

THE FISHING EQUIPMENT OF THE FOUR TOWKAYS

Before assessing the role of the towkays as salt/dried fish merchants, it is essential for us to find out the fishing equipment that the towkays possess because it is partly through this equipment that the towkays purchase their fish, most of which is converted into salt/dried fish.

As indicated in Chapter I, only four out of five towkays own their fishing equipment which mainly consists of boats and nets.

Fishing Boats:

Kueh boats are the most popular among the towkays and the reason for their popularity will be explained in the next section. The table IA shows that Towkay C alone claims 58 percent of the total number of boats, while Towkay D claims only 10 percent. There is thus a great inequality in the ownership of fishing boats.

Table I AFishing Boats Owned by the four Towkays<sup>1</sup>

| Owner         | Type of boat |      |        | All Boats |
|---------------|--------------|------|--------|-----------|
|               | Sekochi      | Kueh | Payang |           |
| A             | 3            | 2    | -      | 5         |
| B             | 3            | 7    | -      | 10        |
| C             | 10           | 14   | 5      | 29        |
| D             | 4            | 2    | -      | 6         |
| <b>Total:</b> | 20           | 25   | 5      | 50        |

<sup>1</sup> Source: The towkays concerned.

These towkays usually purchase their boats from three places: Paka (a district in Trengganu), Balok and Pantai Besar (Pahang). Payang boats are usually bought from Trengganu because of better workmanship obtained there. There are three boat builders in Pantai Besar, but boat construction is by no means their main occupation. They are fishermen, too, and it is mainly during the off-season period from October to February that they turn to boat building for their living. Balok is the only place from where the towkays mostly buy their boats.

Most of these boats are fitted with either  $5\frac{1}{2}$  h.p. or  $7\frac{1}{2}$  h.p. British-made outboard motors. The increasing popularity in the use of outboard motors is mainly because of greater safety for the fishermen and time-saving. It is interesting to note that all these motors are first purchased by the towkays for their fishing group leaders or jeragan. We shall see in the next chapter why these towkays are so generous as to purchase motors for their jeragan and how these jeragan ultimately come to own them.

The various sizes of the Kueh, Sekochi and Payang boats are shown in Table I B. Of the three types of boats, Payang boats are the most expensive, worth \$1,500 each; this is because these boats are more difficult to make. This partly explains why only one towkay owns such boats. The next most expensive are the Kueh boats, valued at \$1,000 each and the investment on this type of boats amounts to \$25,000, about 67 percent of the total

investment on boats. Towkay C has made the biggest investment on these boats, \$14,000, which is 56 percent of the total value of Kueh boats. The Sekochi boats are cheaper, being worth only \$250 each.

Table I B

Total Value of Boats By Type and By Owner<sup>1</sup>

| Type   | O W N E R |         |          |         | Total <sup>2</sup> |
|--|-----------|---------|----------|---------|--------------------|
|  | A         | B       | C        | D       |                    |
| <u>Sekochi</u><br>Small size:<br>about 15 feet<br>long. Valued<br>@ \$250 each., | \$ 750    | \$ 750  | \$ 2,500 | \$1,000 | \$ 5,000           |
| <u>Kueh</u><br>Large size:<br>about 32 feet<br>long. Valued<br>@ \$1,000 each.   | \$2,000   | \$7,000 | \$14,000 | \$2,000 | \$25,000           |
| <u>Payang</u><br>Large size:<br>about 35 feet<br>long. Valued<br>@ \$1,500 each. | -         | -       | \$ 7,500 | -       | \$ 7,500           |
| Total investment<br>made by each<br>towkay.                                      | \$2,750   | \$7,750 | \$24,000 | \$3,000 | \$37,500           |

The total value of investment made by each towkay varies very widely. Towkay C is apparently the richest of the lot.

1. Source: the towkays.

2. All values as at June, 1958.

Of the combined investment made by the four towkays, he alone has claimed 64 percent of the outlay, whereas Towkay A's investment is only about 7 percent of the total for the four towkays.

Nets:

Table II A shows that Pukat Tarik or seine nets are the most popular among the towkays in Baserah. This is because this seine is mainly used for catching anchovy or Ikan Bilis, which in its dried form, constitutes a major portion of the dried fish exported by the towkays. Since Pukat Tarik is usually operated with Kueh boats, this partly explains why such boats are the most common of those owned by the towkays.

Table II A

Nets Owned by the four Towkays<sup>1</sup>

| Owner        | Kind of Nets |             |            |              | All nets  |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|------------|--------------|-----------|
|              | Pukat Tarik  | Pukat Dalam | Pukat Sudu | Pukat Payang |           |
| A            | 2            | -           | -          | -            | 2         |
| B            | 7            | 5           | -          | -            | 12        |
| C            | 14           | 13          | 10         | 5            | 42        |
| D            | 2            | 2           | 4          | -            | 8         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>25</b>    | <b>20</b>   | <b>14</b>  | <b>5</b>     | <b>64</b> |

If one examines Table I A and Table II A carefully, one will notice that, though Towkay A has three Sekochi and two Kueh

1. Source: The towkays concerned.

boats, he has only two Pukat Tarik. The reason is this: his three Sekochi boats, instead of being used with purse nets or Pukat Sudu as usually operated in Beserah, are used with handlines which belong to the Malay fishermen and which, therefore, are not recorded in Table II A. The same thing applies to Towkay B, whose three Sekochi boats are used with the handlines belonging to Malay fishermen. Again examining Table I A and Table II A carefully one will notice that there are sixty-four nets and only fifty boats. This is because the Kuch boats are usually used with two types of nets - gill nets or Pukat Dalam and seine nets or Pukat Tarik. Gill nets are used at night-time only while seine nets are used during the day-time. The fish caught by Pukat Dalam are mainly Ikan Kembong, a type of mackerel.

\* A purse net or Pukat Sudu is usually operated from three small-sized Sekochi boats at one time. This means that, if all nets are used at the same time, the number of Sekochi boats required must be forty-two. But, as we have seen in Table I A, there are only twenty boats. It is therefore true that not all Pukat Sudu are usually used at the same time. The fish caught by this method consist of pomfret (Ikan Bawal), horse mackerel (Ikan Selar Kuning), mackerel (Pelata), and sardine (Ikan Tamban).

The main reason why Towkays A, B and D do not possess Payang nets or Pukat Payang is that since they cannot afford to buy Payang boats as explained earlier, it is, therefore, useless for them to buy the nets. The most common types of fish obtained by Pukat Payang are jewfish (Ikan Gelama), pomfret (Ikan Bawal),

silver-bream (Ikan Kikek) and wolf-herring (Ikan Parang).

Table II B

Total Value of Nets By Type and By Owner<sup>1</sup>

| Type of Net                                | OWNER   |          |          |         | Total <sup>2</sup> |
|--|---------|----------|----------|---------|--------------------|
|  | A       | B        | C        | D       |                    |
| Pukat Tarik:<br>Valued @<br>\$1,200 each.  | \$2,400 | \$8,400  | \$16,800 | \$2,400 | \$30,000           |
| Pukat Dalam:<br>Valued @<br>\$800 each.    | -       | \$4,000  | \$10,400 | \$1,600 | \$16,000           |
| Pukat Sudu:<br>Valued @<br>\$1,000 each.   | -       | -        | \$10,000 | \$4,000 | \$14,000           |
| Pukat Payang:<br>Valued @<br>\$1,200 each. | -       | -        | \$ 6,000 | -       | \$ 6,000           |
| Total                                      | \$2,400 | \$12,400 | \$43,200 | \$8,000 | \$66,000           |

The Table II B shows the value of each type of nets and combined value of investment made by the towkays. Out of the total value of \$66,000, Towkay C accounts for \$43,000 of investment about 65 percent of the total value. Towkay A has made the least investment in nets, only \$2,400, one-eighteenth of that of Towkay C. Moreover, the table also reveals that the investment made in Pukat Tarik covers almost 50 percent of the total investment. The reason for this has already been explained.

1. Source: the towkays.

2. All values as at June, 1958.