

ORGANISATION.

In this chapter, the writer will discuss the structure of the societies and how each of the societies was being run.

A. Members And Types Of Fishing.

The two co-operative credit and marketing societies were specially designed to meet the needs of the small scale operators namely the handliners, but the membership was open to all fishermen who could afford to subscribe the initial share subscription of \$10/- and \$1/- for entrance fee. The value of one full share was \$50/- payable over a period of 5 years. According to their by-laws, a member was allowed to hold a maximum of one-fifth of the total number of shares.

Kg. Di-Pantai Berserah Fishermen's Co-operative Credit and Marketing Society Ltd. had a membership of 71 and its working capital was \$8,881/- of which \$1,498/- was raised by its members while Seberang Che' Let Fishermen's Co-operative Credit and Marketing Society Ltd. had 65 members who had raised \$1,165.40 cents as capital. Of the 71 members of the Kg. Di-Pantai Co-operative Society, which was established in 1949, only 7 members had paid their full shares. In Seberang Che' Let Co-operative Society which was four years old, only 16 paid more than \$30/- each.

Even though the two villages are near to each other, the handliners in Kg. Di-Pantai went for a different type of fishing than that of the handliners in Seberang Che' Let. Most of the handliners in Di-Pantai went for parang fishing while their neighbours went for unjang<sup>1</sup> fishing. Parang fishing is seasonal and its season is from January to April and

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1. Unjang is a man-made fish house. For greater detail on this, please refer to Che' Sallehuddin's academic exercise (1958/59 Session).

October to December. In between the seasons, some of them joined unjang fishing gangs and the others did other work such as working as awak<sup>2</sup> and those who have land would work on it<sup>2</sup>. Unjang fishing with the exception of the monsoon season, is non-seasonal.

The reason why the members in Kg. Di-Pantai Co-operative Society went for parang was that parang fetched comparatively a high price. (This averages about 60 cents a kati). Parang fishing requires greater skill and capital than unjang fishing. For parang fishing, a person must have a one-man boat, nets and floats. Of the 71 members in the Kg. Di-Pantai Co-operative Society, only 15 did not have boats of their own and, as parang fishing is shore fishing, an engine is not a necessity.

As for unjang fishing, two or three men can share a boat. An unjang is placed between 5 and 7 miles off-shore and therefore an engine is of great help. In fact almost all unjang boats in Che' Let were equipped with engines. Out of 65 members of Kg. Che' Let Co-operative Society, only 20 had boats of their own and 16 of these boats were equipped with engines. So the majority of the members had to hire boats and engines from the other members and non-members<sup>3</sup>.

### B. Management.

Ideally each of these societies should be run by their own elected committees. The Kg. Di-Pantai Co-operative Society had eleven committee members, including a chairman, vice-chairman, honorary secretary, treasurer and seven other committee members. Seberang Che' Let Co-operative Society had only 9 elected committee headed by its chairman. According to their

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2. Quite a number of the members of Kg. Di-Pantai Co-operative Society have opened up land in Cherating about 5 miles to the north of Berserah.

3. The rent of a boat is 10 per cent of the catch and 10 per cent for engine.

by-laws, the committee should meet at least once a month to discuss matters concerning the societies. As the members did not go to sea on Fridays, meetings were always held on Fridays. Although each of these societies had its own committee to run the society, in practice all these responsibilities were assumed by the active few.

A co-operative society, by its nature, is democratic in the sense that each person has the right to voice his opinion openly at a meeting. But this not so in these two societies. The general tendency was that the members tended to follow willingly or unwillingly the suggestions of their leader. This behaviour is inherent in a Malay society in which disapproval is usually shown in the act rather than in open verbal criticism. The last degree of disapproval will be "merajok" when the person concerned leaves the kampong ultimately. Furthermore, this was due to the monopoly of talent resulting in the monopoly of management. Every year almost the same committee was elected, headed by the same men who more or less ran the society<sup>4</sup>. Because of the scarcity of men with the organising ability and the fact that the societies' work required much time and constant devotion, only those possessing the combination of these two requirements - namely, organising ability and time - could assume the responsibility of running the societies.

The superiority of the leaders over the members and their personality gave them more or less complete freedom of action and also created inertia on the part of their fellow members and deflected them from training for responsible work in the co-operative societies.

In Kg. Di-Pantai Co-operative Society, it was the chairman who, besides being the 'Tok Nebeng' (headman) and the owner of a coffee shop, largely assumed the responsibilities of the secretary and the treasurer as well. As he was no longer a

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4. See Appendices V and Va.

fisherman, he had the time to devote to the tedious society's work. He was an intelligent and pious man and he commanded respect from both the old and the young.

As for the Seberang Che' Let Co-operative Society, it was the secretary who ran the whole show. He too was a non-fisherman and was the owner of the coffee shop in the society's premises.

Since very few of the committee members took active part in the running of the societies, committee meetings, which should be once a month, were very irregular and attendance at such a meeting was often poor<sup>5</sup>. So in such circumstances, much of the decisions had to be taken by the men who had to assume the responsibilities.

It was not the only characteristic of the societies for the management boards to be monopolised by the few active leaders but another important characteristic was that the active leaders ran them mainly for their private benefit and not for the sake of co-operative ideals. Both of the active leaders of the two societies ran coffee shops in their societies' premises which were patronised mainly by the members. Seberang Che' Let Co-operative Society had some of the richer members of the village in the committee to further their interests<sup>6</sup>.

C. Paid Staff Of The Co-Operatives. Besides the honorary committee members, the two co-operative societies also employed paid staff who were non-fishermen. This was because the marketing of fish involved much work which could be done only by full time staff.

Each of these societies employed two fish selling representatives who were appointed annually at its annual general meeting. One of them did the selling of fish at the market where the societies had their own stalls, while the other was stationed at the landing point, waiting for the members' return

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5. Although Kg. Di-Pantai Berserah is a small village and that

When he would weigh and record the members' catch and it was his duty to make arrangement to transport the fish to his other partner at the Kuantan market.

From the economic point of view, the appointment of selling representatives on an annual basis was not sound because it took some time before any newly elected representative could acquire some knowledge of marketing business. If he was not elected again the co-operative society would be deprived of the benefit of his experience. This system had also the disadvantages of the uncertainty of tenure of office. There was a tendency for a man who had served as a selling representative, which was a full-time job, not to go back to his old occupation but to become a peraih instead. Up to date, three ex-selling representatives of each society, had become professional peraihs.

The selling representatives were not given fixed salaries but they shared between them 40 per cent of the 10 per cent commission deducted by the society from the sale of the fish. This system of remuneration was a great incentive to sell as much as possible at retail which gave higher price than the wholesale price.

As the marketing of fish entailed much calculation and keeping of account, each of the societies employed a part-time clerk who was given \$50/- per month. The clerical work in Kg. Di-Pantai Co-operative Society was done by the son of the chairman who helped his father in managing the coffee shop. In Seberang Che' Let, it was performed by the secretary himself.

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the members congregate in the evenings in the society's premises, the problem of getting sufficient members to form a quorum is often a difficult one. The writer had the unpleasant experience of waiting for nearly four hours on one Friday afternoon before a meeting could be called on its second attempt.

6. This is discussed in detail in Chapter III.

Since Kg. Di-Pantai Co-operative Society had also a van for transporting business, it had a full-time driver who was given a salary of \$150/- a month.

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