

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION.

In a Malay society, there is every evidence of co-operative practice and in fact "gotong royong"¹ or "berderau" is one of the main characteristics of a Malay society. This is because usually in a Malay kampong such as Berserah, most of the families are related to each other and as such the degree of social cohesion is considerable. Heavy tasks, such as field clearing, are often done by group action.

In Berserah, long before the establishment of the fish marketing co-operatives the people have established a mutual welfare society² to help members to provide for burial expenses. The need to save is often³ by means of partnership known as "berkutu" which is a co-operative pooling of deposits of the group, each member in turn getting all the money paid by the whole group in a given date. This "berkutu" is popular in Berserah not only among the menfolk but also the womenfolk as well.

In many places in Malaya, "suraus"³ are made by voluntary labour. This habit of group action which is deeply rooted in a Malay society, the close social relationships among its members and the exploitation that prevails among the rural people are favourable conditions for co-operative movement as a weapon to remedy their economic ills. Obviously the economic structure which is most adapted to the circumstances of the rural people is co-operation.

1. "gotong royong" or "berderau" means mutual help.

2. This society is not registered and it is known as "Persatuan Kebajikan Mati". When an infant dies, each head of household pays 30 cents and in the case of an adult, each pays 50 cents for the burial expenses.

3. "Suraui" is a place of prayer which is smaller than a mosque.

The value of the co-operative movement as a social and economic organisation to the rural people has inspired the Federation Government to pay greater attention to the spread of the co-operative movement. With the recent political development, more and more attention is being paid to the rural sector which needs considerable assistance for its economic betterment. One of the ways to improve the economic condition of this sector is through the activity of the rural people themselves in a co-operative movement which can be an effective means of providing practical training in the economic field, a safe way of forming local capital and at the same time a means for animating the initiative of the rural farmer and strengthening his self-respect.

B. Purpose.

A comparative study of the two fish marketing societies - namely, the Kg. Di-Pantai Berserah Fishermen's Co-operative Credit and Marketing Society Ltd. and the Seberang 'Che' Let Fishermen's Co-operative Credit and Marketing Society Ltd. - is an aspect of the Berserah Economic Project conducted by Ungku Aziz of the University of Malaya. As the title of this academic exercise implies, the object of the study is to make a close study of the fishermen's co-operative societies regarding their growth, the problems each society is beset with, their organisation and their impact on the living condition of the people themselves with the hope that some light will be thrown on other rural co-operative societies in Malaya.

Though these co-operative societies were situated less than a quarter of a mile from each other, there were considerable differences which arose from the fact that a co-operative society is an association of people and people's needs and requirements which a society must conform to differ from place to place.

Scope.

The co-operative societies specially catered for the small operators, namely the handliners who formed the majority of the inhabitants of these two villages. When making close study of the societies, the writer encountered many difficulties. One of the main difficulties was the lack of certain documents which could be of great use. The people who were responsible for running the affairs of the societies did not realise the importance of the old sale journals, old bond books and the past years' balance sheets and profit and loss accounts. As a result many of these had been lost. The people concerned kept accounts merely for the purpose of audit and once the accounts were audited, they were no longer properly kept. They were also in the habit of writing the minutes of meetings on scraps of paper with the hope that these would be transferred to the proper books later but in many cases this was not done. As a result the minute books did not contain the minutes of some of the meetings.

During the time when this study was made, the Kg. Di-Pantai Co-operative Society confined its activities only to marketing of fish and the granting of credit and it no longer carried out bilis curing as it had done in previous years since it had obtained R.I.D.A.'s loan of \$25,000/- in 1953.

Method.

The study involved interviews with the co-operative officials and members of the societies. Records kept by both the societies and the Department of Co-operative Development, Kuantan were looked into. No questionnaires were used but daily observation had to be made regarding the working of the societies.