

Cod, God, Country and Family

The Portuguese Newfoundland Cod Fishery

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ABSTRACT Why the Portuguese Newfoundland cod fleet persisted in dory fishing until the late 1960s, when the superior productivity of trawler fishing was well known, is examined from three points of view: the state's, the merchant-owners' and the fishermen's. It is argued that industrial technology was not adopted because none of the three parties involved perceived that the new technology would be advantageous to their interests. Archives of state and industry records and interviews with cod fishermen are the sources used to argue that production was increased instead through the extraction of unremunerated effort from the fishermen. A case study of fishermen from one village and two oral narratives document the dorymen's experience.

Introduction

The abundance of cod on the Grand Banks appears to have been known to the Portuguese by 1472 and maps of the period identify Newfoundland as "Codfish Land" (*Terra dos Bacalhaus*). The Portuguese discovery of the Grand Banks cod occurred as part of their search for a sea route to Asia and Portuguese knowledge of Newfoundland preceded by several years John Cabot's so-called discovery of the territory for King Henry VII of England in 1497.¹ Between 1510 and 1525 the Portuguese attempted to found a colony in Atlantic Canada the exact location of which has not been determined but is thought to have been either in the Bay of Fundy (*Baia Funda*) or on Cape Breton Island. In any event it was short-lived. The Portuguese are also thought to have attempted settlement on Sable island in 1567-68. In 1567, the King of Portugal, Dom Sebastião sought nominations for a man to hold the post of civil governor of Newfoundland (*Terra Nova*) suggesting a Portuguese interest in claiming sovereignty over the territory (Anderson and Higgs 1976; Azevedo 1982; Manso and Cruz 1984). But during the sixteenth century Portuguese interest in finding an Atlantic route to Asia declined in part due to the successes of the annual India fleet that sailed around the African coast and in part due to the losses of men and boats and the apparent desolation of the North American Atlantic coast. The one attraction of the North Atlantic was the codfish. Salted and dried it was portable, longlasting, and a valued source of protein for the predominantly agricultural country.

Portugal and France pioneered the trans-Atlantic fishery at the beginning of the sixteenth century and were joined by English fishing boats only in the 1570s. Portugal formally launched its cod fishery in 1501 and by 1506 the king, Dom Manuel, had regulated the collection of cod tithes. By 1578, although fewer in number than the French, the Portuguese cod fleet was larger than the English

and a significant element in the sixteenth century cod fishery (Innis 1940; Mannion and Barkham 1987).² The Portuguese also had abundant sources of salt especially in the Aveiro area and they carried on a significant trade in salt on the Grand Banks. The northern ports of Aveiro and Viana do Castelo prospered and some historians believe that by 1550 in these two ports there were between 100 and 150 ships outfitted for the Newfoundland fishery (Amzalak 1923; Centeno 1940; Mouro 1985). Like the French, Basque, and English fleets, the Portuguese fished in coastal waters and landed for fresh water, bait, and food. The Portuguese concentrated on the Avalon Peninsula, fished from April to July, and preserved their fish "green" or simply salted. By 1572 a commercial *seca* (fish-drying enterprise) was established in Aveiro where the salted green Newfoundland cod was sun-dried. By the third-quarter of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese fleet annually produced 3000 tons of fish and generated an average of 100 *cruzados* in revenue to the state through taxation, a considerable amount for the period. By this time cod had become a staple in the Portuguese diet (Azevedo 1982).

In 1580 Portugal was annexed to Spain under Phillip II and subsequent hostilities between Spain and England contributed to the harassment of the Portuguese fleet by the English in St. John's harbour, which the Portuguese used as a fishing base. In 1582, they suffered from the piracy of Richard Clarke, and Portuguese fishermen were among those who accepted Sir Humphrey Gilbert's proclamation on 5 August 1583 that established Newfoundland as the property of Queen Elizabeth I. The Portuguese continued to fish off the coast of Newfoundland but they no longer landed, as they had formerly, at the coves between Bonavista and Cape Race, and between 1614 and 1620 there were violent clashes between English and Portuguese fishermen (Prowse 1895). By the time Portugal regained independence from Spain in 1640, England had firm control over the Newfoundland fisheries and the Portuguese fleet had been largely destroyed in the Spanish Armada and through English piracy. The silting over of Aveiro, the major Portuguese port, also contributed to the decay of the cod fleet. By the mid-seventeenth century, Portugal had abandoned the Newfoundland fishery and passed from being a major producer to being a major importer of cod.³ Not until almost two centuries later did Portugal attempt to revive its Newfoundland fishery (see Table 1).

New interest in the Newfoundland fishery began in 1829 when the Portuguese consul in North America sent a directive home urging that the cod fishery be revived. By 1835, a small company based in Lisbon, the *Companhia de Pescarias Lisbonense*, had equipped nine vessels for the cod fishery and by 1848 it had nineteen vessels and employed 325 men. The company disbanded, however, in 1857. For a few years after 1866, a company based on the Azores sent two vessels to Newfoundland, but this effort too was short-lived. Then, in 1886, Mariano & Irmãos, a company in Figueira da Foz, outfitted two vessels for the Newfoundland cod fishery and the following year ten boats from Lisbon accompanied them. These twelve vessels constituted the entire Portuguese cod fleet at the beginning of the twentieth century. Annual cod production was little more than

Table 1. *The Portuguese Cod Fleet from the 16th to the 20th Century.*

Year	No. of Boats	No. of Men
16th Century:		
1550	150*	
1578	50	
17th and 18th Centuries**		
none by 1640		
19th Century:		
1835	7	
1848	19	325
1857	0	
1866	2	
1886	2	
1887	12	
1896	12	
20th Century (up to 1929 and the New State):		
1901	12	
1903	17***	462
1910	28	949
1915	38	
1920	30	
1925	44	

Sources: Amzalak (1923), Leone (1903), Moutinho (1985), Souto (1914).

* Numerous sources mention that there were between 100 and 150 ships outfitted for the cod fishery in the ports of Aveiro and Viano do Castelo. This number seems disproportionately large and it is now known how many actually went to Newfoundland that year.

** This hiatus in the development of the Portuguese cod fleet was due largely to destruction of the fleet in the Spanish Armada.

*** The 1903 cod fleet included the first vessel from Aveiro in over 300 years; the rest of the fleet was from Figueira da Foz. In the twentieth century, Aveiro emerged again as the major port for the cod fleet.

2,000 tons, and more than 22,000 tons of cod were imported. By 1925 the fleet had increased to forty-four ships. Domestic production had doubled but still only represented 12 percent of the cod consumed in the country (see Tables 1 and 2). Portugal was one of the largest consumers of cod in the world. It was a maritime nation with a strong tradition of fishing but its cod fleet was small and unproductive.

Concern over the low productivity of the domestic fleet and the high volume of cod imports led the Portuguese state in the 1930s to undertake a major restructuring of the fishery and by 1965, domestic production of cod represented 76

Table 2. Domestic Production as a Percentage of Total Volume of Cod Consumed, 1900-1980.

Year	Vol. of Domestic Production (tons)	Vol. of Cod Imported (tons)	Total Vol. (tons)	Domestic Cod as % of Total Volume
1900	2,313	22,086	24,399	9
1905	2,480	22,238	24,718	10
1910	4,913	-	-	-
1915	3,899	22,575	26,474	15
1920	1,678	31,268	32,946	5
1925	5,032	35,619	40,651	12
1930	3,559	40,830	44,389	8
1935	9,372	43,441	52,813	18
1940	20,541	27,578	48,119	43
1945	28,309	9,238	37,547	75
1950	51,472	23,426	74,898	69
1955	68,537	18,954	87,491	78
1960	61,787	20,285	82,072	75
1965	65,726	20,697	86,423	76
1970	59,201	38,501	97,702	61
1975	33,693	46,130	79,823	42
1980	17,746	25,035	42,781	41

Source: Amzalak (1923), Azevedo (1982), Centeno (1940), GANPB (1952/53-1970/71), Moutinho (1984), Silva (1957), Souto (1914).

percent of consumption. Unlike other countries such as France, however, Portugal increased cod production not through the development of trawler-fishing but instead through elaboration of the traditional line-fishing from one-man dories (*a pesca à linha*). The state sponsored the design and construction of a new type of vessel, the "motor-ship" (*navio-motor*), especially for dory fishing. Archival records show, however, that the first trawler was used in the Portuguese fleet as early as 1938 and that the relative advantages of trawlers were generally acknowledged even at that time: trawlers had greater carrying capacity, increased production, required fewer men, and could make two annual voyages. But trawlers were not widely used in the Portuguese cod fleet until the late 1960s.

My objective in this paper is to examine the reasons the Portuguese persisted in dory fishing. Written documentation of the twentieth century cod fishery has been controlled by the state, however, and tends to defend the policies and initiatives of the state. Most of the sources that exist are annual reports of state-sponsored associations or commissions or are documents written by officials responsible for the cod fleet. An additional problem with sources is that there has been little written from the perspective of the dorymen themselves. For this reason, in 1988, in conjunction with archival research, I undertook fieldwork in Vila da Praia (a pseudonym), a fishing village on the north coast of Portugal

where I had previously conducted extensive research in the local fishery during 1984-85. My earlier research focussed on the women of the community who were, or had been, active in fishing, fish-selling and the production of seaweed fertilizer. During my work with the women I had learned that almost all of their husbands had made numerous voyages to the Newfoundland fishery ("*aos Bancos*"). I resolved at that time that I would return to the community to interview the men about their experience as Grand Banks dorymen, and this is what I undertook during the summer of 1988. In this paper, based on both interviews and archival sources, I consider the development of the twentieth century cod fishery from the points of view of the three major actors involved in the fishery: the state, the merchant-owners of the cod fleet, and the fishermen.⁴ I begin, however, with the narratives of two Vila da Praia fishermen, Joaquim and Manuel, who will introduce us to the experience of the dorymen.

"It was a slave's life": Narratives of Two Dorymen

Joaquim⁵

Joaquim, like the majority of Vila da Praia fishermen, has made numerous voyages to the Newfoundland cod fishery. He owns his own boat, the *Três Marias*, and fishes daily with a partner who is also a boat-owner. The men fish one week in one man's boat and the next week in the other man's boat; each brings his own gear, nets, traps or lines depending on the season. "This way we are equal to one another," they say. Their wives also work together on the beach. They unload the boat, sort the fish, sell some directly to neighbours on the beach, and auction the remaining fish in the *lota* (fish auction) to local women fish vendors or to merchants who come from the nearby cities of Matosinhos and Porto. The wives keep an account book of all expenses and earnings of the fishing operation and every Saturday the two couples get together and divide the week's earnings equally between them. They maintain equitable relations between the two households by having an equal investment of capital and labour.

Joaquim and his wife Maria consider that they have a strong marriage and view themselves as partners in the household fishing enterprise. In Vila da Praia they are known as hard workers; when they are not working on the beach, they are making or mending nets in the yard outside their house. They have six children, three sons and three daughters. The daughters all work as seamstresses in a nearby garment factory, two sons work in house construction, and one son is a fisherman. Two daughters and a son live at home and hand over their wages to their mother to manage for the household.

Joaquim remembers:

I made my first voyage to Terra Nova in 1958. I was nineteen years old, a *pobre*, and had just married. My wife was seventeen and pregnant. I knew that I would not be able to support a family by fishing in Vila da Praia. I wanted to go to the cod fishery (*a pesca do bacalhau*) to earn money. I also wanted to avoid the army. I wanted to be earning money for my wife

and the army didn't pay. I discussed it with my wife and she wrote to her cousin in Angola asking him to write to David R. here in Vila da Praia. David owed him a favour and she asked him to ask David to take me with him to Terra Nova. David arranged a place for me and after that I did the same for others. My son was born that first year I was in Newfoundland.

I went to the Newfoundland fishery every spring for twelve years and was gone for six to eight months each time. It was a long time to be away from my wife and family. There were always two great blows for me each year when I left for Terra Nova. The first was leaving my children behind here in Vila da Praia. We left them with my wife's mother and my wife came to Lisbon to be with me until the fleet left for Terra Nova. The second was saying good-bye to my wife in Lisbon.

The first few days at sea were very hard. Then the time started to be filled with hard work – sometimes around the clock – and there would be little time for thinking. They were the worst of times. Always dirty. Eating poorly. Working hard. Living in very cramped quarters: bunks with very little space above or below them. We earned some money. More than here. But it was very hard. It's possible that if we needed the money, I'd go again. I've only just turned fifty. I am still strong and a good worker. But it was a hard life, very hard to be away from my wife and children. That's no way to live. If my wife could've gone with me there and if we were coming ashore every few days or every weekend like the trawlers do nowadays that would be different. But to be there for six months and my wife here: that's no life. I'd sooner be here in my own house with my family than earning money there.

My first seven voyages were in a terrible boat. The captain was very bad, mean. The food was bad: for the men, it was beans and potatoes; for the officers, it was steak. And then, after fishing in Newfoundland, we went to fish in Greenland before coming home. Then I got a place on the *Vila do Conde*. The *Vila do Conde* only fished in Newfoundland – on the 'Rocks,' the Baixas. Almost all the men from here were fishing on the *Vila do Conde* then. It was a good boat. Good captain. Fair. Good food. I made my last five voyages in the *Vila do Conde*. I went for the last time in 1969. That was the year we rescued bodies from a Canadian ship that had sunk after a fire. When I saw those bodies I began to think of never seeing my wife and family again. I thought: 'This could happen to me one day and my wife and children would be left without support, without the money that I earn.' I was also just tired of the life: it was no way to live, so many months separated from my wife. I discussed it with her and we thought that we could make it by fishing regularly on the beach here. We'd not be rich but we'd have just enough to get by. To be able to live with one's wife and children ...

In 1961 we had bought a piece of land here to build a house on. By 1969 we had a house and a boat of our own and we thought we could get by by fishing here. That's how we've been living and we live well. We live day by day. For today we are fine. Who knows about tomorrow?

There were some good times. I was in St. John's for the procession when Our Lady of Fátima came to Newfoundland. When we were in port, I used to hang out with the other Portuguese in the park where the statue of Corte Real is. And the people of Newfoundland were always very kind and friendly. But the life was very hard.

Manuel

I will tell you about my life as a cod fisherman (*um bacalhoeiro*). I want to help you with your work. I want to tell you how it really was because you will not get the truth from books. You can not know how it really was because of the politics (*a política*). The government told

lies about the fishery. I can only talk about the time of dory fishing (*pesca à linha*), because I made my last voyage in 1969 before the trawlers. I made twelve voyages between 1958 and 1969. I stopped going because the owner (*o patrão*) refused to give me the amount of money under the table that I asked for when I went to register in March 1970 – and I was in the first line (*a primeira linha*) of the cod fishermen! Instead I joined other fishermen from Vila da Praia and went to fish for a company in Germany. Then I got better work paving highways in Germany for ten years. They paid well there. Now – since 1982 – I work in a soy oil factory in Vila do Conde. I can only talk about what it was like during the time when I was a cod fisherman. And it was very bad. It was a slave's life. It was in the time of fascism, the time of Salazar.

I was born in Vila da Praia in 1937. My father and my grandfather were both *pesca*dores (fishermen). My mother was a *jornaleira* (an agricultural day labourer). She worked for the *lavradores* (landowning peasant farmers) in their fields. She also harvested seaweed to sell, and she carried fish inland to sell to the *lavradores* there.

I went to school until the fourth grade and by the time I was thirteen I was fishing full-time. I fished with my father and when I was fourteen I took out my fishing license. In those days (the 1950s) the fishing here in Vila da Praia was very poor (*não dava p'ra nada*). The boats were small. We were still fishing without motors and there were many days especially during the winter when the weather was bad and the sea was high and we could not go out fishing. And when we could not go to sea, we had no fish to sell and therefore no food to eat. The *pesca*dores were not like the *lavradores* because they owned land and we didn't.⁶ And when we could not go to sea because of bad weather, we had no food for our children. But the *lavradores* always had food to eat; they always had corn to make bread. The *pesca*dores had to beg from the *lavradores*. Also, it was after the War. You could not make a living and most of the fishermen emigrated, or they signed on the boats going to the Banks (*os Bancos*) for the cod.

I made my first voyage to Newfoundland in 1958. I was nineteen and still unmarried. I went with Domingos. He was the first fisherman from Vila da Praia to go in the *Vila do Conde*. He was an excellent worker and fisherman so the company wanted more Vila da Praia men. Each year Domingos brought more men with him to the *Capitania* (local marine authority) to be registered until there were sixteen men from Vila da Praia fishing together aboard the *Vila do Conde*. The other men aboard came from different fishing villages along the coast including the Algarve. There were no Azoreans on our boat but there were Azoreans on other boats.

So, I signed on to fish for the cod because it was impossible to make a living here. Life was a misery here on the beach (*na praia*). I was unmarried when I made my first voyage but I already had a sweetheart (*já namorava*). We married in March 1959 when I signed up for my second voyage. Maria was pregnant with our first child and she was living with her mother. Our son was born four days before I returned from Terra Nova. He was born on 18 October and I got home on 22 October. After that, I kept going to the cod fishery because we needed the money. All the men were anxious to go because they would earn more there than fishing here. Although they knew it was slave's life (*uma vida de escravidão*) and poorly paid for how hard they had to work, they wanted to go because they could still earn more than they would here. It was even worse here. My wife and I discussed it. She didn't want me to be away but she knew it was necessary. We were both elder children in our families so neither of us would be inheriting a house. We would have to build a house of our own. Soon we had five children to feed. So we needed the money. My wife moved into a rented house and in 1962 with the help of loans from my wife's family we bought a shack (*barraca*) here on the beach. It was two rooms and she lived here with five children. We gradually built

this new house on the same site as that shack.

When I was away, my wife worked harvesting seaweed with her mother and her aunt. If she needed money she would borrow from them. Her aunt [mother's sister] owned a boat that she had inherited from her father, my wife's grandfather, and she hired men to fish for her. My wife's family also owned a small grocery shop on the beach. So we would borrow from them if she had to. I would come home with money in October and the first thing I would do was to put 1000 *escudos* away in a drawer. My wife would sell her seaweed in November. I would get the remainder of my earnings from the cod fishing – about 20 per cent – around Christmas time. I could also earn a little something fishing here when I was home. I didn't have my own boat but I would fish for others. Then in March when I matriculated I got 3000 *escudos* to buy my gear for the voyage – clothes, wine, soap, shaving supplies – and if there was any leftover I gave it to my wife to spend for the family. This 3000 *escudos* was the only money we were guaranteed. The rest of our earnings depended on how much fish we caught.

About the only good thing about being a cod fisherman was the medical care. We got better care then than we do now. We got free medical care through the *Casa dos Pescadores*. Three times a week there was clinic held in Vila da Praia so our wives and children were always looked after when we were away. And at any time we could call the doctor who lived in a neighbouring village and he would come to our house. We got excellent care – better than nowadays. There was also the *abono* (family allowance). My wife would get twenty *escudos* for each child.

So, in March we would go to the *Capitania* in Vila do Conde to register. Several men would go together and our wives would come too. The women wanted to make sure that we got good contracts, that we would be well paid. The women would always protest about the contract – that the wages were too low. But we had to sign. If we didn't they would call the police, the PIDE, and they would make us sign or go to jail. Also, on the first or second Sunday in March we would go with our wives and families by bus to one of the saints' shrines. Mine was Santa Maria de Adelaide. Others went to São Bento da Porta Aberta or São Torcato or Santa Alexandrina. It was a type of pilgrimage. We made *promessas* (votive offerings) so that we would have a good voyage, so that we would be lucky in the fishing (*ter sorte na pesca*) and bring home lots of money. We had that faith (*aquela fé*) then. Nowadays some people still do this but it's more for fun, a diversion.

Then in early April we'd go down to Lisbon with our wives in a bus paid for by the company and we'd stay in a hotel (that we paid for) for four or five days waiting for our departure. Meals were prepared by the cook aboard the ship in port and we would either take our wives aboard with us to eat or, as I preferred to do, go and get the prepared food and take it back to the hotel to eat by ourselves. I didn't like to take my wife into the ambiance (*aquela ambiente*) aboard the ship.

The cod fleet assembled in Lisbon – all of the boats from Aveiro and Viana and Porto and Figueira da Foz were there. And, on the Sunday before the departure and with our wives still there with us, there was the blessing of the fleet (*a benção*). All of the boats would anchor on the Tejo River at Belem, the same place where Vasco da Gama left from and where he is buried, and Cardinal Segueira, who was Salazar's right-hand man, would say a mass. As I say, we had that faith then. Now I don't have anything to do with priests or bishops or cardinals but we used to like to have that mass said before we started our voyage and before we began the long months of work and deprivation. Then, when the day of departure came we would embrace our wives for the last time. Some of the women would come on board hoping to have just a few more minutes with their husbands but they would be ordered to return to shore. Then we would set sail for Newfoundland and our wives would go north

back to Vila da Praia in the bus. It was usually about mid-April.

On the first day at sea we would take turns on one-hour watches (*a vigia*). And I should mention that this went on for the whole six or seven months of the voyage: we were all responsible at various times for a one-hour watch. On the second and third days we began to get our dories and our lines and hooks ready. The dories were assigned by lot and each man put a mark on his dory to signify that it was his. The company supplied each fisherman with all the lines, hooks and bait that they would need during the voyage. Each man received 25 lines each 50 metres in length and 50 hooks for each line. As well, each man received a six-months supply of tobacco.

After eight or ten days we arrived at the Banks. We would fish there until about the end of June and then we would go to the Baixos (the 'Rocks') to fish until the end of the summer. The Baixos or Lejos were extremely shallow and the Portuguese were the only ones who fished there because we were the only ones who did the dory fishing then. Around this time when we had used up the bait we had brought from Portugal usually in July we would stop in St. John's to buy fresh squid for bait. And again in August we would go into St. John's to buy capelin. If it was a good year we would head home with a full ship in late August or early September. Other years it took until October to fill the boat and some years the boats came home only half full. Those were bad years for the fishermen. We were paid for the fish we caught, not for our time.

Once we arrived at the Banks, we began the routine that we would follow until we headed home for Portugal again. The wake-up call was at 4 a.m. After a breakfast of milk or coffee or cocoa or soup – whatever you wanted – each fisherman took a lunch (*um farnel*) of marmalade, bread, olives, or figs. By 5 or 6 a.m. all the dories were launched and each man was rowing or sailing away from the boat, each going where he wanted to fish. The captain would watch the dories through binoculars. Each man fished alone in his dory but usually with a colleague in another dory nearby. A 'green' (*verde*) would fish with an experienced fisherman who might be his sponsor on his first voyage. Or two men who had made numerous voyages together on the same ship would fish near one another, looking out for each other. I always fished with José C. If a man filled his dory right away, he would return to the ship to unload, and if the weather was good he would go out again for a second load. On a normal day, the boat would call the dories back about 4 p.m. The captain would raise a flag if it was a clear day; on a foggy day, he would sound the ship's siren or fire a gunshot and the dories would head back to the ship.

Dinner was in two shifts because of the large number of men. And after dinner began a second day of work. Each fisherman also did one of the jobs involved in storing the day's catch. There were four tasks: splitting the fish; removing the head and cleaning the innards; scaling the fish; putting the fish in the salt in the hold. I was a salter (*salgador*). I did this every night. We worked until all the fish were salted and in the hold – sometimes until after midnight and getting up again at 4 a.m. Sometimes we worked around the clock if the weather was good and there was lots of fish.

The *Vila do Conde* was a motor-ship (*navio-motor*) and there were fifty-eight fishermen each of whom was also a cleaner (*escalador*) or *salgador* and one of whom was also the *contramestre* (boatswain or bosun). There were three officers: one captain (*capitão*), one mate (*imediate*) and one pilot (*piloto*). There were three cooks, one nurse, four motorists (*motoristas*), and ten *moços* (young men servants). The *moços* had a different contract from the fishermen. They were either young boys from the School of Fisheries in Lisbon or they were men who didn't want to fish or whose families didn't want them to fish because of the danger but who wanted to avoid the military service. Their jobs were to shovel the salt and look after the cargo, to manage the lowering, lifting and storage of the dories, to ration

the bait and hand it out each morning at 4.30 a.m. to the fishermen, to salvage the tongues and faces and other parts of the codfish left from the splitting and store them in barrels to be sold later by the company. And this is an important point. I am against fascism. It was our fish – not their fish – but they appropriated the codfish parts as pure profit. They took these parts of our fish to sell for themselves. They also took the cod liver oil. This was fascism.

I worked with three captains in my career. José dos Santos (*dos Chatos*, 'The Squabbler', we called him), Manuel Pata, and Ernesto Costa ... all from Ílhavo. Manuel Pata was the nicest. Even he was bad but he was the best there was. If you fell asleep on your watch he would just say. 'Go get some sleep! Others would beat you or write out a report on you. One day, José dos Chatos discovered that the ship's cook had made a cake because it was his wife's birthday and he threw it down and stepped on it yelling, 'Who said you could do this?' All of the men felt so bad for the cook. He was lonely and was missing his wife. The captains were bad, very bad. They treated us as if we were animals (*faziam de nos animais*). They treated us like dogs – as if we weren't human like them. They called us elephants, dogs, and so on. We were like the blacks in Africa had been in the 1920s.

In the time of fascism, the fishermen were not allowed to organize and strikes were against the law. The government established the *Casas dos Pescadores* and told the fishermen that this was their organization and that they were to be grateful to the *Grémio* and to Tenreiro [Commander Henrico Tenreiro]. Tenreiro was in charge of all this. Each fisherman received a card identifying him as a member of a *Casa dos Pescadores*. This card entitled him and his family to medical care and the *abono*. Our *Casa dos Pescadores* is in Vila do Conde. Although it's true that we were better looked after then than we are now, we were very subjugated (*muito subjugados*). The *Grémio* was for the owners, for the companies. Tenreiro was in charge of it; he was the commander. The *Grémio* united companies, the employers, but there was no union for the fishermen. They had the power (*a força*), we had the weakness (*a fraqueza*). The government established the price of fish and all of the companies paid that price to the fishermen. The fishermen had no control over the price of their fish. Some companies owned the *secas* (companies where the codfish was dried) as well as the boats. They bought the fish from the dorymen, dried it, and sold it again. The government controlled both the price that they paid for the fish and the price that they sold the fish for.

As I've said, in March when we went to the *Capitania* to register, we were given 3000 *escudos* up front to buy our supplies for the voyage and this was the only money we were guaranteed. We were paid according to the fish we caught. The captain's eyes were the weigh scales. Each day when the dories returned to the ship the captain would estimate the number of quintals each man caught. He did this by looking at the volume of fish that filled each section between the thwarts in the dory. Then he would record 60 per cent of this weight because that was considered to be the weight of the fish after it had been cleaned, split, and salted. Each fisherman also tried to keep a record of the fish that he caught. But a fisherman would have little recourse if the captain recorded a smaller catch than he recorded. All captains had their favourites and those they disliked, and they would record more or less fish accordingly. An unfavoured fisherman might suggest that the captain had made a 'mistake' (*'tu enganaste'*) but could never say that he had been robbed. But it was robbery.

On my first voyage in 1958 when I was a 'green' I earned 8000\$00 including the 3000\$00 advance and I had fished very well.⁷ We were paid 20\$00 per quintal up to 100 quintals, 40\$00 per quintal after 100 quintals and 80\$00 per quintal after 200 quintals. It was an incentive to fish more: we were paid more for fish after 100 quintals. In 1969, my last voyage, I earned 34000\$00 (6000\$00 advance, 20000\$00 at the end of the voyage and 8000\$00 at Christmastime after the fish had been dried and sold). We were paid 80\$00 per quintal up

to 100 quintals and 180\$00 per quintal after 200 quintals. I earned 34000\$00 and I was one of the top ten. Others earned half of that. For six months work the best would not earn 50000\$00. It was very little money for the hard work. It was robbery. But it was far more money than I could've earned in Vila da Praia.

There was rivalry among the fishermen: each wanted to be the best – like a bicycle race – but it was competition, not conflict. Conflict was between the fishermen and the captains. The fishermen were united against the captain. The living quarters of the fishermen were in the bow of the boat (*a proa*) and the officers lived in the stern (*a ré*) where they had servants to serve their meals and do their laundry. The officers had different, better, food than the fishermen. We lived like animals. We slept two men to a bunk. We'd put our clothes down on the bunk to make a mattress – dirty clothes at our feet. We brought enough clothes for six months and never did laundry so the dirty clothes increased during the voyage. We each brought a blanket from home. We'd put one beneath us on top of the clothes and one over top of both of us. Generally we slept with someone we knew. On our first voyage when we were 'greens' the captain would assign us a bunk partner but after that we could usually choose our partner. It was a kind of family – we were more than friends (*mais do que amigos*) – and it had to be that way: six months in voyage. We had to be very disciplined and respect one another in order to work and live side-by-side. Of course there were squabbles (*chatisses*) but my wife and I also have our squabbles – typical family relations. In the *proa* there were good relations among the men. During bad weather at sea we might cook meals of special foods that we had brought from home or when we were in port we might invite Vila da Praia men from other boats to come and eat with us on the *Vila do Conde*. The cook was good about that.

There was one time in 1966 when the cod fishermen tried to hold out for more money. Fishermen from the Algarve called fishermen in Aveiro who called others in Vila do Conde who told us to ask for more money when we went to the *Capitania* to matriculate. So in March when we went into Vila do Conde we all said that we wanted to be paid more for our fish than the contract offered. The *Capitania* called in the PIDE and we were forced to sign. They said 'sign or go to jail.' As I say, in those days under fascism we were very subjugated. I never voted until after 1974. And, on the ship, the captain had all the power, we had none.

I'm outside that life now and I don't want to know about it. I'm only talking about it because I want to help you with your work. But it was a slave's life. I don't want to remember it.

The Salazarean New State and the Newfoundland Fishery

"Father, what is the New State?"

"Son, the New State is a Government that helps us, that gives us work, that gives us bread."⁸

The Portuguese Newfoundland fishery in the twentieth century can only be understood in the larger context of the corporate structure of the Salazarean New State (the *Estado Novo*). The New State came into being after a military coup terminated the First Republic on May 28, 1926 and it held power until the Revolution of 25 April 1974. It was an authoritarian, nationalistic, Christian (Roman Catholic), anti-capitalist and anti-communist state, and was strongly influenced

by Italian and Spanish fascism and later by Nazi Germany. The rise of fascism in Portugal in the form of the New State was related to post-World War I fears of liberalism, democracy, populism, mass society, and industrialization and the form that it took was in large part due to its founder, Dr. Oliveira Salazar.⁹

Oliveira Salazar was a thirty-nine year old professor of economics, founder of the Catholic Party (the *Centro Académico de Democracia Cristã*), and had been elected to Parliament once before he became Minister of Finance in the military dictatorship in 1926. He was a well-known deputy of conservative, Catholic interests and had published numerous articles and books on economics and finance in which he had outlined the virtues of the balanced budget that became a trademark of his government. Already in 1929 he was speaking freely on non-financial matters and was a strong nationalist coining the now-famous slogan "Nothing against the Nation, all for the Nation." By 1932 the military dictatorship had ended peacefully and Salazar had formed a government with himself as Prime Minister, a position he held until he suffered a brain hemorrhage in 1968 and was replaced by Marcelo Caetano.

In regular speeches to the nation, Salazar outlined his view of society and of the role of the state. He saw the family as the fundamental cell of the state and the virtues of family were a constant theme. The state was "like a great family" with a father (himself) at its head (Leeds 1984:17). The state was an organism with each segment in its proper place obedient to both authority and to the traditions of the past. Salazar's belief in the value of tradition translated into romanticization of what he called the "stability" and "order" of rural life, and a denial of the poverty of the rural population. He believed, then, in a strong and paternalistic state based upon order and discipline. And, to this end, he abolished all unions and political parties, strongly enforced censorship, and created, among other groups, the PIDE (*Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado*), a secret police force trained by German and Italian experts.

Salazar rejected the inevitability of class struggle and regarded it as thoroughly opposed to the principles of the New State. He spoke, instead, of "class harmony" and envisioned the interests of both employers and employees as united morally and economically in "corporations" that worked for a common "national" interest. The corporatism of the New State became, then, not only a device for consolidating an authoritarian political system, but also an instrument of class rule. Each industry was organized into a *grémio* (guild) that brought together individual employers and companies. Rural unions – the *Casas do Povo* – were established and their members included both employers and workers. Associations of fishermen and their employers – the *Casas dos Pescadores* – were also created. As well, a number of pre-corporative bodies were established for each industry to coordinate the relationship between the state and the corporations. These were: regulating commissions (*comissões reguladoras*) to control imports; national boards of trade (*juntas nacionais*) to develop and control exports; and, "institutes" to supervise and officially guarantee the quality of exports.

The reorganization of the Newfoundland cod fishery during the 1930s exhibits

many of the features of the New State that dominated Portuguese society for almost half a century. The fishery was state-controlled and not market regulated; it was hierarchically organized in a corporate structure established by state decree; and, it was part of a larger national policy that aimed to constrain industrialization and keep the population rural and uneducated, and available as a docile and cheap labour force. The costs to the state in incentives and subsidies to develop and reproduce this rural and dependent labour supply may have been greater than the costs of subsidizing the modernization of the fleet would have been, and are indicative of a general state fear of politicization of the population through industrialization.

In the 1920s, the cod fishery was characterized by poor organization, low production, and heavy foreign competition. As noted earlier, domestic production in 1920 was only 5 per cent of cod consumption and domestic production never exceeded 12 per cent of consumption prior to 1930 (see Table 2). Huge volumes of cod were imported annually (31,268 tons in 1920 alone) primarily from England but also from Norway and Sweden. The restructuring of the cod fishery by the state was motivated by two concerns: the first was to reduce imports and the second was to create employment that would maintain a rural population.

In 1921 a commission established by the Republican government to study the cod fishery had recommended revitalization of the industry through state intervention in a variety of forms including: subsidies and loans to cod merchants and shipbuilders to modernize the fleet; incentives to fishermen to establish the labour supply; and abolition of taxes on domestic cod to make domestic cod prices competitive (Amzalak 1923). Fifteen years later the New State acted on these recommendations and established the *Comissão Reguladora do Comércio de Bacalhau*, the CRCB, in 1934 and the *Grémio dos Armadores de Navios da Pesca do Bacalhau*, the GANPB, the following year.

The CRCB was responsible for regulating cod imports and ensuring that wholesalers purchased domestic cod in proportions and at prices annually fixed by the Commission. The CRCB controlled the classification, quality, and sale of all cod, and established the price. Cod would be considered "domestic" if it had been fished by boats whose owners were registered in the GANPB and if it has been fished in conformity with CRCB regulations. No boat could leave for the fishery without prior authorization from the CRCB. All owners were required to declare to the CRCB within fifteen days of returning from a voyage the volume of green cod carried by each of their ships. A margin of loss (*quebra*) due to the transformation of green to dried cod was established by the CRCB.

The CRCB regulated the market, ensured that shipowners were paid a competitive price for their fish, and stabilized the sale price of dried cod to consumers. Between 1934 and 1965, the size of the fleet increased from 43 ships to 71 ships and the capacity of the fleet increased from 11,362 tons to 74,160 tons (see Table 3). Domestic production that had been only 8 per cent of cod consumption in 1930 had increased to 76 per cent of cod consumption by 1965 (see Table 2). By the 1950s, Portugal's cod production was second only to Canada's

Table 3. *The Cod Fleet, 1926 to 1979.*

Year	Total No. Boats*	Total Tonnage	Total Crew	No. Trawlers**	No. Dory-Fishing Boats Luggers	Motorships	Total***
1926	39	9,777	-	0	36	0	36
1934	43	11,362	1,944	0	43	0	43
1936	51	16,489	2,157	1	50	0	50
1940	48	19,454	2,228	4	42	2	44
1945	50	-	2,861	6	37	7	44
1950	63	47,857	4,018	18	34	11	45
1955	70	61,941	4,928	22	25	23	48
1960	72	71,029	5,490	23	-	-	49
1965	71	74,160	-	32	8	31	39
1970	63	75,330	5,200	39	-	-	24
1974	57	81,951	-	55	-	-	2
1979	30	-	-	30	0	0	0

Sources: Azevedo (1982), Castro (1969), GANPB (1940), Mouro (1985), Moutinho (1985), Silva (1957), Teiga (1982), Villiers (1951).

* Attrition of the fleet was also a factor. A number of boats were discontinued each year due to age, fire, and shipwrecks.

** Trawlers had an average tonnage of between 1200 to 1500 tons and the majority made two annual voyages departing in February and August.

*** In 1936 the average tonnage of a dory schooner (the traditional three- and four-masted luggers, (*lugres*) was 356 tons, each carried an average of 37 dories, and less than half had auxiliary motors; in 1950, the average tonnage was 455 tons, each vessel carried an average of 43 dories, and only 3 vessels were without auxiliary motors. After 1939, the dory fishing fleet also includes the state-sponsored motorships (*navios-motor*). The breakdown into luggers and motorships was not available for the years 1960, 1970 and 1974.

and first among the European countries fishing in the North Atlantic. Nonetheless, the fishery was still precarious and domestic production still was not able to meet national needs. During this time, five national conventions were held to discuss the problems of the cod fishery. Debate centred on technology, and on the problem of maintaining the supply of cod.

In 1938 the president of the CRCB, Higinio Queiros, reported that the cod fishery suffered from poor administration, lack of technical competence, poor return from cod, and poor processing of cod that resulted in poor quality. The greatest problem in his view, however, was the age of the boats and their small capacity. In 1938, 70 per cent of the fleet (33 of 47 boats) was over ten years of age. He attributed the poor state of the fleet to the persistence in line-fishing and blamed the shipowners for not developing trawler-fishing. In 1938 only four shipowners had built new boats and of those four boats only one was a trawler; the other three were traditional luggers (*lugres*) with less than 800 tons capacity. Queiroz estimated that in order to increase domestic production to even 60 per cent of national cod consumption, the capacity of the fleet would have to double.

And, by the end of the 1930s, the primary objective of government policy had become to renovate the fleet (Centeno 1940; Lanhoso 1949). Curiously, although Queiroz prioritized doubling the capacity of the fleet and increasing production, and although he acknowledged the superior production and capacity of trawlers, he was reluctant to advocate abandonment of traditional line-fishing from dories (Mouro 1985; Teiga 1982). In his 1939 annual report he wrote:

The truth is that not only are other methods [i.e., linefishing] equally productive but it is necessary to consider that while trawler-fishing is productive in fish of average size it is not possible to catch larger fish that are also demanded by the market. All indications are that we ought to adopt a mixed situation allowing the development of trawler fishing without affecting existing methods. This is not to prejudice the fundamental idea that our fleet and our methods require renovation...

This ambivalence plagued the entire project to renovate the fleet with the result that by 1961, although 66 new boats had been built, two-thirds (44) of these were designed for doryfishing and only 22 were trawlers.

Files of the CRCB between 1939 and 1943 show that there was tremendous indecision within the Commission about how to proceed with the renewal of the cod fleet. There was discussion of the difficulty of obtaining materials, especially steel and petrol, during wartime but most discussion centred on what kind of ship design to authorize. The CRCB wanted to centralize the designing of ships, the use of technical expertise, and the purchase of materials. It considered it most economical (and therefore desirable) to construct a number of boats of the same design but there was no agreement on what that design should be. In any event, the Commission was hesitant to endorse the building of trawlers. The Commission finally adopted the *Renovação* design, a boat that could be built of local wood (and therefore of smaller dimensions than boats built of imported steel) and later converted to trawlers. By 1943 the CRCB had abandoned the idea of building any trawlers at all due to the cost and difficulty of obtaining materials. The President of the CRCB recommended that the design of the *Renovação* be kept but that it be recognized that these boats would never be converted to trawlers. He authorized four shipbuilding yards to proceed with construction of eleven boats of the *Renovação* design. A year later, however, he was authorizing the building of trawlers again. The vacillation of the CRCB continued until the late 1960s. In 1955 the Commission had refused to authorize the building of any trawlers but by 1960 it had reversed this decision and had authorized the conversion of 15 dory fishing boats to trawlers. In 1967, the protectionist control of the CRCB was terminated and the cod market was deregulated. The sale of cod would no longer be subjected to fixed prices; wholesalers were authorized to import cod; and, the quota system that had regulated the distribution of domestic cod was abolished.

Despite the increased capacity and production of the fleet and the relatively successful, if temporary, reduction of imports, the industry remained in constant crisis. The state was unable to develop an effective plan for reorganizing and

modernizing the fleet and was reluctant to abandon dory fishing. Dory fishing was economical when labour was abundant and offered a means of employment that would guarantee the reproduction of rural communities and of a rural labour force.

The Merchant-Owners of the Fleet

The preamble to the 1935 legislation that established the GANPB (the *grémio* of the owners of the cod fleet), noted:

Recognition of the value that cod consumption represents to the national economy and of the necessity to protect domestic cod from the excessive and not always fair competition of foreign cod, taking care of the interests of consumers as well, led the Government to establish on 5 June 1934, the CRCB. After one year in operation, it has already attained its objectives: the market has been disciplined and domestic shipowners are assured a remunerative price for their fish and a stable price that enables them to proceed with the processing [i.e. drying] of their cod.

This preamble was intended both to encourage the shipowners to invest in the cod fleet and to suggest the advantages to them of state regulation of the industry that included the organization of the shipowners themselves into a *grémio*.¹⁰

The GANPB was to:

- 1 develop, control and direct the fishing, drying and sale of domestic cod and the utilization and sale of the byproducts;
- 2 assist its members (the shipowners) to develop the fishery and related industries;
- 3 develop insurance policies for boats, gear and cargo;
- 4 establish the terms of work (contracts) for each voyage subject to superior approval; cooperate in the establishment of institutions designed to protect those who work in the industry in case of illness, infirmness, or involuntary unemployment, and also to guarantee retirement pensions;
- 5 guarantee protection against accidents and risks of the profession

The income of the *Grémio* was generated by a tax to the shipowners on green domestic cod – a tax they continually protested was too high. As well, the shipowners complained that the price of domestic cod did not match the costs of production, and that there were too many services and insurance schemes for the fishermen and none for the owners (which was untrue). But their greatest complaints were about the government's plans for renovation of the fleet. Shipowners argued that wooden ships of the *Renovação* design would not significantly increase the capacity of the fleet and most considered that trawlers were too costly to build because they required expensive imported winches, cables, electrical installations, nets and engines. Only the owners of the *Empresa de Pesca de Aveiro* (who in 1938 had commissioned the building of the first Portuguese trawler in Denmark) continued to build trawlers and went on to develop

the stern trawlers that would eventually become widely used in the Portuguese cod fleet (Teiga 1982). Most of the merchant-owners, however, shared the view of one who wrote to the President of the CRCB in October 1943:

... this company does not wish to build a single ship according to the general plan ... the cost of construction has exceeded by thousands of *contos* the estimates of eighteen months ago when this plan to increase the fleet was initiated; we would prefer to build boats of steel that, although more expensive, have greater intrinsic value and larger cargo capacity.

Shipowners such as this one were prepared to increase their capital investment in order to increase cargo capacity but not to make the capital investment needed to transform the technology of fishing itself; they preferred to modernize the ships used in dory fishing. To increase production and continue dory fishing, they only needed to increase the capacity of their ships, the number of men and dories, and the length of time at sea (after fishing in Newfoundland, they went on to fish in Greenland before returning to Portugal). Whereas trawlers carried an average of 70 men, made two trips annually, and had an average tonnage of 1273, the motorships required more men, had smaller capacities and made only one voyage annually. Steel motorships carried an average of 95 men and had an average tonnage of 1114; wooden motorships carried an average of 72 men but had an average tonnage of only 706. The traditional luggers carried an average of 60 men and had an average tonnage of 523 (calculations based on Silva 1957: Appendix). The abundant supply of cheap labour in rural Portugal thus became a form of capital for the shipowners. They perceived no need to invest in the technology of trawler-fishing when they could increase production and realize large profits by intensifying the exploitation of the labour supply they had available to them – a labour supply that was, as we shall see, maintained by the state through incentives and subsidies.

Regardless of the type of vessel built, the shipowners absorbed little of the cost of renovating the cod fleet. They claimed to be in financial difficulty and unable to repay government loans, but they were also highly subsidized. Through a state-run cooperative they obtained all supplies for the fishery, including bait, at reduced prices and on credit. The state also absorbed the costs of shipbuilding through subsidies to the shipowners and through long-term, low-interest loans that were rarely repaid. In fact, institutional records of the GANPB indicate that profits to the companies were respectable in even the poorest years and very significant when the ships returned with full cargoes. Again, profits were secured by exacting increased effort from the fishermen. In order for the ships to return full, the captain merely had to prolong the voyage for a few weeks or even months, the only expenses to the owners being food for the fishermen (notoriously poor and small in portions) and petrol. This means of increasing production represented a reduction in the hourly wage of the fishermen who were then required to work up to several hundreds hours more.

Thus, until the late 1960s, the profits gained by the owners of the cod fleet were achieved through intensified exploitation of labour and not through

modernization of fishing technology. The shipowners were reluctant to invest in trawlers when, by extracting unpaid effort from the fishermen, they could secure healthy profits for low investment. There is little doubt, however, that if the shipowners had not had at their disposal a population with a standard of living so low that they would accept starvation wages and inhuman working conditions, they would have invested in technology in order to increase production. The relationship between the supply of cheap labour and the reluctance to make capital investments in technology became clear in the late 1960s when fishermen began to emigrate in large numbers to northern Europe where they would be paid higher wages (wages are discussed in the following section; see also Castro 1969:38). The labour supply then became a problem for the cod fishery and shipowners rapidly increased the number of trawlers in their fleets.

Contracts and Paternalism

The *Grémio* represented the interests of merchant-shipowners, the CRCB represented the state, but no organization protected the interests of fishermen. According to state officials, the interests of the fishermen were protected by the *Grémio* and embodied in the *Casas dos Pescadores*, centres located in coastal villages where fishermen and their families could go for social and medical assistance. The state created numerous other incentives that, on the one hand, appeared to address the needs of poor, rural fishermen and their families, and on the other hand, served to develop and maintain the labour supply. These incentives (to be further discussed below) included an adjustable piece-rate so that men who landed more fish (regardless of the time spent fishing) were paid at a higher rate for their cod, and cash advances that were adjusted according to skill and experience. Incentives also included social services that were offered to the fishermen and their families and that were not generally available in Portugal until after 1974. These social services included: free medical care, a family allowance (the *abono*), pensions upon retirement, subsidized new housing (in theory but rarely in practice), and education for the sons of fishermen who wanted to become fishermen. Men who made six consecutive cod voyages were also exempted from compulsory military service.

State paternalism was accompanied by continual reminders of the fishermen's subservience to, and dependence upon, the state - reminders that appear to have been intended to induce the fishermen to accept the poor wages and working conditions. Slogans conceived and published in various contexts and media controlled by the state reminded the fishermen of the primary principles of the New State - God, Country and Family - and of the virtues of hard work, austerity and discipline. Details of contracts - of wages and hours of work - were not to concern the fishermen because the state was protecting their interests and because work was noble in itself and honour was one's reward.

The following examples are quotations from speeches made by Salazar and Commander Tenreiro and later published in the *Jornal do Pescador*, a state-authorized magazine that was circulated free to the fishermen through the *Casas dos Pescadores*:

Fisherman, think well! God, Country, Family and the Sea ought to be for you, Fisherman, the four cardinal points that guide your life.

Fisherman! Don't view work as punishment because it is the noblest and most honourable occupation of man.

Fisherman! In the struggle to contribute to your country, there are no lowly professions; all are equally honourable when the Love of work exists.

The greatest virtue of the worker and the soldier is discipline.

Be disciplined in everything: towards your superiors and your colleagues; in your commitments, in the family and in society. Discipline is the road that leads to triumph.

Your home, your children, your wife and your Country - you can only serve them in one way: working.

Fisherman! All of the assistance and aid provided by the *Casas do Pescadores* is possible due to the corporate action of the New State instituted by our leader - SALAZAR.

The *Grémio* is your protector; if you have a complaint or grievance, take it to the *Grémio* through the intermediary of your *Casa dos Pescadores* and rest assured that you will receive justice.

Respect the hierarchies, that is to say the levels; you should make your claims/complaints to the *Grémio* only after you have presented them to your Captain. After this you should complain to the Shipowner and only afterwards should you resort to/appeal to the *Grémio* and even so this should be through the intermediary of your *Casa dos Pescadores*.

Your best friend is your employer; he thinks more about your well-being than you can imagine.

Prior to the reorganization of the cod fishery by the New State, individual captains had recruited men for particular boats, and contracts and methods of payment were also individual arrangements. After the restructuring, recruitment for the whole fishery was undertaken by the *Grémio*, and the method of payment was established by an annual contract drawn up by the GANPB. Once a man signed up for the cod fishery he was required by law to make six consecutive voyages regardless of the terms of employment. And, if he did not register each March, the local marine authorities would call the state police to go to the man's home and bring him in to sign up. If a man complained about the contract and refused to sign, the police were also called. In Lisbon, the GANPB maintained a central file in which all fishermen were registered (by 1974, 23,400) and where notes were kept on each man that included not only the boat embarked on and the volume of fish each man caught on each voyage, but also notes on a man's comportment and "discipline."

The contract of 1955 was typical. The fleet was divided into three categories of ships. "A" ships were those with a capacity greater than 8,000 quintals; "B" ships were those with a capacity between 6,000 and 8,000 quintals; and "C" ships were those with a capacity of less than 6,000 quintals. Fishermen were divided into five gradations: "Specials," 1st Line, 2nd Line, 3rd Line, and "Greens" according to the amount of fish they had caught on their last voyage. For example, in "B" ships, "Specials" were those who caught more than 190 quintals; the 1st Line caught between 160 and 190 quintals; the 2nd Line caught between 120 and 160 quintals; the 3rd Line were those who caught between 80 and 120 quintals; and the "Greens" (*Verdes*) caught less than 80 quintals of cod. "Greens" were fishermen making their first voyage and were required to be over 18 and under 25 years of age. In "A" ships, "Specials" were those who caught more than 240 quintals and "Greens" were those who caught less than 100 quintals; in "C" ships, "Specials" were those who caught more than 153 quintals and "greens" were those who caught less than 60 quintals. Thus, to be a "Special" on an "A" ship, a fisherman had to catch almost 100 quintals more fish than did "Specials" on "C" ships, the ships with the smallest capacity. The GANPB moved men up to "A" ships based on their individual landings and the GANPB ensured that each dory-fishing ship had approximately 20 per cent "Specials," 30 per cent 1st Line, 30 per cent 2nd Line, 10 per cent 3rd Line and 10 per cent "Greens" (GANPB 1955).

A fisherman's pay was made up of lump sums paid in advance and payment on his catch in quintals estimated by the captain each day at the time the fish was taken aboard the ship from the dory. Because the fish were not weighed and because the fishermen did not trust the captains, they considered this to be another method of exploitation. Every doryman was also a splitter or salter, or a general labourer during the nightly fish-cleaning. Splitters and salters were graded in classes according to their experience and speed of working and received an adjustable lump sum advance. For example, a doryman in 1955 would receive an advance of 5,000\$00 plus an additional lump sum of 500\$00 if he were a first class salter (450\$00 if he were a second class salter, 350\$00 if he were a third class salter, or 400\$00 if he were a first class splitter, 350\$00 if he were a second class splitter, or 250\$00 if he were a third class splitter; general labourers received 50\$00 to 150\$00). His earnings above this were proportional to the volume of fish he landed and the piece rate was adjustable: fisherman who landed more fish were paid more per quintal. The adjustable piece rate in 1955 was:

- For each quintal of green cod up to 100 20\$00
- For each quintal of green cod from 101 to 150 25\$50
- For each quintal of green cod from 151 to 200 32\$50
- For each quintal of green cod over 200 35\$00

The men received their pay in three installments: in March upon signing, in October based upon the captain's estimate upon disembarking, and in December after the fish had been dried and sold. The method of payment never worked to the advantage of the fishermen. For example, one fisherman caught 250 quin-

tals of cod in 1967 and earned 32,490\$00 for six months' work. In 1970, if he had caught the same amount he would have earned 43,750\$00 but due to the scarcity of fish that year he caught only 150 quintals and earned only 26,500\$00 or 18 per cent less than he had earned three years before.

Fishermen were paid for the fish they caught, not the time they worked. The contract was always vague about the hours of work and this was another source of grievance. The standard clause on hours of work in the contract was as follows:

Hours of duty aboard will be organized so that, during the fishing, each crew member will have, at least, four consecutive hours of rest in addition to the hours of rest that their duties permit and one-half hour for each meal, *except in those duly justified cases where the special circumstances of the fishing do not permit* (GANPB 1955) [emphasis mine].

Hours worked aboard ship were, therefore, dependent entirely on the goodwill of the captain. A major complaint of the fishermen was that they often went weeks without four hours of sleep in twenty-four, that they lived and worked in a constant state of fatigue that was aggravated by the poor food and crowded quarters (where they slept two men to a bunk). The quality of life aboard depended on the captain and, like Joaquim and Manuel, few fishermen can remember a good captain. Instead the harshness of the captains was renowned. Nicknames for captains abound, nicknames such as: "Light Breeze" (*O Araginha*) because even in strong winds he would make the fishermen launch their dories saying it was only a "light breeze"; or "Beater" (*O Pancadaria*) because he used to beat the fishermen on his ship.

A strict hierarchy existed between the captains and ship's officers and the dorymen - a hierarchy that was evident in the social structure of life aboard ship and that was maintained by the differential pay structure. As Joaquim and Manuel described for us, the captains lived in the stern (*a ré*) of the ship where they had comfortable quarters, good food, and servants to care for their laundry, bathing, and other personal needs. The fishermen lived in the bow (*a proa*) in crowded quarters with no servants and no fresh water for bathing and where they were fed different and inferior food than the officers. Where fishermen were paid by the piece, ship's officers were paid a lump sum and an adjustable share of the ship's total cargo in green cod and cod-liver oil. Captains received a monthly salary payable throughout the year in addition to a share of the catch of the cod, and a share of the take of cod-liver oil, tongues, cheeks, and other cod parts (a share that dorymen like Manuel strongly resented). Many captains invested their shares in boats to eventually become owners, and many owners were former masters.

The Dorymen: Family, Household, and Gender Constructs

The commander of the first support ship the *Carvalho Araujo* that accompanied the Portuguese fleet to Newfoundland in 1923 reported first-hand on the condi-

tions of the lives of the dorymen on the Grand Banks, conditions that, as Joaquim and Manuel described, were still unchanged in the 1960s. He called the conditions deplorable and wretched (*desgraçados*), the work arduous and dangerous, and the life horrible (*horroroso*). He considered that men would subject themselves to such living and working conditions only out of "necessity, adventurousness or unconsciousness" (*por necessidade, aventura ou inconsciência*). He was also one of the earliest critics of the Portuguese persistence in linefishing and argued that dory fishing only produced good results when fish were abundant; otherwise the labour required of the men was far in excess of the results achieved.¹¹

Who were the dorymen? Why did they go to the Newfoundland fishery? Why did they accept the poor wages and working conditions? And, how did they view their experience?

Like Joaquim and Manuel, the majority of the dorymen were inshore fishermen from small coastal villages in northern Portugal, the Azores, and the Algarve. To answer these questions, then, we need to know more about village life and family and household organization in Portugal under the New State. I use Vila da Praia, the village in which I conducted fifteen months' fieldwork during 1984-85, as representative of the kind of community that produced the labour necessary for the Portuguese Newfoundland cod fishery.

Vila da Praia is located on the north coast of Portugal about twenty-three kilometres north of Porto, Portugal's second largest city. In 1930 its population was 926; by 1960, its population had grown to 1,933, and by 1985, its population was almost 3,000. From the turn of the century until the 1960s, one-third of the village population was engaged in the local inshore fishery, and the remainder were employed in agriculture. But during the 1960s wage employment opportunities became available and began to attract young men and women, and by 1985 only 8.7 per cent of parish households engaged in fishing and only 7.2 per cent engaged in agriculture; the majority of households were now dependent upon wages earned in nearby factories or in construction work. In 1985, only 29 women and 53 men were employed full-time in local fishery, the men fishing and the women unloading the boats and selling the fish. No household relied solely upon income from fishing. All except two of the households that engaged in fishing also had teenage sons and daughters employed in wage work and depended upon their additional cash earnings. Only two households had dependent children and, in 1985, the men from these households decided to make trips with the Portuguese cod fleet because they needed the cash. An additional eight men were making annual voyages with the cod fleet and fished locally with relatives when they were home. Although only eight men in 1985 described themselves as *Bacalhoeiros* (cod fishermen), all except one of the 53 inshore fishermen in Vila da Praia had at one time or other fished with the Portuguese Newfoundland cod fleet: some had made the minimum six voyages, many had made between ten and twenty voyages, and, one man was making his thirty-ninth voyage to Newfoundland when I was in Vila da Praia in 1988. The demography and history of the fishing households of Vila da Praia may, then, be summarized as follows:

until the 1960s, one-third of the households in the community depended upon fishing and all except one of these households had sent men to the Newfoundland fishery at one time or other. By the 1960s, wage employment opportunities were attracting young people and the number of men employed in both the inshore and the cod fisheries was decreasing. By the time I was conducting fieldwork in the 1980s, the parish population had increased dramatically and young people appeared to be abandoning fishing; the majority of the men and women engaged in the local fishery were over forty years old and their teenaged children were contributing wages to the household economy. Nonetheless, a few households continued to send men to the Newfoundland fishery.

How could villages like Vila da Praia support and accommodate the long absences of men that the Newfoundland fishery required? At least three characteristics of rural fishing households like those in Vila da Praia enable them to withstand prolonged periods of male absence. The first is that fishing households are "woman-centred."¹² The second is that local people interpret the Newfoundland cod fishery within the context of a long history of male emigration from rural Portugal. And the third is that the dorymen and their families viewed their commitment to the cod fishery as part of a larger household strategy to reproduce the local fishery.

Fishing households in Vila da Praia are woman-centred. Although marriage is considered a partnership and husband and wife say that they confer with one another in decision-making, the household is managed by the woman. An almost-endogamous system of marriage and uxorilocal residence at marriage is practised among the fishing households. Marriages between maritime and agricultural households are rare: sons and daughters of fishermen marry sons and daughters of other fishermen (and of other land-poor households), and sons and daughters of the agricultural households of Vila da Praia marry children of other agricultural (and land-owning) households.¹³ A young couple lives with the woman's parents until they can establish themselves in a house of their own. If the woman is the youngest daughter or the last to marry, the couple will remain in her parents' home for she will inherit the house and the fishing boat and gear and she will be responsible for caring for her parents in their old age. If a woman will not inherit her parents' house, she and her husband will build a house of their own, usually close to the houses of the woman's parents and sisters. As a result of these patterns of marriage and residence, bonds among consanguineally related women are strong, and women are able to offer one another mutual support during the absences of their husbands. Manuel described well how this mutual support system worked for his own wife. Women also have an economic autonomy that enables them to meet their own daily needs and those of their children. In addition to managing the economic resources of the household, they generate additional income through their monopoly of the harvest of seaweed and the production and sale of seaweed fertilizer. Women also own property such as houses, boats, and garden plots that they have acquired either through inheritance or purchased with their own savings.

In this cultural context, men marry into their wives' families. Although men

are close to their wives and children, they often are, and feel themselves to be, peripheral to the running of the family and household. Men are expected to earn money to contribute to the household but they have almost no other roles or responsibilities in the household. The cultural ideal is that a wife is "a hard worker and a good manager of the household" ("*muito trabalhadeira e uma boa governadora da casa*") and a husband is "a hard worker who gives the money to his wife to manage for the household" ("*muito trabalhador e entrega a dinheiro à mulher*"). Men work and when work is done, they go to centres of male social activity, centres which are outside the home and usually in the tavern. Here they play cards and dominoes, drink wine and beer, talk about fishing and weather, and stay out of the way of their wives. Men who go to the Grand Banks fishery thus fulfil local cultural ideals and gender constructs: they work hard and hand over their money to their wives to manage for the household.

The long history of male emigration from rural Portugal has also been important to the development of the cultural values and women-centred institutions that enabled the absence of men at the Newfoundland fishery for prolonged periods. Emigration has been endemic in Vila da Praia and throughout Portugal since the late nineteenth century and has been described as "emigration to return" – that is, men emigrated in order to accumulate cash and with the intention of returning home to their villages (Brettell 1986). In Vila da Praia during the first half of this century it was common for husbands and fathers to emigrate to Brazil frequently (perhaps seven or eight times) during the early years of their marriages each time for a period of a few years. After 1960, northern Europe became the primary destination, and because of its proximity, larger numbers of men were willing to take the gamble of emigration. A different pattern of emigration also emerged after 1960 but one that still involved men leaving their wives and families: men emigrated to wage work (often in construction) and would come home twice a year, once for a vacation and once for Christmas. They lived on their own in France or Germany and their wives and children remained in Vila da Praia. They invested their wages in their homes, properties, and families in Vila da Praia, and they planned to return home to retire.

Emigrants from rural villages like Vila da Praia thus accept low wages, long hours, and poor living and working conditions in foreign countries because they view this work and life as temporary. They accept the work and status of emigrant because in their view (as in the view of generations of Portuguese emigrants) they are working in order to return one day to their homeland with a higher status and a more secure income than they would have achieved had they not emigrated. The social construction of masculinity, then, in rural Portugal incorporates this long history of male emigration and, along with it, the notion that one will have to leave one's homeland and family and endure hardship in order to advance one's socio-economic status and in order to offer a better future for one's children. The decision to go to the Newfoundland cod fishery should be understood within this tradition and as part of this male gender construction.

But the men also joined the cod fishery to achieve specific goals that they de-

finied within the context of the local household economy: they wanted to avoid the military draft and they wanted to earn cash to build a house or to buy a small fishing boat. The majority of men, like Joaquim and Manuel, signed on their first voyage just before or soon after marriage and continued fishing during the years their children were small. Once they owned a house and a boat and they and their wives agreed that the household could subsist on earnings from local fishing and household production, the men rarely hesitated to quit the Newfoundland fishery. Their investment in the cod fishery was, therefore, short-term. Their short-term commitment to the industry produced an ambivalence in their interpretation of their experience as dorymen: on the one hand, they were acutely aware of their exploitation (they described themselves as "like the slaves in Africa") and they abhorred the hierarchical corporate structure that privileged captains and employers and that left the fishermen with no recourse. On the other hand, they were not interested in modernizing technology in order to increase production. Increased production would, from their point of view, only have meant fewer jobs and even lower prices for their fish. Individual earnings would not have increased. The men's philosophy was to endure the hardship – as generations of Portuguese men had done before them – and to return home.

The dorymen, then, did not see themselves as workers whose lives were intimately tied to the fortunes of one industry. Instead, they saw themselves as workers in a household economy and each voyage as part of a household strategy, necessary in order to realize immediate objectives. The dorymen came from land-poor fishing households in small, coastal villages like Vila da Praia. In these villages the fishing households were intimately linked to the local agricultural households: historically, fishermen were the non-heirs of peasant agricultural households and had taken up fishing out of necessity. Fishing households retained many of the characteristics of peasant households – especially a strategic approach to household subsistence – thus, in the Portuguese context, dorymen may be understood as peasants who work for cash to contribute to a household economy. Fishermen represented the lowest social strata of these primarily agricultural communities and their dependence upon an unprivatized common property resource allowed them little possibility of increasing their cash earnings. The wages earned in the Newfoundland fishery – although in no way remunerative of their labour – still represented larger cash earnings than they could earn locally.

Conclusion

The Portuguese cod fleet persisted in line-fishing from dories because none of the three parties involved perceived a benefit from the new technology of trawler-fishing. The state was interested in providing jobs that would keep the Portuguese population rurally-based and unpoliticized. Industrialization of the cod fishery was inconsistent with this objective and the state offered numerous incentives to the cod fishermen in order to maintain the labour supply. The merchant-shipowners were not interested in modernizing technology because they could

intensify the exploitation of available labour and secure healthy profits without increased capital investment. And the fishermen, although they recognized they were poorly remunerated for their effort, were not interested in new technology and increased production for several reasons. They had no long-term commitment to the industry for they saw themselves not as industrial workers but as contributors to a household economy. They joined the cod fleet as part of a household strategy and usually with specific short-term goals in mind: to avoid military service, or to earn cash to buy property – perhaps a small fishing boat or a piece of land on which to build a house. Once they had achieved these goals the majority quit the fleet and resumed fishing at home. Furthermore, the increased production through new technology not only would have decreased the number of jobs available but because the price of cod (the piece rate) would have been lowered, the earnings of individual fishermen would not have increased. In the late 1960s, however, when northern European countries welcomed Portuguese workers and offered higher wages than either employment in Portugal or the Newfoundland cod fishery offered, fishermen emigrated, labour was in short supply, and soon thereafter the cod fleet converted to trawler-fishing.

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Notes

1. By 1472, two Portuguese explorers, João Vaz Corte Real and Alvaro Martins Homem, had reached Greenland or Newfoundland which they called Terra dos Bacalhaus. Others followed during the 1480s and 1490s: By 1495 Pero de Barcelos and João Fernandes Lavrador, whose last name would later be applied to the Canadian coast, had discovered or rediscovered Greenland. In 1500 Gaspar Corte Real thoroughly explored Newfoundland. On a second trip a year later he disappeared and his brother, who tried to find him in 1502, also disappeared (Oliveira Marques 1972:221-27).

2. Anthony Parkhurst's letter to Richard Hakluyt, written in 1578, describes the European cod fleets: "But of Portugals there are not lightly above 50 saile, and they make all wet in like sorte, whose tonnage may amount to three thousand tuns, and not upwarde. Of the French nation and Bretons are about one hundred and fiftie sailes, the most of their shipping is very small, not past fortie tunnes, among which some are great and reasonably well appointed, better than the Portugals but not so well as the Spaniards, and the burden of them may be some 7,000 tunne. Their shipping is from all parts of France and Brittain, and the Spaniards from most parts of Spaine, the Portugals from Aviaro and Viano, from 2 or 3 parts more. The trade that our nation hath to Island maketh, that the English are not there in such numbers as other nations" (quoted in Anderson and Higgs 1976:11).

3. A Newfoundland planter, however, reported that Portuguese ships were fishing there as late as 1676 (Anderson and Higgs 1976:11). Systematic archival research on this early period still needs to be done.

4. The perspective of the merchant-owners is the least developed here perhaps because I had assumed a coincidence of interests between the merchants and the state under Salazar's New State. Although this assumption may not be valid (but I do not think it is entirely invalid), I believe we can know quite a lot about the strategies of merchant-owners from the existing documents. Interviews with merchants should be conducted at a future stage of research.

5. All names are pseudonyms. The ethnographic present is 1988.

6. The fishing households were not always landless but they were land-poor. Most fishermen and women were squatters on the state-owned beach lands where they had built their houses and had reclaimed the dunes for small gardens. Some rented (from a *lavrador*) a small plot for a house and garden; others had inherited a plot. Fishing households emerged in Vila da Praia during the nineteenth century due to local inheritance practices that endeavoured to keep intact the *casa* (the agricultural household including all land, buildings, animals and other property). The *pescadores* (fishermen and women) historically were the sons and daughters of *lavradores*, those sons and daughters who had not inherited the *casa*.

7. In 1950, 8000 escudos (8000\$00) was US \$296.00 (27 *escudos*/US dollar). The average wage worker in Portugal earned about US \$400.00 per year. It must be remembered, however, that at this time by far the majority of the population was not wage-employed but was engaged in peasant household (i.e. subsistence) economy. In 1969, 3400\$00 was approximately US \$1000.00. The average wage earner earned about \$750.00 per year. The GDP per capita at current-year prices was: in 1950, 5000\$00 (US \$165.00); in 1960, 8200\$00 (US \$292.00; and, in 1970, 17,000\$00 (US \$612.00).

8. This quotation was taken from the cover of a 1943 issue of the *Jornal do Pescador*, and was accompanied by a photograph of a fisherman talking to his small son. All translations from Portuguese are mine.

9. There have been a number of publications on the history and legacy of the New State in recent years and the subject is a controversial one. For this section I have relied on the traditional sources of Delzell (1970) and Oliveira Marques (1972), as well as on Leeds (1984).

10. Despite the efforts of the CRCB and the GANPB to unite shipowners, in 1938 there were twenty-eight shipowners in the country of which seventeen had only one boat, six had 2 boats, four had 3 boats and only one had 6 boats. In 1955, there were still twenty-seven shipowners; eight had only 1 ship, ten had 2 ships, three had 3 ships, three had 4 ships, one had 5 ships, one had 6 ships, and one had 10 ships. The largest shipowning company was the *Sociedade Nacional dos Armadores de Bacalhau*, and the second and third largest were the *Empresa de Pesca de Viana* and the *Empresa de Pesca de Aveiro* (Silva 1957). The greatest number of these companies were located in Aveiro.

11. The deplorable conditions of the Portuguese fleet on the Grand Banks and the labour intensiveness of line fishing from dories was well-known (Lanhoso 1949; Mouro 1985; Teiga 1982). Observers writing during the time of the New State, however, tended to romanticize the life of the dorymen and to deny the poor wages and working conditions. They described the Newfoundland fishery as part of a long maritime tradition dating back to the fifteenth century and the Portuguese Golden Age of Discovery. They also attributed the persistence in dory fishing to what they variously called the "individualism," "conservatism," and even "resistance" to new technology, of the dorymen themselves (Centeno 1940; Simões 1942; Villiers 1951).

12. The structure and economy of the fishing households of Vila da Praia is elaborated in an article, "Women-Centred Households in a Portuguese Maritime Community" (Cole n.d.).

13. During the period 1911 to 1959, of 174 marriages of fishermen, only 10.3 per cent (18 marriages) were to daughters of agriculturalists; and of 51 agriculturalists who married only 3.9 per cent (2) married daughters of fishermen.

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