

CHAPTER II

POPULATION

Table 2.1 illustrates the distribution of population by dialect groups in the padi area of Sekinchan. From the Table 2.1 it can be seen that there are six main dialect groups in this area namely Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew, Kwangsai and Hainese in their order of importance. Foochow, Hengwah and the category others formed only a minority group.

The Hokkiens with a number of 1854 representing about 37% of the population form the major group. The smallest dialect group is the Foochow - only, 0.16%.

TABLE 2.1

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY DIALECT GROUPS

Dialect Groups	Number	Percentage <sup>1</sup>
Hokkien	1,854	36.51
Cantonese	1,296	25.66
Hakka	846	16.75
Kwangsai	329	6.51
Teochew	567	11.23
Hainese	154	3.05
Foochow	8	0.16
Hengwah	10	0.19
Others	31	0.16
Total	5,095	100.00

<sup>1</sup>In all the tables some of the total percentage figures do not add up to 100.0 exactly due to the rounding up of figures.

It would be interesting to speculate on the predominance of the Hokkiens in this area. We know that the Chinese maintain close connections with extended family. They are based on what is called a 'bangsa' affiliation. Most Chinese occupational relations follow bangsa lines, a practice which is reflected in and strengthened by the tendency for the members of a particular bangsa to be in the same type of occupation. Hence it may be that the majority of the first settlers in Sekinchan were Hokkiens and this tended to attract more and more Hokkiens into this area.

Table 2.2 shows the distribution of population by age and sex. The age structure of a community is significant in the sense that it is an index of its social and economic welfare. To take an extreme example - if only 30% of a population were of an economically active age, the community concerned faces the crucial problem of too large a dependency problem. If added to this 60% of the remaining population could be ready for the labour market within a period of three years, the provision of additional employment will be one of its future problems.

In Table 2.2 we see that there is a column for age unknown. This is because at the time of the interviews, the enumerators rightly or wrongly thought the age and sex of children under 15 years to be unimportant and therefore recorded information concerning this part of the populace in very general terms. The following is a sample of the type of recording done: 'seven children ranging from 15 years to 1 year'. In this case, naturally the sexes of all the seven children would be unknown, and only the ages of two of them can be tabulated as known. This is not to say those who are tabulated under age unknown are children. There is a small minority of older people who are suspicious of our mission and therefore did not wish to reveal details of themselves. These are popularly known among us as the "hardnuts".

Having taken this into account it can be seen from Table 2.2 that about 37% of the population is under fifteen years of age. This means that there is great potential labour force in the area and unless additional capital resources is made available the provision of employment will pose as one of its urgent problems. In fact the striking feature in the age structure of the total population is the concentration in the below 30's age groups. Disregarding those under the age of 15, the ages with highest frequency for both females and males occur between 15-29 years. This is a healthy sign for it indicates an effective labour force. An effective labour force is always an asset and in this padi-growing area of Sekinchan we can say the fields need not lie fallow for want of labour.

The people in middle aged and old aged groups i.e. from 30 to 65 and above are relatively lesser in number. They range from 2% - 5% as compared to the 5% to 12% distribution of those from 15 years to 29 years.

The age distribution according to sex is however not entirely

TABLE 2.2

## DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY AGE AND SEX

Age Group in Years	No. of Persons		Percentage	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0 - 4	292	235	10.76	10.22
5 - 9	411	317	15.00	13.79
10 - 14	371	290	13.54	12.62
15 - 19	350	255	12.78	11.09
20 - 24	256	195	9.34	8.48
25 - 29	144	120	5.26	5.22
30 - 34	92	109	3.36	4.74
35 - 39	63	89	2.30	3.87
40 - 44	57	79	2.10	3.44
45 - 49	70	104	2.56	4.52
50 - 54	112	107	4.09	4.65
55 - 59	139	106	5.08	4.61
60 - 64	143	72	5.22	3.13
65 & over	98	70	3.68	3.05
Age Unknown	138	146	5.04	6.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,736</b>	<b>2,294</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Note: Persons whose sex are not stated are excluded from this Table. There are 64 of these.

similar to the general one. Although as already mentioned in the previous paragraph that most of the males and females are under thirty years old, the males have a higher proportion of their population within this range. However, in the groups from 30-59 the number of females constitute a slightly greater percentage. But this again drops in the 60-65 and above groups, where the males outnumber the females again. We can give a fair speculation on this outnumbering of females by males in the 60-65 age group.

We know through our field investigation that most of the early settlers in Sekinchan came from China. It is probable that they leave their wives and children behind, hence is explained the relatively fewer in number of females in this old age group.

One feature of the Table 2.2 which cannot be entirely explained by natural causes is the very low percentage of males, and a slightly higher, but comparatively low percentage of females in the age groups between 35 and 49. This low frequency could perhaps be due to the original population whom we assumed to be about thirty-five to forty-five years of age when they first came to settle in Sekinchan has aged and children borned have not reach this 35 to 49 age group since Sekinchan resettlement area is just about sixteen years old. Therefore we have this partial vacuum, this is pure speculation for we need a comparative study between present percentage age distribution and that at the beginning of the settlement to verify this point. Since we have no data on the past percentage age distribution we have to leave it as "Speculation". As stated since the birth of this resettlement is just sixteen years ago, another probable reason is very few of those now between 35-49 had the opportunity or the experience necessary to become self employed farmers. The fact, that there are comparatively a greater number of the populace in the 50-65 and above age groups tend to support this interpretation. Another factor favourable to this conclusion, is that during the survey it was found that quite a few of the farmers between 35-49 had inherited their land from deceased parents. This shows that at the start of the resettlement, they were not on their own, but were just family farm workers.

Our analysis of the sex-age structure of the population shows that in the padi area of Sekinchan there is great potential labour force as indicated by the high percentage of both males and females under fifteen years years of age. We also that right at present there is an effective labour force shown by the high frequency of both males and females between 15-29 years. The conclusion is under-employment will be one of the problems that planners have to encounter.