

CHAPTER II

GENERAL REVIEW OF THE FISHING INDUSTRY

Malaya⁺¹ has a coastline of about 1,000 miles long, its regularity being broken by bays, inlets and rivers which facilitate the siting of fishing villages because they offer protection against strong winds and big waves of the open sea. Though shallow, these bays, inlets and rivers provide good harbours for the small fishing crafts used by the fishermen.

Malayan fisheries are near-water fisheries in that all fish are caught within 50 miles from the shore.

Fish is an important source of animal protein and forms an important part of the Malayan diet. Our Malayan waters have over 150 types of fish of which about 40 species are important in our catches. Our seas abound with fish of the pelagic type. They occur in large concentrated shoals, for example, the kembong, bilis, tamban and chincharu. They are caught by a large variety of gears here. The immense fishery resources are a potential great supplier of food to the expanding population.

Importance of the Fishing Industry:

In terms of employment, the industry employs 59,000 regular fishermen directly or 2.7% of the total economically active population of 2.16 million as enumerated in the 1957 Census of Population of the Federation of Malaya. This makes it the third largest "agricultural" industry in Malaya after rubber and padi.

In addition, fishing gives employment to a large number of people, all connected with the industry indirectly. These are the wholesalers, retailers, village middlemen and

⁺¹ It refers to the area known as the Federation of Malaya before the formation of Malaysia in September, 1963.

shopkeepers, transportation agents and all those engaged in the marketing of fish.

In terms of annual output, fish production for 1962 was 2,859,000 piculs or 170,200 tons valued at \$154.3 million⁺¹. In 1961, the fishing industry contributed \$133.9 million⁺² to the national income of Malaya or 2.4% of the total national income of \$5495 million⁺³.

The Fishermen:

Very few women are directly engaged in fishing because the physical exertion in the open sea is too much for them. In 1957, out of the 59,000 engaged in sea-fishing, only 738 are women (see Table 1, column 3).

Table 1

MALAYA: ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION ENGAGED IN SEA-FISHING

State	Total Number Engaged in Sea-Fishing			Malay- sians (4)	Chinese (5)	Indians (6)
	Persons (1)	Males (2)	Females (3)			
Perlis	825	825	-	745	75	2
Kedah	3,527	3,517	10	2,789	599	65
Penang	5,439	5,425	14	2,559	2,750	120
Perak	10,040	10,010	30	3,093	6,746	193
Selangor	5,049	5,031	18	742	4,277	30
N.Sembilan	350	358	2	219	137	3
Malacca	2,176	2,173	3	1,475	650	1
Kelantan	7,314	7,055	259	7,290	20	2
Trengganu	12,649	12,300	349	12,586	51	3
Pahang	3,413	3,376	37	3,277	135	1
Johore	8,673	8,654	19	5,088	3,564	5
Federation of Malaya	59,016	58,278	738	39,649	18,770	425

Source: 1957 Population Census of the Federation of Malaya.

+1 1962 Annual Report of the Fishing Industry.

+2 1961 Annual Report of the Fishing Industry.

+3 1963 Bank Negara Annual Report.

(Note that figures for the category "others" are excluded because they are unimportant).

In Malaya, the women folk stay behind while the husbands go out to fish. They look after the domestic needs of the house, for example, cooking, washing and taking care of the children.

Very often they are engaged in some terrestrial economic activity to supplement the inadequate income brought in by the husbands. They may be engaged in tapping the rubber trees of the nearby smallholdings or they may look after their own padi fields and rubber and coconut smallholdings. This is a common feature in the East Coast states of Kelantan, Trengganu and Pahang, where the fishermen normally own some land and have a subsidiary occupation to their main occupation of fishing. They may look after the pigs and poultry and their vegetable plots as is common among the Chinese fishing population in the West Coast⁺¹.

Of the 59,000 engaged in sea-fishing, 67% or 39,600 are Malaysians⁺², 31.8% or 18,800 are Chinese (see Table 1, columns 4 and 5) and 1.2% covering the Indians who are widely scattered throughout Malaya, the Siamese in the northern states of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu and the Portugese in Malacca.

Malaysian fishermen dominate overwhelmingly the East

⁺¹See (a) U. Aziz's first year's (1961) lecture notes;
(b) R. Firth: Malay Fishermen: Their Peasant Economy.

During my visit to Telok Bahang, I learnt that some of the women folk derive some income by tapping the rubber trees of the nearby smallholdings on a sharing basis of 1 : 1.

I also observed that every household reared some poultry and in some cases goats for domestic consumption and for sale to the non-fishing population in the village and in the town.

In my interview with two Pulau Aman fishermen at the Sungei Pinang market where they come every morning to dispose of some of the island's fish, I learnt that the wives of the fishermen are employed to tap the rubber smallholdings of the island. The women folk grow fruits and rear poultry and goats which are taken to Bukit Tambun for disposal at the mainland.

⁺²They are Malays and Indonesians domiciled here.

Coast fishing states. Fifty-eight point six percent or 23,200 of the total Malaysian fishing population are found in these three East Coast states of Kelantan, Trengganu and Pahang. A large number is found in East Johore, Selangor, Kedah and Perlis where the Malaysian population is large.

Chinese fishermen predominate in great concentration in the purse-seine fishing centre of Pulau Pangkor and drift-net fishing centres of Pulau Ketam and Malacca. They dominate the central and southern west coastline of Malaya. Ninety-two per cent of the total Chinese fishing population or 17,300 are found in the four West Coast states of Penang, Perak, Selangor and Johore (See Table 1).

The majority of the fishermen engage in fishing by themselves. Seventy-two point two percent of the total fishing population or 43,500 are self-employed while 21% or 12,400 are employees working for another employer in the fishing industry, and the rest 6.8% or 2,800 are unpaid family workers living in the same household and helping the fishermen and at the same time are unpaid (see Table 2 on page 8).

Malaysians show a higher percentage as self-employed than their Chinese counterparts who are more capitalistic in their methods of catching fish and therefore have to engage helpers. Eighty-one per cent of the Malaysian fishermen or 32,000 are self-employed as compared to 62% of the total Chinese fishing population or 11,500 (see Table 2). In the Malaysian dominated states of Kelantan and Trengganu, over 90% of the total fishing population are self-employed. But in Perak, Penang, Selangor and Johore where the methods of catching fish are more capitalistic, a relatively large number of the fishermen is engaged as employees in these states in operating the gears like the fishing stakes and the purse-seine nets.

The Malayan fishermen normally go out to fish in the early hours of the morning at between 2 to 4a.m. and return to the village late in the morning after having spent about 9 hours in the open sea. Often they fish in late afternoon close to their fishing village⁺¹.

⁺¹ See R. Firth: Malay Fishermen: Their Peasant Economy.

My conversations with the fishermen at the fishing villages in Telok Bahang, Batu Ferrengghi and Tanjong Bungah in Penang confirmed that they go out to fish early in the morning and the number of times they fish per day depends on the gears they use.

TABLE 2

MALAYA: CLASSIFICATION OF FISHING POPULATION ACCORDING
TO OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

State	Total engaged in sea-fishing	Malaysians: Those who are			Chinese: Those who are				
		Total	Self-employed	Unpaid family worker	Employee	Total	Self-employed	Unpaid family worker	Employee
Penang	5,665	2,758	1,880	44	832	2,773	1,915	94	764
Perak	10,458	3,581	2,900	110	568	6,666	3,901	267	2,497
Selangor	5,374	991	816	80	95	4,350	2,890	416	1,041
Kelantan	7,355	7,331	6,441	711	178	20	16	2	2
Trengganu	12,662	12,598	10,319	385	1,894	51	32	-	19
Johore	8,321	4,995	4,341	160	490	3,364	2,094	291	919
Federation of Malaya	59,016	39,639	32,018	1,713	5,908	18,755	11,471	1,074	6,210

Source: 1957 Census of Population of the Federation of Malaya.

(Note that figures for other states other than those above are not available and that the figures for the category "Indians" and "Others" are excluded because they are unimportant.)

During their leisure hours, they spend their time on the beaches repairing their boats and mending and drying their nets⁺¹. It must be emphasized that our fishermen are very hardworking and they spend most of their waking hours on their occupation.

Most of the fishermen are illiterate and they learn their trade during childhood from their elders through careful guidance and from observation and experience.

Normally, the fishermen operate in groups, two in the case of the drift-net (Pukat Hanyut) and ten to twenty in the case of the lift-net (Pukat Tangkol), beach-seine net (Pukat Tarek) and purse-seine net (Pukat Jerut)⁺². A significant portion of the catch is deducted as rent to the owner for the use of the net and boat before the members of the fishing syndicate share in the catch⁺³.

It is difficult to estimate the income of the fishermen as there is no official statistical data concerning the income of the fishermen hitherto. To make a guess is also difficult because incomes vary between fishermen in the same

⁺¹See R. Firth: Malay Fishermen : Their Peasant Economy.

I observe all these activities along the beaches of Penang.

⁺²See (a) R. Firth: Malay Fishermen: Their Peasant Economy.

(b) Tjoa Soei Hock: Institutional Background to Modern Economic and Social Development in Malaya.

At Telok Bahang, the Pukat Jerut is manned by a group of seventeen men, the Pukat Hanyut by two men and at Batu Ferrengghi, the Pukat Tarek is hauled in from the shore by two teams of ten men each.

⁺³See (a) R. Firth: Malay Fishermen: Their Peasant Economy.

(b) Tjoa Soei Hock: Institutional Background to Modern Economic and Social Development in Malaya.

In Telok Bahang and Batu Ferrengghi, the provision of gears and boats plus motors by rich Chinese Towkays is common. The Towkays bear all the fishing expenses like fuel and repairs. The rent is calculated at between 30% and 50% of the daily net sales proceeds depending on the type of gears. The rent is 45% for the Pukat Jerut.

locality and between regions. The types of gears used vary from the highly capitalistic fishing stakes like the blat pok and kelong and nets like the purse-seine net and beach seine net, to the primitive and inefficient gears like the hand-line and the casting net. The types of boats employed also vary from the larger ones powered by bigger engines to medium ones powered by small engines to the small non-mechanised crafts. Obviously, the income of those employing more capitalistic equipments will be very much greater than that of the poorer fishermen. Secondly, the income of each fisherman varies from day to day and from month to month depending on weather conditions and sea situations like the presence of dolphins and jellyfish which drive away the fish and the salinity of the water which affects the presence or absence of fish⁺¹. Nevertheless, the average income of the fishermen of the East Coast, as estimated by Tjoa Soei Hock, is \$80 per month⁺².

Fishing Season

In Malaya, fishing is continuously carried out throughout the year along the West Coast as there is no seasonal climatic disturbance to prevent the fishermen from going out to fish for a certain length of time. In Table 3 and Graph 1 on page 11, the monthly output of fish for the West Coast is quite regular. Though March and April show exceptionally high output of fish, they need not be the peak production months in other years as a glance through the monthly production figures of a number of years for the West Coast will confirm that peak months can be in any month of the year.

⁺¹This difficulty is expressed by those fishermen whom I interviewed on the beach in Penang. They could not say for the income of their counterparts in the same village because of differences in amount of capital employed. Neither can they be certain of their monthly income. In their own words, fishing is a big gamble. The range of variations in income is great and their explanation for the great range has already been mentioned above.

⁺²See Tjoa Soei Hock: Institutional Background to Modern Economic and Social Development in Malaya.

This appears to be a fair estimate according to Che Khalid and Che Samad, Both senior cooperative officers at the Cooperative Division, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, with whom I had many interesting discussions.

TABLE 3

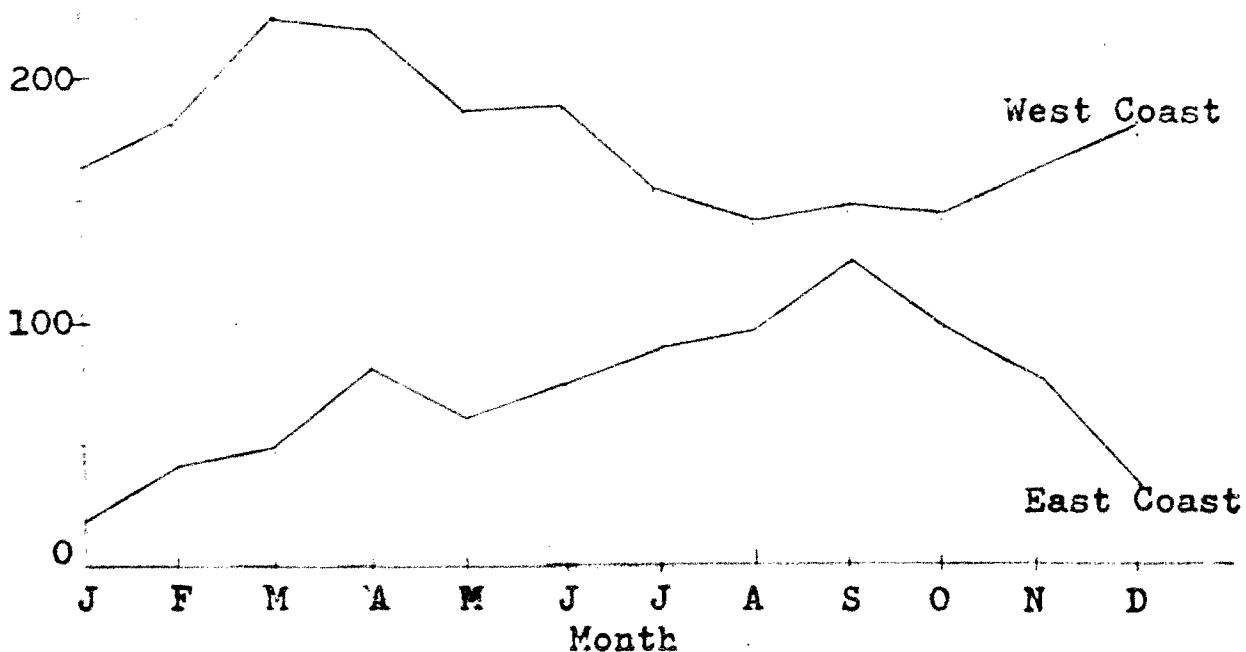
MALAYA: 1962 MONTHLY PRODUCTION
OF FISH IN PICULS BY COAST

Month	East Coast (1)	West Coast (2)	East Johore (3)	West Johore (4)
January	15,800	161,300	1,500	7,100
February	32,300	179,500	1,900	9,200
March	43,800	223,300	3,700	9,400
April	76,800	217,200	12,600	8,800
May	57,100	183,800	13,600	9,000
June	70,600	184,700	16,500	13,500
July	83,100	192,300	17,400	13,600
August	95,500	139,400	21,100	15,900
September	121,000	145,700	22,200	15,900
October	96,000	142,000	21,600	12,900
November	70,400	162,900	17,800	12,800
December	28,000	174,300	4,400	10,500

Source: 1962 Annual Report of the Fishing Industry.

Monthly
Output
in Piculs
(000)

GRAPH 1
(Drawn from Table 3,
columns (1) and (2).)



But East Coast fishing shows seasonality. Fishing is interrupted by the North East Monsoon (November to April), especially during the months of December and January when there is hardly any fishing due to strong winds and big waves which make it difficult for the fishermen to leave the sea-shore to fish. Table 3 and Graph 1 on page 11 represent the pattern of fish production in any year⁺¹. During the period of the North East Monsoon, fish production drops significantly to its lowest for the year. In January, 1962, the output is 15,800 piculs compared 121,000 piculs in September.

A better picture of the effects of the North East Monsoon on fish production is brought out by the monthly production figures of East and West Johore (see Table 3, columns (3) and (4)). Although both coasts share the same latitude, the monthly production for West Johore shows more regularity than that of the East Johore. The range in the variation of annual output for West Johore is between 15,900 piculs and 7,100 piculs while that of East Johore is between 22,200 piculs and 1,500 piculs in 1962.

Normally, those who cannot fish during the North East Monsoon find odd jobs to do or tend their smallholdings. Some migrate further south or^{to} the West Coast to fish. A large number have to depend on their savings supplemented by credit and loans to tide them over this lean period⁺².

Fish is present during the North East Monsoon. The problem is for the boats to leave the sea-shore for the fishing ground in the face of such bad weather. Today, increasing mechanisation has enabled the fishermen to fish more often during the North East Monsoon. Mechanisation has reduced the ill-effects of the monsoon. Larger diesel engined boats can be used to fish in all but the worst weather and bring back good catches⁺³.

⁺¹ I found the pattern of fish production for the East and West Coast as stated above to be the same for any year when analysing the monthly production figures for the years 1956 to 1962.

⁺² See U. Aziz: First year's (1961) lecture notes.

⁺³ Annual Report of Fishing Industry, 1956-59.

Che Khalid and Che Samad of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and Che Ibrahim, Penang's senior cooperative officer and the many fishermen whom I interviewed in Penang all agree with me on this aspect of mechanisation.

Fishing Grounds and Methods:

Malaya's sources of marine fish are located in the South China Sea, the Straits of Singapore, the Straits of Malacca and the eastern extremity of the Indian Ocean. Traditionally, the inshore fisheries especially the Straits of Malacca and Singapore have been fished intensively with a great variety of gears⁺¹. The off-shore fisheries have been left untapped by the Malayan fishermen but with increasing mechanisation and technical training given to the fishermen, it is hoped that this will pave the way for the development of the off-shore fisheries.

Pelagic fish and those fish living in mid-water are captured by drift-nets, seine-nets and lift nets. The main types of fish caught are the kembong, tamban, bilis, tenggiri and parang.

Demersal fish are those found on or near the seabed like the merah, kerapu, etc. They do not move around in large shoals. Therefore, the operation of big nets is not an economic proposition. They are caught by hand-lines, long-lines and fish-traps (bubu)⁺².

Fishing Apparatus

a) Boats Before 1955, nearly all boats used for fishing were non-mechanised but since the recommendations of the Committee to Investigate the Fishing Industry (1955), there has been increasing mechanisation of crafts with inboard diesel motors. In 1962, 44% of the total number of registered boats in Malaya were mechanised.

b) Fishing Gears As stated earlier, a large variety of fishing gears, both stationary and mobile, varying from primitive to highly capitalistic types, is employed in Malaya. There has been no new type of gears introduced into Malaya recently but the Fisheries Department is experimenting

⁺¹For a full description of all the various gears in use in Malaya and how they operate, see T. W. Burton: Fishing Methods of Singapore in JMBRAS, vol. 27, Part 2, June, 1954.

⁺²I derive this conclusion from my analysis of Tables of fish caught by different gears found in the Annual Reports of the Fishing Industry, 1956-62.

on the practicability of the Moro Ami or the Japanese set-traps aiming at replacing the fishing stakes but so far, nothing has come out of the experiments.

The attempts by the Chinese fishermen in North-west Malaya to introduce trawler fishing into Malaya have been frustrated by the present ban on trawlers after they had achieved significant success in their operations because of strong protest from the inshore fishermen.

The Fisheries Department has been successful in its efforts to improve the efficiency of the existing gears by substituting synthetic fibre net in place of natural fibre net. Although no new types of gears have been introduced, local gears are being modified to meet changing conditions and the use of certain traditional gears is becoming less widespread due to a change towards the use of more versatile and efficient gears like the purse-seine nets (Pukat Jerut) and shore seine (Pukat Twabang) in areas where they had never been in use before⁺¹.

The use of synthetic fibre nets has increased the catching power of certain gears especially the drift-net (Pukat Hanyut) as well as providing the fishermen with more durable nets⁺². Though more expensive, they are stronger and require less maintenance than natural fibre nets.

Mechanisation and improvement in fishing gears at sea have been followed by development on shore as well. Eight cold rooms have been constructed in the major fishing villages in the East Coast. Landing jetties have been provided in many of the fishing villages, where possible. Selected fishermen from all over the country are sent to the two Fisheries School in Kuala Trengganu and Penang for training on the technical side of their occupation. Under the Rural Development programme, roads and bridges are built in the rural areas. These facilitate the transport of fish.

⁺¹ See Annual Reports of the Fishing Industry, 1956-59.

At Telok Bahang, there are now about 50 purse-seine nets in operation. Two years ago when I was there, this gear was not used. Incidentally, it is one of the most efficient gears from my conversations with the fishermen.

⁺² See Annual Reports of the Fishing Industry, 1956-59.

Fishing Centres and Consuming Areas

Fishing villages are found along both coastlines but in each area, there is a dominating one by virtue of the number of fishermen employed and the number of gears in use and the facilities like cold rooms, roads and marketing facilities available.

On the West Coast, the main fishing centres are Kuala Kedah, Penang Island, Kuala Kurau, Kuala Panchor, Pulau Pangkor, Pulau Ketam, Malacca, Batu Pahat and Muar and on the East Coast, they are Tumpat, Besut, Kuala Trengganu, Dungun, Kemaman, Kuantan, Kuala Pahang, Mersing and Sempili (see Map 1 on page 16).

The main consuming areas are the inland towns like the mining towns of Taiping and Kamunting and those of the Kinta Valley like Ipoh and Kampar, the commercial cities of Singapore and Penang and the major administrative centres like Alor Star, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, Malacca, Kuantan and Kota Bharu (see Map 1). These towns have a very large population and if they produce any fish like Penang, Malacca, Singapore and Kuantan, the production is usually in-adequate to meet the local demand. Often, they have to import from outside.

Along the small coastline of Perlis, fishing is important only to the extent of feeding the local population. Its contribution to Malayan production is insignificant. But its off-shore island, Pulau Langkawi, is an important fishing centre.

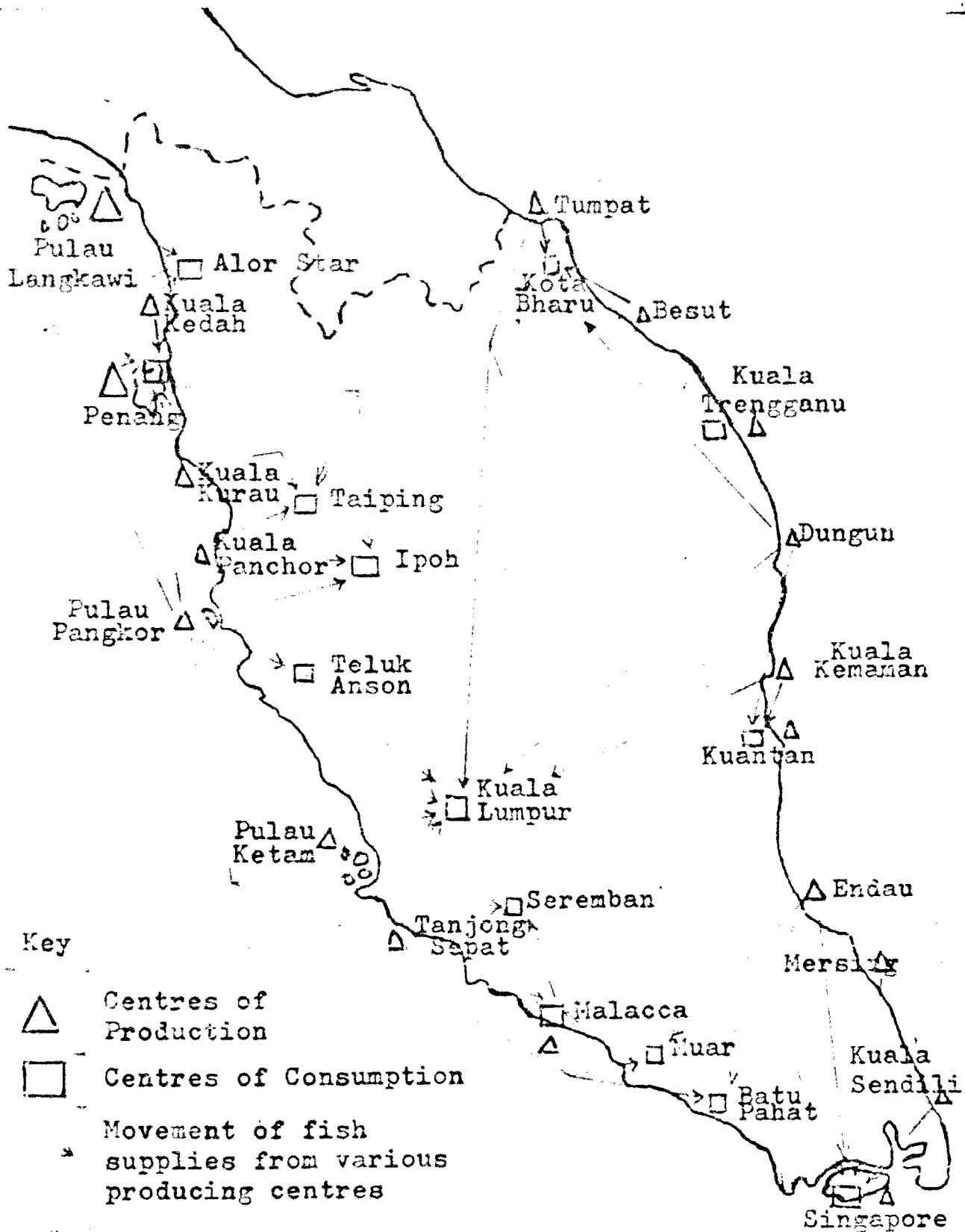
In Kedah, Kuala Kedah is the dominating fishing centre and together with Pulau Langkawi, supplies most of Alor Star's fresh fish.

Penang Island is an important fishing centre employing a large variety of gears. Most of the catches are retained for local consumption but a small portion is sent to Taiping and Ipoh.

The Perak coastline has a series of important fishing centres. Kuala Kurau and Kuala Larut (near Port Weld) are moderately important. They supply most of Taiping's fresh fish. Pulau ^{Pangkor} is by far the most important fishing centre in Malaya supplying fresh fish for the whole of central Malaya from Penang to Batu Pahat. The purse-seine net is widely used here. Kembong, bilis and tamban are the main types of fish caught here.

MAP 1

MALAYA: PRODUCING AND CONSUMING CENTRES
AND INTERNAL MOVEMENT OF FRESH FISH



Key

- △ Centres of Production
- Centres of Consumption
- Movement of fish supplies from various producing centres

Source: Wall Map, Fisheries Department, Planning and Research Branch, Kuala Lumpur.

Much fishing is done along the coast of Selangor. The small fishing centres send their surpluses to Kuala Lumpur. Pulau Ketam is an important fishing centre. The drift-net is widely used here.

Malacca Town is the next important fishing centre but all her production is consumed locally.

From Malacca Town southwards to Singapore, there are numerous fishing centres but none outstanding. They produce to cater for the local demand mainly.

Along the East Coast, fishing is a very important industry. In Johore, Sendili, Mersing and Endau are important fishing centres. They send all their surpluses to Singapore mainly.

In Pahang, Kuantan and Kemaman are important fishing centres but Kemaman is the only centre that exports fish outside the state to Kuala Lumpur. It also sends fresh fish to Kuantan to supplement Kuantan's inadequate production. Kuantan has a large urban population and produces only for her local demand.

In Trengganu, Dungun and Kuala Trengganu are important fishing centres. As Kuala Trengganu has a large population, she has little surplus but Dungun has surplus fresh fish to send to Kuantan, Kuala Lumpur and Kota Bharu.

In Kelantan, Tumpat and Besut are important fishing centres. Besut sends all her surplus fresh fish to Kota Bharu but Tumpat, in addition to sending fresh fish to Kota Bharu, also sends supplies to Kuala Lumpur and Singapore⁺¹.

The internal movement of fresh fish from one fishing centre to another consuming centre is given on Map 1.

Fish Marketing and Credit Situation

In Malaya, the fish marketing system is almost entirely in the hands of the middlemen whose usual price policy is to pay the fishermen a low price and charge the

⁺¹ See D. G. Stead: General Report of Fishermen in British Malaya.

final consumers a high price for the fish⁺¹. The present fish marketing system is poor. It gives no incentive for the fishermen to increase production. There is no integration of marketing functions creating much loss of fish during transit as its quality deteriorates rapidly in our hot climate unless the fish is properly iced. To provide for a better fish marketing system, the Government has encouraged the growth of the fishermen's cooperative marketing movement and, under the Canadian Colombo Plan Aid Programme, eight coldrooms have been installed in the East Coast. The formation of the Fishermen's Cooperative Marketing and Transport Union to federate all the fishermen's cooperative societies in the East Coast is another effort in this direction. A fish marketing survey, under the direction of the Fisheries Department, is now underway to understand the fish marketing problems fully and to make recommendations to the Government on ways to improve it.

Due to many factors, the fishermen are in need of credit for certain periods of the year. Traditionally, they obtain their credit from the shopkeeper, middlemen and juru selam. This credit system is bad because of the many obligations involved in the loans. The Government's encouragement for the growth of the fishermen's cooperative credit movement is to help provide the fishermen with low-interest loans to give them sufficient capital with which to operate efficiently and enable them to get better real income.

Government Aid:

Government aid for the development of the fishing industry is necessary because it is the only possible agency to do the job properly. The fishermen must be helped and released from the grip of the middlemen and juru selam. The help can come from the formation of the fishermen's cooperative movement to undertake fish marketing and supply loans to the fishermen for the purchase of motor engines and better fishing gears. Roads, bridges, landing jetties, ice plants and cold rooms have to be constructed and transport vehicles bought. The cooperative societies must have good managers and enlightened membership. These provisions are the task of the Government because the fishermen find it difficult to better

⁺¹ See L. Berube: Memorandum: Economic Research Report: Suggested Programme of Fisheries and Marketing Development in Malaya - Planning and Research Branch, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Federation of Malaya.

themselves unaided. Since 1955, the Government has committed itself to developing the fishing industry and eradicating poverty among the fishermen. To draw up a programme to aid the fishing industry, the Government, in September, 1955, appointed the Committee to Investigate the Fishing Industry to:

- a) investigate the present position of the fishing industry with special reference to the efficiency of its operation and nature and adequacy of its capital;
- b) investigate the present organisation and procedure for distribution and marketing of fish;
- c) make recommendations from the investigation as to:
 - (i) what Government assistance, financial or otherwise, should be given to the fishing industry and
 - (ii) what action to be taken by the Government in relation to distribution and marketing to ensure that Government assistance is properly used, that fishermen obtain a fair return for their work and improve their social and economic standing and that consumers receive fish as cheaply as possible.

The recommendations of the Committee have since been the basis of determining Government aid to the fishing industry. Though the Government has been giving serious assistance to the industry for the past nine years, much remains still to be done.

The Committee found the fish marketing and distribution side to be too complex and recommended the appointment of another committee to make a full and detailed investigation. The survey on this facet of the industry is now underway.

Administration of the Fishing Industry

The Fisheries Department is responsible to the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives for the control and development of the fishing industry. It is the policy of the department to provide sufficient fish to meet the needs of the growing population and improve the economic and social position of the fishermen.

The control of the industry is effected by the licensing of fishing gears and boats and ensuring that fishing operations are in compliance with the various State Fisheries Enactments which lay down the conditions under which fishing can be carried out. The administration of the enactments is carried out by a Fisheries Officer, under the Director of Fisheries, in each of the four regions, the North West region, the South West region, the South East region and the North East region, into which Malaya is divided for administrative purposes. The headquarters of the administration is in Kuala Lumpur where the office of the Director of Fisheries is.

Each of the four Fisheries Officers has a number of Fisheries Assistants stationed at important fishing centres in the region. They are the immediate link between the fishermen and the Fisheries Department and they carry out the licensing of gears and boats, advise and guide the fishermen, arbitrate in disputes where necessary and enforce fisheries regulations.