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Modes of Production, Ethnicity and Class in the Kuala Kedah Fishing Community of West Malaysia

KAMARUDDIN M. SAID

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini memperkatakan tentang kewujudan dua ragam pengeluaran, iaitu ragam pengeluaran praktalis dan ragam pengeluaran kapitalis, dalam bentukan sosial perikanan di Kuala Kedah, Semenanjung Malaysia. Kewujudan dua ragam pengeluaran dalam suatu bentukan sosial ini diperkatakan dengan mengaitkannya dengan kewujudan bentuk-bentuk perhubungan di kalangan kumpulan-kumpulan ethnik dan kelas sosial yang berbeza. Keseluruhan perbincangan tertumpu kepada implikasi teoritis yang terjelma menerusi kajian kes ini.

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the existence of two modes of production namely, the pre-capitalist and the capitalist modes of production, within the socio-economic formation of the Kuala Kedah fishing community in Peninsular Malaysia. The existence of these two modes of production within a single socio-economic formation is discussed by relating it to various forms of ethnic and class relations. The whole discussion is focused on the theoretical implications emerged from this case study.

INTRODUCTION

This article, based on a case study of a fishing community of Kuala Kedah, West Malaysia, attempts to explore patterns of class and ethnic relations within a context of a social formation which articulates two distinctive modes of production. Social formation of this fishing community under study comprises of: (1) an inshore fishing sector which represents post-peasant mode of production which has been subsumed, but not fully, by the capitalist economy, and (2) an off shore sector which has fully been subsumed by and represents the capitalist mode of production.

The discussion hopes to show that these two modes of production, which co-exist within a single social formation, bring about distinctive patterns of class and ethnic relations, within each mode, as well as between them.

THE SETTING

Kuala Kedah is an important fishing settlement located at the mouth of the Kedah River, in the State of Kedah, the most important "rice bowl" in Peninsula Malaysia. Pioneered originally as a Malay settlement, Kuala Kedah later developed into a dual-ethnic area after the coming of Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth century. Kuala Kedah's present population of about 10,000 (1986) is made up of 89% Malays and 11% Chinese (District Officer's File).

Kuala Kedah is a sub-district (*mukim*) within the district (*daerah*) of Kota Setar and is divided into eleven villages (*kampungs*): Kampung Ulu, Kampung Mesjid Lama, Kampung Tengah, Kampung Balai, Kampung Madrasah, Kampung Tok Pasai, Kampung Tepi Laut, Kampung Baru, Kampung Seberang Kota, Kampung China and Taman Sri Putra. The population settlement of Kuala Kedah is patterned according to ethnic lines. In general, the settlement areas can be categorized into three main groups: the first group which comprises of Kampung Ulu, Mesjid Lama, Tengah, Madrasah, Tepi Laut, Baru and Seberang Kota are occupied mainly by the Malays with the exception of one or two Chinese shopkeepers. Kampung Cina (Chinese Village) and Kampung Tok Pasai constitute a second category of villages which are exclusively inhabited by the Chinese. The third category is the newly developed modern settlement of Taman Sri Putra or *Kawasan Rumah Murah* (Low Cost Housing Area) with its mixed population of Malays and Chinese.

Kampung Cina is the heart of the fishing economy of Kuala Kedah. The office of the Association for Chinese Fish Dealers of Kuala Kedah (*Persatuan Pemborong-Pemborong Ikan China Kuala Kedah*) is situated in the middle of this *kampung*. The MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association – a Chinese political party which is a component of the ruling National Front coalition party) branch office of Kuala Kedah is located next to it. The combined economic strength of the various Chinese *taukey* is demonstrated not only by the congregation of trawler boats which belong to them, but also by the presence of the building which houses the Association for Chinese Fish Dealers. The neighboring MCA office suggests a strong tie between the economic strength of the Chinese *taukeys* and the political machinery of the ruling party. There is also a recently built, moderate-sized, Chinese temple which is located at a strategic place in the middle of Kampung Cina. All these serve to emphasize not only the physical presence but also the economic dominance of the Chinese.

The road that links this town to Alor Setar (capital of Kedah) is always busy with traffic, a basic indicator that Kuala Kedah is not an isolated fishing settlement. In fact, this town has all the features of a typical small town in peninsula Malaysia. Its five rows of shop houses constitute the

center of the town. Consistent with other small towns in peninsula Malaysia the setting in Kuala Kedah is familiar: the town area is populated by the Chinese who are in control of trading activities. There are two ice factories, several stores selling fishing gear of various bends, several locally famous seafood restaurants, grocery shops, beauty saloons, hardware stores, video rental stores and entertainment centers, all of which are owned and operated by Chinese.

Situated in the middle of Kampung Tok Pasai is a "wet market" – a place divided into about twenty lots, for the sale of fresh as well as dried fish, meat, vegetables and other food stuffs. These lots are divided and operated equally by the Chinese and Malays. Compared to those of the Chinese, the businesses of the Malays are of small scale. Nevertheless there are three medium-sized restaurants owned and operated by Malay families.

Kuala Kedah is a town where the old and the new intermingle. A runaway fire which broke out in Kampung Tok Pasai in the late 1960s, resulting in the destruction of several rows of old shop houses and a cluster of shabby squatter houses, was, according to one informant, "a blessing in disguise" for the town. Even though some of the old wooden shop houses spared by the fire still remained, within a few years, several new rows of double-storey brick shop houses were built, including a two-story building built by MARA (*Majlis Amanah Rakyat*, a government agency formed to help the indigenous Malay in business), an agency formed by the government to help the economic development of the Malays. It is within this MARA building that most of the Malays operate their business ventures, including the above mentioned Malay restaurants.

There is a *balai raya* (community hall) in Kampung Tok Pasai which has apparently been left unattended. Next to it is an open space for the *Pasar Rabu* (Wednesday market) – a weekly held open market which caters for the *peniaga pasar malam* (night market traders). Those involved are mainly Malays, especially peasants from neighboring areas who come to sell their agricultural surplus in this weekly small scale business venture.

Within Kampung Tok Pasai, there are also a police station, three school buildings, a small wooden building occupied by the Lembaga Kemajuan Ikan Malaysia (LKIM, the Malaysian Fisheries Development Authority), and a modern mosque with a large dome made of brass and a decorated fence. The mosque is in fact the most impressive building in Kuala Kedah.

The town itself can be divided into several parts according to the main economic and social functions of each area. Right along the river bank within Kampung Cina is the center of the fishing economy of Kuala Kedah. Within this area, there are 25 *pelantar ikan* (fishing boat jetties). On the jetties one can always see typical activities of a fishing economy: mending fishing nets, unloading marine catch (especially in the morning and late afternoons), pumping diesel for the fishing boats (every jetty has its own

pumping facility), sorting and weighing the catch, repairing the boat engines and so on. The roar of the boats' engines, the smell of fish and mud, the presence of a large number of bicycles, motorbikes, and pickup trucks as well as large trucks are testimony that the fishing economy of Kuala Kedah is very vibrant. It also reveals the prosperity of the Chinese capitalist class of Kuala Kedah.

The general prosperity of the population of Kampung Cina is symbolized by the presence of a large number of motor bikes, cars and pickup trucks parked in front of their houses-cum-offices. In fact, since many of them own brand new cars, there are about 30 fully covered garages where their cars are kept and protected from the rain and hot sun. Apart from owning attractive cars, and one or two motorbikes (some of their children go to secondary school by motorbikes – a symbol of family prosperity), Kampung Cina residents always have color television and video sets, stereo sets, telephones, and gambling tables for playing oakum (*mahjung*) at home. In the front of each house there is usually an ancestral tablet, an important symbol in the Chinese religious rites and beliefs of ancestor worship.

The Malay fishermen in the above mentioned *kampungs* live on the periphery of Kampung Cina. As in some other fishing villages in Malaysia, the Malay fishermen's houses are mainly built in a muddy area with narrow wooden platforms linking one house to another. These houses are closely built and are modest. Although a few of these Malay fishermen own motorcycles, the majority of them do not own any means of transportation, except bicycles. Each *kampung* has its own *surau* (prayer house), and small grocery store run by either Malays or Chinese.

At the entrance of each *kampung* there is always a sign board proclaiming the presence of the branch office of either UMNO (United Malay National Organization, a Malay political party which is the major partner in the ruling National Front) or PAS (Parti Islam SeMalaysia, the opposition party, otherwise known as the Pan Malaysian Islamic Party). Nevertheless there is no special office building for these political parties comparable to that owned by the MCA.

Compared to Kampung Cina, these Malay *kampungs* display the reduced living standards typical of the life situation of poor rural Malays. A survey involving about 1,700 fishermen in Kuala Kedah, conducted by the Planning Division of the Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia in 1985, reveals the socio-economic profile of these Malay fishermen. According to this survey, the average age of the fishermen is between 30 to 45; about 80 percent of them are married and each family has between five to nine members. Although 12 percent of them are illiterate, about 73 percent completed secondary schooling, while a further 15 percent reached the level of secondary school. About 90 percent of these fishermen live in

their own houses, but only 22 percent of them have been able to build their houses on their own land. About 40 percent of them are squatting illegally (*setinggalan*) on government land, and many are at present squatting legally (*menumpang*) on land owned by relatives or friends. These data indicate the wide gap in living standards among the population of Kuala Kedah based on ethnic differences. Still, in spite of these differences, Malays and Chinese do not form separate entities within the economic organization of Kuala Kedah. Although they play different roles in the fishing economy, Malays and Chinese have established symbiotic economic, socio-cultural, and political ties with one another for the past six or seven decades. Several hundred yards upstream, passing from Kampung Cina there is a newly-built custom checkpoint and a marine police base. Between these two bases is the *Kompleks Perikanan* (Fishing Complex), a modern building with a large open space built by the LKIM and managed by the Kuala Kedah Fishermen Association. It is connected to a jetty which can accommodate ten to fifteen fishing boats at a time for landing their catch or for taking on water, ice and diesel supplies. The *Kompleks Perikanan*, together with LKIM and the Fisheries Department Office of Kuala Kedah are government agents for economic development and offer hope for the Kuala Kedah Malay fishermen. However, these agencies, nevertheless, are regarded by the local Chinese capitalists as a class threat to their economic domination in the fishing economy of Kuala Kedah.

KUALA KEDAH FISHING ECONOMY IN GENERAL

As officially defined by the Fisheries Act of Malaysia (1984), a person who works not less than six months and derives not less than sixty percent of his income from fishing related activities within a year can be considered as a fisherman. Nevertheless, according to LKIM, "'fisherman' refers to a person who undertakes fishing as a source of income for more than 90 days" (LKIM 1986: 8).

TABLE 1. Kuala Kedah: Number of people involved in the fishing economy according to ethnic groups, 1986

Ethnic Groups	Number	Percentage
Malays	1553	88.4
Chinese	195	11.1
Others	7	0.5
Total	1755	100

Source: LKIM (1986:15)

Official figures (1986) indicate that there are 1553 Malays actively involved in the fishing economy of Kuala Kedah. At the same time only 195 Chinese were involved. According to the same source, 7 Thai fishermen were also working full time in Kuala Kedah in 1986, but they left a year later.

Generally, the fishing economy of Kuala Kedah can be divided into two sectors: the traditional small-scale inshore sector (*sektor nelayan pantai*) and the modern large-scale offshore sector (*sektor nelayan pukat tunda*). These two sectors differ significantly in several ways because of their different degrees of subsumption within capitalism.

THE INSHORE SECTOR

The inshore sector is predominantly a Malay domain, representing a leftover of their peasant-based fishing economy (cf. Firth 1948 [1966]). This sector establishes its base in the narrow Tok Pasai stream, about 200 yards away from Kampung Cina, the heart of the capital-intensive offshore sector. In 1987 the traditional sector of the Kuala Kedah fishing economy comprises 312 small boats (*perahu*), 83% of which is using outboard engines (*enjin sangkut*), and the rest is not. These boats were operated by almost the same number of Malay inshore fishermen. About 98 percent of these inshore fishermen are owner-operators, and, since most of them work alone, there is no kind of economic organization or division of labor involved among them. Thus each *perahu* is an independent fishing unit.

Some of these boats are mainly used for deriving incomes as local 'public' transportation for a small fee instead of for fishing since inshore fishing no longer secures sufficient income. Nevertheless, inshore fishing boats constitute about 35 to 40 percent of the total number of licensed fishing boats in Kuala Kedah as shown by Table 2.

TABLE 2. Kuala Kedah: Ownership of boats by categories of owners and types of boats, 1985

Types of Boats	Owned by Taukey		Owned by owner-operators		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Without engines	6	12.0	44	88.0	50	100
Outboard engines	21	8.0	241	92.0	262	100
Inboard Engines	223	53.6	193	46.4	416	100
No information	11	73.3	4	26.7	15	100
Total	261		482		743	
Percentage		35%		65%		100%

Source: LKIM (1986: 18)

The Kuala Kedah inshore fishing sector maintains some of the peasant economy's characteristics. Their production technology is relatively simple because they only operate small boats (*perahu*) powered by outboard engines (*enjin sangkut*), using simple fishing gear such as small drift nets (*pukat senyuh*) and hand lines (*rawai*). Their production horizon and capability is limited because of the size of their boats and gears. Even though their fishing zone, defined in the Fisheries Act of 1960, extend three miles offshore from the coastline, they are fully protected from the intrusion of offshore trawlers. Compared to the amount of capital invested in offshore fishing, inshore fishing needs very little. Inshore fishermen need to invest an initial capital of between \$1000 to \$1500 to cover the cost of a small boat, a small outboard engine (*enjin sangkut*) and a small fishing net (*pukat tangsi/senyuh*). After getting fishing permits from the Fisheries Department (*Jabatan Perikanan*), they are on their own as small scale owner-operators.

Nevertheless, this sector is not exclusively an enclave domain, for it has external economic relations. Through market relations inshore fishermen, similar to most peasant communities all over the world, sell all or part of their catch and purchase goods and services they do not produce themselves (Potter 1968: 3). The inshore sector is thus an integral part of the overall modern market economy operating in Kuala Kedah. Close consideration of their production sphere reveals that this inshore fishing sector differs significantly from the offshore sector for the former has not been completely adopted by the capitalist mode of production.

The concept of "mode of production" used here refers to "a combination – which is capable of reproducing itself – of productive forces and specific social relations of production which determine the structure and form of the process of production and the circulation of material goods within a historically determined society" (Godelier 1977: 18).

From this mode of production perspective, the inshore fishing sector of Kuala Kedah can be said to be still a part of the Malay peasant economy. Inshore fishing production is not solely for the fishermen's own household consumption. It is mainly for the market, even though it is their common practice to take a certain portion of their catch for home consumption. Inshore fishermen only catch low grade fish, especially cat fish (there are no official figures on the inshore fishermen's production). Their catch is sold to local Malay fish dealers who send it to the fish market in Alor Setar, the Kedah state capital, six miles away.

PRODUCTION

Having inherited their occupation from their fathers, most of these Malay inshore fishermen regard themselves as pure fishermen (*nelayan tulen*). Except for the use of outboard engines, a modern element which has

penetrated into their economic life, their production activities revolve around the use of inherited traditional 'production' tools. These fishermen still use the same type of small boats (*perahu*) which were used by their fathers. This limits them to only fishing within the inshore area. They use only simple fishing gear which, together with the cost of their small boats, requires no large capital investment. The most popular fishing gear used are *pukat senyuh* (small drift nets, also called *pukat tangsi*), and fish-lines and hooks (*rawai, pancing*).

Because of technological simplicity of the fishing gear used, most of the inshore fishermen work alone, though there are exceptions. For instance, because of their advanced age, a few inshore fisherman need extra help in handling their boats and nets, and this help is usually available from a son or grandson. These helpers are not paid any kind of wage because they are not considered employees nor does the old fisherman himself play the role of an employer. When he works alone, the traditional fisherman handles each step of his production activities. He decides when and where to go fishing, what kind of fishing gear to use, how long he will fish, when to draw his net or fish-lines, when to stop, and what to do with his catch. As an economic actor, he has absolute autonomy so far as production is concerned.

In Kuala Kedah, the inshore fishermen have established their own bases along the narrow Tok Pasai river, situated in the middle of Kampung Tok Pasai and away from the Kedah river bank where the off shore-fishing boats congregate. Their physical separation from the offshore sector is consciously maintained.

The inshore fishermen in Kuala Kedah are mainly owner-operators. They usually need small capital to buy a small boat, an outboard engine and a small fishing net (*pukat tangsi/senyuh*) which, compared to the capital invested by the off shore *tawkey*, these amounts are very little. Inshore fishermen therefore do not establish significant formal relationships with financial institutions, especially with commercial banks. In fact, it is very rare for inshore Malay fishermen to attempt to borrow money for their investment capital from financial institutions. Most of their initial capital invested to buy small boats and fishing gear was traditionally assembled with contributions from members of their own family (especially working children) or from loans given by close relatives. More recently, those who are strong supporters of the ruling party, have secured their initial capital or fishing gear from local politicians through government economic aid programs. Such grants are actually rewards for political support. Some of these lucky fishermen may even get their outboard engines through such 'development projects'. The rest, after securing their own boats and gears, buy their outboard engines from the Chinese dealers through an 'easy payment' scheme in six or twelve installments. Once these installments are

paid, they are free of any economic ties in the sphere of production. Most inshore fishermen are thus free producers.

Since most inshore fishermen work alone, they do not establish any relations of production in the sphere of production. Within their own territorial domain of the inshore zone, they still consider the sea as their common property resource although they work independently of one another. Their relations of production are established within a unit of production, but within their sector. This "sectorial relations of production" is mainly bound by their common interests, shaped by their common belief system regarding economic activities, and expressed mainly in the forms of ritualistic symbols and representations within the realm of this belief system. It is through collective participation in such rituals that they agree on common procedures and strategies for their economic activities, especially upon ways to deal with the supernatural forces which they believed control the sea and its fish. These indirect relations of production are established through their common experiences, for should any of them fail to observe certain fishing taboos, all might face the same consequences in the form of disturbances from the supernatural forces. Hence, relations of production in this context refer to relations among free producers based on their common interests in production formed in the sphere of collectively held belief systems and rituals. But these ritually-based relations of production are not situated within any form of class structure (a more detailed exploration on this subject, which is in order, is under preparation).

POVERTY

The inshore fishermen of Kuala Kedah represent the poor group in the community. According to a survey conducted by the LKIM (LKIM 1986), their average monthly income of \$150 to \$200 is below the national official poverty level of \$300. This writer's random income survey conducted among these inshore fishermen in November 1987 showed a similar picture. Yet some of these fishermen, especially members of the older generation, are reluctant to move into other occupations. Even though they realize that inshore fishing has no future anymore, it has become part of their life. The younger generation has lost their interest in inshore fishing. Indeed, the older inshore fishermen do not want their children to follow them into their occupation. Thus, those of their children who remain in the fishing industry, work mostly as *awak-awak* in trawler boats.

Figures in Table 3 show income differences among members of the Kuala Kedah fishing community according to types of gear used. From this table, it can be seen that inshore fishermen who operate drift nets (operated using small boats of less than 10 tons), scoop nets, traps and hooks and lines have the lowest income levels.

TABLE 3. Kuala Kedah: Average monthly income of *taukey*, *taikong* and *awak-awak* according to gear used 1986

Types of Boats/Gears	<i>Taukey</i>	<i>Taukey/Taikong</i>	<i>Taikong</i>	<i>Awak-Awak</i>
Small trawlers	-	300 - 600	-	200 - 300
Medium trawlers	300 - 600	400 - 800	400	250 - 350
Large trawlers	500 - 800	-	500 - 600	300 - 400
Fish Purse seine	2,000	-	1,500	300 - 400
Drift nets				
(- 10 tons)	350	-	200	
Drift nets				
(- 10 tons)	235	-	180	
Scoop nets	-	240	-	160
Traps	-	200	-	150
Hooks & lines	-	140 - 200	-	100 - 150

Source: LKIM (1986: 18)

Table 4 shows income distribution among 1755 members of the Kuala Kedah fishing community, based on a socio-economic survey conducted by the LKIM. This table shows that their average monthly income is about M\$350.00. Nevertheless, about 45% of them, which comprised most of the inshore fishermen, earn less than this average figure.

TABLE 4. Kuala Kedah: Monthly income of fishermen 1986

Monthly Income (M\$)	No. of Fishermen	Percentage	Cumulative %
< 50	4	0.22	0.22
50 - 100	7	0.39	0.61
101 - 150	19	1.08	1.69
151 - 200	72	4.10	5.79
201 - 250	149	8.49	14.28
251 - 300	319	18.17	32.45
301 - 350	243	13.33	45.78
351 - 400	184	10.48	56.26
401 - 450	116	6.60	62.86
451 - 500	109	6.21	69.07
> 500	533	30.37	100.00 (rounded)
Total	1755	100.00	

Source: LKIM (1986:13) (recalculated).

Their main reason for continuing to work as inshore fishermen is for their own subsistence for food. There is no clear tendency among them to raise their economic activity from this subsistence level to one that is fully integrated into the modern capitalistic production. The inshore fishermen's first priority is to get *lauk* (fish or meat cooked for consumption with rice) for their households' daily food consumption. They consider getting any extra catch beyond their immediate consumption needs as a rare privilege given by *Allah*. This extra catch means that they have additional fish, beyond the amount needed for their own household's consumption, which can be sold to the fish mongers, and the cash income thereby attained can be used to buy rice and other cooking ingredients. But even the rare privilege of such a windfall still serves only their subsistence needs, which are related mainly to food.

Because they consume in subsistence a major part of what they produce, their economic situation is best described in the familiar Malay proverb which they themselves cite as "*kais pagi makan pagi, kais petang makan petang*" (what you earn in the morning you consume in the morning, what you earn in the afternoon you consume in the afternoon, i.e., a hand-to-mouth existence). They realize that the volume of their catch is decreasing constantly every year. At the same time, prices for their catch are not increasing proportionately. Their real incomes are thus steadily decreasing. They believe that the most important reason for their decreasing catch and incomes is the encroachment of the offshore fishing boats into their fishing grounds. These intrusions, they believe, have ruined the breeding grounds of coastal fish, especially the relatively higher priced coral fish (*ikan kerapu*).

Their poor income is also due to the low prices offered by the fish-mongers for their catch. Since they use the simple drift net (*pukat senyuh*), they manage to catch only several types of cat fish (*ikan sembilang laut*) which have a low market value. Very rarely do they come across 'good' fish in their nets which can give them a better income.

In addition to these, their low productivity and income are believed to be caused by, according to one informant, the offshore fishermen's refusal to observe ritual elements associated with inshore fishing taboos and traditions, resulting in the disappearance of several types of fish from the Kuala Kedah inshore area. But, given their unchanged levels of capital investment, the simplicity of the fishing technology they use, and their belief in rituals and supernatural forces, even if the LKIM were to change its policy regarding the issuing of inshore fishing permits, the situation of these impoverished inshore fishermen would remain unchanged. Their low income levels would simply not permit them to accumulate surplus resources for investment in more lucrative offshore fishing and thus to free themselves from their culture of poverty.

Securing the extra income to enable them to buy other goods is indeed rare. It is beyond any dream that they might save enough money from their inshore fishing activities to buy property in the form of land, houses or cars. This explains why most inshore fishermen squat on government land or build their small wooden houses on land belonging to relatives.

Some of them are lucky in having grown up children who work elsewhere and are not involved in the fishing industry. These children are normally generous enough to contribute financial support for their old folks and non-working brothers and sisters. Through these contributions some inshore fishermen manage to raise their actual living standards. Commonly, the radio or television sets in the houses of these inshore fishermen are bought from these contributions by their working children.

EXCHANGE

Despite the fact that these small-scale owner-operators own their own fishing boats and gear and hence are independent in the sphere of production, most of them establish exchange relations with a small number of fish dealers (*peraih ikan*) who control the wholesale market of the inshore fishing sector. The fishermen do not market their own catch because they are not legally permitted to do so. A Fishery Department and District Office rule stipulates that they must sell their catch to any of the fish dealers licensed by the Fishery Department.

These middlemen or fish-mongers comprised exclusively of a small group of Malay entrepreneurs. When this study was conducted in 1987, there were about ten Malay fish-mongers involved in marketing the inshore fishermen's catch. Compared to the comfortable economic life of the Chinese fish dealers in the offshore sector, these Malay fish-mongers have a low economic position. Most of them use small motorbikes to transport their goods, not only because they are dealing with small quantities of goods but also because they could not afford to buy better means of transportation. To use Clifford Geertz's terminology, these Malay fish-mongers are still operating their business at the level of "bazaar" economy (Geertz 1963).

This writer's own calculation shows that a fish-monger trading the inshore fishermen's catch earns between \$400 to \$500 monthly, an income clearly above the official poverty line which the fishermen themselves do not attain. Nevertheless, this income gap is tolerated since the fish-monger is regarded by the fishermen as *orang kita Melayu* (our Malay brothers) or *orang sesama Islam* (a Muslim brother), who, according to an informant, has no malice against the poor Malay fishermen. The most common expression used by fish-mongers to describe their intimate relationship with the fish-mongers is "*kita mencari rezki sesama saudara Islam*" (we strive together as Muslim brothers for our *rezki* – God's Abundance).

Among these inshore fishermen, their relations in the exchange sphere are more explicit compared to the production sphere production. These relations are made up of two dimensions. First, the market spectrum in which relations of exchange develop between fishermen and fish-mongers as sellers and buyers. In this sphere, their interactions and relationships are relatively formal, so long as they agree on some basic exchange principles. It is through this formal relationship that they reach agreement on the prices of fish, after a minimum process of bargaining. The other spectrum comprised the interactions and relationships established between them by their religious teachings. The principle of relationships applied in this dimension is basically derived from the notion of *'muamalah'*, a general Islamic concept which governs the principles of trade. The concept of *muamalah* lays out basic rules for trading activities which are to be guided by consensus and the rejection of *'riba'* (usury) and exploitation. Formal marketing procedures and *muamalah* principles blend together and become the framework of their exchange relations.

The fishermen in no way claimed to be exploited or unjustly treated by the middlemen who determine the price of their catch. Even so, there were cases where several inshore fishermen "ran away" from their middlemen to seek a better price for their catch. The middlemen's response to this is that "*kalau ada rezki saya, mereka yang lari itu akan datang kembali*" (if it is my *rezki* [read, economic fate] they will eventually come back to me). Relationships among these groups with their different economic roles are based on personal loyalty and Muslim brotherhood. Social relationships between small scale inshore fishermen and fish-mongers are in fact relatively cordial. This is because the fish-mongers, according to an informant, "are not that rich either".

Such socio-economic ties cannot be described in terms of employer-employee relationships. Relationships between the inshore fishermen and their middlemen are not based on kinship ties but rather on religious and ethnic identities. It is the shared sentiment of common religion and ethnicity that solidifies their association. Inshore fishermen who break this solidarity are branded by the fish-mongers as "*nelayan tak bersemangat Melayu dan Islam*" (fishermen who lack the collective spirit of Malay and Muslim brotherhood).

These commercial interactions and exchange relations take place only in the market place, usually at the fish-mongers' collection centers. Beyond these places, social relationships between members of the two groups, are not really close, except when they gather to observe certain rituals. Since rituals to appease supernatural forces are not held very often, they interact only during congregation of Friday prayers. Even interactions during these Friday prayers are very brief. In this context, it is not possible to see any explicit signs of collective consciousness, symbols and representations, or

the presence of mechanical solidarity among these inshore fishermen as a distinctive class. Though they share their poverty, these fishermen do not practice any forms of leveling rituals or 'slametan' (Geertz 1960).

The presence of these inshore fishermen in Kuala Kedah will be short-lived. According to the most recent LKIM's ruling, fishing permits for inshore operations are only to be given to local (and 'pure') fishermen who own small fishing boats. But these permits are not renewable. LKIM's rationale behind this ruling is that in order to eradicate poverty among the inshore fishermen, they have to be discouraged from this "unproductive" sector and instead encouraged to become farmers in government sponsored FELDA scheme (FELDA – Federal Land Development Authority), or to become tobacco growers, which would give them higher incomes. In addition to this ruling, the still valid fishing permits are not transferable to anybody, not even to their own sons, if the permit holders decide to retire from fishing. Thus, the future disappearance of the inshore fishermen, basically through government action, seems certain.

THE OFFSHORE SECTOR AND ITS CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION

It is in the offshore sector that elements of the capitalist mode of production can be identified: the development of production activities mainly for exchange; the process of turning labour power into a commodity; the practice of economic coercion and exploitation of the producing class through surplus-extraction by the non-producing class; the extension of the reproduction of capital; and the rise of opposing economic classes.

The capitalist mode of production develops when its basic conditions exist: proletarianization of a class of direct producers and the accumulation of money capital by the capitalist class. According to Marxian interpretation, it is this class of direct producers who create the material value of society. But because members of this class do not own the means of production, they have to sell their labour-power in order to subsist, hence its transformation into a form of commodity to be bought and sold. The capitalist class, comprising the owners of the means of production employ wage-laborers to produce output for market exchange. It is through the ownership of money capital that the capitalist class has control of the production process and of the output of commodities produced. Further, the capitalist class, because of its ownership of money capital, is able to appropriate surplus value produced from the labor of the laboring class. This surplus value is made up of the difference between the value produced by labour and the value of wages paid to the labouring class. The surplus value thus appropriated is turned into capital capable of accumulating itself, hence raising the organic composition of capital in production (Marx

in Tucker 1978: 302-438), i.e. the amount or ratio of "dead" or "concealed" labour invested in the form of capital, in relation to the amount of living labour employed.

The fishing economy in West Malaysia began to be subsumed within the capitalist mode of production and exchange through the spread of Chinese circulation capital into the traditional Malay fishing economy as early as in the 1920's. Through their trading practices in the rural areas, and through their connection with wholesale markets in the cities, the Chinese traders become middlemen (*orang tengah*) or fish dealers (*peraih ikan*) for most of the Malay fishermen, especially on the west coast of West Malaysia. In the early 1920's, most of the Malay fishermen in the west coast became dependent on the Chinese fish dealers or middlemen, or broadly *taukey*, to buy their catch for cash. Through this economic role the Chinese *taukey*-cum-traders managed to accumulate large profits which were later transformed into production capital when they began to invest their money in buying fishing boats and nets, which they hired Malay fishermen to operate.

A report published in 1923 (Stead 1923) gives a preliminary picture of the economic and social roles played by Chinese *taukey* in West Malaysia. Stead's report illustrates how economic ties between the Malay fishermen and their *taukeys* are perpetuated through financial dependency of the former upon their *taukeys*, and how they perceived their *taukeys* as their "best friend," who is considerate and always ready to supply them with their living necessities (Stead 1923: 127).

TABLE 5. Kuala Kedah: Ownership of boats by categories of owners and tons/volumes 1986

Tons/Volumes of Boats by Tons	Owned by <i>Taukey</i>		Owned by owner-operators		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
9.9 or less ¹	93	18.7	405	81.3	498	100
10.0 – 25.0	48	61.5	30	38.5	78	100
25.1 – 39.9	49	75.4	16	24.6	65	100
40.0 – 69.9	61	84.7	11	15.3	72	100
70.0 – 99.9	–	–	2	100.0	2	100
No informations	10	35.7	18	64.3	28	100
Total	261		482		743	
Percentage		35%		65%		100%

Source: LKIM (1986: 17).

Note: ¹Mainly *perahu*.

Table 5, which has to be read together with Table 2, shows that types ownership of fishing boats have significant correlations with their sizes (tonnages) and usage. While small boats (*perahu*) are mainly owned and operated by the owners themselves, big boats are mainly owned by *taukey* who do not operate them themselves. Table 3 shows that there is an inverted relationship between the size of boats and with whether they are owned by *taukey* of owner-operators – the larger the boats are, it is most likely that they are owned by a non-operator *taukey*. Nevertheless, there is an exception that there are two more than 70 ton boats which are owned by owner-operators. Actually, these boats are owned by the Kuala Kedah Fishermen Cooperation, hence the classification.

The 1987 figures show that there are about 410 trawler boats operating from Kuala Kedah. Of these, about 60 percent are trawler boats of between 10 and 25 tons; almost 15 percent of these are trawler boats of between 26 and 40 tons, and another 15 percent are boats of between 41 and 70 tons. At the same time, there are seven purse seine boats (*bot pukat jerut*) of between 50 and 90 tons, owned by the Kuala Kedah (Malay) Fishermen's Association and operated by the local Malay fishermen. But these purse seine boats have not been operated efficiently and hence are running at a loss and will soon stop operating. Each trawler boat (fishing unit, not *production unit*) is usually operated by four to five workers: one *taikong* (skipper), two or three *awak-awak* (crew) depending on the size of the trawler boats, and a pilot (*juru-enjin* or the engine man).

It is estimated that there are 860 Malay *awak-awak* in Kuala Kedah, most of whom work with trawler boats. At the same time about 400 Malays work as skippers (*taikong*) for trawler boats. Sixty percent of these *taikong* work in boats owned by *taukey* (owners of fishing boats and gear and hence are the major employers), most of whom are Chinese. According to official sources, there are about 190 Malay fishermen who work as *taikong* of their own boats. This category of fishermen is known locally as *taukey-taikong* (owner-operators). Official figures indicate that there are 20 Malay owner-non-operators (*taukey tulen*) and 19 Malay fish dealers (*taukey ikan*) in Kuala Kedah.

The Chinese who are involved in the Kuala Kedah fishing economy are mainly as *taukey*. Most of them are owners of fishing boats and gear (*taukey bot*), employers of other fishermen who are mostly Malays, and fish dealers (*pemborong ikan*) or middle men (*orang tengah*) for those who do not sell their catch themselves. But there are 12 Chinese who are *taukey-taikong* and 21 who work as *taikong* in boats owned by Chinese *taukey*. Not one Chinese works as an *awak-awak*, nor does even one Chinese work for a Malay *taukey*, not even as a *taikong*.

This offshore sector develops along with the growth and domination of Chinese capital in the fishing economy of Kuala Kedah. While official

figures show that there are Malay *taukey* who, on formal record, own some offshore fishing boats, in reality this is not so. It is an open secret that Chinese *taukey* use the names of their Malay *taikong* when they apply for fishing permits and when they register the ownership of their boats. There are at least two reasons for this practice. First, it is easier to get a fishing permit if the application is made by a local Malay fisherman. Thus, Chinese *taukey* who trust the Malay *taikong* working with them will usually use their names for this purpose. Such business ventures are known colloquially as "Ali-Baba" ventures, where Ali refers to the Malay and Baba to the Chinese (Ali being a common Malay Muslim name while "Baba" is a vernacular term for a Malay-speaking Chinese merchant of the peninsula). Second, from the Chinese *taukey*'s point of view it is better not to claim legal ownership of more than two or three fishing boats should he wish to conceal his real income. Most Chinese *taukeys* try to conceal their actual monthly income. If they consent even to discuss it at all, their standard response is "tak untung" (not profitable). The main reason is that officers from the Income Tax Division of the Internal Revenue Department have, of late, begun to harass them for tax evasion. Thus, in actuality, the majority of offshore trawler boats are owned by Chinese *taukey*. But this is not to deny that there are some Malay fishermen who actually own offshore fishing boats and gear.

TAUKEY: THE CAPITALIST CLASS

Since Chinese traders began to encroach into the economic life of the rural Malay peasantry, the term *taukey* has become an important terminology in the economic vocabulary of the rural population of West Malaysia. Etymologically, *taukey* is a Hokkien word which means "leader". In the context of the Chinese household-based economic enterprise, a *taukey* refers to the head of a nuclear or an extended family who, because of his position, becomes the manager of the family's economic enterprise, especially in trading activities. If this household-based economic enterprise employs non-family members as workers, then he becomes the employer as well. Thus in a broader and common context, a *taukey* who is the head of a household in a Chinese trading unit is also the "boss" whose decisions in business matters under his control are rarely disputed by members of his family and his employees.

In the fishing community, originally the term *taukey ikan* refers to the Chinese fish-dealers (*orang tengah* or middlemen). In short, the *taukey* class emerge in the beginning as traders and middlemen and thus are mainly active in the sphere of exchange. It is through these activities that the economic dominance of this class developed vis-a-vis the subordinate position of the Malay peasant and rural population, including the Malay

fishermen. This dominant position, among others, is clearly expressed by using terminologies which are used to describe certain economic aspect or process.

In the fishing economy of the west coast of West Malaysia, several Chinese words are popularly used to describe certain things. Other than the word *taukey*, Chinese terms like *taikong* (skipper), *tu'a* (transaction records) and *panggu* (floating shares) are widely used and understood by the Malay fishermen. This is because the fishing economy in the west coast of West Malaysia is controlled by the Chinese. Even though the Malay word *juragan* (skipper) is used by the east coast Malay fishing community, this word is rarely used in the west coast. The acceptance and widespread use of these Chinese words reflect the strong economic position of the Chinese compared to that of the Malays in the east coast fishing industry.

CAPITALIST PRODUCTION

The capability of these trading activities to generate profits has led to the creation of commercial capital which is slowly transformed into production capital. The development of the capitalist mode of production within socio-economic formation of the Kuala Kedah fishing community has passed its embryonic stage. The employment of the *nelayan-pekerja* (fishermen workers) class by the *taukeys* (the capitalists), and the control which this non-producing class consequently exercises in the production and exchange spheres and through which it accumulates surplus value, are the primary manifestations of the existence of this mode of production. The formation of the *nelayan-pekerja* class takes place within a specific form of production relations which separate them from ownership of the means of production – fishing boats, engines, nets and so on, and hence require them to sell their labour power for wages in order to subsist. Within this off-shore sector, labour-power takes the form of a commodity, to be bought and sold. The *taukeys* are the owners of the means of production, whose main interest is to produce commodities mainly for market exchange; they thus become the major employer to the *nelayan-pekerja* class. This process takes place through the practice of the *bertaukey* system (the system of having or becoming tied to a *taukey*), an economic institution practiced in almost all west coast fishing communities.

Because of their economic position, the *taukey* play the roles of the capitalists, employer-managers, merchants, fish dealers, and creditors, simultaneously. The *taukey* is thus the central and controlling figure of a producing and exchange unit since he is the one who decides how much fixed capital is to be invested in the production sphere and in what forms (i.e., type of boat and gear), how many workers are to be employed, how much wages or shares are to be paid to his workers, how much in daily cash loans (*hutang wang*) is to be advanced to his workers and so on.

Thus each *taukey* can be regarded as an independent unit of production in the Kuala Kedah fishing economy. Because of the homogeneity of production and exchange systems followed by most *taukeys* in Kuala Kedah, an observation of the activities of one *taukey* will also quite accurately describe the others, except for their variations in economic scale. The overlapping roles played by the *taukey* demonstrate his position as a member of the capitalist class within the context of the relations of production he has established with his workers.

In the Kuala Kedah fishing community, the *taukeys* play their roles in both the production and circulation spheres. They are comprised of two major groups of capital owners who differ in terms of the number of roles they play and the size of their capital: (1) *taukey kecil* (small scale owners), and (2) *taukey besar* (large scale owners).

The *taukey kecil* category is made up of two groups: (i) the owner-operator (*taukey-taikong*), and (ii) the owner-non-operator (*taukey tidur*/sleeping owners). The difference between the owner-operators and the owner-non-operators is due only to the fact that the former work as the *taikong* of their own boats, while the latter do not work at all due to old age, lack of experience (no fishing background), and so on.

With the exception of a few Chinese, most of the owner-operators in Kuala Kedah are Malays. Even though most of these owner-operators possess their own boats and gear, they do not have enough operational capital to finance their daily fishing activities. In addition to this, the Malay owner-operators do not have their own marketing outlet for their catch. Thus they have to depend on the *taukey besar* (large scale owners) to provide the daily supply of fuel and ice on credit and cash credit (*hutang wang*) needed by the boat crew members, as well as to market their catch. Thus, even though the owner-operators possess a relatively independent status and hence are small *taukeys* in the sphere of production by virtue of their position as employers of deck hands, they are nonetheless dependent on the bigger *taukeys* for matters related to the supply of variable capital, maintenance costs, and the marketing of their catch.

It is the practice among the Malay owner-operators in Kuala Kedah to berth their boats at their *taukey's* jetty to take on supplies of diesel, ice, and water before each fishing expedition. During this time, the crew members, including the owner-cum-*taikong*, will ask for cash loans from their *taukey* who, in this case, is the buyer of their potential catch. The *taukey* seldom rejects this loan application. All the relevant information – the amount of diesel and ice supplied to the boat (water is supplied free of charge), and the amount of cash money loaned to the crew members-is recorded by the *taukey*. On returning from their fishing trip, the total value of the *taikong's* catch is calculated and recorded in the *tu'a*, a copy of which is kept both by the *taukey* and the *taikong*.

At the end of a fishing month (*sekali panggu*, one fishing cycle), the owner-operator-cum-*taikong* will calculate the total gross value of catch (gross income), production costs (diesel and ice), and loan advanced by his *taukey* in order to arrive at the net value of production to be distributed among his crew. In the case of owner-operators, the owner (who is also the *taikong*) will have to deduct, from his total gross income, the costs of diesel, ice and loan advanced by the *taukey*. The remainder represents the net income of the boat. Of this, the owner takes one-half, while the other half is divided equally among the hired fishermen working on the boat. The owner, in addition, gets his share as the *taikong* of his own boat.

INCOME DISTRIBUTION UNDER CAPITALISM

Under capitalist production relations, the wage paid to workers is merely payment for the producer's ability to work and not for the actual labour rendered. The value of labour not paid to the producer is called surplus value. Characterized by generalized commodity production and exchange, capitalism in reality involves the production of values. The capitalist class therefore accumulates capital both from extracting surplus labour and manipulating exchange values.

In Kuala Kedah, the distribution of earnings under *bertaukey* arrangements is called the *sistem panggu* (*panggu* system). *Panggu* is from the Chinese word (*pong-ku*) which means "floating shares." The calculation of earnings is based on the daily catch of each fishing boat. Earnings from fishing days are normally accumulated for three to four weeks. When the *taukey*, *taikong* and *awak-awak* feel it is time to divide their accumulated earnings, they will then calculate their total profit and loss, known as "*pecah panggu*" (dividing the shares) for the said period. These earnings are recorded on a receipt called, usually in Chinese, *tu'a*.

In trawler-fishing, each expedition begins at the *taukey's* jetty. The *taukey* will provide enough diesel for his sea-going boats and ascertain that there is a sufficient supply of ice blocks and fresh water (for drinking and washing) while at sea. It is a common practice that before each fishing expedition, the *taukey* gives "*duit belanja*" (spending money, or loan) to his *taikong* and *awak-awak*. This advance will be deducted from their earnings later on. Each fishing trip takes between eight to ten hours. The *taukey* normally waits anxiously for his boats to come back with a good catch, and will ask his other non-seagoing workers to sort out the catch, as soon as it has arrived, according to the type and size (or grade) of fish or other marine catch obtained. Following this, each category is weighed and recorded. The *taukey* will then produce a *tu'a* for that day's catch, a copy of which is given to the boat's *taikong*.

A *tu'a* contains several pieces of information: (1) prices for each type of catch according to their grades, (2) amounts of *duit belanja* taken by the

crew, and (3) costs of diesel and ice blocks advanced by the *taukey*. A simple calculation of net income is shown by deducting items (2) and (3) from the total gross stock value summed up by (1). The value of net income is then divided into equal portions, one half of which is for the *taukey*, the other half to be divided equally among the crew. It is a common practice and an open secret, that a *taukey* will give an incentive payment (known as “*bonos*”, bonus) to his *taikong* in order to secure their utmost loyalty. In Kuala Kedah, this incentive payment ranges from between M\$5 to M\$7 for each expedition, especially one that is successful.

The calculation of income from one *panggu* of a *taikong* and his *awak-awak* is based solely on the total share of their boat’s earning for that period. The share received by a *taikong* and two *awak-awak* from the total gross earnings of one *panggu* may be represented diagrammatically as follows: collection of *tu’a*, the incomes of a *taikong* and two *awak-awak* are as follows:

TABLE 6. The Panggu formula

		Gross Catch Value		
Operating Cost		Net Catch Value		
		50% for the Boat Owner (Taukey)	50% for the Crew	
Fuel	I c e	T a i k o n g	a w a k - a w a k	a w a k - a w a k
	<i>Taukey</i> pays his <i>taikong</i> 5% of his share		1	2

In theory, a *taukey’s* income for one *panggu* is derived from his share of the gross earnings. But in reality his earnings come from other sources as well. These include: (1) profits from supplying diesel for his own boats as well as for other boats under his *taukey*, (2) profit from similarly supplying ice blocks, and (3) profit from being a fish dealer, the value of which depends on how well he manipulates price structure.

In Kuala Kedah, the current price profit sharing system is most commonly practiced in distributing earnings. The previous method of 'fixed-price profit sharing' in which the owner of the fishing vessel buys the catch from his fishing crew at fixed rates has long been abandoned. Current-price profit sharing developed as a result of negotiations between the *taukey* and their crew, for the fishermen have realized that under the earlier fixed-price system, the *taukey* profitted greatly from price fluctuations. The current-price profit sharing system operates in theory as follows: the boat owner buys the fish that are landed at an agreed upon current prices, according to their types and grades. The total market value of the catch so calculated is called the 'Gross Stock of Production Income' (Yap Chan Ling 1977: 59). This 'Gross Stock' then becomes the basis for calculation of profit after operating costs are deducted.

Relationships between the owner-operators and the fish dealers are totally based on trust without any written agreement. The fact that they are local people who have known one another for a long time is vital for this kind of relationship to prevail. The verbal agreement is very simple: (1) the fish dealer agrees to supply diesel, ice and water to an owner-operator, (2) the owner-operator agrees to sell his catch to this *taukey*, (3) the *taukey* agrees to advance small sums of money to the owner-operator when he needs cash, and this loan must be repaid within a certain time (based on the amount of money advanced by the *taukey*). It is rare to hear of an owner-operator not fulfilling his obligation to sell his catch to his *taukey*. In fact, should any owner-operator try to sell his catch to someone else for any reason, no other fish dealer will buy his catch. All the *taukey besar* (in this case, the fish dealers) are the exclusive members of the Boat Owners Association of Kuala Kedah, and they will protect one another's interests. Thus the difference between the small and the big *taukeys* is not limited only to the size of capital involved; it also embraces the wider range of economic roles played by the latter, which the former cannot match.

The owner-non-operators among the *taukey kecil* differ from the owner-operators in terms of their inability to contribute their labor power in the fishing activities. Most of these non-operators do not go fishing anymore because of old age. However, a few do not go fishing simply because fishing has never been a part of their economic life. Another difference is that the owner-non-operators do not get a share as *taikongs*. In addition, the owner-non-operators have to face the added problem of maintaining the loyalty and honesty of their employees. The Malay owner-non-operators' *taukey kecil* judge the loyalty and honesty of their Malay Muslim employees on the basis of their own impressions of their religiosity (*kekuatan berugama*).

The economic position of these Malay *taukey kecil* who operate trawler boats is better than that of the inshore fishermen and their own employees.

Nevertheless, even though they are quite autonomous in the sphere of production, they are tied to the economic strength of the *taukey besar*. Thus they represent a weaker fraction of the capitalist class who are dependent upon the stronger one.

OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

Capital exists in the sphere of circulation as well as in the sphere of production. A member of the capitalist class is thus anyone who accumulates capital in either one or both of these spheres of activity. In the sphere of circulation, capital appears in the form of commercial capital (or merchant capital), usury capital and finance or interest-bearing capital which generally entails the loan of cash funds or other forms of credit in order to recoup a higher sum later. But capital in the sphere of production is made up of constant capital which refers to capital in the form of means of production, and variable capital which is the cost of reproducing the labor force. Under the *bertaukey* system of Kuala Kedah, the Chinese *taukey* own and control both circulation and production capital.

The involvement of the Chinese *taukey*' capital in the circulation sphere started in the early twentieth century. During this period until the early 1960's, the Chinese did not invest their capital in the production sphere. But they were involved in the process of buying and selling fish for the market. Since merchant capital is accumulated by buying fish from the Malay fishermen at low prices and selling them to the wholesale buyers in the big towns at higher prices, the accumulative degree of capital depends on the expansion of fish markets and other related trading involving these *taukeys*. In West Malaysia, fish marketing networks began to be established when physical and financial linkages between fishing villages and big towns developed in the early 1920's. While "physical linkage" refers to the development of roads connecting villages and towns making the transportation of fish possible, "financial linkage" refers to the network established among the *taukey* and the fish traders throughout West Malaysia. The growth and development of fish-trading activities on a large scale were taking place through the exclusive involvement of the Chinese traders. There is no evidence to show that European capital in West Malaysia was ever involved in this sector.

Trawling was introduced in Kuala Kedah and its operation found profitable in the early 1960s. The purse seine, once the net most commonly in used among Malay fishermen, has become increasingly less popular. The introduction of trawling was responsible for this, and since that time off-shore fishing and trawling have become synonymous. Of 416 fishing boats with inboard engines operating from Kuala Kedah in 1987, more than 95 percent were trawler boats. The rest are purse seine boats.

Trawling as practiced in Kuala Kedah does not entail the use of large boats, as does purse seining. About 60 percent of trawler boats used are between 15 and 40 tons, while about 30 percent are between 41 and 70 tons. Only two boats weighing more than 70 tons are used in Kuala Kedah, and these are purse seine boats, owned by the *LKIM* and operated by Malay fishermen under a special development program introduced by the government. In fact, from 1960s until late 1970s, the majority of trawling boats used seldom exceeded 30 tons and were powered by engines of between 20 and 50 horse power. But in the early 1980s a few *taukey* began to use the more efficient trawl nets which are called *pukat apollo* (apollo net). Since it is longer and wider than the first generation of trawl nets, *pukat apollo* needs to be pulled by stronger boats; hence boats are now more than 40 tons and powered by engines of between 100 and 200 horse power. From the early 1980s most trawlers above 40 tons began to have their own inboard refrigerators and air conditioning units. These developments show that the owners of capital have become confident that they will receive good returns on their investments.

A brief random survey of ten Chinese *taukey* in Kuala Kedah provides some vital information concerning size of boats owned, their ownership status, initial capital invested, and the year these men started as *taukey*. Table 7 reveals that most of them became *taukey* more than ten years ago.

Of these ten *taukey*, two are fish dealers (*taukey ikan*) who do not own any boats, the rest are owners-non-operators. Most of the trawler boats owned by these *taukey* are of 30 to 40 tons costing initially between \$70,000 and \$100,000 respectively. Seven of these boat owners started their careers working with their fathers. After inheriting their fathers' boats, they managed to accumulate one or two more boats through savings and bank loans.

The above information reveals that, among other factors, the economic background of their family, surplus income derived from the practices of the *bertaukey* institution and the *panggu* system, and a knowledge of banking facilities are the main bases for the formation and consolidation of the Chinese capitalist class in Kuala Kedah. Of these factors, inheritance of significant means of production is the most important stage in initial capital formation, followed by savings and bank loans (or loans from other sources). But the last two sources are available only to those already drawing some income surplus. The ability of these Chinese *taukey* to accumulate more capital after they have inherited their first boat shows that fishing is a most lucrative business which serves to further the existence of the *bertaukey* system and the practice of the *panggu* system.

TABLE 7. Ten Chinese *Taukeys*

Taukeys	Age	Status	Boats Owned	Boat's Weight	Costs (M\$)	Sources of capital	Year started as taukey
1	38	owner-non-operator	trawler	40t	100,000	savings, loan from friends, finance companies.	1977
2	45	owner-non-operator	trawler	40t	100,000	inherited	1972
			trawler	40t	100,000	savings, bank loans	
			trawler	40t	100,000	bank loans	
			trawler	40t	100,000	bank loans	
3	46	owner-non-operator	trawler	30t	70,000	inherited	1972
			trawler	30t	70,000	savings, bank loans	
			trawler	30t	70,000	savings, bank loans	
4	48	owner-non-operator	trawler	40t	100,000	inherited	1970
			trawler	40t	100,000	savings, bank loans	
5	68	taukey-non-owner	-	-	-	savings, buying goods in credit	1964
6	39	taukey-non-owner	-	-	-	savings, buying goods in credit	1985
7	46	owner-non-operator	trawler	30t	70,000	inherited	1972
			trawler	30t	70,000	savings, bank loans	
8	41	owner-non-operator	trawler	40t	100,000	inherited	1975
			trawler	40t	100,000	savings, bank loans	
9	38	owner-non-operator	trawler	30t	70,000	inherited	1983
			trawler	40t	100,000	savings, bank loans	
10	47	owner-non-operator	trawler	30t	70,000	inherited	1980
			trawler	30t	70,000	savings, bank loans	

CLASS RELATIONS

Class relations are essentially related to social relations of production. In the immediate process of production, relations of production involve affiliations among members of the producing class with one another, alliances between them and the means of production, and also between them and the owning class.

A *taukey* will first choose his *taikong* to be the production leader for each of his fishing boats. These *taikong* are experienced fishermen of known reputation and skill. The *taukey* himself chooses the *taikong* to ensure the success of his economic ventures. Although some of the Chinese *taukey* have chosen Chinese *taikong*, the majority would rather have Malays as their *taikong*. Empowered by their respective *taukeys*, the *taikong* in turn choose their own *awak-awak* often with whom they may have some kinship ties or else are neighbors and friends. Quite often these *awak-awak* are complete strangers to the *taukey*. Although a *taukey* will not interfere with the choice and employment of the *awak-awak*, he might suggest to the *taikong* that he replace unreliable *awak-awak*. Within a *taukey* production unit, employment for the *taikongs* is relatively stable compared to that of *awak-awak*.

Within the *bertaukey* system, the *taukey* is the centre of a unit of production. Even though he may own several fishing boats, each of which represent an independent economic unit, the *taukey* himself is considered to be the centre of a particular network of production exchange relations since he is the nucleus around which these relations are established. In the words of an owner-operator, "*dia taukey, dia taikong*", implying that his fishing boat itself represents a unit of production with an exclusive set of production relations, for in each unit the separation between the owner of capital and labor can be clearly identified. It follows from this that income is distributed according to one's position so far as capital ownership is concerned. Nevertheless, most owner-operators in Kuala Kedah are themselves patronised by a bigger *taukey* who acts as their fuel and ice supplier and, more important, as a creditor. This creates a situation in which the small *taukey* is patronised by the bigger *taukey*. This is the origin of the concept of *sistem bertaukey* (the *bertaukey* system).

Within the *bertaukey* system, a boat is considered as the smallest unit of production organisation. It comprises a *taikong*, and two or three *awak-awak*. The seemingly symbiotic economic relationships between these two categories of capital owners, the *taukey kecil* and *taukey besar*, is simply called the *sistem bertaukey* (the *bertaukey* system) which, as previously noted actually means a system of "having a *taukey*". The *bertaukey* system is a quasi-patronage system in which the small scale capitalists rely upon the additional capital provided by the bigger *taukey* in return for a guaranteed supply of fish.

The *bertaukey* system is actually an exploitative production and exchange set of relations based on economic and social ties. It has its origin in the traditional inshore fishing economy into which market economy forces have encroached, especially through the merchant capital, introduced and developed, by the Chinese immigrants since the late nineteenth century.

Since the *taukey* is not personally involved in sea-going fishing expeditions, trust and loyalty, in addition to the *taikong's* skill, are all vital considerations. A *taikong* might be skillful, but this does not guarantee a good return for the *taukey's* investment if he is not trustworthy and loyal. On occasions *taukey* have discovered that *taikong* abetted by his *awak-awak*, has sold their catch while at sea and then returned home empty-handed, explaining that there had been no catch due to "bad luck". In Kuala Kedah, this stratagem is called "*jual curi*", secret selling or literally, "steal and sell" since the *taikong* steals the catch from the *taukey* by selling it secretly. *Jual curi* is normally attempted if the *taikong* has good connections with fish dealers from Thailand, for a *taikong* would not trust local fish dealers to cooperate in such deception and maintain secrecy about it. The practices of *jual curi* and *sorok ikan* (the hiding of catch for later sale to trusted friend or for home consumption) are two major fears among the *taukey*. Fish which are sold secretly or not declared to the *taukey* is called "*ikan cekik*" (strangled fish). Yet, despite this literal translation, it is in fact the *taukey*, not the fish who is strangled, for it is from the sale of "his fish" that his crew profits. Fear of the practice of *ikan cekik* and an increasing suspicion that crews resort to it have led the *taukey* to believe that they are vulnerable to "exploitation" by their crews. A happy *taukey* is one who has reliable and trusted *taikongs* and *awak-awak*. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the *taukey* always insist that they are fair employers. By doing this, they hope to persuade their employees not to cheat them.

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to show that the co-existence of two modes of production within one social formation in the Kuala Kedah fishing community brings into existence three major patterns of class and ethnic relations. These different patterns exist due to dissimilarity in the structure of property ownership and control, as well as in relations of production based on differing modes of production in existence.

First, it has been pointed out that class relations within production sphere among members of the inshore fishing sector does not exist since all of them are owner-operators who, among themselves, still perceive the sea as a common property resource. Nevertheless, a mild form of class consciousness does exist between them and fish dealers with whom they

have established exchange relationship. This mild consciousness exists mainly due to ethnic, and hence religious, ties that bind them into a group with common cultural identities, rather than disintegrate them into different class in the market arena.

Second, the inshore fishermen have explicit anger against the offshore fishermen because the latter has a significant leading edge vis-a-vis the former in terms of fishing gear used. In fact, the inshore fishermen believe that their current economic problems, i.e they are hardly able to fulfill their subsistence needs and their bleak future are mainly caused by irresponsible offshore fishermen who have not only destroyed inshore fish breeding ground, but also provoked supernatural forces which govern the inshore region.

Nevertheless, the confrontation between the inshore fishermen and the offshore fishermen cannot be interpreted as a conflict between two different classes because the majority of these offshore fishermen are members of the working class who work for their respective employers (*taukey*). It does make sense to conclude that this confrontation is between small time owner-operators whose main objective is to fulfill their own subsistence living, and large scale capitalist enterprise of the *taukey* class, but visually represented by their employees. Nevertheless, within this context, the fact that they belong to the same ethnic group and hence supposedly subscribe to the Malay culture and Islam in general, does not minimise this confrontation. It is the fact that the Malay *awak-awak* and *taikong* work for the Chinese *taukey*. To the inshore Malay fishermen, this is the main reason for their continuous criticism against the former. The inshore fishermen perceive that it is not proper for members of their own ethnic and followers of the same religion and culture doing harmful (economic) activities just to support the interests of the non-muslim Chinese *taukey*. In this case, while the inshore fishermen show aggressive ethnic, religious and cultural criticism against the offshore Malay fishermen, the latter do not show any counter arguments of similar bearings. In fact, they uphold their belief that the sea is also a common property resource for every fishermen, regardless of the types of gear used.

Third, class confrontation between the Malay offshore fishermen against their *taukeys* is the most significant. Nevertheless, this confrontation, which takes place within the context of inequality of class and ethnic based (religion and culture) differences, seldom reaches an alarming level. This is so because the inshore fishing community has their own mechanisms and ways to manage confrontation. It is interesting to note how the acts of *cekik* (strangle) are being used by both members of the capitalist class and the working class alike for purposes of fulfilling their own diverse interest.

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