A COMPENDIUM OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING STUDIES IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF MALAYSIA

MARIANA MOHAMED OSMAN SYAHRIAH BACHOK MOHAMMAD ABDUL MOHIT MANSOR IBRAHIM



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CHAPTER 7

ZAKAT IN MALAYSIAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Lukman Hakim Mahamod

INTRODUCTION

Zakat is a funding mechanism that can be used to alleviate poverty in Malaysia. The administration of zakat in Malaysia is controlled not by the federal government but by individual states. The reason for this arrangement is that religious matters, including zakat, are under the authority of the ruler of each state. Although the collection of zakat in each state has increased considerably, yet the total amount is still not enough to alleviate poverty, especially in the poor states. In that situation, transferring surplus zakat from rich to poor states might be a means of solving the problem. However, the proposal to establish a central body to collect some of the zakat from all the states and redistribute it to the poor states, in particular, has been rejected by most states. This article examines the development and administration of zakat in Malaysia as well as questions arising from its collection from rural producers and the transfer of its proceeds.

ZAKAT ON PADDY AND THE POVERTY SECTOR

Paddy (rice) is the staple food of Malaysia and also the economic mainstay of the Malays in Peninsular Malaysia. The paddy (or its equivalent in money) was used by Muslims to pay zakat al-fitr (also known as zakat fitrah) to the Majlis Agama Islam Negeri - MAIN (State Islamic Affairs Council) with the exception of Kedah. Zakat fitrah contributed much zakat revenue to the MAIN, particularly before the 1990s (Nasir, 1999).

Paddy planters who have harvested more paddy than the *nisab* are requested to pay *zakat* on paddy. *Zakat* paddy is collected in the category of *zakat pertanian* (*zakat* on agriculture) by every MAIN. Other categories of *zakat* are *zakat perniagaan* (*zakat* on business), *zakat pendapatan* (*zakat* on income), *zakat saham* (*zakat* on shares), *zakat simpanan* (*zakat* on savings), and *zakat emas* (*zakat* on gold). To differentiate these types of *zakat* from *zakat fitrah*, all the states in Peninsular Malaysia have classified them as *zakat harta benda* (*zakat* on wealth or *al-mal*).

It should be noted that *zakat* on paddy is the only agricultural resource officially collected by the MAIN. Before the mid-1980s, the bulk of the *zakat* on wealth revenue in Kedah, Kelantan and Perlis came from the *zakat* on paddy. In the agricultural sector, paddy farmers are the poorest community, statistics showing that in 1970, about 88 % of these families lived in poverty. However, poverty among paddy farmers fell considerably to 40.2 % in 1987, owing to subsidies provided by the government. Most states,