Êđăp Ênang: Some thoughts on the forced relocation of Vietnamese highlanders during the American War in Vietnam

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7th Triennial Vietnam Symposium—The Vietnam Center
Dr. Gerald Hickey Memorial Session
Understanding the Ethnic Minorities of Vietnam
10 March 2011
Ethnic Groups of South Viet Nam

The Jarai language belongs to the Chamic group of languages. All of these languages are members of the Austronesian language family, which ranges from Malagasy (Madagascar) to Polynesia. So Jarai is distantly related to Hawaiian.

For example, the number five (5):

Jarai = rơma; Hawaiian = ‘elima
Long houses on stilts
Ancestor pole in front of long houses
Dry rice swidden (slash-and-burn) field after burn off
Harvested rice being husked with mortar and pestle
Father and daughters by vegetable garden
Woman weaving on a loom
South Vietnamese propaganda sign in Vietnamese and Jarai languages
“Whenever possible avoid projects or operations which give the tribesmen the impression they are being forced to change their ways.”

“The Jarai prefer to live in longhouses with their entire extended family. Whenever possible, housing projects should take this preference into consideration. The style of the house should not be changed; it is an integral part of Jarai environment.” (p. 300)
TRADITIONS
CUSTOMS
AND
TABOOS
OF THE FIGHTING FOURTH'S
MONTAGNARD NEIGHBORS
...WITH PICTURE TIPS
YOUR HOSTS CAN UNDERSTAND UNSPOKEN GESTURES OF CONTEMPT OR DISGUST
Bao Duc: 6536-1
Map

During the 4th Infantry Division’s Operation Francis Marion (April to October 1967), 51 hamlets in and near the Ia Drang valley were relocated to the Edap Enang Resettlement Center (in the area of Plei Yt).
Êďăp Ėnang means “peaceful, quiet”

- In **Rhade** (Ēđē), a closely related group to the south
- NOT Jarai, the language of the people involved!
- In Jarai, it should be **Ronăp Ronang** or **Ronuk Ronang** (depending on the dialect).
Edap Enang kids
"By their very nature the Montagnards are ill-suited to Edap Enang. The town is too large, a conglomerate of the 47 hamlets they were forced to desert. And they don’t like the soil here—a sign deeply rooted in their primitive tradition that it is time to move on."

“...the Jarais did not want to go. Traditionally tied to the lands where their ancestors were buried, and distrustful of change, they chose the vagaries of war to the promised safety of Edap Enang. In the spring of 1967, a decision was made to move them anyway.”

“In hindsight, the result seems predictable. The Jarai began to move out faster than they were moved in. Initial preparations were insufficient to support the number of people brought in. Rice harvests were lost, potable water was in short supply and housing was inadequate.”

Maniloff and Russell 1969:11.
1Lt. Edward Ruminski’s report on conditions at Edap Enang

“Analysis of Edap Enang Resettlement Center to include its present situation, its needs, general conclusions and considerations and proposed courses of action.”

This report covers four main areas:

1. Administrative/Military

2. Agriculture, Land Distribution, and Education

3. Refugees and Public Health

4. Public Safety
Ruminsky’s priority 1: Administrative/Military

- On 17 Feb 1968, II Corps Commander Gen. Vinh Loc transferred Edap Enang (EE) administration to a Pleiku province responsibility, under Thanh An district.

- District chief’s permission is necessary to distribute rice every 15 days.

- There is no province level official administrator to coordinate the various agencies involved with EE.

- There is no EE Jarai natural leader being positioned and supported by the advisory and GVN channels in order to control and develop the situation.
Ruminsky’s priority 2: Agriculture, land distribution, and education

Situation as of 18 May 1968 (for 860 families living in Edap Enang)

• 466 families have both land and rice seed (the 50 pounds of rice seed per family is not sufficient for planting the land area they have received)

• 268 families have 50 pounds of rice seed, but no land for planting

• 126 families have no rice seed and no land

• 394 families have no land for planting

• Hamlets and families who arrived later received land far from their homes or there was no land left to distribute

• Education: 2 problems. Distance of EE from Pleiku; lack of students
Ruminsky’s priority 3: Refugees and Public Health

• EE will not be a viable community until the population stabilizes—at least for a period of 8 months—one planting/harvesting season

• A fluctuating population makes effective land distribution very difficult

• EE has a dispensary, 2 medics, a mid-wife, and several medics within the RF/PF units

• Medical personnel need to be training for the time when American MEDCAP assistance will be withdrawn

• Supplies, further training, and moral support are crucial
Ruminsky’s priority 4: Public Safety

• National Police need to be better equipped and directed

• They should have the capability of communicating in Jarai

• Need proper market place surveillance

• Overall program of civilian control for which Police would be answerable

• National Police have area of responsibility from Thanh An including Than Giao (aprx 15 km along QL 19)

• There are 9 men and they share 2 motor bikes; they are ill equipped (.38 caliber pistol) and have no direction given to them and no program for which they are answerable
Residents were given 3-day notice of relocation

Could only take what they could carry

Regional Forces and other cadre stole their belongings: pigs, chickens, and goats (and gongs) during the move

Government troops burned the hamlets after they abandoned their homes

This was in 1971, 4 years after Edap Enang
Five criteria to apply to a resettlement scenario

1. Motivation (forced or voluntary)
2. Composition of the moved unit
3. Distance moved
4. Ecology of the new location
5. Degree of maintenance of original life style patterns

(McArthur 1972: 12)
Conclusions

Depending on your direction of focus, Edap Enang presents a number of conflicting images.

Looking backward, it is easy to develop a case for inept planning made worse by blundering civil servants and over-zealous advisors.

Looking forward, Edap Enang presents a picture of a group of diverse villages which have been relocated in a resettlement complex which is slowly taking root as a viable community.

The important point is not the mistakes which were made, but the lessons which should have been learned (McArthur 1972:18).
References


• Ruminsky, Edward P. Edap Enang Resettlement Center. APO 96350: 41st Civil Affairs Co., Team 9, July 1968.

Thank you!   Cảm ơn!