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RED FLAGS AND LACE COIFFES: THE POLITICS OF SURVIVAL IN THE BIGOUDENNIE, FRANCE

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

Red Flags and Lace Coiffes: The Politics of Survival in the Bigoudennie France

by

Charles R. Menzies

Advisor: Professor Gerald M. Sider

This dissertation is ultimately concerned with how family-based fishing enterprises continue in the face of what seem to be overwhelming odds. It is based on a historical ethnography of the fishers -skippers, crews and their families who make the Bigouden region in France their home. While I am concerned with all Bigouden fishers, this analysis is primarily directed toward the skipper/boatowners and the manner through and by which this group of the 'productive' petty-bourgeoisie organize their enterprises in a struggle to survive in the face of a massive social transformation of commercial fishing in Europe. The research from which this dissertation draws was conducted during the periods of September to November, 1993, October 1994 to November 1995, and November, 1997.

For Gilly with Love

List of Tables and Figures

Preface

Before leaving Vancouver for France in 1992 I prepared a list of possible sites in which fishing would be the primary economic activity. I was looking for an area with a small to medium sized fishing fleet operated by family enterprises. Due to my theoretical interest in social reproduction and small-scale producers, I immediately ruled out industrial ports such as Boulogne and Lorient. Instead, I concentrated on visiting the many small and out of the way fishing villages that are spread along the Breton coast between St Malo in the north and Vannes in the south.

As I toured the coast many fishers were already talking about the developing crisis. They complained of poor fish prices, declining catches, and non-E.C. fish imports. A major fishing co-operative had been forced to reorganize and consolidate its processing facilities due to economic exigency, in the process nearly 100 workers were terminated. Fishing skippers were having difficulties paying their boat-mortgages. The families of crewmembers had begun the process of economizing in the home.

Though the problems seemed to be wide spread, it was in the artisanal[1] fishing ports of the Bigoudennie[2] that the problems seemed the most acute. This is so for two reasons. Firstly, fishing forms the economic base of the region. Changes in fishing revenue reverberate throughout the local economy. Secondly, and more importantly, the artisanal character of fishing in the Bigoudennie ensured that crisis would be earlier and more intensely felt than in the industrial fisheries due to the importance of extended networks of kin and family in the fishery.

My impressions of the "field" are vicariously recorded in my notebooks, files and, more graphically, in the family photos I took during my stay, with my wife and small boy, in the Bigoudennie. Glancing through our family albums, I see the passage of fourteen odd months in Brittany recorded from the perspective of the everyday life of a family. These photos mark the events, trips, birthdays, guests, anniversaries and other everyday moments of parenthood and family. The place, that is to

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[1] Artisanal here refers to a technical term used by the French to designate a specific class of fishing enterprises: boats under 24 meters in length, not owned by an incorporated firm.

[2] The Bigoudennie is the top-ranked artisanal fishing district in France and is fourth in overall production after the industrial ports of Boulogne, Lorient, and Concarneau.

say the "field-site," enters this record as glimpses of landscape and blurred backgrounds against which the normal life of family progresses.

Our arrival in Brittany is captured in a series of pictures of my sons, playing on a beach near our first temporary lodgings. It is late in the afternoon and the setting sun colors the landscape. In one picture, the boys are standing behind an inscription etched in the sand: "Jarek and Tristan, Oct. 16, 1994, Brittany." This photo masks the anxiety of navigating along highways and county lanes, searching out what is for us, strangers here, difficult and incomprehensible. Now, having finished with the necessities of shopping, signing leases, and cleaning up, we have retreated to this beach to relax and take stock of the place we shall be for the next year or more.

This experience of the field is overwritten by my experience as father and partner. We attend the public school festival like the other parents. Some sunny afternoons we might pile into our car and take a picnic on the beach, along some nearby lakeshore or in a neighboring wood. On the way home from the daily commercial fish auction, I would often stop to "pickup a few things" at

the supermarket. These are not earth-shattering events. But they are part of a family life which continues irrespective of whether or not we are in France, Canada, the United States, or elsewhere. Too often, anthropologists deny the normalcy of their lives in their writings of "strange and far off" peoples and places.

In one of the few photos of which I am in the picture I am standing on the edge of a quay in Lesconil (one of the four Bigounden fish ports). One boy is perched near the edge of the dock. I am holding the other on the seat of an adult's bike. Off to the side, an old-style dragger is coming alongside the dock. The white-washed sides of stone houses are just visible across the harbor. While my presence is clearly expressed, the skipper of the dragger is barely a silhouette framed in the window of his wheelhouse. The clues to his identity are locked within the silhouette of the boat and in its registration number. Much can be learned from a reading of the boat: age, rigging, gear-type, crew size, port of registry, etc.…. However, these faceless and objective data push the skipper and his crew even further into the shadows. My goal in this dissertation is to bring the faces of these men and their families out of the shadows, to listen to

their stories, to make sense of the silences and commemorations of local histories and past struggles. Ultimately, my aim is to locate the relevance of the remembered past in the moment of the current crisis, a crisis in which it seems that past lessons may no longer apply.

Early on in my fieldwork, I was invited to attend a support demonstration outside the courthouse in Nantes, 300kms south of Le Guilvinec. The six men in court had been charged with destroying fish during a demonstration in June, 1994. I joined with a group of fishers in Le Guilvinec who had chartered a bus for those fishers (crews and skippers) who were attending. During the four or five hours down to Nantes, the wait for the court case and decision, and on the return trip I had plenty of opportunities to talk about the problems in the fishery. In an important way, this trip broke the ice and allowed my research to move beyond the realm of officialdom to an engagement with the men I had up to this point only been observing as they unloaded their daily catch. It is to this group of men, their families, and friends that I most owe a debt of gratitude. While this work is the particular product of my vision and interpretation of my

time in the Bigoudennie, it owes no small part to this group of men who's company I kept beginning on that rainy day in November.

My parents, Shirley and Harry Basil Menzies have been unfailing in their support. They have made allowances for a wayward 'professional-student' who seemed to have embarked on a journey without end. Now that the end is in sight I hope they will be able to breathe a little more easily.

At the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, I would especially like to thank my advisor, Dr. Gerald M. Sider for his challenging and inspiring commentary: his words have left a lasting impression on the way in which I see the world. I hope that I am able to inspire students as he has me. Dr. Jane Schneider has been a source of support and helpful advice from the first day of my entering the CUNY Ph.D. program. Her course on the Ethnography and Ethnology of Europe inspired me to pursue anthropological research in France and for this I am grateful. Thanks also to Profs. May Ebihara, Louise Lennihan, Michael Blim and Gerald Creed of CUNY for their critique and support at various stages of my work; each offered me something of importance.

A special thanks to my fellow students Anthony Marcus and Kate McCaffrey for all of their contributions, commentary and assistance. They read untold pages of drafts, disjointed musings and carefully constructed argument (or at least so I thought). Without their unique contributions my vision would not be as sharp.

In the Bigoudennie, my thanks to Jean-Jacques and Anne-Marie Coic, Annick and Oliver Heal, Anne-Marie and Gonzalg de Maupeou who helped by welcoming my family and me into their homes and communities: their help made the difference between a difficult stay and an excellent sojourn in a strange land. I would also like to give a special thanks to all the people in the Bigoudennie who took the time to explain the ways in which the fishing crisis intervened in their lives. To the men on the boats I sailed on (however briefly), met on the docks, at meetings and in other less 'formal' contexts, I wish you good fishing.

René-Pierre Chever, secretary general of the Comité des Pêches Pays Bigouden (CLPM), went out of his way to introduce me to fishers. Several members of the CLPM executive made a special effort to assist my studies - André Le Berre (president), Camille Gouzien (vice-

president), Scarlette Le Corre (vice-president). Pascal Boccou (Organisation des Pêcheries de l'Ouest Bretagne) helped explain the crisis and the impact on Breton skippers near the beginning of my field work. Franz Dorval, (director Ciree de St. Guénole) was very helpful in describing the process of Saint Guénolé's fish auction and providing data on sales during my field period. Thank you also to Christine Nédélec (L'Association Solidarité Entreprises de Pêche), Aimé Guegeun (Skipper) and Armand Le Cosec (Skipper).

Conversations and meetings with academics in Paris, Brest, Concarneau, Lorient and Nantes were important for situating my work within the local context. My thanks especially to Martine Segalen (Centre d'Ethnologie Francaise), Maurice Aymard (Maison des Sciences de l'Homme), Aliette Giestdoerfer (Université Paris-X), Patrick Dorval (UBO-Centre de Genie Industriel, Lorient), Patrick Chaumette (Université de Nantes), Herve Gloux and Ahn Boclé-Gloux (Musée de la Pêche, Concarneau) .

During the years leading up to and during my field work and throughout the writing of this dissertation I have benefited greatly from the detailed commentary by Veronica Ignas. This work is dedicated to her. Our sons,

Jarek and Tristan, shared the field work experience and offered much commentary on the process: thank you.

This project has been supported in part by a City University of New York pre-dissertation fieldtrip grant, a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada doctoral fellowship (1991-94), a doctoral research grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research (1995-96) and generous family support.

In the last instance, sole responsibility for the stories which follow rests with me.

Introduction: the Bigouden World

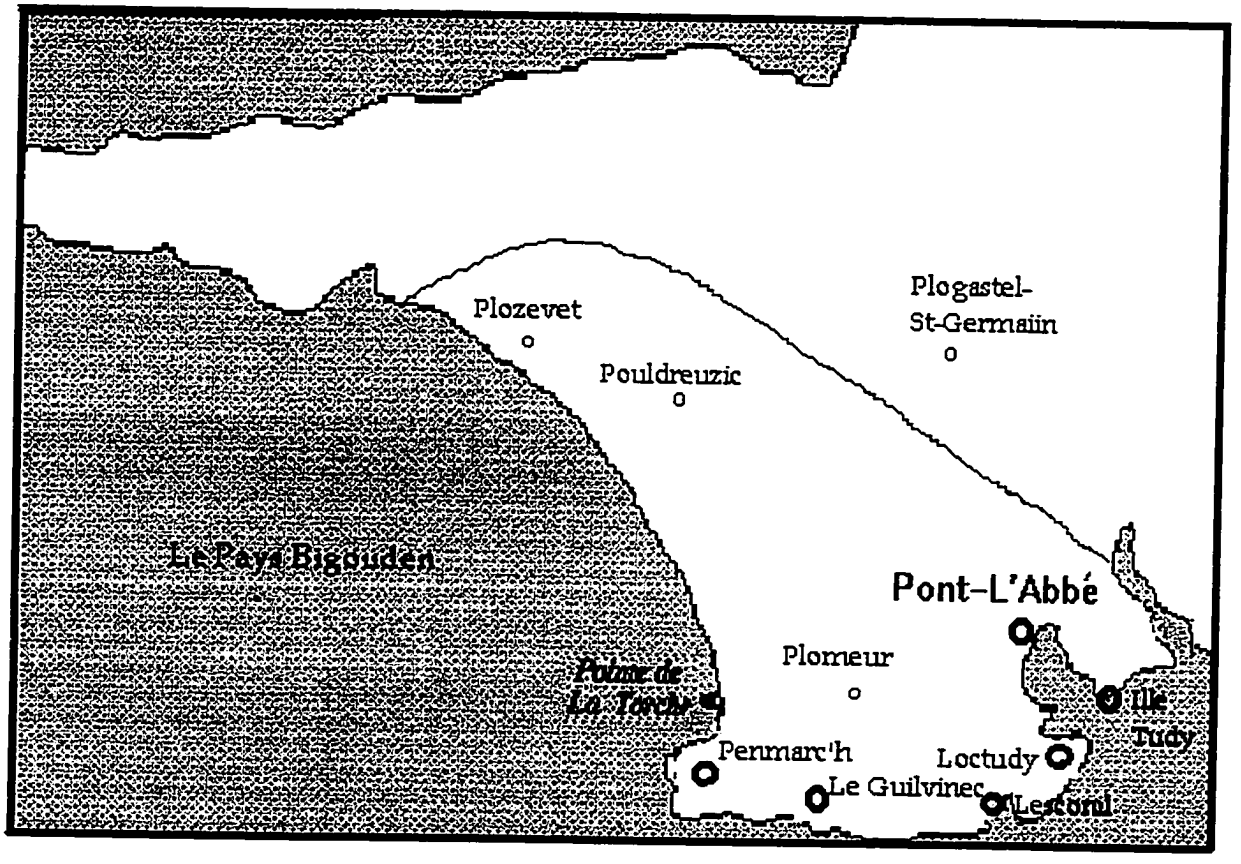
Although this dissertation addresses general questions of the politics of survival and the processes of social reproduction, it focuses on one group of people to make its argument. First then, we should meet these people - the skippers, crews, and their families – and the place they call home, the Bigoudennie.

The Bigoudennie incorporates the cantons of Le Guilvinec, Pont L'Abbe, and Plogastel-Saint Germain; an area of roughly 150-200 km^2 characterized by intense cultural particularities (c.f. Segalen 1991; Hélias 1975). The region is noted in travel guides and local histories for the unique lace coiffe worn its women. The coiffe, a cylinder of lace fixed to the top of a small black bonnet, can be as high as 30 cm and was worn as an item of everyday clothing for most of the 20^{th} century. Today, only a few hundred women over the age of 65 continue to wear it on an everyday basis. Amongst younger women, it is occasionally worn for special holidays, folk festivals, and pan-Celtic celebrations. During the most intense period of struggle in the 1990s, the coiffe became one of a series of important symbolic markers of local identity. The culturally intense markers of identity, which

primarily developed in the 20th century, have little to do with the geographic 'isolation' of the region.

The Bigouden coastline consists of open sandy beaches occasionally broken by rocky outcroppings. The region is effectively demarcated on the west and south by ocean and on the east by the river Odet. The northerly frontier winds along a low-lying stream valley which opens at the sea town of Audierne. The land is not particularly well suited to large-scale agriculture or the new farming techniques adopted in the northern part of Finistere during the rapid modernization of the 1960s and 70s. Prior to the commercial sardine fishery of the late 1880s, generations of peasants eked out a livelihood living near the coastal strip, alternating between land and sea.

The maritime administrative district of Le Guilvinec incorporates four fish ports and a number of small coves of southern Bigoudennie. Located on the center of the coast of the southern Bigoudennie, Le Guilvinec lends its name to the maritime administrative district. To the west, Penmarc'h - St. Guénolé juts out into the Atlantic. To the eastward is Lesconil. Finally we come to Loctudy, located at the mouth of the River of Pont L'Abbe.



Map of the Bigouden Region of Brittany

Aspects of the Local Economy

The fishery and its associated support industry is the motor of the local economy despite higher employment figures in the service sector, (62% versus 12% of the active labor force). One may be excused for assuming that the service sector is the defining force behind the local economy. However, this back to front picture, reminiscent "of the Roman mythological figure, Cacus, who steals oxen by dragging them backward into his den so that the footprints make it appear they have gone out from there" (Ollman 1971:227)[1], obscures the important difference between 'productive' (that is, surplus-value producing labor) and 'non-productive' sectors of the economy[2]. The service sector employment is secondary to fishing and, furthermore, is reliant upon the existence of a strong fishery for its survival and this is what makes fishing

[1] Bertell Ollman, citing Marx, notes "it fits the capitalist in general, who pretends that what he has taken from others and brought into his den emanates from him, and by causing it to go backwards he gives it a semblance of having come from his den" (1971:227).

[2] The distinction between productive and non-productive should not be confused with contemporary neo-liberal distinctions between "useful" or "good" versus "wasteful" or "bad" labor. The distinction being made here is different: "Productive labor is engaged by Capital in the process of production for the purpose of producing surplus value. As such, productive labor concerns only the relations under which the worker is engaged and neither the nature of the production process nor the nature of the product" (Bottomore 1983:397).

more significant than 'industry' which has a slightly larger labor force.

Employment Sector	Percentage Labor Force
Agriculture	6%
Fishing	12%
Industrial	15%
Services	62%
Other	5%

Distribution of Bigouden work force by sector, (1990)

Job Category	Number of Workers
Ship Building	120
Ship Repairs	170
Marine Electronics	40
Fishing Gear Manufacturing	170
Fish Auction	200
Fresh Fish Processing	600
Ice Processing	50
Canneries	380
Total	1730

Number of employees in fisheries support industries in the Bigoudennie, (1990)

There is a clear link between the fishery and the region's overall economic health: close to 30% of the active labor force is employed in some fashion in the fishing industry and, in financial terms, the fishing industry contributes close to 900 MF to the local economy. The development of the welfare state in the form of public sector employment in this region has acted to modify cyclical swings and dampen the extent of crises. It has not, however, replaced the crucial importance of the productive sectors of the economy. Furthermore, throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, welfare state support had been progressively eroded. Hence the increasing local reliance upon the fishery as the primary source of economic sustenance.

Agriculture, once predominant in this region, has been in a decline since the 1960s. Between the years 1970-1980 almost one-third of the farms in the two cantons disappeared, while the average age of those working them rose (Segalen 1991:250). By the late 1990s, the number of active farms had plummeted from 1,094 in 1970 to just 135. The decrease in units of exploitation and the area under cultivation has been matched by an increase in the average size of individual farms from 9ha in 1970 to 24 in 1991

(Cleac'h and Priou 1993). The decline of agriculture in the region is inscribed on the landscape by an increase in fallow lands and abandoned farm houses. Over the course of the last two decades the cost of remaining on the land outstripped the cost of abandonment or letting it sit fallow. If tourism comes to play a more decisive role in determining how land is used it is even more unlikely that a widespread return to agricultural enterprise will occur.

Year	Number of Farms	Area of cultivation	Average farm size
1970	1,094	9,846 ha	9 ha
1979	677	N.A.	N.A.
1988	359	5,744 ha	16 ha
1991	218	5,254 ha	24 ha
1996	135	3,250 ha	24 ha

Agricultural enterprises in the Bigoudennie, 1970-1996

The third axis of the local economy is tourism. The local tourist industry is based on a short seaside summer season that does very little in terms of providing for long term economic stability. Most of the summer tourist

trade consists of summer cottagers and campers who come down from Paris, Germany, or across the channel from Britain to holiday on the local beaches. Though a boon to some of the local merchants, compared to the 900 MF (about 18 million US dollars) contribution of the fishing industry to the local economy, the 150 MF from tourism does not seem to be terribly significant.

According to Le Bail and Nicot (1995), it is unlikely that tourism will replace fishing in the foreseeable future as a significant source of alternative employment. Squeezed as it is into July and August the seaside tourist industry is only able to create a short term demand for summer employment in the cafes, restaurants, hotels and camp grounds. Firms with more than 10 employees add an additional 440 individuals (8% of their winter work force) during the tourist season. Smaller firms (cafes, hotels, and restaurants, etc.) increase their work force by 72% or 322 individuals. By all accounts, the Bigouden tourist industry has reached the finite limit beyond which further expansion is unlikely. Most of the tourists coming this way are looking for an inexpensive beach holiday touched up with the occasional taste of local exoctica in the form of the fish ports or local folk dances and costumes.

The interface between tourism and the fishery is most obvious during the unloading of boats in July and August. Then the dock is jammed with tourists watching the men unload the boats. Tourists from France, Germany, and Britain jostle one another to see the fish being passed off the boats by hand, box by box. The fishermen are forced to move their heavily laden fish carts through a press of tourists unwilling to give way until the last possible moment. By the end of July many men have stopped yelling out a warning as they hurtle pell-mell through the mass of tourists.

The dock-side attitude of the men contrasts sharply with the more generous attitudes of administrative personal who see each tourist as a potential consumer of fish. When the rains return in autumn, and the tourists finally depart for another year, a collective sigh can be heard through the Bigoudennie.

Historical Context

The commercial fishery in this region has its roots in the recent past. After an interregnum of more than two centuries, a commercial sardine fishery emerged in the late 1800s. The canning industry in coastal Bigouden was

spearheaded by industrial firms who for the most part already were operating canning plants in Nantes, Concarneau, or Brest (Boulard 1991; Guéguen and Le Maitre 1990). The first plant in Le Guilvinec opened in 1864. However, it wasn't until the railway was extended to Pont L'Abbe in 1884 that the industrialization of coastal Bigoudennie 'took off.' The growth of the fishery marked the turn from an agrarian-peasant economy to an industrial-capitalist economy.

The expansion of the sardine fishery in the south Bigoudennie was part of a larger expansion of the sardine fishery which followed the invention of the canning process in 1840 in Nantes. This new technique for preserving fish revolutionized the fishing industry. When combined with assembly style production procedures, the industrial fishery swept up the coast. Regions like the Bigoudennie, in which there were high levels of rural poverty, were especially targeted as potential development sites. In the Bigoudennie, cannery workers and fishers were recruited from among the rural poor. They fled the poverty of a stagnant agricultural economy and gathered in the new coastal industrial belt.

In the Bigoudennie the change from an agricultural to industrial fishing economy occurred quickly and dramatically. For example, between the years 1880 and 1890 the hamlet of Le Guilvinec grew from fewer than 100 residents to a small town of more than 6,000. Small, constricted homes sprung up within these newly formed urban spaces. The living conditions were atrocious. The benefits gained by the cannery owners were not passed on to their workers. The large, spacious homes of the owners and managers stood in stark contrast to the squalid and cramped homes that housed the newly formed working class. Between 1890 and 1910 three separate and discrete cholera epidemics swept through the fishing towns. Tuberculosis was rampant. Life expectancy dropped. Infant mortality increased. Not until well into the 1920s did basic health and sanitary conditions return to the level of the agricultural community.

The social transformation from peasant to fishworker was accompanied by militant trade-unionism. From luddite struggles against the introduction of the labor saving "Sertiers," (which replaced the hand soldering of the cans with a highly efficient mechanical process and thereby eliminated several hundred relatively well paid

fishworkers) to fish-strikes over the minimum prices for fish, coastal Bigouden was a cauldron of social unrest.

During the sardine period (1864-1936) the canneries controlled many aspects of their workers' lives. They availed themselves of every available resource of intimidation, from police to church, to prevent disruption of the smooth functioning of business. In a letter dated 1905 one cannery manager complained to the prefect in Quimper that a wave of revolution was sweeping across the department and must be at all cost put down. The prefect responded by sending a unit of mounted police to ensure that the local cannery could operate without interruption. In the face of the collusion between state and business, skippers, crews, and cannery workers organized themselves into unions[3].

At the national political level the industry has been buffeted throughout its history by alternating periods of economic liberalism and protectionism. The development of the early sardine fishery greatly benefited from a

[3] Departmental Archives, Quimper, file:4S 358. Fishers -skippers and crews—organized jointly and in opposition to the industrial canners. This form of union organization continues to be the model followed in the region. However, during the early 1990s the left-oriented union, Force Ouvrier (FO), began organizing the crewmembers on the 24 m class draggers fishing out of Loctudy. FO organizers accused the local CGT and CFDT of being ineffective representatives of the crews.

strongly projectionist economic policy which made it difficult for sardines from Spain and Portugal to enter the French market. However, the simultaneous internationalization of capital allowed the canning firms to relocate and leave behind starving fishers and fishworkers. For example, most of the canneries operating in coastal Bigouden also operated plants in Portugal, Spain, or North Africa. Thus, they were interested both in maintaining liberal trade policies and in the introduction of more efficient machines in their French plants.

The evolution of fishing gear and vessels progressed rapidly during the twentieth century. The first diesel powered fishing vessels (14-20 meter wooden draggers) began replacing the earlier sailing vessels by the 1930s. The change in propulsion systems opened the way for the development and expansion of ports like Le Guilvinec as major artisanal fishing ports in Brittany. Fishers were able to move farther afield under increasingly inclement conditions and the variety of fish available to be caught correspondingly increased.

In the years following the second world war, the French fishing fleet expanded at an astronomical rate.

Fueled by government funding and the need for food products in a war ravaged Europe, the French fishing industry grew without any consideration of the ecological health of the fisheries resource. On the technological end, over capacity was generated by the rapid introduction of new types of fishing gear, more powerful engines, hydraulics, electricity, navigational and communications equipment, and new stronger types of building materials (steel, aluminum, and fiberglass) for boats and machinery.

Isolation and Integration: The Bigoudennie in the Wider World

The wave of industrialization which swept along the Breton coastline in the latter third of the 19th century has had a major impact on the shape of the region known today as the Bigoudennie - not in the sense of the 'modernization' of an isolated rural region, but rather in laying down the foundations upon which contemporary economic processes of integration and isolation are now being acted upon.

The issue of 'isolation' is important in so far as the dominant discourse in popular and academic discussion of Brittany (see, for example: Badone 1989; Weber 1976;

Morin 1967) focuses upon the false dichotomy between rural isolation/traditionalism and modernization/integration. The very issue of isolation versus integration obscures important underlying processes and linkages within which, paradoxically, isolation and integration are simply conjoined aspects of a unifying process of trade and production in which the physical connections to the outside emerged and retreated over the course of several centuries.

For Eugen Weber, the years between 1870-1914 (*la Belle Époque*) ushered in a period of change and integration that ultimately led to the transformation of "peasants into Frenchmen." Weber points to the rapid expansion of the instruments of civil society, most notably education and communications, as being pivotal in this process. According to Weber, the years of *la Belle Époque* were witness to a multitude of "distinct societies" (to borrow from the Canada/Québec dialogue) being dissolved into a homogenous "French" identity. While the implications of standardized education, rail transportation, industrialization, and the commercialization of agriculture undoubtedly changed the social and political 'face' of France it is debatable

whether or not the process of conformity and homogenization Weber suggests in fact occurred (see, for example: Lehning 1995; Magraw 1983).

Generally speaking, Weber stresses the rather benign impact of incorporation into a national state and invokes a mythic rural France shuttered behind the cloisters of superstition and ignorance. Yet, as Magraw suggests:

> "it could be argued [contra Weber] that the nineteenth-century developments made the countryside *more* rural and 'peasantized,' less 'modern' if one wishes to use that terminology. For not only did rural outworkers succumb to factory competition, but many of those literate, radical culture-brokers who had provided the contacts between the peasantry and the urban world in 1848-51 -wood floaters on the Yonne, carters, bargees, blacksmiths, village shoemakers, Provençal cork and barrel-makers— were precisely the groups hit by urban competition, or by changes in transport, who quit the villages first, along with agricultural laborers, who declined from 4.5 to 3 million between 1860 and the 1900s" (1983:321).

The point is that isolation and integration run hand and hand. As discussed *in Part I: The Politics of Survival*, the development of a local Bigouden identity is as much a product of the period of industrialization in the fishery as it is of the region's isolation in physical terms from metropolitan France.

While the Bigoudennie may have been isolated from the administrative center of France, the region has not always

been outside the orbits of major communication links and transportation routes. For example, according to local historian Serge Duigou, the Bigoudennie boasted a fleet of some 270 vessels engaged in the Bordeaux-England wine trade of the 15th and 16th century (1991:3-6; 1994). Penmarc'h-St. Guénolé was a bustling seaport of 11,000 inhabitants. During this period, Bigouden mariners combined fishing with coastal trading and held a partial monopoly over the trade of wine. Their primary contracts were with the merchants of Bordeaux and Toulouse. Several also worked for the British, the Spanish, and the Dutch. They were also involved in the fish trade, bringing their catches of dried cod to major ports in France, Spain, and Portugal. This period was marked by the affluence of the marine trade. The vestiges of which can still be seen in such places as the ruins of a large church tower standing in the center of Penmarc'h.

In the 19th century, fewer people lived in coastal Bigouden then had lived in the port of Penmarc'h alone during the 15th and 16th centuries. Situated within a context of potential surplus labor in the rural economy, the extension of rail transport and a protected national market for sardines, the population of coastal Bigoudennie

practically doubled between 1881 and the first world war[4]. The coastal demographic explosion was, I would argue, a direct response to the spread of the canning industry into the Bigoudennie.

All this is to point out that the notion of an "isolated" peasantry lying in wait of the railway to wake it from its slumber and join the 'modern' world is problematic at best, myopic at worst. The relationship between the local and the larger are not simply decipherable in terms of, for example, length of rail-track or number of machines. This form of 'muscular materialism;' obsessively focused on technological innovation and detailed counting of objects, deflects our quest to understand the messiness of actually-lived life. Undeniably, such counting, measuring, and detailing of objects is important. However, it is the social relations incorporating production and reproduction which ultimately drive the development and implementation of technology.

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[4] For the communes of Treffiagat, Penmarc'h, Le Guilvinec, Pont L'Abbé, and Plomeur: 11, 698 in 1881; 22,022 in 1911. Rural inland Bigoudène communes show a much smaller increase or a stabilization of population at the 1881 levels and then a decline following 1911 (for example, Saint-Jean-Trolimon: 986 in 1881; 1,124 in 1911). The decline in coastal populations occurred close to fifty years latter after interior communes such as St. Jean-Trolimon.

Conclusion

Between the sardine crisis in the early 1900s and the 1990s, the region's economy had been yet again completely transformed. The combination of changes in patterns of consumption, technologies, and within the global capitalist system undermined the basis for industrial production in the region and left an artisanal fishery in its wake. Despite the crisis of the 1990s the fishing industry, and its shore-based support industries, are still the most important aspect of the commercial fishers.

The contemporary Bigouden fishery operates within a socio-economic matrix that simultaneously includes new forms of information technologies to assist in the delivery of fresh fish to market as needed, at optimal prices, old forms of capital/labor relations (represented onboard the boats by skippers/crews), and kin-ordered systems of resource pooling, labor recruitment, and processes of economizing. In the chapters which follow these issues are elaborated within the context of the politics of survival within an artisanal based fishery of the Bigouden region.

Chapter 1: the Struggle to Survive

Commercial fishing is a peculiar enterprise. It defies simplistic analytical attempts to categorize its various aspects. Yet, as a way of life, commercial fishing has had an enduring legacy. Even in the midst of major cities one can still find a commercial fleet. Often hidden in rundown corners of the harbor or squeezed between marinas dedicated to pleasure craft or commercial shipping docks, artisanal fishers carry on their day-to-day activities in seeming oblivion to the world around them. Small communities spread along the coasts of North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and a variety of island states, are supported by the economic activities of commercial fishers.

Small- to medium-scale commercial fishing persists despite the dominant economic trend toward concentration extant under a capitalist economy, despite the attempts of resource managers to 'rationalize' production, and despite the apparent economic inefficiencies that plague such fisheries. This dissertation is about why: why do family-based fishing enterprises continue in the face of what seems to be overwhelming odds; why do fishing communities continue their struggle? I do this through an historical

ethnography of the fishers who make the Bigouden Region in France their home. This is historical not in the sense of the reconstruction of what "actually happened," but in how people situate themselves in the flow of time. While this dissertation takes as its social field all fishers - deckhands and skippers— the primary focus is upon boat owners (skippers) and is motivated by the following question: How do members of the productive[1] petty-bourgeoisie organize their economic enterprises in their struggle to survive.

Late Capitalism

The process of social reproduction is not isolated from the wider social and economic environment within which it occurs. Local agency, for example, is mediated or limited by the specificities of the wider socio-economic environment within which the local is encapsulated. Thus, it is important to describe the contours of late capitalism as they apply to fishing economies in general and in the Bigoudennie in particular.

[1] 'Productive' is used here to denote their control over productive property. The distinction made by Marx between 'productive' and 'unproductive' labour is instructive here.

During the boom years in the Euro-American economy following the Second World War, working people were able to extend their notions of collective social benefits[2]. By the 1970's however, working class struggles became increasingly defensive. The provisions of the welfare state were simultaneously less capable of ameliorating the ill effects of capitalism and acted as a shackle on the process of accumulation. Capital sought changes to regimes of production, social safety nets, and national controls over the movement of capital and goods.

Three key features of late 20th century capitalism are important to note: (1) changes in the organization of production from large centrally located factories to an array of smaller 'flexible' units of sub-contractors; (2) the privatization of state firms, services, and the dismantling of the social safety net; and, (3) the globalization of the economy in such a way that the ability of the national state to independently regulate its own economy is no longer assured. A variety of labels

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[2] Across the Euro-American world working class movements secured benefits which went beyond work place issues and extended into the structures of the Keynsian Welfare State. The Post World War Two situation of Canadian workers described by Bryan Palmer was generally reflective of most workers within the Euro-American world: "For the first time ever organized labor managed to force some semblance of security from capital and state, with the result that many of its ranks could actually settle into lives where stability was no undercut at every turn" (1992:336).

have been presented to describe the current period including, but not limited to: post-industrial, post-Fordist, post-modern. These labels are united in their assertion that our current period is Post-*something*. Often seen as an inevitable product of "neutral" technological advances, post-*somethingism* does accurately capture an essential respatialization of the process of production and a move toward more flexible units of production in which the economic risks are shifted outward and away from the central corporation.

Post-Fordism

In a discussion of a Spanish case study of post-fordism, Lauren Benton (1990) describes the respatialization of the process of production. Work, originally located in factories employing several hundred people, was shifted out to small jobbers who in turn sub-contracted the work out in a manner reminiscent of the industrial out-workers described by E.P. Thompson for 19th century England (1963:288-289, 297-346). In Benton's example, capital effectively disperses both economic risk and actual productive activities by contracting out the actual production process.

A similar development has occurred throughout many of the world's commercial fisheries. Large processing firms have sold off their fleets of fishboats to ostensibly independent fishers. The boatowners operate under the illusion of freedom but are, in reality, still firmly under the control of large capital. Boatowners are, in essence, workers who must buy their own tools in order to work. Their objective class location is, however, complicated by their ownership of productive property. And, with respect to their crews, they take on the appearance of capital.

As Benton points out: "decentralization soon showed itself to have unexpectedly positive implications --from the point of view of employers-- for the problem of control within the factories. Within formal firms, workers find their position so weakened [due to the existence of the new informal firms] that they must heed employers' demands to intensify work and increase the number of hours worked" (1990:160).

In general, however, Benton seems to believe that the decentralization and informalization of industry can be a benefit both to the workers themselves and to the economy at large. The decentralization and informalization of

production seems to provide an opening for political decentralization in two ways. "First, fragmentation of the production process generates opportunities for control over production to shift toward skilled workers and worker-entrepreneurs" (Benton 1990:190). Secondly, the decentralization of production creates problems of control for a politically centralized state. A potential benefit for the economy, is that the smaller-scale firms are more responsive to changing demands in the global economy (Benton 1990:188).

These benefits seem overshadowed by the more mundane and ever present conditions of work experienced by workers in the informal firms. In one example of how informal enterprises control labor, Benton quotes an owner who, when asked about the way piece rates are set, said: "Usually, they give a little and I give a little. Then I say, 'If that's not good enough for you, you can just leave.' It's usually effective. I am like a judge here. I always have a final say" (Benton 1990:98). How, I ask is this any different from the way capitalism has always worked, except here the threat, the real coercive force of the owner's control over the worker's labor, is laid bare: "I am like a judge. I always have final say."

Despite the superficial changes in the organization of production, the fundamental aspect of the relation between worker and employer has not altered. Contra the post-*somthingists,* Wood (1996) argues that the economic and social changes of the late 20th century do not represent an epochal change. Theorist who argue that the socio-economic changes of the late 20th century are of an epochal nature have, "explicitly or implicitly, based their arguments on a theory of history that downplays the discontinuities *between* capitalist and non-capitalist societies, a theory that disguises the historical specificity of capitalism" (Wood 1996:25).
Fordist forms of production were first introduced to deskill and take control out of the hands of artisanal workers and place the control of production firmly within the orbit of capital. The collectivization of work, however, contributed to the militancy of workers and the process of decentralization of production today must be seen from within this context.

Resource Hinterlands

June Nash (1979) has described how the control of foreign capital over the Bolivian economy created one of the world's most impoverished working-class populations:

"Dependency in the world market has always meant that Bolivia was vulnerable to measures carried out by the industrialized nations to control prices. ... Whatever profits resulted from industry in the country failed to be reinvested in the nation, since the control over capital was exercised from outside" (Nash 1979:255). Bolivia's integration in the world economy and its articulation to metropolitan capital exists within the matrix of an authoritarian and repressive political structure. "Armed with the latest weapons from the United States" the Bolivian government has not hesitated in resorting to massacre to stop workers' protests (Nash 1979:277, see also, pp. 256-309).

The material conditions of existence for Breton fishers are undeniably better than that of their counterparts in Bolivia. However, the manner of Brittany's integration within the world system as a resource hinterland is very similar to Bolivia's.

In an important early formation of this view from a Canadian perspective, Gary Teeple (1972) outlines the extent of American control over the manufacturing and productive component of the Canadian economy. Initially, the Canadian economy developed as a colonial source of

staples (fur, fish, timber, minerals, grain) for metropolitan Europe. With the rise of the U.S. as a major industrial power, European economic control was usurped by American, resulting in a situation in which nearly 80% of Canada's manufacturing sector is controlled or owned outright by American firms. As the Free Trade Agreement (FTA)has demonstrated, most of these American firms only invested in production facilities in Canada because of a tariff barrier. Prior to the FTA, the cost of paying tariffs was more expensive in certain key industrial sectors (household appliances and after-market car parts, for example) than in setting up production facilities in Canada. Following the implementation of the FTA, the economic incentive to maintain production facilities in Canada no longer existed (especially in Ontario, Canada's industrial heartland). While the Breton case differs in several key aspects, most notably that Brittany ceased to be an independent state five centuries ago, its role as an internal colony/resource hinterland within France is analogous to both Canada's role vis-à-vis the US and Bolivia's within the global imperialist economy.

Resource extraction industries are essential to the development and growth of capitalism yet they are often

located in the industrial hinterlands or supply regions: areas out of which resources are taken and only rarely is capital reinvested. According to Jane Jacobs:

> supply regions are inherently overspecialized and wildly unbalanced economies, hence unresilient and fragile, helpless when they lose their fragments of distant markets. ... As time passes, formerly prosperous supply regions succumb to many hazards. Depletion of resources is common. Overfishing, 'too many fishermen, not enough fish,' as they say in Nova Scotia has, along with timber depletion, played a part in impoverishment of some eastern Canadian supply regions. Sicily lost its position as Europe's pre-eminent supplier of wheat, a disaster from which it has never really recovered, in part owing to depletion of its overexploited soil" (1984:63,66).

Thus, for resource workers the situation is one that is uniformly precarious and has, almost without fail, led to radicalization and militant unionism (Palmer 1992:186-192). However, the uniformity of workers' experience of the imposition of capitalist relations and forces of production is mediated by the particularities of the local culture, the local matrix of social differentiation, and the specific manner in which the local is articulated to the larger.

Social Reproduction and Commercial Fishers:

My specific theoretical focus is on how small-scale producers (that is, fishing skippers) negotiate and

express, within the medium of 'family' and state their ability to effectively reproduce their fishing enterprises. Previous approaches to social reproduction have developed: 1) in response to the inability of classical Marxist approaches to effectively deal with gender relations and the extent of inequalities within the household; 2) as a dialogue between Leninist and Chayanovian inspired researchers, and; 3) out of an anthropological concern to link the concrete and specific material and social realities of daily life with the logic of a world capitalist system.

Strictly speaking, this dissertation is not an examination of the reproduction of labor power, but rather focuses on the reproduction of a particular form of production based on family or household ownership (in this case a fishing boat) and how labor power and capital is squeezed out of individual family members. Furthermore, I am interested in how the reproduction of family-based fishing enterprises is ensnared within the wider system of production of foodstuffs within the context of a contemporary industrial economy.

If the maintenance and perpetuation of a family-based fishing enterprise was simply the result of efficiency at

the level of the boat, there would be no significant problem. However, as modern fisheries have clearly demonstrated, as efficiencies at the level of the boat improve, the pressure on fish stocks increases. This makes it increasingly difficult for the stocks to reproduce. This in turn compels fishers to engage in yet another round of efficiency seeking technologies. This destructive process is commonly referred to as the tragedy of the commons.

The particularities of fishing for a living offers a unique vantage point from which to examine the processes of social reproduction. With few exceptions, the majority of the world's commercial fishers work on small to medium sized vessels, typically less than 30-35 meters in length, operated by crews of three to six individuals (for the exceptions see, for example: McGoodwin 1990:101-3; Warner 1983; Tunstal 1969). While capital and financing is sometimes provided by large processing firms (Clement 1986; Marchak, Guppy, and McMulen 1987) or governments (Rodman 1989; Cohen 1987; Bryon 1986), for the most part commercial fishers maintain formal ownership and control over the basic instruments of production (McGoodwin 1990; Acheson 1981; Norr and Norr 1978). As a commercial

enterprise, small to medium scale commercial fishing sits on the margins of capitalist development in that the basic process of production operates largely within the medium of kin-based crew recruitment and the apparent economic freedom of the ownership of the instruments of production (Robben 1989; Jorian 1982b; Farris 1972). Nonetheless, commercial fishing is fully subordinated to the logic of capitalist production through a commoditized market in terms of servicing the industry and processing and selling the fish.

Two particular aspects of this linkage between the form of production extant in small-scale fishing industries and the logic of the encompassing capitalist social formation bear closer examination. Firstly, the logic of capitalist production propels the development of fishing techniques to a point at which catching capacity exceeds the ability of fish stocks to successfully reproduce (Suzuki 1992). Secondly, the epicenter of economic growth in fisheries is located, not in the localities in which fishing is based, but rather in metropolitan centers far removed from the lives and communities of fisherfolk (Jacobs 1984). This specific economic and social context of fishing adds a particular

salience to our understanding of social reproduction in the context of the neo-liberal agenda of imperialist globalization in which flexible accumulation, decentralized production and assembly, and just-in-time production are making local control over economic survival less and less possible (Nash 1995; Blim 1992; MacEwan and Tabb 1989).

Social Reproduction and the State

Two aspects of the state as a social institution are important to keep in mind for our purposes. First, one of the primary roles of the late 20th century state has been to structure the field of accumulation in the interests of capital. Second, commercial fishing in general, and in the Bigoudennie, is immersed within a dense network of regulations and policies which limits what is fished, how it is fished, and (even more importantly) which defines the economic rules under which the industry must operate. These two aspects of the late 20th century state form a crucial component of the socio-economic context within which the process of social reproduction of artisanal fishing occurs.

In the following discussion of the Bigouden people's struggle to survive as commercial fishers, I focus on: 1) the historical set of social relations out of which emerged a local identity, and; 2) how this identity is intimately linked to the formation of social class in coastal Brittany. My underlying point of concern is with the mundane daily necessity to feed, cloth, and shelter one's family, and how this is connected to, shaped by, and is often in opposition to an economic formation driven by profit and greed. The dissertation is divided into two primary sections: "The Politics of Survival" and "The Material Conditions of the Everyday."

PART ONE: The Politics of Survival

The world of commercial fishers seems to sustain just one thing: crisis. The response to crisis can vary from passive resistance to open revolt. In the Bigoudennie, a detailed history of active resistance can be traced back from contemporary social protests to the revolutionary trade unionism of the early 20th century and the even more remote anti-feudal peasant revolt of 1675. Each of these moments of struggle has left its imprint on the collective memory and, for better or worse, has laid the pathways of resistance to the contemporary period of neo-liberal globalization.

One of capitalism's defining features is its inherent capacity for change, destruction, and recomposition. This constant process of pulling down and building back up has important consequences for racial, ethnic, and local identities. In the borderlands of Europe's internal colonies and along the margins of Euro-American settler society, capitalism has been engaged in a spatial and cultural restructuring with critical consequences in terms of racial, ethnic, and local identities. During the early period of industrial transformation in the Bigoudennie (roughly, 1880-1914), local resistance was

expressed as class struggle represented symbolically in the red flag and the singing of the International. Following the collapse of the sardine fishery, a local "Bigouden" identity took precedence over that of being a "worker." This metaphoric shift serves to conceal, or displace, the underlying class dynamics of the artisanal fishery in which the economic survival of boat owners is to some extent dependent upon their ability to exploit the social labor of their own kin.

The particular and local manifestations of the new sets of identities which emerged out of the encounter between the larger (that is to say the world capitalist system) and the local is dependent on the nature of the over arching state formation and that of the pre-existing social formation. At its moment of encapsulation into an industrial capitalist social formation the Bigoudennie was an economically stagnant agricultural region in which the rural peasantry were barely eking out a living.

Industrial capitalism arrived in the backcountry of Brittany in much the same manner as it was implanted in Europe's overseas colonies, carried by "foreign" capitalists who expropriated local labor and resources, and undermined local forms of production. The particular

form of struggle which emerged in the Bigoudennie reflects this almost colonial context. This is not to say that the local struggles which emerged were explicitly or necessarily nationalist in nature. In truth, nationalist sentiment seems never to have moved far beyond simple resentments commonly expressed by hinterland peoples toward the urban center. Rather, local expressions of class solidarity were more easily cultivated when the cannery owners and managers were French-speaking and the working class were Breton-speaking. This, in combination with the transition from peasant to industrial conditions of work, created the conditions for strong collective action and militant trade unionism.

As opposed to more clearly nationalist "Breton" movements described by McDonald (1989), contemporary Bigouden militants see their struggle as one based in maintaining the viability of their 'community,' not as part of a struggle for autonomy or independence. Here, idioms of locality and 'community' are used as a medium to articulate specific class demands and viewpoints within a context in which representations of class have become despatialized.

In examining the twinned issues of livelihood and resistance, Gavin Smith describes how cultures of opposition which are based in the local, or in expressions of 'community,' can be seen to sow "the seeds for a more broadly based oppositional class consciousness" (1989:236). Following Sabean, Smith defines community "not [as a set of] shared values or common understanding, so much as the fact that members of a community are engaged in the same argument, the same *raisonement*, the same *Rede*, the same discourse, in which alternative strategies, misunderstandings, conflicting goals and values are threshed out ... What makes community is the discourse" (1984:29-30). In the Breton illustration, what is interesting to note, is that here identities based in the local or the 'community' have (re)emerged as the primary expression of class interests, whereas Smith was documenting a case in which he saw the local culture of opposition as forming a basis upon which a more generalized class consciousness might emerge.

The more abstract notion of being "Breton" appeals to a cultural "quest for authentic identity" (Badone, 1992:808) in which pan-Celtic celebrations of traditional costumes, dance, and music play an important part. Yet

on the national plain, the majority of the Bigouden fishers support "French" political parties, as opposed to regional based groupings advocating autonomy or independence. At the very least, this points to the complexity and divergence of social identities in which a fisher may well be "Bigouden" at the demonstration, "Breton" at the *Kermesse*, and "French" on election day.

The early struggles brought people together in an industrial setting who, until that point, had primarily thought of themselves as villagers as opposed to seeing themselves as having a rather more abstract identity as either French, Breton or worker. In their struggle against the "bosses" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, their own collective identity, manifest in a class idiom, emerged. Though not evident at the time, this early proletarian identity contained within it the potential of transmutation into an ethnic or "local" identity. Subsequent changes in the local political economy -primarily the collapse of the industrial canning industry– stripped away the unambiguous class basis of their collective identity and opened the path for the emergence of a *Bigouden* identity which the fishing

skippers of the 1990s manipulated in order to advance their own specific set of class interests.

In the following chapters, I explore three specific periods of struggle and their implications for the politics of survival in the contemporary Bigoudennie. I begin with the stories of contemporary struggle and then move backwards through historical time. While a different account might well start in the past and move forward, I have chosen to follow the narrative progression of the participants of the contemporary social movement. For the meaning, the strategic importance, of this history lies in the manner in which it intersects, shapes and haunts the struggles of the present.

Chapter 2: Social Struggle in the 1990s

On the night of February 22, 1993, 800-1000 Breton boat owners, crew members, and their supporters stormed the Rungis wholesale fish auction, just south of Paris. In the ensuing melee 800 tons of fish valued at more than $4 million dollars were destroyed. The fishers and their supporters engaged in a running battle with the CRS, the specially trained and armed French riot police. Armed only with sticks and the brute determination of a people fighting for their livelihood, they held off the police until well into the early hours of the morning. Many of the demonstrators came from the Breton fishing ports of Le Guilvinec, Douarnenez, and Concarneau where earlier in the day more than 9,000 people had participated in demonstrations against changes in the European Union's common fisheries policy. The new policies cut quotas, forced a reduction in the size of the French fishing fleet, and liberalized regulations governing the importation of non-EU fish products. The anger and strength of this and subsequent demonstrations underlined the extent of the crisis which shook the French artisanal fisheries in the early 1990s.

The fishers' protest movement was steeped in a language of the local and invoked symbols of the region's agrarian past. It eschewed a discourse of class, apparently as mobilization tactic, emphasizing rather a strong sense of local solidarity and community. In the context of the re-organization of production in late capitalism, the terrain of production, and hence struggle, has shifted.

The state has, to a large extent, replaced capitalist firms as the primary pole of struggle vis-à-vis boat owners and hired crews. This is so in two senses. First, the state plays a fundamental role in the regulation of the fisheries. This is compounded in France by the provisions of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of the European Union which governs all fishing outside of a narrow 12 mile coastal strip. In other words, there are two specific levels of governance regulating the process of production on the fish boat and within the local. Second, the state (again at both the national and European Union level) finances and, through a variety of provisions, controls crucial economic structures such as boat loans, marketing and processing facilities, and minimum fish prices for key fish species.

The expanded role of the state in the regulation of fisheries occurred within a context of what appears to some to be a fundamental shift in the capitalist organization of production. That change has occurred is uncontroversial[1] and has been documented by many observers (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Smith 1991, and; Blim 1992). What is controversial is the nature of the current changes. According to some, these changes represent a radical disjuncture with early twentieth century capitalism and what is considered the defining fordist form of production. For post-modernist writers, in "contemporary high tech media society, emergent processes of change and transformation are producing a post-modern society ... the era of post-modernity constitutes a novel stage of history and novel socio-cultural formation" (Best and Kellner 1991:3. See also, Luke 1989). Changes in the organization of production, while important, receive relatively little attention in this broader, more cultural formulation.

[1] In fact, the constant changes of production, built environment, and social arrangements is one of, if not the, fundamental aspects of capitalism in which: "All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind" (Marx and Engels 1969:111).

Moreover, according to the post-modernist view, capital has been so thoroughly reorganized that the working class is no longer the 'gravedigger' of capitalism, but rather one of capitalism's staunchest allies (cf., Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). New forms of class cleavage are identified:

> A line of conflict forms between, on the one hand, a center composed of strata 'directly involved in the production process and interested in maintaining capitalist growth on the basis of the welfare-state compromise, and, on the other hand, a periphery composed of a variegated array of groups that are lumped together. Among the latter are those groups that are further removed from the 'productivist core of performance' in late capitalist societies, that have been more strongly sensitized to the self-destructive consequences of growth in complexity or have been more strongly affected by them (Habermas 1986:392-393).

Habermas is referring to the so-called *new social movements* (NSM) --feminism, environmentalism, peace and nuclear disarmament activists, gay and lesbian activists-- which sprang up in the aftermath of the new leftism of the late 1960s. NSM are seen to "express organizationally a series of new territorial culture, functional cleavages, new classes" (Luke 1989:137). The environmental movement, for example, is considered to represent a new class struggle against "unequal exchange and ecological colonialization by the core regions" (Luke 1989:145). The

most telling change in the *post-industrial* world for the post-modernist theorists has been the rise of information technologies and the deindustrialization of Western economies. Accordingly, the NSM are seen as part of a "critical historical shift of a 'third industrial revolution'"(Luke 1989:133).

This chapter confronts the myth of NSM theory by examining the fishers' community-based protest movement. This is done through a study of how a coalition of boat owners was able to mobilize support from their crews through a careful manipulation of symbols of class struggle and local identity. The crucial point here is that underlying the shroud of identity politics are the class interests of a group of petty capitalists struggling to maintain their socio-economic location within a rapidly shifting and changing field. That their movement took on the contrived aura of class and local identity reflects the particularities of local history. That it was grounded in the political and economic power of the boat owners reveals the contemporary economic reality.

On to Crisis

The malaise faced by Breton fisher-folk has been growing sporadically since the end of the second world war. Three interrelated processes have been at work: technological developments, stock depletion, and government attempts at regulation. Under the post-war modernization plans the volume of fish landed by the French fishing fleet tripled (Chaussade and Corlay 1988: 31,51). However, as catching capacities increased and fishing technology improved, job opportunities decreased. In Brittany the number of jobs plummeted from 25,000 in 1950 to 8,000 in 1992. Today, the catching capacity of Brittany's highly capitalized and efficient artisanal fishing fleet greatly exceeds the reproductive capacity of the fish stocks (Salz 1991; Gwiazda 1993).

In a desire to minimize social disruption among fisher-folk while simultaneously attempting to conserve fish stocks, national and European government agencies introduced a variety of restrictive policies ranging from limiting access to fishing grounds, restricting types and sizes of fishing gear, limiting vessel size, and establishing regional and species quotas. These measures, however, have only compounded the problems of those who

fish. Breton fishers face the likelihood of further fleet size reductions, rapidly declining fish stocks, and, in the foreseeable future, the potential collapse of their way of life.

The Boom

During the heyday of the fishing boom in the 1980s the retail sector in the regional commercial center, Pont L'Abbé, grew at a remarkable rate during a time in which many other rural communities in France were loosing their small commercial centers. At the peak of the boom this small town of 8,000 (servicing an area population of between 30 to 35,000 residents) supported more than 200 commercial businesses. A local building boom, propelled by rising fishing incomes, swept the region as fishers replaced old housing stock with larger, modern homes in the interior of the region. The new homes were more reminiscent of the cannery owners' homes of an earlier era than of the small cramped homes of their parents.

Following four to five generations of hard times it seemed to the fishers like the good times had finally arrived. Little luxuries that had been denied their parents and grand-parents became a normal aspect of

everyday life. Growth and expansion seemed unending. The drop in overall production that had begun in the mid 1980s was more than offset by steadily rising prices. For many the crisis came as a complete shock.

Fish prices in the south Bigoudennie fluctuate depending upon the time of year. All Saints Day (November 1) heralds the beginning of the lucrative holiday season. Fish prices climb to the annual high point as French consumers flock to their local fish counters in preparation for the expansive meals which mark the Christmas and New Year holiday season. The relative scarcity of fish at this time of year works in concert with heightened demand to drive up prices. Consumer demands falls off dramatically in January driving prices down to what is normally the annual low in the price cycle. The situation is made more difficult as the weather in January and February is the worst of the year. The bad weather keeps most of the under 24 m vessels tied up to the dock. In the 12-18 m class of vessels, ships' logs indicate an average of 50% of the available fishing days are lost during January and February due to poor weather. With the milder spring weather, fish prices start to slowly climb back up. Prices peak during the

summer langoustine fishery. Prices drop off a bit in early fall until the holiday rush begins to propel them skyward again.

In the south Bigoudennie, the crisis of the early 1990s brought to an abrupt halt the boom of the preceding decade. Early warnings of crisis were clearly apparent during 1992. Falling catches combined with declining prices to make 1992 a poor year for the majority of the ports in south Finistere. The precipitous drop in fish prices was the by-product of two unrelated economic changes. The first was a currency crisis in which the Italian, Spanish and British currencies devalued relative to the French Franc. This affected Bigouden fishers in two ways. Firstly, close to 60% of locally caught fish is sold on the Spanish and Italian markets: a drop in those currencies had a direct impact on the price of fish in Le Guilvinec. Second, the British fish enters into the same market in sizable enough quantities to have a major impact on the price of fish in the Spanish market place. The second major economic change was the liberalization of import regulations affecting fish products. E.U. policies introduced in 1992 simultaneously allowed fish from non-member states (specifically from the Americas and Africa)

into the European Union market and cut minimum price supports. The impact of these economic changes made the decline in fish catches even more apparent and the crisis that much more sever.

Overall production fell 7.2% (72,123 metric tons versus 77, 728 in 1991). The registered value of the catch dropped by 5.7% (1.3 million French Francs against 1.4 million in 1991). In the Bigoudennie, 1992 had a variable affect. Declines in overall production ranged between 8% and 11%. The aggregate price per kilo of fish dropped by 23% in January of 1993. While the magnitude of the drop was unusual, it was not unexpected to experience a drop in prices during the first few sales of the new year. However, prices continued dropping throughout 1993; indeed they were in free-fall until spring/summer 1995 when they stabilized at 15% less than the 1991 pre-crisis price. The impact on the local economy was devastating.

Days of Protest

During the holiday season of 1992 prices did not climb nearly as high as was expected and when the January price drop arrived, it hit with the force of the famed French high speed train. Gentle pre-Christmas warnings by

the president of the local fishers committee in the committee's bulletin were quickly transformed into a general protest movement of fishers that at its peak stretched along most of France's Atlantic coastline. The movement had its roots in the government mandated local committees of fishers, but as the nature of the protest changed from lobbying to direct action, informal "survival" committees sprung up and soon displaced the official committee structure as the effective political voice. The local committees, established by the French state in 1945, are part of a well integrated and centralized management system that brings together all sectors of the French fishing industry under one umbrella organization, the Comité Central des Pêches Maritimes, (CCPM). Although they have a certain degree of autonomy, they are ultimately responsible for the "execution of decisions taken at a higher level" (Salz 1991:137).[2] It is important to point out that in spite of the new structure and separate organization many of the CLPM personal were also involved in the organization and leadership of the survival committees. In many instances

[2] See LiPuma and Meltzoff 1994, for a discussion of an analogous management system in Spain).

the survival committees were run out of the CLPM offices and were funded by the official organization. Unhampered by the government bureaucracy and arising out of local networks of co-operation and kinship, the survival committees were able to mobilize large numbers of fishers, family, and community members in a relatively short period of time.

With few exceptions, all of the Bigouden skippers participated in the mobilization. The majority of the organizing committee members were also skippers. The two leading members of the survival committee, Andre Le Berre and Dominique Lepart, are skipper-owners of vessels in the 24m class. In addition to being a member of the survival committee, Le Berre was also a member of the nominally communist allied union, CGT, and was president of the government mandated local fishing committee. While most crew members I interviewed said they had supported and participated in the protests, they did so under conditions in which their absence would have been clearly noted by their skippers.

Four thousand demonstrators marched through the streets of Le Guilvinec on February 22, 1993, the day before Breton fishers stormed the Rungis fish market.

The newspaper Ouest-France[3] declared: "In the memory of the Bigoudennie, we haven't seen so many people demonstrating in Le Guilvinec since May '68."[4] Survival Committee organizers declared the demonstration a success: "Here, everyone understood that if the fishery crashes, everyone will crash along with it."[5] (O-F: 23,02, 1993). The exasperation and anger of the demonstrators was reflected in the slogans on their placards: "Briezh[6] fish inside, American fish outside, Brussels—watch the cauliflower and leave us the fish, Fish unsold, Fishermen in rags, US Go Home."

The speakers stood upon a makeshift platform draped in the black and white of the Breton flag and the orange and yellow of the Bigouden flag. In a manner evocative of an English Canadian unity rally or a St. Jean Baptiste day celebration in Québec, these visible signs of the Bigouden and the Breton swayed through the demonstration and in the words of the speakers. While simultaneously recognizing,

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[3] February 23, 1993. All future references to Ouest-France will be listed in text as follows: (O-F, day, month, year).

[4] "De mémoire de Bigouden, on n'avait pas vu tant de monde manifester au Guilvinec depuis mai 68."

[5] "Un bel élan de solidarité. Ici, tout le monde a compris que si la pêche crève, tout le monde crève avec elle."

[6] Briezh is the Breton word for Brittany.

even supporting, the need for an effective pan-European fishing policy, speaker after speaker referred to the community base of the fishery and the importance of the fishing industry in economic and cultural terms.

The Bigoudennie was the epicenter of the protest. A careful plotting of direct actions and demonstrations against the landscape of France's Atlantic coast dramatically illustrates the central role of this place in the uprising that swept through the French fishing industry (Couliou 1994:11-12). Roving bands of fishers entered grocery stores and cold storage facilities and destroyed thousands of kilos of imported fish. Trucks loaded with imported fish were held-up on local highways and their contents dumped out. The national government tried to put out the flames of protest with the promise of a 225 million French Franc "emergency plan" and an offer to review government fisheries policy (Le Telegramme, 02/24/1993). The protests continued unabated.

As spring weather gradually replaced the meanness of winter storms, however, the daily necessity of earning a living slowly took over. Sporadic direct actions occurred well into June, but modest price increases over the summer

and during the 1993 holiday season kept the fishers at sea. Government largesse also allayed the concerns of some boat owners, especially those most in difficulty who were promised financial assistance. The basic problem, however, remained as before and in January 1994 protest erupted again.

In 1993, the skippers had been at the forefront of the struggle. In 1994, crew members tried to push their demands on working conditions and pay into the limelight, but without much success. At a general meeting of all fishers in Le Guilvinec, organized by the survival committee, a call was issued for a general strike of all artisanal fishers. Most of France's Atlantic fishery was shut down for the better part of February. As in 1993, the fishers organized roving bands of "commandos" whose task it was to destroy imported fish wherever it was found. Other units went into the local markets to hand out copies of the prices fishers received at the dock. Local town councils worked with the survival committees to organize "dead city days" in which all the merchants of the town closed their shutters in support of the fishers (and incidentally thus avoided attacks by units of commandos).

The national government acted quickly to forestall an escalation of the protest. In answer to the strike organizers' demands a meeting was set up between then prime minister Eduard Balladur and elected representatives[7] from the government-mandated local fishers' committees in Rennes, the capital of Brittany. On the day of the meeting several thousand fishers, their families, and supporters demonstrated in the streets. While the minister talked with the fishers, riot police chased demonstrators through the streets of the city using tear gas, rubber bullets, and clubs. The fishers fought back with distress flares, one of which landed on the roof of the historic former parliament building of Brittany.

Early the next morning demonstrators returned home to pictures of the burning building and fishers with bloody and beaten faces on the local newspapers. The burning of the parliament building in Rennes seemed to dampen community support a little. Yet, despite this momentary setback and the beginnings of vocal criticism at home in the Bigoudennie, fishers continued their protests until the government promised more subsidies to help boat owners in difficulty. Crew-members, however, received little

[7] Most of the representatives who met with Balladur were boat-owners.

attention. Social cleavages at the local level between skipper and crew started to widen and made subsequent solidarity more difficult. One of the manifestations of this has been the growth of the new union, the Force Ouvier (Workers Force), on the 24 m class vessels based in the Bigouden port of Loctudy.

The lackluster conclusion of the 1994 phase of the social protest reflected the internal contradictions of the fishing communities themselves and reveals a contrasting and antagonistic set of social interests between skipper and crew. I will return to this in Chapter 8, but for now, suffice to say that in promoting their social interests, the boat owners simultaneously relied upon the support and subordination of their crews.

The Impact of the Crisis on Everyday Life

Under capitalism, conservation and resource management practices almost always take into account maintaining the best rate of profit over the medium to short term. In the case at hand, moreover, conservation plans are designed from outside the community of fishers and are oriented toward fulfilling needs and objectives that have very little to do with the local community (Rogers 1995; Stump and Batker 1996). For their part,

members of the local community are pulled inexorably into a vortex of increasing capacity and diminishing returns until the fishery collapses completely. Local people are then forced to either switch to a new fishery or be pushed out of fishing forever.

In the Bigoudennie the direct impact of the crisis on the fishing fleet was reflected in the day to day operations of the fishing boat in three specific respects: 1) reductions in crew-size, 2) reductions in expenditures on maintenance of vessels; and, 3) increasing fishing time. In combination, these responses to crisis resulted in a worsening of shipboard safety.

For example, since 1989 the crew size on a fleet of 24 meter boats belonging to one local fishing company declined from six to five at sea. During the same period many of the coastal draggers went from four to three men at sea[8]. Whereas technological changes (such as the switch from side-trawling to stern-trawling) was at the root of downsizing of crews in the past, in the mid-1990s the explanations are directly economic. Fewer men in the

[8] This date was collected from a variety of sources during my field work in 1994/95 including interviews with fishing skippers, government officials and reports. I conducted a boat-to-boat survey in which I counted the crews of over half of the vessels in the 12-24 m range. None had crews greater than five on the deep-sea vessels and four on the inshore.

crew translates directly into bigger crewshares of declining income.

Many boat owners also cut back as much as possible on maintenance expenditures. Boats were taken up on the slipway less frequently than was previously the practice. Gear was made to last longer than usual and the replacement of old equipment was deferred, often beyond the point of safety. In the short run, this form of economizing can improve the productivity of the vessels and thus increase the boat owners' revenue and (perhaps) maintain or at least slow down declining incomes. However, over the long term these measures led to a deterioration of conditions of work and a worsening of shipboard safety.

The crisis also had a social and economic impact on the fishers' family. Most obviously, declining incomes forced changes in the management of the household budget. In confronting "the perennial problem of the peasantry," (Wolf 1966) fishing families in the Bigoudennie had little recourse but to increase production (that is to fish longer and harder)and to restrict their consumption on the fishboat and in the household. Changes in patterns of household spending had a serious impact on the local

retail economy. However, it was the hidden processes of economizing and their impact on the fishers' families that underlay much of the widespread anger and spurred the Bigoudennie to protest.

Until the crisis in 1993, Danielle,[9] a mother of two children aged 5 and 2, did not have to work outside of the home. My husband, she said: "is away from home 15 days at a time on a dragger in the Irish Sea. His feet barely touch the ground before he's back out fishing... Since the crisis he has brought home a salary of between 800 and 2500 Francs (175-500 $US), typically about 1,000 Francs. Until the debut of the crisis Danielle had worked at home. When the crisis hit she unsuccessfully tried to find employment in the region's service economy. When the crisis deepened, she joined the local Fishermen's Wives Association.

"You think about it," continued Nicole, a mother of three children, "with a sum like that one can't make the house payments or pay the various bills that arrive. I

[9] All names are pseudonyms with the exception of those of prominent members of the fishing community, government officials, or elected politicians, quoted by name from published sources. I met Danielle, Nicole and Françoise at a local food bank run by one of the local Fishermen's' Wives Associations. During my stay in the Bigoudennie I spent a great many hours listening to the women talk about the difficulties of running a household and, for the skippers' wives, the boat accounts during the period of crisis.

can't properly care for my children anymore, in particular the youngest who is 18 months and has bronchitis."

"What's more, our men love their *metier* and, it's not a question of doing something else," said Françoise. "They are worried and on edge because of these financial difficulties and the crisis about which one can see very little to do. Their anxiety affects us and our children. We are worried when we watch them head out to sea, but not as much as when they leave to join the demonstrations. It is a desperate time and we worry when we hear news of men being arrested and beaten by the police," said Françoise.

"On what do we live," said Nicole, "that's the real question. You can ask us, --why don't you get a job?-- But there is no work in this region. Each time we get a bill we have to go to the bank and negotiate. You know, that is not normal. Our husbands spend 18 hours working each day at sea and make next to nothing. Do you think they'll go begging, cap in hand?"

Due to the nature of the regional economy and high levels of unemployment it was difficult for fishing families to supplement their losses from fishing with income generated by other family members not already working. But more importantly the details of the problem in much the same

manner as I have described for the boats. The distribution and allocation of paid-employment in the Bigoudennie reflects a common western pattern of gendered employment opportunities with women disproportionately represented in the generally lower-paid portions of the service (retail/clerical) sector and men employed in managerial activities, trades, and fisheries. The retail sector appears to be at its peak employment level and, given the region's economic reliance on fishery it is unlikely to be able to expand to absorb additional labor.

Neo-Liberal Globalization and Social Conflict

Class struggle in the Bigoudennie has shifted decisively, not into obscurity, but out of the tangible arenas of the locality and into the phantasmagorical world of neo-liberal globalization. In, *Globalization and the Decline of Social Reform*, Gary Teeple paints an exceedingly gloomy picture of the "coming tyranny: …largely unfettered by political considerations, [it] is a tyranny unfolding -an economic regime of unaccountable rulers, a totalitarianism not of the political sphere but of the economy" (1995:151). It is against this mature form of capitalism -"late" capitalism- that the boat-owners and crews were protesting.

There are two particular aspects of the fishers protest that bear closer examination. First, structural features of the local matrix of class forces. Second, the particular tactical approach employed by the fishers. I will consider each in turn.

The Class Matrix

Any one particularistic description of class structures is bound to become mired in the different, conflicting, and contradictory individual locations of class. The core set of class relations in the Bigoudennie since the collapse of the industrial sardine fishery in the 1930s is that between skipper and crew. Spinning outward from this core relation is a dizzying array of conflicting and cross-cutting class structures.

The antagonistic class relations between skippers and crews is, to a certain extent, held in check by kin relations onboard the boats. As I have suggested elsewhere, (Menzies 1992:88-89;1990) a certain degree of egalitarianism permeates the relations onboard small to medium scale vessels. This is partly a by-product of the necessity to co-operate in the sailing and fishing processes, and the familiarity bred of living together for

extended periods in close quarters. While this is by no means to suggest that skipper and crew live harmoniously and without dispute, it does represent a different form of class struggle than one which pits an industrial owner against a wage-employee.

In the ancillary industries such as machine and engine repairs, boat building, electronics, fishing gear manufacturing, and fish processing, small shops with fewer than 15 employees are the norm. Here, the 'artisanal' nature of work also mitigates against a politics of intense class conflict.

The agricultural rural economy was, by the 1960s, essentially non-existent in the south-Bigouden coastal strip and much reduced in the center and north of the region. Changes resulting from the Common Agricultural Policy and domestic policy help bolster a local dairy industry. For those fortunate enough to hold dairy quotas farming is profitable.

By the 1990s, the structure of social class in the Bigoudennie incorporated a large white-collar class closely linked to national trade unions and politics and a private sector dominated by artisanal social relations in which explicit class conflict models of struggle had

become more memory than reality. A further complication to this picture has been the growth of holiday or secondary housing in the region, especially along the coast. Secondary housing represents between 30 and 50 per cent of the housing stock in the coastal communes.

One further, but crucial new factor must also be taken into account. During the early period of class struggle, socially necessary labor time was determined by regional/national average. The crucial shift, a shift that has served to undermine the economic viability of fishers more than almost any other single factor, is the shift to a world average of socially necessary labor time. The consequences of a global average are similar to the previous consequences a national average of socially necessary labor time: "a pressure to equalize the conditions of production and exchange and rates of profit, but now on a world level; and a movement towards world prices and world wages" (Teeple 1995:68). For fishers in Western Europe or North America, it equals real dollar prices at the lowest level in nearly 30 years. The difficulty for fishers at the local level is in trying to 'grab hold' of this new faceless reality.

Tactics of Struggle

When one faces an invisible foe, it may well feel as though struggle is futile. The tactical approach employed by the Bigouden fishers during more than two years of struggle in the early 1990s is simultaneously locked in an old pattern of demonstration and strike while struggling to find a new form of struggle effective in a world in which the price of fish in Senegal or New England has as much of a bearing on one's livelihood as the local system of marketing or government subsidy.

Two components of the fishers' tactical response are worth noting. First, the fishers and their organizations quickly worked to make international contacts. Second, they employed a dual campaign of political protest in the national arena and acts of economic sabotage directed against multinational capital and fish importing firms.

The attempts by the Bigouden fishers to forge international contacts was qualitatively different than, for example, the fund-raising trips organized by striking British Coal miners in Thatcherite England. As opposed to the earlier Union style tour in which the primary purpose was to organize support and raise funds, the Bigouden

fishers recognized that the price paid to the Senegalese had a direct bearing on their price. So, one of their first steps was to forge direct links with fishers' organizations in countries importing fish into France and the European Union in an attempt to raise fish prices outside of France. Other outreach programs were with fishers in Cornwall, Devon, and Ireland who were disenchanted with the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).[10] The aim here was to enlist the support of other European fishers to change provisions of the CFP to the benefit of local fleets.

Simultaneously, the fishers' groups organized political and direct action plans to impede the flow of fish products into France. In the changed field of class relations, simply going on strike had no direct impact on anybody but the fishers themselves. In order to strike at the core of productive relations within the global economy, the Bigouden fishers had to strike at the state's infrastructure and disrupt the transport and sale of fish.

[10] For these anglo fishing skippers, the CFP acted as a severe brake on their ability to expand their fishing capacity. Their primary grievance was that non-British fleets had larger national quotas in waters that, if they were not members of the E.U., would have been British Territorial waters.

Conclusion

The tactical advances made by the fishers in the Bigoudennie suggest that struggle is necessary and gains however small can be won. The Bigouden fishers combined direct action tactics against the state with economic strikes against the corporate sector. They quickly realized that their struggle had to extend beyond the local arena to avoid being ghettoized and demobilized by the state.

The response by the Bigouden fishing skippers to their economic decline and the increased regulatory pressure exerted by the French state and the European Union was to organize simultaneously within the community and internationally. In so doing, they invoked a remembered history of industrial struggle with its roots in a metaphor of community. In the following two chapters I explore this remembered history of local struggle and the social context out of which the current structures of struggle have emerged.

Chapter 3: The Sardine Years --Red Flags and Social Class

Mapped onto the topography of the material conditions of daily life is a culture rooted in the local, yet angled against the continuous incursions from "outside," emerged in the Bigoudennie. In the early period (1860-1914), the outside was represented physically by French speaking cannery managers and owners who brought their money and machinery into the Bigoudennie. Even though they lived among the Bigouden people, their life-ways, dress, and language were ever present indicators of both their social and ethnic differences. The early social movements which emerged in opposition to this new class of owner were articulated within the language of class and class struggle. They were symbolized by the red flag and the singing of the International.[1] Although the struggles were rooted in the local, however, the physical sites were the canneries and the streets of the local towns, they were universal in terms of their connection to an international working class.

In this chapter I examine the early period of social protest which emerged in the context of the new industrial

sardine fisher. The point is to: 1) describe the nature of the strikes through a detailed recounting of two particular incidents (St. Guénole-Penmarc'h, 1909 and Le Guilvinec, 1914), 2) to outline the social conditions that formed the material background of these strikes, and; 3) to explore the symbols and 'lessons' that this period of social protest bequeathed to the future.

Strikes and Demonstrations

The strikes and demonstrations of 187505-1936 in the Bigoudennie were not isolated events, but rather occurred within a context of expanding working class militancy on the national stage (Noiriel 1990:88-95). Union membership, "still under 200,000 in 1890, had risen to around 1 million in 1914" (Margraw 1992:99). The average length of strikes increased from 7 days in 1875 to 21 in 1902 (Noiriel 1990:89). *La Belle Époque,* as this period is called, was simultaneously a time of struggle and misery, tied to the development of new forms of industrial production.

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[1] Ironically the symbol which best exemplifies the constructed identity of the struggles of the 1990s was only barely emergent at the point of these early struggles. See chapter 4 for an expanded discussion.

Trashing Fish in St Guénolé-Penmarc'h, 1909

In the early morning hours of September 7, 1909, a group of about 60 St. Guénolé fishers stopped three wagons of tuna on their way to the Landais cannery. The fishers were protesting the canner's refusal to buy their sardines. First the police, and then the town mayor, asked the fishers to step aside. According to the police report, the fishers calmly held their ground and refused to move.[2] Shortly thereafter, the demonstrating fishers were joined by another 150 from a nearby port, one of whom was carrying the tricolor --the national flag of France The police report continues:

> "They rolled up the blue and the white on the pole to form, in this way, a red flag. Next they tipped over one of the cars. They then took hold of the other two and, despite our presence, they continued the strike and threw the tuna into the sea.[3]

After this momentary burst of "over-excitement," the fishers are reported to have "returned to the calm.

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[2] Archives départmentales, Quimper: File, 4S 358, "Rapport du Brigadier Vivier sur les incident survena le 7 courant à St. Guénolé.

[3] "Ils ont enroulés le bleu et la blanc autour de la hampe formand ainsé un drapeau rouge, puis … ils ont basculé une des voitures puis ils se sont emparès des deux autre voiture et malgre nous (the police) les ont conduits a la grève et jeté le thons a la mer" AD, Quimper: File 4S 358, Penmarc'h, telegram to Prefecutre, Quimper 15:59, 07/09/1909.

Nevertheless, we continued to patrol the streets in groups."[4]

The events described in the police reports were republished in newspaper accounts at the time, and following the court proceedings concerning six men arrested after the demonstration. The individual voices of the fishers do not emerge in the printed record with the exception of a short series of articles reporting on the court case, nearly two years later, in which one of the fishers is reported to have said: "I made like the others, I danced on the fish."[5] Much to the chagrin of the police, all six fishers were acquitted.[6]

Rather than capitulate completely, the cannery owner Landais attempted to meet his production needs with locally grown green peas rather than by imported fish from other ports. Landais was not alone in this strategy. During the Sardine years, between 20 and 60 percent of the plants were also canning vegetables and tuna. Especially during fish strikes it seems that canners believed they could profitably substitute peas or tuna for sardines.

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[4] AD, Quimper: File 4S 358, "Rapport du Brigadier Vivier…"

[5] *La Dépeche*, Brest 21, January 1911.

However, the issue of first buying local fish continued to be a vexing problem and source of conflict between the canners and fishing skippers. Additionally, it provided the primary point of conflict between fishers of different ports within the Bigoudennie.

The police reports focus on the 'over-excitement' of the crowd and the specific physical acts observed by the authorities. The reasons or explanations for the fishers' actions are left unsaid. Reading between socio-economic studies conducted by the Prefecture in Quimper, newspaper reports at the time, and living memory of fishers active in the protests of the 1990s, a different sort of picture emerges. From the viewpoint of the fishers, it was the cannery owner, Landais, who was culpable: Landais had refused to buy their fish and chose, instead, to import tuna from another port. At the court case, one of the fishers testified "that they feared to die of hunger if the local canneries refused to buy their fish."[7]

While Landais saw the fisher's actions as an infringement on his property rights and his ability to conduct business untrammeled by 'violence,' for the

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[6] AD, Quimper: File, 4M 203, Letter to Director de la Sureté Général, Paris au sujet des incident de 7bre 1909 à St. Guénolé-Penmarc'h: Verdict de la Cour d'Assises de Quimper.

fishers the issue was their very ability to survive. To them the primary issues was the price paid by the canneries for the fish as well as the local-first purchasing policy.

From the vantage point of the late 20th century we can point to two underlying causal factors leading to the crisis in 1909: (1) the biology of the sardine, and; (2) a particular confluence of global economic processes. In combination, these factors laid the material basis for crisis in the Breton sardine fishery and, for working people, resulted in a period of 10-15 years of abject poverty and social upheaval.

Fish, such as sardines, pilchards, and herring often exhibit wild fluctuations in terms of stock size and range. Recent research suggests that population size and viability is closely linked with changes in global climatic conditions and oceanic water temperatures. Between 1902 and 1913 the sardine 'disappeared' from the waters off the coast of Brittany (disappeared should here be taken as meaning the stock, such as it was, was not deemed to be of commercial value). Over the course of these ten years, the bulk of the sardines rarely moved

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[7] *La Dépêche*, Brest 21, January 1911.

north of Belle Isle, nearly 100 km to the southeast of the Bigoudennie. To make matters worse, the fish that did move into the Bigoudennie during these years tended to be too small to be profitably canned by the local canning industry.

For the fishers and their families however, this threatened survival. They fought for a price for the few fish they could catch which would allow them their subsistence. It was a desperate time. The situation was so severe that, in 1905, the bakers in St. Guénolé threatened to go on strike and close their shops if the Prefecture did not provide aid to the fishers. In a letter to the Prefect, the bakers' committee said they could no longer afford to extend credit to the fishers and their families. They said "the people will undoubtedly starve without government support."[8]

In the 1909 incident, the fishers were fighting to maintain control over who could sell their fish to the local canneries and over the minimum price they would be paid. They had arranged a deal with the canneries in the area, but Landais had refused to buy at the agreed upon price. On the stand in 1911, one of the fishers testified

[8] AD, Quimper: File 4S 358.

that "the cannery owners had agreed by contract to pay 7 francs per thousand sardines for the first boats, 5 francs for the second boats, with a maximum of 15,000 sardines per boat. … M. Landais had refused to sign the contract, so the fishers decided to demonstrate."[9]

The second issue, concerning who could sell fish to the canneries, was just as crucial as the price paid. This was one of the primary sites of conflict *between* fishers in the different Bigouden ports. Fishers from Ille Tudy on the east and to St. Guénolé on the west fought to maintain local control of fish sales in their port.

These inter-port conflicts serve to highlight the contradictory notion of their being a unified 'Bigouden identity.' Over the course of the 20th century the 'local' has been progressively enlarged to incorporate the entire region as opposed to the village. During the period of the sardine crisis, fishers fought both the canners and each other, simultaneously employing a local and a class identity. Control over sales in the local port led to

[9] *La Dépêche*, Brest 21 January, 1911. The same fisher also commented upon the remarks made by the local mayor: he said, " Do what you want, as long as you do not hurt anyone."

intra-class conflict and struggles with the canners relied upon inter-port solidarity.[10]

In order to protect their livelihood at the local level, fishers wanted the canners to agree to not import fish from other ports or to buy from boats based in a different port. That is, a Penmarc'h cannery was to buy only from boats which habitually sold their fish and hired their crews in Penmarc'h. Landais, however, saw this as a direct infringement of his rights of free enterprise and thus refused to buy the local sardines (which he argued were too small to be useful anyway) and chose, instead, to bring in three wagon loads of tuna from outside the Bigoudennie. In the ensuing conflict all of the tuna was unloaded and destroyed by the fishers.[11]

Despite the 'local' aspect of this incident, it encapsulates the two primary points of conflict within the fishery: struggle over fish prices and control over where fish could be sold. In the fishers' struggles with capital, these have been the two most important points of contention. As systems of marketing, transportation, and

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[10] For details see, AD, Quimper: File 4S 358.

[11] As an aside, several crates of tomatoes in the wagons survived the demonstration unharmed. The fishers carefully unloaded the tomatoes, set them aside, and then proceeded to destroy the tuna.

processing became more and more integrated into a single world economy, the ability of fishers to affect change through strikes or direct actions at the local level has diminished considerably. Yet, even in 1909, the fishers ability to control the price of fish was next to impossible (even when one considers the great number of strikes in the region). Most of the firms engaged in canning were branch plants or had branch plants operating in an international arena which included Spain, Portugal, and North Africa (sites in which the price of labor was lower and the supply of sardines more regular than in Brittany).

The Strike at Le Guilvinec, 1914

The police files maintained in the departmental archives at Quimper reveal the extent to which the canners and the police expected resistance from fishers and cannery workers during the sardine fishing season of 1914. The canners were attempting to rationalize production through the introduction of new processing machinery, a change in the system of purchasing sardines, and by closing certain canneries.

The canners co-operated with the police and provided detailed maps and plans of their canneries along the Breton coastline. In the file for Le Guilvinec the maps of the five local canneries are titled: "plans de protection." The maps indicate the places where the police were to be located during a strike or protest situation. The files list numbers of police (on horse or foot) regularly based in Le Guilvinec and the number and location of potential reinforcements. Essentially, these files document a state-business coalition contingency plan to break strikes should they occur.

The 1914 strike began in the port of Concarneau and rapidly spread along the coast. The canners, represented by a National Syndicate, locked-out the fishers in Concarneau on June 15, 1914 until such time as the fishers would agree to the canners' price and new conditions of sale. The canners had unilaterally decided to change the selling of sardines from the customary system by the thousand (au mille[12]) to a system based on sale by the kilogram. The industrialists argued that the new system gave them better means to control their purchases. The fishers, however, argued that the new system created a

situation in which the canners could under value their catch and thus pay less than might have been the case under the sale *'au mille.'*

For the duration of the strike the majority of the canners believed they could profitably substitute peas or tuna for the sardines. The joint police-business plans of protection focused on access routes along which vegetables and fish from outside the region could be imported. It seems, however, that the canners did not expect the predominantly female workforce in the canneries to join with the fishers. This is however, what happened.

The seven day strike at Le Guilvinec in June, 1914 was far more of a threat to the normal operation of business than the incident at St. Guénolé. First, it was part of a Brittany-wide strike. Second, it was a co-operative venture between shoreworkers (mostly women from fishing families) and fishers. Within several days of the strike in Concarneau, the call to strike had been answered by fishers and cannery workers in Île Tudy, Loctudy, Lesconil, Le Guilvinec, St. Guénolé-Penmarc'h, Audiene, and Dounarnez, effectively shutting down the entire Breton

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[12] According to the fishers, the sale *'au mille'* had been in use "since time immemorial" (*Le Dépêche du Brest*, 24 June, 1914).

sardine fishery. At the peak of the strike, more than 7,000 fishers and 3,000 cannery workers were out. The extent of support for the strike varied from port to port. Outside of Concarneau, the strongest public manifestation of support came from the fishers and cannery workers in Le Guilvinec.[13]

Until their fellow fishers in Concarneau had gone on strike, the Guilvinists had seemingly accepted the change in the selling system without much publicly reported opposition. The issue was discussed in a general meeting of fishers on June 22, 1914. At the meeting, the Guilvinists decided to go on strike in a act of solidarity with "their comrades in Concarneau."[14] The strike was therefore declared and the boats stayed at anchor in port. The regional newspaper commented that "the population is calm and the mariners speculate phlegmatically along the quay facing the sea which they have momentarily deserted. … for their families a day of unemployment will be a day without bread."[15]

On the morning of June 23, the fishers gathered in a local hall to debate their continued participation in the

[13] AD, Quimper: File 4S

[14] *Le Dépêche du Brest* 23 June, 1914.

strike. To strengthen their position, they passed a motion demanding an end to all work in the canneries until the canners reverted to the former system. They called upon the cannery workers to join their strike. A meeting of cannery workers was organized immediately. At the meeting, the gathered women, most of them wives, mothers, daughters or sisters of the striking fishers, agreed to join the strike until the former system was reestablished. To show their support they immediately began a march through the streets of Le Guilvinec.

The demonstrators, followed by children, began their march by serving notice to Mr. Guégan, manager of the cannery Delory of Lorient, that no work would be carried out in his cannery until he returned to buying sardines by the thousand. The plant manager replied that "he was an employee like them and must execute his own boss's orders. The women and girls then shouted: 'Vive la grève! And led the march to the cannery Salles."[16]

At the cannery Salles, the demonstrators entered the plant and urged their fellow workers to join the strike. According to police and newspaper reports, the plant was quickly emptied of all workers who left the vegetables

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[15] Ibid.

waiting to be canned to rot. The new contingent of workers joined the demonstration and they all moved off to the third of five canneries, the Société Brestoise. The manager, however, had already taken precautions and locked all the entrances to the cannery with his workforce on the inside. The demonstrators banged on the doors and demanded that they be opened so that they might discuss the strike with their fellow workers.

According to a *Le Dépêche* reporter, the 'energetic approach of the special commissar, who resolutely defended the right to work, was respected' and the workers stopped trying to break down the doors to the plant.[17] The commissar was less successful, however, in breaking up the demonstrators who proceeded to set up outside the plant for the rest of the day.

In the newspaper report of the demonstration, the reporter comments: "Mischievous children play about their feet while our charming Bigoudens busy themselves crocheting Irish Lace. 'We do want to strike, but we won't leave our precious lace' they say." For the reporter, the women's crocheting is seen as bemusing: while engaged in something ostensibly as serious as a strike, the women

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[16] *Le Dépêche du Brest*, 24 June, 1914.

chose to pass their time crocheting lace. However, concealed in the apparently innocent act of domestic labor is something far more important than the reporter appears to have recognized. In the detailed socio-economic surveys conducted by the Prefecture each year during the so-called Sardine Crisis, one can see that the sale of lace brought in as much, if not more, to each family as did a women's work in a cannery. Thus, their crocheting was more than simply a way to pass the afternoon at a demonstration; they were simultaneously earning money to feed their families and attempting to improve their working conditions and pay. Perhaps, if the reporter had realized this, he would not have been so amused by what the "charming Bigoudens" were doing.

Fishers and cannery workers joined forces to demonstrate outside of the Salles Cannery early on the morning of June 24. The cannery was operating behind a barrier of 20 police on horse and 10 on foot[18]. The manager wanted to complete canning the fresh peas which had been left in plant following the previous day's strike. However, when the demonstrators (mostly women)

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[17] Ibid.

[18] AD, Quimper: File 4S 361 Divers, *Raport sur la crise sardiniere du Guilvinec, 16-24 Juin 1914.*

returned to the cannery, he was forced to close the plant and send his workers home. Even after the plant emptied, the demonstrators refused to move. When the police tried to disperse them, the workers fought back by throwing rocks and sand. Two hours latter, the workers left on their own accord to attend a meeting.

Representatives of the striking Concarneau fishers and an official of the Fédération des Inscrits Maritimes addressed an audience of 2000 people in the streets of Le Guilvinec. M. Gauthier, of the Fédération, talked about the importance of joining the union, the C.G.T.: "To win your struggle, you need the union," he told them . "Only together, united in a union will you be able to force the bosses to listen to you." M. Morillon, secretary of the Syndicat des Matelot Pêcheurs de Concarneau, told the Guilvinec fishers that they would be allowed to sell their fish in Concarneau to canners who had broken ranks with the other industrialists. Following the speeches, the local union announced a meeting later in the day to discuss what action to take, given that the Concarneau fishers had agreed to allow them to sell fish in

Concarneau until the Guilvinec canners returned to the old system of sales.[19]

In the meeting which followed, the fishers decided to start fishing again and to give 7% of their catch to the strikers. They decided to remain ashore Saturday, the 26th of June, 1914. Sunday the 27th would be their first day back to sea. A portion of the fleet would sell in Le Guilvinec to the one canner, Chacun, who had agreed to return to the old system of sales. However, he would only purchase 80,000 sardines (approximately the catch of 5-10 boats). The majority of the fleet would sail with their catch to Concarneau and sell to the canners there who had agreed to return to the old system of sale. All these plans, however, were complicated by the events of June 25, 1914.

The day began with a demonstration in front of the Société Brestoise cannery, the only plant in which workers had not joined the strike. The women strikers marched to the cannery with a red flag at the head of their parade. They tried to enter the cannery but the police pushed them back. The Special Commissar sent a runner for reinforcements and within five minutes 20 additional

[19] AD, Quimper: File 4S 361.

mounted police were on the scene. During the scuffle, all of the Société Brestoise workers quit working and left the plant except for the forewoman and her husband. The strikers held their place against the police for two hours, yelling for the forewoman to leave and throwing rocks at the police. When the woman finally left the plant, she was met by a chorus of boos.

According to the Special Commissar of Police, the actions of the women were directly attributable to the influence of the red flag. In *Le Dépêche du Brest*, the commissar was quoted as saying he: "knew there would be trouble as soon as the seditious emblem was raised and, there it was, at the moment the flag was raised a volley of rocks was thrown at the police."[20] Fearing a continued and escalating level of social turmoil, the police requested additional reinforcements and help from the armed forces.

With the news of the arrival of additional police and armed forces in Le Guilvinec, the fishers reversed their previous decision to return to a limited fishery. Over the weekend of June 26-27, 1914, forty soldiers from Quimper and 18 more police officers were added to the 50

[20] *Le Dépêche du Brest* 26 June, 1914.

or so police already stationed in Le Guilvinec. The fishers met with the local deputy, George Le Bail, who agreed to act on their behalf and ask the prefect to withdraw the armed forces. In return, the officials of the fishermen's trade union made a written promise that they would desist from criminal acts during the strike.

Despite their fractured unity, the canners association declared a lock-out in all of their canneries in Finistere. However, the canners where unable to sustain co-operation amongst themselves, and by 11 July, 1914 the majority of canners had reverted to the old system of purchases (Guéguen and Le Maitre 1990:407). The strike had effectively maintained both fish prices and the traditional system of sales. The ability of the fishers to force the canners to accept their demands relied upon the solidarity between cannery workers and fishers: a form of solidarity which may well be more a product of household dynamics than class consciousness.

Putting Food on the Table: or, the material conditions of existence amongst the working poor in Le Guilvinec.

The actual cost of living and level of income for fishers and their families during the two decades immediately proceeding the First World War are difficult to determine in any exact manner. The reports submitted to the Prefecture between 1909 and 1913 variously estimate family budgets based upon wages paid by local canneries to their workers and to fishers, surveys of actual household budgets, tax reports, and census data.[21] These reports document extreme variations between different canneries within and between different Breton ports. In addition to these variations of income, one can note additional variations even within a single cannery, reflecting differences between unskilled female labor versus skilled male labor, long-term core employees versus short-term employees, and differing levels of production.

In the Bigouden ports, a reliance upon sardine, mackerel and, to a lesser extent, tuna, created a highly seasonal fishery in which both fishers and plant workers were unemployed for close to half of the year. Thus, fishing families could not rely solely upon earnings from

[21] AD Quimper, File: 4S 360.

the fishing season. They had to find alternative work during the off season. Unlike their peasant cousins who could rely on food reserves put by during the harvest, fishing households (especially those in Le Guilvinec proper) had no such opportunities to fall back on.

In 1912, fishing household incomes ranged from a low of 770 Francs to a high of 1290 Francs, or from 130-215 Francs per working person in the household. More than half of this income was generated during the three or four months of the sardine fishery. How do these household incomes compare with other workers in France at the time? According to Lévy-Leboyer and Bourguignon, a Breton worker in 1882 spent between 129 and 282 francs per person per year on food. The average food costs suggest that the Le Guilvinec fishers were living very close to the edge of not being able to buy sufficient food.

The average daily wages of women and men working in the fish canneries were, respectively, 1.75-2.5 and 3-4 Francs per day. This compares poorly with the average daily wage of women in other industrial areas and with male laborers in Paris (Lévy-Leboyer and Bourguignon). An important supplementary source of income for Bigouden households came from the lace work of women.

Introduced to the Bigoudennie by a catholic order of Nuns during a fishing crisis in 1903, the 'Irish' style lace-work quickly became an important economic activity and was estimated by the Prefecture in 1911 to contribute as much as 5 Francs per day to the household budget of fishing families in the Bigoudennie. Lace-work was conducted by all the female members of the household and young boys. Children, starting at about 11 were put to work crocheting. The prefect estimated that lace-workers earned 150 Francs per year per household and in times of poor fishing, their lace-work made it possible to feed their families.

The period between 1900-1914 is remembered as one of extreme poverty. In his memoir, The Horse of Pride, Pierre-Jakez Helias recalls women from Le Guilvinec and Penmarc'h, with crying children, come begging for food during the winter. The Prefecture notes that several hundred families left the Bigoudennie in 1909. The struggle to put food on the table took up most of the families' day. The strikes that developed during this period emerged out of an anger and sense of injustice fed by hunger.

Strikes and Demonstrations

A common theme linking the strikes and political actions during the sardine years is their reference point in a language of class and struggle and their invocation of highly symbolic markers such as the red flag. In the contemporary the strikes themselves have become symbolic markers of struggle. This is not to deny the abject poverty and the real socio-political issues which gave birth to these particular struggles, but rather to point out, to prefigure, the underlying multiplicity of meanings and the ambivalence with which people entering periods of crisis "conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language" (Marx 1969:398).

The two most pressing symbols of struggle marshaled to the defense of the Bigouden strikers between the late 1880s and the eve of World War II were the red flag and the singing of the International. The flag proceeded the processions. Singing was a ritualized way of opening both socialist and union meetings - duly recorded by police

spies in and amongst the strikers and observing from the sides[22].

The red flag is fraught with a double nature: simultaneously "national" in its invocation of the French Revolution and international as the flag of workers' revolution. In both cases the flag symbolizes a threat and provocation to the state.[23] It is a reminder of the rights of citizenship within the republic. But more fundamentally, it is part of a collective project engaged in creating "something that has never yet existed" (Marx 1969:398). And, as Noiriel, points out: "the red flag became the badge of highest honor; it became the late nineteenth century's rallying emblem for workers and their struggle everywhere, to the detriment of the tricolor flag symbolizing the Republic" (1990:94).

The singing of the international can be 'read' (as indeed metropolitan based academics have sometime done, personal communication) as a mis-reading of the French by

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[22] I examine the detailed nature of surveillance in an ongoing project funded by the Humanities and Social Science Research Fund, UBC called: Ethnographies of Violence: Police Reports of Strikes, Meetings, and Demonstrations in the Bigoudennie, France (1900-1939).

[23] The red flag was seen by police as a potent inflammatory symbol. During a strike in Le Guilvinec, one police official suggested the very presence of a red flag was instrumental in precipitating an incident of rock throwing in which two police officers were lightly wounded (*La Dépêche du Brest* 26 June, 1914; Police Report, AD, Quimper: File, 4S 361 Divers).

Breton speakers: "en terre nationale" as opposed to "internationale." While it is more likely that this is a contemporary *mis*-reading, it points to the violence being enacted upon the Breton people. The gibe at their singing in French fails to acknowledge that their first language, Breton, was actively being erased by the national state. Clearly, these symbolic acts were 'read' by the state as provocative and, in one instance, all flags but the tricolor were banned from a public parade.[24]

As the passage of time separates the present from its past, the rough edges of memory are rounded off. One's political perspective is no antidote. Both Left and Right (re)construct romantic images of the past with which to fight their battles for the future. As Sider argues in "Cleansing History" (1996), historical renderings have simplified the past in such a way as to paper over real processes of differentiation and struggle. For contemporary Bigoudens, the period of social protest and struggle during "L'Épopée de la Sardine"[25] was a potent symbol of solidarity mobilized in the context of the protests of the 1990s.

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[24] AD, Quimper: File, 4M 162, Manifestations.

[25] See Boulard 1991 and Tillon 1977:64-82,84-85).

The period between 1905-1936, a time when "on chantait rouge" (Tillon, 1977) is reworked in the context of the contemporary protests as a romantic period in which the 'community' was united in opposition to an exploitative class of owners. The contemporary view of these strikes is part critique of the present and part longing for the past. The past is here constructed as a time in which familial ties were strong and community solidarities important. The contemporary rendering of the "Epic of the Sardine" evokes the importance of community and kin-based networks of mutual support and solidarity while acknowledging their decisive opposition to the industrial 'outsiders,' represented by the cannery owners and managers who lived in their midst but, in a fundamental way, maintained an impassable social distance between themselves and their workers.

In this chapter I have described in some detail a series of strikes and contestations over which the fishers and cannery workers where struggling. In the following chapter I will continue the journey back in the local historical memory and describe the development of a particular feature which played a significant role as a

marker of local identity during the protests of the 1990s: the Bigouden coiffe.

Chapter 4: Lace Coiffes and Industrial Work

In this chapter I explore the socio-political development of the Bigouden coiffe from its pre-Revolutionary origins to its contemporary manifestations. The tall cylindrical coiffe of the Bigoudennie has become the prime symbol (if not caricature) of the region (Segalen, 1991:2). From tourist brochures to Union banners, the Bigouden coiffe marks out an important domain of local identity. The fetishization of the coiffe both as emblem of the contemporary and marker of the exotic reveals the intimate link between the processes of the everyday and the violence of capital.

The origin of the coiffe is a subject of some debate (Duigou 1990; Cornou 1993; Cousinié-Kervennic 1994). One particularly robust local story roots it in a peasant uprising in 1675, "La Revolte des Bonnets Rouges." The historical evidence, such as it is, suggests a far more recent origin (Duigou 1990:12). As I argue in this chapter, the origin of the coiffe is linked in popular memory with local sentiments of resistance and struggle. I am not here concerned with the factuality of these stories. What is crucial is the manner in which the social violence of capitalism is etched into the cultural

matrix through popular costume and memory. In this chapter, I examine the socio-political development of the coiffe and its symbolic relevance within the domain of contemporary social struggles.

The Coiffe in its Present Form

The coiffe in its present shape has the appearance of a tall white-lace cylinder worn on top of a women's head. The coiffe is actually a rather elaborate head-dress that is comprised of bonnet and lace cylinder. The hair is first pulled up into a tight bun on the back of the head upon which a small black-cloth bonnet is secured. The lace cylinder is then attached to the bonnet by use of hair pins and two lace ribbons tied under the women's chin.

The coiffe is normally accompanied by a plain black dress and shawl. On special occasions (fêtes, cultural and religious events, marriages, etc.…) an elaborately embroidered vest and blouse are also worn. The dominant colors of the vest are orange and yellow (the colors of the pre-Revolutionary Barony of Pont L'Abbé and the contemporary Bigouden flag).

The coiffe appears in three specific social-symbolic contexts: (1) as a regular item of clothing worn by a

dwindling number of elderly women; (2) as a tourist and marketing image, and; (3) as worn by young women at special 'cultural' events. Given the extent of tourism during the summer months, the dividing line between these three specific contexts can at times become blurred, as everyday life is transformed into performance.

It is not uncommon, for example, to see several elderly women with coiffes in Pont L'Abbé on market day. During the height of the tourist season, one may witness the rather surreal sight of an elderly Bigouden moving slowly through the market, stopping here and there as she makes her weekly purchases. Her coiffe, visible above the crowds, stands like a lighthouse attracting the turned gaze of tourists, the boldest of whom are busy taking her photo as she passes by. A similar scene replays itself in the heart of the rainy Breton winter, except the cast of thousands is reduced to just the local inhabitants who take no notice of the "old Bigouden" as she passes by her coiffe encased in a special clear plastic bag to protect it from the rain and wind.

The coiffe as icon is splashed across a multitude of advertisements, publicity brochures, and tourist knickknacks. Everyone from the local tourist authority,

the town council of Pont L'Abbé, to a windsurfing school in Loctudy uses it for publicity. Photographs of women wearing the coiffe are to be found on an innumerable variety of post cards. My favorite example is a carton image of a feisty, muscular Bigouden who, with her coiffe on top, is pictured on the local CGT's union banner, sleeves rolled up and ready for battle.

At the annual Féte du Brodeuse in July, a parade and cultural festival is held to celebrate local culture (and, not insignificantly, to attract tourists). Part tourist extravaganza, part cultural revival, the festival of embroidery has been slowly growing since its inception the 1950s, but exploded in popularity during the 1980s and 1990s.

Up until the late 1950s most of the women in the Bigoudennie wore a coiffe for all manner of occasions ranging from work in the canneries and work in the home to important public occasions and events. Few, if any, young women coming of age in the 1960s wore the coiffe. Coincident with the wider processes of 'modernization,' the coiffe was seen as retrogressive, traditional in a negative sense, and as a marker of inferior social class. Emulation of aristocratic costume was replaced by an

emulation of 'bourgeois' costume with its attendant understatement and neutrality (Le Wita 1994:57-61). Though modeled on an aristocratic costume, the coiffe is every bit as much a product of the 20th century as are automobiles or assembly-line production.

In the late 1980s, young women whose mothers stopped wearing the coiffe in the 1950s joined folk groups in which they wore the local costume and performed 'traditional' folk-dances. The growth of the pan-Celtic movement and its attendant folk-festivals is not unlike the growth of the pan-Indian pow-wow movement in North America. In the 1990s, a growing number of young women are choosing to be married in traditional costume and/or have their wedding pictures taken in a coiffe.

The coiffe pre-existed the arrival of the industrial fishery. But its phenomenal development and elaboration occurred at the hands of the young women who worked in the new canneries starting from the late 1800s. In the mid 1800s the distinctive coiffe was little more than a suggestion, a slight peak at the front of an otherwise unremarkable bonnet. The coiffe rose (both literally and figuratively) out of the flux and disruption initiated by the fishery during the early years of this century.

Innovation began amongst the young women working in the canneries and then spilled inland.

The last generation to wear the coiffe as a regular item of clothing was also the last generation to work in the canneries, which closed down in the 1950s. Coincidentally, although by no means causally linked, the decline of the coiffe as an item of everyday attire occurred along with the withdrawal of the canning industry from the region. As the canneries left, job opportunities for women shifted into the service sector (retail and government). In the 1980s and 1990s the coiffe re-emerged in folk festivals, pan-Celtic cultural events, and as a marketing icon in the tourist trade. The contemporary coiffe has lost it link to the everyday and, with the exception of a dwindling group of elderly women, is now worn only as a costume. It is an extravagant marker of local identity symbolically linked with an imagined past.

Stories of the Coiffe's Origin

One of the most enduring stories of the coiffe's origins dates to a late 17th century peasant revolt which, in the Bigoudennie, was called the revolt of the red bonnets. The revolt was part of a more generalized Breton

uprising opposed to the imposition of a new tax levied by Louis XIV to finance the his ongoing battles with other European states. The specific mechanism was the introduction of a paper stamp that had to be attached to legal documents to indicate that the tax had been paid.

In Brittany the new tax was seen to be an attack on the privileges of the province: "a declaration of hostilities" (Duigou 1989:3). The revolt began with a riot in Rennes on April 18, 1675 and quickly turned from protest against the tax to an outright rebellion against the feudal system. Peasants sacked the country mansions of the nobility and executed nobles. According to Duigou, the Royal edict acted as a catalyst and set off latent anger against the feudal system (1989:3). Peasants in the Bigoudennie entered the fray two months later on June 23, 1675 when a local seignior was killed during a church mass at Combrit.[26]

By all accounts the insurgents extended their control over the Barony of Pont L'Abbé within three or four days. Pursued by the insurgents, the local nobility withdrew first to Pont L'Abbé and then to Quimper. On the 2nd of July, 1675, the insurgents gathered at Notre Dame de

Tréminou, a small church in Plomeur, a scant five kilometers from Pont L'Abbé. A Peasant Code was proclaimed. It established a popular militia and abolished feudal rights which were described as "a tyrannical enemy of the freedom of Amorique[27]" (Duigou 1989:31). In the ensuing two months, government troops slowly moved across the Breton landscape putting down resistance. The troops arrived in force in the Bigoudennie in September, 1675 and, between September 2 and 17 smashed down the steeples of 6 local churches that had been used by the insurgents to coordinate their revolt.

According to the historian Duigou:

> Les Bigoudnes ne s'y sont pas trompés. Il est tout de même révélateur que la légende la plus célèbre du pays a trait aux Bonnets Rouges. Chacun sait que la hauteur vertigineuse de la coiffe de Pont L'Abbé trouve son origine das les troubles de 1675: <<Le duc de Chaulnes a ras"e nos clochers? Auraient proclamé, surperbes, les femmers de Combrit et de Lambourg. Eh bien, désormais, nos les porterons sur la tête!>> (1989:19).

Duigou and others are quick to point out the mythic aspect of this story of the coiffe's origin. However, what is important here is not so much the story of what

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[26] Nicolas Euzénou de Kersulaün, Seigneur du Cosquer was fatally wounded by members of the congregation of the Church of Combrit while sitting in his reserved box during a high mass.

actually happened, but rather, the ways in which the story roots the coiffe's origin in a moment of peasant resistance (actually open revolt) against feudalism. As myth, the story speaks to us about a local sentiment of resistance within which gender and class are intertwined. In the present, the story is told as parable, understood as not 'actually real, but 'essentially' true in its reference to the power of women, the history of resistance, and the primordiality of local distinctiveness.

In debunking the 'myth,' two important factors are left untouched: (1) the social context out of which the story appears to have emerged, and (2) the gendered aspect of the story. The first factor speaks to the context of the present: that is the simultaneous presents of the Sardine Years and the present of the social struggles of the early 1990s. The second makes any simple correspondence between class and struggle difficult to sustain without moving into the domain of tension and struggle within as well as between classes.

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[27] Amorique is the Latin name for Brittany.

Conclusion: The Political Context

The coiffe emerged within a period of intense social strife in the Bigoudennie which culminated in the election of the United Front government of 1936. The mass working class movement was also part of an inescapable process of proletarianization in which a rural peasantry was transformed into a semi-urban proletariat. The seemingly anachronistic, even paradoxical, expression of 'tradition' as manifested in the elaboration of the locally distinct lace coiffe must be placed in the context of these processes of social dislocation. As Brian Palmer points out:

> Capitalism does not so much come to the countryside. The backcountry is itself the site of historical transformation, generating social (gender/racial) relations, protoindustrialization, demographic convulsions, and market forms pivotal in the transition to capitalism" (1994:15).

The Bigoudennie was one space within a wider field of industrialization and social strife which, in terms of the fishery in 1900, included 10,000 fishers and 30,000 workers in more than 100 canneries plus several thousands more in support industries such as net making and boat building.

It is crucial to note that the elaboration of a 'traditional' costume was not isolated to the Bigoudennie. Similar processes can be identified throughout the region. In practically all cases these examples of "cultural innovation" stem first and foremost from young women entering waged-employment in industrial food processing plants: thus simultaneously maintaining and severing their connections with the agricultural-based networks of kin, reciprocity, and exploitation. As Sider notes, such examples of intensifying cultural particularism are directly associated with the elaboration and intensification of locally specific forms of inequality, both within and between communities (1997).

The coiffe emerged as a symbol of local identity at precisely the moment at which Bigouden society was undergoing a transition from a rural agricultural society to an industrial capitalist economy with women economically and metaphorically in the middle, working in fishplants and married to artisans and their crews. The structure of social inequality was changing from one in which the primary lines of control over labor were located within the family, to an industrial waged-economy in which the previous kin-based forms of control were disrupted.

The old paternalism of the 'father' was being replaced by a 'new' paternalism in which the patron of the cannery or factory now appropriated the labor power of household members. Given the division of labor between men and women, this new form of social inequality had different meanings for the genders. Men working on the fishboats were nominally independent of the direct control of capital over their labor while women were working under the direct control of capital.

In this chapter I have described and analyzed how a 'traditional' costume developed within the context of the transition from a peasant-based economy to an industrial capitalist economy. In Part Two, I turn to a close examination of the material conditions of the everyday: what it is to be a fisher or a member of a fishing family in the Bigoudennie today. Then, in the concluding section, I will return to a discussion of the politics of survival and the symbols of struggle.

PART TWO: The Material Conditions of the Everyday

In the preceding conclusion the politics of survival was discussed in terms of three specific moments of organized resistance and the attendant symbols employed in those struggles. In this section, I write about the material conditions out of which the political movements emerged. The day-to-day conditions, tasks, cycles and responsibilities are mundane and repetitive. Yet, they are simultaneously the terrain within and upon which the struggles for survival are inscribed: here is the site of anguish and terror, fear and love. These sites of the everyday are what makes the politics of survival worthwhile. The flying of red flags at the head of a march, or the majesty of the lace coiffe, are simply the distilled manifestation of life lived moment to moment.

Chapter 5: Episode not Epoch: Building Capitalism in the Hinterland

My inspiration for the title of this chapter comes from Eric Hobsbawm's essay "Industrialization: the Second Phase 1840-95." Specifically, in reference to working class acceptance of capitalism he wrote: "Contrary to the apologists of the system, it [capitalism] offered them little even in theory, at any rate, so long as they remained workers -- which most of them were destined to do. Until the railway era it did not even offer them its own permanence. It might collapse. It might be overthrown. It might be *an episode and not an epoch*" (1969:123). While the empirical details and actual situation that Hobsbawm describes are undeniably different, for working classes in the south Bigoudennie, industrial capitalism has in fact been more episode than epoch. The south Bigoudennie is part of capitalism's "backcountry," regions which sit idle or ignored until they are colonized by capital or completely abandoned.[1]

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[1] See, for example, Brian Palmer's (1995) description of the arrival of Goodyear in the backcountry of Ontario, Canada. What is important in Palmer's analysis is that regions which seem to be outside the normal orbit of industrial capitalism are crucially located as potential reserves both of 'space' and labour. In the case of Goodyear, the relocation of its tire plant out of an industrial urban setting (Toronto) into the countryside served the corporation in terms of undermining worker organization in Toronto and in extracting concessions in a backcountry area starved for jobs.

The birth of the fishing industry in the Bigoudennie was accompanied by a profound social transformation whose corollary was the near total disappearance of agriculture. Prior to the emergence of the industrial fishery of the late 1880s economic development was held in check by a set of social relations of production in the peasant community reliant upon containing labor power within the family. The coastal people employed a variety of subsistence strategies as part of their survival kit, among which was an inshore dingy fishery. Growing population in the late 1800s increased pressure on the local peasant economy which was unable to absorb the surplus labor power. The impetuous for change emerged from developments in the national economy. The growing network of railways (spurred on by industrial interests) finally reached the Quimper in 1863 and Pont L'Abbe in 1872. Capital investment in physical plant followed quickly. The implantation of industrial capital in the Bigoudennie broke the bonds of peasant social relations and set the stage for the region's brief flirtation with industrial capitalism. Crucial to this process was the existence of a potentially surplus labor force and a growing metropolitan demand for cheap food products to feed France's northern industrial workforce.

From Peasant to Worker

The pre-1880s peasant agriculture in the Bigoudennie had stagnated under the pressure of social relations tied to a peasant system of production locked into "tenant farming and an egalitarian system of transmitting goods" at the point of generational succession (Segalen 1984:130; see also 1991). By the late 1800s, growing population increased the pressure on the local peasant economy to such an extent that out-migration was, for many their only alternative. However, the development of a commercial fishing industry completely transformed the social and economic structure of the Bigoudennie. According to Segalen: "The crisis in agriculture ought to have resulted in a mass exodus from the countryside at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. However, this was deferred for thirty years by the growth of fishing and related activities" (Segalen 1991:234; see also Vaulcare 1985:15).

Surplus labor, as Jose Nun reminds us, "is necessarily a 'relative' concept, and a surplus only exists in relation to a given type of production system" (Worsley 1984:188). Prior to the arrival of the sardine

canneries one can not truly talk of a reserve army of labor in the Bigoudennie waiting to be called into service. We can note that the form of agricultural production relied on human (not machine) labor and that little progress was made toward agricultural intensification. According to Segalen, "demographic pressure militated against any kind of technological innovation" (1991:224). The introduction of machinery at the end of the 19th century occurred in the context of the development of the sardine industry. The possibility of replacing agricultural workers with machinery and thereby creating "surplus labor" emerged out of the transition to industrial capitalism within the local.

The primary limiting factor for the development of the fishing industry was the lack of adequate and accessible rail linkages between the Bigoudennie and Paris. Investment in transportation infrastructure by the state and private enterprise, and in sardine factories by private capital, rapidly transformed the local economy[2]. In the space of less than 10 years Le Guilvinec jumped in

[2] For an interesting discussion of railways and 1) their importance in the development of "second phase" industrial capitalism see Hobsbawm (1969:109-133); 2) their role in turning "peasants into Frenchmen see Weber (1976:195-220), and: 3) a comparison of British, American and French approaches to the construction of railways, see Dobbin (1994).

population from a small hamlet of fewer than 200 to over 6,000 people working in the canneries and on the fishboats.

During this "episode" of industrialization (1880-1950) the face of coastal Bigoudennie was fundamentally altered. Involvement in the industrial waged-economy was crucial for more than half of the 30,000 people living within the southern portion of the Bigoudennie. In a report to the Prefecture dated 1913, a "typical" household included six family members recorded as earning income from industrial sources. While one may speculate that some form of subsistence practice was used to supplement the household budget, the report unambiguously states that the people living in the newly urbanized coastal strip no longer engaged in any form of agriculture.

The primary impetus toward economic development came in the form of the investment of industrial capital based in metropolitan France. Railroads created an opportunity for capital investment to access the resident labor pool and, in the process, remade the local population into a Bigouden working class. The first step was the extension of joint state-private funded rail links into the Bigoudennie. Quimper, the regional capital, was linked

with the markets of Paris by rail in 1863. A regional spur line linked the Bigoudennie with Quimper (and thus to Paris) in 1884. While it is alluring to see the railway as being the causal factor in the phenomenal growth of the sardine fishery in the Bigoudennie (within 2 years of the establishment of a rail head in Quimper, five sardine canneries were established, and by 1901, 20 canneries were operating) the development of the railway should not be seen in isolation from the metropolitan-based food industry nor the local level political leadership's economic aspirations. The expansion of the rail links into the region was pursued as a development strategy and, as such, was a product of the wider processes of industrial development in France at that time.

The expansion of the sardine fishery in the south Bigoudennie was part of a larger expansion of the sardine fishery that followed the introduction of the canning process in 1840 in Nantes, several hundred kilometers to the south of the Bigoudennie. This new technique for preserving fish revolutionized the fishing industry and, when combined with assembly style production procedures,

swept the coast and around the world.[3] Regions like the Bigoudennie in which there were high levels of surplus labor and rural poverty were targeted by the canning firms.

The rapid transformation of the economy gave birth to a working class unfamiliar with the discipline that capital expected of its workers. The resulting militancy severely hindered the process of unfettered accumulation. While labor power may exist in the raw form it must be made into a labor force. This requires forcing/coercing workers as well as workers' own accommodation and desire to change/adapt/ acclimatize.

The canners encountered two basic obstacles to their seemingly unstoppable expansion: 1) an irregular supply of fish due to the seasonal nature of the fishery; and 2) a militant and politically radicalized workforce (Adam 1987; Chatain 1994:40-43; Lachèvre 1994; Lebel 1981; Le Coz 1985; Martin 1994; Vauclare 1985, 1987). The supply of fish alternated between oversupply and scarcity and, in the context of an organized working class, made ongoing profitability difficult. The canners responded to the

[3] The expansion of the commercial cannery fishery was not limited to France, but was part of a world wide development in which the industrializing world of the time was incorporating peasant and tribal regions into a newly emerging global industrial-capitalist world system.

militant labor movement by: 1) requesting government mandated control of supply; 2) introducing labor saving technology to take over control of the work process; and 3) investing in Portugal, Spain, Algeria, and Morocco.

Attempts were made to diversify into other fisheries (trap, longline, and tuna). However, the development of these fisheries was limited. Their targeted species were not sufficiently profitable for the fish processes to encourage more than an occasionally foray in new directions (though the tuna fishery did, to a certain extent, supply the canneries in times of under supply or strike). Overall, however, the artisanal fishery was unable to supply the processing sector on a regular enough basis. Some canneries attempted to counteract the problem of irregular supply by switching to vegetables in the off season; which in turn led to the development of back-braking pea-farming in the Penmarc'h peninsula. The canneries that survived into the 1960s were those which had turned away from fish processing and focused more generally on processing agricultural products.

In the 1950s the dominance of the sardine fishery began to wane under the pressure of competition from lower wage areas in the French colonial possessions (notably

Algeria and Morocco) and Spain and Portugal. Without strong protective tariffs and/or greater rationalization the local food-canning industry was non-competitive. Rationalization was not an option due to the strength of organized labor. Thus, by the early 1960s, most of the canneries had been shut down. In 1996 the two canneries remaining in the region primarily process imported fish.

The Rise of the Trawl Fishery

During the period between 1906 and 1945 the Bigouden fleet was completely transformed in terms of gear, vessels, and the structure of ownership. The cost of this transformation was underwritten by the state funded Credit Maritime. The Credit Maritime was established by the French state in 1906, in part as a reaction to a crisis of under-supply in the sardine fishery and partly to assist artisanal fishers in purchasing and outfitting their own fishing vessels. Initially this worked to the interests of both canners and fishers. The canneries did not have to finance or own the fishing vessels, thus shifting the burden of economic risk. For the fishers, access to capital allowed them a modicum of independence from the canners, consistent with an artisanal mode of subsistence.

It is important to point out that while the state was assisting fishers in becoming "little capitalists" it was significantly less supportive of other avenues of economic improvement, such as the formation of trade unions.

The primary technological transformation was the shift from sail to motor power and a gradual enlargement of the vessels themselves (partly to accommodate the added weight of the motors, partly to take advantage of the vessels' newly extended fishing range and catching capacity). The first 5 motorized vessels were put into service in 1924. By 1934 the number of motorized vessels had jumped to 634.

Ironically, the state-funded program of motorization figured prominently in the collapse of the sardine canners. The switch from sail to motor opened up the door to the successful development of fisheries other than sardines and mackerel (the dominant fish species caught prior to the Second World War). During the War ground fish became the most sought after. This change in primary target was linked to the adoption of trawl gear that had been made possible with the introduction of motorized vessels and hydraulics. By 1950 trawling was incontestably the primary focus of activity in the

fishery. Whereas sardines were linked with industrial canning plants in the region, the newly developed trawl fishery was oriented toward a fresh fish market based first in a regional network of small retailers and then in the large corporate distribution system of fish auctions and supermarkets.[4]

The introduction of trawl technology and the motorization of the fishing fleet cleared the way for the development of a relatively independent artisanal fishery to develop in the Bigoudennie. In the post World War II period, trawling made it possible for the fishers to circumvent price and market controls by the canneries and to enter the rapidly growing fresh fish market. The fresh fish market was better suited toward maintaining higher ex-vessel fish prices. Initially fishers and fish buyers used the existing rail links to transport fish to market. Very quickly after the end of the Second World War, road and highway modernization programs made trucking more attractive due to its lower cost and greater flexibility.

The infrastructural support for the development of the sardine fishery was laid down by the railroad and the

[4] The data for this observation derive from interviews with current (1995-96) fishers and archival sources located in the Departmental Archive of Finistere, in Quimper.

canning process. The post-war fishery developed in conjunction with the techniques of refrigeration and an expanding highway system that made it possible to ship fish by truck. The new reliance on truck transport (the major local trucking firm was established in Le Guilvinec in 1954) allowed a greater flexibility in marketing for fishboat owners. In the place of the departing canneries a system of government run fish auctions emerged.

The shift away from an industrial cannery fishery to a fresh market artisanal fishery had a major impact on the structure of employment in the region.[5] While the employment of men on the fishboats remained relatively stable into the 1960s, employment prospects for women disappeared as the canneries and subsidiary factories closed their doors and moved away. Ironically, at a time when the rest of rural Brittany was 'modernizing' the

[5] In this context, the fishery maintained a degree of economic independence. It is a highly contingent independence and was partly a product of the industrial capitalist class not wishing to take up the higher risk and lower rate of return involved in actually owning the boats. Neither can one deny the allure of fishing in which one's income appears to be limited only by how much fish one can catch. Colloquially, fishing is thought of as a gamble in which the chances of "winning big" loom large in the fishers imagination. Yet, it is unlikely that men could be enticed voluntarily to sea for wages. It is the possibility of the big trip that makes the brutally hard, physically taxing, and often poorly paid work bearable. The existence of an artisanal form of production throughout so much of the world's commercial fisheries can only be seen in this light.

Bigoudennie was experiencing a process of de-industrialization.

Social Relations of Production

The basic conditions for an expanded and commercial fishery existed in the Bigoudennie for several decades before one could effectively be launched. As argued above, it was the railroad which made it technologically possible for the Bigoudennie to emerge as a fishing region and thus re-enter the national stage. However, the overall process of replacing human labor with machine labor in agriculture, and the already existing (though small) fishery, were predicated on wider social struggles occurring across France. In the Bigoudennie and in Brittany generally, the development of the industrial canning industry was marked by massive social struggles between the emergent working class and industrial capital. Specifically, luddite style protests fought the introduction of machine technology. The successful introduction of industrial production was not pre-ordained. It required the complicity of the state (i.e., detailed police surveillance of workers and their organizations, suppression of strikes, and the support of

management in the introduction of labor saving technologies) and the self-conscious organization of the capitalist class. One final point, it is not technology which exploits workers. Rather, it is the social organization of production in which workers are divorced from the products of their labor.

The Household: The point at which capitalist relations of production were inserted into the Bigoudennie, the dominant relations of production were mediated through kin relations within peasant households. This is not to say that wage labor was non-existent: it was a critical component of the agricultural economy. However, the dominant mode of expropriating surplus labor occurred within the medium of the family.

According to Segalen (1991), these social relations of production where "egalitarian" and at points of generational succession "every one took their part." This view of the peasant relations of production overlooks certain critical aspects, discussed by Segalen herself. First, despite a system in which partible inheritance was the norm, the basic size of peasant holdings does not appear to have altered until the introduction of the commercial fishery; at which point peasant holdings

decreased in number while simultaneously increasing in size(Le Bail and Nicot 1995). This is partly accounted for by the form of landholding in the region in which peasants held short-term leases to farms and only owned the structures on the land. However, even though the splitting of a lease was possible, it appears that all effort was made to maintain economically viable farms through a commonly practiced marriage pattern which served to maintain lease holdings of a viable size (Segalen 1991).

Secondly, Segalen notes that population increases would have resulted in significant out migrations throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries were it not for the arrival of the fishing industry. The 'deus ex machina' of the fishing industry relieved the pressure on the peasant form of production by absorbing potentially surplus labor power. What Segalen does not discuss is the extent to which labor shunted into the fishery represented a 'pushing' off the farm of those strategically disadvantaged in terms of control over the peasant means of production. In particular, women and younger sons lost their place on the farm and were either sent into the fishery in some capacity or had to leave the region.

The Factory: Social relations of production within the fish factories were unambiguously capitalist. The basic antagonism was that between owner/manager and worker. The social distance between them was exemplified in the differences between their housing. The owners and plant managers lived in large, châteaux-like houses. They associated with the local notables and middle classes in the local and regional capitals of Pont L'Abbé and Quimper. They spoke French and saw themselves as part of a national class. The workers were crammed into hovel-like houses (now prized as holiday cottages) with no sanitation nor accessible sources of clean water. During the first 30 years of the sardine fishery there were at least three cholera outbreaks in addition to rampant TB.

Conditions of work left much to be desired, even by 19th century standards. Employment was seasonal and job security was tenuous. The awful conditions of work and the callous disregard, by owners and mangers, of workers' conditions were instrumental in the waves of strikes and protests which swept the region (see chapter 3).

The Fishery: The struggle between boardroom calculations of profit and deckside desires to earn a living gives rise to a rather unique set of relations of

production which are neither fully capitalist nor artisanal-based, but locked through market circuits to capital and through labor requirements to family. This form of production resembles various types of 'peasantries' or simple commodity production.

Several writers have effectively used the concept of simple commodity production to describe this form of production in the fishing industry (see, for example, Sinclair 1985) while others have attempted to argue that fisheries represent a fully formed capitalist form of production as evidenced by the relationship between boat-owner/skipper and crew (Clement 1986; Fairley 1985). The difficulty is whether one focuses on the kin-ordered aspect of resource pooling and labor recruitment or on the specific shipboard division of labor, allocation of surplus, and structure of ownership. Maddeningly, both perspectives are correct while simultaneously being terribly wrong.

First, fisheries such as in Bigoudennie are fully formed 'modern' artifacts created by industrial capitalism, not an archaic or pre-capitalist survival that has straggled along and fortuitously maintained itself despite all odd within an encompassing capitalist mode of

production. The pattern is evident in just about every small- to medium-scale commercial fishery currently existing. The characteristic pattern includes single vessel ownership, kin-based labor recruitment, super-exploitation of family labor power, full reliance upon the cash economy for all provisioning, and ties to a global or extensive regional capitalist commodity market. Sometimes previously existing "peasant" economies are incorporated within the fishery or these "peasant-like" economies may be created out of nothing (the British Columbia fishery is a case in point). This is not to say there is no analytic value in using the conceptual framework of simple commodity production to understand this form of production. The danger is that in doing so, one glosses over (perhaps even romanticizes?) the pre- or anti-capitalist aspect of this form.

Second, the inherent problem of most of the "development of capitalism" theses is a teleological progression toward fully formed firms with clearly identifiable contradictory class relations, that is to say the proletarian crewmembers against their bourgeois boat-owning skippers. The difficulty here, is that in many cases, the 'natural' progression in commercial fisheries

has been to move in the completely opposite direction. This is partly theoretical artifact, partly a misunderstanding of the actual nature of fisheries and an overemphasis on the harvesting side of the industry.

Let me explain: For much of the twentieth century, industrialized fisheries seemed to be able to push smaller scale fishers out of business. Large vessels operating like seaborn factories appeared to be far more efficient than their smaller cousins. However, the high risk and levels of capital investment required, combined with attempts by coastal nations to control the adjoining ocean territory have, in most cases ultimately reduced the efficacy of large scale fishing. By and large, it rapidly becomes more efficient for large firms to divest themselves of the harvesting end of fishing, shunting the risk onto individual boat owners. Long before flexible accumulation and just-in-time production became deified in post-modernist discourse, so-called 'post-fordism" had become the norm in fishing.

The strength of this particular set of relations of production structures and limits the possible adaptations of technology through the fishers' limited access to capital. But, importantly, the use of family labor (far

easier to exploit than strangers) serves to depress the costs of production and hence old technology is cheaper to employ and, ultimately, more productive than newer, potentially more efficient technologies.

Typically, it is only after the introduction of gear or license limitations or through government funded modernization programs, that fishers begin to upgrade their gear and vessels. In Brittany, it was not until the state-funded *Credit Maritime Mutual* began financing motorization that a major change begin to occur. Then the change in propulsion systems opened the door to new fishing techniques, such as trawling. In hindsight, the introduction of motors and trawl gear foreshadowed the death of the local canning industry and made possible the survival of a family-based artisanal fishing industry.

Conclusion

In this chapter I described the 'episode of industrialization' in the Bigoudennie. Industrialization of the fishery ended peasant agriculture in the region and laid out the foundation of the contemporary artisanal fishery. Despite the superficial similarities between the peasant agricultural economy and the contemporary

artsianal fishery, they are separated by the gulf of the industrial interlude. The contemporary fishing industry is a modern adaptation to the global market in fish products, government policy and subsidies, and the decline of fish stocks. In the following chapters I turn away from the wider social processes of transformation and adaptation to consider individual histories of family and work.

Chapter 6: Boats, Gear, and Working Conditions

In this chapter I describe the physical working conditions onboard the Bigouden fishing fleet. Here I am particularly interested in: (1) the structure of the working day, (2)the manner in which the proceeds of the day's catch are divided, (3) the development of the Bigouden fleet, and (4) the general characteristics of the boats themselves. This descriptive detail is not central to my theoretical agenda, but it is important in understanding the lives of the fishermen in the Bigoudennie. It is their experiences onboard the fish boat that defines them as fishers and as such it is the background against which all of their political and social protests are enacted.

A Day at Sea

The 17m *Ann-Laura* is a typical local boat. It is a highly effective and modern all weather steel dragger (trawler) built during the boom years of the 1980s. The covered work deck is cramped, but keeps the crew protected from the rough seas typical of the open Atlantic. The wheelhouse sits up above the work deck, amidships. The crew's quarters, engine room and fishhold forward are

located below decks. The galley, such as it is, is a small room just off the work deck. The wheelhouse is as well equipped as any that I have seen: GPS, loran, radar, depth sounder, sonar and at least four or five radio phones.

The fishing day begins before daylight. On this trip, we left the dock at Le Guilvinec just after 3:30 a.m.. It took about three hours to reach the fishing grounds 30 nautical miles offshore. When we arrived on the fishing ground there was a brief scurry of activity as the trawl was put in the water or 'set.' Then we waited. It is not until the catch from the first drag is brought onboard two or three hours later that the work starts in earnest.

The bag of fish is dumped out on the stern of the boat, the net is set back in the water, and then the crew sorts through the catch. The men get down on their hands and knees moving quickly through the mound of langoustine and fish. Langoustine are sorted into two baskets according to their size. The fish are sorted by species. Close to 50% of the catch is thrown back because it is either two small or not marketable. From the time this

first load of fish comes on board until the fish is unloaded and sold, the work does not let up.

By 6:00pm the fleet is back in port. The return of the fleet is a major attraction for tourist and resident alike. People start turning up at the harbor as early as 4:00pm. Within the hour, the dock has a carnival-like atmosphere. Even on the coldest winter day there can be as many as six tour-bus loads of tourists out to watch the unloading and auction.

Within minutes of landing up against the quay the skipper and crew are busy unloading their catch. The fish are sorted and placed into plastic boxes which are brought onboard the boat. At dock-side, these boxes are passed by hand off the boat and loaded onto carts which are then wheeled directly onto the floor of the fish auction. The skipper checks that the fish have been properly sorted as his crew arranges the boxes on the auction floor. Almost as soon as they are done, the auctioneer arrives and begins the sale. From start to finish the unloading process takes less than an hour.

The crew of the *Ann-Laura* and their fellow Breton fishers have been rocked by an economic and ecological crisis that threatens to destroy their livelihood. The

combination of falling prices and declining fish stocks has been devastating. In Le Guilvinec alone, close to 25 % of the boats are in risk of defaulting on the loans taken out to build them. The situation has been slow to improve.

Throughout the period of fieldwork, I collected landing statistics from 15 fishboats representing the three general categories of vessels in the Le Guilvinec fleet and at three points in the annual cycle (Feb-March, June-July, and November-December). These periods correspond to changes in fishing patterns that are themselves the by-product of annual climatic conditions, availability of fish stocks, and market fluctuations.

The skippers who supplied daily catch figures were recruited from amongst a core group of men whom I had first met on the bus trip to Nantes at the beginning of my fieldwork. While my sampling methods are at best haphazard, I had the advantage of being able to check the daily catch figures against the district-wide aggregate statistics collected by the regulating government agency, Affairs Maritime, and the landing statistics reported in the local newspapers on a daily basis.

The data were collected between June 20, 1995 and July 23, 1995. Over this period the *Ann-Laura* averaged a daily catch of 270 kg of fish for a landed value of 9,300 French Francs (FF), approximately US$1,690. The summer Langoustine, or Norway Prawn, season is one of the more lucrative fishing seasons. As this is a "live" fishery, most vessels in the *Ann-Laura's* class (12-19m) return to port each afternoon to sell their fish. Daily gross crewshares are about 1200 FF (US$218.00), nearly double the annual daily average of 660 FF (US$120.00) for fishers in the early 1990s. During the summer fishery, the *Ann-Laura* fishes 5 days per week, 15 hours plus per day.

Between late September and early June (with the exception of the pre-Christmas season) the *Ann-Laura* makes trips of two to three days, landing in Le Guilvinec on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to take full advantage of both the auction schedule and available fishing time. During the winter season the primary loss of fishing time is due to poor weather conditions. The worst time of the annual cycle is January-March, in which low prices and bad weather combine to make earnings especially low.

Gross Sales	9,300 FF	US $1,690
Common Charges[1]		
Landing taxes and charges (6% of gross)	558 FF	US $101
Fuel, lube oil, grease	900 FF	US $164
Social security charges[2]	833 FF	US $151
Food	112 FF	US $20
Net	6930 FF	US$ 1,254

Typical average day's catch of a Bigouden dragger: June 20, 1995 to July 23, 1995

The net is split 50/50 between the boat and crew. In this example, that would mean 3,465 FF (US$1,254) to the boat and 3,465 (US$1,254) to the crew. As there are four crewmembers, each crewmember would receive 1/4, or 866.25 FF (US$157). As noted previously, the daily earnings during this period are significantly higher than previous year's average daily earning. This reflects the higher earnings typical of the summer months.

In 1995 the *Ann-Laura* was five years old. She had

[1] Costs incurred during the fishing process that are paid for by the boat owner include gear and equipment repairs.

[2] Social security charges are calculated on a fixed basis according to the certificate of each crew member. In this case, the charges work out to about 9% of the gross. These charges are commonly referred to as the "role." On some of the smaller boats, the role is paid for completely out of the boat share.

cost approximately 3.5 million FF to build. Payments are made on a quarterly basis. The loan period is fifteen years renegotiated every five. The interest rate as of 1995 was 9.5% making the loan cost about 28,000 FF a year.

During the same period a smaller dragger, the Kervade, had a gross sale of approximately 60% of the *Ann-Laura*: that is, 5,500 FF. Even so, the average daily crewshare on the Kervade was roughly the same as on the *Ann-Laura* (860 FF versus 866.25 FF). The real difference is that the *Ann-Laura* can fish in much heavier seas than the Kervade, and thus loses fewer days due to bad weather. The Kervade's financial manager, the skipper's wife, showed me a detailed graphical representation of the annual earnings: the months of January to March were almost at zero.

Ownership and vessel costs

Despite the high cost of purchasing a fishing vessel -a steel dragger cost 3.1 MF in 1981, 4.8 MF in 1985, and 6.4 MF in 1992- Bigouden fishing skippers have not hesitated in taking on sizable loans in order to purchase a vessel. The cost of carrying large boat loans is

lightened somewhat by a generous system of European Union, state, regional, and departmental subsidies which, in some cases can be as much as 45% of the overall investment. In 1990, for example, 11 new boats entered the fishery (7 boats of 18-25 m, 2 of 16-18 m, and 2 of 12-16 m) worth a total of 62.2 MF. The total subsidies represented 32.7% of the investment for the vessels in the 18-25 m class, each of which cost approximately 4.5 MF (Le Bail and Nicot 1995).

The division of the catch

The division of the catch, or share-agreements, between skipper and crew are fairly standard in the Bigoudennie. The only point of difference lies in the actual percentages accorded crew and skipper, which varies from between 30 and 70 percent for the crew. The typical is a 50/50 split (Chausade & Corlay 1988).

The Development of the Bigouden Fishing Fleet

Two major waves of innovation and technological development played a role in the development of the contemporary Bigouden fishing fleet. First, as noted

above, the switch from sail to motor was instrumental in changes in gear type (from drift nets to seine and trawl) and in target species (from sardines to bottom fish). The second major change in this century involved new materials such as steel and aluminum and innovations in trawling techniques; primarily from side to stern trawling.

The first steel-hulled trawler used in the artisanal fishery was a 22 m vessel built in 1963 at Dunkirk. Widespread use of steel-hulled vessels in the French artisanal fishery did not occur until 1968, starting in the north of France. Nevertheless, stern-trawling began to appear in the artisanal fishery, nearly ten years after its introduction in the industrial class fishery (vessels greater than 25 m). The switch to stern trawling was made possible by the installation of gantries on the stern of the vessel and the addition of a fixed stern ramp. Working conditions were improved by the addition of a covered, or semi-covered deck on which the wheelhouse was perched amidships(Dorval 1987). According to Dorval, "there was some resistance at that time (1970-72) among Breton fishermen to vessels with covered decks and stern trawling facilities" (1987:26). The first steel-hulled and covered deck vessel in Brittany entered the fleet in

1972. Within ten years they were the preferred vessel type for new construction (see chart).

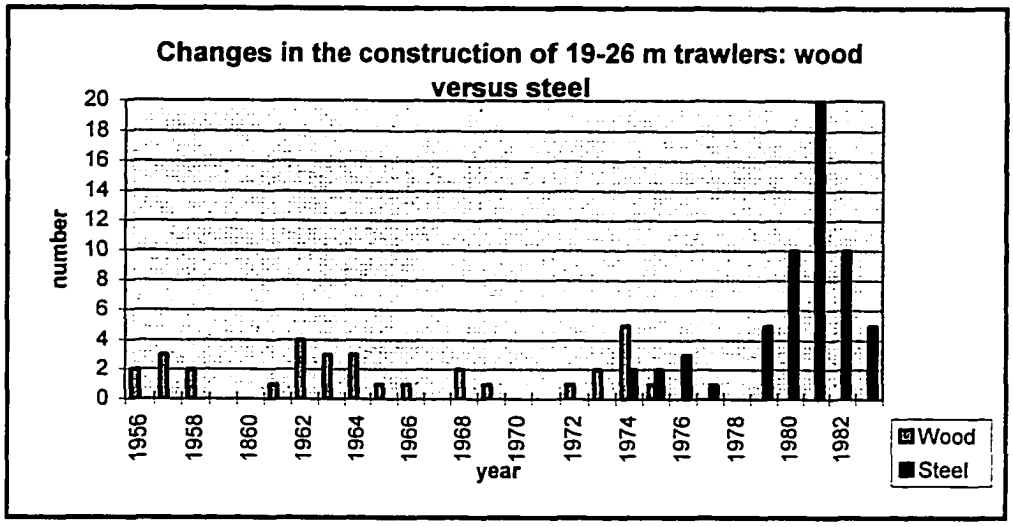

Chart of vessel construction in the Bigoudennie by building material, 1966-1988

The general layout of contemporary vessels emerged throughout out the 1970s. The basic features are: sleeping quarters for the crew in the stern with a separate stateroom for the skipper on the larger vessels; engine in the middle, and the fishhold in the forward section. Hydraulic winches appeared in 1970-71 and net drums in 1972. Initially, the vessels were only equipped with one drum; today, most trawlers have two or three. The drums are used for storage and hauling of the nets.

There are four main jobs aboard the Bigouden draggers: skipper, deck-boss, engineer, and deckhand. With the exception of the larger class vessels(20-24 m), there is no designated cook's position. Crew members often perform more than one of the tasks.

The work pattern can be broken into six primary stages: setting and hauling the net, sorting and storing the catch, miscellaneous tasks, meals, rest periods, and watches on the bridge. The actual setting and hauling of the net takes very little time. However, this is also the most dangerous and difficult of the fishing operations as it is the point in the fishing process at which the greatest number of accidents occur. Sorting the catch is backbreaking work, often done on one's hands and knees with the deck shifting and rolling underfoot. On smaller vessels the skipper may put the boat on auto-pilot and come down to the work deck and assist with sorting the catch.

Day boats are usually out of port for about 14 hours each trip and often entails leaving and returning in the dark. They are thus restricted in terms of their fishing grounds, having to fish within a three or four hour traveling radius of port so that they are able to arrive

in time for the Monday to Friday afternoon auctions. A typical day trip involves setting and hauling the drag three or four times. During the fishing day, the crew rarely has time to rest between sorting the catch and preparing to set and haul the nets.

On vessels making trips of between 3 and 14 days, the fishing process continues almost without interruption. The crew, skipper, and mate work in shifts, grabbing rests in between tows and after the fish have been sorted and stored in the fish hold. While crew and skipper usually have between 8 and 10 hours of rest in every 24, rarely are more than 4 of these hours uninterrupted (Dorval et al 1984; 1988).

In his study of working conditions and security at sea in the early 1980s, Dorval notes that the typical crew size varies between 5 and 8 (1988:196). One of the direct impacts of the crisis of the early 1990s is a reduction in average crew sizes to between 3 and 6 men. The average crew size in the near-shore fleet is effectively 3 men on board the vessel at any one time. The offshore vessels (20-24 m) have reduced their crew to between 5 and 6 men with one crewmember taking a trip off every four or five trips. The reduction of crew, while helping to maintain

the fishers' incomes, has an immediate and deleterious effect on the conditions of work. Anecdotal evidence collected from fishing skippers and local fishing companies suggest that reduced crewsizes are workable but do result in increased injuries at sea.

Boats and their general characteristics

The contemporary Bigouden fishing fleet is primarily comprised of steel hulled vessels of between 12 and 24m in length. The group of under 12 m vessels represent a very different form of fishery from the 12-24 m class. The smaller boats tend to be older, fishing just off the adjoining coast, and their operators tend to engage in a multitude of subsistence practices. The operators and deckhands on the large vessels, on the other hand, are more likely to be full-time fishers.

Length	Number	Power (kW)	Tonnage
L > 12 m	169	11, 122	939
12 - 16 m	135	27,451	4,014
16 - 25 m	156	53,297	9,277
25 - 38 m	1	348	107
Total	461	92,218	14,337

Bigouden Fishing Fleet by Length, Power, and Tonnage, 1995

The majority of vessels in the contemporary fleet (301, representing practically all of the 12-24 m vessels) are engaged in bottom or mid-water trawling. A funnel shaped net, held open by two large "doors," is towed along the bottom from the stern of the fishboat. The net scoops up practically everything in front of it. It is hauled up onto the vessel every two or three hours, the catch loaded on board, and then is set out again. Four other gear types are commonly used: gill and/or trammel netting(9), longlining (10), trap fishing (15), and seining for sardines (6).

The effective maximum age of a fishing vessel in the district is twenty years. There is a significant age discrepancy between the 169 vessels in the under 12 m class and the 12-24 m class. Of the under 12 m class, the vast majority are older than 20 years, while the average age of close to 75% of the 16-24 m class was younger than 15 years. This discrepancy reflects differential funding opportunities for the building of larger vessels during the late 1970s and 1980s. As part of the modernization plans of the post-war era, and fleet decommissioning schemes, vessels older than 20 years in the 16 m class

Length	< 5yrs	5-10	10-15	15-20	>20yrs	Total
<12 m	6	26	26	39	72	169
12-16 m	12	17	18	26	62	135
16-25 m	28	41	53	15	19	156
>12 m					1	1
Total	46	84	97	80	154	461

Bigouden Fishing Fleet by Length and Age, 1995

can be destroyed and the owner compensated for removing the boat from the fleet. The net effect has been a growth in larger, more efficient vessels and a progressive aging of the smaller, under 12 m vessels.

Conclusion

This has described the basic contours of the working conditions aboard the Bigouden fishing fleet and of the fleet itself. In the following chapters, the crucial social relations between and among skippers and crew, the household, and genders are discussed.

Chapter 7: Work First! Then Eat – skippers, crews, and the family at sea

> We all work together, share the same risk: both physical and financial. The crew is like a second family. You spend 15 days at sea with your shipmates and two days at home. It's always a fight at home. You know your crew better than your family.
>
> Union representative and former boat-owner

What does it mean to compare one's work group with one's family but then to imply that the 'real' family is beset by conflict? According to Michael Loti[1], former skipper and district union representative on the local fishing committee, skippers and crews share a common interest: "We're all workers. The skipper-owner is every bit as much a worker as are his crewmembers." However, there are clearly identifiable social and economic distinctions between crews and skippers in terms of social networks and material assets. In this chapter I examine the "family at sea," how is it constituted, in what sense can we speak of social class on the fishboat, and in what ways the interests of skippers are parallel to and/or antagonistic to those of their crews. My argument is that

[1] Michael Loti is a pseudonym. I have chosen not to name the union as that would clearly reveal the identify of M. Loti.

the social complexities of class onboard the Bigouden fishboat must be approached from two separate though intertwined positions: (1) from the perspective of the family enterprise. In what way does the structure of familial ownership shape and/or constrain the social relations between crew and skipper through the reproduction of the fishing enterprise as a unit of production; and (2) from the deck of the fishboat? How are the skipper's prerogatives maintained and enforced on the boat? How is the boat organized as a site of production?

The Fishing Enterprise, Social Class and Forms of Production

Much of the debate about class is merely an argument of classification - "in many cases a survey of the typology of class boundaries rather than a study of the process of class formation and the real historical battles which produce the ever-shifting lines of demarcation" (Stark 1980:77). It is important to be cognizant of the "typologies of class boundaries" if only as a starting point in understanding the process which creates class. However, the explication of these typologies should not be an end in itself.

Admittedly, simple typologies of class boundaries typically employ a rigid structuralism that risks ignoring the contradictory and situational context of artisanal fishing communities such as Le Guilvinec. For example, Clement's notion of independent commodity producers (ICP) -which refers to those producers who are linked "with capital through the mechanism of the open market ... and are free of contractual obligations to capital" (1986:64)- tends to ignore a common situation of occupational multiplicity among fishers.[2]

Clement's framework includes a simultaneous consideration of social relations of production within the unit of production (i.e. the fish boat) and between units of capital (i.e. boats, processing firms, fish auctions, etc.); other typologies do not. The range of single focus typologies stretches from the self-referential -"the fundamental division crosscutting all others is between those who think of themselves as labor and those who take on the self-image of owners, free enterprisers, or entrepreneurs" (Marchak 1984:124)-to a structualist materialism in which boat ownership is used as a measure

[2] It is important to recognize that the situation of occupational multiplicity varies from fishery to fishery and, as in the case of the fishers in Le Guilvinec, is not always the rule.

to produce "a simple threefold categorization of class, ... fishermen as owners; fishermen as rentiers; and crewmen, ... who generally receive payment based on a predetermined share of the catch" (Guppy 1986:19).

Other writers exclude the concept of class completely from their analysis. They adopt concepts such as network, action set, community, or adaptation in the studies of fishing peoples. Acheson (1988), in his work on the lobster fishers of Main, emphasizes networks and action sets as an adaptive mechanism in the face of uncertainty and risk. Anthony Cohen's work on Whalsay is concerned with the symbolic construction of community. As such, he is only concerned with the symbolic significance of fishing for the community of Whalsay "with its embeddedness in and influence on cultural and social relations." According to Cohen, "the fishing crew should be regarded as the community at sea" (1987:145). John Forest inverts the relationship between social relations and ideological constructs and finds that "the decision to be a waterman [fisher] is itself founded on aesthetic desires" (1988:105). Though these approaches to fishing do describe some aspect of the lived reality of fisherfolk, they ultimately fail in terms of providing an

effective framework for understanding how such diverse groups of fishing people interact with the wider political economy within which they are embedded.

One way to analytically situate fishers is to isolate the enterprise of production (in our case the family owned fishing vessel) and to analyze it at two levels: "at the level of each enterprise [form of production] and at the level of the social totality of enterprises [mode of production]" (Banaji 1977:9). Form of production "refers to the structure of the basic unit of production, as in, for example, the fishing crew" (Sinclair 1985:15). This is in contrast to the more comprehensive concept of the mode of production: "the dominant economic forces and relations of production in a society" (Sinclair 1985:15).

Form of production "is conceived through a double specification of the unit of production and the social formation" (Friedmann 1980:160). By separating these elements of fishers' lives we can see: (1) the structural similarities of their respective labor processes; and (2) come to terms with the different historical developments and interactions between the fishers' units of production and the encapsulating capitalist mode of production. Thus, we can see how "the social formation provides the

context for the reproduction of units of production [yet, is] not uniquely determinative of the form of production" (Friedmann 1980:160).

The identity of the form of production extant on the Bigouden fishboats is ambiguous and shifts depending upon one's vantage point (i.e. from the basis of the ship-board crew or the household enterprise). These fishers can be understood by reference to either simple commodity production or capitalist commodity production. Simple commodity production

> is a form of production which draws on the household for its labor supply and organizational structure; it depends on articulation with commodity markets to realize the value of what is produced and to acquire both personal and consumption goods and the means of production (Sinclair 1985:18).

Furthermore, "in simple commodity production, the combined return to the enterprise and to labor generates no … tendency towards increased scale of individual enterprises" (Friedmann 1978:88). On the other hand, capitalist commodity production:

> separates the direct producers from the means of realizing their labor and compels them into wage labor (or its equivalent, such as shares or piece-rates). Capital directly organizes production based on social labor, and the proletariat controls neither its product nor the labor process (Clement 1986:63).

Capitalist and simple commodity production are also distinguished by the form in which the reproduction of the enterprise occurs. The regeneration of the enterprise through time, from one cycle of production to the next, occurs in accordance with the logic of the form of production. In capitalist production:

> the appropriation of surplus value leads to accumulation within the enterprise; this generates an inherent tendency toward concentration or increased scale of production independent of technological advances (Friedmann 1978:88).

Excepting, for the moment, changes in the scale of production resulting from technological innovations:

> there are no economic pressures in simple commodity production for expanded reproduction; that is simple reproduction, or maintenance of production at the existing level, is adequate for survival of each unit of production (Friedmann 1978:87).

Simple commodity production is, however, subject to "demographic pressures which lead enterprises with more than one son to seek expanded reproduction" (Friedmann 1978:87).

The process of expanded reproduction differs depending on the form of production. Under a capitalist form of production, expanded reproduction tends toward concentration and accumulation. In simple commodity production, expanded reproduction tends "toward fission,

in which income generated in one household enterprise is used to establish a new one on the same scale" (Friedmann 1978:88). Thus, expanded reproduction within a simple commodity form of production will increase competition between units of production whereas it decreases such competition under a capitalist form of production. This is especially important in open access fisheries.

The notion of capitalist commodity production allows us to identify a set of antagonistic social classes (capital/labor or, in this case, skipper/crew). The concept of simple commodity production identifies

> a class of combined laborers and property owners within a capitalist economy, ... the circuits of reproduction of simple commodity production intersect with those of commodity, landowning, and banking capital, and with markets in labor power, in abstractly determined relations (Friedmann 1980:162).

The analytic task is to link abstractions, such as class typologies, with lived experience but without recourse to a naïve empiricism in which the uniqueness of the group of fishers is over emphasized. In the first section of this dissertation I have discussed how fisherfolk in the Bigoudennie construct their self-image. The image is by no means homogenous, nor does it necessarily reflect the experiences of all Bigouden. In the second part, I am

laying out the material structure of their class relations, material conditions of life, and gendered processes of production. In this chapter, the pertinent questions are: How are boat-owning fishers to be conceptualized in class terms? --as peasants? petty bourgeois? disguised wage laborers Where do their crews fit into the picture? Are crews unambiguously labor as against skippers who are capital? How do ties of kin and community mediate or disrupt theoretical abstractions such as class?

Social class is, in this sense, more than just an objective relationship to the means of production: it must also be situated within the flow of time. It is my contention that a snap shot view of class obliterates the processes by which and through which individuals become members of social classes. In reverting to the ethnographic present, classes fade from view and we are left with a field of social actors and a multitude of individual experiences. Abstracting social classes in this manner risks confusing stages in an individual's life history with actual class relations.

Work First! Eat Latter: Social Class at Sea

The social relations on board a fishboat are typically governed by the necessity of the work process. The skipper runs the boat, chooses the fishing grounds, and gives the command to set and haul the net. The crew are responsible for the physical aspects of the fishing process, from setting the net to sorting the fish. The social space is implicitly divided into crew's space and skipper's space. This division is part functional (it would be next to impossible for the skipper to run the boat from the engine room) and part symbolic (several skippers actively discourage their crew from entering the wheelhouse unless they have been explicitly invited to enter). On one fishing trip I witnessed a scene which although not typical, clearly lays bare the social relations between crew as labor and skipper as capital.

The two deckhands had been busy sorting fish on their hands and knees for most of the morning. Occasionally, the skipper would walk back along the upper deck and yell down: "what's taking so long. There's nothing there!" Near noon, he came back and called out to one of the men: "It's time for lunch. Better put something on." The

designated cook left the sorting and began to prepare a meal of boiled meat and chips for the skipper (the stove was too small to cook more than one meal at a time). When the meal was ready he knocked on the wheelhouse door and handed it up to the skipper. He then started preparing a meal for the other crewmember and himself.

I heard the skipper rev up the engine a notch and then he stuck his head down the companion way, looked around the galley, and told the cook to get ready to haul back the net. When the cook protested, the skipper simply reached across the stove and turned it off. Turning to the crewman he said: "work first! Then eat."

This particular episode is singular in my observations in the Bigoudennie (though I have seen many such skippers onboard fishboats in British Columbia). Nonetheless, the actions of the skipper expressed his ultimate authority to command the labor of his crew. In his actions he clarified the divergent social interests of crew and skipper. The skipper overlooks the time it takes for his crew to prepare his meal -in fact demands that time be taken. However, the skipper does not tolerate the crew member taking time to prepare food for himself and

the other crewmember: to do so is to take time away from the production of wealth for the skipper.

A Divergent Solidarity

The social relations between crews and skippers are forged in a process of work that is both intimate and intense. Commercial fishers, especially on small to medium scale vessels, must constantly rely upon their work mates, not just to 'get the job done,' but very often for their personal safety and well-being. The intensity of the emotions which arise can create enduring friendships and deeply felt animosities. In such a context the social cleavages of class become obscured by the experience of having to personally rely upon each other at points of crisis. Crews which are unable to function in this manner do not stay together long. Yet, there is a fundamental difference between the objectively defined interests of skipper-owners and crews. As owners of productive property the skippers ultimately control the labor power of their crews irrespective as to whether the crews are family, friend, or strangers. However, in order to maintain their productive enterprises, the skipper-owners rely upon the solidarity of their crews. As discussed in

Part One of this dissertation, social solidarity has been maintained through an ideology of the local (Bigouden) and in a collective memory of past social protests (the Sardine Years). In this way, the divergent social interests of skippers and crews are erased in the cultural construction of a local identity.

Chapter 8: The Difference a Family Makes

In this chapter I shift from the more general description of the material conditions of daily life to a consideration of a sequence of stories of family, work and the everyday. These stories of family[1] and work document 'lived' histories which are intermingled with and simultaneously oppose and affirm, the broader "history" of the place. While the family histories related here are in some sense generalizable across the spectrum of fisherfolk in the Bigoudennie, they are predominately stories of families who own fishboats.

Labor within the household and family is necessarily rigidly segregated by gender. The material reality of fishing in the Bigoudennie removes men from the home on a practically permanent basis. The administration and maintenance of the household including the care of children lies firmly within the domain of the fishers' wife and other female kinfolk.

The exclusion of women from harvesting fish, while by no means quantitatively accurate(there are six women

[1] In keeping with standard anthropological practice, in order to preserve their anonymity, these families are identified only by pseudonyms and where necessary certain identifying details have been altered.

registered as fishers out of a total of 1,600 in Le Guilvinec, one of whom operates her own small vessel and sells her fish directly to consumers), is however, a social reality in that women are widely believed ill-suited for fishing. This is despite the fact that, as the few women who are in the fishery demonstrate, there is no physical reason to prevent women from engaging in the fishery. However, as I have noted elsewhere, the exclusion of women from fishing is tied tightly to male conceptions of masculinity which "are strongly linked to defining 'their' occupation as being a male occupation in which women are, by definition, unable to participate" (Menzies 1991:15; Cf. Binkley 1995).[2]

Underlying and connecting the stories of work and family are themes of separation between fisher and partner, parent and child. For the men, work histories are recited in terms of the names of the boats they owned or fished on and the names of the skippers; for the women, the stories revolve around work in the home, caring for children, and balancing house and boat budgets.

The two case studies related here detail the

[2] The question of women's involvement has been discussed in two important collections: Davis and Nadel-Klien (1988) and Alison, Jacobs, and Porter (1989), see also, Cole (1991).

different occupational trajectories of skippers and crews. They also address the question of the difference that family makes in staying in fishing or being pushed out. The first case, Luc and Martine Kernevad, is representative of a deckhand's family. The second case, is of a boatowner's family.

Luc and Martine Kernevad

I met Luc for the first time during a fishers protest in late 1994. As I got to know him, he told me about his life working on the fish boats:

> At the age of 15 I went to sea on the dragger *New Times*[3], a wooden boat of 17m, equipped for deep-sea fishing. The trips were 10-15 days off the coast of England and Ireland. There were 7 men in the crew. We worked between 18 and 20 hours a day. My job consisted in cooking, stacking the langoustine and filling up the net mending needles with twine. The *metier* pleases me, but it is hard and very tiring (interview, 1995).

Luc and his wife, Martine's families are native Bigoudennes. They have lived in the region for generation upon generation going back beyond the point of it making any sense to talk of their arrival. However, one risks accepting a false sense of continuity in employment when, from the vantage point of the present, we trace backwards

[3] The skipper of the boat was his father's brother. To respect the anonymity of the respondents, the name of the boat has been changed.

a linear progression to some distant ancestor of Luc or Martine. Luc himself, reckons his lineage patrilineally. He is at least the fifth generation of the family Kernevad to have made his living as a fisher and he is likely to be the last. Of Luc's siblings, none currently work as fishers, two are in jobs connected with the fishery, and three work in areas completely separated from fishing. Out of 17 cousins, only five work in fisheries-related jobs (two as fishers, one a ship's carpenter, and two in machine shops).

Position Relation	Fisher	Fish Worker	Other Blue Collar	Professional	Service	Not Know
cousin	2	3	3	2	5	2
sibling	0	2	0	1	2	0

Employment Categories of Luc Kernevad's Generation

However, depending upon whether one considers the progression of the family lineally (from child to grandparent) or laterally generation by generation (sibling to sibling, cousin to cousin), the family's occupational image changes. To say Luc comes from a family of fishers is to privilege the occupation of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather over, say, his mother's father or great uncle on his father's mother's

side (the first was a livery-man, the second alternated between a variety of construction and day labor jobs). It is also to ignore the peasant pre-history that moved between sea and land as well as the lateral shifts out of fishing at each generation in the family's history. It is more accurate, therefore, to suggest that Luc's family was part of the rural proletariat and took up jobs when and were they could. During the period in which the fishery grew, his family members became fishers.

Martine's family represents an entirely different segment of the social matrix than Luc's. The dominant occupation in her family has been peasant agriculture. Martine worked on the farm as a young child. At fifteen, she found a factory job in a nearby town. None of her sisters married farmers, nor did her brothers choose to become one. Of her siblings, she is the only one still living in the Bigoudennie.

Martine and Luc currently live in a house built on a section of her family's 20 ha farm (a farm which has been held in the family for at least three generations). No one in her family is currently farming the land. Some of the land has been sold for housing, about 6 ha are sitting fallow, and the remaining 12 ha or so are leased to a

local dairy farmer with a milk quota. Martine's parents literally went to their graves farming the land. They actively encouraged their children to find jobs in the fishery or in the towns.

Luc has maintained an impressive work history, crewing on only four boats over the past 20 odd years. After fishing for several years with his uncle, Luc took a job on a modern deep-sea dragger in the 24m class. He switched boats once in the mid-1980s to take a better job and then switched again in the early 1990s (just before the crisis) to a coastal dragger,[4] wanting to be closer to his children during their adolescence.

Martine worked in the same factory she had started at as a teenager. As the birth of her first child approached, she quit her factory job. At points when Luc's income fell off (most notably during the crisis of the early 1990s), Martine found employment in a variety of short term jobs such as cleaning and clerking. Both Luc and Martine hope their children find employment outside of the fishing industry: "There's no future it the fishery for a young man," they say.

[4] The coastal draggers, 12-23m in length typically fish day trips (out early in the morning and back into port by about 5:00 p.m.). During certain seasons, some of these boats switch to three to five day trips.

Gilbert and Catherine Bazhad

The personal and family histories of Gilbert and Catherine Bazhad are intimately entwined with the history of the Bigoudennie. Gilbert, born in the fishing village of Léchiagat (just across the harbor from Le Guilvinec), descends from a paternal line of fisherfolk which disappears beyond the scope of living memory. Catherine, born in the village of St. Guénolé, has inherited a patrimony equally as rooted in the maritime milieu. As a couple, they have maintained their kindred's involvement in the fishing industry.

Gilbert and Catherine at Work: Gilbert's work history cuts through the period of social transformation following World War II. He started fishing at the age of 14 on his father's sardine seiner out of Le Guilvinec. After three years of learning the trade, he switched to trawling as a deckhand aboard his uncle's boat. In the 1950s many young men went to work aboard the growing distant water fleet: Gilbert was no exception.

Year	Position	Owner and type of boat fished on
1950	inbreaker	Father's boat, fishing sardines out of Le Guilvinec.
1953	deckhand	Father's brother's boat, side trawler fishing out of Le Guilvinec.
1955	deckhand /boson	Distant water trawler fishing out of L'Orient.
1958	mate	Father's brother's boat, side trawler fishing out of Le Guilvinec.
1963	skipper	Partnership with two brothers, built new wooden boat for side trawling, fishing out of Le Guilvinec.
1968	skipper	Bought out brothers' share of boat.
1977	skipper	Built new steel stern trawler, sons listed as co-owners.
1983	skipper	Built second steel stern trawler, eldest son operates boat built in 1977.
1988	retired	1977 vessel replaced with a new steel stern trawler, oldest so runs new boat, 2nd son takes over boat built in 1983. Gilbert retains ownership interest in both vessels.

Gilbert Bazhad's Work History

When Gilbert left the Bigoudennie in 1955 to fish on the distant water trawlers, his father retired and passed on the running of the family boat to Gilbert's older brother André. After three years working in the offshore fleet, Gilbert returned to Bigoudennie, married Catherine, and went to work on his uncle's wooden side trawler. As his uncle had no sons to take over his boat, Gilbert was hired as the mate. As his uncle approached retirement age (52-55), Gilbert assumed greater responsibilities on the

boat and, by 1960, was practically running the boat as his own (his uncle retired and sold the boat in 1963, causing Gilbert to commission the building of a new wooden trawler).

From 1963, when he bought his first boat, to his retirement in 1988, Gilbert was involved in building four new vessels (1 wood, 3 steel). He formed a partnership with his two brothers in 1963. André continued to run the family boat, replacing it with a new vessel in 1964. His youngest brother Jean-Pierre, who had been working on the uncle's boat, came to the new boat with Gilbert and fished with him until the mid-1980s when he retired early for medical reasons.

Throughout this, Catherine worked primarily in the home. She was responsible for maintaining the boat accounts, arranging provisions, and ensuring that payment deadlines were kept. Often hidden from view, this work is as important in the maintenance and perpetuation of the fishing enterprise as was Gilbert's ability to make deals and catch fish.

According to Catherine, men have a hard time with money: "They go from their mother's home to their wives home," she said. "We do it all for them. They can't even

write a check! Without a good women -one who knows that it is important he spend a little in the Bistro, not too much, just enough to waste— he'll waste it all."

Year	Position	Comments
1954	cannery worker	St. Guénolé, seasonal work.
1958		Moved to Le Guilvinec following marriage to Gilbert.
1959	house wife	Following the birth of their first child, Catherine, stopped working in the paid workforce, working instead in the home.
1963	book keeper/manager	Following the purchase of a new boat, Catherine was responsible for keeping the vessel's accounts. As the enterprise developed, she became the virtual manager of the family enterprise.
1988	'retired'	Ceased active involvement in the fishing enterprise, much of her work having been taken over by her eldest son's wife in the course of the 1980s

Catherine Bazhad's Work History[5]

Catherine began work as a cannery worker in her home town, St. Guénolé. She worked there for five years. Like many other young women, she had worn a coiffe but, by the early 1960s had traded it in for a 'modern' hairstyle. "My mother and grandmother wore a coiffe everyday of the week," Catherine said. "I did as a young women, but

[5] In addition to running a household and managing a fishing enterprise, Catherine also crocheted items which she then sold at the local markets.

stopped when I started doing our accounts. It just didn't seem practical anymore." Her daughter, Anne, belongs to a local folk group. She now wears the coiffe to special events, festivals, and the occasional performance.

Fishing in the Family: To locate an occupation other than fishing in either Catherine's or Gilbert's family tree once must descend back beyond the 1860s. Of the eight 'ancestral-households' economically active in 1860 two involve peasant agriculture with small-scale fishing and one unambiguously derived its livelihood from peasant agriculture. Of the generation immediately prior to the 1860 generation, Gilbert and Catherine say about half of these households were peasants. The others combined fishing and agriculture.

As presented here, only those in a direct line to (and from) Gilbert and Catherine are represented in the kinship diagram. This creates certain difficulties, as discussed in the above section, in terms of potentially generating a false image of continuity. The powerful aspect of this family is the extent to which nearly five generations have been involved within the fishery. Although as detailed a genealogical study as that by Martine Segalen in her study, *Fifteen Generations of*

Bretons (1991) was not the primary purpose of this project, several observations about patterns of marriage and their relevance for keeping vessels and workers "inside" the fishery can be suggested.

In her study of kinship in the Bigoudennie, Martine Segalen carefully describes a system of affinal-linking marriages which, over the course of several generations, knit kindreds together. Segalen suggests that these linking marriages (which have no emic designation) function to maintain property within the 'family' (1991). The density of fishing occupations within Gilbert and Catherine's family suggest the possibility that linking-marriages such as those identified by Segalen were being used to keep boats within male kindreds. Based on the data collected from twenty fishing families, and extending back three to five generations, there is strong evidence to suggest that, at least in terms of work opportunities and partnerships, the typical relationship was between agnatic kin, specifically Father-Son, Uncle-Nephew, or Brother-Brother. Up until the mid-1980s most crews were agnatically based groups of fathers, brothers, and uncles. A second important link is that between a man and his

father-in-law, perhaps representing a transfer of a women's share of the estate from father to son-in-law.

First Fishing Job, Skipper's Relationship to ego	Number of occurrences in sample, n=21
Father	7
Father's Brother	5
Father's Father	3
Brother	1
Cousin (Father's Side)	2
Cousin (Mother's Side)	0
Mother's Brother	2
Mother's Father	1

Skipper's Family Connect to Young Fisher on his First Fishing Job

Based on three generations of men from Gilbert and Catherine's family, I examined the kin relationship between a young man and the boat skipper on his first fishing trip. Based on 21 'first trips' it is evident that the preferred situation is to first go to sea on one's father's or uncle's boat (see table "First Fishing Job"). To further refine this picture, I then compared the kin relations between boat-partnerships. Here the picture shifts somewhat. Joint investments are almost as common with one's father-in-law as with one's agnatic kin (see table "Family Relationship of Boat Ownership Partner").

Family relationship of boat-ownership partner	Number of occurrences in sample, n=11
Father	2
Father's Brother	1
Father's Father	0
Brother	3
Cousin (Father's Side)	0
Cousin (Mother's Side)	0
Mother's Brother	0
Mother's Father	0
Father-in-Law	3
Brother-in-Law	2

Boat Owning Partnerships and Family Relations

The data are limited by the manner in which they were collected. This limits, to a certain extent, the ability to effectively generalize beyond the specific cases described. Information was collected from amongst the core group of fishers with whom I worked. No effort was made to generate a 'random sample'. Instead, I employed a 'snowball' technique in which the fishers' own social networks were used to recruit respondents. Although I am reasonably certain that the data represent an accurate overview of the social world within which Bigouden fishing skippers operate, they do not necessarily represent a statistical description of the world of French fishers.

In conducting occupational genealogies I realized early on that there is an important difference between the history of crewing and joint ownership within families such as the Bazhad's and the histories of families of crewmembers like the Kernevad's. Crewmember families display a greater heterogeneity in employment terms than do boat owners, a situation which can be traced over several generations. Furthermore, there is a lower rate of retention in the fishery from amongst the crewmembers' families than in the boat-owners' families. This tends to suggest that some of the maneuvers of families with respect to conserving property had the impact of creating social barriers between crew and skipper which are, to a large extent, 'masked' by the relative egalitarianism of shipboard life. It was occasionally noted in interviews, for example, that skippers' wives and crewmembers' wives did not associate and that, in times of crisis, this intensified the social problems in the community. There has clearly been a difference in income between skippers and crews and their social interests are indeed different and at time antagonistic.

Conclusion

In preparing for fieldwork in the Bigoudennie I had noted that a major shift was occurring in the structure of employment opportunities in the French fishing industry. Between the 1950s and 1993, the number of Breton fishers had dropped from 25,000 to 8,000. In order to understand how fisherfolk were surviving -or failing to survive- I planned to compare two groups of respondents. The primary group would be selected from among fishers and their families whose base of operations was in the port of Le Guilvinec. The second group was to be comprised of former fishers and their family members. Part of my problematic was thus to contrast the expelled with the hangers-on. This was initially conceived of in terms of men being pushed off the boats into waged-labor either in or outside the region. To a certain extent these expectations were confirmed by the occupational genealogies that I completed.

My speculations about workers leaving fishing stemmed from the experience of commercial fishers in British Columbia where, following licensing changes introduced in the herring and halibut fisheries during the 1980s, there was an obvious and easily measurable decrease in jobs.

Men who had fished since childhood had been made redundant and were forced, if they were able, to seek employment in other areas. However, the shift out of fishing in France occurred long before the men ever reached the boats.

In the post-war period a new openness in the educational system allowed more working-class and peasant families to give their children a post-secondary education. In the context of the expanding welfare state jobs were plentiful. Add to this a dramatic change in family size: in one generation family size dropped from 5-9 children to 2-4. In the occupational genealogies collected during my field work, a move away from manual labor toward white collar employment based outside of the region was evident. As my work progressed I realized that those who had kept a foothold in the fishery were predominantly those whose families had owned fish boats for a generation of more.

The potential problem of displaced fishers also seemed to be controlled through the educational system. Like many other occupations in France, one must attend a specialized school to become certified as a fisher. Advancement from deckhand to mate or mechanic, or from mate to skipper, require additional certificates. French

fishers can also retire after 37.5 years of work to a full pension (the minimum reported pension was $US 1,750 per month). The official age of retirement is 55. Understandably, men over the age of 55 are rare indeed onboard a French fishing boat. Thus potential surplus labor is siphoned off by a system of early retirement and is further inhibited through restricted enrollments at the special fishing schools.

The family histories related in this chapter encapsulate and express the difference a family makes in maintaining a foothold in the Bigouden fishing industry. They emphasize how individuals and their kin have negotiated their way through the morass of social transformations and upheavals that have characterized this region. In recounting these two types of history (the history of things -boats, fleets, gear- and the history of families) I wish to emphasis the interconnectedness and the messiness of everyday life.

One of the more revealing aspects of the two family histories is the difference between families which have managed to maintain vessel ownership through several generations and those which have not. As property owners in control of a rather tenuous and risky enterprise,

families worked hard to conserve the capital necessary for vessel ownership within the family. This is not a feature of vessel ownership unique to the Bigoudennie. In my earlier work with British Colombian fishers (Menzies 1991; 1992) I have discussed the perpetuation of ownership in terms of the difference between simple and expanded reproduction.

Under conditions of simple reproduction the fishing enterprise maintains one unit of production. The capital investment may necessarily increase, but the effect is the same: an enterprise sufficient to support a fisher and his family (see Menzies, 1991). Under conditions of expanded reproduction, the fishing enterprise increases not just in terms of capital investment, but also in terms of the number of productive units.

What is interesting about artisanal-scale fishing is that typically, even under conditions of expanded reproduction, there eventually comes a point at which the enterprise either hives off into two or more smaller ones or makes a qualitative leap into becoming a 'fully capitalist firm.' Thus, it is quite likely that at some time in the near future, Gilbert Bazhad's sons will formally separate their enterprises and concentrate on

accumulating sufficient capital to assist their own sons' move into the fishery. It is possible however, that the Bazhad fishing enterprise will, on the contrary, jump the barrier between simple commodity production and become a firm. There are currently only two such enterprises in the Bigoudennie. One has eight 24m draggers and the other five.

The crewmembers' families move through a field of employment opportunities simultaneously more tenuous (owning productive property does make a difference) and more open. It is more tenuous than that faced by their boat-owning neighbors because they are solely reliant upon being able to sell their labor power in order to survive. It is more open in that their concerns have less to do with maintaining control within the kindred over productive property but more with locating employment for kindred members.

The social transformations which have swept through this region have inscribed themselves into the tissue of family histories. Children in families without access to productive property tend to move into other careers outside the fishery. Those with productive property favor marriages with other boat-owning families. In a very real

sense, the peasant past is reproduced in the struggle to maintain a foothold in the fishery.

Chapter 9: Gendered Worlds of Work

The most obvious public expression of the boundary between men and women is located in the gatherings of women, young children in hand, waiting dockside for their men to return from the sea. I cannot help but read into this scene my own childhood memories waiting at the dock for my father. As I, the anthropologist stand there, slightly to the side and behind the gathered crowd, I see my own eagerness at my father's arrival reflected in the faces of these children.

I had been walking along the dock and came by happenstance upon this small crowd. They, however, had been notified by the skipper's wife a few hours earlier that the boat was coming into port. Everything stops in the house and is redirected toward the incoming boat. This is a moment of celebration in which quotidian worries are pushed aside.

When I ask about the difficulties of being a fisherman's wife, about how one arranges their daily life to this non-terrestrial rhythm, the waiting women respond in a rather matter of fact way: "It's just the way things are. This is what it is to be a fisherman's wife." Revealed in their dockside conversations is neither fear,

nor worry. This is not the time nor the place. In their homes, however, several of the women I spoke with opened their books and showed me, in graphs and tables of past income, the yearly variations of catch, price, weather, breakdowns. It was as if, in the simple act of graphing and drawing it out on paper, the unknowns of living as a fisherman's wife could be conquered and taken into account.

What I witnessed on the dock was only the most visible manifestation of gender roles. In one sense, this scene presents and reinforces a particularly 'traditional' image of men and women in fishing (and, one might add, in Western society in general). Especially is this so because it is wrapped in metaphors of family and images of children. Very clearly the homecoming of one's partner, father, or son is a powerful public manifestation of gendered social relations (among other things). It is not, however, the full picture.

In this chapter, I examine the specific ways in which relations of production and consumption in the Bigoudennie are structured by notions of gender. I do this by reference to: (1) the gendered division of labor with respect to (a) waged labor (b) non-waged labor critical to

household maintenance and reproduction; and (2) the accounts of this division as expressed by (a) the fishing community and (b) outsiders (i.e. non-fisherfolk).

Fishermen and Women in Fishing Communities: A Global Overview

The worlds of women and men are perhaps nowhere more separated than in commercial fishing communities. Built on top of a very real physical and spatial separation in which men are away at sea and women ashore is constructed a symbolic structure that is at once affirmative of the role played by each gender and retrogressive in its inherent segregation of the genders. Work and home, men and women— this most hackneyed bipolarity echoes through time in different versions, the most common of which being the nature/culture model (Ortner 1974). Commercial fishing is one of those human occupations in which there is little doubt as to who does what: men catch fish and women stay home: that is, stay onshore. The literature on the sexual division of labor is replete with examples of occupations, tasks, or behaviors defined as "masculine" in one culture, but "feminine" in another(Mead 1935). Fishing remains, however awkwardly positioned in the academic literature, a decidedly masculine pursuit across cultures

as diverse as Aboriginal North Pacific America, South Asia, Western Africa, and Coastal Europe.

To unearth examples of women's involvement in fisheries, one must either: (a) expand the definition of fishing to include such tasks as fiscal management of the fishing enterprise, fish processing, and/or marketing of the fish, or; (b) lump together all manner of different subsistence practices which include some aspect of the capture of fish. Each of these paths has expanded our understanding of 'fishing' and are important vis-à-vis equity politics: they remind us that there is no 'natural' reason to exclude women from actively engaging as 'fishermen.'[1] Contemporary academic politics notwithstanding, the capture of fish and the crewing of boats is definitionally male.

Estimates of female participation, based on work in the US Pacific Northwest (Allison, Jacobs and Porter 1989), British Columbia (Jensen 1995), and Alaska (Fields 1997), suggest a rate of between 5 and 10% (or less) of

[1] There are several important symbolic/cultural explanations for the exclusion of women from fishing. They all centre on notions of patriarchy and the maintenance of male privilege. Male working class notions of self, for example, are intimately tied up in demonstrating that one is *not women*. In a discussion of British Columbia halibut fishers I delve into the symbolic importance (in terms of male gender ideology) of defining the fishery as an exclusively male domain (Menzies 1991).

the fishers are female. In the Maritime administrative district of Le Guilvinec, 6 out of 1,600 plus registered fishers were women in 1994-95. One women owned her own 6m vessel. The other 5 either fished with their husbands or some other male relative. None of the women fished on deep-sea vessels in the 24m class.

Irrespective of the multitude of potential causal explanations, the continuation of a system of rigid gender separation undergirds a particular masculine conception of identity based on the denial of physical discomfort and an intense 'physicality.' Fishers work under difficult and dangerous conditions. They experience chronic back pain, persistent soft-tissue arthritis, and carpal tunnel syndrome caused by repetitive motion. Yet, ask a fisher if he has sustained a serious injury and the most likely answer, despite any physical evidence to the contrary may well be, as Marion Binkley (1995) discovered, "no."

In a study on risk and danger in the Nova Scotia offshore fishery, Binkley encountered fishers with visible injuries, such as amputated fingers. When she asked them if they had had a serious injury while at sea they said "no." When pressed to explain a lost finger, for example, the reply was: "'You know you stop fishing after you have

a serious accident.' Since those men could still fish, they felt they had never had a serious accident" (Binkley 1995:138-139). Binkley correctly, I think, identifies this denial (and glorification) of mutilation and of working through pain and fatigue (see also: Walker 1988)as part of a masculinist ideology; an ideology which simultaneously keeps men working under ghastly conditions and provides them with an explanatory system which justifies their actions, even to the extent of making a virtue out of it.

For their part, women are located within the socio-economic relations of fishing, but not on the fishing boats. In many fisheries world-wide, the fishermen are away from their home communities for most (if not all) of the year. Depending upon gear type (net, line, or trap), species fished (ground fish, herring, tuna, etc.), or the regulatory regime under which fishing occurs, fishers may be away from their homes for 250-300 (or more!) days of the year. The net effect of this are women-centered[2] families in which women take on the primary role of the

[2] In her study of maritime households and the women at the centers of them, Sally Cole suggests using the term 'Women-centered' over such terms as matricentric or matrifocal --terms which "tend to emphasize the centrality of the mother in household relations, whereas, 'women-centered' acknowledges the centrality of women in general, regardless of kinship" (1991:62) . I have, accordingly, adopted the term.

maintenance and day-to-day management of the household in a manner akin to a lone-parent household.

Women play an integral role in most fisheries. Their location at home places them in the center of the political and economic fields within which it has become increasingly important to act. As the market for fish products has been increasingly globalized and local protective tariffs removed (in the European Union primary tariff barriers for fish products were removed in 1993, Arbo and Hersoug 1997) the political role played by women in the home community has expanded to take on a wider national and international dimension (Clark 1988; Smith 1988). In addition to their expanding political role, women are the primary caregivers for children and maintain and provision the home. Skippers' wives often manage the fishing boat's accounts. Over and above all of this many fishermen's wives are also employed in wage-labor outside the home.

'With One Hand I Feed My Family, With the Other I Fight for Our Survival: Women's Work and Fishing in the Bigoudennie

This section outlines the specific dimensions of women's work in the Bigoudennie through the examination of three women's experience of work as members of a fishing community. Two underlying aspects of these experiences of are considered: (1) What do women do in their daily round, and: (2) What opportunities for wage-labor exist in the Bigoudennie?

Women at Work

(1) Jeanne Floch: Jeanne's husband, Etienne, is a fishing skipper/boat-owner of a 18m steel dragger whose fishing trips range from one to four days in length with a crew of 4 (including Etienne). They have three school-aged children (Jannick, 8; Yves, 6; Matthew, 5) and live in a rather spacious, new-style home (built, 1987) just inland from Le Guilvinec in the commune of Plomeur.

Jeanne's primarily responsibility is the basic accounting and record keeping of the fishing enterprise. She keeps track of the boat's tally slips and receipts for

trip expenses. Though it is her husband who actually 'makes' most of the purchases, she is the one who records and maintains the records of these expenses. She meets on a regular basis with a business representative of the local management co-operative who does her family-fishing enterprise's detailed fiscal planning.

Jeanne is also responsible for relaying messages between the boat and the crew members' wives and partners when the boat is at sea for more than a day at a time. Given the regularity of the boat's schedule, this is normally not a particularly taxing responsibility. However, in the event of an accident at sea, the task of calling the affected wife falls to Jeanne.

Jeanne does not currently work outside the home, although she has worked in the past as a retail clerk. She resigned her previous job as the birth of her first child approached. At several points in our conversation, she discussed the possibility of returning to work, especially given the downturn in the fishing economy. In light of the crisis, however, she felt it was unlikely that she would find work. Many other women were looking for employment in a context of an overall decline in employment in the region. Between her responsibilities

for the fishing enterprise and her children, she said, she was better off at home:

> "As long as Etienne is fishing, we seem to be all right. He is very good at catching fish. When the crisis hit we were in a good position. We hadn't over-extended like some of the others who are worse off did. It's much harder for others then for us" (Jeanne F., per. Comm.).

Jeanne's work in the home includes basic household cleaning, laundry, cooking, purchasing food and clothes, and looking after the children.

Jeanne's daily schedule is shaped by the rhythm of her children's schooling. School starts at 8:50 am, breaks from 11:50-2:00 for lunch, and is finished at 5:00pm. Most days she picks her children up and drives them home for lunch. Jeanne participates in an informal lunch co-op with three or four other mothers. When she is unable to take her own children home for lunch one of the other mothers will take her children to their home for lunch. The children could stay at school and have lunch at the cafeteria, but Jeanne prefers that they have a home lunch.

On a typical day, Jeanne will prepare about six separate meals. When her husband is fishing day trips out of Le Guilvinec, she makes a small bag-lunch and breakfast for him to take on the boat the evening before he sails. In the morning, she prepares a light breakfast for the children and herself before school. She eats lunch with the children during the noon break and prepares a light meal for them when they come home again at 5. And, she has a supper waiting for her husband when he comes home from the boat in the early evening after unloading the day's catch.

For most of her day-to-day shopping (bread and dairy supplies) she drives to the nearby burg of Plomeur. On Saturdays the whole family (including her husband when he is in town) goes to Pont L'Abbé to shop for the week's groceries at a large supermarket. Occasionally, they will make a special trip into Quimper, 40 kilometers away. On Thursdays, after dropping her children at school, Jeanne goes to the open-air market in Pont L'Abbé.

All in all, Jeanne's daily labor in the home provides an important material contribution to the economic and social well being of her household. Despite being fairly well off, in local terms, the cost of

replacing Jeanne's labor in the home would be crippling to the family budget. The value of 'domestic' labor has been well documented (see, among others: Benston 1969; Seccombe 1974; Beechy 1977). In Jeanne's case, her unpaid labor frees capital from the family fishing enterprise so that it can be reinvested in maintaining their productive property (i.e., boat and gear).

(2) Marie Le Roche: Marie's husband, Jean, skippers a 12m wooden inshore dragger with a crew of two (including Jean). They have two teenage children (Anna 17, and Jean-Pierre, 15). The crisis of the early 1990s caught the LeRoches in the process of renovating their old farmhouse near Lesconil -work that is now deferred until the fishery recovers. They had resisted investing in a larger, modern steel dragger during the 1980s boom, opting instead for a more conservative fiscal path. Nonetheless, the impact of collapsing fish prices forced them into a process of 'retrenchment' and effecting 'budgetary efficiencies' (to borrow from the neo-liberal vocabulary of contemporary budget cutting).

The rhythm of school has less of an impact on Marie's daily activities than it did on Jeanne's. Marie's children attend the Lycee in Pont L'Abbé. They leave by

bus every morning before 8:00 am and return home by 6:00 p.m.

"My time is a little more my own now the children are adolescents. When they were little, they took a lot of time out of my day," Marie said. She also expects them to shoulder some of the basic household tasks including cooking, some shopping, and light housecleaning.

"I'm still the boss here," she told me, laughing. As if to demonstrate, she called out to her daughter: "Anna, let's have some coffee for our guest." Turning to me, she laughed and said: "She doesn't make very good coffee. I'll be right back."

In the lull provided, I sit back and look around the dining room. I've been sitting here for nearly an hour listening to her talk about fishing, the crisis, and her day-to-day work in the home and for the family fishing enterprise. The room is large enough to hold a table which must seat at least 25 people. It is made from a richly textured hard wood and is ornately decorated. Heavy, dark brown buffets and china cabinets (typically 'Breton' and decidedly not 'nouveau') are arranged along three sides of the room. The room serves as a combination office, parlor, and dining room (the family, however,

takes their meals around a small table in the kitchen). A wide bay window has been installed facing the street -- part of the recent spate of renovations I suspect. My reverie is broken by the arrival of two family friends. Marie introduces me: "He's wants to know about the crisis." Anna brings in the coffee and Marie returns to telling me about her daily work as a fisherman's wife.

Marie is far more involved in her family's fishing enterprise than is Jeanne. "The more things I do," she said, "the more money we have. For example, I buy the provisions for the boat. On the bigger boats they get a supply company to buy it for them. But that costs more.

She stands up and takes a notebook off a nearby cabinet: she keeps the fishing records in one of the cabinets lined up against the wall. She passes the notebook to me. I see that it is really a calendar, one month per two pages. A sequence of dates are marked off in a variety of colors.

"Here, these dates -that's when the boat loan must be paid. It's a priority, red ink."

"These ones," (she points to days marked in blue), "that's the gear account at the Co-op. Important, but we can let it slide a little."

"Over there, in green, that's when the fuel account must be paid."

She returns to the cabinet, looks through a shelf of notebooks and pushes another one across the table to me.

"This shows our gross earnings over the past five years by fishing day and month."

Every contingency is detailed and graphed: days lost due to bad weather or mechanical breakdowns; cycles in fish prices (mostly downward over the past several years, I note); gross stock and overall expenditures.

"I do all this," she says. "This way I know exactly what is happening. I can plan household expenditures. Here, look at this," she points to a low point on the graph.

"That's late January early February. The weather is so bad he can't get out of the harbor some days. So, I know I have to save up a little, put some aside. Its not easy."

Marie also works outside of the home. She has a paper route of 150 deliveries spread across a rural area of close to 150 square kilometers.

"I get up at the same time as Jean leaves to go fishing. It takes me about 3 or 4 hours from the time I

pick up the papers till I'm back home." Marie applies the money she earns from the paper route against the household food budget: "that's one less thing to worry about," she says.

3) Pascale Le Guin: Pascale's husband Henri, is currently a deckhand on a 3 man wooden dragger fishing out of Lesconil. According to Pascale, the boat seems to always be *en panne*, or broken down: "First its the hydraulics, then they rip up the net, next it's the engine. Henri's got to find a better post." Pascale and Henri have two children (Sophia 7 and Jannick 5). They live in a smallish rented home in Loctudy: "We need a nicer place for the children," says Pascale. "But with the fishing the way it is, there is no certainty. Henri will have to get on a better boat. Maybe one of the Bara boats[3]."

As the wife of a deckhand, Pascale has no responsibilities directly related to the fishing process (though she does make a bag lunch for Henri to take with

[3] The 'Bara' boats are a fleet of 8 24m steel draggers owned by a local boat owning company based in Le Guilvinec, Armament Bigouden. Two things are notable about this fishing enterprise. It is only one of two family busines which own more than two or three boats and, while other enterprises have been either standing still or going backward, the Armament Bigouden has actually been able to expand its fleet. In 1995 a brand new vessel was launched. All of the boat names in the fleet begin with the word Bara, Breton for bread.

him on the boat). Pascale is employed part-time as a cleaner in a nearby health-care facility. The crisis hit their household hard. Her husband's income dropped by nearly 40% at the peak of the crisis. "We were planning to have a house built just when the prices started to fall. It was too much, so here we are," Pascale said. In 1995, Henri's fishing income had increased slightly, but was still close to 20% lower than its 1992 level. "While our income goes down, everything else goes up," Pascale said.

Pascale's response to the crisis was both pragmatic and political. In the first instance, she took on a number of private housecleaning and domestic jobs. On the political level, she joined the Fishermen's Wives Committee: "With one hand I feed my family," she said, "with the other I fight for our survival."

Pascale's children stay in school over lunch when she works. "I'd like to take them home for lunch, but I have to work. They get a good meal. It's good for them to start early. Education is what will give them their jobs. They can't count on fishing, especially since they are girls."

Arranging her schedule is one of the most difficult aspects of Pascale's day. As a part-time worker she does not have a regular schedule and so must constantly juggle her commitments to her children and work. She relies upon her retired mother to help out with the children. In return (though Pascale definitely did not see this as an exchange: "its what any daughter would do," she said), Pascal helps her mother maintain her home, does odd jobs such as shopping, and supplies her with fish whenever she can from Henri's share of take-home (this amounts to about once a week at least).

Although both Pascale and Henri come from families with a depth of four or more generations in the fishery, neither one of them believes their daughters will marry a fisherman or stay in the area as adults. As essentially propertyless workers, they have very little to pass on to their children that would keep them in the region. They look toward the institutions of the contemporary welfare state to provide them with a "good job."

The Daily Round

Much of a woman's unpaid labor in the Bigoudennie is structured in terms of whether or not she has children.

The existence of a well funded (by North American standards) crèche and pre-school system releases, to a certain extent, parental labor (predominantly female) for waged-labor in other sectors of the economy. Nonetheless, the 'family' is the primary site of domestic labor and, in the Bigoudennie, it is predominantly the domain of women.[4] Women's tasks in the domestic sphere can be broken into three basic categories: 1) children; 2) housekeeping; and 3) financial management.

Child care is partially underwritten by the state in the form of an extensive pre-school system. In Brittany, nearly 80% of children aged two and up are in the school system and more than 95% of three year olds attend school. I appreciated the benefits of the French school system, being as I was with two young children. I still marvel at being asked by people we met early on who, upon learning we had two young boys, asked when, not if, we would be enrolling them in school.

The benefits of a state-funded child-care system are

[4] The issue of the family as both the site of the reproduction of labour power and of the oppression of women has been much debated. Two particularly good discussions of these issues, if somewhat dated, can be found in Michèlle Barrett (1980) *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis* (see especially, pages: 152-226) and in Lise Vogel (1983) *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory* (see, especially, pages: 136-175).

not to be underestimated. However, the primary responsibility for children in the fishing community (and in general) falls to women. The specific impact of having children varies according to their age and degree of self-reliance. Children add to the burden of household labor for quite a few years before they can usefully be seen as net contributors to the household (in terms of labor devoted to the household versus labor created for others.[5]

Household tasks include cleaning, maintenance, shopping, cooking, laundry, just to name the most obvious. Housework is a particularly vexing vocation: the more accomplished one becomes the less obvious it appears. It is far more apparent when a house is untidy then when it is neat and orderly.

The majority of the financial work in the home is also conducted by women. This includes keeping the household accounts (the fishing accounts too, if the woman is married to a skipper) and ensuring that regular

[5] I must admit this is, perhaps, a particularly 'insensitive' evaluation of the impact of children which focuses on their material impacts on household labour as opposed to other factors. As a parent who has been intimately involved throughout my children's lives, I recognize the strong emotional and affective ties we parents develops with our children. Yet, I am enough of a materialist to also realize that as a parent in contemporary society, my unpaid labour in the home subsidies the reproduction of capitalism.

household bills are paid. As almost anyone who has tried to balance a budget and provision a household will attest, the job of household finance is a delicate balance between controlling family desires and meeting basic needs. This job extends into the planning of daily, weekly, or monthly shopping trips for a variety of household needs. With children in the house, ensuring appropriate clothes, toys, and supplies can be a daunting task, especially if one's income is declining or insufficient to meet basic needs. Working outside the home further complicates one's tasks on a given day.

The Stories People Tell

The descriptions of Jeanne, Marie, and Pascale's lives reflect they way in which they talk about themselves. But they also fit within a wider set of narratives about fishermen's wives and Bigouden women told by fisherfolk and their neighbors. These stories are complementary in that they are reflections on a common social reality. In terms of their messages, however, they differ widely. In this section I will focus on two specific narrative themes: (1) "the strong women," as

told by fisherfolk, and; (2) "the naive spendthrift," as told by "outsiders".

The Strong Woman, or how men go from mothers to wives

On my regular walk through Pont L'Abbé for shopping I would occasionally stop by a small take-out crêperie to pick up crêpes and cider for lunch. In addition to being an excellent cook, Annette, the proprietor, was a veritable cornucopia of information about men and women in the fishing communities. She had grown up in a fishing family and, when she heard that I was doing a study on the fishing crisis, she would greet me each time I came into her shop with another story. She always seemed to have an open bottle of cider to 'taste' and, if I arrived with the boys in tow, would offer them each a crêpe.

The store was essentially a smallish room with a wide glass window store-front. Inside was a long high counter running along one side of the store, behind which she had installed three electric crêpe pans. She would deftly spoon the batter on each to pan sequentially, talking all the while.

One of her favorite themes concerned the immaturity of the local men: "They don't even know how to write a check," she said one morning. Given my own difficulties

figuring out how to write French bank checks I didn't feel particularly qualified to comment on this revelation.

"Oh," I said. "Why?"

She paused in her cooking and poured a little more cider into my glass. "Because, they never have to do anything on their own when they are on land. We Bigouden women are strong, we have to be. The men, they are always out on the boat. They are never on land, not very long." She never stopped making crêpes as she spoke, deftly shifting attention between the cooking, her customers and me.

"My father, for instance: He lived in his mother's home until he was 27 -that's when he married my mother and then moved into her home. He first went fishing when he was 14 years old. When the skipper gave him his share, he took it home and gave it to my grandmother. This she told me."

"He had to pay for his room and board?"

"No," she said. "He didn't know what to do with it. So my grandmother put it away, gave him a little bit at a time. It's that way with all the Bigouden men. They need a little money to spend at the bistro when they're on

land. But, a women who gives her man too much, looses everything."

An elderly women had come into the store while she was talking. "Isn't that right Madame?"

"Tout á fait, absolutely," was the reply.

"Women are the heart and soul of the family," Annette said. "We are the true boss on shore. The fisherman is like a little boy. He doesn't know what to do, he doesn't understand the banks or finance. He works hard on the boat, our men are good fishermen: the best. But a man who moves from his mother's home to his wife's will never be able to look after himself."

Bourgeois Jokes and the Fisherman's Wife

Counterpoised to the valued image of women as the center of the household are the stories told by outsiders, most notably by the urban bourgeoisie. These stories reflect a class-based antagonism. In these stories the fisherman's wife is represented as a naive and/or inappropriate consumer (read: desiring to consume beyond her means and station). Stories such as these were most often encountered at dinner parties I attended in home of

the urban merchant and professional classes, living in the region, and were told as 'jokes.'

(1) "Twice the length." *A young fishermen's wife was ordering new cabinets and shelves for her home.*

"How many cabinets and shelves do you need?" the carpenter asked.

"How long was the cabinet Marie-Claire ordered?" the fishermen's wife asks.

"Ten feet."

"Then I'll have twice that length," she says.

(2) "The silver sugar tongs." *The other day a young fisherman's wife from Penmarc'h went to Quimper to shop. She walked into Henri's Silverware, it's near the old part of town. She saw a neighbor leaving the store and asked her what she had bought: "a silver coffee tong for when I have guests," said the neighbor.*

The young fisherman's wife went up to the clerk. "I'll have one dozen silver coffee tongs," she said. "One for each of my guests."

(3) "The *piano á deux queue*." *A young fishermen's wife was overheard in a music store in Qumiper.*

"I'd like to buy a piano."

"What type of Piano would you like?" said the clerk.

"Well, my neighbor just bought a piano á queue. I would like a piano á deux queue."

In each of these stories the fisherman's wife commits a social *faux pas*, more apparent in the latter example, perhaps, than in the first two 'jokes.' These jokes document a concern, on the part of the joke-teller, with a transgression of a social class barrier represented in terms of a naive consumer, the wife of a fisherman. She is presented as almost desperate in her attempt to buy a new social image and keep up with her neighbors, yet she constantly trips over the hidden boundaries of class. Class codes are subtle markers of identity designed to exclude (see Le Wita 1994:62-97).

Revealed in these stories (and others like them) is the hidden topography of class. Being told in the context of the fishery crisis, they also contain a barely restrained glee at the comeuppance of the 'uppity lower classes' who had forgotten their proper place in the social order but are now being returned to it.

Yet the prosperity of the accusing class of town dwellers and merchants rests firmly on the backs of the fishing community. Tourism is unable to outweigh the

impact of the fishing collapse and with the collapse of the Keynsian state, government largesse is beginning to disappear, overtaken by the neo-liberal desire to balance budgets and fund tax cuts (the election in 1997 of a socialist parliamentary majority reflects a growing dissatisfaction with the tend toward neo-liberalism in France).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the ways in which gender intersects with the process of production in the fishing community of the Bigoudennie. Here I am defining the production process widely to include the reproduction of labor power in the home (both in terms of new laborers and the rejuvenation of current labor power), the economic maintenance of the family-based fishing enterprises, and the subsistence of the household itself. The three case studies describe the situation of a big boat skipper's wife, a small boat skipper's wife, and the wife of a deckhand. In each case the economic importance of the women's paid and unpaid labor power was critical in the maintenance of the household unit.

The final section of this chapter described the social matrix within which fisherfolk live. The juxtaposition of stories told by the townsfolk against the description of their daily life told to me by the women of the fishing families themselves is stark. On the one hand we are presented with a bevy of irresponsible, consumer-crazed even grasping, women who don't know that a grand piano has only one 'tail.' On the other, we have the detailed explanations and descriptions of daily life and the work associated with running a household and a business, including the work of managing the consumption of every member of the family.

In the 'bourgeois tales' the story tellers attempt to intervene in the social process of class formation at the local level. Here they are struggling over access to what is felt to be a diminishing pool or wealth and resources. The jokes are one aspect of an attempt to shape the social field. Revealed within the jokes is the internal antagonism of being Bigouden; a denial of the myth of a community of shared values. Ultimately, these jokes and stories highlight the crucial centrality of gender in the local matrix of class and identity. Despite the pivotal work carried out by the fishermen's wives (particularly

the wives of boat-owners), these stories form part of the cultural apparatus which constrains and divides the imagined community. They are fundamentally stories of class boundaries and the maintenance of the same.

Chapter 10: The State and Social Struggle

In a world in which the price of fish in Senegal or New Bedford, or the food fashion in Japan or Paris, has more to say about the price of fish than the quantity unloaded each afternoon on the docks of Le Guilvinec Prince Rupert, Dartmouth, Newlyn, etc.…, how do fishing people organize their resistance? In this chapter I describe the social field of the state within skippers and crews must now confront. In doing so, two points are important to keep in mind: (1) commercial fishing in the epoch of capitalism has almost always been inserted into a wider regional or global system in which the prime dynamic comes not from the locale of fishing, but from the larger metropolitan economic centers; and, (2) the state plays a critical role in intervening in fisheries; not in order to protect the resource, but rather to ensure an acceptable level of profits. Before taking up a consideration of the structure of the fisheries policy (see chapter 11), four specific aspects of the state in late 20th century capitalism must be presented: (1) the relation between the state and capital; (2) the role of the welfare state in late 20th capitalism; (3) the question of who benefits from

the welfare state; and (4) the structure of social conflict within the welfare state.

The relation between the state and capital

At its most simplistic, the state is indeed the executive committee of large business interests. Within contemporary capitalism the state plays an important role in facilitating the smooth accumulation of capital with a minimum of social disruption. The state has at its command the exclusive control of coercive force (police, army, law, etc.) and effective redistributive powers with which it is able to underwrite the infrastructural costs of production (building roads and airports, for example). However, the state is not simply the adjunct of the ruling class; it is simultaneously a product of the historical development of capitalism **and** an actor in the process itself. Two common left views of the state -the state as superstructure or the state as capital— both obscure the actual relationship between the state and capital. On the one hand, they allow for too much autonomy to the state and, on the other, they accord too much dependency of the state on capital.

In the state as superstructure model, the state is seen "as external to the capitalist economic system. Capitalism in this view, consists in the pursuit of profits by firms (or, more accurately speaking, the self expansion of capitals) without regard to where they are based geographically. The state, by contrast, is a geographically based political entity, whose boundaries cut across the operation of individual capitals" (Harman 1991:3).

The state as capital model has its intellectual roots in the writings of Lenin and Bukharin. Of special note to us here, are their descriptions of the state merging with capital, of state monopoly capitalism, or state capitalism. The interpretation of soviet-style communism as state-capitalism thus traces its roots to Lenin and Bukharin (see also, Cliff 1988). However, to argue that "every state acts at the behest of a set of nationally based capitals, and every significant capital is incorporated in a particular state" (Harman 1991:5) is to take the state as capital model too far. The state as superstructure model implies that there is a separation between the political and the economic. Thus, the struggle against police violence, for example, is seen

not as a problem intrinsic to capitalism, but rather as a separate political or even ethical issue.

According to Harman:

> the implications of the view of the state and capital as merging completely are just as great (as in the state as superstructure.) The forms of oppression maintained by the state are seen as flowing directly from the accumulation needs of capital. … The consequence of such a view is to drop any distinction between fundamental social clashes which challenge the very basis of capitalist rule and less fundamental ones that can be contained by reforms to the existing institutional structure (1991:6).

The end result is a 'movement-based' coalition politics in which class is seen as merely one of several possible sites of struggle as opposed to the primary and fundamental site.

The fundamental basis of the relationship between state and capital is best understood in terms of the concrete ways in which the state and capital interact in the course of historical development. "Existing national states did arise out of the developing capitalist organization of production as superstructures. But they feed back into that organization helping to determine its tempo and direction" (Harman 1991:7).

The logic of capitalist development leads to the concentration and rationalization of capital. Within this process, the nation state becomes "the nodal point around

which capitals cluster, even when their activities lead them to branch out from it to penetrate the rest of the world" (Harman 1991:22). This trend toward the conjoining of state and industry began in the late 19th century. But it did not reach its fullest development until the 1930s, when individual 'private' capitals seemed incapable of recovery from economic crisis if simply left to their own devices" (Harman 1991:23). Thus emerged the period of state capitalism, represented in the west by the welfare state and in the east by soviet-style communism (bureaucratic state capitalism). These two forms are variants on a common theme and have important implications for the manner through which social struggles manifest themselves.

The Role of the Welfare State

The welfare state performs two primary functions: (1) it intervenes in the economy in terms of the "level, distribution and pattern of consumption" (Gough 1979:46); and (2) it intervenes "in the process of reproducing labor power and maintaining the non-working population" (Gough 1979:49). These two functions relate to a particular and

enduring problem within any capitalist social formation: the problem of over-production.

Who benefits from the welfare state?

As several commentators have pointed out, the welfare state has served the immediate short term interests of workers through improved living and working conditions (e.g. Gough 1979; Teeple 1995). However, the contemporary period of restructuring the welfare state highlights the fragility of benefits and entitlements within a capitalist social formation. The benefits people gained from the post-war welfare state emerged within a specific conjuncture of economic expansion and political transformation, and a social climate in which popular movements were gaining ground. Thus, it was politically expedient and economically feasible for the capitalist state to expand the domain of social provisioning.

Social Conflict and the Welfare State

In what way then, has the development of the welfare state changed or effected the dimensions of social conflict? As I have argued above, one of the primary

functions of the welfare state has been to contain the demands of the working peoples within the confines of capitalism. This was an especially important aspect in the post-World War II context of Soviet-style communism (a state form which represented a potential threat to capitalist hegemony in the rest of the world).

For our purposes, two specific features are important: (1) the initial switch from a "Night-watchman's" State in the early part of this century to an interventionist welfare state; and (2) the impact of globalization on local social movements.

With respect to the fishing communities of the Bigoudennie, the development of the welfare state coincided with the decline of the industrial sardine canning industry. While it is prudent to caution against drawing too hasty a conclusion, neither should one underestimate the role of state intervention in this change. For example, in correspondence between cannery owners and state officials during the period 1903-1914, the canners advocated state intervention in the fishery and state officials complied without apparent protest. However, the state's response was not simply one of armed intervention, but -and this is a crucial point-- also in

funding credit unions to assist fishers in buying and modernizing their fishing boats and gear. One unintended by-product of the state-funded Credit Union was that it generated the economic means for local fishers to escape the direct control of the industrial canners. Paradoxically, the timely intervention of the state contributed to the withdrawal of the industrial canning industry from the region.

The post-World War II French state was shaped by de Gaul's conservative corporatism. In the face of a strong communist and socialist opposition, de Gaul introduced a variety of social welfare measures in an attempt prevent a communist take-over of the state apparatus. De Gaul also instituted enterprise and industry-wide committees which included representatives from all segments of each industry (for example, the local, regional, and national fishing committees represent deckhands, skippers, industrial fishing companies, processors, and distributors).

The underlying assumption of the corportist model was that these committees would engender a spirit of tri-partite co-operation between government, labor, and business that would forestall more radical action on the

part of subaltern groups. However, the increasing degree of state intervention merely served to define the site and target of political protest as lying within the realm of the state, not of capital. The corporatist Gualist state strove to incorporate working class demands within the context of a capitalist state without threatening the stability of business. The essence of the tactic "is that in return for consultation and a representational monopoly within their sphere, each co-party exerts control over the base of their organization" (Gough, 1979:146). This is physically manifest in the Bigoudennie through the Local Fishing Committee (CLPM). However, the existence of such bodies does not preclude social conflict. When conflict does break out, as it did in 1994-95, it tends to be more violently anti-state than a 'straight-forward' worker/employer struggle.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the four primary aspects of the state in late 20th century capitalism that are crucial to our understanding of the role of state regulation of fisheries and social struggle. In summary, the relationship between the state and capital is such

that while the state is not, crudely put, 'the executive committee of the ruling class' it does indeed play a crucial role in regulating labor and industry in order to facilitate the process of accumulation. The answer to the question -" who benefits from the late 20th century state"- is somewhat ambiguous, though a general tendency can be suggested. That is, while short term benefits (public education, healthcare, old age security, and so on) have had a clear impact, their long term sustainability under a market economy is far from certain. The restructuring of the welfare state in the 1980s and 1990s would seem to indicate that benefits accruing to the broad spectrum of society (as witnessed in the post-war era) were the product of a particular constellation of economic, political and social forces that are no longer operative today. The net effect of the welfare state on political and social struggles has been to shift the focus of struggle from economic enterprises toward government policy. In the next chapter I follow this thread through a discussion of fishers' policies.

Chapter 12: Fisheries in a Global and National Perspective

Fisheries the world over are, have been, and will continue to be in crisis. Since the advent of the commercial fishing industry, crisis has been the most sustainable component of fisheries. What is it about commercial fisheries that leads persistently, if not inevitably, into crisis? Answers variously emphasize too much government intervention, not enough government involvement, the "tragedy of the commons" (in which greedy individualists pillage the fish stocks for their own profit), inappropriate non-selective gear, scientific errors, seals: the list is endless. The one factor rarely discussed (for an exception see Rogers 1995) is the impact of the market economy and the role played by the state in facilitating the accumulation of capital.

The focus of this chapter places it within the purview of several key concerns in modern social theory and resource management. At the most general, it speaks of the essential difficulty of small-scale producers to survive in a market economy. Specifically, in this chapter I: 1) describe two important and competing paradigms of resource management (folk and bio-economic); 2) describe

the specific case of French fishery policies; and 3) list the social implications for small-scale fishers.

Fisheries Management

The dominant model of fisheries management is commonly referred to as a bio-economic model, in that it combines biological concerns (i.e. stock size) and economic demands (the need to accumulate capital and produce a surplus). Under this model stocks have tended to be managed on a species by species basis, though recent efforts at managing ensembles of species are being introduced in certain jurisdictions. The goal of a bio-economic model is to maximize economic benefits without too severely harming a particular species. Unfortunately, bio-economic models tend to be blinkered by the economy and tend to restrict their focus to economically viable species.

A host of multi-word concepts and an alphabet soup of acronyms have emerged out of the conjoining of biologists and economists over the course of the last century. For our purposes three concepts are of particular concern in examining the problematic aspects of the bio-economic model. These concepts are: the tragedy of the commons;

maximum sustainable yield, and; optimum yield. I will address each in turn.

The tragedy of the commons thesis was first advanced by Scott Gordon in an important paper in 1954. Essentially, Gordon argued that as long as the fishery was profitable, new fishers and/or boats would enter the fishery. Total costs would increase until resource rents (i.e. profits) were destroyed by competition. Since no one owned the fish until they were caught, there was no incentive to reduce harvest levels to protect the resource, nor did anyone have the authority to allocate the resource. The inevitable result was the destruction of the fishery.

According to Gordon, the 'tragedy' of the commons could only be diverted by introducing property rights into the fishery. Gordon assumed that as owners, fishers would be guided by enlightened self-interest and self-regulate their fishing effort in a sustainable manner. Unfortunately, in an analysis otherwise faultless, Gordon (and those who followed) managed to ignore the drive toward expanded exploitation extant within a capitalist social formation.

Obtaining maximum sustainable yield (MSY) has been the primary goal of fisheries managers for most of the 20th century. MSY is operationalized thus: "what is the most fish we can allow to be caught without reducing the fish stock to below a commercially viable level?" According to Rettig, Berkes, and Pinkerton, "MSY resulted in the development of harvest objectives for one stock at a time, as if stocks of fish existed independently of their ecosystems" (1989:275). While MSY came to be replaced by the idea of "optimal yield" as an objective that incorporated social concerns, the underlying economic impact of the market economy on fishers was still ignored.

Critics of the bio-economic model have identified a variety of folk-systems in which a host of local systems of ownership and socio-cultural restraint, premised upon belief systems and/or peasant leveling mechanisms, seem to allow for the sustainable harvesting of the resource. According to Dwyer and McGoodwin, "folk management in the fisheries is management by and for fishing people themselves. It naturally arises as an inevitable outcome of resource utilization by fishing peoples. Formally defined, it is any localized behavior originating outside

state control that facilitates the sustainable utilization of renewable natural resources" (1994:1).

Aboriginal North American systems of resource management are often held up as examples to follow. In a paper on co-management (essentially, management based on co-operation between communities and governments), Rettig, Berkes, and Pinkerton argue that aboriginal approaches to resource management provide an important counter model to contemporary practices of resource management. However, they raise a perceptive question in a comment on pre-industrial fisheries customary practices on the Northwest Coast: "It is less clear how long and under what conditions aboriginal conservation practices can survive in the industrialized world" (1989:281). Yet, the issue is quickly dropped with a vague reference to the power of 'native authority' and 'spiritual beliefs'.

The political economic context within which a fishery operates is critical: "Initiatives to conserve the natural world require a viable social context in which to manifest themselves. In turn, economic globalization is not a social context that offers any hope for conservation" (Rogers 1995:154). Rogers may be overstating his case, but the fundamental point remains: the only future for

conservation is through "resisting the forces of economic globalization" (1995:154).

Fisheries in the European Union

The first Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of the European Union (E.U.), adopted October 20, 1970, encompassed two fundamental points: 1) equal access to the basic resource by all member states, and 2) a common market organization for fish similar to the common market for key agricultural products (Leigh, 1983). This agreement still left much of the actual control of fisheries in the hands of individual member states and emphasized economic development, fleet modernization and rationalization ahead of issues of conservation. The E.U. was not able to come to an agreement on a CFP that effectively dealt with both economic and conservation factors until January, 1983 (Farnell and Elles 1984; Leigh 1983; Wise 1984; Holden 1994). The 1983 CFP gave the European Commission powers to set fishing quotas for member states, to limit access to fishing grounds, and to restrict fishing effort.

French fishers have been strong supporters of E.U. and national policies that have expanded and/or guaranteed

their access to fishing grounds, funded modernization of new vessels, and/or ensured strong minimum prices for key species The triumph of neo-conservative economics and the advancing globalization of the economy has had a direct impact on E.U. fishery policy. Under the guise of conservation (undeniably needed, but in no way effectively implemented[1]) E.U. fishers have been confronted by mandated fleet reductions and declining quotas. Simultaneously, new E.U. trade regulations opened the door to cheaper American and Third World fish imports, prompting E.U. officials to lower the guaranteed minimum prices in key species. In addition, the devaluation of the Spanish and Italian currencies resulted in a concurrent devaluation of fish prices due to the important role of these two Mediterranean nations in buying French fish. Working in concert, these various factors were at the root of the crisis that shook the French artisanal fishery in the early 1990s.

[1] See, Coffey (1995)

The French Example[2]

In the years following the second world war the French fishing fleet expanded at an astronomical rate. Fueled by government funding and the need for food products in a war ravaged Europe, the French fishing industry expanded without any consideration to the ecological health of the fisheries resource (Meuriot, 1986). On the technological end over capacity was generated by the rapid introduction of new types of fishing gear, more powerful engines, hydraulics, electricity, navigational and communications equipment, and new stronger types of building materials (steel, aluminum, and fiberglass) for boats and machinery.

1945-1953: This period was marked by the direct intervention by the state in terms of establishing a professional structure which linked fishers and fish processors under the tutelage of the state (the fishing committees). During this period the extensive network of fish auctions was established. In addition, improved transportation routes (primarily truck and road systems) created a space for an urban fresh-fish market.

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[2] This account of French fishing policy owes much to the book by Éric Meuriot (1986) and to the unpublished summary of Meuriot's book by Patrick Chaumette.

1953-1978: This period was characterized by massive state investment in offshore trawlers. At the same time, coastal-states were establishing exclusive economic and fishing zones in which fishing was restricted to boats from the coastal-state fleet. Post-war readjustments, political turmoil in France and her colonies, changes in the international law of the sea, and the development of the European Union had a combined effect on the French distant water fleet which ultimately resulted in a policy turn around in the late 1970s and 1980s.

1978-1993: This period marked the switch from offshore, corporate ownership of fishing boats to an emphasis on smaller, family-based fishing operations within the territorial waters of France and the European Union. With the election of Mitterand and the socialists in 1979, economic policies were (initially) redirected in a direction important in terms of the local fishery. That is, the Socialists decentralized government and created a regional council which had control over subsidy programs.

1993-1995: This period was marked by severe structural crisis. The government response was a yearly series of ad hoc interventions of millions of Francs. Despite the individual differences of each plan in this

period, the underlying principle was the same and involved large infusions of money. The policy difficulties of the recent years reflect an inherent contradiction between conservation and social policies. On the one hand, governments try to control fishing effort to conserve fish stocks and maintain a 'reasonable' corporate profit over the medium to short term. However, these same governments are also attempting to alleviate social problems and assist in the modernization of their fishing fleet. These two approaches are contradictory and result in social conflict at the local level.

The catching capacity of the heavily capitalized and efficient fleet of the 1990s greatly exceeds the reproductive capacity of the fish stocks (Salz, 1991; Gwiazda, 1993). In a desire to minimize social disruption among fisherfolk while simultaneously attempting to conserve fish stocks, government agencies have introduced a variety of restrictive policies that range from limiting access to fishing grounds, restricting types and sizes of fishing gear, limiting vessel size and power and establishing regional and species quotas. These measures, however, have only compounded the problems of those who fish.

The Crisis of Management and the Possibilities for the Future

French fishers have experienced a socio-economic crisis that is at the same time a classic problem of over-capacity and stock depletion and a problem arising out of the welfare state. The first aspect of the crisis is a common feature of many of the world's commercial fisheries. The trajectory is simple: a process of technological innovation, competition, and enclosure of the resource propels fishers to increase their capital investment beyond the point of profitability. The resultant crisis is resolved either by complete collapse or re-deployment into other fisheries. The second aspect is somewhat different and I would suggest perhaps a more fundamental causal factor. That is, we are coming to understand that the resource is far more fragile than once thought (especially under the brunt of highly efficient capturing techniques). Thus, state-driven programs of modernization and expansion, combined with the fragility of the resource, has in fact created the current crisis situation.

The dilemma is that under a market regime sustainable resource extraction is not feasible in the long run.

Market mechanisms propel catching capacity to such a point that ultimately returns do not warrant the investment (that is, the catch per unit effort declines to a point at which the stock is commercially extinct, if not actually so). The former Soviet Block countries may at first appear to be an obvious contradiction of this proposition. However, the error lies in a common misconception as to the nature of the soviet-style economies. Once one cuts through the rhetoric of Left and Right, the Soviet and the Western welfare-state economies exhibit a striking similarity in form and function. According to Harmen: "The merger of the state and capital had been a trend throughout the world capitalist system between the 1930s and the 1970s, of which what happened in the Eastern states was the most extreme expression" (1990:77. See also, Harmen 1991; Haynes 1992). With respect to the specific form of management and operation of the Soviet fishing industry, there is in fact very little that was distinctive. According to an official Soviet fishing management text, the goal of "socialist management" in the fishery is to run the business of catching fish efficiently and "increasing the productivity of labor" (Sysoev 1974: xiii). Fishers on the former Soviet vessels

were paid on a piece rate system because: "it makes workers materially interested in raising the productivity of their labor" (Sysoev 1977:306) That is, it forces fishers to work harder and to catch more, irrespective of the weather conditions, for example.

A market driven economy, by its inherent logic, propels actors to continually reinvest and expand to maintain profit levels (this certainly seems to also be the case for the Soviet fisheries, see Sysoev, 1974). Unlimited expansion, however, is not possible in the context of finite limits. Fisheries resources, especially wild stocks, exist in a context of finite limits; the example of the northern cod stocks and the 50,000 people out of work in Newfoundland is a cruel but clear example of this (see also: Rogers 1995; Berril 1997).

In the context of welfare state policies, fisheries (primarily fishing corporations and boat owners) have been fed a seemingly unending flow of investment to spur on the development of new fisheries, gear, and a constant modernization of fishing boats. This flow of money has been directed more at maintaining domestic industries (ship building, for example) and quelling social protest:

ultimately the policy has been an employment and industry development policy, not a fisheries policy.

From a resource management perspective, the typical responses have been: (1) to create vessel limitations in terms of size, power, or capacity; (2) to decommission vessels; (3) to restrict fishing effort through regulating fishing gear or limiting the number of days at sea; or (4) to introduce of individual transferable or vessel quotas (ITQs or IVQs).

Vessel limitations:

The underlying approach here is that the size, power or carrying capacity of a fishing vessel and the number of fishing vessels in a fleet has a direct relationship to the amount of fish that will be caught. While such limitations do indeed have an impact on the catching capacity of individual vessels, vessel limitations have been fraught with a myriad of problems as fishers seek creative ways to circumvent regulations without actually breaking them. A particularly vexing problem of limitations on vessels is that they often have the paradoxical result of expanding, not restricting, catching capacity.

Limitations on kilowatts of power in the French fleet have contributed to a refurbishment of the dragger. In this case, older, less efficient vessels are replaced by newer vessels far more efficient than their predecessors. In British Columbia, a 'limited entry' plan which 'froze' the fishing fleet at its 1967 level resulted in the expansion of one sector of the fleet (the larger, more effective seine fleet) at the expense of the smaller, community-based gillnetters and trollers. Under the initial plan, fishers where able to combine licenses from smaller boats in order to build larger, more efficient fishboats. As the process continued, fishers found that with the aid of naval architects they could build bigger and better boats with smaller and smaller licenses. When the Department of Fisheries and Oceans finally introduced a length restriction and barred combining tonnage, it was too late.

The difficulty with limited entry programs or limitations on vessel dimensions and power is that the underlying problems of competition and expanding fishing effort are not adequately addressed. In open access fisheries, fishing effort expands through increasing the number of fish boats. However, in limited entry,

expanding fishing effort leads toward increases in capital invested in the boat. Thus, fishers invest more money in improving the capability of their vessel so that they can fish further afield and in rougher weather. Government aid programs designed to assist fishers in modernizing their boats intercede in a contradictory manner and, ultimately, undermine attempts to control fishing effort.

Decommissioning or "buying-back" vessels:

A variety of different types of decommissioning or 'buy-back' schemes have been introduced across the world's fisheries. The underlying theme, however, has been the same: reduce fishing effort by removing actual units of production from the fishery. Unfortunately, the underlying premise had a fatal flaw. Resource mangers have simplistically assumed that the removal of any one unit of production (i.e. any one boat) will lead directly to a proportionate reduction in fishing effort. This has not been the case. In just about every documented example of fleet reductions through buy-backs or decommissioning, the actual catch of the remaining fleet has not declined. Nor has the 'capacity' of the fleet decreased.

Restricting fishing effort:

Placing restrictions on fishing effort by focusing on gear-type or days at sea (in some cases 'minutes' at sea is more accurate) has been the primary means of regulating fisheries. Fishers face regulations concerning mesh size, net length and depth, the specific type of gear allowed (i.e., pots, trawls, hook and line, seines, traps, etc.). The dominant measure, fishing effort, is calculated in quantity of fish per unit of gear. Clearly, management plans designed to restrict fishing effort are by definition also plans to create inefficiency, which runs counter to fishers aim for improved efficiency: hence the fundamental line of conflict between fishers and resource managers. One of the primary methods to overcome the dialectic of efficiency/inefficiency inherent in all previous management practices is the introduction of a variety of quota systems held by the individual boat owner.

Individual transferable or vessel quotas (ITQs or IVQs):

Commercial fishers the world over are coming to realize that their fisheries are collapsing and new ways

of management need to found. Fishers are having to spend more money, time, and effort to catch fewer and fewer fish. During the 1970s, world fish production leveled off at about 70 million metric tons, yet the catch per unit of fishing effort and the catch per dollar invested in the fisheries steadily declined. At the same time the number of fishing vessels grew and fishing technology became ever more effective. Despite a slight increase in overall production during the earlier 1980s the overall catch per unit effort has continued to decline. One of the solutions to this problem is the introduction of individual vessel quotas (IVQs). Spearheaded in New Zealand in the early 1980s this approach to resource management has gained rapidly in appeal among resource managers.

The primary feature of IVQs is the privatization of the fishery resource either in the hands of fishers or fishing enterprises. In theory, IVQ's motivate fishers to maximize their revenues and minimize their costs to earn the highest possible profit on their quota. In practice this means deckhands loose jobs and licenses are concentrated in corporate hands. The primary appeal of IVQ's for resource managers and fisheries economists is

the relatively low cost of management of the IVQ system and the system's theoretical emphasis on private property rights.

In 1992, after a decade of "derby" style fishing, in which fishers raced against the clock in limited openings to catch as much Halibut as possible, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans introduced an IVQ system into the British Columbia Halibut fishery. Initially license "stacking," or combining several quotas on one boat, was prohibited. After the initial test period however, stacking regulations were relaxed. The overall benefits to the fishery in terms of higher ex-vessel prices and aggregate earnings for deckhands still in the fishery are undeniable. However, the IVQ system immediately resulted in fewer jobs in the industry as license holders attempted to "minimize costs and maximize revenues."

In BC the actual IVQs were determined by a formula that combined vessel length and past history. Because the total allowable catch varies from year to year, the actual quota is expressed as a coefficient. Thus, a fisher's individual poundage in any one year will vary according to the yearly TAC but his proportion of the TAC relative to other license holders will remain the same. The

accumulation of quota on any one vessel is moderately restricted, but there are no restrictions on how much quota an individual or corporation may own.

IVQ's (or ITQ's, individual transferable quotas) are not a panacea for fisheries management problems. They do offer a convenient solution for resource managers. Those fishers fortunate enough to have been in possession of a license when the scheme was first introduced have certainly benefited from the system. However, the problems inherent in privatizing the resource are not dealt with and as a consequence small coastal communities throughout British Columbia are suffering as licenses leave and fish processing firms depart to larger urban centers.

Finding solutions that work

Each and every one of these solutions results in displacing yet more workers and in a further concentration of ownership -- not an obviously distasteful end product if one's only intent is in the general rate of profit and the smooth functioning of a market economy. It is, however, a problem if you begin with the premise that the quality of life of working people is to be privileged over the profits of a few.

A major problem encountered by most primary food producers is the manner by which they are linked into the retail market. Between the fisher and the final consumer is more often than not a string of intermediaries The large supermarkets in France have attempted to overcome this problem by developing vertical linkages that reduce inefficiencies. For example, the retail chain Intermarché recently purchased a fleet of 9 distant water trawlers based in Lorient (just a 100 km south of Le Guilvinec). For the artisanal fishers the solution lies in the creation of a fishermen-owned processing-distribution network. In conjunction with strong support in the maintenance of minimum prices and the potential reduction of cost in a not-for-profit distribution system, it is possible that the fleet could maintain its current employment base and reduce its ecological impact.

In terms of ecology, the classic problem is one of over-capacity and extensive pressure on the resource. In the Bigoudennie, as in much of the rest of the world, overall production has been falling since the mid to late 1980s. The period between 1992-1994 was one of readjustment to changes in market conditions in which the price dropped between 30 -40%. The drop in fish prices

was the outcome of a series of factors which involved liberalized trade (which let in cheap fish from the U.S. and the Third World) and the devaluation of the Italian, Spanish, and British currencies. Not surprisingly, most local fishers are strong advocates of the single currency.

One of the most pressing aspects of the struggle to survive at the community level is that the economic dynamic is located outside of the domain of the local or even the regional. This process is often referred to as the process of globalization. Globalization is nothing more than the extension of the laws of the capitalist mode of production on a global basis. As Teeple argues, globalization is part of the continuing process of the socialization of the means of production:

> The international exchange of commodities increasingly became determined by the world average of socially necessary labor time, which in turn was regulated by factors such as the global supply and demand of labor power, the outcome of the global struggle between the capitalist and working classes, and the productivity rates of the most advanced technology, wherever located. The consequences of the law of value operating on the global level are the same as the previous consequences on the national level: a pressure to equalize the conditions of production and exchange and rates of profit, but now on the world level; and a movement towards world prices and world wages (Teeple, 1995:67-8).

The globalization of the market for fish and fish products forces fisherfolk and fisheries managers to

grapple with the problems of resource management in ways the have the potential to fundamentally alter our thinking about resource management. Prior to the advent of the industrial capitalist model of fisheries, the ecological impact of fishing was relatively limited. However, the advent of commercial fisheries based on an industrial capitalist model has brought us to the brink of ecological collapse of fish stocks and the social disruption of fishing communities. Traditional fisheries management solutions to this very real crisis typically echo the tired ideology of the market economy: privatize, privatize, and privatize again. Alternative solutions tend to be locked in a romantic image of past (i.e. traditional) management practices or seek to emphasize the enlightened self-interest of fishers rooted in a local system. Underlying both standard and alternative approaches is a fundamental refusal to question the basic dynamic that drives the commercialization and the contemporary reality of the fishery: the drive toward accumulation inherent in a market economy.

Conclusion

This dissertation tells the story(ies) of a group of people struggling to maintain their foothold in a way of life based on family-owned fishing vessels. Fisherfolk, especially those owning boats, are in the middle of a major social transformation which has the potential to change utterly the way in which they and their families live. Their response to this crisis -the social protest movement of the early 1990s- was fundamentally conservative in the sense of trying to maintain the status quo. Yet, the status quo they were attempting to maintain is based in a world defined in national or local economic terms: a world in which the nation-state has the political and economic ability to effectively control its own economy. If the post-*somethingists* are correct in any sense, it is in the effective globalization of the contemporary world system. However, what has been 'globalized' is the logic of capitalist production, not simply exchange. Thus, the struggle of the boat owners to maintain their individual fishing enterprises is perhaps one of the last 'luddite' struggles of the Euro-American world. In this conclusion I revisit the context of my fieldwork and the main points of my argument.

The Fieldwork Context

The male world of fishermen is one bound within close personal ties, hard work, and often intense feelings of alienation from the wider society. This is a world that is often hard to enter. Non-fishers are definitionally strangers, especially for the men working the boats. In the Bigoudennie this is compounded by a tourist trade which for certain weeks of the year overwhelms the local population and plugs the roads, seashore, stores, and living space with voyeuristic strangers. Other anthropologists have written of the necessity to move inland, away from the tourist press during the summer months, in order to avoid being confused with the tourists (cf. Badone 1991).

My own life's work as a fisherman and a skipper's son both facilitated and made more difficult my time in the Bigoudennie. I actively made use of my understanding of fishing and work as a fisherman. I carried with me everywhere a small photo album of fishing boats, fish and fishermen from back home in British Columbia. Many long conversations and relationships emerged out of this small album. Thus, from my life I was able to envision and empathize with the intimate experience and close-cutting

ties which simultaneously unite and divide fishing communities. Yet, my superficial familiarity was, to a certain extent, also a handicap. The world around me so closely reminded me of my own childhood experiences and adult work-experiences as to at times obscure what was uniquely Bigouden or European. Yet, for the Bigouden fishers I came to know, our common experience as fishermen created the medium from within which communication could proceed. That I was also a researcher affiliated with an American university further legitimated what was already understood as a valid professional interest in fisheries in general.

I arrived in the Bigoudennie at the tail-end of the 1994 tourist season and with the first rains of winter. I was not alone in my interest in the local fishers. Television crews, radio, and print journalists were gathered, waiting to see if for the third year in a row local fishers would again erupt into social protest. When nothing happened, the journalist turned to other issues such as the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. My arrival in the midst of a journalist scrum helped to locate my interest as crucial. The fishers I knew interpreted my continuing presence in the Bigoudennie beyond the waning of

journalistic interest as reflecting their own sense of the importance of the issue and my commitment toward understanding their crisis.

The Argument

This dissertation is ultimately concerned with how family-based fishing enterprises continue in the face of what seem to be overwhelming odds. This has been accomplished through an historical ethnography of the fishers -skippers, crews and their families- who make the Bigouden Region in France their home. While I am ultimately concerned with all Bigouden fishers, this analysis has primarily focused on skipper/boat owners and the manner through and by which this group of productive[1] petty-bourgeoisie organize their enterprises in a struggle to survive despite the massive social transformations now occurring in the European fisheries.

Two important conclusions emerge from this study. The first details the specific ways in which the development of the welfare state reconfigured the social-spatial dimensions of class struggle. The second concerns

the issue of custom, struggle and invention. Here, I am specifically referring to the manner in which a unique cultural particularity emerged out of the imposition of industrial social relations: specifically the development the local Bigouden coiffe. The crucial issue here is the manner in which a seemingly archaic custom was in fact a direct product of the experience of proletarianization even as it became entangled in the present within a social protest rooted in the productive middle classes.

State and Social Class

As I have argued in the body of this dissertation, one of the primary functions of the welfare state has been to contain the demands of the working and petty bourgeois classes within the confines of a capitalist state. The welfare state is the hidden side of 'fordism' -the part of social peace and stability that the state underwrites. With respect to the fishing communities of the Bigoudennie, the development of the welfare state coincided with the decline of the industrial sardine canning industry and the rise of an artisanal fishery of skipper/boat owners. While it is prudent to caution

[1] I am using 'productive' here to denote their control over productive property. The distinction made by Marx between 'productive' and 'unproductive' labour is instructive here.

against drawing too hasty a conclusion, neither should one underestimate the role of state intervention in this change. The archival evidence is clear: Capital and State did in fact combine to: (1) undermine relations of social solidarity within the fishers' communities and (2) pull certain classes of fishers into the orbit of the propertied classes. Here it is important emphasize that the form of state intervention was neither limited to nor uniquely focused on the use of coercive force -indeed coercive force scarcely enters into the construction of this social 'order.' More importantly, the development of state-funded financial instruments (i.e. Credit Maritime, a credit union-like agency) deliberately targeted segments of the fishing communities (specifically boat skippers) in order to incorporate them into the capitalist economy through the device of ownership.

Local Custom and Social Struggle

The question of how local customs fit into social struggle is particularly important. In the Bigoudennie the lace coiffe emerged as a symbol of local identity at precisely the moment in which the local society was undergoing a transition from a peasant to a capitalist economy. The structure of social inequality changed from

one in which the primary lines of control over labor were located within the family, to an industrial waged-economy in which the previous kin-based forms of control were disrupted. The old paternalism of the 'father' was replaced by a 'new' paternalism in which the manager or owner of the cannery now appropriated the labor power of household members.

This new form of social inequality had different meanings for the genders. Men working on the fishboats were nominally independent of the direct control of industrial capital over their labor. They experienced a work setting in which the idiom of companionship and equality predominated (though, as pointed out in the body of the dissertation, the control of a skipper over the labor of crew throughout the 20th century has been less pronounced or brutal than the control of a factory boss over a wage-laborer). Women, however, worked under the direct control of capital. They were paid wages based upon their hours of work and, for the most part worked in an assembly-line type setting. Thus, the experiences of industrial capitalism varied dramatically according to one's gender.

The point is that the fishing families cannot actually confront the irrelevance of yesterday's struggles -not just protests against the state and capital but the ways they formed that let them survive. In the face of constant change three enduring features are crucial to note: 1) the language of the local or the construction of a local identity is part of a structure of conflicting class antagonisms which crosscut families; 2) the symbolism of struggle in the 1990s is local but the arena of struggle is not -struggle is located in a de-spatialized context of the universalization of production and exchange; and 3) The speakers, the storytellers, are the boatowners who, through their skillful use of local identity and the shared memory of struggle have been able to forge an effective political coalition with their crews, the crew's families and with a national 'liberal' /social democratic agenda which has primarily benefited the most successful of boatowners.

The struggles during the Sardine years at the beginning of the 20th century centered around the extension of capitalist relations of production into a previously agrarian society. Between then and the 1990s yet another, potentially more fundamental shift, has occurred. This

shift is not epochal, nor is it a harbinger of some new stage of the world economy. Rather, it represents the universalization of capitalist relations of production.

In this context, fisheries are subordinated to an economic logic that extends far beyond the local fish port, auction or fishing ground. It is in this newly emerging global capitalist system (as opposed to a world economic system based only on trade and exchange) that the local identity 'Bigouden' has emerged as part of a tactical program for political struggle in the global arena. Thus, the boat owners attempt to strategically place themselves within an intensely local construction while simultaneously orienting or locating their field of struggle within a global frame. In so doing, they attempt to turn the experience of past resistance to the use of the present. But, in this struggle between the remembered past and the desired future, one wonders if the fisherfolk of the Bigoudennie will manage to survive their present.

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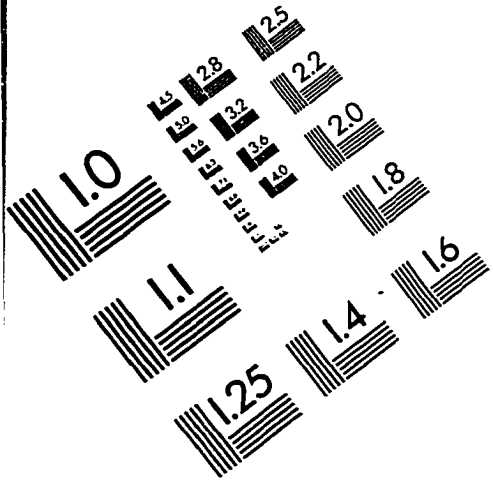
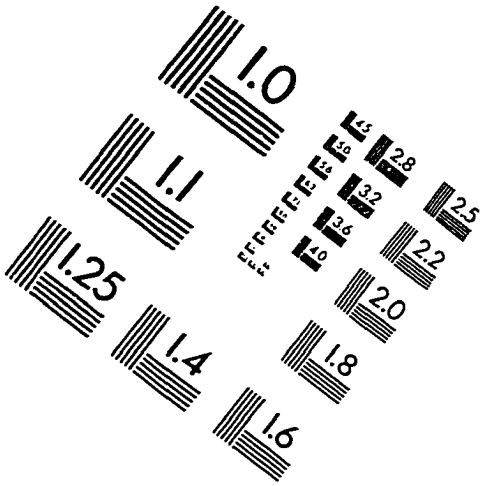
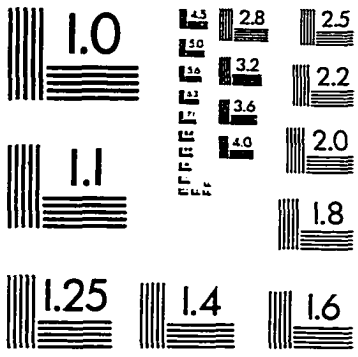
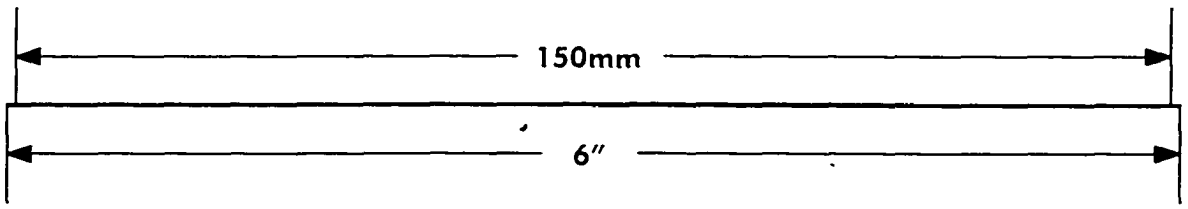
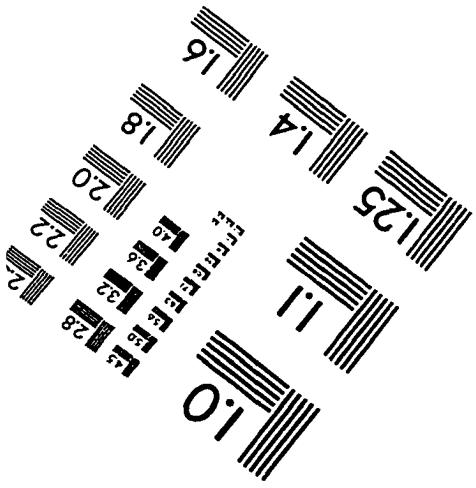
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

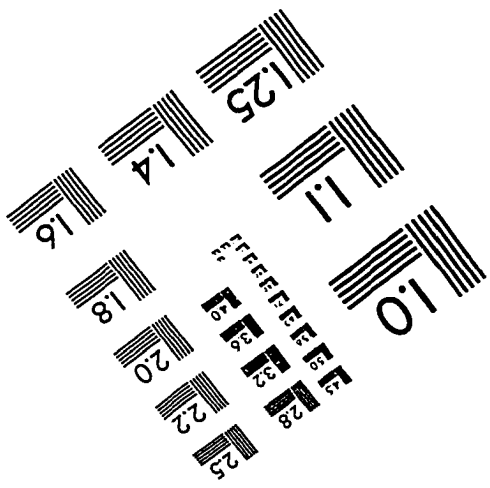












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