

Opening Speech

by

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Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, the joint sponsors of this Seminar, I have very great pleasure in welcoming all of you to this Seminar on the Problems of Malay Rice-Growing Villages in Malaysia. I would like to extend an especially warm welcome to our foreign delegates and express the hope that their short stay in our country will be a pleasant one and that the environment of Petaling Jaya will be conducive to their deliberations.

This Seminar is the first to be jointly organized by the Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University. Such cross-national cooperation between sister academic institutions is an activity which augurs well for future inter-institutional relationships. It also illustrates the close collaboration that has steadily been built-up between the two universities — a development which has been of considerable benefit to both parties.

Our association with the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University is a lengthy one going back to the time when we were a Department of Economics in the Faculty of Arts and when Professor Ungku Aziz was Head of Department. It has also been a most fruitful association since the Faculty and the Center have had a mutual interest in research in Malay rice farming villages especially as a phenomena of persistent poverty, a topic which apart from the almost singular exception of Prof. Aziz, had largely been ignored by researchers previously. The recognition of the importance of micro-level village studies and the socio-economic and cultural matrix of rural poverty is clearly reflected in the variety of the studies and approaches used in the six papers being presented today. These range from ecological observations pertaining to rice cultivation to socio-cultural concepts relating to community, the Malay family, religion and rural education and a comparative study of rural development. The results of such interdisciplinary research are of keen interest to Malaysian academics and policy-makers and the discussions from varied perspectives spanning several disciplines will, I feel sure, prove to be of major benefit to local researchers and other interested parties.

The research activity at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University has always had a strong focus on rural poverty and rural development in Southeast Asia

since its inception. The Center clearly recognizes that the development and evolution of rural communities forms an essential part of nation building in our region and that the process of rural development is a multi-dimensional one incorporating agricultural, economic and socio-cultural changes in the rural areas. Moreover, that such changes include not only those induced by public sector agencies but also those resulting from the activities and responses of rice cultivators themselves appear to have been a premise on which the Center has operated. These objectives are in large measure similar to those of this University, which is also intent on fostering interdisciplinary research on issues relevant to Malaysian society. I need hardly add that rural development is a topic which we feel to be of the highest priority in the use of scarce research resources.

The functions of today's Seminar on the Problems of Malay Rice-Growing Villages in Malaysia are threefold. Firstly, the Seminar provides an opportunity for researchers from the Center for Southeast Asian Studies to report and review their work on the interdisciplinary aspects of Malay rice-growing villages. Secondly, the Seminar offers Malaysians, both researchers, policy-makers and development implementors, an almost unique opportunity to discuss and analyze the findings of foreign scholars on an important component of the Malay rural sector. Finally, we hope that the Seminar will contribute to a wider and deeper understanding of the problems of Malay rice-growing communities and, at the same time, assist policy-makers and planners in expanding their knowledge and consciousness of the ecological, sociological, anthropological and educational dimensions of rural development.

It is very pleasing to report that there is participation in this Seminar from representatives of Malaysian Universities, the Department of Agriculture, agricultural research institutes such as Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI), Directors of State Departments of Agriculture, the Malaysian Center for Development Studies, Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA) and Kemubu Agricultural Development Authority (KADA), Farmers' Organization Authority and the private sector and international organizations. It is my hope that they will find the proceedings of this Seminar stimulating and that fresh insights and new perspectives will be generated. The fact that discussants from Malaysia have been allotted for each presentation should further facilitate the mutual exchange of views which is a primary objective of the organizers. The decision of the Organizing Committee, too, to circulate papers prior to the Seminar will also hopefully be justified by discussion at an intensive level.

The organization of this Seminar would not have been possible without the hard work of the Organizing Committee and I would like to take this opportunity of extending my thanks to all of them. A special word of appreciation is due to the Faculty of Economics and Administration and to Professor Shinichi Ichimura, Director, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, who have worked very hard

to bring this Seminar to fruition.

On a personal level and as a person who has been associated with the project right from the beginning of the association between our two institutions, this Seminar is a very meaningful one indeed as it brings together my Japanese friends from Kyoto. Their presentation today justifies the many immigration and other guarantee forms I have signed and also justifies to the many Malaysian officials and friends I have recommended them to that they have not given their time in vain.

The Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya, consists of seven divisions, including Analytical Economics, Applied Economics, Accounting, Business Administration, Public Administration, Rural Development and Statistics. It has been involved in research in rural development since its inception as a Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts.

The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University was set up in 1965 as an interdisciplinary research institution on Southeast Asian area studies. Many research projects covering the humanities, social and natural sciences have been carried out on an interdisciplinary basis, some of which are published in the *South East Asian Studies (SEAS)*. Collaboration with Southeast Asian Scholars is one of the features of the Center's research program.