

COMPLIMENTS OF  
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A REPORT ON THE ADAPTATION OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES  
TO THE FISHING INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY OF MONTEREY BAY

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## INTRODUCTION

This report is the result of a three month pilot project conducted by the Center for Coastal Marine Studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz. It is intended to provide basic documentation of the Indochinese participation in the fishing industry and community in Monterey Bay, and of the issues revolving around this participation. The project staff consisted of the principal investigator, a research associate, an undergraduate research assistant with Vietnamese language ability, and two consultants; a member of the staff of the Indochinese Resettlement Assistance Program (IRAP) of Monterey County, and a prominent Vietnamese fishing boat owner and president of the Monterey Vietnamese Fishermen's Association. The information contained in this report is based on twenty-one in-depth interviews with Vietnamese boat owners, captains, and crewmen, and on numerous observations and discussions with other members of the Vietnamese community, relevant government agencies, local non-Vietnamese fishermen, and others related to the fishing industry in Monterey, Moss Landing, and Santa Cruz Harbors. An integral part of the research process has been participation by project personnel with the Monterey Fishing Advisory Task Force and with local county government deliberations on issues concerning Vietnamese fishermen. Our focus was on the Indochinese as a group in the midst of a process of cultural and occupational adaptation. Such basic demographic information as the number of boats and their ownership financing was collected primarily from interviews with the Vietnamese themselves with assistance from IRAP staff members, Fish and Game officers, and the harbor masters. Immigration patterns and fishing activities were

described by the Vietnamese during interviews, as were aspects of Vietnamese community organization and other social and cultural factors. Information for impact on harbors, gear conflict and legal issues was gathered from a combination of Fish and Game authorities, harbor masters, IRAP staff, other local fishermen, local city and county government officials, and Vietnamese fishermen. Problems with fish buyer's reluctance to buy from Vietnamese were discussed with the buyers themselves, IRAP staff, and the Vietnamese.

This report will be followed by a complimentary work which will address the activities and perceptions of others besides the Vietnamese themselves who were involved in the situations we have described here. Taken together, these two reports will comprise as complete an explication as is possible in a six-month research time frame of the complex issues surrounding the adaptation of the Vietnamese to the fishing industry and community of Monterey Bay.

#### 1) Migration Patterns and Fishing Experience

A majority of the Vietnamese who are presently involved in independent fishing enterprises on the Bay left Vietnam between 1976 and 1978 on a fishing boat which they owned, or which belonged to a relative or a fellow fisherman. Most made their way to Malaysia, where they were eventually accepted into a refugee camp. Others were either picked up by American ships off the coast of Vietnam and sent directly to camps in the United States, or landed in another Southeast Asian country such as Hong Kong, Indonesia, or the Philippines. A few of those who presently own boats here came to the United States at various times over the last ten years to live with an American spouse or friend.

Those who tried to land their boats in Malaysia were usually turned away several times before being accepted into a refugee camp. Once in the camps, some fished by hand to feed their families and others worked at construction jobs and other forms of manual labor. Several Vietnamese to whom we talked estimated that a very high percentage (60-80%) of the refugees in their camps were fishermen and their families. A common aspiration was to immigrate to the United States and buy a boat so that they could fish for a living once again.

The period of time spent in these camps ranged from two to fourteen months. During this time many fishermen communicated with each other in their own camp as well as with those elsewhere in Asia and in the United States.

Communication networks were set up between Hong Kong, the United States, Japan, Malaysia, and other locations in order to locate friends or relatives. Magazine advertisements and word of mouth were two primary means for reaching other Vietnamese. About one-fifth of those now working on boats in Monterey Bay first met each other in refugee camps, and arrived here using networks such as these.

From Asian camps nearly all of the fishermen were sponsored to the United States through a large volunteer organization such as Catholic Welfare Services, Church World Service, and the United States Catholic Conference, or by individuals or private families. The stay, if any, in an American refugee camp was relatively brief, two months being the longest reported. A little over half of the sponsoring families in the U.S. were themselves Vietnamese, and well over two-thirds of these were friends and fellow fishermen of the refugee sponsored.

Once in the United States, the fishermen we interviewed were spread out between Florida, Texas, and California, a dispersal pattern common among

Indochinese refugees. Some were sponsored to areas such as Arkansas or Chicago, where the climate and other circumstances were much different than those to which the Vietnamese were accustomed, and where there were no opportunities to pursue their traditional livelihood as fishermen. In search of good fishing conditions and the companionship of other Vietnamese seamen, most made at least one move to another location within the United States before they began fishing in Monterey Bay. Through friends and relatives a fisherman learned of an area where there were other Vietnamese fishermen, such as Monterey. Several fishermen from the same location would then travel together to the new area to find work.

Those fishermen who immigrated directly to Monterey as well as those from other locations were sponsored by Vietnamese contacts and were introduced into the fishing industry here through them. Once in the area, a fisherman would often run into fishing mates from home, or would make the right connections with other Vietnamese fishermen to buy a boat or put together a crew. At this point the fisherman's family would leave the original sponsor and come to the new location, in this case Monterey.

About seventy-five percent of the Vietnamese fishing in Monterey Bay had some fishing experience in Vietnam. This experience varied from gill netting to trawling and longlining. The majority of the fishermen interviewed are from three major areas in Vietnam; Phan Thiet, Da Nang, and Saigon. Phan Thiet and Da Nang are major fishing provinces, and most of the fishermen from these areas had extensive fishing experience when they arrived in the United States. These men work as captains or crewmen on boats in Monterey Bay. Those from Saigon, who compose on-quarter of the fishermen interviewed, had relatively little or no fishing experience in Vietnam and are usually boat owners as opposed to skippers or crew here. Many have relatives and

friends in the fishing trade and buy boats as an investment, or to help provide fishing work for other Vietnamese. Having worked in the city of Saigon, these people usually speak more English and more of them make their principal living in the United States outside of fishing.

Throughout the process of immigration and resettlement in the United States, the Vietnamese fishermen have shown a general desire to live and work with other Vietnamese from the same home province in Vietnam. Over half of the boats in the Bay have two or more crewmen from the same province. There are several boats that are entirely owned and operated by Vietnamese from the same province, many of whom fished together in Vietnam.

Other provinces in Vietnam represented in Monterey Bay are Phouc Thinh and Rach Gia, both known for their fishing industries. The fishermen from Phouc Thinh tend to concentrate in squid fishing in Monterey. A common pathway for the Vietnamese fishermen in Monterey has been to start out working on an Italian-owned squid boat and eventually make enough money and contacts to buy a boat, or to begin fishing on a Vietnamese-owned boat. Two-thirds of those we interviewed had taken this pathway. Those from Phouc Thinh, however, have tended to remain on squid boats. Fishermen from Rach Gia usually work on Vietnamese-owned boats.

## 2) Levels of Participation in Fishing in Monterey

At present there are between one hundred and one hundred and twenty-five Vietnamese fishermen and boat owners in the Monterey Bay area. This is out of a total Vietnamese population of between 1,000 and 1,300, including women and children. The number of active fishermen at any given time, however, has been much smaller. In the month of August there were close to sixty Vietnamese actively fishing. In September this number declined to

forty. In any one day maybe no more than three to fifteen are actually fishing.

This indicates that not only do less than half of the Vietnamese fishermen actively fish in a given time period, but that at the moment the number is decreasing. Six months ago nearly seventy-five percent of the fishermen in the area were fishing. In September, the number was less than fifty percent.

Reports from the Vietnamese themselves indicate that poor gear, unreliable boats and boat engines, and poor seasons for halibut and kingfish are the reasons for this decline in participation. Many trips do not even cover expenses for fuel and maintenance of the boat, gear, and automobiles for a day's fishing, much less provide net income for the fishermen and their families. Increasingly, crew members have been staying at home and mending nets to prepare for the next trip, waiting for the reports on fishing conditions or success from other boats, reports which are often negative. Some Vietnamese have returned to school this Fall to study English. This and other non-fishing-related factors also account for the decline in the number of working fishermen over the last few months. The Vietnamese fishermen who are not presently fishing say that they are not dropping out of the industry permanently, and that if the catch improves they will return to fishing.

The Vietnamese own and operate approximately forty fishing boats out of Monterey Bay, with homeports equally divided between Monterey Harbor and Moss Landing. As with the number of fishermen, only about 15 boats out of the 40 are consistently in operation. Between Monterey and Moss Landing on any given day only one to five boats are actually taken out to fish. There has been a slight decline in the number of active boats in the past



six months, but not as much of a decline as there has been in the total number of fishermen. This observation as well as interview data indicate that fewer crewmen are available to work on each boat compared to two months ago. This increases the workload for those remaining, while economic returns are still not high enough to support even the reduced crews.

### 3) The Adaptation To Local Fishing Activity

The Vietnamese in Monterey have had to adapt not only to a different economic and cultural environment in the U.S., but also to a very different set of physical circumstances. The location of their boats and fishing activity is no longer in general proximity to their homes, as they tended to be for those who fished in Vietnam, is separated by anywhere from a few to hundreds of miles. Although the majority of the Indochinese-owned boats are located in Moss Landing and Monterey harbors, fishermen's residences are spread from Monterey north and east to San Jose, Sacramento, San Francisco and Berkeley. Even the largest local residential concentrations, in Marina and Seaside, are several miles distant from these harbors. This has altered the patterns of community interaction and family participation in the fishing enterprise, which in Vietnam were much more concentrated and interwoven. Thus, besides the affects on their fishing activity, this more dispersed living pattern has also altered the structure and content of general community interaction.

The first group of Vietnamese to arrive on the fishing scene in Monterey Bay came around 1975, and entered into the squid and anchovy fisheries as crewmen. Many of these fishermen have remained to become a stable labor force in these fisheries, especially in squid. To some extent they seem to have replaced fishermen from the local traditional fishing

community--predominately Italians--who have gone on to other occupations or whose children have elected not to go into fishing. The tendencies towards acculturation and upward mobility which are evident in many traditional fishing communities around the United States (Miller and Van Maanen, 1979) has created a need for experienced labor which, in certain sectors of the Monterey fishing industry, the Vietnamese are filling.

The fact that these first Vietnamese fishermen obtained crew positions rather than buying their own boats is significant. In other instances, such as the case in Seadrift, Texas, where a local fisherman was shot and killed in a dispute with a Vietnamese fisherman, part of the problem has been that the Indochinese have entered the industry with independent operations before they were aware of both the formal and the informal rules and patterns of the industry. In Seadrift, for example, pot-fishing for crabs is an important local fishery. Pot fishermen have their own territories, loose geographical areas where it is understood that one fisherman or group have preferential rights to set their gear. These territories are informal in that they are not written, registered, or legal boundaries of any kind, but are nonetheless very commonly understood and accepted in the operation of the fishery ( see Acheson, 1975 ). It is difficult for new entrants into the industry-- especially those who may not speak English--to learn about this kind of informal rule. In Monterey this problem has been largely avoided because the initial set of Vietnamese entered the fisheries as crewmen, which enabled them to socialize to the industry gradually.

The second group of Vietnamese to enter the fishery in large numbers, beginning around 1978, however, have purchased their own fishing boats. This group includes many fishermen completely new to the industry here and some, about 25%, new to fishing as an occupation. Most of these men have

purchased older pleasure boats in the 20-30 foot range, with gasoline engines. These boats were not built for commercial use, but are inexpensive and can be adapted for limited inshore fishing. They tend to have frequent mechanical and maintenance problems, which has limited the continuity of the Vietnamese operations over time. With the specific gear used by the Vietnamese aboard, and combined with congregation in certain docking locations, these boats are a visually distinct segment of the fishing fleet in the two harbors.

These 'second wave' Vietnamese originally fished virtually exclusively for a species of white croaker called 'kingfish'. Kingfish is not a popular market species on the west coast or in the United States in general, and their trade has in the past been limited to small volumes sold to specialty markets. Kingfish are found in sandy bottom areas, and the fishery for them is somewhat seasonal. The fish appear to move around over the course of the year, and some local non-Vietnamese fishermen use kingfish fishing as primarily a winter supplement to their other fishing activities. In the last year the Vietnamese have begun to fish for halibut, a high-value market species which is strictly seasonal and which is also highly prized by other local fishermen. The conflictual aspects of this situation will be discussed below.

The independent Vietnamese boats fish predominately with gillnets; nets made of monofilament or woven mesh which are anchored to the sea bottom and held open by corks or floats along the top of the net and weights along the bottom. Although they are among the most internationally-prevalent fishing gears, gillnets enjoy a mixed reputation in the United States. They are non-selective in that they ensnare not only all species of fish, but--when not used very carefully--also starfish and other bottom dwellers, and occasionally marine mammals and birds. Because they are made of synthetic

material they are susceptible to what is called the 'ghost net' phenomenon; lost or torn netting which catches fish indefinitely after being lost, thus wasting them, or otherwise creating a nuisance for the environment, fishermen, and the general public alike.

The Vietnamese use gill nets for several reasons. First, it is a method with which many of them are familiar from Vietnam. Second, it is a gear which does not demand other specialized gear such as winches, expensive tackle, or large vessels to use. Third, it is a relatively inexpensive gear although it is possible to invest large amounts of money in gillnets depending on the size and extent of the fishing operation. Finally, it is a gear which allows the Vietnamese to stay out of direct competition with most U.S. fishermen while at the same time taking species of fish which cater to the Indochinese cuisine and tastes.

There are several significant differences in fishing style between Vietnamese and other U.S. fishermen. With respect to the use of the gillnet gear, the Vietnamese typically set out two to three times the length of net at a time than do U.S. fishermen. There are two reasons for this. First, they simply reason that the more net, the more fish. Local fishermen claim that the amounts of net the Vietnamese put out at one time are far too great to be handled or fished effectively. It is not clear how much of this is substantive criticism, and how much is reaction to a use of the gear which breaks U.S. 'tradition' regarding net length. Second, it is common for Vietnamese boats and gear to be owned by several owners, or to be fished by individuals who are fishing not only for themselves but in the interests of a long chain of friends, relatives or investors. Thus the catch must often be distributed among many families or individuals, and the large size of the nets is sometimes attributed to the larger number of people who have

an interest in the catch. This is compared to most U.S. fishing, where the tendency is for one fishing unit to support only the nuclear families of an owner, skipper and crew.

Other differences have to do with what we will term the 'ethos' of fishing. There is some resentment of the Indochinese fishermen, also noted in other occupations and locations, which stems from the fact that they spend more continuous time and effort in the fishing endeavor than many local fishermen. This is typified by the story from an interview of the Vietnamese crewman who arrived at a crew job which entailed an overnight cruise without a sleeping bag. When asked about this, he replied that when he was at sea he fished; he slept at home. The skipper informed him that on his boat they slept at night and fished during the day. The Vietnamese viewed this as wasted fishing time. The Vietnamese are known here for fishing in bad weather, when other fishermen with comparable size boats consider it too rough to go out of the harbor. One Vietnamese boat went down in such conditions in Monterey bay, with the loss of the three crewmen. Some local fishermen have remarked that the Vietnamese just work too hard.

Ethos also includes such items as boat handling and maintenance. Most of the Vietnamese have different knowledge and standards of equipment maintenance, cosmetic condition, and on-the-water etiquette from many U.S. fishermen. Their boats sometimes lack the safety equipment considered mandatory in the U.S. Local fishermen not only in California but also in other areas where the Indochinese have entered the fishing industry ( see Star, 1980 ) have complained that Vietnamese are not careful about excessive boat speeds in close quarters with other boats, waiting in proper order in line at gas docks, avoiding bumping between boats, and other inter-vessel interactions. These stylistic differences can easily become accentuated,

and can lead to a perception of the Vietnamese as not only different people but also as bad fishermen. These differences tend to diminish rapidly over time as interaction among the groups increases, with some exceptions as we will note below.

Still other differences have to do with the 'technological set' of the Vietnamese. They have a tendency to be very flexible in adapting to new equipment and techniques unfettered by convention, to the point where local fishermen poke fun at the "weird" boat and gear configurations used by the Vietnamese. They use a good deal of implements and material which would not generally be considered "marine" by local fishermen such as rocks and other heavy objects instead of conventional anchors for their nets, and the appearance and demeanor of the Vietnamese fishermen themselves does not fit many peoples' concept of "seamenlike". The Vietnamese, on the other hand, in interviews expressed the opinion that U.S. fishermen appear to them to depend much more on expensive equipment rather than fishing skill to catch their fish. These are two sides of the coin: Local fishermen perceiving the Vietnamese as seat-of-the-pants fishermen, and Vietnamese perceiving the locals as overly-technological at the expense of traditional skills. We will say more about this later.

Although they have nationality in common, the Vietnamese fishermen in the Monterey area have not developed a recognizable internal organization. As we have pointed out, there are between 100 and 125 Vietnamese fishermen and from 30 to 40 Vietnamese boats operating at various times out of Monterey Bay harbors, but the number of participants at any one time varies considerably. The Vietnamese, at this stage in their settlement into U.S. communities, are still fairly mobile, searching out friends, family, jobs, desirable

locations, and so on. Both individual fishermen and boats will come into the bay and leave again, sometimes from as far away as the Gulf of Mexico. Although there is a growing stable core, both in the community in general and in the fishing industry, this fluidity has been another impediment to the organization of the Vietnamese fishing enterprise.

Most of the regular Vietnamese fishermen go out fishing 3 or 4 times a week. Their dependence on kingfish has limited them compared with other fishermen who spread their dependence over several species and even several gear types. A few of the Vietnamese, those with commercial-type boats or greater fishing experience, fish more often and venture further--as far south as Santa Barbara. This, also, has contributed to the inability of the Vietnamese fishermen to get together as a group; their residential dispersion combined with fishing absences and in-and-out migration from the community as a whole.

#### 4. Community Organization

The majority of the Vietnamese who fish out of the Monterey Bay Area live in Marina. The second largest number live in Seaside. Only about seven percent of those in our sample live in the Monterey/Pacific Grove area.

A surprising number of these fishermen, however, live outside of the Monterey area entirely. Twenty percent live in San Jose and other distant locations such as Stockton, Oakland, and Sacramento. These fishermen commute in car pools to Monterey Bay to fish, and they fish as often as the Vietnamese who live in the area. This increases the time and cost involved in a day's work for those who commute, and also means that they have less access to their boats when they need repair. It is also more difficult for them to obtain weather reports and other fishing information.

Many of the fishermen, especially those who live in San Jose, have or aspire to have second jobs to supplement their fishing. Because most Vietnamese have been finding it difficult to support their families in fishing alone this year, some have looked for work or training in construction or electronics. San Jose and the San Francisco Bay area offer more opportunity in these fields, and more employment opportunities in general than the Monterey Bay area. Thus fairly even numbers of captains, owners, and crewmen live in San Jose or Oakland and commute to Monterey or Moss Landing to fish. We have already noted some of the effects of this dispersal as compared to the relatively close proximity of the communities in Vietnam.

Wherever the general location, the Vietnamese fishermen and their families usually live in rented houses or apartments which are widely dispersed. Each household usually consists of an extended family which may include cousins or brothers who are also fishermen. It is common for one or two other single fishermen to be sharing the home as well. These are generally men who have no family or whose family is elsewhere, and who are invited to join the household.

As we mentioned earlier, it is common for fishermen from the same provincial area in Vietnam to find one another here and often to work together on the same boat. Households also tend to be made up of fishermen from the same area in Vietnam. Those fishermen living in the same house who are from different home towns usually work on the same boat.

Common origin in Vietnam, or working on the same boat also forms a basis for wider social grouping. Sharing similar memories and losses, and in some cases having known one another in Vietnam or having escaped together creates close bonds which also contribute to the formation of social groups. At least three of these wider social groups exist in the Monterey Bay fishing community, which we shall label the Da Nang, Phan Thiet, and Phouc Tinh social groups, or



"Nhom." Frequent social gatherings, an internal network for communication about fishing conditions, and mutual support in the fishing trade are characteristics of the "Nhom." Each has a central figure who is well respected for his experience and expertise as a fisherman. The group leader may have a strong influence on other fishermen's technique, or on where, when, and with whom they fish as well as on their non-fishing activity.

Another aspect of the Vietnamese fishermen's community is multisource economic interdependence. For example, when money is needed to repair a boat engine a fisherman may ask for and receive assistance from a number of family members, friends, and fellow fishermen. Such assistance may be in the form of informal loans or gifts which do not have to be paid back, which create an obligation to give the same or similar assistance if the economic situation is reversed. Such reciprocity is also found in the exchange of human effort such as labor in boat repair or fishing.

The fishermen frequently move from town to town and occasionally from household to household depending on fishing conditions and the availability of working boats, and the cooperative household arrangement facilitates this mobility. They may stay at a friend or relative's home indefinitely. This happens when fishermen living in San Jose come to the Monterey area to fish for several days, or occasionally when a fisherman from Monterey moves temporarily to another part of the state to go to school. Several boats have tried fishing in the Morro Bay and Santa Barbara areas in the past several months. In these cases the crew will stay with friends in the area or on the boat.

The women and children of Vietnamese fishermen generally remain in the home, and seldom leave their hometown. In Vietnam fishermen's wives were often involved in fishing activities, especially in marketing. About half of the men interviewed said that in Vietnam their wives helped sell the fish either

when it was brought to shore and sold to dealers or sold in the market place. Women and children would also help mend nets at home. Here, women and children do not actively participate in fishing as they did in Vietnam. They remain in the home to care for their children and cook. When asked why this change in family involvement in the trade, the fishermen generally said that the women do not have time, and the children are busy in school and do not want to help as much. Also, there are fewer extended family members living in the household to care for the children here than there were in Vietnam. Transportation is another factor. All of the families we visited lived out of walking distance from the harbor from which their husbands fished.

In Vietnam, fishermen generally devote a strong lifelong commitment to the fishing trade. One's fathers and grandfathers were fishermen, making fishing an integral part of one's personal, family, and community identity. Many of the men we interviewed told us that even if they must look for another job to support their families when fishing is down, they would always return to the fishing trade when the catch improved. Even though nearly two-thirds of the boats whose crewmen we talked to lost money on most of the days they have fished in the past two months, the desire to fish, to try to support one's family in the trade, appears to be stronger than the felt need for profit alone. As one interviewee explained, "fishing is our way of life, we want to fish!"

## 5) Special Issues

### a. Associations and Organizations

There are a number of associations and organizations formed in the past year in the Monterey Bay area as a result of the recent influx of Vietnamese fishermen. All of these are interrelated, and were inspired either directly or indirectly by the Indochinese Resettlement Assistance Program (IRAP) in Seaside. IRAP itself was formed two and one-half years ago as an extension of the Social Planning Council of San Jose. It was funded primarily through the

International Center in San Jose. IRAP is a non-profit organization with the purpose of providing services to the Indochinese community in the Monterey Bay area such as job and family counseling, health services, and general liaison with community resources. As of September, 1980, IRAP has become an independent non-profit organization supported by local funds as originally planned by the Social Planning Council of San Jose. It is now titled the Refugee Services Program of the Monterey Bay Counties.

In addition to offering various social services, IRAP provided monthly Advisory Board meetings made up of Indochinese refugees, some IRAP staff members, and concerned members of the community. The purpose of the board meetings were to discuss needs of and issues involving Indochinese refugees.

As the Vietnamese community grew, discussion topics at the Advisory Board meetings became too numerous and diverse for one general meeting. This resulted in the formation of the Indochinese Community Forum. The Forum began meeting in January of 1980. Its main focus was on issues external to the IRAP organization such as employment and the Vietnamese and fishing. The Advisory Board then began to concentrate its attention solely on IRAP's internal affairs. The Advisory Board and the Community Forum each met every other alternate month. During the Spring of 1980 the Vietnamese population began to grow much more rapidly than before, coincident with an increase in fishing activity at the beginning of the halibut season. To meet the rapidly developing need for better communication among the Vietnamese and agencies, and the larger community, the Fishing Advisory Task Force was formed. The Task Force was suggested and organized by several IRAP Community Forum members, and had its first meeting in June, 1980. Its meetings are once a month, and so far it is the most widely attended Vietnamese-related organization of all with representatives from IRAP, Fish and Game, the University of California, the

Monterey and Moss Landing fishing associations, the Squid Captains Association, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Marine Advisory Program, the Harbor Masters and the Vietnamese fishing community. Task force meetings have focused on fishing laws and regulations, the airing of grievances among the different groups, and the discussion of potential conflict situations.

The Vietnamese Fishing Association (VFA) was established on May third, 1980, by three prominent members of the Vietnamese fishing community. Its formation was inspired, again, by a staff member of IRAP, and by the death of three Vietnamese fishermen in a sinking incident in March. The initial purpose of the VFA was to organize to help prevent fishing accidents, and perhaps to facilitate group fishing efforts.

The Vietnamese Fishing Association has to date, however, not been successful for several reasons. An initial attempt at organizing to boycott local fish buyers and negotiate prices failed in late Spring. The number of Vietnamese-owned boats on the Bay was still increasing and by June it was clear that the halibut season was not going to be very plentiful. Coupled with the low price per pound the fishermen were receiving, and undependable buying interests on the part of the dealers, VFA members became disillusioned with the possibilities and usefulness of their efforts. The Association met twice during the summer and is now dormant.

#### b. Gear Conflicts

As we have pointed out, the predominate gear used by the Vietnamese are set gillnets. Gillnets, like many other fishing gears, are suited to particular species and particular physical and environmental conditions. In Monterey Bay, gillnets are used for kingfish, halibut, and to a lesser extent for bottomfish (snapper, etc.). The traditional pattern of gillnet setting

is perpendicular to the shoreline, across the current which runs along the shore. They are used mostly in sandy, flat bottom areas. Rocky areas, reefs, or areas with large amounts of kelp or particularly strong currents make most gillnet fishing impractical.

At the onset of the Vietnamese fishing, a problem arose over the marking of the nets. California law requires that gillnets be marked at each end of the net by a float with a flag attached. These flags must be marked with the fishing license number of the fisherman. There were several complaints by local fishermen that the Vietnamese were not marking their nets at all; that they were marking only one end; that the length of the nets made it impossible under most sea conditions to see one flag from the other end of the net; or that the nets had bouys but no markings. All of these marking problems existed to some degree in the first months of the Vietnamese fishery, but have tended to correct themselves over time.

Set gillnets are a fixed gear. They are stationary on the bottom, and as such are always a potential hazard for mobile fishing gear such as troll lines or trawl nets, both of which are pulled through the water. Because of different fishing depths and locations the Vietnamese gillnets have not been a problem for trawlers, but in the Spring of 1980 there was a great deal of concern over the potential conflict between the gillnetters and the salmon trollers. Salmon appear in Monterey Bay in the Spring, and the trollers trail their lines through the water at varying depths wherever they see or expect salmon. These locations vary from year to year, as the anadromous salmon follow different routes back to their spawning streams. Many of these routes cross gillnet fishing areas.

The Monterey Fishing Advisory Task Force discussed this problem at its first meetings, and urged the Monterey Indochinese Resettlement Assistance

Program to advise the Vietnamese fishermen of the potential conflict. The Task Force representatives from the three local commercial fishermen's associations were asked to perform the same function for their members. As a result of these actions in combination with fish stock movements which resulted in the gillnetters fishing inshore while the salmon trollers generally stayed in deeper water, there was negligible conflict between these two fisheries in 1980.

There was some conflict, however, between the Vietnamese and other gillnetters. Some of this conflict was territorial; the informal precedence of "rights" which we mentioned above. Other aspects of the conflict were physical. The Vietnamese, unused to or ignorant of the current and other environmental conditions in the bay set their nets in configurations other than perpendicular to the shore. This caused a few reported incidents of the Vietnamese setting across or over other fishermen's nets. As the Vietnamese learn both the environmental conditions of the bay and the informal rules regarding territories and local gear setting patterns, these types of conflict have also tended to subside.

Some residual feeling on the part of local fishermen concerning what they term "gear conflict" is due to the general phenomenon we noted above of the difference in fishing styles and technologies between the Vietnamese and the locals. In addition to adapting their techniques to a new environment, many of the Vietnamese are admittedly novices, or men with experience primarily in fishing techniques other than gillnetting. Some portion of the discussions of conflict on the bay were expressions of fear or uncertainty regarding the general skill and knowledge of the Vietnamese and the potential impacts of these factors, rather than actual experience with direct conflict.

In general, the adherence of the Vietnamese to gillnet fishing has precluded

their involvement in many gear conflict problems which arise in Monterey Bay Fisheries in the normal course of operations irrespective of the Vietnamese, such as trawl-pot conflicts. Within the Vietnamese community itself, there is an expressed intent to avoid any such conflict.

c. Sanctuary Areas

Three areas in Monterey Bay--off Santa Cruz, Carmel/Monterey and Point Lobos--are designated as preserve or sanctuary areas where fishing is restricted. During late July and early August, 1980, several Vietnamese fishermen were cited by enforcement officers of the California Department of Fish and Game for fishing in these areas. While no citations have been issued since that time, the July-August citations contributed significantly to the impressions of local fishermen and others about the Vietnamese. The situation also pointed out some interesting aspects of the process and problems of Vietnamese adaptation to the environment, industry, and community.

A much-debated question is whether or not the Vietnamese fishermen had prior knowledge of these areas, and the restriction on fishing activity involved with each. During a course offered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary in Monterey during the Spring of 1980, which was conducted through a translator, the sanctuaries were mentioned by a CDF & G Officer but the subject was evidently not addressed in detail and many of the Vietnamese present did not recall their mention at all. In any case, the Vietnamese appeared to be largely ignorant of the ramifications of fishing in these areas, if not of the existence of the sanctuaries themselves. The areas are not physically marked. They do not appear on standard navigational charts. When local fishermen were questioned about how they acquired their knowledge of the sanctuary areas, they consistently replied that they had learned to avoid them by word of mouth and common knowledge, a method which would have been very

difficult for the Vietnamese to use given their language differences, their short time in the area, and their general lack of contact with other local fishermen. CDF & G does have xeroxed maps of the sanctuary areas, but these are not generally available. Some of these areas are set forth in the CDF & G's Digest of California Commercial Fish Laws; others are not, and information about them must be obtained separately. Even in the Digest, the information about what may or may not be done, and where and when, is not easy to extract for an English-reader and nearly impossible for a non-reader. The boundaries given are in some cases compass courses and depth lines; most of the Vietnamese do not have compasses or depthfinders on their boats. Some of the compass courses are true courses, and some are magnetic which means that a 17<sup>o</sup> correction must be made in Monterey Bay to correctly identify the prohibited areas. There are many such nuances.

The larger point, however, is that even though these difficulties were present, and even though there have been only isolated citations after the original batch, the incident as a whole left its mark on the general community perceptions concerning the abilities and motives of the Vietnamese, perceptions which on many points were quite incorrect.

#### d. Gillnets and Attitudes Towards the Environment

As we pointed out above, gillnets are not a popular gear in the U.S. Many of the reasons for this have been born out in Monterey with the Vietnamese. There have been incidents of Vietnamese gillnets taking large quantities of starfish, isolated instances of large numbers of marine birds becoming entangled in the nets, and general problems with undersized or out of season fish being taken. Virtually all of these problems can be overcome by experience in the Monterey Bay environment. The local gillnetters know the seasons and locations



where one can fish to avoid these kinds of bycatch problems. When the locals make a haul with starfish, for example, or when they see marine birds or mammals in the area, they immediately change their location. The Vietnamese are adapting to these methods, but the problem is somewhat deeper than simple methodological mimicry.

There is a general pattern on the west coast of Indochinese transgression of U.S. cultural norms concerning the use of coastal environments; families "capturing" wild birds in San Francisco parks for food, harvesting tidal organisms in Southern California, and so on. In Vietnam, many of the refugees lived in a much closer relationship to land and aquatic subsistence resources than the vast majority of Americans. As one of our Vietnamese co-workers told us, most of the under-30 refugees have lived their entire lives in a constant state of war in their home countries. Many of them lived on what they harvested themselves; they did not go into the local supermarket for oranges from Florida or beef from Kansas. They fished, farmed, and obtained their goods from relatively local market areas. While they have in most instances adapted quickly to the new social and economic context of the U.S., to fully adapt one must not only learn the behaviors themselves but also develop a grasp of the underlying logic of the system--of the "culture" in the broad sense--which drives Americans.

A good example of this relates back to the sanctuary problem, and to the general cultural relationship between different groups of people and their environment. When the issue of the sanctuary areas came up we discussed the topic with several Vietnamese. In explaining the sanctuary concept, we said that these were areas where certain species or environments were protected either because of a history of over-use or for some specific valued activity such as recreation. When questioned by them about the need for the

Santa Cruz sanctuary area specifically, we replied that one of the original reasons for the sanctuary was to protect breeding grounds for sardines.

Aware that there has not been a sardine fishery in the bay for 25 years, they asked what was being protected now. We explained that in addition to specific protection motives, some sanctuary areas existed as part of the preferences of a sector of the U.S. citizenry who were in favor of reserving much of the marine environment for non-commercial use, in some cases as symbols of their cause. Although the Vietnamese are becoming increasingly familiar with this line of reasoning, it is still extremely difficult for many of them to convert from a consumptive to a non-consumptive orientation towards the environment. This is not to say that the Vietnamese do not practice conservation techniques; in fact they have their own detailed perceptions of ways to ensure continuity and viability of the resources upon which they must depend. Those perceptions, however, are keyed to the Vietnamese rather than the California coastal environment, and to a clearly different use ethic.

All of these factors combine into a cultural differential much of which is reflected in the Vietnamese applications of their primary gear to date in the U.S.--the gillnet. As they branch out into other areas, species, and gears, these differences too will erode.

e. Pressure on an Already-taxed Fishing Industry

In many ways the influx of Vietnamese fishermen could not have come at a worse time in terms of the situation of the U.S. commercial fishing industry. Although the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 has assisted in slowing foreign fishing in U.S. waters within 200 miles of our shores, there are significant pressures pushing in on industry participants. Many fisheries, including some in California, are already overcrowded by new entrants and by evolving technologies which put more effort into the fisheries even with the same number of units and fishermen. At the same time that new laws and regulations have eased competition from foreigners on the fishing grounds, U.S. fishermen have been placed under increasingly restrictive management regimes by those same laws. Imports of foreign fishery products have made inroads on U.S. markets, and the consuming public in the U.S. has been slow to respond to new fish products and product forms offered by U.S. fishermen. Habitat degradation from industrial development and competition for space and resources from recreational and other interests have affected the biological and infrastructural aspects of the fisheries. In Monterey Bay in particular, there has been an influx of boats from outside the state and from other areas of California which has taxed the local fishery resources and markets.

It is in the midst of all of these pressures that the Indochinese fishermen have arrived on the scene. Aside from the specific issues and conflicts which have arisen, this general situation has colored much of the interaction between the Indochinese and other local fishermen.

f. Language

Language is a major problem the Vietnamese are facing. Eighty-five percent of the fishermen we interviewed did not speak English. Of the people we talked

to who had not fished in Vietnam, many said they entered the trade here because there were many other Vietnamese seamen in the U.S., and language was not a barrier to quick entry into the profession. A Vietnamese can use his own language with other members of the crew, and therefore does not have to struggle with a new language while learning to support his family and adjust to a new culture. Language problems arise, however, even in fishing. Many fishermen cannot communicate effectively with fish dealers in English, therefore making it almost impossible to negotiate price or understand a dealer's decision as to whether or not he will buy.

In general, boat owners and common origin social group leaders are the principle communicators with the world outside of the Vietnamese community. These men and women usually speak English and have lived in the United States long enough to be comfortable in American society. Some of the boat owners we talked to had not fished in Vietnam, but invested in the industry here mainly to help other Vietnamese fishermen, who did not speak English, support themselves.

g. Boat Financing

Vietnamese boat financing has been an area of general interest and concern among the non-Vietnamese who are involved in the fishing industry in Monterey Bay. There is a strong general impression that the Vietnamese are receiving special attention from government agencies in granting or subsidizing loans for building or buying boats.

This is in fact not the case. Most of the Vietnamese boats are financed by a pattern of capital accumulation which involves pooling money earned in squid fishing or work outside the fishing industry with contributions and loans from other members of the community. For example, one boat was purchased last winter by two Vietnamese. One had saved the capital from a

construction job held previously in Texas, and the other had squid fished in Monterey for part of the capital and borrowed the rest of the money for his share from three friends in the Vietnamese community. At the time of purchase the boat and engine were in need of repair. The owners and several family members and friends worked together to restore the boat, each contributing his particular skill of either carpentry, mechanics or net making. After four months of joint effort, the boat was first taken out fishing in June. This type of community involvement is typical of the purchasing and upkeep pattern for the majority of the Vietnamese-owned fishing boats whose histories we traced. Co-ownership is a common phenomenon. At least five of the Vietnamese-owned boats presently fishing in the Bay are owned by two or more people.

We know of only one case where a bank loan was used to purchase a boat. In this case, the owner was the Vietnamese wife of an American serviceman not involved in fishing directly and the loan was not subsidized. This pattern, the Vietnamese wife of an American who buys a boat as an investment which is then fished by someone else to lend a hand to the Vietnamese community, is also common. We found five such cases.

#### h. Impact on Harbors

The increasing number of Vietnamese fishing boats in the Monterey Bay has had a significant impact on Moss Landing and Monterey harbors. The most visible effect has simply been over-crowding of the docks and harbor areas. Many Vietnamese fishermen left their boats tied to the end of a dock or pier, or in areas such as the sea wall which separates Wharf 1 from Wharf 2 in Monterey. This area has generated particular concern from other local fishermen and other interests in Monterey harbor. Aside from this sea wall area's high visibility, it is also a boat launching area. Three to five small boats at a time tied to the Monterey sea wall is considered an obstruction

to boat launching as well as to boat traffic in the harbor. It is also considered an untidy eyesore and detrimental to local tourist business. The Vietnamese who own these boats originally simply did not see the harm in mooring there; now many believe there is no other practical choice because of recent incidents of vandalism in other parts of Monterey Harbor.

Incidents related to gas engines have also created hazards in the harbors. Because of the age and condition of the majority of the Vietnamese owned boats, their engines are unreliable and frequently malfunction. In addition, nearly all of the Vietnamese fishermen we interviewed were accustomed to working with diesel powered engines in Vietnam, and have very little knowledge of or experience with gas engines. Inappropriate care and misuse coupled with the engine's age has lead to two engine explosions within Monterey Harbor. This has created substantial concern by both harbor officials and boat owners.

The proper place for unloading fish has also been an issue for fishermen and harbor officials. Before the Vietnamese arrived on the scene, druggers working for Moss Landing dealers and independent salmon fishermen who fished out of the harbor delivered fish directly to the dealers. All fish brought into the harbor were sold to Moss Landing dealers. When the Vietnamese began to fish in the Monterey Bay they were not aware of this dealer-fishermen agreement, and unloaded their fish on the docks. In addition, local dealers were reluctant to buy fish from the Vietnamese, as discussed in the next section, which made it necessary for them to transport their catch to dealers elsewhere through the docks.

As more and more Vietnamese began working out of Moss Landing and unloading on the docks, some local salmon fishermen began to unload their fish on the docks also, and transport it out of the harbor. Eventually it was brought to the attention of the Harbor Master by other harbor users

that the Vietnamese were "illegally" using the docks as a loading area, and that they should be stopped. As local authorities investigated the issue, however, it was found that no such law prohibiting the unloading of fish on the docks existed.

The results of the whole affair are ongoing. At the present time harbor officials are planning to make unloading fish on the docks illegal in fact. If this does happen, and Moss Landing dealers continue to refuse to buy fish from Vietnamese fishermen, the Vietnamese may not be able to use the harbor for commercial fishing at all.

There has also been considerable social impact of the recent influx of Indo-Chinese fishermen on the Monterey Bay harbors. Some local fishermen appear threatened by the presence of more competition on the Bay, especially during an overall low catch season. Over half of the Vietnamese interviewed said they had been watched and occasionally approached on the docks by beligerant local fishermen. Those who speak English told us that local fishermen would accuse them of catching illegal fish, and make derogatory statements about their fishing methods and gear. They were also stopped by local fishermen on the docks who checked their fish or had called a Fish and Game officer down to do so. The general attitude on the part of the Vietnamese is that they are being unfairly discriminated against by these fishermen because of ethnic differences and competition for fish. We will discuss this further presently.

i. Buyer's Reluctance

Some Monterey fish dealers have been reluctant to buy fish from the Vietnamese. Part of this is due to the belief that Vietnamese fishermen often

sell their catch directly to local retailers, circumventing the buyers. When asked if this is true, the fishermen explained that the few times they have sold directly to local retailers has been when they caught less than fifty pounds by hook and line, which was considered too little to bring to the dealers to sell.

Some buyers are also reluctant to deal with the Vietnamese because they believe this may upset other local fishermen with whom they have more established relationships. As we pointed out, many of those fishermen consider the new influx of Indochinese fishermen as competition for fish and for markets. The local kingfish market is at present small, and there is evidence that increased Vietnamese catches have contributed to a decrease in kingfish prices over the last few months. Further south in California, buyers in Morro Bay and Monterey claim they have been warned not to buy from Vietnamese fishermen by anonymous callers. They did not know who had made these warnings, but the implication was that dealing with the Vietnamese may result in some form of violence. Fish dealers in Moss Landing have refused to buy from the Vietnamese altogether. The reasons given are a lack of interest in buying kingfish or halibut except from the company's own draggers. Some said they were concerned over their relationship with other local fishermen.

From the point of view of the Vietnamese, Monterey Bay fish dealers are undependable. Those interviewed said that they never knew for sure whether the dealer would buy on any given day. The price paid for fish is also described as highly unstable. The Vietnamese find this kind of fluctuation and unreliability distressing. They explained that in Vietnam, demand for fish was so great that they could always sell everything they caught and at a negotiable price.



j. Vandalism, Harrassment, and Anti-Vietnamese Sentiment

Beginning in late July, reports began to appear concerning vandalism of Vietnamese fishing equipment. Claims were made by Vietnamese that the floats had been cut from their nets, or the nets themselves moved or damaged. In that same month, three Vietnamese were stopped by two local non-Vietnamese fishermen as the Vietnamese left the dock with a box of fish they had just taken off their boat. The non-Vietnamese took the box out of the back of the Vietnamese's truck, opened the box, and proceeded to look for violations of the California Fish and Game laws. They found what they claimed were violations, and detained the Vietnamese while they called the police. A representative from the Monterey IRAP happened on the scene, and summoned California Department of Fish and Game personnel, who found that while some of the fish -- specifically crabs -- in the box constituted a minor out-of-season infraction, that the majority of the charges by the non-Vietnamese were unfounded. There were, however, a range of civil rights issues raised concerning the incident which are yet to be resolved through the courts.

Although direct confrontations of this sort have been almost non-existent, there has been a steadily increasing amount of documented vandalism and harrassment against the Vietnamese throughout the fall: several nets cut in the water; one net, worth approximately \$3,000, stolen off a boat moored in Monterey Harbor; several boats cut loose from their moorings during the night; telephone threats against gas docks and buyers who traded with Vietnamese in Morro Bay and Port San Luis, where some of the Monterey-based Vietnamese had taken their boats temporarily in search of better fishing; and one vessel sinking

which many Vietnamese attribute to sabotage. An odd feature of the trend in these incidents is that they appeared to increase significantly around October, when the number of Vietnamese actively fishing had decreased significantly, and when any direct fishery-related conflict between Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese fishermen appeared to be at a minimum.

Because of this lack of correlation with other factors, the trend itself is most disturbing. What started in mid-Summer as minor vandalism, an isolated vigilante-like incident, and industry parochialism may now, unfortunately, be evolving into potentials for more serious conflict and clearer cases of harassment and discrimination.

### SUMMARY

The work reported here is the first step in the documentation of the adaptation of the Indo-Chinese refugees to the fishing industry and community of Monterey Bay. It is now being supplemented by a continuation project which will address specifically the role of the various non-Vietnamese sectors of the industry and community in the adaptation process. This companion work will be performed in the same manner as that reported here: Through interviews with representative elements of the non-Vietnamese sectors, and other primary and secondary source data collection.

Although our work to date has yielded only very preliminary results, several points stand out:

- Many of the Indo-Chinese refugees who have arrived, and will continue to arrive in Monterey -- and probably in California and the U.S. as a whole -- have backgrounds in fishing as not only an occupation but also as a family and community lifestyle.
- The fishing techniques, tastes and preferences for fishery products, perceptions of proper uses of the marine environment, and marketing practices of the Vietnamese differ in many significant ways from those indigenous to Monterey Bay and perhaps, once again, to California and the U.S. as a whole.
- The Vietnamese, although their community is not a thoroughly homogeneous one, have attempted to adapt to the resources, constraints, and patterns of the U.S. fisheries in ways which produced the minimum amount of conflict between them and non-Vietnamese fishermen.

- Aside from a fairly small segment -- as yet unidentified -- of the non-Vietnamese who are responsible for vandalism and similar acts, and certain buyers whose behavior appears to be discriminatory, most of the local agencies such as the Harbor Master's offices, the California Department of Fish and Game, and most local fishermen have tried actively to assist the Indo-Chinese in their adaptation.

- Rumor and misinformation, exacerbated by language and cultural differences, have contributed significantly to the reaction of Monterey Bay residents to the appearance and activities of the Vietnamese, and to the difficulties the Vietnamese themselves have had in learning and adapting to both the formal, legal rules and informal practices which govern the fishing industry and community.

While this pilot project has addressed some of the social, economic, and cultural aspects of these situations, a sustained, indepth effort will be required to document these aspects and their role in what promises to be a continually increasing level of participation by Indo-Chinese immigrants in U.S. fishing industries.

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