Pulau Bidong Camp

Contestations for Power and Place

Byera Hadley
Travelling Scholarships
2017

Cecile Tran

NSW Architects Registration Board

Cecile Tran was awarded
the Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship in
2017

Cover image:
Lachlan Kennedy, Main Street, Refugee Camp, Pulau Bidong, Malaysia, Apr 1981. 35mm colour photograph. 10.2 x 15.2cm. Museums Victoria Collections https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/2103276 Accessed 2 October 2019

Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarships

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This report explores a spatial discourse between the Malaysian State and Vietnamese refugees within the Pulau Bidong Camp during its existence from 1978 to 1991.

Preamble

"The journey, Not the destination matters..."
T. S. Eliot

When I initially started my Byera Hadley Research Scholarship, I proposed a research report titled "States Of Statelessness: Urbanising Refugee Settlements". This report would investigate case studies past and present, from the Middle East and South East Asia, to explore how the planning of refugee spaces develop and become informalised. The case studies I put forward were the dispersed self-settlement within the Beqaa Valley, Lebanon (2010- present), the transit centre occupying former British barracks on Hawkins Road, Sembawang, Singapore (1978-1996), and the planned and managed camp on Palau Bidong, Malaysia (1978-1991). These settlements represent three distinct types of refugee settlements and, through migrant accounts, each uniquely demonstrate how people recover their agency through producing spaces both physically and politically.

I planned to approach the study by visiting and documenting each refugee settlement, delving into national archives and existing scholarly works as well as parliamentary debates to understand the political and social position of host nations and refugees at the time. With this information, I would pull out the similarities and differences between each case study to examine the spatial planning of these settlements and in turn re-examine the role of the architect in urbanising refugee settlements.

Over the course of 8 months, from December 2018 to August 2019, I undertook this plan of attack and found that each case study had its own challenges.

The Beqaa settlements were incredibly hard to document as the government does not recognise the refugees and thus held no public record of them. Through an NGO, I was able to visit three settlements in the valley and in the time I was there, two of the three camp were moved and we were unable to locate them again.

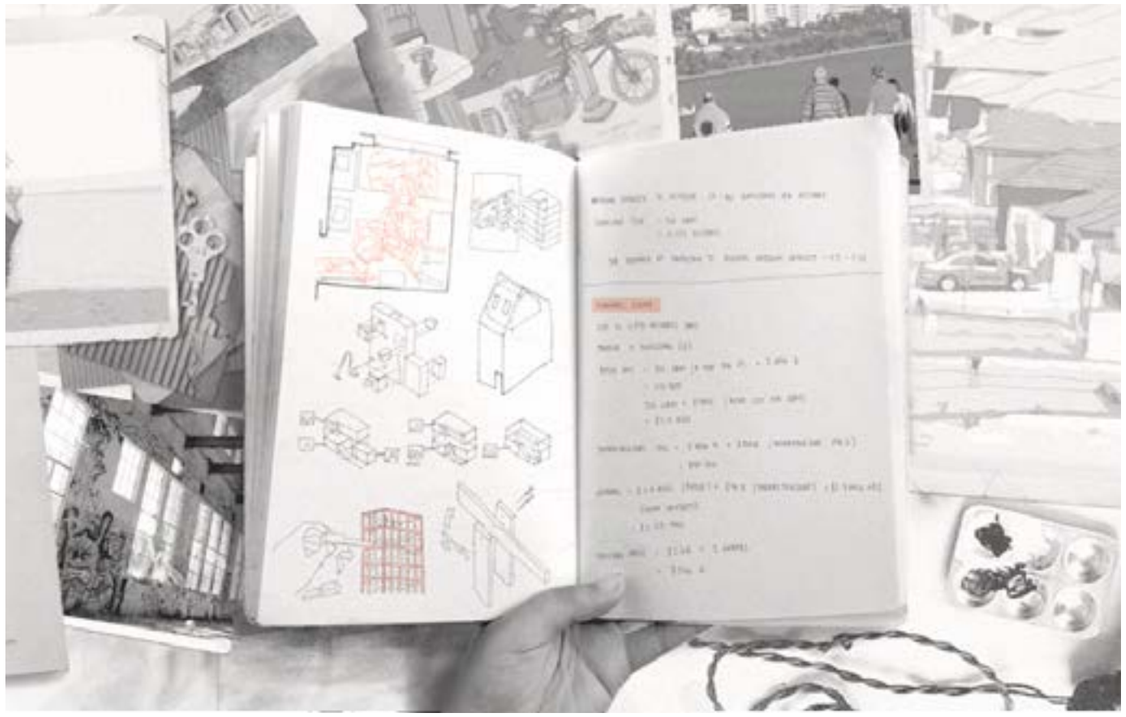


Figure 0. Cecile Tran, Personal Sketchbook. Colour photograph. Personal collection, Sydney

When I visited the Sembawang transit centre, in Singapore, access to the camp was prohibited and archival material on the camp was classified. So that left me with Palau Bidong Camp.

In many ways, the impact of travel and the eventual restrictions were incredibly instructive and evolved to be a useful research experience. It allowed me to stop and reflect on the research - Is studying three different types of refugee settlements, over three different countries with two sets of cultures over two different times in history beyond my capabilities? Yes. Well, what should I do now?

In refocusing my Byera Hadley to the Pulau Bidong camp, I yielded a much more thoughtful scholarly journey. The biggest turning point for me was rethinking the research method from largely archival material to focus on interviews I would conduct with those who once resided or established the camp. It's poignant to think that my deepest research didn't require an epic, worldwide tour, but rather it was in Sydney, through the interviews and personal significance of connecting with the community, that I gained my most richest research.

Figure 1. John Isaac, Coping with Disasters: Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia, 1979. Colour photograph, 3491 × 2367px. UN News and Media, Malaysia

Dedication

To Bác Liên, Cô Tuyet, Cô Phuong and those who flee

Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarships

Acknowledgements

Though the genesis of this report was professional in nature, its completion was deeply personal. It has had immeasurable impact upon my understanding of my heritage and identity as a Vietnamese Australian, for this, I am forever grateful for all those who have encouraged and supported me throughout its pursuit.

On June 20, Kirsten Orr and Byron Kinnard, had the foresight to suggest focusing the report on the refugee camp experience in South East Asia, particularly Malaysia. I am indebted to all the instruction I have received from them both. I thank the NSW Architects Registration Board for the opportunity to apply and submit this paper. Without their continual commitment, architectural research would not be the same.

I would not have gotten this far without mentors as patient and dedicated as Brent Trousdale and Paul Berkemeier. Both possessed of razor sharp intellects, and without their guidance and advice, this report would have been significantly the poorer. In one of our early catch ups - Brent convinced me that the architectural history of camps such as Pulau Bidong needed to be written and I should be the person to write it. He demonstrated more confidence in me than I thought I deserved, while simultaneously keeping my ego in check. Paul Berkemeier, who meticulously read and edited many drafts, never allowed me to make unsubstantiated claims in my scholarship.

Through this study, I discovered an amazing community of people at the Vietnamese Community of Australia NSW chapter in Cabramatta. I found the greatest pleasure in documenting the memories of the refugee generation. The interview subjects who I met there, and who will remain anonymous, were very generous and I owe them all a humongous debt of gratitude for opening their lives to me.

My interest in the historical method picked up speed when I discovered the treasure trove of primary sources at the Malaysian Red Crescent Society. On September 12, on a phone call to the society, I was transferred to Misnan Kasan. Within minutes, the now retired coordinator at Pulau Bidong camp, treated a complete stranger like a familiar face and painstakingly scanned all the documents he could find. I deeply thank him for his efforts in providing me with those documents, which I believe have significantly enriched this report. Furthermore, I would like to thank his continual efforts towards virtually archiving source material. Without such a resource, I have been unable to obtain refugee camp newsletters, organisation literature, parliamentary debates and many other resources.

My friends, the most amazing and inspiring bunch of people. Their contributions to my academic pursuits and personal wellbeing are too numerous to list on these pages and continue to be indescribable, immeasurable and profound.

I have been blessed with a very loving and close family. My aunts, Bác Liên, Cô Tuyet and Cô Phuong, who sparked and fuelled my interest in uncovering the camp experience at Pulau Bidong. Without them, I wouldn't have been introduced to many other interviewees who shared their experience. My aunts continue to be incredible role models as fierce Vietnamese woman who remain resilient and true to themselves.

Ba, my father, Mr Francis Tran Trong Dung, who has worked long hours and hard days in hopes that my siblings and I could pursue the opportunities Australia had to offer. I am forever grateful for his sacrifices, love and encouragement. To Me, my late mother, whose memory still lives on in my heart and mind always.

Last but not least, my domestic situation and love Brett Nangle. He processed every wild idea before I pursued it and was my unwavering support throughout. Only someone as patient and understanding as Brett could put up with someone mad like me. For everything, I am eternally grateful.

Figure 2. Lachlan Kennedy, Mr Long On His Balcony, Refugee Camp, Pulau Bidong, Malaysia, Apr 1981. 35mm colour photograph. 10.2 x 15.2cm. Museums Victoria Collections https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/2103268 Accessed 2 October 2019

Abbreviations

ASEAN
Association of Southeast Asian Nations

MOHA
Ministry of Home Affairs
(Malaysian Federal Government Department)

MRCS
Malaysian Red Crescent Society
(formerly Malaysian Red Cross)

NSC
National Security Council of Malaysia

SRV
Socialist Republic of Vietnam

UNHCR
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNRC
1951 United Nations Refugee Convention

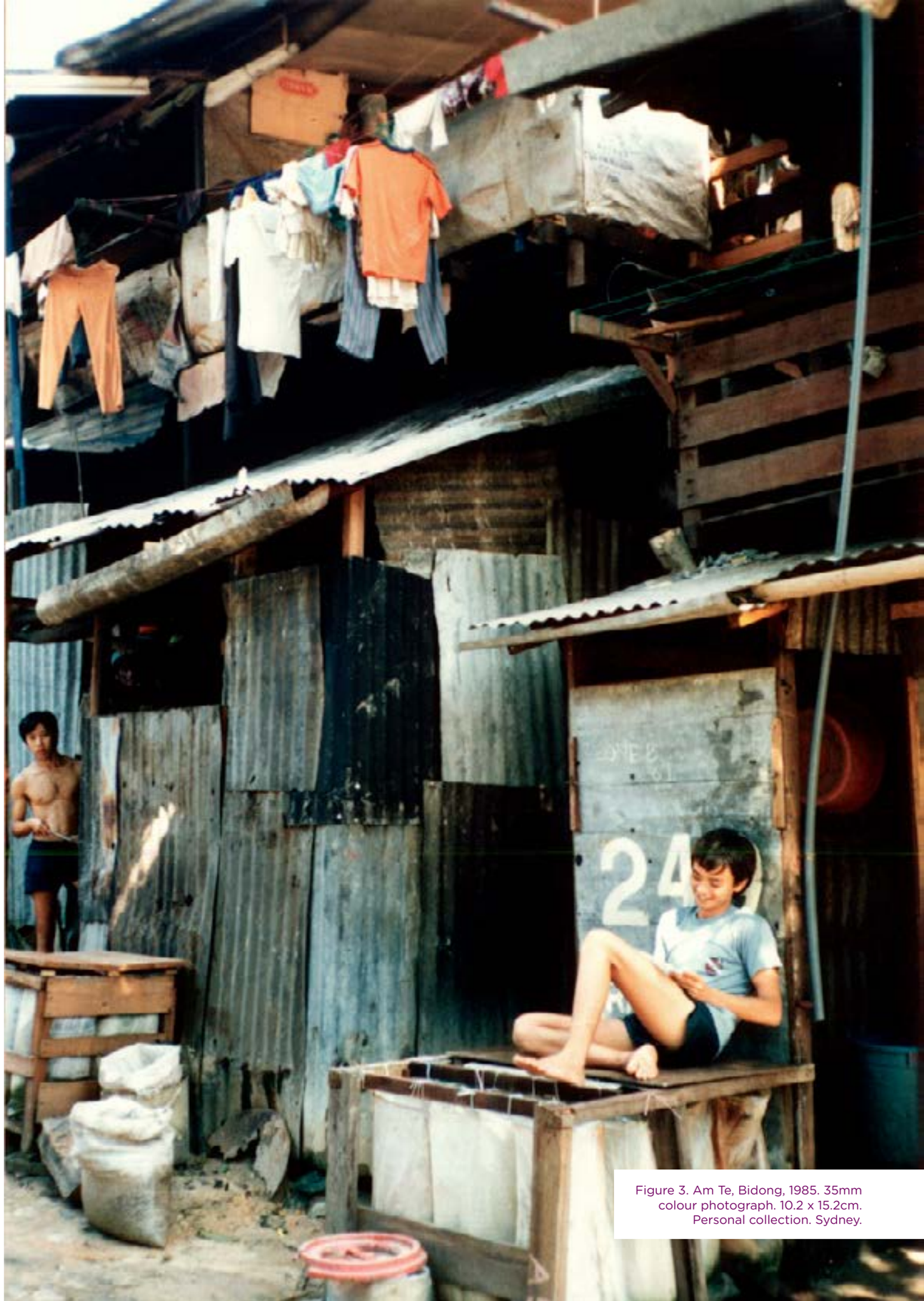


Figure 3. Am Te, Bidong, 1985. 35mm colour photograph. 10.2 x 15.2cm. Personal collection. Sydney.

Abstract

Figure 4. Lien Tran, Sisters, 1985. 35mm colour photograph. 10.2 x 15.2cm. Personal collection. Sydney.

With more than 1.6 million refugees departing from land and sea following the end of the Vietnam War (1955-1975), refugee camps emerged as part of the southeast Asian landscape for more than a decade. These camps were a unique form of human habitation, transient by geopolitical discourse, rendered between war and resettlement. Focused on the protection, survival and containment of refugees; architects imposed a formal production of space. Exerting the interests of those politically and economically powerful, reducing these camps to biopolitical spaces.

For my Byera Hadley report, I intend to challenge this notion and reveal how the active involvement of place shaping by the Vietnamese camp residents became a key empowerment mechanism and strong assertion of right of place. I will examine an often neglected aspect of the Indochinese exodus, Malaysia's role, and focus on the planned and managed camp at Pulau Bidong camp (1978-1991). Further, this report will investigate the Vietnamese perspective on Malaysian policies and the self organised spaces that were made in reaction to them. Many books and articles on the exodus make only passing references to Malaysia or Pulau Bidong and how it featured during this time. Since the connection between Vietnam and Malaysia warranted more attention, this paper will explore the spatial discourse and pursuit for power between the Malaysian Government and the Vietnamese refugees at Pulau Bidong.

Through my study, I will assess the changing Malaysian attitude to Vietnamese refugees through policies and legislation during this period will be assessed. These documents will be used to examine the government's execution of the Pulau Bidong camp, considered through the lens of urban planning theory, and scrutinising the role of architecture as a tool of influence and control.

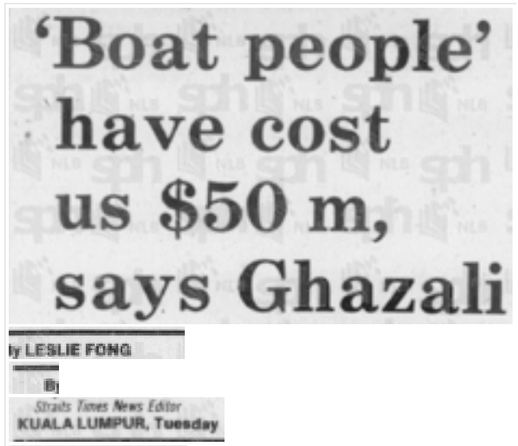
I feel strongly about pursuing my research because Bác Liên, Cô Tuyet and Cô Phuong (my aunts) fled their home in Vietnam as refugees and were processed at Pulau Bidong. Their accounts, supplemented with photographs and filmed footage, have largely informed my perspective of refugee settlements to act almost as transient states of what the refugees have left behind and lost, creating these "Little Saigons" that dotted southeast Asia during this time.

Introduction

As the trumpets sounded the Tieng Goi Công Dân, medals gleamed on my grandfather's chest. These medals marked more than thirty years of almost continuous war in Vietnam. Thirty years of immense suffering and human displacement.[1]

The upheavals which followed the 1975 communist victories in the former French colonies of Indochina – Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos – caused more than three million people to flee their countries over the next two decades.[2] In Vietnam, the new governing Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) exerted its power and influence in measures that violated many aspects of human rights.[3] Citizens longed for their freedom, their self expression, their spirit of Saigon that used to be.[4] Amid the rise of discontent with the communist regime, we also saw the rise of citizens fleeing the country.[5] As there was very limited means of leaving legally, most Vietnamese left by boat, prompting the identity by which we know them as today, the 'boat people'.[6]

Figure 5. Jean-Claude LABBE, The Fall of Saigon, Vietnam in April, 1975- , 01 April 1975. Gamma-Rapho.



'Boat people' have cost us $50 m, says Ghazali

by LESLIE FONG

Straits Times News Editor

KUALA LUMPUR, Tuesday

Figure 6. Leslie Fong, "Boat people have cost us $50m, says Ghazali", New Straits Times Resource Centre, Indochinese refugee file, New Straits Times, 20 June 1979.

[1] Modern Vietnam (1858-present) was considered under almost continuous war from 1930-1975. This period was marked with the Yên Bái mutiny (1930), Nghe-Tinh Soviets (1930–1931), Japanese invasion of Indochina (1940), Franco-Thai War (1940–1941), Southern uprising (1940), Bac Son uprising (1940), World War II ((1940–1945), the First Indochinese War (1946–1954) and the Vietnam War (1959–1975). William J. Duiker. The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam. Boulder, Colombia: Westview Press, 1981.

[2] Refugee movements are volatile and hard to quantify. Estimates vary according to the definition used and the time period under consideration. The figure provided, however, excludes the loss of human lives as a result of shipwrecks or refoulement, nor the hundreds of thousands of Cambodians mass murdered on the Thai border. Angus Francis and Rowena Maguire, Protection of Refugees and Displaced Persons in the Asia Pacific Region (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2013), 4. Georgina Ashworth. The Boat People and the Road People: Refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Sunbury: Quartermaine House Ltd, 1979. 239

[3] For further in-depth discussion on the motivations of the Vietnamese exodus see Appendix I: Historical notes - The exodus of the boat people. Amnesty International, Report Of An Amnesty International Mission To The Socialist Republic Of Viet Nam, 2.

[4] Anonymous (Interview 1), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 9), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 10), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 17), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 18), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 19), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 21), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 22), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 24), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[5] Ashworth, The Boat People and the Road People: Refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. 34.

[6] Nghia M. Vo. The Vietnamese boat people, 1954 and 1975-1992. McFarland, 2005. 35

Introduction

With more than 1.6 million boat people abandoning Vietnam after 1975, refugee camps emerged as part of the southeast Asian landscape for more than a decade.[7] These camps presented a unique form of human habitation, transient by geopolitical discourse, rendered between war and resettlement. Focused on the protection, survival and containment of refugees, architects imposed a formal production of space, exerting the interests of those politically and economically powerful, reducing these camps to biopolitical spaces.[8]

For this report, I intend to challenge this notion and reveal how the active involvement of place shaping by the Vietnamese camp residents became a key empowerment mechanism and strong assertion of a right of place. I will examine an often neglected aspect of the Indochinese exodus, Malaysia's role, and focus on the planned and managed camp at Pulau Bidong (1978-1991). Along these lines, this report will investigate the Vietnamese perspective on Malaysian policies and the self organised spaces that were made in reaction to them. Many books and articles on the exodus make only passing references to Malaysia and how it featured during this time. Since the connection between Vietnam and Malaysia merits more attention, this report will explore the spatial discourse and pursuit for power between the Malaysian Government and the Vietnamese refugees at Pulau Bidong.

[7] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The State of the World's Refugees 2012: In Search of Solidarity. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 79.

[8] Biopolitics is a Foucauldian concept which examines the strategies and mechanisms through which humans are managed under regimes of authority. Michel Foucault, Michel Senellart, Palgrave Connect (Online service), and Collège de France. The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978-79. New York;Basingstoke [England];: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Vanessa Lemm and UPSO eCollections (University Press Scholarship Online). The Government of Life: Foucault, Biopolitics, and Neoliberalism. First ed. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014. Anne Stevenson and Rebecca Sutton. "There's no Place Like a Refugee Camp? Urban Planning and Participation in the Camp Context." 28, no. 1 (2011): 137.

Figure 7. Claude Chatelain, Pulau Bidong, camp de réfugiés de la mer. Vue du camp., 1980. International Committee of the Red Cross.

Introduction

Through my study, I will assess the changing Malaysian attitude to the Vietnamese boat people through policies and legislation during this period.[9] As Malaysia was not a party to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention (UNRC), it was not formally obligated to receive refugees into its country.[10] However Malaysia did respond to the plight of the boat people and provided temporary asylum under its 'first asylum' policy.[11] In examining the government's execution and operation of Pulau Bidong camp, I will scrutinise the role of architecture as a tool of influence and control.[12]

I feel strongly about pursuing my research because Bác Liên, Cô Tuyet and Cô Phuong, my aunts, fled their home in Vietnam as boat people and were processed at Pulau Bidong. Their accounts, supplemented with interviews, photographs and filmed footage, have largely informed my perspective of refugee settlements to act almost as transient states of what the refugees have left behind and lost, creating these "Little Saigons" that dot southeast Asia during this time.[13]

Overall this report aims to answer the following questions:

- How does the Malaysian government use architecture as a tool of control and influence within the Pulau Bidong camp?
- How does the act of place shaping by Vietnamese camp residents become a key empowerment mechanism and strong assertion of right of place?
- Was it legitimate and necessary for the Vietnamese camp residents to exert their right of place within Pulau Bidong camp when the camp only functioned as a momentary humanitarian effort on Malaysian soil?

Figure 8. Staking claim of Pulau Bidong, author's own.

[9] Arzura Idris. "Malaysia and Forced Migration." Intellectual Discourse 20, no. 1 (2012): 31.

[10] The 1951 UNRC is significant in two respects: Firstly, it provides a general definition of a refugee as "someone outside his or her own country and ubnable to return as a result of a well-founded dear of persecution on grounds of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a social group" (Article 1). Secondly, it places obligations upon states which are party to it, the most fundamental of which is the principle of 'non-refoulement' (Article 33). This concerns the obligations of countries of asylum not to return people forcibly to situations where their lives or freedom would be threatened. Erika Feller, Volker Türk, Frances Nicholson, and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Refugee Protection in International Law: UNHCR's Global Consultations on International Protection."Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[11] For further in-depth discussion on the motivations of the Vietnamese exodus see Appendix II: Historical notes - The boat people in Malaysia.

[12] Anne Stevenson and Rebecca Sutton. "There's no Place Like a Refugee Camp? Urban Planning and Participation in the Camp Context.",137.

[13] Nee, Seah Chiang, "It's a 'little Vietnam' that's well organised", New Straits Times Resource Centre, Indochinese refugee file, New Straits Times, 10 January, 1979. Anonymous (Interview 1), in discussion with the author. August 2019.

"camp\'kamp\ *n* **1a**: ground on which tents or buildings for temporary residence are erected **b**: a group of buildings or tents erected on such ground **c**: a temporary shelter (as a cabin or tent) **d**: an open-air location where persons camp **e**: a new lumbering or mining town **2a**: a body of persons encamped **b**: (1): a group of persons promoting a theory or doctrine (liberal or conservative *camps*) (2): an ideological position **3**: military service or life [Middle French, derived from Latin *campus* "plain, field"].

(*Webster's New Encyclopedic Dictionary* 1993: 140)

Malaysia's Pulau Bidong Camp

How does the Malaysian government use architecture as a tool of control and influence within the Pulau Bidong camp?

In determining how the Malaysian government exerted control and influence through architecture, it is crucial that I define what architecture is. Architecture, for me, is the manifestation of our society in the physical world. We make architecture so that we can live our lives the way we want. Yet in the case of Pulau Bidong camp, the architecture here is not established by the Malaysian government for the Malaysian people. Rather, the Malaysian government determined how the Vietnamese boat people should live their lives temporarily in Malaysia, and, consequently reduced the camp to a biopolitical space.

In reaction to the socio-territorial transformation caused by the arrival of boat people in Malaysia, the Malaysian government responded conservatively with the establishment of an isolated settlement to host these refugees temporarily during the resettlement process.[1] In this way, the Malaysian government created a "total institution," a concept Erving Go man defined as "a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life."[2] The siting of the Pulau Bidong camp was discussed in the March 29, 1978 parliamentary sitting, where Minister of Home Affairs, Minister Ghazali Shafie, proposed that the Malaysian government alienate the boat people on an island within Kuala Terengganu, i.e. Pulau Bidong, as it minimised contact with the local Malaysian population, and in turn, would avoid security problems.[3] Pulau Bidong,

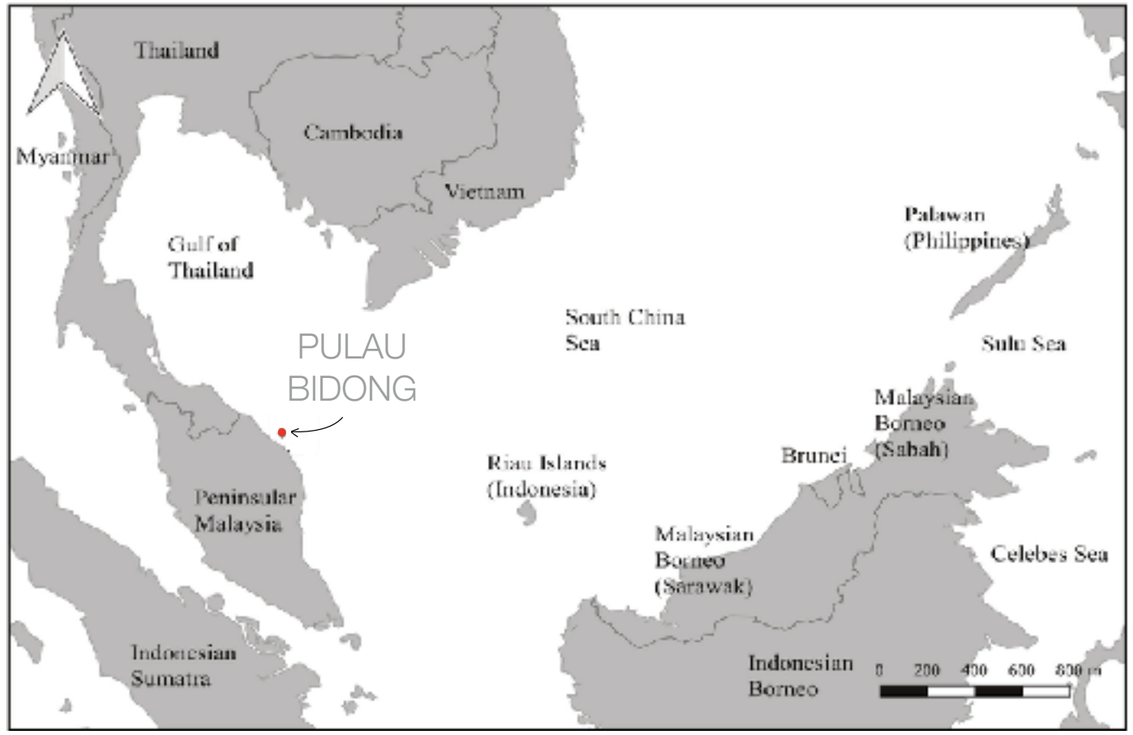


Figure 9. Mohd Tajuddin Abdullah, Map showing the location of Pulau Bidong. Part of report Tree species composition in Pulau Bidong and Pulau Redang, 2019.

[1] For further in-depth discussion see Appendix II: Historical notes - The boat people in Malaysia. "MRCS Secretariat report for the Executive Committee Meeting held on Sunday, 13th June, 1976," in MRCS Executive Committee file, 0011340, Malaysia National Archive, 4.

[2] Erving Goffman, Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates (New York: Anchor Books/ Doubleday, 1961), xiii.

Malaysia's Pulau Bidong Camp

at this time, was an uninhabited island off the northeast coast of Malaysia.[4] Situated in the South China Sea, the island is about one square kilometre in area and only accessible via boat from the coastal town of Merang.[5] In placing the camp here, the Vietnamese refugees were contained and segregated from main society, allowing the Malaysian government to easily exercise control and influence on the camp.[6]

Following this parliamentary order, Pulau Bidong was put under Federal jurisdiction and the camp was opened on August 8th, 1978.[7] In its establishment, field manuals were used to guide its urban planning and form. One manual in particular was the first edition of the UNHCR's Handbook for Emergencies.[8] The language employed in this manual to describe and refer to camp residents lessens them to biopolitical entities. We see this in the business-like references such as "camp clients" and "camp end users", or in statistical descriptors such as "units of flight" or "units of displacement".[9]

This is further exacerbated with Minister Shafie's announcement during the March 22 1978 parliamentary sitting, that Malaysian government will consider all Vietnamese boat people as 'illegal immigrants'.[10] With this new identity as illegal immigrants, Vietnamese boat people were subjected to

"The answer to the questions (a) and (b) has been I gave it to this House on March 22nd. However, I am pleased to note that to this day, there has been no application from Vietnamese Refugees to secure "asylum" in the country.

I am aware that the Trengganu State Security Working Committee has instructed local fishermen not to give any assistance or assistance to refugee boats found in either Malaysian waters or in international waters. They are also required to direct the boats out because ***they have been declared illegal immigrants****. And under the* ***Court's action under Section 56(b) of the Immigration Act 1956/63*** *action will be taken against them."*

- Minister Ghazali Shafie

Menteri Hal Ehwal Dalam Negeri (Tan Sri Haji Muhammad Ghazali bin Shafie): Jawapan bagi pertanyaan (a) dan (b) telah

527 27 MAC 1978 528

saya berikan di Dewan ini pada 22hb Mac lalu. Walau bagaimanapun, suka saya nyatakan sekali lagi bahawa sehingga hari ini belum ada lagi sebarang permohonan dari orang-orang Pelarian Vietnam untuk mendapat perlindungan "asylum" di negara ini.

(c) Ya, saya sedar bahawa Jawatankuasa Kerja Keselamatan Negeri Trengganu telah memberi arahan kepada nelayan-nelayan tempatan supaya tidak memberi apa-apa pertolongan atau bantuan kepada bot-bot pelarian yang ditemui baik pun di perairan Malaysia ataupun di perairan antarabangsa. Mereka juga dikehendaki mengarah bot-bot berkenaan keluar kerana mereka telah diisytiharkan sebagai pendatang-pendatang haram (illegal immigrants). Nelayan-nelayan yang didapati membantu atau membuwa masuk orang-orang pelarian Vietnam ke pantai Malaysia akan dianggap sebagai bersubahat dan tindakan Mahkamah di bawah Seksyen 56 (b) Akta Imigresen 1956/63 akan diambil terhadap mereka.

KAD PENGENALAN MERAH

27. Datuk Albert Mah minta Menteri Hal Ehwal Dalam Negeri menyatakan:

(a) jumlah pemegang kad pengenalan merah di Malaysia;

(b) adakah beliau sedar bahawa terdapat banyak dari pemegang-pemegang kad pengenalan ini adalah layak mendapatkan kewarganegaraan Malaysia dan telahpun memohon untuknya, tetapi oleh kerana kelambatan mendapatkan kelulusan dari Kementerian berkenaan, mereka-mereka ini telah mengalami kerumitan di dalam mencari kerja; dan

(c) bolehkah beliau memberitahu bilakah tindakan segera akan diambil untuk meluluskan permohonan mereka supaya mereka senang mendapatkan pekerjaan.

Tan Sri Haji Mohammad Ghazali bin Shafie:

(a) Jumlah pemegang Kad Pengenalan merah di Malaysia pada masa sekarang ialah 244,144 orang.

(b) Kementerian ini sedar bahawa di antara bilangan tersebut di atas hanya terdapat 0.8% saja mereka yang memohon Kewarganegaraan. Sebagaimana yang sering diperkatakan dalam Dewan yang mulia ini bahawa soal meluluskan kewarganegaraan adalah suatu perkara yang memerlukan kajian yang mendalam dan pertimbangan yang halus dan teliti. Kelambatan yang berlaku bukanlah sengaja dibuat-buat oleh Kementerian ini. Kementerian ini terpaksa menghalusi setiap permohonan, dokumen-dokumen dan mengkaji latarbelakang pemohon-pemohon secara terperinci serta sentiasa berhati-hati agar Sijil-sijil Kewarganegaraan yang dikeluarkan itu benar-benar sampai ke tangan mereka yang berhak mendapatkannya. Kementerian ini berpendirian demikian adalah semata-mata untuk kepentingan dan keselamatan negara.

Sukacita Kementerian ini memaklumkan bahawa soal kesenangan mendapatkan pekerjaan bukanlah suatu asas dalam menimbangkan permohonan kewarganegaraan. Asas yang diambil dikira dalam memberi keputusan sebagaimana yang sering dinyatakan adalah tertakluk kepada kelayakan Perlembagaan, taraf penduduk tetap serta kepentingan dan keselamatan negara.

(c) Jawapan kepada soalan (c) sudah pun dijawab dalam soalan (b).

JALAN-JALAN DI BANDARAYA—PENYELARASAN

28. Tengku Noor Asiah binti Tengku Ahmad minta Menteri Kerajaan Tempatan dan Wilayah Persekutuan menyatakan bahawa samada Kerajaan sedar jalan-jalan di Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur bukan sahaja sudah terlalu kecil (sekurang-kurangnya di-

tindakan segera akan diambil untuk meluluskan permohonan mereka supaya mereka senang mendapatkan pekerjaan.

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(b) Kementerian ini sedar bahawa di antara bilangan tersebut di atas hanya terdapat 0.8% saja mereka yang memohon Kewarganegaraan. Sebagaimana yang sering diperkatakan dalam Dewan yang mulia ini bahawa soal meluluskan kewarganegaraan adalah suatu perkara yang memerlukan kajian yang mendalam dan pertimbangan yang halus dan teliti. Kelambatan yang berlaku bukanlah sengaja dibuat-buat oleh Kementerian ini. Kementerian ini terpaksa menghalusi setiap permohonan, dokumen-dokumen dan mengkaji latarbelakang pemohon-pemohon secara terperinci serta sentiasa berhati-hati agar Sijil-sijil Kewarganegaraan yang dikeluarkan itu benar-benar sampai ke tangan mereka yang berhak mendapatkannya. Kementerian ini berpendirian demikian adalah semata-mata untuk kepentingan dan keselamatan negara.

Sukacita Kementerian ini memaklumkan bahawa soal kesenangan mendapatkan pekerjaan bukanlah suatu asas dalam menimbangkan permohonan kewarganegaraan. Asas yang diambil dikira dalam memberi keputusan sebagaimana yang sering dinyatakan adalah tertakluk kepada kelayakan Perlembagaan, taraf penduduk tetap serta kepentingan dan keselamatan negara.

(c) Jawapan kepada soalan (c) sudah pun dijawab dalam soalan (b).

JALAN-JALAN DI BANDARAYA—PENYELARASAN

28. Tengku Noor Asiah binti Tengku Ahmad minta Menteri Kerajaan Tempatan dan Wilayah Persekutuan menyatakan bahawa samada Kerajaan sedar jalan-jalan di Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur bukan sahaja sudah terlalu kecil (sekurang-kurangnya di-adakan 3 lanes) tetapi masalah menggali untuk memasang paip, ducts and lights adalah menjadi-jadi disebabkan short-sighted planning, samada satu coordinating effort dapat dilaksanakan dengan kerjasama Dewan Bandaraya, RIMV, Polis, Syarikat-syarikat bas, I.L.N. dan Talikom dan samada kerja korek-mengorek jalan dapat dibuat pada waktu malam untuk mengurangkan kesukaan lalulintas yang mendesak sekarang ini.

Menteri Kerajaan Tempatan dan Wilayah Persekutuan (Tuan Haji Hassan Adli bin Haji Arshad): Saya sedar jalan-jalan di Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur telah menjadi sesak dan kerja-kerja gali-menggali untuk memasang

Figure 10. Dewan Rakyat, "22 March 1978, 8321 & Ministry Information, Malaysia", Lari dari neraka Komanis (Kuala Lumpar: Department of Information, Ministry of Information Malaysia, March 1978), 526-7.

[3] Dewan Rakyat, "22 March 1978, 8321 & Ministry Information, Malaysia" 181.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid. 186.

[6] Ibid.

[7] UNHCR, "The Problem of Indochinese refugees and displaced persons in Southeast Asia," UNHCR, no.4, July-August, 1978, 5. Following the Federal Government's order, Pulau Bidong was put into Federal jurisdiction. Later in 1988, Terengganu State government sent a memorandum to Mahathir, the fourth Malaysian Prime Minister seeking to release Pulau Bidong from the Federal Government's control. "Terengganu wants Pulau Bidong", New Straits Times, 23 February 1988 in Refugees, Vol 30, 0002653, Malaysian National Archive.

[8] MRCS, "Progress report on Vietnamese Boat People assistance programme", League of Red Cross Societies Meeting (4th – 5th February 1980: Singapore), 34.

[9] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Handbook for emergencies. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1982. 10-39.

Malaysia's Pulau Bidong Camp

Malaysian municipal and immigration law.[11] Thus, they could be placed in detention camps and deported back to Vietnam, even if their lives or freedoms were threatened.[12]

With these myriad of labels, one that is never used is "camp citizen". Citizen implies control and ownership of a city.[13] While this is logical to some extent, given the Vietnamese's displacement and temporary asylum status in Malaysia, it reduces camp residents to mere entities managed under Malaysian authority, mere entities of biopolitics.[14]

Thus, in analysing the establishment of Pulau Bidong camp, it has become evident to me that the Malaysian government used architecture to influence and control the camp. We see this in the site selection of the camp - the motivation to isolate the boat people from the local Malaysian population, the motivation to segregate and contain.[15] Additionally, we see this in the language used to refer to camp residents - the motivation to withhold citizenship and reduce camp residents to mere entities managed under Malaysian authority.[16] In this way, the Malaysian government successfully exerted power and influence in the establishment of Pulau Bidong Camp.

Figure 11. Kelihatan Menteri Dalam Negeri, Tan Sri Ghazali Sha e membuat persidangan akhbar kepada wartawan mengenai Hari Kebangsaan di pejabat Beliau. 28.08.1978 (Minister of Home A airs, Tan Sri Ghazali Sha e explained to the reporters regarding National Day during press conference in his o ce. 28.08.1978), Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia.

[10] Although the Malaysian government officially considered the Vietnamese boat people as refugees, they labelled them "illegal immigrants" when the numbers reached a point that was considered intolerable by the government. Dewan Rakyat, "22 March 1978, 8321 & Ministry Information, Malaysia", Lari dari neraka Komanis (Kuala Lumpar: Department of Information, Ministry of Information Malaysia, March 1978), 181.

[11] Dewan Rakyat, "28 November 1985, 8327 & Ministry Information, Malaysia", Lari dari neraka Komanis (Kuala Lumpar: Department of Information, Ministry of Information Malaysia, March 1978), 19.

[12] Ibid.

[13] The very origins of the word "city" capture the dynamics of control and ownership of cities: derived from the Latin civitas, cities have been seen as both places of state power (civilisation) and shared power (citizenship). Anne Stevenson and Rebecca Sutton. "There's no Place Like a Refugee Camp? Urban Planning and Participation in the Camp Context." 28, no. 1 (2011): 137.

[14] Dewan Rakyat, "22 March 1978, 8321 & Ministry Information, Malaysia" 181.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

Pulau Bidong Camp - The Little Saigon

How does the act of place shaping by Vietnamese camp residents become a key empowerment mechanism and strong assertion of right of place?

In contrast to the Malaysian government's intent, an examination into the operation of Pulau Bidong camp shows the Malaysian government's control of power and place is compromised. Pulau Bidong camp falls under the 1975 tripartite agreement, the 'Vietnamese Refugees Assistance and Protection Programme', between the Malaysian government, the Malaysian Red Crescent Society (MRCS), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[1]

Under this agreement, the Malaysian government's control extended to minimising the security risks associated with refugees, a task executed by Task Force VII.[2] With this, Task Force VII laid out the foundational boundaries and restrictions of the camp. Such controls included the restricting of access to and from the island with heavy scrutinisation of anything or anyone, reinforcing camp perimeters and prohibiting contact with Malaysian locals.[3] In this way, the Malaysian government did not prescribe the architecture in which the Vietnamese camp residents should live their lives. Rather, Pulau Bidong camp in a sense is a classical topos, as a site of spatial enclosure.[4] The camp, in its enclosure, bred self organising spaces that supported its community and aligned with the principles of control exerted by Task Force VII. In this way, the Malaysian government unconciously allowed the freedom for Vietnamese camp residents to set their own architectural agenda.[5]

Due to the limitations of this study, the spatial interventions made and used by the camp community were reconstructed to the best recollection of the interviewees of this report. I have endeavoured to depict the interventions as accurately as I could through cross referencing these interviews with archival and photographic material.

Accompanying the written component of this reconstruction, are photomontages I used to visualise these spaces. They were pieced together in the same spirit that Enric Miralles does to portray his built work. As Miralles describes,

> "These montages aim to make one forget the way of representing and thinking about the physical reality to things characteristic of the perspectival tradition. In a certain sense they are like simultaneous sketches, like multiple and distinct visions of one single moment. There are many points of attention and many different thoughts in them, A collage is a document that fixes a thought in a place, but it is fixed it in a vague way, deformed and deformable, it fixes a reality in order to be able to work with it."[6]

My montages combine the photographs acquired from the personal collections of interviewees and the Terengganu State Museum with these drawings and quotes from the interview. In the act of photomontaging, I attempted recreate the atmosphere and depth of the spatial intervention described in the interviews. In their assessment, I will critique how these interventions contributed to the shaping of place and community.

I aim to demonstrate how the act of place

[1] For further in-depth discussion see Appendix II: Historical notes - The boat people in Malaysia. "MRCS Secretariat report for the Executive Committee Meeting held on Sunday, 13th June, 1976," in MRCS Executive Committee file, 0011340, Malaysia National Archive, 4.

[2] MRCS, Report for the XXIV International Conference of the Red Cross, Manila, 1981 (Kuala Lumpar: MRCS, 1983), 14.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Bülent Diken and Carsten B. Laustsen. The Culture of Exception: Sociology Facing the Camp. New York;Abingdon, Oxfordshire;: Routledge, 2005.

[5] Dewan Rakyat, "28 November 1983, 8323 & Ministry Information, Malaysia", Lari dari neraka Komanis, Kuala Lumpar: Department of Information, Ministry of Information Malaysia, May 1997

Pulau Bidong Camp - The Little Saigon

shaping by Vietnamese camp residents became a key empowerment mechanism and strong assertion of right of place. It is through producing spaces both physically, camp residents were able to recover their agency and sense of community.[7]

Despite the extent to which the Vietnamese camp residents' physical context was dictated by political interests, the residents gained a great sense of empowerment through the self-imposition and redefinition of the spaces to serve the purposes of the community.[8] When arriving to the camp, they brought with them their reasons of departure.[9] As expressed in Interview 19, "We ask for the right to live. We want freedom. We love peace."[10] Thus, this pursuit for freedom and self expression culminated in the creation of Religion Hill.

Up a flight of stairs decorated with colourful plaques written with the refugee's names, identification numbers and arrival dates was Religion Hill.[11] This hillside was shared by a Catholic church, Buddhist temple, and a protestant church and Cao Dai temple.[12] These buildings were built and were simple in nature.[13] Constructed from building materials were sourced and supplied by the MRCS, these building rose from piles of metal sheeting, plywood and timber.[14]

Figure 16. Lachlan Kennedy, Mr Long On His Balcony, Refugee Camp, Pulau Bidong, Malaysia, Apr 1981. 35mm colour photograph. 10.2 x 15.2cm. Museums Victoria Collections https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/2103268 Accessed 2 October 2019

Religion Hill honoured the life of the camp community through the congregation of the community for religious celebrations such as Christmas, Buddhist festivals, weddings, baptisms and funerals.[15]

Statues were erected to represent what was significant to the community.[16] A statue of sails symbolised the will power and endurance every boat person had to survive in the search for freedom.[17] Another statue of a ship's bow, decorated with stone tablets commemorated those those who didn't survive the journey.[18] Prayers were left here, sending messages to loved ones past and present.[19]

Religion is deeply engrained within Vietnamese culture, shaping its language and customs.[20] One such aspect of Vietnamese culture is how age prescribes the hierarchical position and the role of a person within society.[21] Those older and in superior positions have the moral responsibilty to care for those below, while those below show their gratitude for the care they receive through humility and respect.[22] This interwoven tapestry of hierarchy, relationship and reciprocity with each member of society playing a role stems from Confucianism and is even

[6] Jennifer AE. Shields. Collage and architecture. Routledge, 2014. 349.

[7] Bülent Diken and Carsten B. Laustsen. The Culture of Exception: Sociology Facing the Camp. 24.

[8] MRCS, "Progress report on Vietnamese Boat People assistance programme", League of Red Cross Societies Meeting (4th – 5th February 1980: Singapore), 34.

[9] Anonymous (Interview 01), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 02), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 09), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 10), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 11), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 13), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 14), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 17), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 18), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 19), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 21), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 22), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 24), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[10] Anonymous (Interview 19), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[11] Anonymous (Interview 08), in discussion with the author. August 2019.

[12] Anonymous (Interview 03), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 08), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 21), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[13] Anonymous (Interview 03), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 08), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 19), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

Pulau Bidong Camp - The Little Saigon

present in language and how one addresses others.[23] Religious expression moves beyond offering solace for the Vietnamese refugees. Religious expression confirms what it is to be Vietnamese.[24] In reference to Religion Hill, Interview 08 said, “We were proud of the achievements on the island, proud of our religious buildings.”[25]

[14] Anonymous (Interview 03), in discussion with the author. August 2019. MRCS, “Progress report on Vietnamese Boat People assistance programme”, League of Red Cross Societies Meeting (4th – 5th February 1980: Singapore), 34.

[15] Anonymous (Interview 03), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 24), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[16] Anonymous (Interview 08), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 24), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Anonymous (Interview 05), in discussion with the author. August 2019.

[20] Crawford, Ann Caddell. Customs and Culture of Vietnam. Rutland, Vt: C. E. Tuttle, 1966. 38.

[21] Julie Ann. Hagemann “Confucius Say: Naming as Social Code in Ancient China.” Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, 37th, New Orleans, L.A., 1986.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Monica McGoldrick, Joseph Giordano, and John K. Pearce. Ethnicity and Family Therapy. 2nd ed. New York: Guilford Press, 1996. 28.

[24] Anonymous (Interview 08), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 24), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[25] Anonymous (Interview 08), in discussion with the author. August 2019.

FIGURE 12:
MAP OF PULAU BIDONG CAMP

“Pulau Bidong was as busy as Chinatown in New York… A Little Saigon in Malaysia.” - 01

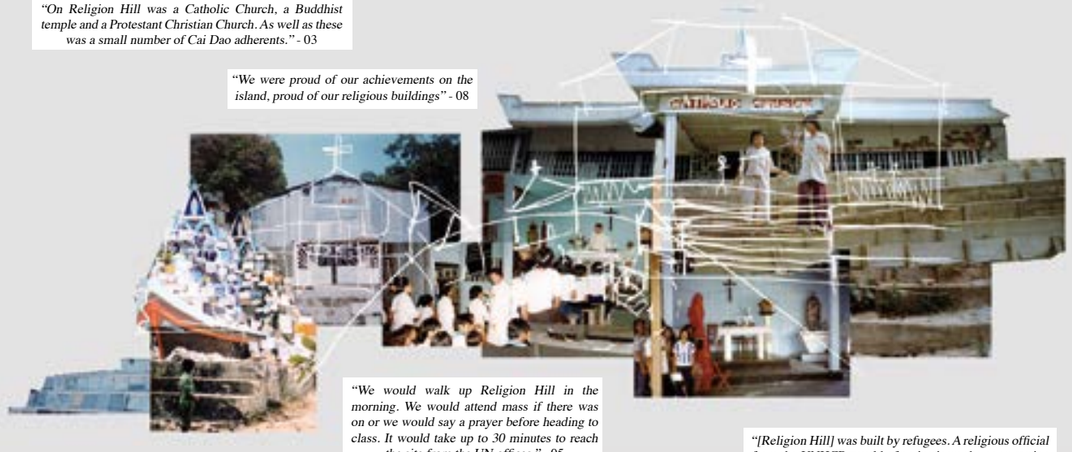
01 16

FIGURE 13

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

"On Religion Hill was a Catholic Church, a Buddhist temple and a Protestant Christian Church. As well as these was a small number of Cai Dao adherents." - 03

"We were proud of our achievements on the island, proud of our religious buildings" - 08



"We would walk up Religion Hill in the morning. We would attend mass if there was on or we would say a prayer before heading to class. It would take up to 30 minutes to reach the site from the UN offices." - 05

"[Religion Hill] was built by refugees. A religious official from the UNHCR would often instigate the construction and help to gather building materials for us." - 03

01 03 05 08 16 19 21 24

Interviews: **01 03 05 08 16 19 21 24**

Photos above from Terengganu State Museum

Photos above from Am Te personal collection

FIGURE 14

THE BUDDHIST TEMPLE

"The Buddhists had equally simple buildings on either sides. The Buddhist shrine was quite central, like a mini temple located in the common area" - 08

08 16 19 21 24

Interviews: **08 16 19 21 24**

All photos from Am Te personal collection

Pulau Bidong Camp - The Little Saigon

Social bonds were also strengthened in spaces that allowed the Vietnamese to gather such as the home and cafe.[26] The island only offered a small area of levelled space, yet every part of the island within the boundary of the camp was covered with huts made from whatever that could be salvaged, taking many shapes and sizes.[27] With a population of population of 20,000 in 1978, reaching 40,000 in 1979, real estate on the island was tough.[28] Houses on the beach front would exchange for M$2500, while those on the steep slope behind the camp were M$150.[29]

Pulau Bidong camp had three cafes called Happy, Club and Coconut Inn, in which were modelled on the hawker stalls on the streets of Saigon.[30] Built from excess materials from the MRCS' building projects, the cafes exchanged hands as owners left and others arrived.[31]

Both the home and the cafes hosted games, using biscuits as chips, which helped passed the time.[32] They were places to meet, drink, talk about lives, jobs and impressions of the camp.[33] In dire times, they provided space

[26] Anonymous (Interview 06), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 12), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 17), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[27] Anonymous (Interview 09), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 10), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 15), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 17), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 19), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[28] Sten A. Bronee, "The History of the Comprehensive Plan of Action." 534.

[29] Anonymous (Interview 15), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[30] Seah Chiang Nee, "It's a 'little Vietnam' that's well organised", New Straits Times Resource Centre, Indochinese refugee file, New Straits Times, 10 January, 1979.

Photo from Museums Victoria

Photo from Am Te personal collection

14

Interviews: **01** **03** **14** **16**

FIGURE 15

THE GRAVES

"Those who passed away would be buried on the hillside overlooking the camp. To mark their graves, we would write their names on a piece of paper and place them in empty Fanta bottles. As you walked up the hill, the bottles would glisten in the sun" - 16

01 **03** **08** **14** **16**

Pulau Bidong Camp - The Little Saigon

to gather and consult oracles through playing cards.[34]These spaces supported the social life the Vietnamese community needed and longed for from old Saigon.[35] They allowed for communal bonds to form and strengthen.[36]

Other spaces were created in order to run the community such as the hospital, wells, gardens and market. The camp was equipped with a field hospital designed and built by camp residents to treat basic illnesses amongst its inhabitants.[37] This hospital had operation theatres, a clinical laboratory, an x-ray unit, delivery rooms and other amenities.[38] In addition to the hospital were sick bays which concentrated on the immunisation and control of various infectious diseases, especially pulmonary tuberculosis and malaria.[39] These facilities were serviced by doctors from Malaysia's general hospital as well as doctors and trained nurses amongst the refugee population.[40] In 1979, 120 experienced refugee doctors and 400 refugee nurses on Pulau Bidong helped run the camps' medical services.[41] Over more than a decade of its operation, the hospital saw more than 2,000 babies were delivered.[42]

As the island had no natural fresh water system, the island's more than 60 wells were

[31] MRCS, "Progress report on Vietnamese Boat People assistance programme", 34.

[32] Anonymous (Interview 10), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[33] Anonymous (Interview 04), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 12), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 17), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[34] Anonymous (Interview 17), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[35] Ibid.

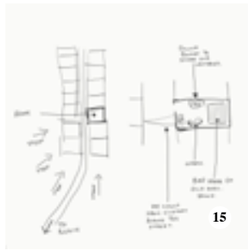
[36] Anonymous (Interview 04), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 12), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 17), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

FIGURE 17
THE HOME

"I would spend passing the time visiting my friends' huts... In the little hut, we would drinking, and talk about our lives, jobs and impressions of Pulau Bidong." - 17

"Life in the camp was hard. We lived in makeshift tents. For us, and the thousands of other Vietnamese boat people who found refuge at Pulau Bidong, it was... living in a tropical paradise." - 13

02 04 09 10 13 15 17 19



Interviews: 02 04 09 10 13 15 17 19

Photos above from Am Te personal collection

Photo from Museums Victoria

Pulau Bidong Camp - The Little Saigon

dug during long resettlement processing times.[43] The square or round wells were 1.5 metres in depth and weren't watersealed, allowing the soil to stain the water red.[44] Long lines to gather water daily in whatever vessel was available to a camp resident, whether it be a carton or empty biscuit tin, instigated incidental social interaction amongst camp residents.[45] The wells also functioned aspublic baths, meeting points, gossip circles and garden irrigators.[46]

Small scale gardening activities were encouraged by the MRCS as it reduced camp residents' dependency on the camp's food supply and used their time productively.[47] Refugees grew their own vegetables, such as bean sprouts, and even sold them amongst each other.[48]

This gave rise to the market. Though illegal, as Task Force VII prohibited employment, the market provided luxuries that refugees

[37] MRCS, Report for the XXIV International Conference of the Red Cross, Manila, Kuala Lumpar: MRCS, 1983.3

[38] MRCS, MRCS programme for Vietnamese boat people: Annual report 1980, Kuala Lumpur: MRCS, 1980. 18.

[39] Ibid.

[40] MRCS, "MRCS assistance programme for Vietnamese boat people", Regional Conference of the International Council on Social Welfare, Asia and Western Pacific, 31 August – 4 September 1981: Bombay, India. 4.

[41] Ibid. Anonymous (Interview 02), in discussion with the author. August 2019.

[42] MRCS, "MRCS assistance programme for Vietnamese boat people", 4.

[43] Jim Howard. "Survey on Water Supply and Sanitation for Pulau Bidong." Disasters 3, no. 4 (1979): 461-467. Anonymous (Interview 04), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 14), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 22), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Anonymous (Interview 04), in discussion with the author. August 2019.

Photos above from
Terengganu State Museum

Photo above from Am Te
personal collection

06

Interviews: 01 04 05 06 12

FIGURE 18
THE CAFES

"They were built by us refugees. Like one person would want to open a business on the beach. They would set it up, build it and run it. Then when they left, they would sell the business to another refugee." - 06

01 04 05 06 12

"The cafes were a place to reminisce about our past lives and dream about the future." - 01

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would otherwise go without.[49] Camp residents would swim out to meet local fisherman, strike a deal on the goods and bring back items unscreened by Task Force VII.[50] Though the market was located on the front beach, its form was never permanent as Task Force VII would often dismantle it.[51] It was a shanty town of tents and benches, filled with bakers, fishmongers, tailors, hair salons, fruits stands, mini grocers etc.[52] People used the vocational training gained through the MRCS programme to sell at the market.[53] Here, they could showcase what they had learnt, perfecting their skills and earn some money.[54] Interviewee 05 describes, "There was a great sense of community and pride."[55] It is evident in these acts of place shaping by the Vietnamese camp residents empowered their community and asserted ownership of the camp. Spaces such as Religion Hill, the home, the cafe, sick bay hospital, the wells, the gardens and the market allowed camp residents to survive, adapt, and eventually thrive through their own redefinition of the spaces despite the

[46] Anonymous (Interview 22), in discussion with the author. September 2019. MRCS, "Progress report on Vietnamese Boat People assistance programme", 34.

[47] Anonymous (Interview 12), in discussion with the author. September 2019 Anonymous (Interview 14), in discussion with the author. September 2019 Anonymous (Interview 18), in discussion with the author. September 2019. MRCS, "Progress report on Vietnamese Boat People assistance programme", 34.

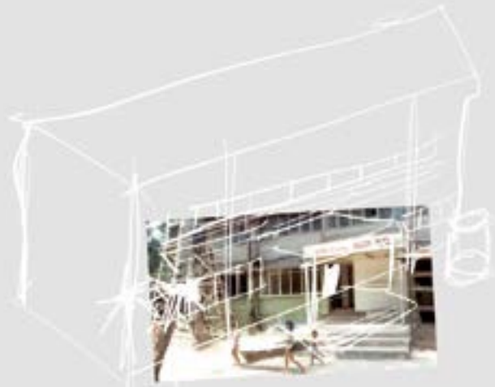
[48] Anonymous (Interview 12), in discussion with the author. September 2019

[49] MRCS, Report for the XXIV International Conference of the Red Cross, Manila, Kuala Lumpar: MRCS, 1983.2. Anonymous (Interview 20), in discussion with the author. September 2019

[50] Ibid.

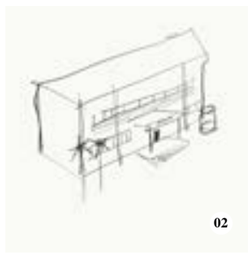
[51] Anonymous (Interview 20), in discussion with the author. September 2019

FIGURE 19
THE HOSPITAL



"The camp leader Father Le Ngoc Trieu ... organised that refugees were to receive some medical training. I was amongst one of the 80 doctors. There were 100 nurses trained. My son was one of the 400 paramedics" - 01

02



02

Interviews: **02**

Photos from Terengganu State Museum

Photo above from Museums Victoria

Photos above from Terengganu State Museum

12

Interviews: **05** **12** **20**

FIGURE 20

THE MARKET

"The market was a shanty town of tents and benches. The Malaysian authorities would often dismantle it and so it never took a constant form." - 20

"There was a great sense of community and pride." - 05

05 **12** **20**

FIGURE 21

THE GARDEN FARM

"We would clear the jungle, grow vegetables, build wells and latrines. We were hungry." - 14

"We cultivated mung beans into bean sprouts. We sow the mung beans into sandy soils, put up railings to protect the bed. Then cover the seeds to preserve the moisture. Slowly the beans sprout forth, like magic, like fables." - 12

12 **14**

Photos from Am Te personal collection

18

Interviews: **12** **14**

Pulau Bidong Camp - The Little Saigon

physical and political adversity they faced. These spaces functioned to facilitate how the Vietnamese wanted to live their lives and express what it is to be Vietnamese. In many ways the camp functioned like a city, a 'little Saigon'.[56]

[52] Anonymous (Interview 12), in discussion with the author. September 2019

[53] Anonymous (Interview 05), in discussion with the author. August 2019

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

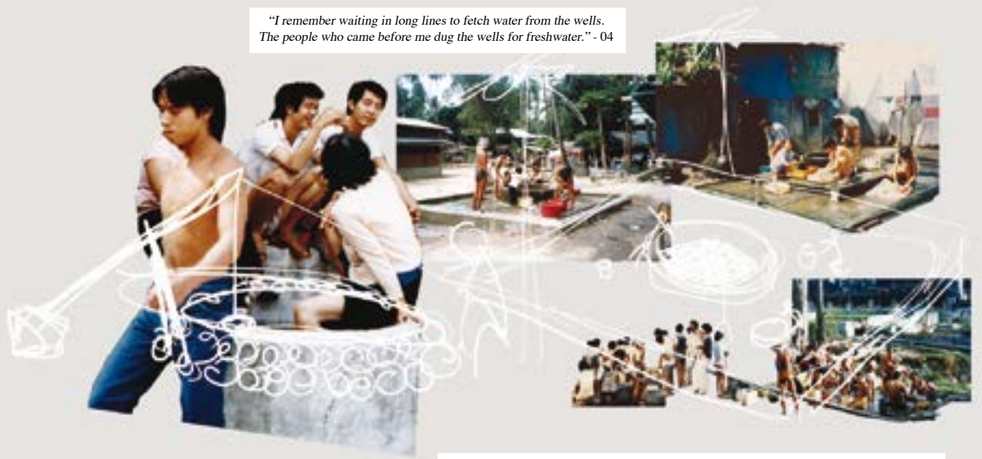
[56] Anonymous (Interview 01), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Seah Chiang Nee, "It's a 'little Vietnam' that's well organised", New Straits Times Resource Centre, Indochinese refugee file, New Straits Times, 10 January, 1979.

Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarships

FIGURE 22

THE WELLS

"I remember waiting in long lines to fetch water from the wells. The people who came before me dug the wells for freshwater." - 04



"As people would stay longer for screening, this was the case for those who arrived after March 14th, 1989, many wells were dug by us to be used to bathe, cooking, and farming." - 22

04 07 09 14 22

09

22

Interviews: 04 07 09 14 22

All photos from Am Te personal collection

Conclusion

In the architectural canon, refugee camps are portrayed as extreme, marginalised spaces.[1] The focus never on the camp but rather the major events, the security threats that plague them, serious sanitation problems or outbreaks of infectious diseases.[2] In this study, I have put this aside to focus on the individuals - those that flee - and how they made the refugee camp their own. In the Vietnamese perspective, Pulau Bidong camp was a 'Little Saigon', a city which in its impermanence created a strong sense of community and belonging.[3] Despite the Malaysian government reducing the camp to mere biopolitics in its beginnings, Pulau Bidong camp became a home for the Vietnamese people, demarking the Vietnamese presence in Malaysia, and asserting the Vietnamese's pursuit for power and place.

While Pulau Bidong camp's thirteen year existence may seem inconsequential and short lived, it represents a transformational number of years in an individual's life.[4] Children grew to be adults, people married and procreated, the elderly passed on. Drawing on Lefebvre's notion of social space, we contend that camps gain meaning as a place by acting as a backdrop to resident's lives.[5] It is in the witness testimonies gathered that denies the notion that top-down approaches to the architecture of refugee camp hold refugees back emergent forms of architecture. Rather these camp limitations breed creative and resilient architecture, architecture driven by expression of culture, religion, independence and hope.[6]

Overall, was it legitimate and necessary for the Vietnamese camp residents to exert their right of place within Pulau Bidong camp when the camp only functioned as a momentary humanitarian effort on Malaysian soil? I would say yes. If the Malaysian government fully enacted its control in creating a 'total institution', camp residents would respond to the loss of personal control with resistance behaviours such as campaigning, self-harming and suicide.[7] It is in the freedom for Vietnamese camp residents to create their own architectural agenda within the parameters set by the Malaysian government, that a deeply rooted sense of community grew and prospered - as Interview 01 puts it, "a Little Saigon in Malaysia".

[1] Bülent Diken and Carsten B. Laustsen. The Culture of Exception: Sociology Facing the Camp. New York;Abingdon, Oxfordshire;: Routledge, 2005. 2

[2] Ibid.

[3] Anonymous (Interview 04), in discussion with the author. August 2019 Anonymous (Interview 05), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 08), in discussion with the author. August 2019

[4] MRCS, Report for the XXIV International Conference of the Red Cross, Manila, Kuala Lumpar: MRCS, 1983.2.

[5] Henri Lefebvre. The Production of Space. Oxford, OX, UK;Cambridge, Mass., USA;: Blackwell, 1991.

[6] Bülent Diken and Carsten B. Laustsen. The Culture of Exception: Sociology Facing the Camp. 29.

[7] Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor, Psychological Survival: The Experience of Long-Term Imprisonment (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972).

Figure 23. Am Te, Bidong, 1985. 35mm colour photograph.
10.2 x 15.2cm. Personal collection. Sydney.

I

Historical Notes: The Exodus of the Boat People

Following the French defeat at Điện Biên Phu in 1954, the first Indochina War concluded with the establishment of two Vietnams. A communist state in the north, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, also known as North Vietnam. And a separate state in the south, the Republic of Vietnam, also known as South Vietnam.[1]

From 1960, there was renewed conflict in South Vietnam. Anti-communist forces sought to halt the spread of Soviet and Chinese backed communism in Southeast Asia.[2] The Vietnam War led to a greater wave of human displacement in all three Indochinese countries.[3] By the late 1960s, at the height of the war, an estimated ten million South Vietnamese were internally displaced.[4]

Behind the hundreds of small and large scale military operations carried out during the war, were the world powers that lent support to Vietnam's nationalist movements, namely the US backed South Vietnamese and Soviet and Chinese backed North Vietnamese.[5] On April 30 1975, Vietnam's two political regimes reached the climax of their political rivalry when North Vietnamese troops entered Saigon and claimed victory over South Vietnam.[6]

Immediately after, a wave of human displacement began, starting from South Vietnam and slowly gaining momentum.[7] By spring 1975, the US government had evacuated their Vietnamese based personnel and officers, together with some 140,000 Vietnamese who were closely associated with the South Vietnamese government.[8] The US-organised evacuation was followed by a smaller exodus of Vietnamese who found their own way to neighbouring southeast Asian countries. By the end of 1975, some 5000 Vietnamese had arrived in Thailand, 4000 in Hong Kong, 1800 in Singapore and 1250 in the Philippines.[9]

[1] P. J. Honey, Communism in North Vietnam: Its Role in the Sino-Soviet Dispute. Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1963, 40.

[2] William J. Duiker. The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam. Boulder, Colombia: Westview Press, 1981.

[3] During a 300 day period, the borders between the two states were temporarily opened and more than one million people moved south. Their numbers included 800,000 Roman Catholics, who fled out of fear of persecution by the governing North Vietnamese, the Viet Minh. An estimated two thirds of the the total Roman Catholic population of the north moved south. Charles Keith. Catholic Vietnam: A Church from Empire to Nation. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012, 102. There was also a smaller movement in the opposite direction, as some 130,000 supporters of the communist movement were transported by Polish and Soviet ships. L. A. Weiser, Victims and Survivors: Displaced Persons and Other War Victims in Vietnam, 1954-1975, Westport Press, New York, 1988. A. R. Zolberg et al. Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, 160-170. Most of the displacement was internal. However, in some cases, it spilled across borders, as in the case of the Delta Khmer, who fled into Cambodia to escape the fighting in Vietnam. High Commisioner for Refugees Sadruddin Aga Khan, "Statement to the Twenty-fifth Session of the Inter-governmental Committee for European Migration", 10 May 1966.

Figure 24. Hubert Van Es, April 29, 1975: Evacuees climbing to the roof of a downtown Saigon building, Bettmann Corbis collection. New York.

[4] Zolberg, Escape from Violence, 163.

[5] The United States had long supported the South Vietnamese regime. The United States eventually sent in over 500,000 troops. The Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China both supported the North Vietnamese regime. David Mayers and Spencer C. Tucker. "Vietnam." The Journal of Military History 64, no. 1 (2000): 261.

[6] William J. Duiker. The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam. 39.

[7] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The State of the World's Refugees 2012: In Search of Solidarity. 81.

[8] William J. Duiker, Vietnam since the Fall of Saigon. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1989, 87.

[9] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The State of the World's Refugees 2012: In Search of Solidarity. 81.

[10] Douglas Pike. History of Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1976. Vol. 189. Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 1978. 92.

As early as 1975, the newly formed Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) conducted a political purge to restructure Vietnam's political system in line with its communist ideology.[10] Unfortunately, the implementation of the new societal restructuring policies sharply restricted all basic liberties, including freedom of expression, religion and conscience, assembly, and association. It prohibited political opposition, independent media, civil society, or trade union.[11] Citizens were subjected to constant, unsubstantiated threats and interrogations.[12] The SRV introduced re-education camps targeting those formerly associated with the South Vietnamese government, like my grandfather who served in the army, or those considered bourgeoisie. The government detained these target groups as political prisoners in order to instil its communist paradigms in its citizens. Many died, while tens of thousands languished in detention until the late 1980s.[13]

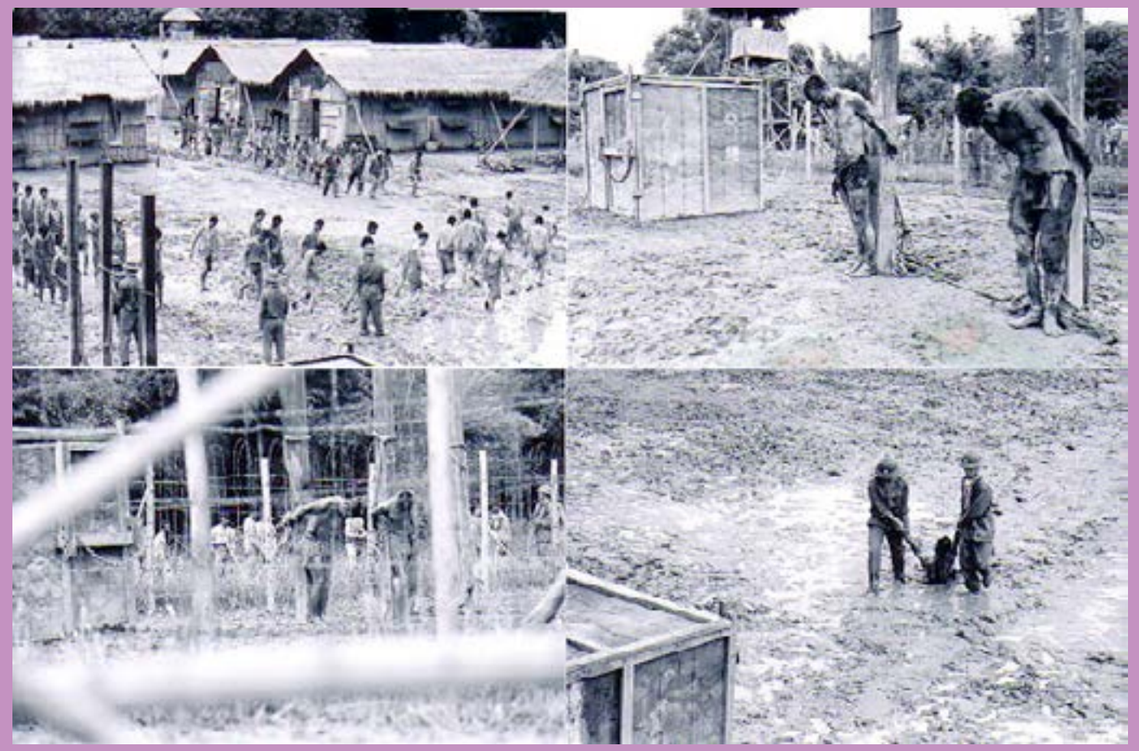


Figure 25. Pham Tran, 40 years on April 30, 1975 re-education camps unmasked, SBTN, Garden Grove.

[11] Amnesty International, Report Of An Amnesty International Mission To The Socialist Republic Of Viet Nam, London: Amnesty International Publications 1981. 2.

[12] Van Canh Nguyen. Vietnam under communism, 1975–1982. Hoover Press, 2017.

[13] Re-education camps were described in Interview 18 as "Vietnam's bamboo gulag". These reeducation camp were not mere reformatories for former army personnel, media or political activists of the South Vietnamese, rather they were more like real prison camps. Sanh Thong Huynh, ed. To Be Made Over: Tales of Socialist Reeducation in Vietnam. No. 5. Yale University Press, 1988. Anonymous (Interview 02), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 13), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 14), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 17), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 18), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[14] Odd Arne Westad and Sophie Quinn-Judge. The Third Indochina War: Conflict between China, Vietnam and Cambodia, 1972-79. Vol. 11. London: Routledge, 2006. Anonymous (Interview 09), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 19), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 22), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

Externally, the SRV strained Vietnam's relations with its neighbours. In 1978, Vietnam expanded its victory to include Cambodia.[14] This invasion and occupation of Cambodia strained Vietnam's relationship with China and in 1979, Chinese troops crossed into Vietnam and a brief war was fought as punishment for Vietnam's actions.[15]

In exerting their power and influence through these measures, the SRV violated many aspects of human rights.[16] Citizens felt a lost of freedom and self expression.[17] They longed for relics of a departed era, a Saigon that used to be.[18] And as discontent with the new communist regime increased, the number of people fleeing the country grew.[19] There was very limited means of leaving legally and so most Vietnamese left by boat, giving rise to the identity as the 'Vietnamese boat people'.[20]

[15] In December, 1978, the Vietnamese drove the Khmer Rouge from power in Cambodia and occupied the country. A border war broke out between Vietnam and China in February-March, 1979. Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin Books, 1984). Ben Kiernan. How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975. 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). Westad, Conflict between China, Vietnam and Cambodia, 1972-79. 293. Anonymous (Interview 10), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[16] Amnesty International, Report Of An Amnesty International Mission To The Socialist Republic Of Viet Nam, 2.

[17] Anonymous (Interview 1), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 9), in discussion with the author. August 2019. Anonymous (Interview 10), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 17), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 18), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 19), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 21), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 22), in discussion with the author. September 2019. Anonymous (Interview 24), in discussion with the author. September 2019.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ashworth, The Boat People and the Road People: Refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. 34.

[20] Nghia M. Vo. The Vietnamese boat people, 1954 and 1975-1992. McFarland, 2005. 35

Figure 26. Otto Bettmann, Refugees Huddled On Boat In Rain Downpour, 11 September, 1979, Bettmann Archive. Manhattan.

II

Historical Notes: The Boat People in Malaysia

Indochinese arrivals by country or territory of first asylum, 1975–95

Figure 4.3

Country/territory of first asylum	1975–79	1980–84	1985–89	1990–95	Cumulative 1975–95
Vietnamese boat people					
Hong Kong	79,906	28,975	59,518	27,434	195,833
Indonesia	51,156	36,208	19,070	15,274	121,708
Japan	3,073	4,635	1,834	1,529	11,071
Korea, Republic of	409	318	621	0	1,348
Macau	4,333	2,777	17	1	7,128
Malaysia	124,103	76,205	52,860	1,327	254,495
Philippines	12,299	20,201	17,829	1,393	51,722
Singapore	7,858	19,868	4,578	153	32,457
Thailand	25,723	52,468	29,850	9,280	117,321
Other	2,566	340	321	0	3,227
Sub-total (boat people)	**311,426**	**241,995**	**186,498**	**56,391**	**796,310**
Thailand (overland)	**397,943**	**155,325**	**66,073**	**20,905**	**640,246**
Cambodians	171,933	47,984	12,811	4,670	237,398
Laotians	211,344	96,224	42,795	9,567	359,930
Vietnamese	14,666	11,117	10,467	6,668	42,918
Total (boat and land)	**709,369**	**397,320**	**252,571**	**77,296**	**1,436,556***

*There were also 2,163 Cambodians who arrived in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines after 1975.

Figure 27. Office of the UNHCR, The State of the World's Refugees, 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action, 2000.

Unlike land refugees, which primarily affected Thailand, the Vietnamese boat people presented new challenges as their displacement spread across southeast Asia and beyond.[1] The international community's attention was drawn to their plight from an early stage, due to the political background of their departure, the often extremely tragic circumstance of flight and extensive media coverage.[2] And thus, the international community acted jointly, as if in a linked chain. On one end were the countries of origin, on the other were the countries able to offer resettlement, and in between, were the 'first asylum' countries.[3]

Figure 28. Indochinese refugee process diagram, author's own.

[1] Khaw Guat Hoon. "THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA: Issues in 1989" Southeast Asian Affairs (1990): 3-23

[2] Sten A. Bronee, "The History of the Comprehensive Plan of Action." International Journal of Refugee Law 5, no. 4 (1993): 534-543.

[3] As defined by the 1981 UN Meeting on Temporary Refuge, the term 'first asylum' refers to 'temporary refuge', 'provisional asylum', 'temporary asylum', or 'temporary residence'. Robin Cohen. The Cambridge Survey of World Migration. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 238

[4] Ibid.

Figure 29. Portrait of Ghazali Shafie, author's own. Drawn from Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Past Illustrious Members, 2010. Kuala Lumpur

their economic weakness and the possible political damage to their relations with Vietnam.[4]

In the first years, following 1975, the number of boats arriving to first asylum countries was relatively small.[5] There was sufficient understanding and compassion for the refugee situation in the receiving countries, where they were granted temporary asylum, as well as possible resettlement in sympathetic countries such as the US, Canada, France and Australia.[6] Focusing on Malaysia, the Malaysian government adopted the 'first asylum' policy in May 1975 following the first arrival of Vietnamese refugees at Pulau Perhentian, Terengganu.[7]

Malaysia's 'first asylum' policy granted Vietnamese boat people temporary asylum status in Malaysia before possible resettlement.[8]

As early as July 10 1975, the Malaysian government signed a tripartite agreement, the 'Vietnamese Refugees Assistance and Protection Programme', between the state, the Malaysian Red Crescent Society (MRCS), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees(UNHCR) to cater for the problems related to the lack of funds, limited resources and coordination of refugee protection. Under this agreement, the UNHCR agreed to be the major financial contributor in the Vietnamese refugees' assistance program as Malaysia was seen as a developing country at that time.[9] The agreement outlined the Malaysian government's responsibility for security, executed by the National Security Council (NSC), and migration and customs, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Home Affairs, then headed by Ghazali Shafie.[10] The MRCS, as an authorised body, was to aid in refugee protection through providing logistical supplies such as food, water, shelter material, transportation, communications and medical and social care services.[11] And the UNHCR assumed responsibility as the refugee protection programme coordinator which included, among others, to guarantee resettlement places for the refugees.[12]

For a time, the Malaysian government was satisfied with the Vietnamese refugees' assistance program. However, by 1978, the number of boat arrivals in the region increased enormously. In Malaysia, arrivals jumped from 5,800 in 1977 to 63,000 in 1978.[13] Similar increases were seen a year later in other first asylum countries, most notably, Indonesia, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Thailand. The overall annual arrivals across the region went from 15,600 in 1977 to 86,300 in 1978, and to an alarming figure to 202,100 in 1979.[14]

This phenomenal increase in numberstested

[5] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The State of the World's Refugees 2012: In Search of Solidarity. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 79.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Malaysia was in the most direct path of the boats leaving Vietnam. The lights of Malaysia's offshore oil rigs provided a helpful navigation guide for the often poorly equipped vessels. Frank Frost. "Vietnam, ASEAN and the Indochina Refugee Crisis." Southeast Asian Affairs 7, (1980): 347-367. The first batch of Vietnamese refugees were a group of 47. The report estimates that 70% were women and children. "Report on visit of Red Cross team to Vietnamese refugees in Pulau Perhentian, Terengganu on 31st May 1975" in MRCS Executive Committee file, 0011340, Malaysia National Archive, 2.

[8] Information Services Department Malaysia, Malaysian official yearbook 1975 (Kuala Lumpar: Malaysian Government Printer, 1975), 103.

[9] "MRCS Secretariat report for the Executive Committee Meeting held on Sunday, 13th June, 1976," in MRCS Executive Committee file, 0011340, Malaysia National Archive, 4.

[10] MRCS, Report for the XXIV International Conference of the Red Cross, Manila, 1981 (Kuala Lumpar: MRCS, 1983), 14.

[11] MRCS, MRCS assistance programme for the Vietnamese boat people (Kuala Lumpar: MRCS, n.d), 1-2.

[12] MRCS, "Country paper presented by Malaysian Red Crescent Society," Asian and Pacific Regional Workshop on Refugees and Displaced Person (21-25 November 1988: Kuala Lumpar), 1.

[13] Sten A. Bronee, "The History of the Comprehensive Plan of Action." 534.

[14] Ibid. Between September to October 1977, some 541 Vietnamese refugees left to these third countries for resettlement. "Report on displaced persons for September and October 1977" in MRCS Executive Committee file, 0011340, Malaysia National Archive,1.

[15] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The State of the World's Refugees 2012: In Search of Solidarity. 79

[16] Although the Malaysian government officially considered the Vietnamese boat people as refugees, they labelled them "illegal immigrants" when the numbers reached a point that was considered intolerable by the government.

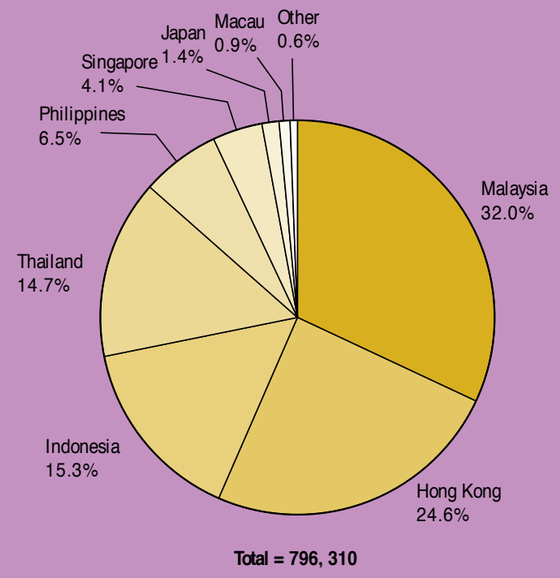


Figure 30. Office of the UNHCR, The State of the World's Refugees, 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action, 2000.

Malaysia's capacity to absorb refugees yet conversely the UNHCR's efforts towards resettlement began to slow down.[15] In reaction, the Malaysian government adopted a new policy of considering all Vietnamese refugees as "illegal immigrants".[16] Such a measure was announced by Home Affairs Minister Ghazali Shafie during the parliamentary session on March 22 1978.[17] The main rationale behind the declaration was to deny refugees the right to seek asylum usually granted to refugees fleeing persecution and warfare.[18] The new measure had the objective of discouraging Vietnamese citizen from seeking 'first asylum' in Malaysia. The refugees would be aware they as illegal immigrants, and thus would be subject to Malaysian municipal and immigration law.[19] Under these laws, refugees would be put in detention camps and deported back to their country of origin. Although the Malaysian government did not deport any Vietnamese refugees, the policy was put in place to scare Vietnamese from coming to Malaysia.[20]

Unfortunately, the adoption of the new policy failed to stem the flow of the Vietnamese refugees and the Malaysian government had no choice but to be prepared to receive more refugees.[21] At the Twelfth Ministerial Meeting of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Malaysia's Minister for Home Affairs says, "I am most determined that the boat people should not be the cause of acrimony amongst ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and that ASEAN must approach this subject together to find a permanent solution."[22] Supported in the July 1979 Geneva Meeting, Malaysia saw the establishment of an organised and managed camp the highlighted Malaysia's ASEAN solidarity and its capacity for generosity on the world's stage.

In turn, the Malaysian government formed a subcommittee compromising of high senior officials from the NSC, the Royal Malaysian Police Department, the Immigration Department and the Armed Forces to discuss the establishment of a camp for the Vietnamese boat people.[23] It was decided that Pulau Bidong, in Terengganu State, was to be the new site and the Malaysian government opened the Pulau Bidong Camp on August 8th, 1978.24

[17] Dewan Rakyat, "22 March 1978, 8321 & Ministry Information, Malaysia", Lari dari neraka Komanis (Kuala Lumpar: Department of Information, Ministry of Information Malaysia, March 1978), 181.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Dewan Rakyat, "28 November 1985, 8327 & Ministry Information, Malaysia", Lari dari neraka Komanis (Kuala Lumpar: Department of Information, Ministry of Information Malaysia, March 1978), 19.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Frank Frost. "Vietnam, ASEAN and the Indochina Refugee Crisis." 357.
In November 1978, a 1500 tonne freighter, the Hai Hong, anchored at Port Klang, Malaysia and requested permission to unload its human cargo of 2500 Vietnamese. When the Malaysian authorities demanded that the boat be turned back to sea, the local UNHCR representative argued that the Vietnamese onboard were considered to be 'of concern to the office of the UNHCR'. This position was reinforced by a cable from the UNHCR headquaters suggesting that "in future, unless there are clear indications to the contrary, boat cases from Vietnam be considered prima facie of concern to UNHCR". For nearly two decades, Vietnamese who reached a UNHCR administered cap was accorded prima facie refugee status amd were given the opportunity of eventual resettlement. UNHCR Regional Office Malaysia to UNHCR HQ, cable, 13 November 1979. UNHCR HQ to UNHCR Regional Office Malaysia, cable, 14 November 1979.

[22] Zainah Anwar. "Blocks to moving on...", New Straits Times Resource Centre, Indochinese refugee file, New Straits Times, 25 August 1980, Page 8

[23] Dewan Rakyat, "22 March 1978, 8321 & Ministry Information, Malaysia" 181.

[24] UNHCR, "The Problem of Indochinese refugees and displaced persons in Southeast Asia," UNHCR, no.4, July-August, 1978, 5. Following the Federal Government's order, Pulau Bidong was put into Federal jurisdiction. Later in 1988, Terengganu State government sent a memorandum to Mahathir, the fourth Malaysian Prime Minister seeking to release Pulau Bidong from the Federal Government's control. "Terengganu wants Pulau Bidong", New Straits Times, 23 February 1988 in Refugees, Vol 30, 0002653, Malaysian National Archive.

III

Method of Data Collection and Data Analysis

This study was a qualitative one which relied on the historical-analytical approach. It included both document analysis and interviews with former refugees who had resided at the Pulau Bidong camp. To this end, the study made use of both primary and secondary resources.

Data for governmental structures and camp operational material was mostly reliant on documents from various governmental ministries such as the National Security Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Ministry of Home Affairs and Parliament (in the form of parliamentary debates) and humanitarian agencies such as the UNHCR and Malaysian Red Crescent Society. These documents were collected from university libraries and archival records. Coupled with transcripts, speeches, books written, press statements and newspaper articles, the documents were analysed and interpreted by myself.

The 24 interviews with former refugees were conducted by myself. The interviewees were found from my own family, family friends, friends of friends and the Vietnamese community of Australia NSW chapter in Cabramatta. These interviews were completed to better understand the relationship between camp residents and the Malaysian authorities and the spatial interventions generated by residents at the Pulau Bidong camp.

The interviews were made of two part: a set of questions followed by a drawing made by the interviewee. From the interview questions, verbal descriptions of the camp, different buildings etc. were made. From the drawing, an illustrated interpretation of the space is made. These drawings were then used to form a collage, along with photographs collected from an interviewee and Terengganu State Museum, to reconstruct the remembered space. The interview answers would then inform the worded annotations and description.

A limitation of this study was the low number and narrow range backgrounds the interviewees came from. I had, unintentionally, spoke exclusively with middle-class Vietnamese refugees living in New South Wales. If this study was to be furthered with more time and funds, I would have like to have spoken with other socio-economic groups, those who were repatriated back to Vietnam, those who were resettled in different countries or different states in Australia. Due to this limitation of the study, the report focused on the collective memory of the Pulau Bidong camp and reconstructed the camp as remembered.

Figure 31. Lachlan Kennedy, Main Street, Refugee Camp, Pulau Bidong, Malaysia, Apr 1981. 35mm colour photograph. 10.2 x 15.2cm. Museums Victoria Collections https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/2103276 Accessed 2 October 2019

IV

Interview Information Statement

STATEMENT IN ENGLISH

1. What is the study about?
This study is completed to better understand the relationship between camp residents and the Malaysian authorities and the spatial interventions generated by residents at the Pulau Bidong camp.

2. Who is carrying out this study?
This study is being conducted by Cecile Tran, as part of her Byera Hadley report.

3. What does the study involve?
You will be requested to take part in one unstructured interview. The interview will be arranged at a time and place of mutual convenience, and you will be asked questions will largely focus on your relationship with the Malaysian authorities and the spatial interventions generated by residents or yourself at the Pulau Bidong camp. The interview may be audio recorded with your consent. You not be identified as a result of your participation in this study.

4. How much time will the study take?
This interview will take you around 20 to 30 minutes.

5. Can I withdraw from the study?
Being in this study is voluntary – you are not under any obligation to consent and – if you do consent – you can withdraw at any time without affect. You may stop the interview at any time.

6. Will anyone else know the results?
All aspects of the study, including the results, will be strictly confidential.

7. Can I tell other people about the study?
Yes you can.

8. What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?
When you have this information, Cecile Tran will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Cecile Tran cecile_tran@hotmail.com

This information sheet is for you to keep.

STATEMENT IN VIETNAMESE

1. Nghiên cuu ve điеu gì?
Nghiên cuu này đuoc hoàn thành đe hieu rõ hon ve kinh nghiem ti nan cua nhung thuyen nhân Viet Nam đã đuoc thoi gian song trong trai Pulau Bidong.

2. Ai đang thuc hien nghiên cuu này?
Nghiên cuu này đuoc tien hành boi, Cecile Tran.

3. Nghiên cuu liên quan đen điеu gì?
Ban se đuoc yêu cau tham gia vào mot cuoc phong van không có cuu trúc. Cuoc phong van se đuoc sap xep tai mot thoi điem và đia điem thuan tien lan nhau, và ban se đuoc hoi nhung câu hoi liên quan đen kinh nghiem cua ban ve Chien tranh Viet Nam (1955-1975), trai Pulau Bidong và đinh cu o Úc.

4. Nghiên cuu se mat bao nhiêu thoi gian?
Cuoc phong van này se đua ban khoang 20 đen 30 phút.

5. Tôi có the rút khoi nghiên cuu không?
Trong nghiên cuu này là tu nguyen - ban không bat buoc phai đong ý và - neu ban đong ý - ban có the rút ra bat kỳ lúc nào mà không anh huong. Ban có the ngung cuoc phong van bat cu lúc nào neu ban không muon tiep tuc.

6. Có ai khác biet ket qua không?
Tat ca các khía canh cua nghiên cuu, bao gom các ket qua, se đuoc bao mat nghiêm ngat.

7. Tôi có the nói cho nguoi khác biet ve nghiên cuu này không?
Có ban có the.

8. Neu tôi can thêm thông tin ve nghiên cuu hoac su tham gia cua tôi vào nó thì sao?
Khi ban có thông tin này, Cecile Tran se thao luan voi ban thêm và tra loi bat kỳ câu hoi nào ban có the có. Neu ban muon biet thêm o bat kỳ giai đoan nào, xin vui lòng liên he voi Cecile Tran cecile_tran@hotmail.com

To thông tin này là đe ban giu.

V

Interview Consent Form

FORM IN ENGLISH

I, ... (PRINT NAME), give consent to my participation in the study conducted as part of a Byera Hadley report

TITLE: PULAU BIDONG CAMP: CONTESTATIONS FOR POWER AND PLACE

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the study and the time involved have been explained to me, and I understand them.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and I agree to participate.

3. I understand that being in the study is completely voluntary.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.

5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affect.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue.

I consent to:

Audio recording _ Yes
_ No

.....
Signature

.....
Please PRINT name

.....
Date

FORM IN VIETNAMESE

Tôi, ... (IN TÊN), đong ý voi su tham gia cua tôi trong nghiên cuu đuoc thuc hien.

CHUC VU: TRAI TI NAN PULAU BIDONG: NHUNG NOI DUNG CHO ĐIEN VÀ NOI

Khi tôi đong ý, tôi thua nhan rang:

1. Các thu tuc can thiet cho nghiên cuu và thoi gian tham gia đã đuoc giai thích cho tôi, và bat kỳ câu hoi nào tôi có ve nghiên cyu đã đuoc tra loi cho su hài lòng cua tôi.

2. Tôi đã đoc Tuyên bo Thông tin Nguoi tham gia.

3. Tôi hieu rang viec tham gia nghiên cuu là hoàn toàn tu nguyen - tôi không bat buoc đong ý.

4. Tôi hieu rang su tham gia cua tôi là hoàn toàn bí mat. Tôi hieu rang không có thông tin nào ve tôi se đuoc su dung theo bat kỳ cách nào có the nhan dang đuoc.

5. Tôi hieu rang tôi có the rút khoi chuong trình nghiên cuu bat cu lúc nào, mà không anh huong.

6. Tôi hieu rang tôi có the ngung phong van bat cu lúc nào neu tôi không muon tiep tuc.

Tôi đong ý:

Ghi âm _ Đuoc
_ Không đuoc

.....
Chu ký

.....
Vui lòng IN tên

.....
Ngày

VI

Interview Sample Questions and Annotated Interview

QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH

1. Please state your age, gender and country of residence.

Prior to departure from Vietnam
2. We will begin the interview with looking at your life in Vietnam prior to your departure. Can you please describe for me what your hometown was like?
3. What was your experience of the Vietnam War?

Departure from Vietnam
4. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?
5. What was your departure experience?

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp
6. How did you arrive to Malaysia and ultimately Pulau Bidong Camp?
7. How long were you at the camp for?
8. What was your first impression of the camp?
9. What was it like to live there?
10. What is a typical day in the camp was like?
11. What was your relationship with the Malaysian authorities?
12. What was the relationship of other camp residents with the Malaysian authorities?
13. Did you have a role at the camp?

BEGIN VARIATION ON COMMUNITY SPACES
Sample questions:
- What was the space like?
- Who would visit and use the space?
- When would they visit and use the space?
- How would they use it?
- Why did they use the space?
- How frequently was the space used?
- Where was the space?
- Why was the space created?
- When was it created?
- How was it constructed?
- Who constructed it?
- What was your impression on the Malaysian authorities' position on the space?
- What happened to the space when you left?

QUESTIONS IN VIETNAMESE

1. Vui lòng nêu rõ tuoi, gioi tính và quoc gia cu trú cua ban.

Truoc khi khoi hành tu Viet Nam
2. Chúng tôi se bat đau cuoc phong van voi cuoc song cua ban tai Viet Nam truoc khi ban lý huong. Ban có the mô ta cho tôi ve quê huong cua ban không?
3. Kinh nghiem cua ban ve chien tranh Viet Nam sao?

Khoi hành tu Viet Nam
4. Đieu gì khien ban quyet đinh roi khoi Viet Nam?
5. Kinh nghiem khoi hành cua ban là gì?

Đen và cuoc song o Malaysia và trai ti nan Pulau Bidong
6. Làm the nào ban đen Malaysia và cuoi cùng là trai ti nan Pulau Bidong?
7. Ban o trai trong bao lâu?
8. An tuong đau tiên cua ban ve trai là gì?
9. Song o đó nhu the nào?
10. Mot ngày đien hình trong trai là nhu the nào?
11. Moi quan he cua ban voi chính quyen Malaysia là gì?
12. Moi quan he cua cu dân trai khác voi chính quyen Malaysia là gì?
13. Ban có vai trò gì trong trai không?

BAT ĐAU BIEN ĐOI KHU VUC CONG ĐONG
Nhung câu hoi ví du:
- Trai nhu the nào?
- Ai thuong ghé thăm và su dung trai?
- Su dung nhu the nào?
- Tai sao lúc su dung nhu vay?
- Trai đó dung thuong xuyên nhu the nào?
- Khi nào đuoc xây đuoc?
- Tai sao không gian đuoc tao ra?
- Khi nào nó đuoc tao ra?
- Đuoc xây dung nhu the nào?
- Ai đã giúp đe xây đuoc trai?
- An tuong cua anh ve vi the cua chính quyen Malaysia trên khu đat đó nhu the nào?
- Đieu gì đã xay ra voi trai khi ban roi đi?

INTERVIEW 01

Departure from Vietnam
1. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?
After the Vietnam War ended in 1975, Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese communists.

2. What was your departure experience?
We escaped by boat as we were afraid of the revenge of the North Vietnamese in charge.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp
3. How did you arrive to Malaysia and ultimately Pulau Bidong Camp?
We travelled in a small crude old boat. Many could not resist the storms but we arrived at Pulau Bidong.

4. How long were you at the camp for?
We were there for six months.

The typology of the island is described as a virgin tropical island

5. What was your first impression of the camp?
Pulau Bidong was a small beautiful island when we all lived there. There were mountains, beaches and valleys...

6. What was it like to live there?
We lived in the valleys. It was divided into zones A, B, C, D, E and F. There was also the UN office and other official departments. Zones B, E, D and F were for the refugees waiting. Zone E was the graveyard. We built a church there.

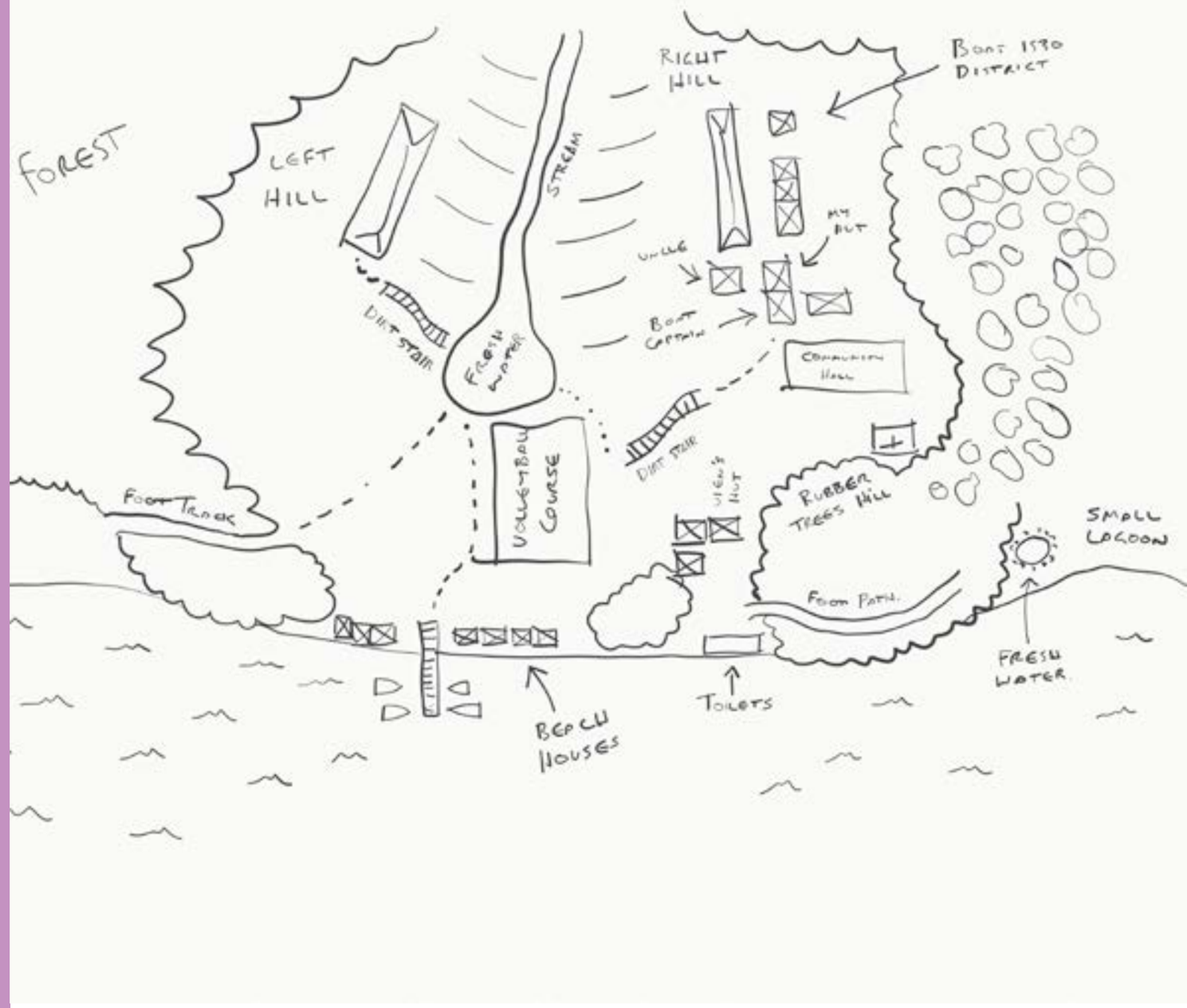
The camp was organised into zones. Each with a particular function. There were 6 zones.

7. What is a typical day in the camp was like?
We would visit Zone B where all the coffee shops were. We would fish and collect clams. Zone G had beautiful beaches but was difficult to access.

Departure from Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp
8. What happened to Pulau Bidong when you left?
Pulau Bidong was a busy as Chinatown in New York but now it is quiet. It was a Little Saigon in Malaysia. The beaches have weeds and litter. Buildings have all fallen apart.

Interviewee 01 compares the structure of the camp similar to that of established cities.

9. What process did you go through to leave Pulau Bidong Camp?
In 1991, the UN and Malaysia shut down the camp. Vietnam and its communists changed their policy which punished escapees. We were taken to Malaysia to wait before being sent back to Vietnam.



Departure from Vietnam

1. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?

I was sent to a reeducation camp for 2 years. After my 'liberation' I was not allowed to practice medicine. My son was not allowed to study. For him, I left.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

2. Did you have a role at the camp?

The camp leader Father Le Ngoc Trieu was truly extrordinary. He organised that refugees were to receive some medical training. I was amongst one of the 80 doctors. There were 100 nurses trained. My son was one of the 400 paramedics. There was a need for me at the camp. By the time it closed in 1991, the island had welcomed more than 250,000 boat people and delivered 2,000-plus babies at Sick Bay Hospital.

The camp's self organised nature, from elections such as camp leader Father Le Ngoc Trieu and initiatives such as healthcare training shows how high developed and complex the camp was.

3. What was Sick Bay Hospital like?

The hospital was like an old warehouse building. It was very unruly and unsantiary. But there was only one hospital for the whole island.

4. What was life like there?

Life in the camps was very basic, but at least the plywood sleeping quarters were rat proof - the rats tried all night to get in but never made it.

Some refugees lived in wooden-framed shanty houses covered in plastic. They were breezy, which was lucky, because there was no power for cooling fans. Their houses were not rat proof. But Pulau Bidong had a library, hospital, market stalls, and two wonderful open-air cafes on the beach. We would escape the harshness of the camp in the evenings swimming over the coral reefs or socialising on the back stairs of the hospital enjoying views of the sunset and electrical storms over the Malay Peninsula.

The island typology also allowed for recreational activities.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

1. When were the churches constructed?
The churches were not at Pulau Bidong at first. The conditions were too precarious after the massive sea exodus. Makeshift pagodas and churches started getting built once the camp became more organised.

The strong need for upkeep in the church was largely driven by religious expression and cultural values

2. How was the church used?
The church space was very well love and kept tidy and well maintained.

3. Who would use the church?
All of us would visit the church. There were many different priests who would hold mass there.

4. How was the church used?
Mass was irregular. Sometimes there would be two masses in a single day. Sometimes just once a week. Priest would come and go as they often had little trouble moving to a third country, They all had different mass schedules which we all got accustomed to.
The church held various celebrations, mourning and teaching.

5. Why did the church get used?
I think people became more strongly religious on Pulau Bidong.

Everyone's stories were harsh and they all need religion to stay strong. Our experience had a long lasting effect on me.

Religion was a way of processing the traumatic events that happened. Through religion, the camp residents found support and comfort.

6. What was your departure experience?
We were motionless at sea and were visited by pirated twice a day for weeks. Until they had stolen everything, they raped and killed others. We relied on religion to get us through those harsh times.

7. Where was the churches?
The two churches were located near each other. Close to the graveyards on the upper slopes.

8. How was the church constructed?
They were built by refugees. A religious official from the UNHCR would often instigate the construction and help to gather building materials for us.

9. What was the Malaysia authorities position on the church?
They were fine with the churches. They were good for the refugees. They gave us something to do. There was little else to do.

The church gave purpose to the lives of some camp residents and the Malaysian authorities were happy to allow it because it meant least people up to no good.

INTERVIEW 04

The camp was very much confined to the southwest portion of the island. The Malaysian authorities sectioned the island and strongly enforced it.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

1. Were there nice beaches in Pulau Bidong?
Yes. Zone F had the nicest public beach on the island. There were nicer beaches to the northeast but the refugees were banned from them.

2. Where would the women congregate?
Women often went to the two storey coffee shop next to the Food Supply cage, a few meters from Sick Bay Hospital. This shop was famous for its ice cream and nightly Chinese and Indian movies.

3. When you were there, what did people do for entertainment?
We were there in the late 80s. Then there was a music stage set up next to longhouse B15. There we had regular music festivals performed by refugees, Malaysian musicians as well as the UN, Malaysian Red Crescent and Police Taskforce.
There was a great sense of belonging in this space.

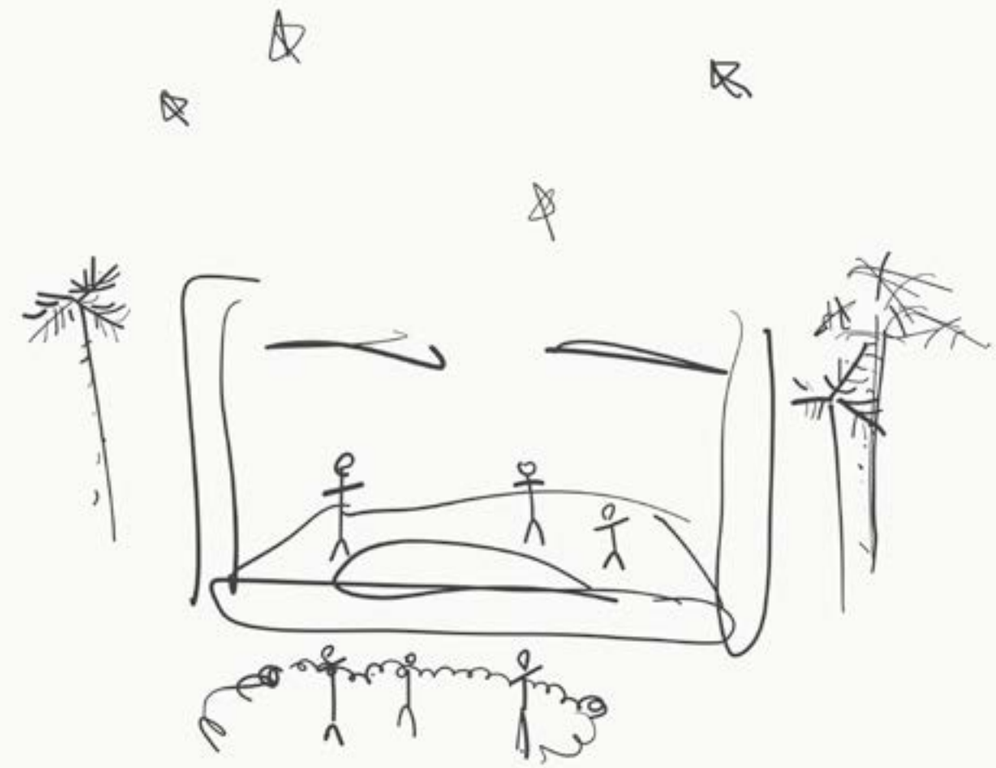
4. What was your first impression of the camp?
I'm pretty sure Pulau Bidong reached 80000 refugees at one stage in 1979. However, it wasn't like that when I was there. I had been running for a while when I reached the island.

The camp experienced a fluctuating camp resident population. Thus the UNHCR and Malaysia's permanent presemce was necessary to keep the camp running smoothly

5. Where did you live?
My parents paid 100 US dollars for a hut that accommodated all five of us in one huge bed.
There was no toilet. One had to walk into a quiet area hundreds of metres away.
There was an enclosed shower that we had to walk to a well to obtain water for a daily usage.
Life was so basic then but we had a future to contemplate and to look forward to.
We struggled constantly and each has found our own paths in life.

6. What was it like gathering water?
I remember waiting in long lines to fetch water from the wells. The people who came before me dug the wells for fresh water. The sandy soil is sometimes red like the colour of cider or lava. The refuges would build a square or round wall often 1.5 metres high. We used whatever vessels we could find to carry the water. Some of the water containers were made from empty biscuit tins.

The island's typography did not allow for natural sources of water. The camp residents had to create wells in order to collect rainwater. Even then, they often ran dry.



INTERVIEW 05

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

1. What was your role in the camp?
We staffed the restaurant, Coconut Inn, as part of our vocational program run by the Catholic organisation.

2. What did that involve?
We would walk up to Religion Hill in the morning. We would attend mass if there was one on or we would say a prayer before heading to the class. We then would prepare the food and sell it. In the early years, food was scarce but eventually food was more adequate. We had plenty of instant noodles, condensed milk, green bean, sugar, chicken, fish and vegetables. There was plenty of fish in the sea.
It could take up to 30 minutes to reach the site from the UN offices.

Religion Hill was not far from the camp at its base however the steepness of the hill provided challenges especially for those who elderly, sick and/ or with disabilities.

3. Was this the only vocational program?
No there were plenty more. There was carpentry, mechanic and tailor courses. I think by the late 80s, there were more course available like business studies, hairdressing and nursing.

4. What did those people do in their courses?
They would be similar to us. Sell their skills at the market.

I guess yes, there was a need to practice our skills and gain a little money. But largely there was a great sense of community and pride. Everyone got to showcase what they learnt and perfected.

5. What did you do since you were a child at the camp?
The rascal kids rather hung out with themselves. The sanitary offices gave out prizes for killed or trapped rates. Prizes included a packet of instant noodles, sugar, or a bottle of condensed milk.
I was with them kids. There was scouts at the camp. I was there while my sisters were away at the Coconut Inn.
The scouts was very organised and kept us kids active with all kinds of outdoor activities.

There were many activities organised on the island to keep people busy.

6. What are some of these activities?
There was rattan ball. We learnt that the Police Taskforce were excellent players.
There were also football matches. At one point, the island had up to 24 teams competing. There was of course an adult and kids division. nightly patrol and secure everyone.

The camp resident's relationship with the Malaysian authorities is friendly and engaged.

INTERVIEW 06

Camp was run by the camp residents however they relied heavily upon the UNHCR and Malaysian Red Crescent society for food, building materials, equipment etc. Electricity was bought to the island from the Malaysian mainland.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

1. How was the island run?

Us refugees pretty much kept it going. Yes we were reliant on essential things such as food, water etc. from the UN and Malaysian authorities. But we were very self-sufficient.

We would vote and appoint officials to enforce policies, nightly patrol and secure everyone.

2. Where would you go to relax?

The cafes at night were very lovely. There were two cafes along the beach. At night, the scent of ground coffee beans brewing against the oceanic shore was magical. Lovers would stroll hand in hand, their feet touching waves, sand creeping between their toes.

I always imaged the lovers sitting down, facing the ocean, an arm around the shoulder.

There would be lanterns hung from the rafters lighting up the shop.

3. What were the cafes like during the day?

Many people would visit Happy or Club. They were very popular with young men. There you could get soft drinks like 7Up, Coke, Pepsi in glass bottles. There were also cakes available on good days.

There was also another cafe near the Sick Bay hospital. That one was two storeys and was famous for holsing nightly Chinese and Indian movies.

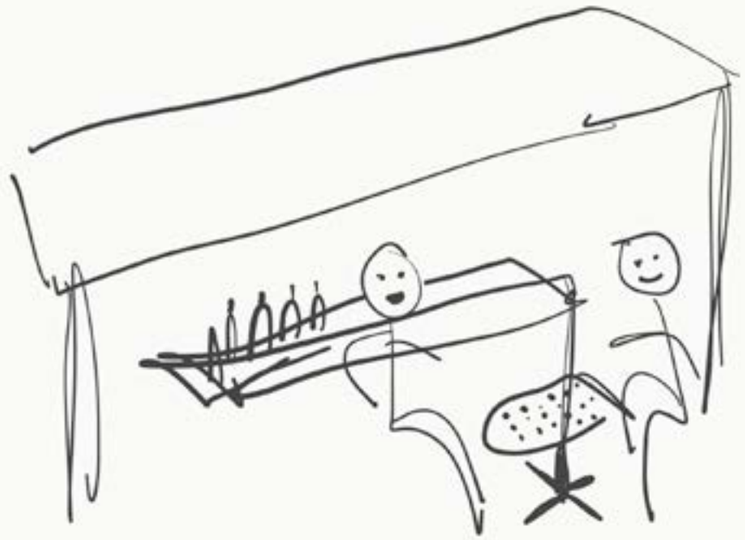
Cafes became a place of community within the camp.

4. Who built these cafes?

They were built by us refugees. Like one person would want to open a business on the beach. They would set it up, built it and run it. Then when they left, they would sell the business to another refugee.

5. How were the cafes constructed?

Using found pieces of plywood, rope, sawn pieces of trees from the jungle. Sometimes there were excess from the building supplies of UN run schools and offices. They were always hot property.



Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

1. What was your departure experience?
I think the whole thing was hard. Three weeks before then I was a senior banker in Saigon. Now I was a penniless father of two. I thank the Lord we all survived the boat journey.

2. What was the camp like as a child?
Us children would dangle tin cans on rope down the well, peering into the depths for traces of water. Yet, at the end of the well, the cans laid empty like stranded fish.
Most of the 60 wells on Pulau Bidong are dry. A few near the beach have water. But its salty. Fresh water, like many other necessities, was in short supply.

Pulau Bidong experience far more extreme weather than Vietnam due to its proximity to the Equator. During the dry months, the island would only receive only a handful on rainy days.

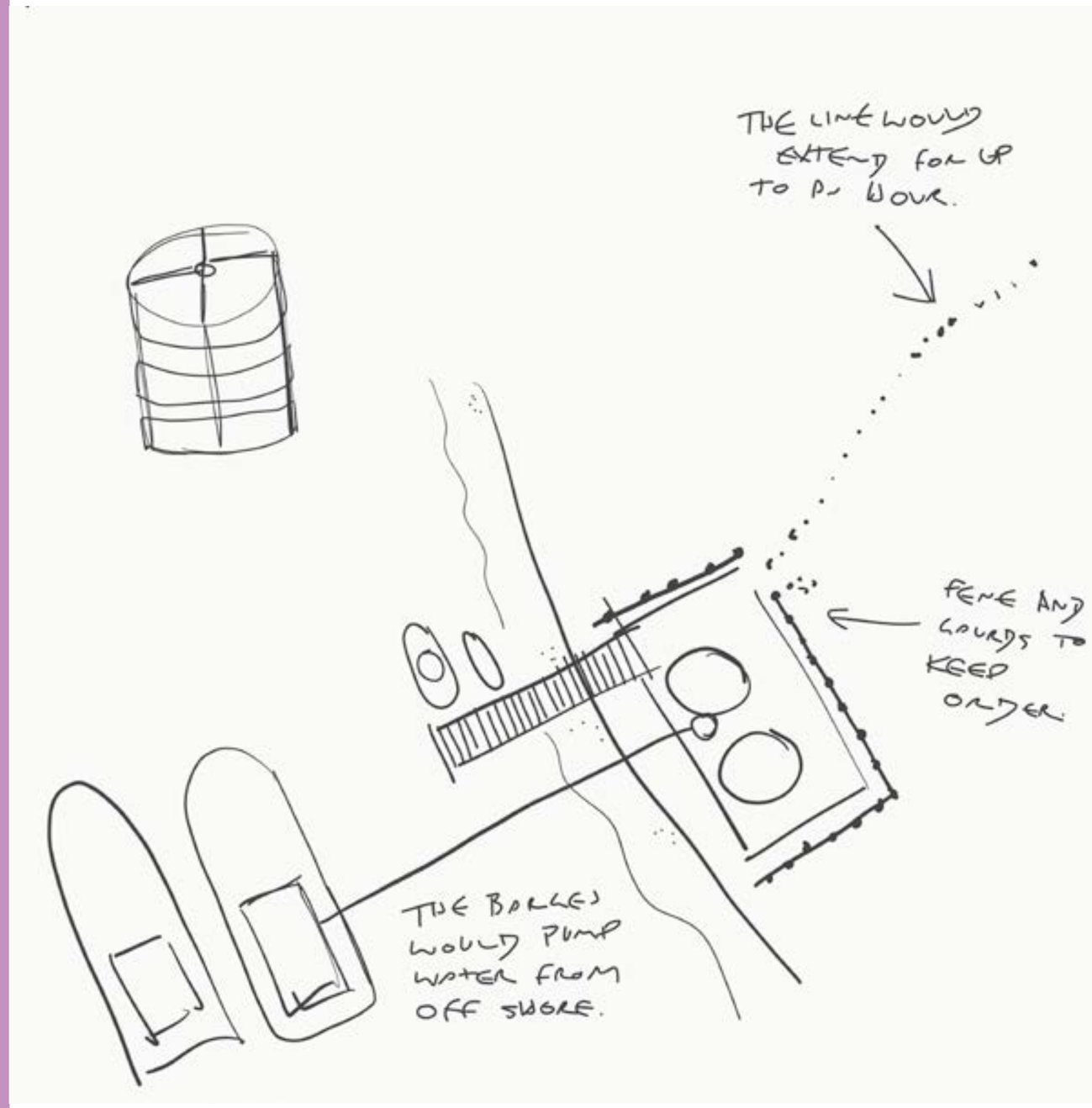
3. What did you do for water?
There was an ongoing problem with water supply. Two barges would refill the water at Kuala Terengganu the main island and call at Pulau Bidong at least four times a week.
On each trip they would carry up to 10000 litres which was pipped ashore into large vats that stand on the beach.
We would line up for water daily. Sometimes waiting for an hour or two to fill up our plastic buckets. We would then lug them on shoulder poles.

4. How was the camp run?
The camp was sponsored and supported by the UNHCR however it was run by us refugees. We zoned it and set up commitees to handle security, administration, supplies and other functions. However we were deeply dependent on the UN agency and the Malaysian Red Crescent society, the local Red Cross for everything – food, building materials, equipment.

Camp was run by the camp residents however they relied heavily upon the UNHCR and Malaysian Red Crescent society for food, building materials, equipment etc. Electricity was bought to the island from the Malaysian mainland.

5. What was your relationship with the Malaysian authorities?
The Malaysian authorities remain ultimately in control, although their presence is limited to a handful o police and Rela, a typed of shotgun toting home guard.
Few outsiders visited the island. It had been gazetted as a restricted zone.

Though the camp residents ran the camp. The security of the camp was ultimately controlled by the Malaysian authorities.



Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

1. What was your first impression of the camp?
There was a congestion of palm huts. The crowding was so intense.

2. What was it like to live there?
There were no permanent medical facilities. The health care we received was from the visiting doctors. If you were ill, you may be sent away from Pulau Bidong for treatment, otherwise you cannot leave the island. Despite the depressing state, the refugees were happy. Having overcome communisim, the ocean. We were proud of the achievements on the island, proud of our religious buildings.

There was no permanent health care available on the island.

3. What was your typical day in the camp like?
Time was spent working to improve the community. We worked to build churches. We were quite religious. Everyone was thankful for having survived.

The strong need for upkeep in the church was largely driven by religious expression and cultural values

4. What was your role in the camp?
I didn't have any specific role but spent time helping to build the church and improve it.

5. What was the church like?
It was a simple structure with a simple crucifix. The Buddhists had equally simple buildings on either sides. The Buddhist shrine was quite central, like a mini temple located in the common area.
The neighbourhood was harmonious. There was no religious segregation. The church was adjacent to a Buddhist temple and both structures would still be standing today.

The Church and Buddhist temple were equally developed and well constructed.

Indeed, outside of the Philippines, Vietnam was Asia's most Catholic country due to the French colonial experience.
The flight of stairs leading to the temple from Pantai Tenggara is richly decorated with colorful plaques written with the refugees' names, social security numbers and dates they arrived. Outside the church, on a mass of cement shaped as a ship's bow, dozens of stone tablets commemorate all those who didn't make it over. Though refugees could reach Terengganu within days, the slow overcrowded boats were often attacked by pirates who, in ascending order of severity, robbed, raped, maimed and killed.

Religion played a major role in the lives of the camp residents back in Vietnam. Religious ceremonies on the island bought a sense of community and comfort.

INTERVIEW 09

Departure from Vietnam

1. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?
The repression of the Communist regime had made us leave Vietnam. We wanted freedom, peace and the right to live.

Only those who were from the middle-class and up were able to afford the journey.

2. What was your departure experience?
Many did not get away. They were imprisoned, died at sea. We would have to scrap our money together to pay the boat leader. Even after paying them, we would wait up to a year to actually escape. We would then have to travel down to river and out to the ocean.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

3. What was it like to live there?

There was no permanent amenties available on the island.

There was only a small area of habitable space. About two city blocks. Every inch of level ground on the rocky island was covered with huts made from what we could scavage.
There was a strong smell of feces. Imagine 16 toilets for 26000 people. In a week, the number of infectious hepatitis cases - 108 of them - would double.

4. What is a typical day in the camp l like?
We had basic rations. Rice, can of baked beans, tinned sardines, chicken stew and some crackers. It would last 3 days. The natural water sources were polluted.
We would spend months writing and hoping for pity and our departure. We would work and earn our keep. But not everyone was so lucky as to have jobs.

The camp's lack of rubbish disposal and sanitation lead to polluted waters and disease.

Some people were given jobs in schools, vocational training, in the scouts etc.

5. If the natural water sources were so polluted, how did you get water?
There were about 80 wells about 20-metre deep dug by us refugees for freshwater.
There were always long lines to get water from the well. When you fetched the water, sometimes it would be stained red from the sandy soil. Some of the wells were square. Some were round.

Continual war in Vietnam since the early 1900s was taking a toll on Vietnam and its people. Generations of people experience only war.

INTERVIEW 10

Departure from Vietnam

1. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?

My family was in a dreadful way - never enough to eat. I was the eldest boy at 19 years old. They asked me to escape because my compulsory military service in the Cambodia-Vietnam War was coming up. I was to escape and then later help them to get out too. But I was very sad. I was to leave my country, my family and a life I only knew.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

2. What was your first impression of the camp?

The refugees would first live on the beach. Braving those first few nights in the open air and tropical storms was terrible.

We would then move to live in barracks and shacks constructed from salvaged boards and pieces of plastic.

There was limited choices to locate the dorms. Anywhere which was level was good.

3. What was the beds like?

The dorms were poor. We would wake up with water leaks. The bark of the trees that we slept under would drop sap on us.

4. How were these dorms constructed?

The bunks were made of trees. Men would cut limbs with their machetes. They would tie the limbs together. Hammer large posts into the softest sandy areas.

The tree's in the jungle had a stringy and fibrous nature to them which is unlike materials found in Vietnam.

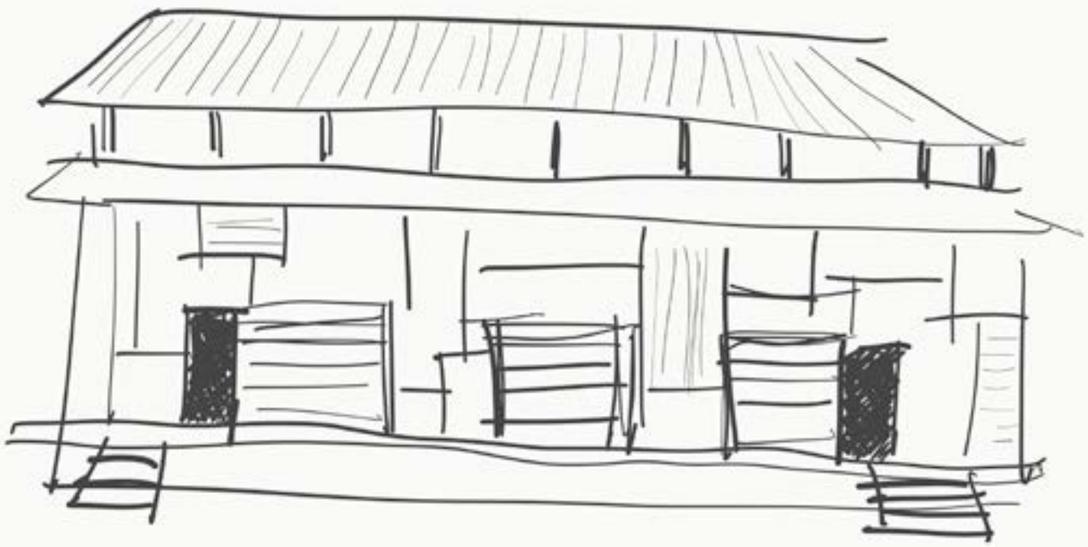
5. How would people use the beds?

We would pass the time and play cards. We would bet with biscuits.

The sleeping quarters was a place to congregate and relax as well as to sleep.

6. When were the dorms created?

The bunks were constantly being built. Once we ran low on space, we would begin to build upwards. Sometimes up to three storeys tall.



INTERVIEW 11

Departure from Vietnam

1. What was your departure experience?
My parents entrusted me to a friend to take me and seventy other children away. I was very afraid because we could not move or the boat would capsize.

2. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?
My parents sent me off with my brother. They wanted us to have a better life. One without war.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

3. How did you arrive to Malaysia and ultimately Pulau Bidong Camp?
We travelled at sea for many days. We landed on the island on the May 17 1988.

4. What was your first impression of the camp?
When I arrived here, I was very happy. I was happy. I was no longer one of the boat people. I thought I would go to Australia quickly.

5. What was it like to live there?
I shared a house called Au Co Family with 34 children. We were the 'unaccompanied minors'.

Upon further research, I found that the orphanage, Au Co Family, was built by camp residents in the early years in response to the high numbers of unaccompanied minors arriving at the camp. The building materials were sourced by the UNHCR and ferried to the island from the Malaysian mainland.

6. What was Au Co Family house like?
The house was a large wooden structure which was used by us 34 children and our one teacher. We didn't have beds, so we slept on the floor in two rows. My feet would touch those of another girl sleeping below me.

The orphanage seems to be one large room which contained all the children.

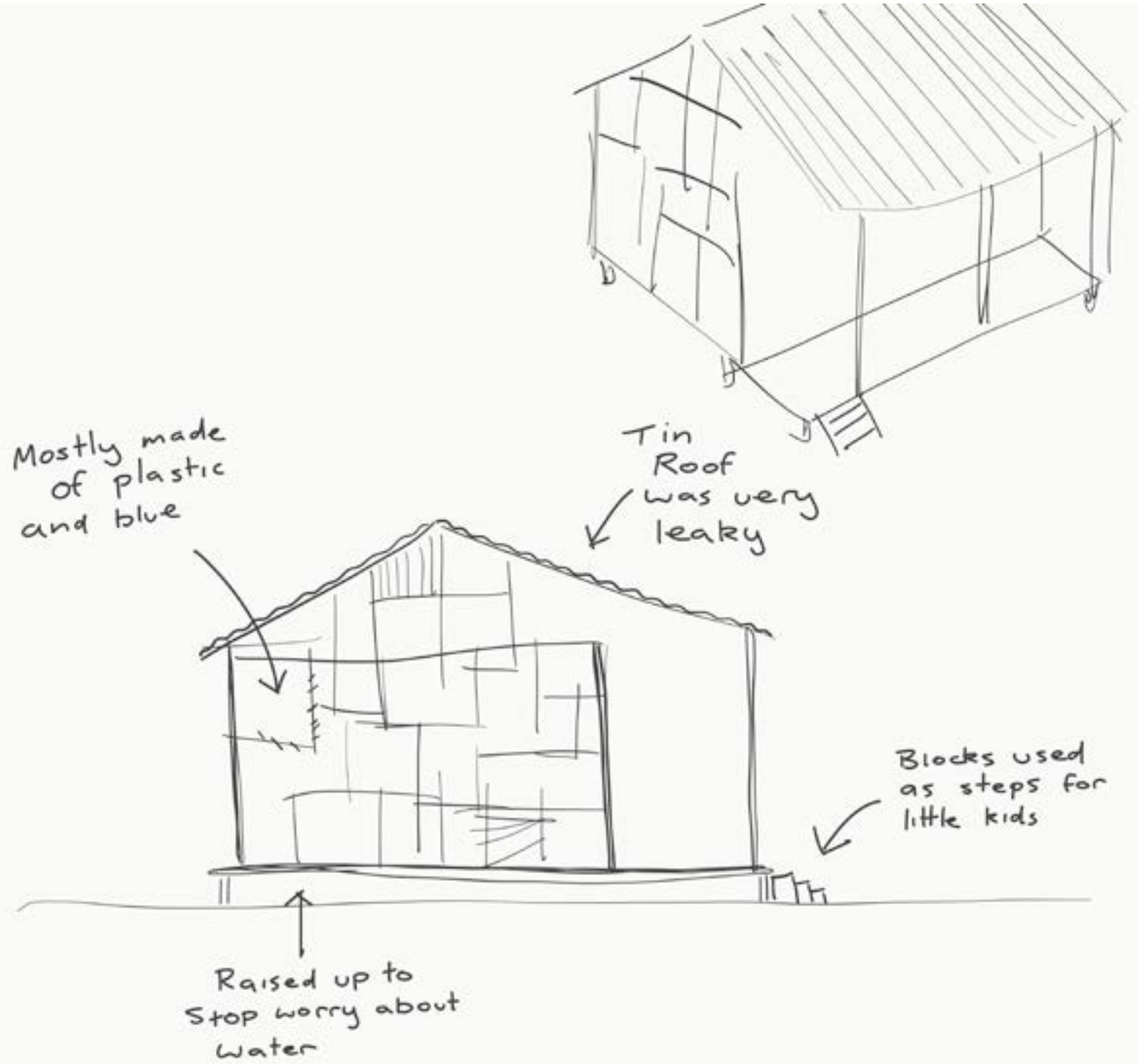
7. What is a typical day in the camp was like?
Every morning we would tidy our dorm and our teacher would take us to the beach for gymnastics. I spent a lot of time at the library.

The orphanage was run by the UNHCR.

8. Did you have a role at the camp?
Us older children took care of the younger kids. I took care of the five year old twins whose parents passed away at sea. Also the girls all had to prepare the meals while the boys did household chores.

Departure from Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

9. What process did you go through to leave Pulau Bidong Camp?
Father Peter taught me English which was very difficult but I had to get good at it if I wanted to join my brother in Australia.



INTERVIEW 12

Guerilla gardening

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

1. What was your role in the camp?
We cultivated mung beans into bean sprouts. We sow the mung beans into sandy soils, put up railings to protect the bed. Then cover the seeds to preserve the moisture. Slowly the beans sprout forth, like magic, like fables.

2. What did you do with the bean sprouts?
We would sell them with the fish at the markets.

3. Where did you get the fish from?
We always had extra tins of tuna.

The camp residents were resourceful in all measures.

4. How would you sell the bean sprouts and fish?
Early in the morning, my sister and I would go to the bakery. The man loaded our cardboard boxes with warm loaves of bread, covered the top with a cloth to keep the heat.
The steam would rise in the glow of the sand ovens. Men stroked the fire, others would knead the dough. We take them to the street and squat down to sell our bread, bean sprouts and fish in the vendors row. Sometimes we would have leftovers. So we would open the tuna and put it over a low flame. She would slice the bread in half and I stuff the fish to make sandwiches.

Things that are strongly held by Vietnamese such as the quality and substance to bread brought to Pulau Bidong.

5. What other stalls were there in the vendors row?
There were tailors, hair salons, fruit stands, a mini grocer...

6. How was the vendors row run?
It was managed and run by the refugees. Except for the two Malaysian owned grocery stores. They would come in and out.

7. Why did people have stalls?
We wanted to make good of a bad situation. We were so lucky to have survived the boat journey. We wanted a better quality of life.

8. Where would people congregate?
There was always people in the cafes. There were two along zone C beach. These two shops, Happy and Club, were the top spot for adults, who were mostly young men. Only soft drinks like 7Up, Coke, Pepsi ... cakes were available.

The cafe provided a space for community and collectivism.

9. Why did the men go there?
The cafes were a place to reminisce about their past lives and dream about their futures.

INTERVIEW 13

Many people seeked political asylum following their experience of the reeducation camps.

Departure from Vietnam

1. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?

Shortly after the fall of Saigon to the Communists on April 1975, civil servants and military officers who served in the US backed regime, like myself, were asked to register for 'political reeducation' which would last 10 days.

I was in prison for 3 years. My family were all sent to do hard labour. There was 'indoctrination' every day. There wa not enough food. For 11.5 years, I never saw my wife or children and then once after they were allowed to see me fore 15 minutes. Life was impossible. We managed to escape seperately and were fortunate to be reunited in the camp.

The makeshift nature of the camp lifestyle was seen as better than its reality as the camp residents compared it to what they fled from.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

2. What was it like to live there?

Life in the camp was hard. We lived in makeshift tents For us and the thousands of other Vietnamese boat people who found refuge at Pulau Bidong it was, to some extent, life in a tent in the camp was likened to living in a tropical paradise.

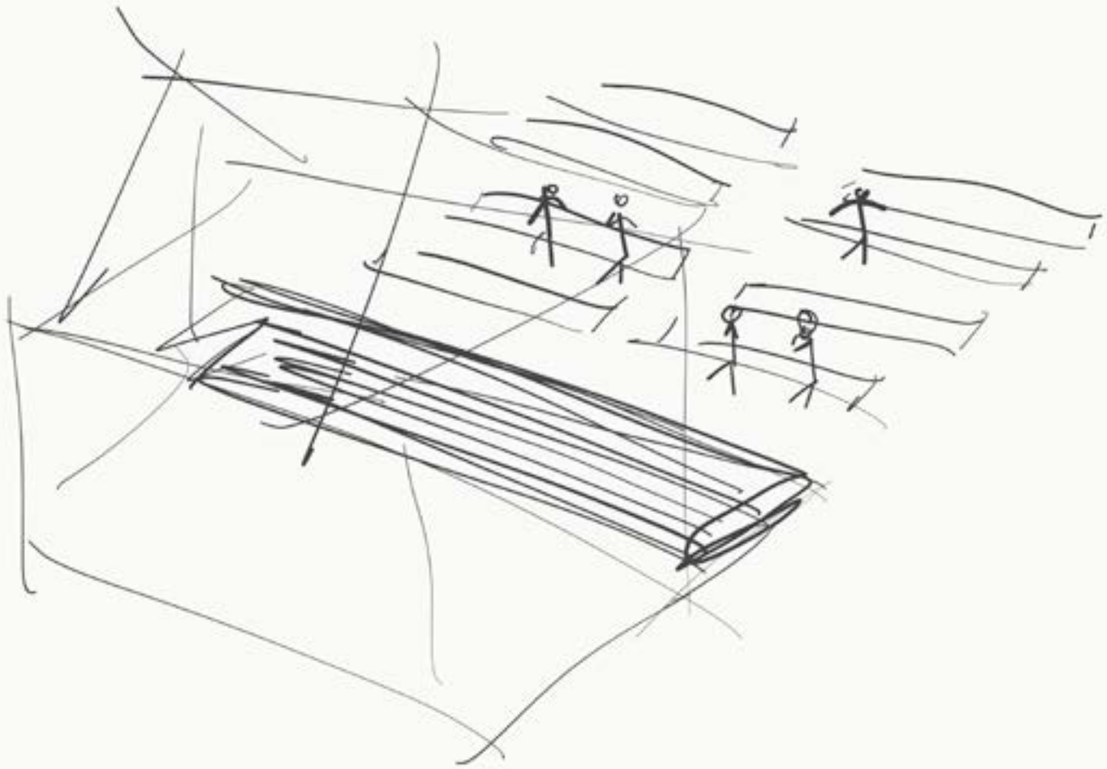
3. What is a typical day in the camp was like?

I would go to the vocational school to train for my life once I have been resettled. There were television tubes, circuit boards, carpentry work-tables and tailoring guides scattered in buildings.

Vocational schools run by the UNHCR to train people for life in their resettlement countries. These were also spaces that craeted purpose and structure to life in the camp.

The children went to the A kindergarten run by UNHCR staff. It looked no different to any other school. There are colorful paintings, posters and alphabets decorating the walls in the classrooms and library. It was always uplifting to see the children learning and playing in these shacks.

Sometimes I would take a short walk into the deep at Pantai Cina will lead to a small waterfall. This was a favorite picnic spot for us. It also served as their source of fresh water (when supplies run out) and a stopover after collecting wood at the nearby hills.



INTERVIEW 14

Departure from Vietnam

1. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?

My father was sent to a reeducation camp because he was drafted into the South Vietnamese army. Months passed and my mother and two sisters when to the registration office to inquire about my father. They didn't come home that evening. There were rumours that my mother, sisters and other women had staged a demonstration and the North Vietnamese soldiers had fired at them. I was a 16 year old boy but was told if they didn't return that I should leave.

The history post-Vietnam war is hard to trace as it mostly hearsay.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

2. What is a typical day in the camp was like?

We would clear the jungle, grow vegetables, build wells and latrines. We were hungry. Some supplemented their rations with wild fruits and insects during their forays in the jungle.

There was little medicine around. The dead were buried on Religion Hill overlooking the camp. Their names and dates were written on a piece of paper, inserted in empty Fanta bottles and planted on the tombs. This was Fanta Hill.

Us refugees called the camp Bidong Bi Dat — tragic Bidong. However Bidong was a very special place that we will never forget. It represented freedom, hope, future, peaceful, beauty or unforgettable.

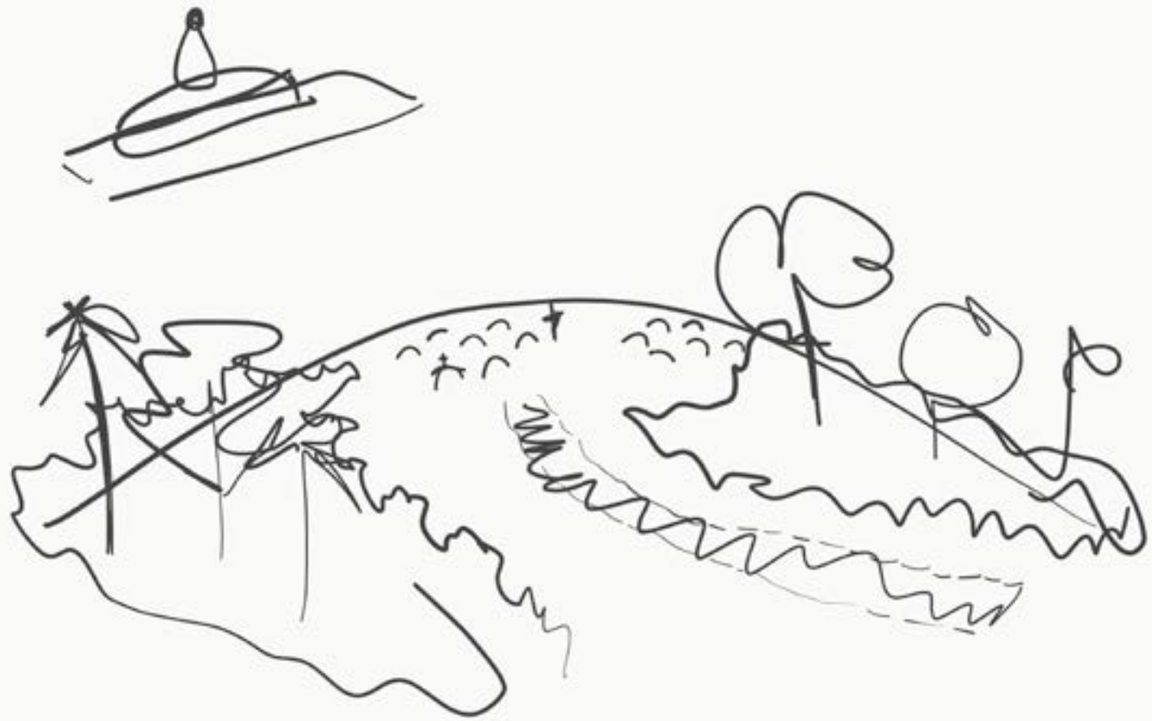
The island represented many different things to many different people. This strongly was influenced by the length of the refugee's stay at the camp.

3. What was the relationship of the other camp residents with the Malaysian authorities?

The tough street kids - the shoe shining boys, petty thieves and orphans - were both against the camp authorities as well as themselves.

The Malaysian authorities also had a lot to do with the fisherman. The fisherman were very kind. They witnessed many boat people landing on the shore of Merang. Every day, they would see boats came to shore. The boats then were deliberately sunk a few meters from shore, forcing people to swim to shore. The fishermen would run to the beach to help pull the weak ones to shore and give them food and water before calling the authorities.

The Malaysian authorities tried to enforce and limit contact between Vietnamese boat arrivals and the local Malaysian people.



INTERVIEW 15

The habitable space on the island was very limited.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

1. What was your first impression of the camp?
They crammed all 32 000 of us into a quarter of a square kilometre of foreshore between coconut trees at the base of a towering hill that abruptly rises to 1000m.

2. What was it like to live there?
There are makeshift shacks made from scavenged timber, plastic sheeting, used bags, cardboard cartons and flattened pieces of metal.
We inspected these shacks near the administration centre. They consist of one room, about 3 metres by 1.5 metres. There was a wooden platform that served as a floor bed, covered overhead with a ubiquitous blue plastic sheeting and lined with cardboard. The people wanted M$500 to M$600 for it.

3. What was your relationship with the Malaysian authorities?
Any money and gold we had, had to be given to the Malaysian authorities. But really it was now that we needed it most.
We spent 2 days looking for a place to live.

4. Why is it so hard to find a place to live?
Since 3800 people would leave the island out of 35000, real estate was tough.
I didn't even bother to look at the houses on the front of the beach. They are known to exchange for M$2500.

All space seemed to be exhausted and stretched to its limits because of the high numbers of camp residents.

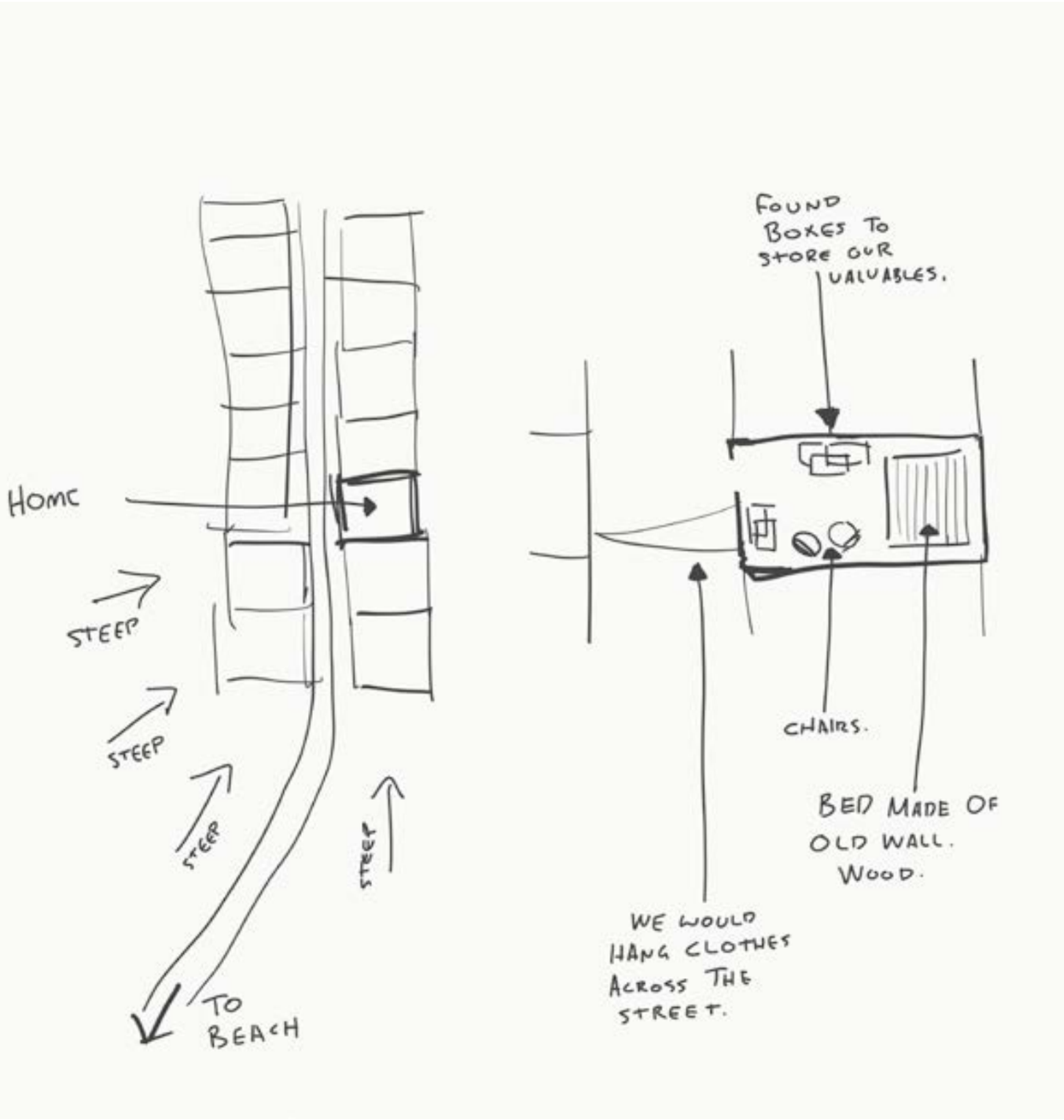
5. Where did you live then?
Instead, we lived up the steep slope behind the camp in Zone D. In Zone D the price dropped to M$150. The higher up the hill you go, the cheaper it gets.

Houses were sold between camp residents in an organised system.

6. Why was it cheaper up the hill?
People don't want to live there because the jungle there has been devasted and reminds them of the bombed and napalmed hills of home.
Mainly I think it was so far and hard to carry water up the hills.
Also you could barely hear the public address system.
But what could we do? I went back and got my axe. I chopped a few trees down like so many before me. I built my own shelter so that the kids were at least out of the weather.

The location of the house was important.

Many camp residents axed the jungle for building material.



INTERVIEW 16

Camp residents were restricted to what they could and could not build on the island. This was reinforced by the Malaysian authorities.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

1. What was the relationship of other camp residents with the Malaysian authorities?
We were not allowed to build toilets over the sea, so instead we dug shallow holes. Instead of polluting the ocean, we polluted the island.
We would build the toilets near our houses and the smell was overpowering. Flies and mosquitoes would breed and were everywhere. Contamination was a reality. I think when we left, they began to give permission to site toilets over the water. It took time. The camp residents had to wait for materials.

The camp residents relied on building materials to be delivered from the Malaysian mainland.

2. What was your role in the camp?
I was one of the 200 residents which would everyday comb the alleyways between the shanties to collect waste rubbish. We were not allowed to burn the rubbish can't be burnt because of the high risk of fire.

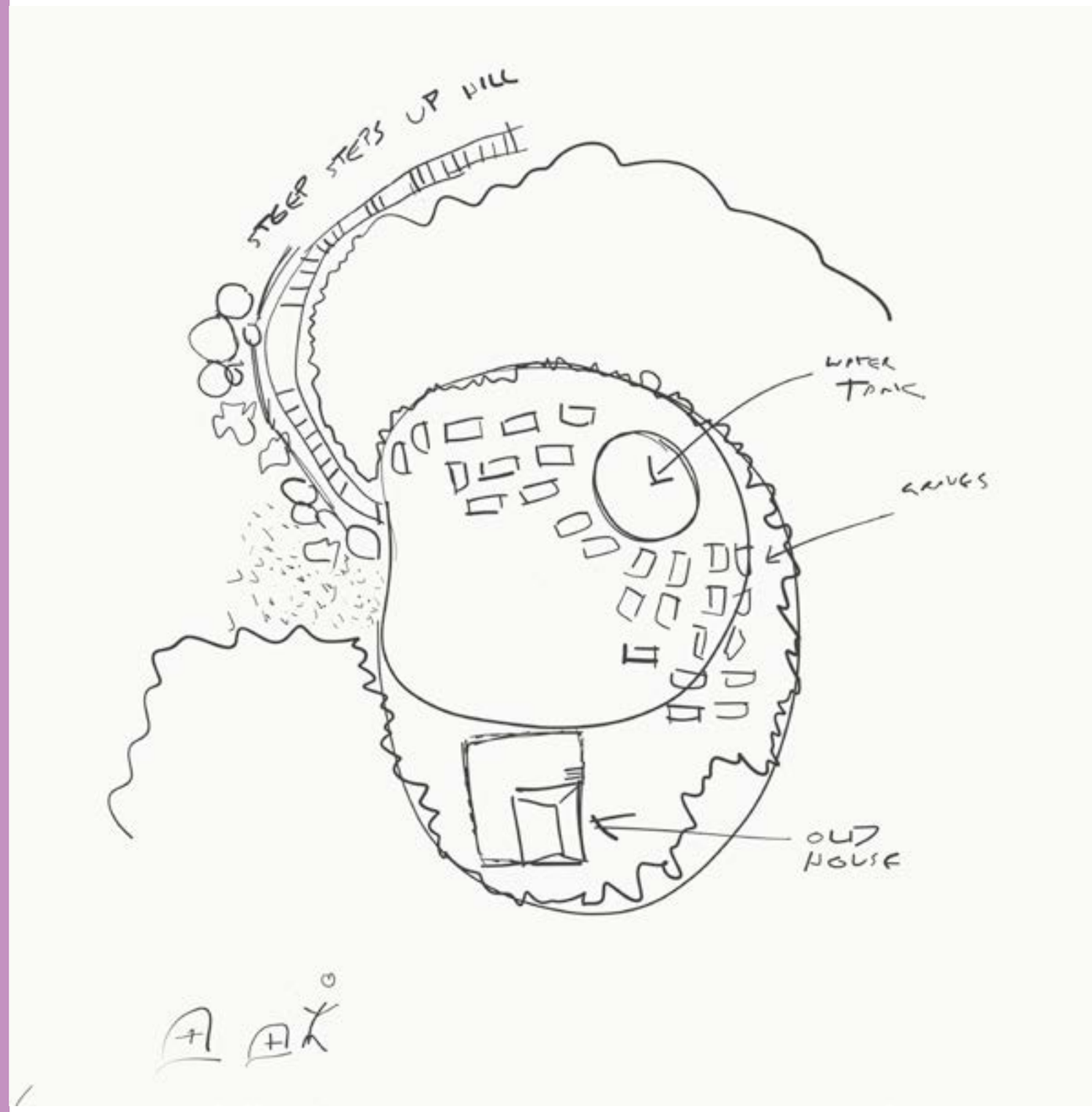
3. What did you eat in the camp?
We would get a bag of rations that would last one person three days. For most people, the diet was satisfactory. For others, it was monotonous and bland. Fresh vegetables were available every six weeks or two months.
Depending how the storms were. Vitamin deficiency was common. Malnutrition was widespread. Many babies and children died.

In the early years, very little structured system of food distribution and ration sizes were available. The island itself was very much deserted and didn't provide a sources of food.

4. How did people deal with death at the camp?
A large hillside on the right side of Zone C beach was a cemetery. It was near the churches and temples.
There was also an older cemetery site, which was up on the mountain. It could take up to 30 minutes to reach the site from the UN offices area.
There was also 20 or 40 graves under the large water tank. Next to these graves, there was also a small garden with a paved yard.

Glass bottles were scavaged and collected by the street sweepers and given to the church and temple on Religious Hill.

5. What was the graveyard on the hillside was like?
Those who passed away would be buried on the hillside overlooking the camp. To mark their graves, we would write their names on a piece of paper and place them in empty Fanta bottles.
As you walked up the hill, the bottles would glisten in the sun.



INTERVIEW 17

The whole world was engaged in the events of Vietnam, pre, during and post the war. The war was not one that played out only regionally.

Departure from Vietnam

1. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?

I was arrested in April 1976 after the reunification of the two Vietnams. Like hundreds of other writers and artists, I was sent to prison, then to a 'reeducation camp' without being charged or tried for anything.

2. What was your departure experience?

I was released in September 1981 thanks largely to the campaigning efforts of Amnesty Internation and International PEN.

In March 1983, I fled Vietnam as a boat person, after bribing the officials. 8 days later I landed in the Pulau Bidong refugee camp - the small island off Malaysia's east coast.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

2. What is a typical day in the camp was like?

I would spend passing the time visiting my friends in their huts. They had houses under trees. Sometimes they would wake up and the tree sap would stick to their clotges, pajamas and skin. In the little hut, we would drinking, and talk about our lives, jobs and impressions of Pulau Bidong.

In dire times, we would consult the oracles that were on the faces of playing cards. We were sure there were ghosts to communicate with. We would ask to leave the island. We would ask the ghosts to carry messages to our loved ones in Vietnam.

Continual war in Vietnam since the early 1900s was taking a toll on Vietnam and its people. Generations of people experience only war.

3. How did they construct the hut?

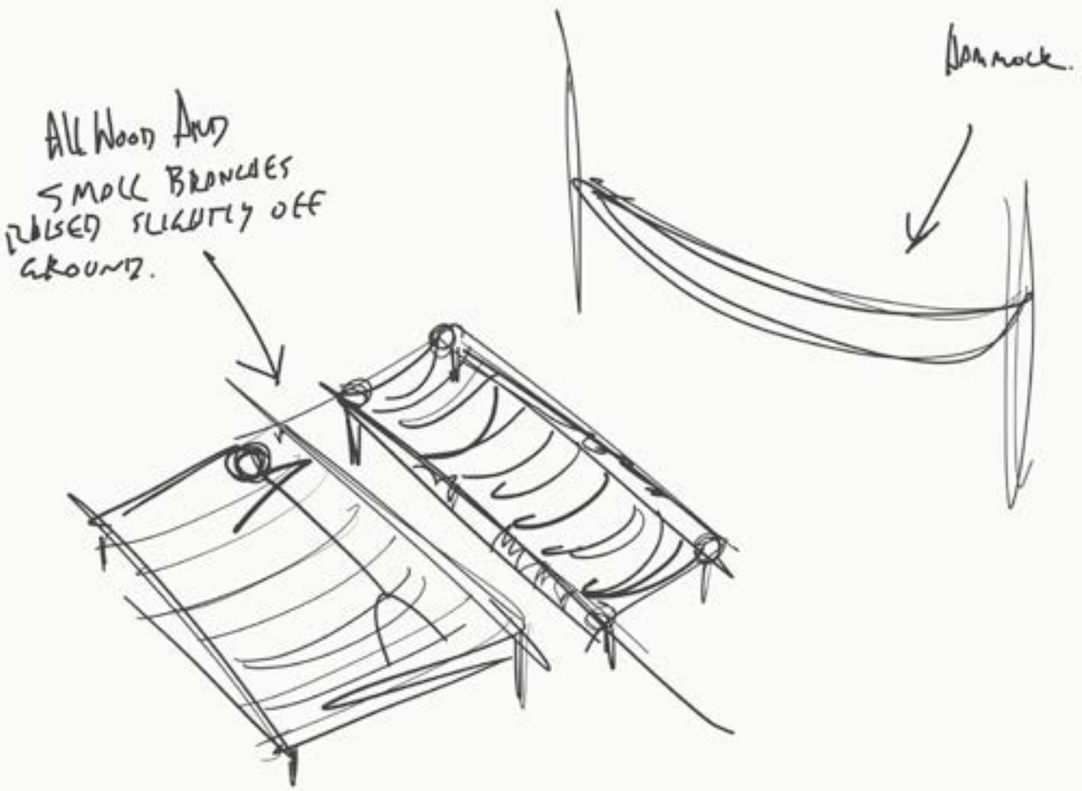
The men, usually, would go to the jungle up the hill with their machetes. They would then cut the tree limbs and carry them back to their sleeping spot. They would then fasten the knotty limbs together to create a platform, build posts and sink them into the soft sandy soil.

Resettlement was more likely for family reunions.

Departure from Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

4. What process did you go through to leave Pulau Bidong Camp?

I appealed to the Australian representatives to allow me to be reunited with my wife and children in Australia. In 1983, that dream was granted.



INTERVIEW 18

The experience of re-education camps is hard to document as mostly it is one of hearsay.

Departure from Vietnam

1. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?

I was in prison for 5 years, 6 months and 18 days for no crime, reason other than my post om the South Vietnamese army.

The camps were Vietnam's bamboo gulag. The reeducation camps were never intended to rehabilitate individuals but rather humiliate, cow and obtain reverence and in the process instill fear an obedience among the public at large.

2. What was your departure experience?

I am still very much traumatised by the voyage. Mainly because of the raping of the women on four different occasions. All us men had to resist our instincts to fight for even the slightest protest, we all would be dead.

It was terrible to see the women fold - wives, sisters, daughters - even a youngster at 10 years old be passed from one man to the other. We were all told to forgive and forget.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

3. What is a typical day in the camp was like?

I was writing a book to let the world know the truth. In the early days, I didn't even have enough money to buy a second shirt. All I wanted was an exercise book and a pen. The title of the book was "The Agony". I also wanted to write another book explaining how for every 100 who flee Vietnam, only one third reached safety. One third would be arrested or killed in the attempt by communists. One third are drowned at sea or killed by pirates.

Many people tried to warn others in Vietnam of the dangers of fleeing by boat.

Departure from Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

4. What process did you go through to leave Pulau Bidong Camp?

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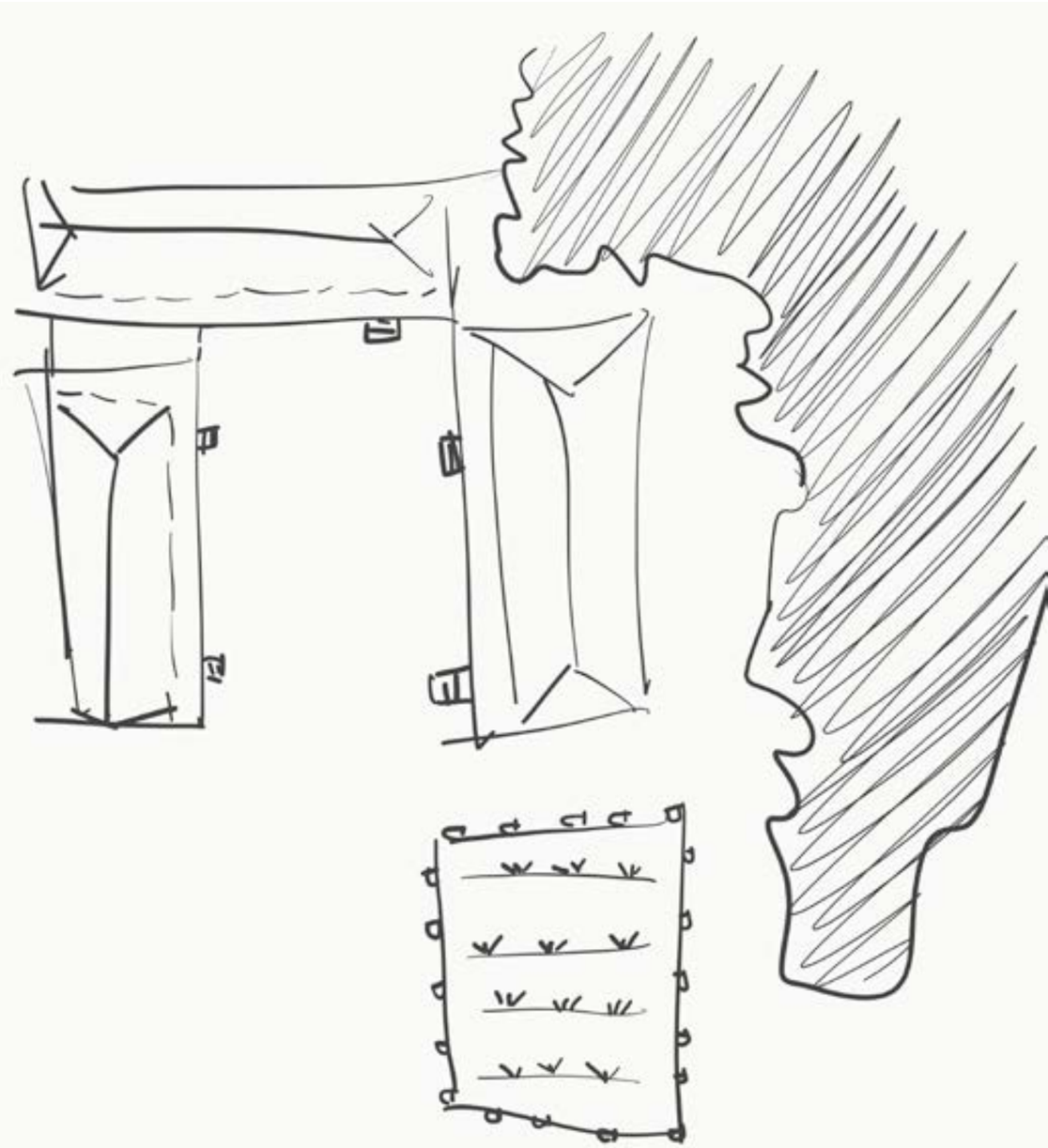


INTERVIEW 19

The history post-Vietnam war is hard to trace as it mostly hearsay.

Prior to departure from Vietnam

1. What was your experience post Vietnam War?

Since the day the Communists invaded South Vietnam, I had led a miserable and repressed life. We were arrested for the most trivial reasons. Jailed for an indefinite period without trial. We lived in a state of fear, worry, terror, afraid of everything, afraid of being caught. We feared the Communists would confiscate our homes, our possessions. We feared the brainwashing of the reeducation camps and exile to “new economic zones”.

There was no political freedom, no freedom of thought. We must use the Communist language, follow their way of thinking, be brainwashed into their way of living. Freedom of speech was completely forbidden. Jail and exile were measures reserved for those who dared to speak up on behalf of the oppressed people. The police regime was everywhere in Vietnam, we were followed and spied on. We had no freedom to move from one provice to another without a government permit. Nothing belonged to me - no house, no thoughts, no self.

we had compulsory military service and forced labour. We were brought

into battle to participate in the Vietnam-Cambodian War as well as the Sino-Chinese conflict. Our people had endured many years of war.If we were against them, we had no choice but to flee.

Continual war in Vietnam since the early 1900s was taking a toll on Vietnam and its people. Generations of people experience only war.

Departure from Vietnam

2. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?

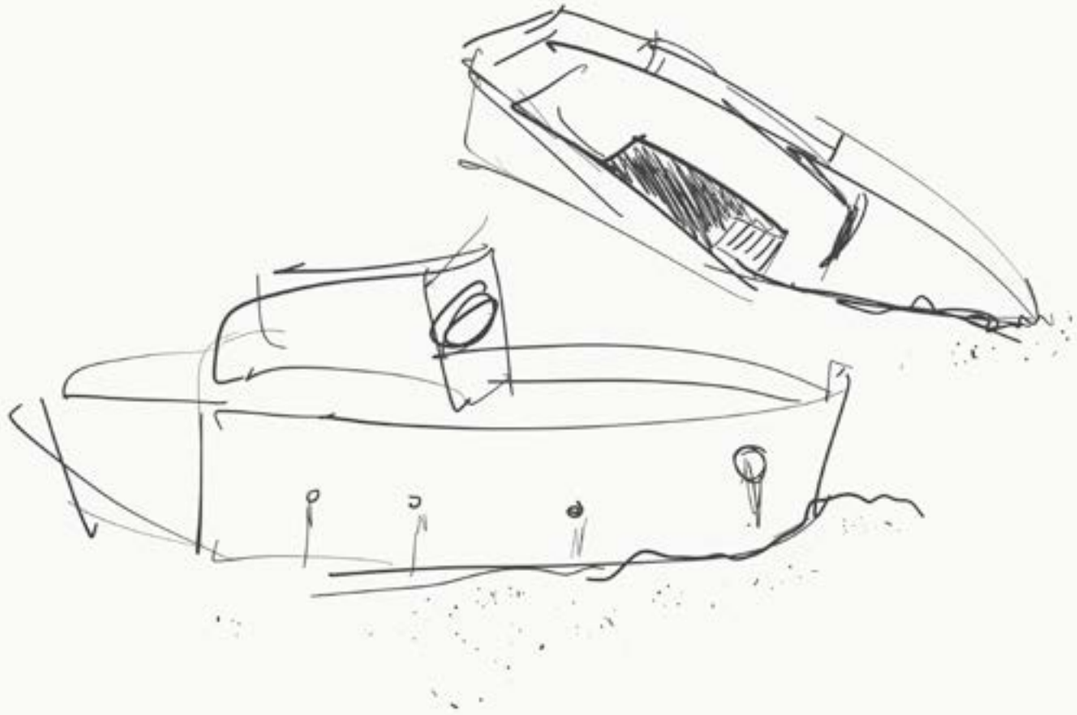
There are many reasons why I left Vietnam. No one can completely express the reason that have pushed them to leave the motherland. I want to speak of the deep reason, the thing that all Vietnamese are aware of and find hard to express. We ask for the right to live. We want freedom. We love peace.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

3. What was your impression of the camp?

Battered boats littered the coastline. More than 3,000 live in shacks made of logs and palm fronds and we were not permitted to cross a narrow inlet to shore. We built a school, library, Roman Catholic church and Buddhist temple. We played soccer in the sand or checkers in their shacks and listen at night to radio broadcasts for news.

Life took place in homes despite their makeshift quality.



INTERVIEW 20

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

1. Who would visit and/or use the market?

The markets were used by the Vietnamese refugees, the internationals and Malaysians too. But the markets were run exclusively by us.

The market revolved around the same area to create familarity and regularity.

2. When would they visit?

They would visit in the morning.

3. Where was the market?

A quarter of the beach, commonly known as the front beach was where we held the markets. I would sell my wares there. But there was also other food and clothes.

4. Why was the market created?

The market was created I guess because the refugees who were struggling were looking got a way to make money. Receiving items from Malaysian fisherman, deciding a price and keeping a percentage.

The markets, while illegal, provided us with luxuries that we would have otherwise gone without.

5. How was the market constructed?

The market was a shanty town of tents and benches. The Malaysian authorities would often dismantle it and so it never took a constant form.

6. What was the authorities position on it?

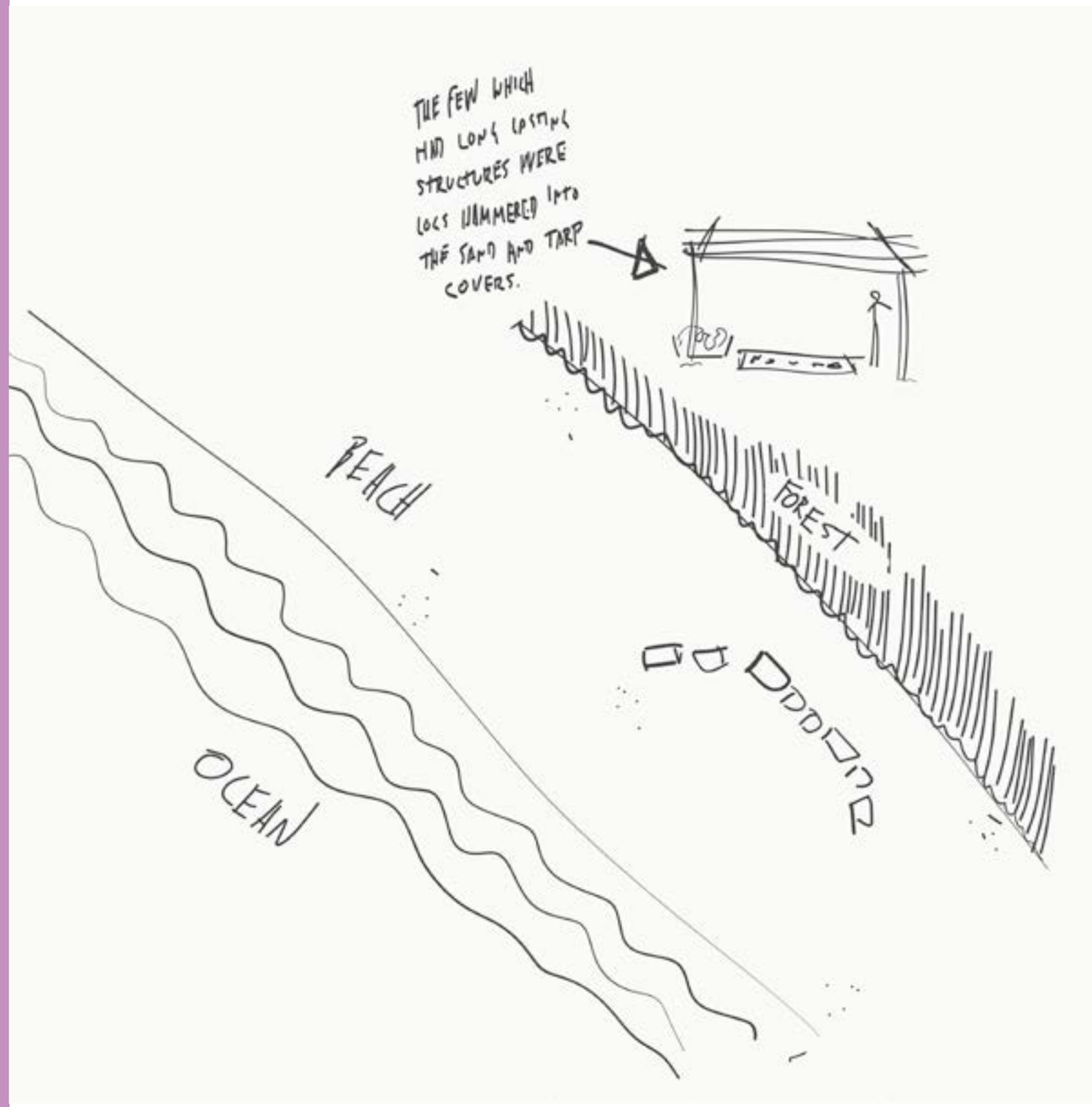
The items sold at the market were obtained illegally.

It was illegal for various reasons. Items were collected by the refugees sailing on crude small boats to meet the Malaysian fisherman. The items were then brought back to Pulau Bidong without passing through any Malaysian or UNHCR body. Items were paid for through money which had not been collected by the Malaysian authorities.

Meeting up with the fishermen would sometimes turn violent when agreements could not be made. Many people went missing.

Being affiliated with the markets could negatively impact on our chances to leave for Australia. They rejected one family because of antisocial behaviour. The authorities do not show any civic spirit.

Association with the market looked poorly on the camp resident however they were desperate to supplement their income in order to afford things in the camp such as fresh vegetables.



INTERVIEW 21

Departure from Vietnam

1. What was departure experience?

I was worried about money. It was hard trying to put together enough to pay the boat leader and often spending it all yet failing to get away. There was a time in 1979, where the government organised departures to gather people's gold.

After payment, we had to wait to the escape date. Tensions would mount. There was a fear of losing it all, fear of arrest. The wait could take anywhere from 10 months to a year.

On the night of the escape, nerves were even more intense. People would lose their life to local guerillas. It is still impossible to describe the perils encountered by those who fled. We laid crowded together on the boat and a single gunshot would create panic.

On board the boat, there was continued worry. We prayed for the success of our escape. I was ready to jump overboard and die rather than be caught.

There were many dangers in the high seas. We were all nauseated, we were all exhausted.

In the big ocean, we appealed to foreign vessels urging them to rescue us but they turned away. Some even sailed away quickly when they saw us. We were out there for 2-3 weeks. Just drifting back and forth. There were boats that drifted back to the Vietnam coast where they would die of exhaustion or were jailed.

There was no room to store sufficient food and water for the journey. Starvation was the cause of innummerable deaths. There were families that fled with 5 persons and only one survived. In some cases everyone on board died.

The boat journey was highly dangerous and many lost their lives.

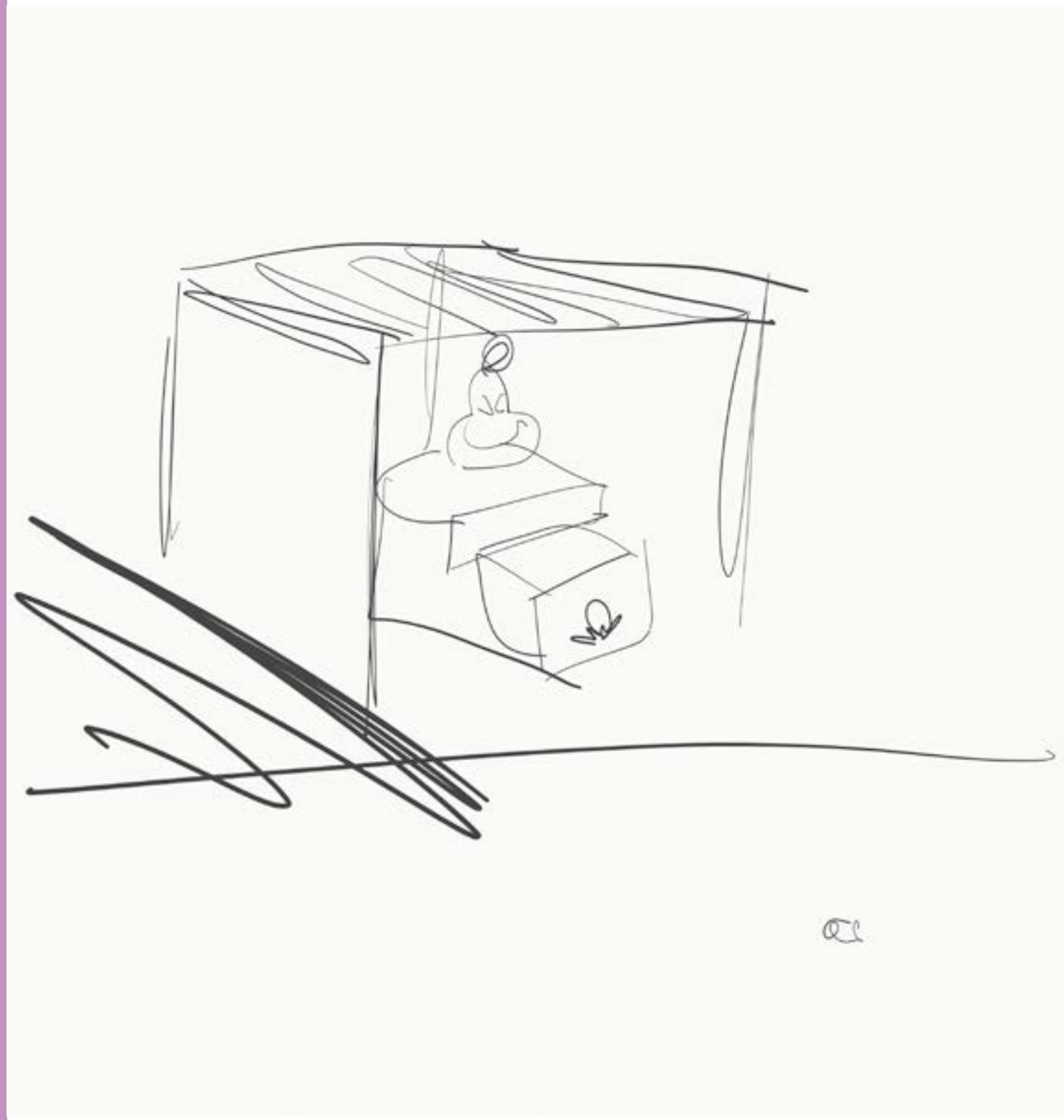
Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

2. What is a typical day in the camp was like?

I was lucky to have come to the camp yet I still suffered. I spent long weary months waiting and hoping for resettlement. In those months I would visit Religion Hill. On "Religion Hill" was a Catholic Church, serviced by Fr Surmon, a French missionary working in Malaysia and resident in Kota Bahru. At various times there were Vietnamese priests and seminarians, and ex-pat priests. The Catholic community in Kuala Trengganu was a bit jealous of the surfeit of priests on the island and the relative scarcity on the mainland. Sharing the hill was a Buddhist Temple and a Protestant Christian Church. As well as these was a small number of Cao Dai adherents.

Religion Hill provided comfort for many in the camp.

The experience of fleeing a country is emotional mental, and physically taxing.



INTERVIEW 22

Departure from Vietnam

1. I'm used to poverty and hard work but it upsetted me so much when I saw how Communist ideas were being taught to my children. To save them, I fled.

2. What was departure experience?

I was 28 with my wife and 2 children. I built a 6 metre boat that could take me and my family. However our desperate neighbour said they would report us if I didn't let them go with us. So 30 people ended up squeezing into the boat.

The boat escape from Vietnam is a gamble with life or death.

The engine failed on the third day. Food ran out after 6 days. On the 25th day, the boat drifted to the Malaysian coast. All of us were hospitalised but survived thanks to the rain.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

3. What was your first impression of the camp?

The camp was surely the most crowded and barren spot on the surface of the Earth.

When we were there in 1979, some 42000 refugees were confined to the only habitable space on the island - an area that would be the equivalent of two city blocks.

4. What was it like to live there?

Water and supplies has to be ferried in from the mainland to keep us alive. The island's terrain was so forrbidding that even in our poverty stricken, laid hungry state, no one wrestled the jungle.

The island's typology was very difficult for the Vietnamese to adjust to. The island was closer to the Equator and thus experienced more extreme weather than Vietnam.

Every inch of level ground on the rocky island was covered with makeshift shack of cardboard, plywood, palm fronds and blue plastic sheeting. Some of the hits were two to three storeys high. The was so much poop everywhere. Garbage flooded the lagoon.

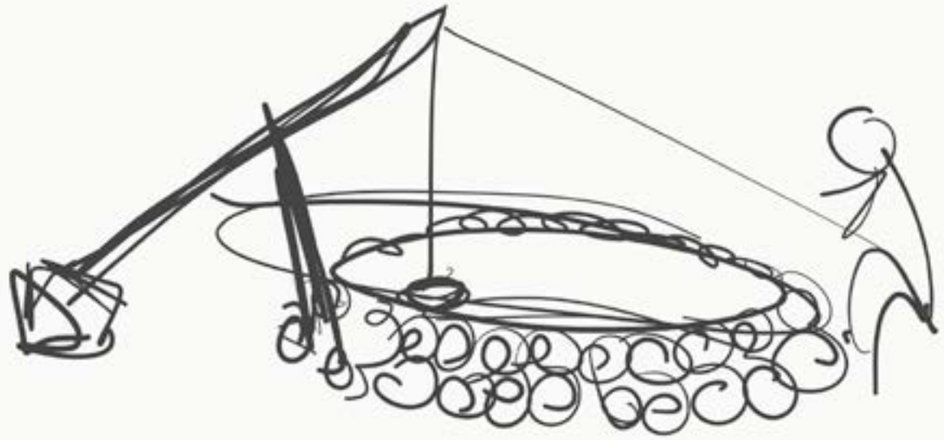
Yet we showed great resilience in spite of our difficulties. We were self organised and had a high sense of community.

5. Why did the camp residents not collect water from the wells?

As people would stay longer for screening, this was the case for who arrived after March 14th, 1989, many wells were dug by the refugee to be used for bathe, cooking, and farming.

Latrines and wells were inadequate; tropical rainstorms sent rivers of filthy water through the camp. All food and clean water had to be imported from the mainland. Water was rationed at one gallon per day per person.

The island's location and geography did not create easily habitable spaces.



INTERVIEW 23

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

1. How did you arrive to Malaysia and ultimately Pulau Bidong Camp?
Generally, all the boat people were allowed into the camp. We were given a number, photographed and were required to fill out documents. We were shown how to apply to the UNHCR for resettlement.

2. How long were you at the camp for?
5-7 months. The last month moved quickly as we had been accepted to Australia by then.

3. What was your first impression of the camp?
Pulau Bidong is about 5 square kilometres. Only 1 square kilometre is suitable for living. It was summer when we arrived, its much hotter than the Vietnamese summer. There is no breeze sometimes.

4. What was it like to live there?
Within a few months the population grew. I was often quite disillusioned and disappointed. Sometimes I would break and vent my anger on my family.

5. What is a typical day in the camp was like?
To kill time I dreamt a lot in an attempt to escape the worries. We dreamt of life in Australia, buying a boat and rescuing all the refugees in the South China Sea.

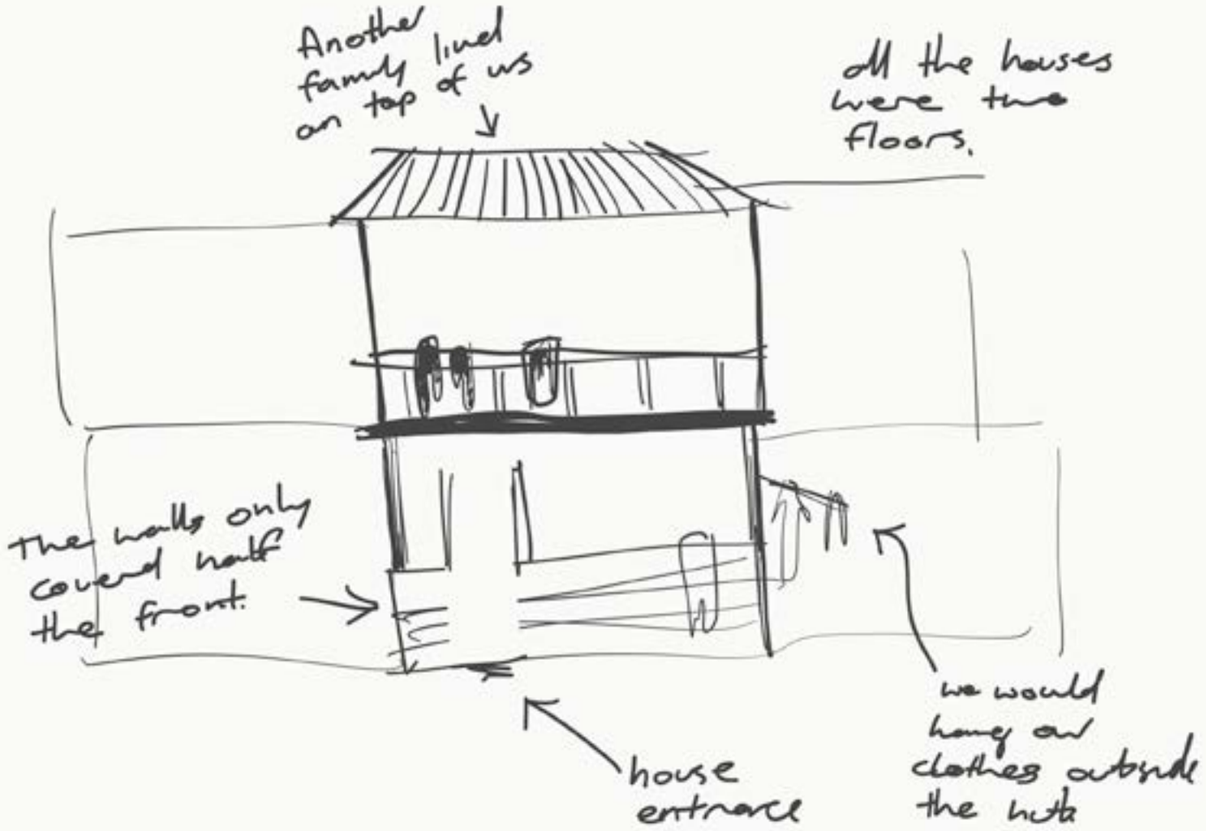
Departure from Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

6. What process did you go through to leave Pulau Bidong Camp?
Delegations from resettlement countries (primarly the US. Australia and Canada) caused a buzz whenever they arrive on the island. Loud speakers placed all across the populated portion of the island made announcements from dawn until the electricity cut out at night.
Even when there were no delegations on th island, there were interviews by UNHCR, health checks and other activities. When the delegations were there, tensions on the island went up several notches.
We filled out forms, but hesitated in our choice of country. Most refugees wanted to go to Australiam as they had land and work, with a temperate climate. We then simply waited to be accepted. Two of our family members were accepted in July. A month later our names were on the list. We had to wait another month for the weather to improve. We had to leave our parents.

There was a lot of spare time in the camp. There was a strong sense of comradery.

The island is described to be largely inhabitable. This largely stands the reason for why the island was not inhabitated by Malays but only used as a resting point for fisherman.

Electricity was brought from the Malaysian mainland onto the camp.



INTERVIEW 24

Departure from Vietnam

1. What made you decide to leave Vietnam?

I did not want to live as a slave. I wanted freedom to express myself.

Arrival and life in Malaysia and Pulau Bidong Camp

2. What was your role at the camp?

I worked mainly in the Single Young Men's programme and also did some work in the church. I stayed on Bidong only one year (one of the best of my life, although for many Vietnamese, it was probably one of their worst).

3. Who used the church?

There was no priest that year I was at the camp. That was 1982. All three priests had left for Australia. A French missionary came every second week and spent a few days. For Holy Week, they planned all the ceremonies in traditional Vietnamese as a priest was able to stay from Holy Thursday to Holy Monday.

It was shocking to hear how clearly the Interviewee remember their time at Pulau Bidong to exact details.

His presence brought much needed uplift in morale.

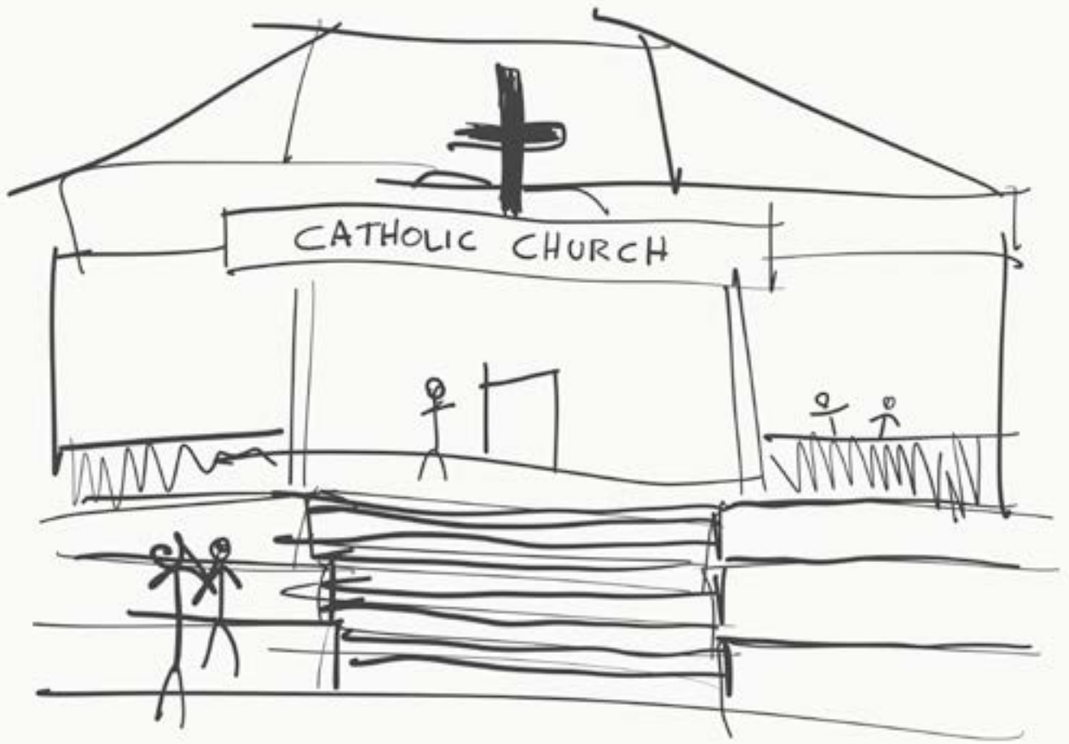
4. What was the church like?

There was a statue of an old man pulling his daughter out of the ocean that sat at the entry of the church. This statue was the most symbolic piece of art on Pulau Bidong because it symbolized the will, the power and the endurance every boat person had to have to survive the search for freedom.

The zinc sheeted wooden frame church was quite remarkable. There were rows of empty pews ready for a church service.

At the Buddhist temple, there was a monument which was an artificial boat and the sails. This was to commemorate those who made the journey as well as to pay tribute to those who gave their lives at sea in search for freedom.

Shrines were also built



VII

Collated Interview Qoutes

RELIGION HILL

INTERVIEW 01

Zone E was the graveyard. We built a church there.

INTERVIEW 03

The churches were not at Pulau Bidong at first. The conditions were too precarious after the massive sea exodus. Makeshift pagodas and churches started getting built once the camp became more organised.

The church space was very well love and kept tidy and well maintained.

All of us would visit the church. There were many different priests who would hold mass there.

Mass was irregular. Sometimes there would be two masses in a single day. Sometimes just once a week. Priest would come and go as they often had little trouble moving to a third country, They all had different mass schedules which we all got accustomed to.
The church held various celebrations, mourning and teaching.

INTERVIEW 03 CONTINUED

They were built by refugees. A religious official from the UNHCR would often instigate the construction and help to gather building materials for us.

They were fine with the churches. They were good for the refugees. They gave us something to do. There was little else to do.

The island did not provide construction materials. Materials had to be sourced from the Malaysian mainland.

INTERVIEW 05

We would walk up to Religion Hill in the morning. We would attend mass if there was one on or we would say a prayer before heading to the class.

Religion Hill provided the community a sense of ownership and identity

It could take up to 30 minutes to reach the site from the UN offices.

INTERVIEW 08

We were proud of the achievements on the island, proud of our religious buildings.

Time was spent working to improve the community. We worked to build churches.

INTERVIEW 08 CONTINUED

It was a simple structure with a simple crucifix. The Buddhists had equally simple buildings on either sides. The Buddhist shrine was quite central, like a mini temple located in the common area.
The neighbourhood was harmonious. There was no religious segregation. The church was adjacent to a Buddhist temple and both structures would still be standing today.

The flight of stairs leading to the temple from Pantai Tenggara is richly decorated with colorful plaques written with the refugees' names, social security numbers and dates they arrived. Outside the church, on a mass of cement shaped as a ship's bow, dozens of stone tablets commemorate all those who didn't make it over.

INTERVIEW 14

The dead were buried on Religion Hill overlooking the camp. Their names and dates were written on a piece of paper, inserted in empty Fanta bottles and planted on the tombs. This was Fanta Hill.

INTERVIEW 16

A large hillside on the right side of Zone C beach was a cemetery. It was near the churches and temples. There was also an older cemetery site, which was up on the mountain. It could take up to 30 minutes to reach the site from the UN offices area.

Those who passed away would be buried on the hillside overlooking the camp. To mark their graves, we would write their names on a piece of paper and place them in empty Fanta bottles.
As you walked up the hill, the bottles would glisten in the sun.

Found objects such as the Fanta glass bottles were used to mark graves.

INTERVIEW 19

We built a school, library, Roman Catholic church and Buddhist temple.

INTERVIEW 21

In those months I would visit Religion Hill. On "Religion Hill" was a Catholic Church, serviced by Fr Surmon, a French missionary working in Malaysia and resident in Kota Bahru. At various times there were Vietnamese priests and seminarians, and ex-pat priests. The Catholic community in Kuala Trengganu was a bit jealous of the surfeit of priests on the island and the relative scarcity on the mainland. Sharing the hill was a Buddhist Temple and a Protestant Christian Church. As well as these was a small number of Cao Dai adherents.

INTERVIEW 24

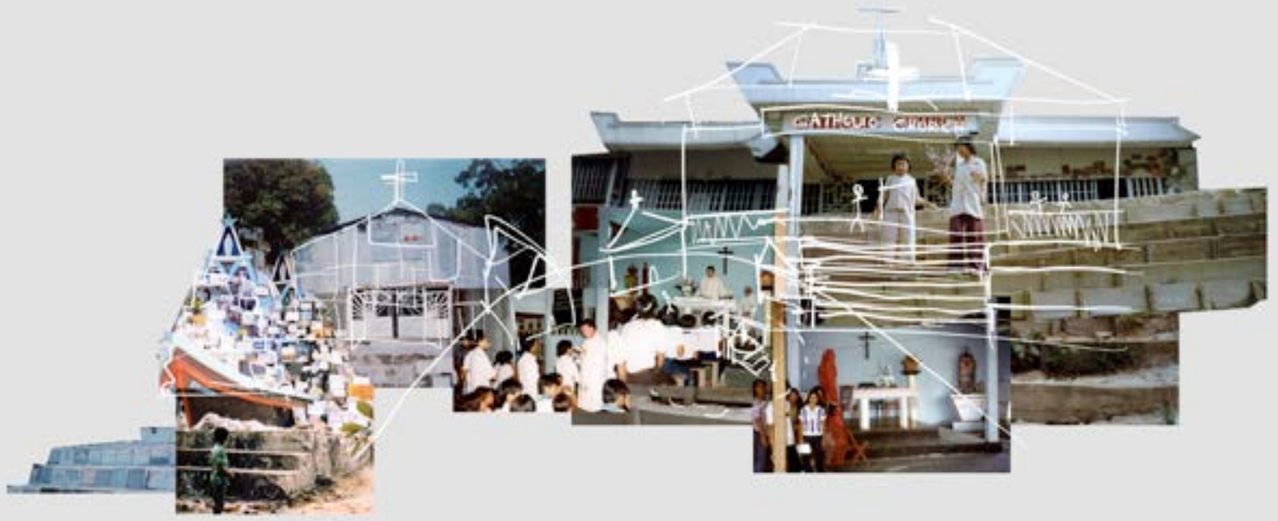
I worked mainly in the Single Young Men's programme and also did some work in the church.

There was no priest that year I was at the camp. That was 1982. All three priests had left for Australia. A French missionary came every second week and spent a few days. For Holy Week, they planned all the ceremonies in traditional Vietnamese as a priest was able to stay from Holy Thursday to Holy Monday. His presence brought much needed uplift in morale.

INTERVIEW 24 CONTINUED

There was a statue of an old man pulling his daughter out of the ocean that sat at the entry of the church. This statue was the most symbolic
piece of art on Pulau Bidong because it symbolized the will, the power and the endurance every boat person had to have to survive the search for freedom.
The zinc sheeted wooden frame church was quite remarkable. There were rows of empty pews ready for a church service.
At the Buddhist temple, there was a monument which was an artificial boat and the sails. This was to commemorate those who made the journey as well as to pay tribute to those who gave their lives at sea in search for freedom.

Buildings were accompanied with art pieces such as statues



CATHOLIC CHURCH MONTAGE

GRAVES MONTAGE

BUDDHIST TEMPLE MONTAGE

THE CAFE

INTERVIEW 01

We would visit Zone B where all the coffee shops were.

INTERVIEW 04

Women often went to the two storey coffee shop next to the Food Supply cage, a few meters from Sick Bay Hospital. This shop was famous for its ice cream and nightly Chinese and Indian movies.

INTERVIEW 05

We staffed the restaurant, Coconut Inn, as part of our vocational program run by the Catholic organisation.

INTERVIEW 06

The cafes at night were very lovely. There were two cafes along the beach. At night, the scent of ground coffee beans brewing against the oceanic shore was magical.

There would be lanterns hung from the rafters lighting up the shop.

Many people would visit Happy or Club. They were very popular with young men.

There was also another cafe near the Sick Bay hospital. That one was two storeys.

INTERVIEW 06 CONTINUED.

They were built by us refugees. Like one person would want to open a business on the beach. They would set it up, built it and run it. Then when they left, they would sell the business to another refugee.

Using found pieces of plywood, rope, sawn pieces of trees from the jungle. Sometimes there were excess from the building supplies of UN run schools and offices. They were always hot property.

INTERVIEW 12

There was always people in the cafes. There were two along zone C beach. These two shops, Happy and Club, were the top spot for adults,

The cafes were a place to reminisce about their past lives and dream about their futures.

Cafes were motivated by commerce. A set system was in place for the buying and selling of buildings.

Cafes served as a communal space, a meeting point.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:
- salvaged plywood
- rope
- logs / tree limbs
- excess building materials from UN projects

CONSTRUCTION METHOD:

THE HOME

INTERVIEW 02

Life in the camps was very basic, but at least the plywood sleeping quarters were rat proof - the rats tried all night to get in but never made it.
Some refugees lived in wooden-framed shanty houses covered in plastic. They were breezy, which was lucky, because there was no power for cooling fans. Their houses were not rat proof.

INTERVIEW 04

My parents paid 100 US dollars for a hut that accommodated all five of us in one huge bed.

INTERVIEW 09

There was only a small area of habitable space. About two city blocks. Every inch of level ground on the rocky island was covered with huts made from what we could scavage.

INTERVIEW 10

The refugees would first live on the beach. Braving those first few nights in the open air and tropical storms was terrible.
We would then move to live in barracks and shacks constructed from salvaged boards and pieces of plastic.

INTERVIEW 10 CONTINUED

The dorms were poor. We would wake up with water leaks. The bark of the trees that we slept under would drop sap on us.

The bunks were made of trees. Men would cut limbs with their machetes. They would tie the limbs together. Hammer large posts into the softest sandy areas.

We would pass the time and play cards. We would bet with biscuits.

The bunks were constantly being built. Once we ran low on space, we would begin to build upwards. Sometimes up to three storeys tall.

INTERVIEW 13

Life in the camp was hard. We lived in makeshift tents For us and the thousands of other Vietnamese boat people who found refuge at Pulau Bidong it was, to some extent, life in a tent in the camp was likened to living in a tropical paradise.

The beds were created crudely and in a makeshift manner. There was no strong sophitication.

INTERVIEW 15

There are makeshift shacks made from scavenged timber, plastic sheeting, used bags, cardboard cartons and flattened pieces of metal.
We inspected these shacks near the administration centre. They consist of one room, about 3 metres by 1.5 metres. There was a wooden platform that served as a floor bed, covered overhead with a ubiquitous blue plastic sheeting and lined with cardboard. The people wanted M$500 to M$600 for it.

We spent 2 days looking for a place to live.

Since 3800 people would leave the island out of 35000, real estate was tough.
I didn't even bother to look at the houses on the front of the beach. They are known to exchange for M$2500.

Instead, we lived up the steep slope behind the camp in Zone D. In Zone D the price dropped to M$150.
The higher up the hill you go, the cheaper it gets.

INTERVIEW 15 CONTINUED

People don't want to live there because the jungle there has been devasted and reminds them of the bombed and napalmed hills of home.
Mainly I think it was so far and hard to carry water up the hills.
Also you could barely hear the public address system.

I went back and got my axe. I chopped a few trees down like so many before me. I built my own shelter so that the kids were at least out of the weather.

INTERVIEW 17

I would spend passing the time visiting my friends in their huts. They had houses under trees. Sometimes they would wake up and the tree sap would stick to their clothes, pajamas and skin. In the little hut, we would drinking, and talk about our lives, jobs and impressions of Pulau Bidong.

In dire times, we would consult the oracles that were on the faces of playing cards. We were sure there were ghosts to communicate with. We would ask to leave the island. We would ask the ghosts to carry messages to our loved ones in Vietnam.

The home served as a communal space as people would gather

INTERVIEW 17 CONTINUED

The men, usually, would go to the jungle up the hill with their machetes. They would then cut the tree limbs and carry them back to their sleeping spot. They would then fasten the knotty limbs together to create a platform, build posts and sink them into the soft sandy soil.

INTERVIEW 19

More than 3,000 live in shacks made of logs and palm fronds

checkers in their shacks and listen at night to radio broadcasts for news.

The island provided the large majority of building materials to create the home.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:
- logs / tree limbs
- palm fronds
- salvaged timber or plywood boards
- blue plastic sheeting
- cardboard cartons
- flattened pieces of metal

CONSTRUCTION METHOD:
- chop trees in the jungle up the hill with machetes
- tie tree limbs to create platform
- elevate platform on posts
- sink posts in sandy soil

THE WELLS

INTERVIEW 04

There was an enclosed shower that we had to walk to a well to obtain water for a daily usage.

I remember waiting in long lines to fetch water from the wells. The people who came before me dug the wells for fresh water. The sandy soil is sometimes red like the colour of cider or lava. The refuges would build a square or round wall often 1.5 metres high. We used whatever vessels we could find to carry the water. Some of the water containers were made from empty biscuit tins.

INTERVIEW 07

Us children would dangle tin cans on rope down the well, peering into the depths for traces of water. Yet, at the end of the well, the cans laid empty like stranded fish.
Most of the 60 wells on Pulau Bidong are dry. A few near the beach have water. But its salty. Fresh water, like many other necessities, was in short supply.

INTERVIEW 09

There were about 80 wells about 20-metre deep dug by us refugees for freshwater.
There were always long lines to get water from the well. When you fetched the water, sometimes it would be stained red from the sandy soil. Some of the wells were square. Some were round.

INTERVIEW 14

We would clear the jungle, grow vegetables, build wells and latrines.

INTERVIEW 22

As people would stay longer for screening, this was the case for who arrived after March 14th, 1989, many wells were dug by the refugee to be used for bathe, cooking, and farming.
Latrines and wells were inadequate; tropical rainstorms sent rivers of filthy water through the camp.

THE MARKET

INTERVIEW 05

They would sell their skills at the market.
I guess yes, there was a need to practice our skills and gain a little money. But largely there was a great sense of community and pride. Everyone got to showcase what they learnt and perfected.

INTERVIEW 12

We would sell them with the fish at the markets.

Early in the morning, my sister and I would go to the bakery. The man loaded our cardboard boxes with warm loaves of bread, covered the top with a cloth to keep the heat.
The steam would rise in the glow of the sand ovens. Men stroked the fire, others would knead the dough. We take them to the street and squat down to sell our bread, bean sprouts and fish in the vendors row.

There were tailors, hair salons, fruit stands, a mini grocer...

It was managed and run by the refugees. Except for the two Malaysian owned grocery stores. They would come in and out.

INTERVIEW 12 CONTINUED

We wanted to make good of a bad situation. We were so lucky to have survived the boat journey. We wanted a better quality of life.

INTERVIEW 20

The markets were used by the Vietnamese refugees, the internationals and Malaysians too. But the markets were run exclusively by us.

They would visit in the morning.

A quarter of the beach, commonly known as the front beach was where we held the markets. I would sell my wares there. But there was also other food and clothes.

The market was created I guess because the refugees who were struggling were looking got a way to make money. Receiving items from Malaysian fisherman, deciding a price and keeping a percentage.
The markets, while illegal, provided us with luxuries that we would have otherwise gone without.

The market was a shanty town of tents and benches. The Malaysian authorities would often dismantle it
and so it never took a constant form.

INTERVIEW 20 CONTINUED

It was illegal for various reasons. Items were collected by the refugees sailing on crude small boats to meet the Malaysian fisherman. The items were then brought back to Pulau Bidong without passing through any Malaysian or UNHCR body. Items were paid for through money which had not been collected by the Malaysian authorities.
Meeting up with the fishermen would sometimes turn violent when agreements could not be made. Many people went missing.
Being affiliated with the markets could negatively impact on our chances to leave for Australia. They rejected one family because of antisocial behaviour. The authorities do not show any civic spirit.

SICK BAY HOSPITAL

INTERVIEW 02

By the time it closed in 1991, the island had welcomed more than 250,000 boat people and delivered 2,000-plus babies at Sick Bay Hospital.

The hospital was like an old warehouse building. It was very unruly and unsantiary. But there was only one hospital for the whole island.

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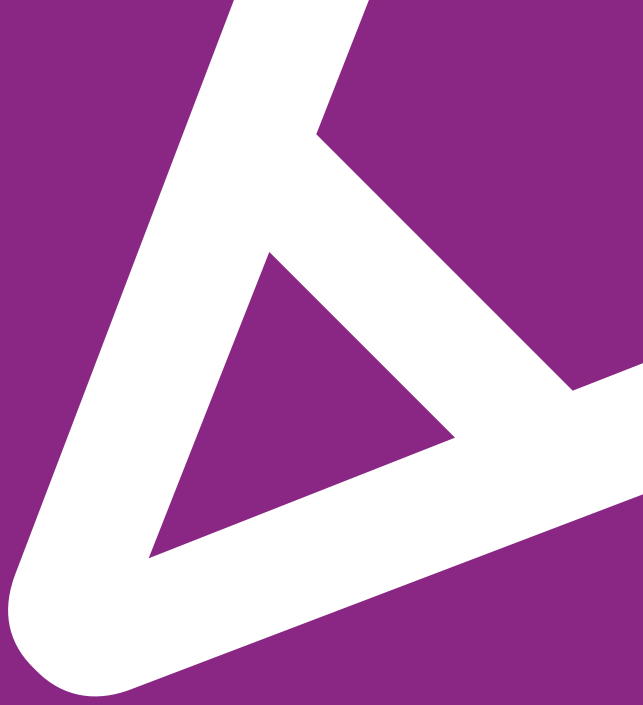

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