



Figure 4: The Boat People: A Three-Generation Family in Their Dwelling

SOURCE: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan, [ing] yanjiusuo (The Institute of Economic Research, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences), *Shanghai penghuqu de bianqian* (Changes in the Squatter Areas of Shanghai) (Shanghai, 1992).

shantytowns paralleled, so to speak, the struggle, or was virtually a result of the struggle.

12 Many peasants came to Shanghai via the Grand Canal on small wooden boats that were popularly known as *maomaochuan* (literally, capped boats; see Figure 3).²⁶ These wooden boats with reed roofing crowded along the banks of Suzhou Creek. Many were berthed for years on the river and served as homes for these newcomers in their first stage of becoming "urbanites" in Shanghai (Figure 4).

13 When a boat became too decrepit to stay afloat, the family that lived aboard would steer the leaking craft onto the river bank, thus beginning the second stage of their residence in Shanghai. They would either live in the grounded boat (Figure 5), or, sometimes when the boat was simply too far gone to serve as shelter, they would use material from the old boat's roof to set up a hut on the muddy ground of the bank. These dilapidated and shabby huts were known by a most romantic



Figure 5: The Grounded Boats in Gaochangmiao, Shanghai

SOURCE: Jiangnan zaochuanchang shi bianxiezu (Writing group of *The History of Jiangnan Shipyard*), *Jiangnan zaochuanchang shi* (The History of Jiangnan Shipyard) (Shanghai, 1975), 32.

name, *gundilong* (literally, rolling earth dragons). Probably this name arises from the Chinese homophone between dragon (long) and cage (long), since the huts were virtually cages for human beings (Figure 6). These dwellings were so crude that it is hard to classify them into shapes. Roughly speaking, there were two types of *gundilong*. One was formed by bending reed mats from an old boat roof to form a semicircular hut; another was formed by tilting together two pieces of thin bamboo strips, thus to form a triangle. Since the huts were made of these unsubstantial materials and none of their owners could afford to erect posts or walls within them, neither of the two types of *gundilong* could be larger than a king-size mattress or taller than an average human being.²⁷ Nevertheless, it was just these kinds of tiny "rolling earth dragons" that sheltered thousands of the new immigrants in the city.

For these squatters, a straw shack (*penghu*),²⁸ though little better than a *gundilong*, was a great improvement and was, moreover, perhaps the best type of dwelling they could reasonably expect to acquire. To acquire a straw shack was often the result of many painful