

THE INVOLVEMENT OF FISHERS OF XIAO LIUQIU IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIA TUNA FISHERY, 1945 - 1980

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Abstract During the period from 1945 to 1980, numerous Xiao Liuqiu fishers migrated to the main Taiwanese fishing harbour of Kaohsiung for economic reasons. With the help of Kaohsiung's port infrastructure and well-equipped tuna longliners, Xiao Liuqiu fishers expanded the reach of their fishing activity in a fan-shaped pattern. Some fished the waters off Hainan Island, some others fished in the waters off the western coast of Luzon. They established regional fisheries businesses that were characterised by hometown ties and conservative business strategies. In order to protect their employment opportunities and business interests in the metropolitan environment of Kaohsiung, the Xiao Liuqiu people formed a discreet, closed corporate fishing community. Their conservative nature effectively helped them avoid some economic risks. However, it has also limited their initiative for further growth and development in global-scale fisheries.

Figure 1: Geographic Location of Kaohsiung and Southeast Asia



Introduction

Taiwanese offshore tuna fishing fleets have played a very active role in the waters of Southeast Asia since the Japanese colonial period (1895 – 1945). Between 1945 and 1980 fishers from various parts of Taiwan used Kaohsiung, the island's largest port city, as their supply base, and sailed directly southward, developing their long distance fishing grounds in a fan-shaped pattern; the eastern boundary of their grounds was the Philippines, while the westernmost edge was situated opposite the province of Hainan, China. The revenue that offshore fishers created from their tuna fisheries in the waters of Southeast Asia not only made considerable contributions to the development of Kaohsiung's economy, but also greatly im-

proved the financial condition of local households from the early years of post-war era when they had suffered considerable economic hardship (see figure 1).

Several groups worked in the various sectors of Kaohsiung's fishing industry after the end of the Second World War. Besides Kaohsiung locals, migrant Penghuan, mainland Chinese, and Xiao Liuqiu fishers all substantially contributed to the development of Kaohsiung's fishing industry. People from the island of Xiao Liuqiu have played a particularly important role in offshore tuna fisheries (Chen 2007:322-323). Xiao Liuqiu fishers, as new migrants with limited financial means and relatively weak personal connections, competed against local fishers. Despite these disadvantages, they eventually played a crucial role in Taiwan's offshore tuna fisheries. This entrepreneurial success of the Xiao Liuqiu migrant fishers to Kaohsiung makes their case particularly interesting. Their onshore business strategies and fishing activities at sea should be viewed as an important topic in the maritime history of Taiwan. However, little attention has been paid to this important area of investigation.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the migration of fishers of Xiao Liuqiu from their home island to Kaohsiung and the subsequent expansion of their fishing activities in the waters of Southeast Asia, and to analyse the culture and business strategies of Kaohsiung's Xiao Liuqiu fishing communities through an ethno-historical approach. The difficult living conditions in Xiao Liuqiu Island drove numerous fishers and their families to migrate to Kaohsiung during the post-war years. Xiao Liuqiu vessel owners formed a self-contained business network based on hometown ties and built numerous well-equipped offshore tuna longliners in post-war Kaohsiung. This conservative business strategy not only enabled fishermen to fish in the waters of Southeast Asia, but also helped vessel owners minimise the potential economic risks of their small fishing enterprises.

I limit the temporal range of my study to the period between 1945 and 1980, years which marked two significant moments in regional time. In 1945, Japanese colonialism in Taiwan ended and Xiao Liuqiu fishers started to migrate to Kaohsiung on a large scale. In the 1980s, numerous job opportunities, which were created by onshore economic activities in the metropolitan areas, particularly Taipei and Kaohsiung, encouraged young people to leave the fishing industry. As a result, the culture and image of Taiwan's fishing communities rapidly changed.

This study used two methodological approaches: oral history and anthropological fieldwork. A number of older Xiao Liuqiu fishers still reside in Kaohsiung's port area. However, most of them are illiterate and unable to write down their past and present ways of life. As a result, the literature relating to their lives and histories is extremely limited. In order to collect oral histories and to experience, vicariously, the rhythm of their lives, I lived in Kaohsiung fishing communities and interviewed old Xiao Liuqiu fishers from December 2001 to July 2002¹.

The Geographic Location of Xiao Liuqiu and the Livelihood of Its People

Xiao Liuqiu, an island adjacent to the southwestern part of Taiwan, is located at 120.21°E and 22.19°N (See Figure 2). It is eighteen miles south of Kaohsiung, the

centre of Taiwan's fishing industry and the largest city in the southern part of Taiwan.² The island is tiny, only 6.8 square kilometres in area. From the northeast to southwest is about 4.1 kilometres long; and from the northwest to southeast is just two kilometres long. The terrain is hilly, and being covered with limestone and coral deposits, is poorly suited to agriculture. Moreover, there is no permanent river (Chen 2000:201).³

Figure 2: Geographic Location of Siao Liouciou Island (See the red dot)



Islanders experienced some difficulties in their livelihood due to the lack of electricity and water supply. Before 1980, electricity was supplied to Xiao Liuqiu households for only several hours a day. In 1980, larger marine electric cables were installed between the island and the mainland, overcoming this problem. The lack of water also brought a great inconvenience to the daily lives of Xiao Liuqiu islanders. Groundwater was considered the most important water source in Xiao Liuqiu. Nowadays, only four schools have been established in this tiny island: three primary schools and one junior high school. Those who want to continue their study have to leave their hometown. In the period of concern here, educational facilities were even scarcer and, as a result, the education level of Xiao Liuqiu islanders was below the national average in the early post-war years.⁴

The hostile conditions for onshore agricultural activities drove the majority of Xiao Liuqiu households to make a living at sea. A survey conducted in 1956 showed that ninety percent of Xiao Liuqiu families engaged in the various sectors of fishing activities.⁵ The Japan Current flows northward through the Taiwan Strait and throughout the year, bringing stocks of migratory fish including mackerel, bonito, and tuna. The Littoral Current flows by the coast of China and moves southward through the Taiwan Strait (See Figure 3). It also provides fishers with rich marine resources, such as pomfret, eel, porgy, yellow croaker, and cutlass fish (Anonymous 1974:66-67).⁶

The fishing techniques of Xiao Liuqiu islanders were improved by the Japanese fishing authorities during the colonial period. The first Fisheries Association of Xiao Liuqiu Island was established with the help of the Japanese fishing authorities in 1925. Through this Fisheries Association, modern fishing techniques, especially longline fishing, were introduced to Xiao Liuqiu in a planned way. The first fishing port of Xiao Liuqiu was built at Baishawei in 1936. This so-called fishing port, in fact, was a small harbour which only enabled fishing boats to take

refuge in rough weather conditions. It was successively renovated in 1956 and 1958.⁷ However, the renovation of Baishawei Harbour, was not sufficient incentive for the local fishers to stay at Xiao Liuqiu and fish in its nearby waters, and a considerable number of Xiao Liuqiu fishers migrated to Kaohsiung in the decades after 1945.

Figure 3: Littoral Current Flows and Japan Current



The Migration of Xiao Liuqiu Fishers

Kaohsiung, the industrial centre of Taiwan, had also functioned as the centre of Taiwan's distant water fishing industry since the colonial period. The construction of Kaohsiung's first modern fishing port, the Shōsento Fishing Harbour, started as early as 1926 (Jhang and Syu 1998:10-15; Tagame 1930:2-10).⁸ The building of onshore fisheries-related infrastructure enabled fishing vessels to exploit marine resources in the fishing grounds of Southeast Asia, which as a result attracted many Japanese fishing vessels to use Shōsento as their forward supply base. Fishers from various parts of Taiwan left their hometowns and moved to Kaohsiung for better employment opportunities. Some of them came from Xiao Liuqiu, although the number of Xiao Liuqiu fishing migrants were not very numerous in the pre-war era.

Governments in Southeast Asia 'devoted a great deal of their energies to restoring fisheries in the post-war years' (Butcher 2004:169). From the late-1950s to the early 1970s, fishers conducted intensive fishing in Southeast Asia; fish catches in the region, as a result, skyrocketed. The intensive fishing during this period to time has been described as 'the Great Fish Race' (Butcher 2004:169-170). Gushan Fishing Port (Shōsento's new name) was rebuilt by Taiwanese authorities in order to give Taiwanese fishers a better position in this Great Fish Race. The construction of Gushan Fishing Port attracted several groups, namely mainland Chinese, Penghuans and Xiao Liuqiu, from various parts of Taiwan to work in Kaohsiung's fishing industry. Most mainland Chinese fishing businesses in Taiwan started as trawl fishing companies. The communists' triumph in the civil war led to the large-scale migration of trawlers from China and Chinese waters in the late 1940s. They moved from one port to another on the Chinese coast. Finally, they relocated to Keelung, Taiwan. However, problems caused by overfishing in the East China Sea soon emerged in Keelung. In order to avoid overfishing, a large number of them moved south to Kaohsiung, operating in the trawl fishing grounds of Southeast Asia. The Penghuans constituted the main source of labour in the distant

water fisheries, especially on longline vessels. Before Penghuan fishers migrated to Kaohsiung on a large scale during the post-war era, a large number of them had worked as seasonal fishers in Kaohsiung in the pre-war sailing boat period. The rapid growth of the Kaohsiung fishing industries after the end of World War Two further encouraged Penghuan fishers to settle down in Kaohsiung.⁹ Xiao Liuqiu fishers also started to migrate to Kaohsiung on a large scale when the Gushan Fishing Port was reconstructed after the end of World War Two.¹⁰ Fishing fleets from Kaohsiung, in a comparatively short period of time, once again became very active in the fishing grounds of neighbouring Southeast Asia.

The construction of Qianzhen Fishing Port in Kaohsiung started in 1964, and was completed by 1967. The infrastructure of Qianzhen Fishing Port, as the largest distant water fishing port of Taiwan, was very advanced with far better facilities by comparison with earlier standards. The number of fuelling stations, water-supply stations and ice-supply stations was much larger than at Gushan. Fishing ancillary industries such as ice-manufacturing plants, cold storage plants and fish processing factories were clustered together near the port (Anonymous 2003, 9; anonymous 1972, 32; anonymous 1974, 281).¹¹ Qianzhen Fishing Port, blessed with these excellent resources, had a competitive advantage over the Gushan Fishing Port. Therefore, it is not surprising that numerous fishing companies, including those originally from Xiao Liuqiu, started to shift their offices and fleets to Qianzhen in the late 1960s (See Figure 4).¹² The construction of Qianzhen Fishing Port not only enabled fishers and fishing enterprises to participate in the 'Great Fish Race' in the waters of Southeast Asia, but also largely improved their chances for running global-scale fisheries to a large extent.

Figure 4: Kaohsiung's Fishing Ports



Living costs in Kaohsiung City were much higher than in the hometowns of fisher migrants, which made the poor fishers from Xiao Liuqiu feel even more impoverished. Most of the post-war migrant fishers were shabbily dressed; some were even barefooted. They frequently had to seek lodging with their relatives after they arrived in Kaohsiung, and had to secure a position on a vessel as soon as pos-

sible.¹³ Before they could get a job, however, they needed to borrow money from their relatives in order to support their job-search and new way of life.¹⁴

One of my elderly Xiao Liuqiu informants, Hong Fucai, said he migrated to Kaohsiung partly because he wanted to provide his children better education opportunities, and partly because he wanted to further expand his fishing business. Kaohsiung was an appropriate place for him to fulfil his dreams. However, as a new migrant, he also experienced financial hardships when he arrived in Kaohsiung. In order to save money, Hong rented a tiny room in a shabby apartment, and shared a kitchen and bathroom with his housemates whom he did not really know, which, he recalled, was a typical arrangement. In order to survive in the metropolitan environment of Kaohsiung, the Xiao Liuqiu people formed a discreet, closed corporate fishing community. Every member of the community, from onshore vessel owners to fishing masters and apprentices, needed to be fellow kinsmen.¹⁵

The Extension of Fishing Grounds

Before migrating to Kaohsiung in the 1940s, people from Xiao Liuqiu fished only in the waters off the 'feet of Xiao Liuqiu'. Their target fish were dolphin fish (*guitoudao*) and sailfish (*yusanyu*), and their limited fishing season was approximately from the third to the fifth month of the lunar year (about April to June). The vessels they used at that time were small, about ten tons, and the length of the fishing trip was never more than a week. These fishers had to stay onshore in rough weather because their vessels were so small. But the few who had larger vessels tried to both explore and exploit more remote fishing grounds. Some went in search of flying fish (*feiwyu*) in the waters off Lanyu, a tiny island located on the eastern coast of Taiwan; some went south hunting for yellowfin tuna (See Figure 5).¹⁶

Figure 5: The Fishing Grounds of Siao Liouciou Fishers before Moving to Kaohsiung



In the 1950s and 1960s a growing number of Xiao Liuqiu fishers had moved to Kaohsiung. With the better port facilities, they started to operate larger longliners just as their Kaohsiung counterparts did. Some fished off Hong Kong, while others fished in the waters off the Philippines.¹⁷ However, no matter where fishers were going to work offshore, they had to catch bait first. This fish then had to be

kept alive in a special tank below deck until being hooked as bait. Normally these fishers would not start their fishing operations until they had enough baitfish.¹⁸ The kind of baitfish Xiao Liuqiu fishers would use was basically determined by the season and the weather. Before migrating to Kaohsiung, Xiao Liuqiu fishers, in order to avoid rough weather in the winter months, had to stay in coastal waters and fish for offshore species like moonfish or torpedo scad (*tiejia*). After winter ended, they would fish for squid or go north to the waters off Tainan County in search of torpedo scad. If they were lucky, it would just take one to two days to get sufficient baitfish. If they were really unlucky, the process of fishing for bait could last as long as a week, which would invariably make their trip unprofitable.¹⁹

However, the fishing grounds off Xiao Liuqiu were not abandoned by Xiao Liuqiu fishers after they migrated to Kaohsiung. No matter which fishing grounds they were going to work, they still had to obtain baitfish off the Xiao Liuqiu coast first. It was always a pleasant task, because the vessel owners allowed fishers to go ashore at Xiao Liuqiu for a day to visit their relatives and friends. Also, returning to Xiao Liuqiu did not necessarily take any extra time away from the voyage, because Xiao Liuqiu was directly on their way to the fishing grounds of Southeast Asia.²⁰

The target fish in the grounds off Hong Kong was black marlin, while the target fish in the waters off the Philippines was yellowfin tuna.²¹ Generally speaking, Xiao Liuqiu people preferred to work the waters off the Philippines, rather than those off Hong Kong. This was partly because the waters off both the Philippines and Xiao Liuqiu were rich zones with which the Xiao Liuqiu fishers were thoroughly familiar.²² Equally importantly was the fact that the shallow waters of the South China Sea created larger waves and rough seas, hence they did not like to fish there on a regular basis.²³ Every year a large number of Xiao Liuqiu fishers left the South China Sea for the waters off the western coast of the Philippines for yellowfin tuna between the months of April and June.²⁴ However, due to the gradual decline of marine resources off the western coast of the Philippines, their search for new fishing grounds gradually took them eastward (see figure 6).²⁵

Figure 6: The Fishing Grounds of Siao Liouciou Fishers after Migrating to Kaohsiung



Case Study: Chen Shengli

In order to present a clear picture of how Xiao Liuqiu fishers ran their fishing business, in this section I will use Chen Shengli as my case study example. He is very well-known and influential in Kaohsiung's Xiao Liuqiu fishing community, and very active in fisheries-related activities in Kaohsiung. He has been rewarded several times by Taiwan's fishing authorities for his efforts in arranging international fisheries cooperation with Southeast Asia and South Pacific Ocean nations.

Chen Shengli was born in Xiao Liuqiu in 1938. The son of a fisher, Chen began his fishing career after he completed his primary education at the age of thirteen. His competence and responsible work attitude impressed elder villagers and he was invited to share in the operation of a newly-built vessel while still in his late teens. The first vessel he operated was a tiny ten-ton, six-horsepower longliner, and the only navigation device in the vessel was a simple compass. The duration of this vessel's voyages never went beyond one week; in rough weather, especially in the winter, the vessel did not go to sea. Thus, in the early years, Chen and his partners never operated in the waters beyond the Bashi Channel between Taiwan and the Philippines.²⁶

The constraints of this tiny fishing boat really frustrated Chen. He left his fellow crew and built his own longliners, *Baoyifa* and *Longjifa*. The relatively powerful engines in his new vessels enabled them to operate in more distant waters. The eastern boundary of their fishing grounds was Lanyu, an island situated off the southeastern coast of Taiwan and the southernmost edge was the shoreline of Luzon. However, a fishing career based in Xiao Liuqiu could no longer satisfy Chen. The reconstruction of Kaohsiung Port had fostered the development of a wide variety of fishing industries and fishing ancillary industries in the ten years after the end of World War Two. Chen could not resist the port's attraction and, in 1957, he moved to Kaohsiung. He ran a shop at Gushan Fishing Port, selling rice, charcoal, fishing gear and all sorts of groceries to fishers and fishing companies. At the same time, he raised funds and built his first longliner in Kaohsiung, *Lijincai*, a twenty-ton vessel with a twenty-five-horsepower *yakitama* semi-diesel engine. It cost 160,000 NT dollars (4,000 US dollars), which was more than enough to purchase a decent size house in Gushan, one of the wealthiest areas in Kaohsiung at that time. The financial sponsorship of this vessel was shared by seven Xiao Liuqiu people, while Chen also had a half-share in the vessel. He now transformed his role, becoming an onshore vessel owner, and never went to sea again. *Lijincai*'s fishing grounds were comparatively remote and extensive. Sometimes the vessel worked in the waters off Hong Kong in search of giant black marlin. Sometimes it operated in waters off either the west or east coasts of the Philippines. During the typhoon season, it stayed in the safe areas of the offshore fishing grounds to fish moonfish (*Mene maculate* (*Pidao*)), a small fish that could be used as longline bait.²⁷

Chen was good at doing business; considerable revenue from his shop and the *Lijincai* kept flowing into his coffers, and, in a very short period of time, he earned an enviable reputation in the Xiao Liuqiu fishing community of Kaohsiung. From 1961 onward, he created partnerships and established his offshore

longliner fleet: *Jiyuyu*, *Jinshengyu*, *Ruisheng*, *Manjinfa*, *Yumanzai*, *Ruicheng Hao* were built one by one (see table 1). In terms of the nature of the partnerships, Chen insisted on two things. Firstly, all the shareholders had to come from Xiao Liuqiu and kinsmen or old friends were preferred. Secondly, Chen had to hold the largest share in each of these vessels, so that he could manage the operation of this longline fleet. The tonnage of the vessels was still comparatively small and the horsepower of the engines was modest, so the fleet worked only in waters off the Philippines. In March, the vessels regularly fished yellowfin tuna on the west coast of the Philippines. In April and May they went to the east coast of Luzon to fish dolphin fish (*Coryphaena hippurus Linnaeus (guitoudao)*).²⁸

Table 1. *Chen's Offshore Longline Fleet*

	Vessel name	Year	Engine	Supply base	Fishing grounds
1	<i>Baoyifa</i>			Siao Liouciou	Shoreline of Luzon
2	<i>Longjifa</i>			Siao Liouciou	
3	<i>Lijincai</i>	1961	Yama	Kaohsiung	Waters off Hong Kong or the east and west coast of the Philippines
4	<i>Jiyuyu</i>	↓	Yama	Kaohsiung	
5	<i>Jinsheng'yu</i>	↓	Yama	Kaohsiung	
6	<i>Rueicheng</i>	the	Yama	Kaohsiung	
7	<i>Manjinfa</i>		Yama	Kaohsiung	
8	<i>Yumanzai</i>	late	Yama	Kaohsiung	
9	<i>Rueicheng Hao</i>	1960s	Yama	Keelung	Waters off northern Taiwan

Table 2. *Chen's Offshore and Distant Water Longline Fleet*

	Vessel name	Year	Engine	Fishing grounds
1	<i>Sinshengyi no. 1</i>	1970	Yakitama	The waters off Brunei, the southern end of the South China Sea
2	<i>Fashengyi</i>	↓	Yakitama	
3	<i>Shengjisiang</i>	↓	Yakitama	
4	<i>Singrueilong</i>		Yakitama	
5	<i>Cyuanshengsiang</i>	1973	Yakitama	
6	<i>Sinwunyi</i>		Yakitama	The Indian Ocean

In those days, the marine resources of the longline fishing grounds in Southeast Asia were so abundant that the fish holds of vessels were always full after a short space of time: the voyage, from onset to return trip, took only about ten days. This excellent fishing environment rapidly built up both Chen's confidence and financial strength. He built more vessels in the early 1970s: *Sinshengyi no. 1*, *Fashengyi*, *Shengjisiang*, *Singrueilong*, and *Quanshengxiang*. Again, all the shareholders were from Xiao Liuqiu, and Chen held the largest share in each of these new vessels. The more powerful engines now enabled these vessels to operate in the waters off Brunei, at the southern end of the South China Sea.²⁹ Traditionally, the Xiao Liuqiu people had no serious ambition to exploit remote fishing grounds, so the longliners they built were much smaller than those of the local vessel owners of Kaohsiung,³⁰ and thirty or forty tons was the maximum size. However, 'the

prospect of profits stimulated fishers and entrepreneurs to invest in more efficient methods of capturing and handling fish' (Butcher 2004:174). With a view to making more money, Chen pioneered the building of bigger longliners: *Fashengyi* was sixty-tons, and the *Singruilong* and *Quanshengxiang* were both fifty-tons. These longliners were considered distant water vessels by the standard of Taiwan's fisheries authorities (Anonymous 1989:49-50).³¹ Furthermore, the *Singruilong* and *Quanshengxiang* were both equipped with refrigerators that made an important technological contribution towards the ability of the vessels to undertake long voyages and operate in distant waters.

A thriving business encouraged Chen to build *Sinwunyi* in 1972, an eighty-ton longliner that was equipped with the best refrigerator available at that time and the new vessel was expected to operate in the waters beyond the South China Sea (see table 2). Unfortunately, on her maiden voyage in 1973, the *Sinwunyi* was detained by the Indian Navy due to an unlawful incursion into Indian territorial waters. The tremendous financial setback and the worrisome legal problems caused by the detention of *Sinwunyi* were a huge blow to Chen. Hence, he decided to slow down the further development of his longline business. From 1974 onward, Chen began to run a fishing gear shop, selling longlines, traces and all sorts of items and equipment for offshore fishing vessels.³² But in the end this new business venture only lasted three years.

Before the 1970s, after fishing in Southeast Asian waters, Xiao Liuqiu fishers returned to Taiwan to sell their tuna catches. From fishing to selling their tuna products, fishers had no contact with overseas fish dealers. This isolation prevented them from participating in the trend towards globalisation in the East Asian fisheries economy. However, the situation eventually changed in the 1970s. As the Japanese economy boomed in the post-years, the demand of tuna for sashimi rose in Japan. To satisfy the domestic tuna consumption, Japanese fishing enterprises not only harvested large volumes of tuna in Southeast Asian waters (Butcher 2004:172), but also purchased tuna products from the offshore fishers of Donggang, a township located twenty-five kilometres south of Kaohsiung on Taiwan's west coast.

The establishment of important business connections between the Japanese fish dealers and the offshore fishers of Donggang generated an offshore longline boom in the fishing communities of southern Taiwan in the mid-1970s.³³ By participating in this supply chain, Xiao Liuqiu fishers' tuna longline fishery tapped into the economic globalisation of fisheries.

The tremendous profits generated by this offshore tuna trade encouraged a new exodus from Kaohsiung to Donggang. Some vessels from Xiao Liuqiu shifted their homeport to Donggang (Chen 2000:199),³⁴ while others decided to stay put. Chen, however, made an unusual decision. He and his onshore staff stayed in Kaohsiung, and his vessels alternated between the two places (see figure 7).³⁵

Figure 7: Chen Shengli and Another of His Offshore Longliners Being Repaired in Drydock in Cianjhen Fishing Port



However, to cash in on the Japanese demand was not as easy as Chen had thought, because the quality of the fish products required for Japan's *sashimi* market was exceptionally high. Each fish had to be perfectly fresh, and its skin had to be free of scrape marks. Unfortunately, all of his vessels were equipped with traditional *yakitama* engines (semi-diesel engines) which produced constant vibration during the voyage. As a result, most of his fish were bruised with scrape marks on their skin. Less than one tenth of Chen's catch met the stringent quality requirements of Japan's *sashimi* market. Chen soon learnt that there was much room for improvement in the quality of his marine products. He, therefore, stopped running his fishing gear shop in 1976, and started building a new series of vessels: *Sinshengyi no. 2*, *Yongchunyi*, *Sinlianyi*, *Jinlongfa*, *Sinyi*, *Sinshengyi no. 10*, *Jinyusheng*, *Sinshengyi no. 12* and *Jinruiyi no. 1* (see figure 8 and 9). Two major technical improvements were made in Chen's new series of longliners. Firstly, all of them were equipped with new *yama* engines (diesel engines), which effectively reduced noise and vibrations, so damage to the fish would be kept to a bare minimum on long voyages. Secondly, in order to improve the operational efficiency of the vessels, the ratio of horsepower to tonnage was traditionally at least 3:1. But *Sinshengyi no. 12* and *Jinruiyi no. 1* were more than 8:1, and *Sinshengyi no. 10* and *Jinyusheng* were nearly 11:1 (see table 3). The state-of-the-art equipment on these longliners and the power of their engines could cope with the most severe weather conditions. Typhoons, giant waves, or failures in communication were not considered to be nearly as dreadful threats as before (Anonymous 1953:31).³⁶ John Butcher has observed that 'the prospect of selling fish products to affluent countries was a powerful force driving greater fishing effort and investment in new fishing technologies' (2004:174). Xiao Liuqiu fishers' efforts to update their onboard engines not only correspond to Butcher's viewpoint, but also clearly show us the impact of globalisation on the local tuna fishery.

Figure 8: Chen Shengli's Offshore Longliner, Sinshengyi No. 2, Taking on Ice in Cianjhen Fishing Port. The Building Directly beside the Vessel is an Ice-Manufacturing Plant, Te Mao Industrial Co. the Ice is Conveyed along the Belt from the Second Floor of the Building into the Small, Black Elevated Building, then is Fed Down into the Vessel



Figure 9: Chen Shengli's Offshore Longliner, Jinlongfa, Moored in Cianjhen Fishing Port in 1979



Table 3. *Chen's Offshore and Distant Water Longline Fleet**

	Vessel name	Year	T	HP	Supply base	Fishing grounds
1	Sinshengyi no. 2	1978	40	125	KH & DG	The waters of
2	Yongchunyi	1978	40	125	KH & DG	Southeast Asia, the
3	Sinlianyi	1979	40	125	KH & DG	eastern part of the
4	Jinlongfa	1979	40	125	KH & DG	Indian Ocean, and
5	Sinyi	1979	40	125	KH & DG	the western part of
6	Sinshengyi no.10	1985	40	430	KH & DG	the Pacific Ocean
7	Jinyusheng	1985	40	430	KH & DG	
8	Sinshengyi no. 12	1987	80	650	KH & DG	
9	Jinrueiyi no. 1	1987	80	650	KH & DG	

* T stands for tonnage; HP stands for horse power; KH stands for Kaohsiung; DG stands for Donggang

Culture and Business Strategies

The number of fishing vessels was limited, and fishers who sought employment onboard were numerous in the early post-war years. Job opportunities, as a result, became extremely difficult to find. In such a tight employment market, kinship connections mattered a great deal. Fishing masters preferred to employ their relatives or those who offered presents or bribes. Reserving a position for a relative or fellow villager was regarded as a 'moral obligation'. When Taiwan was suffering the grip of poverty in the 1950s and 60s, onboard jobs provided relatively decent earnings. Vessel owners or fishing masters certainly felt that they had to look after their 'own people'.³⁷

Most of my interviewees stated that getting a job onboard or getting promotion required establishing good relationships with fishing masters or the fishing companies. However, when they talked about their own cases, most of them stressed that their circumstances were unusual; they stood up on their own feet, even though most of them had relatives who worked as fishing masters.³⁸

In the immediate post-war years, job opportunities in the fishing industry were so limited that the boundaries between different groups were further intensified. When a fishing master recruited his crew, he invariably would recruit those who came from the same village. Therefore, it is safe to say that few local Kaohsiung fishing masters hired Xiao Liuqiu fishers. Also, few Xiao Liuqiu fishing masters hired local Kaohsiung fishers or fishers from other groups.

A Xiao Liuqiu fishing vessel owner explained why they did not hire fishers from other groups or even Kaohsiung locals:

We were not familiar with the habits and characteristics of fishers who came from other counties. That [the recruitment of fishers] was the fishing masters' business. I didn't want to have a hand in it.³⁹

In fact, having their own boats and knowing little about the cultural characteristics of those from other areas were simply excuses. The real reason was that they wanted to reserve job opportunities for people from their own group.⁴⁰ As a consequence, Xiao Liuqiu fishers would not try to get a job with a fishing master from another group, because they realised that such an effort would be useless.

The most conservative group in Kaohsiung's fishing industry are the people from Xiao Liuqiu. Most of them adhered to offshore longline fishing and were not at all interested in other forms of fishing activities. They preferred instead to build medium-sized offshore longliners, rather than large distant water vessels.⁴¹ They worked the old fishing zones that were vacated by locals and expanded southward. They were not keen to explore the possibilities of new distant fishing zones by themselves. Neither did they like working with other groups, which further limited their potential for engaging in the expansion of global-scale fisheries in post-war Taiwan.

While longliners run by local tycoons soon left the waters of Southeast Asia and took their operations a step further into the Indian Ocean and the southwest Pacific Ocean in the 1960s, a new wave of offshore longliners mainly owned by

Xiao Liuqiu immigrants and Kaohsiung local fishers quickly filled the vacuum in the various longline fishing grounds of Southeast Asia.⁴² In general, the longliner fleets in Southeast Asia expanded the reach of their activity in a fan-shaped pattern; the eastern boundary of their grounds was the Philippines, and the western-most edge was situated opposite Hainan. As the example of Chen above shows, the selection of longline fishing grounds depended on seasonal conditions and what kind of fish they wanted to catch to meet current market demand.

Wages and Welfare

In old days, some fishing companies in post-war Kaohsiung signed contracts with fishers, and some did not. It depended on the vessel owners' business practice. Their contract period initially was just for one year. However, with the continuous expansion of fishing grounds, contract periods became two years in length; some were even three years long, especially for those who fished in the Pacific or Atlantic Ocean.⁴³ Most of Xiao Liuqiu vessel owners did not sign contracts with their fishers. This is partly because vessel owners, fishing masters and other crew members were fellow villagers, some even with kinship connections; and partly because their vessels only worked in the waters of Southeast Asia. The duration of their voyages was much shorter than those of other groups.

At the end of a voyage the catch was sold, all the running expenses paid, and the net profit would be shared by both the 'people' (*lâng*) and the 'boat' (*chûn*) which respectively referred to the fishers and the fishing companies. Fishers could receive up to forty-five percent of the net profit, while the fishing company retained the remaining fifty-five percent. However, this ratio was just a general working principle. In practice, the profit sharing system varied slightly from company to company.⁴⁴

I will use the Xiao Liuqiu profit sharing system as an example. Here the vessel owner took half of the net profit and the crew shared the rest. Suppose there was a Xiao Liuqiu vessel with a crew of eight; the catch of a fishing trip was sold for the price of one million NT dollars (25,000 US dollars), and the running expenses were 200,000 NT dollars (5,000 US dollars). The net profit would then be 800,000 NT dollars (20,000 US dollars). Hence, the vessel owners earned 400,000 NT dollars (10,000 US dollars), while the eight fishers, including the master, shared the remaining 400,000 NT dollars (10,000 US dollars). A fishing master and an engineman on a Xiao Liuqiu vessel received double the share received by ordinary fishers, which means the 400,000 NT dollars (10,000 US dollars) had to be divided into ten units, as the fishing master and engineman earned 80,000 NT dollars (2,000 US dollars). Besides their normal income from this profit sharing system, sometimes the fishing master could negotiate for a bonus in private and in most cases the vessel owner rarely objected.⁴⁵

Generally speaking, the larger the vessel the bigger the share of the net profit for the fishing company. For distant water longliners or pair-trawlers that worked in foreign fishing grounds, the fishing companies might take sixty percent of the net profit after every fishing voyage. Also, the larger the vessel, the

greater the bonus the fishing master and other leading crew could earn. While a Xiao Liuqiu fishing master's salary bonus was double or three times compared to that of other ordinary fishers, the salary bonus of a fishing captain who worked in the Pacific or Atlantic Ocean could be ten or even twenty times larger than that of the ordinary crew.⁴⁶

Most Xiao Liuqiu vessel owners used to work as fishing masters at sea, too. Compared with local Kaohsiung vessel owners, however, their situation was much better. First, most of them owned and operated a fleet of small longliners, rather than a single huge distant water longliner. This business strategy effectively reduced the risk of bankruptcy that was caused by confiscation or shipwreck overseas. Second, running small longliners that fished in the nearby waters of Southeast Asia was technically and financially easier than running a huge distant water vessel working remote fishing grounds in the Indian or Atlantic Oceans. These two reasons help explain why it was easier for a Xiao Liuqiu fishing master to become a successful vessel owner than it was for a Penghuan master.

Conclusion

Most of the fishers of Xiao Liuqiu Island invariably started their fishing careers with offshore longlining in the waters off Xiao Liuqiu. The difficult living conditions and poor port facilities in Xiao Liuqiu Island drove numerous fishers and their families to migrate to post-war Kaohsiung. Armed with modern port infrastructure and well-equipped tuna longliners, Xiao Liuqiu fishers extended their fishing grounds into Southeast Asian waters in a very brief period of time.

In order to survive in Kaohsiung City, Xiao Liuqiu fishing migrants formed a discreet and self-contained community. Every member of the community, from vessel owners, shareholders, and onboard crew members, was from Xiao Liuqiu. Their self-enclosed attitude prevented them from effectively interacting with other groups in Kaohsiung's fishing industry.

Most of Xiao Liuqiu vessel owners owned and operated a fleet of small offshore longliners, and they were not interested in other fisheries like trawl fisheries and distant water longlining. They fished in Southeast Asian waters that other groups had left behind as they went in search of more distant fisheries. The conservative nature of the fishers from Xiao Liuqiu effectively reduced the risk of bankruptcy that was caused by confiscation, shipwreck, or unfamiliarity with overseas fishing grounds. Unfortunately, it also limited their capacity for further increasing their participation in global-scale fisheries.

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Notes

- 1 The data on which this paper are based come from numerous interactions with elderly Xiao Liuqiu fishermen, but are owed particularly to a series of lengthy interviews with Chen Shengli and Hong Fucai.
- 2 <http://www.liuchiu.gov.tw/main-c-a-17.htm>

- 3 Chen Hsien-Ming, 'The Development of Tuna Longline Fishery on Liouchiou Island [Liouchiouyu zhi Weidiao Yuye Fazhan],' *Geographical Research* [Shida Dili Yanjiu Baogao], no. 33, Nov. 2000, 201.
- 4 <http://www.pthg.gov.tw/TownLct/CmsShow.aspx?Parm=20061027141833484,20061023204442109,1>
- 5 <http://www.pthg.gov.tw/TownLct/CmsShow.aspx?Parm=20061027141833484,20061023204442109,1>
- 6 A Study on the Fishing Industry of Taiwan [Taiwan Yuye Zhi Yanjiu], Taipei, Bank of Taiwan, 1974, 66- 67.
- 7 <http://www.pthg.gov.tw/TownLct/CmsShow.aspx?Parm=20061027141850265,20061027141833484,5>
- 8 Zhang Shouzhen & Xu Yinan, eds., *The Past and Present of Hamasen* [Hamaxing De Qianshi Jinsheng], Kaohsiung, Hamasen Community Workshop, 1998, 10-15, and Tagame Ichirou, Takao Gyokō to Sono Rikujō Setsubi [Takao Fishing Port and its Onshore Facilities], Takao, Takao Fishing Market, 1930, 2-10.
- 9 See Chen, Ta-Yuan, 'Taiwanese Offshore (Distant Water) Fisheries in Southeast Asia, 1936-1977', Murdoch University, unpublished PhD dissertation, 2007, 322-323.
- 10 Shōsento is a Japanese name. Gushan is a Taiwanese name, but pronounced and spelled in Mandarin, the official language of the KMT regime.
- 11 Fishing Ports of Kaohsiung City [Kaohsiung Shi Yugang], Taipei, Fisheries Agency, 2003, 9, and A Brief Introduction to the Fishing Industry of Taiwan [Taiwan Yuye Jianjie], Nantou, Fisheries Bureau, 1972, 32, and A Study on the Fishing Industry of Taiwan [Taiwan Yuye Zhi Yanjiu], Taipei, Bank of Taiwan, 1974, 281.
- 12 Interviews, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 21/5/2002; Cai Wun'yu, Kaohsiung, 29/5/2002; and Li Jizhao, Taipei, 22/3/2002. I went to Qianzhen Fishing Port almost every day when I was doing my fieldwork in Kaohsiung. Qianzhen Fishing Port looked very much like an industrial park. In the post-war era, both Qianzhen Fishing Port and Gushan Fishing Port were considered to be part of Kaohsiung Fishing Port.
- 13 Interview, Xu Yixin, Kaohsiung, 4/7/2002.
- 14 Interview, Chen Youyi, Kaohsiung, 26/6/2002.
- 15 Interview, Hong Fucai, Kaohsiung, 23/6/2002.
- 16 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 18/3/2002. Dolphin fish [Coryphaena hippurus] is not dolphin.
- 17 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 18/3/2002, and Kaohsiung, 21/3/ 2002.
- 18 Interview, Hong Fucai, Kaohsiung, 21/5/2002.
- 19 Interview, Hong Fucai, Kaohsiung, 21/5/2002.
- 20 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 18/3/2002, and Kaohsiung, 24/6/ 2002.
- 21 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 24/6/2002.
- 22 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 21/3/2002.
- 23 Interview, Hong Fucai, Kaohsiung, 21/5/2002.
- 24 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 18/3/2002 and 29/6/2002.
- 25 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 29/6/ 2002. Nowadays a large number of Taiwanese fishers work the waters off the eastern coast of the Philippines.
- 26 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 21/5/2002.
- 27 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 21/5/2002.
- 28 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 21/5/2002.
- 29 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 21/5/2002.
- 30 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 29/6/2002, and Hong Fucai, Kaohsiung, 5/1/2003.
- 31 Survey on the Fishing Vessels and Fishing Gear of Taiwan [Woguo Yuchuan Xingneng Ji Yuju Peihe Xiankuang Zhi Diaocha Yanjiu], Kaohsiung, Taiwan Shipbuilding Industry Association, 1989, 49-50.
- 32 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 8/7/2002.
- 33 Interview, Cai Wun'yu, Kaohsiung, 29/5/2002. As a matter of fact, the onset of the business relationships between the Japanese fish traders and Taiwanese distant water fishing companies had been established not long after the end of World War Two, and this relationship was strengthened after overseas supply bases were developed by Taiwan's fishing companies.

- 34 Chen Hsien-Ming, 'The Development of Tuna Longline Fishery on Liuchiu Island [Liuqiuyu zhi Weidiao Yuye Fazhan],' *Geographical Research* [Shida Dili Yanjiu Baogao], no. 33, 2000, 199.
- 35 Some vessel owners moved to Donggang, others did not. Those who had a large number of financial assets in Kaohsiung City, like Chen, preferred to stay put. On the other hand, the reasons could also be personal, and have nothing to do with the fisheries.
- 36 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 29/6/2002 and see, *The Fishing Industry of Taiwan* [Taiwan Yuye] Nantou, Department of Information, 1953, 31. Yakutama engines (semi-diesel engines) always produced constant vibrations during the voyage.
- 37 Interview, Xu Yixin, Kaohsiung, 4/7/2002.
- 38 Interview, Xu Yixin, Kaohsiung, 4/7/2002.
- 39 Interview, Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 29/6/2002. Chen did not feel comfortable talking about this issue.
- 40 Interview, Hong Fucai, Kaohsiung, 21/5/2002 and Chen Shengli, Kaohsiung, 29/6/2002 and 8/7/2002.
- 41 Interview, Hong Xinzhu, Kaohsiung, 3/7/2002. Few Xiao Liuqiu fishers were involved in the distant water fisheries, except Hong Xinzhu. He moved to Kaohsiung in the colonial era and started to run a distant water longline fishing enterprise after World War Two ended. He has done very well and has earned a good reputation in Kaohsiung's distant water fishing circle. His story is very unusual in the Xiao Liuqiu community. I visited him once while I was in Kaohsiung, but during the one-off interview he did not share very much of his personal history with me.
- 42 Numerous offshore longliners still work in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. I went to sea with local fishers on one such occasion while I was doing my fieldwork in Kaohsiung.
- 43 Interview, Xu Yixin, Kaohsiung, 4/7/2002.
- 44 Interview, Zheng Sanbian, Kaohsiung, 13/3/2002. How two parties actually shared the net profit differed from company to company. I heard many different versions of the practice when I interviewed older fishers. Some ratios were 40:60; others an even 50:50.
- 45 Interview, Hong Fucai, Kaohsiung, 21/5/2002.
- 46 Regarding how much money a fishing master could earn, there are many factors involved, such as the length of the fishing trip and the master's work performance.

APPENDIX I

The most common species of fish caught by Siou Liouciou longline fishers

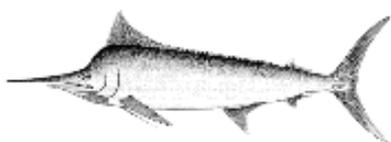
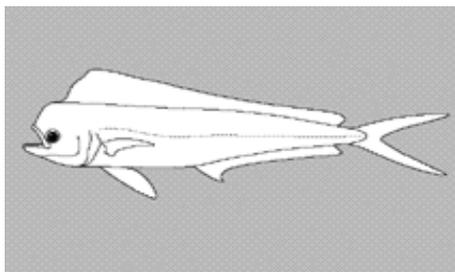


FIG.

Black marlin [*Baiciyu*], khoah-heng-á, *Makaira indica*, Family *Istiophoridae* – Billfishes Distribution: Indo-Pacific: tropical and subtropical waters, occasionally entering temperate waters. Highly migratory species

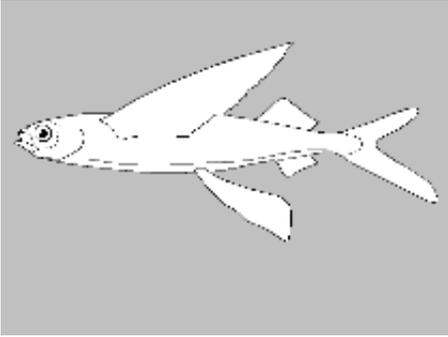
Source: <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?genusname=Makaira&speciesname=indica>



Common dolphin fish [*Guitoudao*], *Coryphaena hippurus*, Family *Coryphaenidae* – Dolphin fishes

Distribution: Atlantic, Indian and Pacific: in tropical and subtropical waters. Highly migratory species

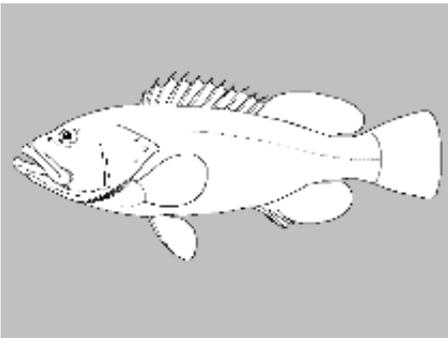
Source: <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?genusname=Coryphaena&speciesname=hippurus>



Flying fish [*Feiwuyu*], Family *Exocoetidae*

Distribution: Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans

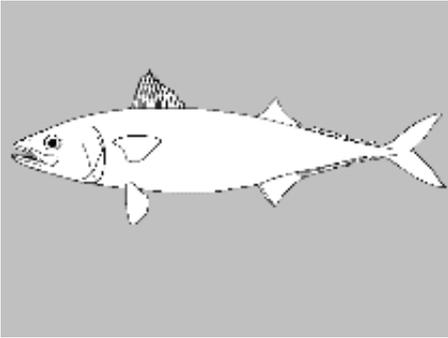
Source: <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/FamilySummary.cfm?ID=206>



Groupers, fairy basslets [*Shiban*], Family *Serranidae*

Distribution: Tropical and temperate oceans. Some enter freshwater.

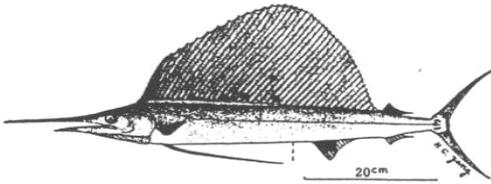
Source: <http://fishbase.sinica.edu.tw/Summary/FamilySummary.cfm?ID=289>



Indo-Pacific king mackerel, mackerels, tunas, bonitos
[Baifu], *pch-pak*, *Scomberomorus guttatus*, Family *Scombridae*

Distribution: tropical and subtropical seas

Source: <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/FamilySummary.cfm?id=416&lang=English>

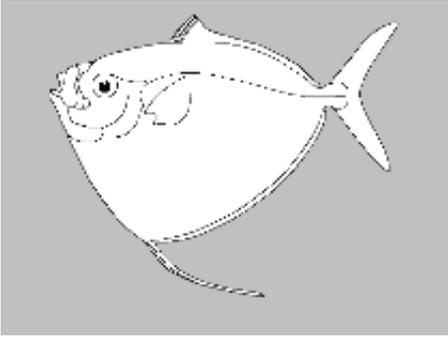


Indo-Pacific sailfish [Yusanyu], *Istiophorus platypterus*
Family *Istiophoridae* – Billfishes

Distribution: Indian and Pacific: tropical and temperate waters approximately 45°-50°N and 40°-35°S in the western Pacific, 35°N and 35°S in the eastern Pacific; 45°S in western Indian Ocean and 35°S in eastern Indian Ocean. Entered Mediterranean Sea from Red sea via Suez Canal. Highly migratory species

Source: <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?genusname=Istiophorus&speciesname=platypterus>

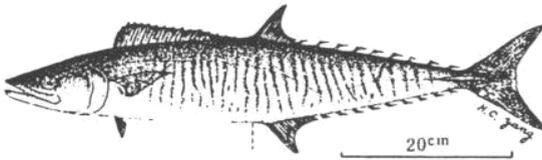
Survey on the Fishing Vessels and Fishing Gear of Taiwan [Woguo Yuchuan Singneng Ji Yuju Peihe Siankuang Zhi Diaocha Yanjiu], Kaohsiung, Taiwan Shipbuilding Industry Association, 1989, 64.



Moonfish [*Pidao*], Family *Menidae*

Distribution: Indo-Pacific: East Africa to southern Japan and northeastern Australia. Recorded from the South China Sea and the Arafura Sea.

Source: <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?id=390>

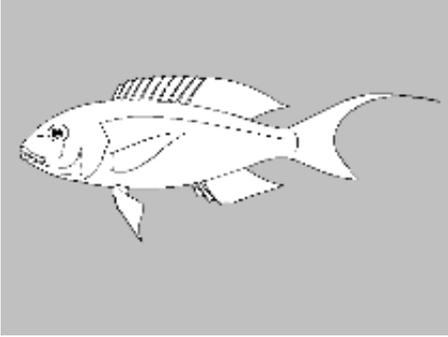


Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel [*tutuo*], *Thô·-thuh*, Family *Scombridae*
(Mackerels, tunas, bonitos), subfamily: *Scombrinae*

Distribution: Indo-West Pacific: Red Sea and South Africa to Southeast Asia, north to China and Japan and south to southeast Australia, and to Fiji

Source: <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?genusname=Scomberomorus&speciesname=commerson>

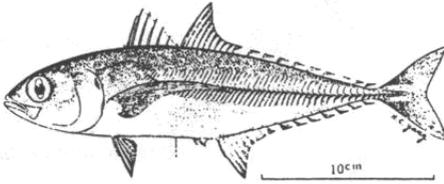
Survey on the Fishing Vessels and Fishing Gear of Taiwan [Woguo Yuchuan Singneng Ji Yuju Peihe Siankuang Zhi Diaocha Yanjiu], Kaohsiung, Taiwan Shipbuilding Industry Association, 1989, 68.



Threadfin breams, whiptail breams [*Jinsianyu*], Family *Nemipteridae*

Distribution: Tropical and sub-tropical Indo-West Pacific.

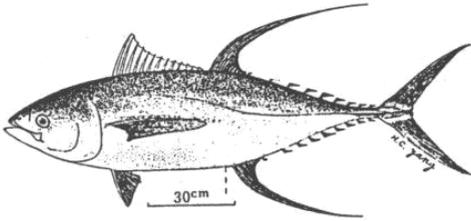
Source: <http://fishbase.sinica.edu.tw/Summary/FamilySummary.cfm?ID=324>



Torpedo scad [*tiejia*], *Megalaspis cordyla*
Family *Carangidae* Jacks and *pompanos*

Distribution: Indo-West Pacific: East Africa to Japan and Australia.

Source: <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?genusname=Megalaspis&speciesname=cordyla>



Yellowfin tuna [*Heiciyu*], *chh'ig-á*, *Thunnus albacares*
Family *Scombridae* - Mackerels, tunas, bonitos

Distribution: Worldwide in tropical and subtropical seas, but absent from the Mediterranean Sea. Highly migratory species.

Source: <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?genusname=Thunnus&speciesname=albacares>,

Survey on the Fishing Vessels and Fishing Gear of Taiwan [Woguo Yuchuan Singneng Ji Yuju Peihe Siankuang Zhi Diaocha Yanjiu], Kaohsiung, Taiwan Shipbuilding Industry Association, 1989, 57.