

**MEN OF THE SEA :**  
**COASTAL TRIBES OF SOUTH THAILAND'S WEST COAST**

by

David W. Hogan

Along the picturesque west coast of South Thailand are found three tribes of strand-dwellers of whom little has been written. The Thai Negrito or Semang people who are scattered through the jungle from Trang to Narathiwat have been very thoroughly described (Brandt, 1961, 1965). Along the coast there are the Moken, the Moklen and the Urak Lawoi' tribe of whom little or nothing has been written. The Moken have been described at length as inhabitants of South Burma but little reference has been made to their presence in Thailand also. The Moklen, who speak a variant dialect of Moken, appeared in print for the first time in Mr. Court's article in the January 1971 issue of this Journal, where they are called Thai Mai. The Urak Lawoi' were referred to by a few writers about the turn of the century under the name Orang Laut, and the absence of any more recent reference has led one writer to assume that they had died out and another to think they were a disappearing race. However these three tribes are all in existence, with distinctive languages of their own and each in its own habitat.

From the time I came to Phuket 13 years ago I have been interested in the Urak Lawoi' and Moken tribes and maintained contact with them. Then four years ago my wife and I began to study their language and culture so we could communicate with them adequately. We have therefore made a study of the Urak Lawoi' language as being the language of the largest of these three tribes in Thai territory and the most readily accessible here on Phuket. In the course of this work we have travelled to most of their localities from Ranong in the north to Satun on the Malay border and so have seen something of the Moken and Moklen people as well as the Urak Lawoi' people. This article will therefore concentrate on the Urak Lawoi' people with occasional contrastive detail of the Moken and the Moklen.

In general terms these three tribes may be described as animistic strand-dwellers, gatherers rather than cultivators, living in a "face-to-face" type of community. The Moken are sea-faring nomads, the Moklen and Urak Lawoi' live in sea-side villages. The Urak Lawoi' and the Moklen have lost much of their own distinctive culture but have not yet been absorbed into the Thai community, so that many of them seem to be living in a cultural vacuum. Those Moken who are still nomads seem to have retained their own culture to a remarkable extent. Some who have settled down in Urak Lawoi' villages seem to share the cultural vacuum of these people to an acute degree.

#### THE NAMES OF THE TRIBES

Much confusion has been caused by the different names that have been loosely employed. To Thai people generally these tribesfolk are all known as Chaaw Thalee (Sea People) or in some provinces Chaaw Naam (Water People). Those who have become Thai citizens are known as Thaj Maj (New Thai). This is a general name for any tribal man who has become a Thai citizen so cannot be used to differentiate between the tribes. The tribal people tend to resent the name Chaaw Thalee and especially the name Chaaw Naam but are proud to be called Thaj Maj.

Europeans tend to group all these tribes together as Sea Gypsies, but strictly speaking this should only be applied to the Moken who are the only maritime nomads still wandering in this area.

The Malays call them all Orang Laut (Sea People) but this is a very general term which can cover anyone living by the sea in contrast to those living inland.

In Burma the Orang Laut people are unknown. The Sea Gypsy people there are called Selungs with variant spellings Chalomes, Chillones, Seelongs, Salon, Salones, Selongs and Chelong.

In their own language the Sea Gypsies call themselves Moken or Moklen (moken, moklen) according to their dialect. The word Moken has sometimes been written Mawken. So far as I know the name Moklen has not been mentioned in the literature before. In speaking of themselves to others the Moken often call themselves Běsing (Basing). Sopher (p. 65) refers to this name and its variant Orang Běsin and suggests that



it is connected with clans among the Orang Laut Kappir known as "sinin" but this seems very doubtful. I have found no trace among the present-day Orang Laut of any clans and the word "sinin" is unknown to them. In any case the word is not just the Orang Laut name for the Moken but their own word which is still frequently used today. It seems more probable that it is related to the Burmese word Selung as mispronounced by the Moken, pre-fixed by their mispronunciation of the Thai word "phuak" (group).

In Thai, the Moklen people refer to themselves as Chaaw Bok (Coastal People) in contrast to the Chaaw Ko' (Island People), meaning the Moken.

In their own language the Orang Laut people call themselves Urak Lawoi' (Sea People) which is their dialect's equivalent to the Malay title Orang Laut. Therefore they are referred to in this paper as Urak Lawoi' to distinguish them from any other people who may be included in the general category of Orang Laut.

#### LITERATURE ABOUT THESE TRIBES

Sea Gypsy people have been known and referred to since the seventeenth century, frequently under the name Orang Selat (People of the Straits) or variations of the title (Saleeters, Celates, Selates, etc) but it seems doubtful whether these are necessarily identical with the present-day Moken. They are universally spoken of as being wild, piratical nomads, subject to no form of government but wandering about robbing, looting, murdering, taking slaves. Often they would pay tribute to some local ruler so as to be allowed to use his coast as a base for their piratical operations. It was through the help of some of these that the Parameswarra, the first ruler of Malacca, is reputed to have founded his kingdom and he rewarded them by making them hereditary nobles.

In contrast with this, the present Sea Gypsy and Urak Lawoi' people are a most unwarlike people, timid and disheartened, subject to authority, anxious to avoid trouble of any sort. Possibly in a former century they may have been enlisted by others to man piratical boats but it is hard to imagine them as the instigators of such raids themselves. It seems more probable that the term has been used in a general way to refer to various

groups of people without any precision as to who the actual culprits were. One such nest of pirates was in the area around the Straits of Singapore, the Riouw-Lingga Archipelago and the south-east coast of Sumatra, from where the term Orang Selat probably originated. Another prominent group were the Buginese from Southern Celebes who had a reputation as colourful adventurers. It would appear more probable that such people as these were the "Sea Gypsies" whose depredations played such havoc along the coasts of this area.

There has also been confusion because of the failure to realise that the Urak Lawoi' people were a quite distinct group from the Moken. This is largely because the Urak Lawoi' are only found in South Thailand between Phuket and the Malayan border and very little about them appears in the literature.

In "Sea Gypsies of Malaya", W.G. White gives a sympathetic account of his experiences with the Moken in the Mergui Peninsula, their main habitat. He refers to four dialects of the Moken language, including Orang Laut as the dialect spoken on Phuket Island. In this he seems to refer to Urak Lawoi', as a number of Moken have settled at Rawai on Phuket Island and inter-married with the local Urak Lawoi' people.

In "The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves", Bernatzik tells of his visit to the Moken in the Mergui Archipelago. He says that some Moken had been captured by Malays, inter-married with Malays, Chinese and negritos and became Orang Laut or Orang Lonta (pp. 41-42). No doubt there have been intermarriages of this sort, but the Urak Lawoi' language and culture is so distinct that this cannot be regarded as the origin of the tribe. Orang Lonta is possibly a reference to Ko' Lanta, the original home of the tribe.

In "The Sea Nomads", David E. Sopher presents a study of all maritime boat people of Southeast Asia, based on the literature previously published. This includes a comprehensive survey of the literature about the Moken and Urak Lawoi' people and has a very full bibliography. He quotes Annandale (1903) as having met Orang Laut people in the vicinity of Trang who had referred to the "Orang Běsin" from the Mergui Peninsula. Sopher therefore distinguishes between Moken and Orang Laut but assumes the absence of recent information about the Orang



Laut indicates that they have virtually ceased to exist (p. 346). Sopher quotes a distinction between Orang Laut Islam and Orang Laut Kappir which applied at the turn of the century on the islands at the mouth of the Trang river (p. 62 f.). Now, there are no Urak Lawoi' on Ko' Mook and Ko' Lebong in that area and most of the inhabitants are Thai Moslem and not referred to as Orang Laut. Possibly this reference includes Ko' Lanta too where the Urak Lawoi' are plentiful and quite distinct from the many Thai Islam there. Most of the Thai Islam on this coast speak Thai and few know the Malay language, except a few villages in Satun Province and some along the coast near Ranong.

In "Moken Texts and Word-list" (1960), Miss M. Blanche Lewis undertakes what she calls "armchair research" into the language of the Moken, based on various texts in that language which have been published, mainly "A Primer of the Selong Language" (1844) and "St. Mark in Mawken" (1913) and other work done by the Rev. Walter G. White. In a footnote on page 41 she states that she was informed there were "Moken" on Pulau Adang (Satun Province) and that the Headman of that island, himself a "Moken" said there were only three Moken communities, at Pulau Adang, Pulau Lanta and Pulau Sireh near Phuket, and that further north there were the Běsing whose language they found hard to understand. She did not visit the area herself but from samples of the language collected for her she concluded that the language of Pulau Adang was a dialect of Malay and probably in process of disappearing. There seems to be some confusion here, probably caused by the fact that the people enquiring on Miss Lewis' behalf may have used the Malay word "Orang Laut" as synonymous with "Moken". I know Phuuja Banjong, Headman of the Ko' Adang group referred to and he is proud to be an Urak Lawoi' (Orang Laut in Malay). The three settlements referred to by him at Ko' Adang, Ko' Lanta and Ko' Sireh, Phuket are the three major settlements of Urak Lawoi' people. If those asking him had used the word "Moken" I am sure he would have identified them with the Běsing he referred to. When staying in his house on Ko' Lipe in April last, his son told me how there was one Moken family living on Ko' Adang and that a Moken boat from further north was then there visiting them.

The publication "Ethnic Groups of Mainland South-East Asia" (1964) groups the Moken and Orang Laut together and describes them

as one group, but distinguishes them in the accompanying map. Based on this publication, the National Geographic Magazine published a map of the "Peoples of Mainland Southeast Asia" (March 1971) but used only the name "Moken" to cover both the Moken and the Orang Laut peoples. It also followed the "Ethnic Groups" map by showing them as located on Ko' Terutao and Pulau Langkawi, straddling the Thai-Malaysian border. Ko' Terutao is practically uninhabited and has no Moken or Urak Lawoi' residing on it. Pulau Langkawi has been named as a possible traditional origin for the Urak Lawoi' people (Sopher, p. 67) but it seems definite that none of them have lived there for many years.

In the Journal for January 1971, Mr. Christopher Court told of a brief encounter with the Moken and gave a list of words, some of them from a Moklen informant referred to by him as Thai Mai, and some from a Moken man, referred to by him as Chao Koh Thae (True Island People).

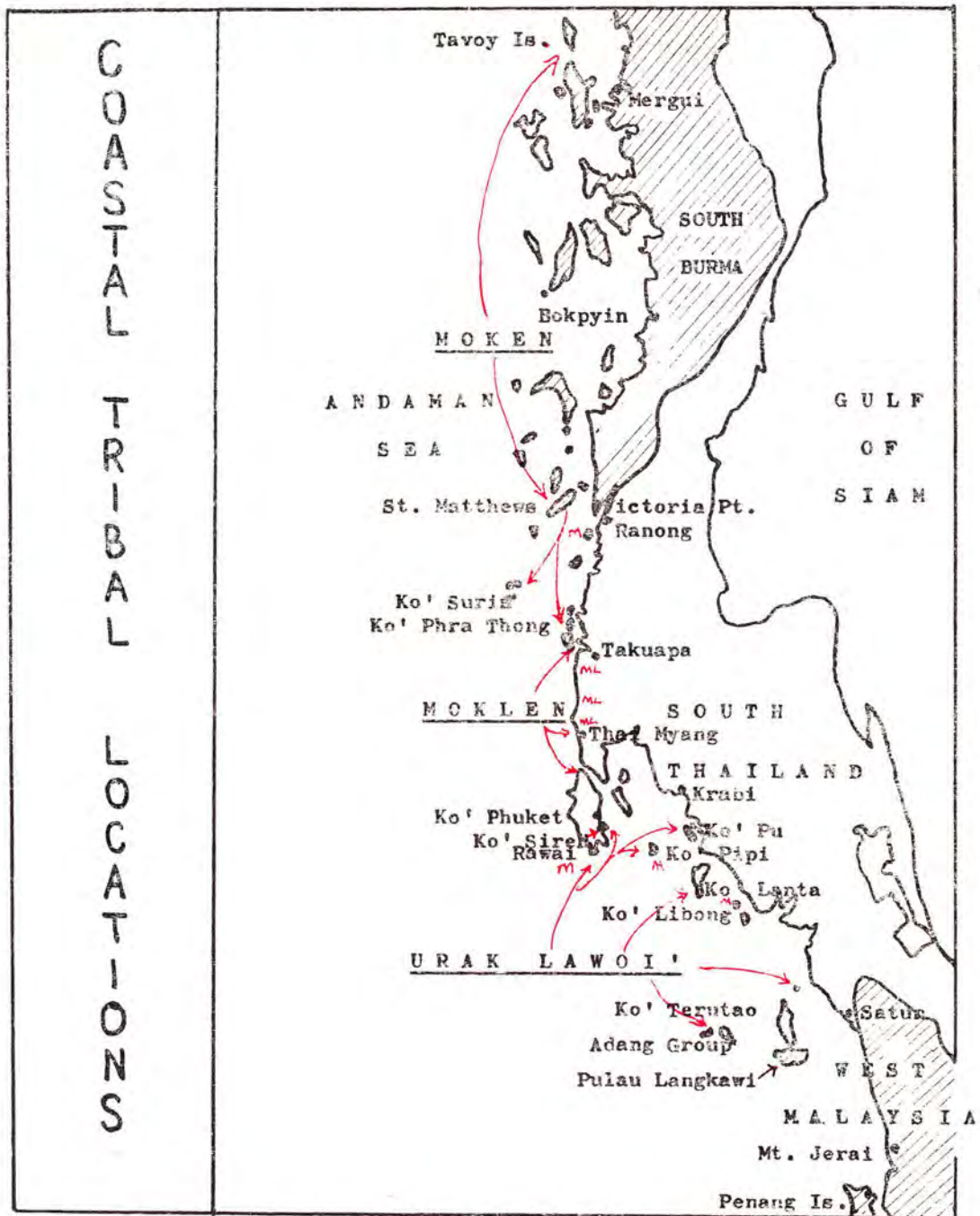
#### **DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION OF THE TRIBES**

The distribution of the Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi' people along the west coast of South Thailand is as shown on the accompanying map.

The native habitat of the Moken people is the Mergui Archipelago in South Burma. Sopher states that their wet season rendezvous is found on all the large islands from St. Matthews in the south to Tavoy Island, with crude settlements on the mainland at Bokpyin, Victoria Point and Mergui. Some of these people range down into Thai waters in the course of their nomadic wanderings. Their normal range for this seems to be as far south as Ko' Phra Thong in Amphur Khuraburi of Phangnga Province and out to Ko' Surin and the adjacent islands, 30 miles out in the Andaman Sea. The territory within which they wander is indicated on the map by arrows. Occasionally their boats travel south as far as Ko' Phuket, Ko' Pipi and even Ko' Adang to visit relations there but as this is not part of their regular territory it is not shown on the map.

There are small settlements of Moken on Ko' Sin Hai and Ko' Luuk Plaa off Ranong and in Urak Lawoi' villages at Rawai on Phuket and at Ko' Pipi, Krabi Province. In both these two last villages intermarriage with the Urak Lawoi' has occurred as mentioned above. Those on Ko'





Pipi are reported to make their base occasionally on Ko' Ngai, south of Ko' Lanta. These Moken settlements are indicated on the map by the Letter "M".

The Moklen tribe live in villages on the islands adjacent to Ko' Phra Thong, Amphur Khuraburi, Phangnga Province as stated by Court, then in several villages and settlements along the coast from Ban Thung Nam Dam, Amphur Takuapa down to Ban Lampi, Amphur Thai Myang. There are also two villages of them at the northern tip of Ko' Phuket in Tambon Tha Chaatchai, Amphur Thalang, Phuket. The approximate extent of their settlement is indicated on the map by the letters "ML".

The Urak Lawoi' tribe live in villages at Ko' Sireh, Rawai and Sepum in Phuket Province, on Ko' Pipi, Ko' Pu and four localities on Ko' Lanta Yai in Krabi Province, and on Ko' Bulon and the Ko' Adang group of islands in Satun Province. In the Ko' Adang group they live on three islands, Ko' Adang itself, Ko' Lipe and Ko' Rawi. These locations are indicated on the map.

It is difficult to be accurate as far as the population of these tribes is concerned. The nomadic Moken people would not be Thai citizens, while those who have settled at Rawai and Ko' Pipi would not be listed separately from the Urak Lawoi' there. Mr. Court estimated 70-110 in the Ko' Phra Thong--Ko' Surin area. The settlements at Ranong, Rawai and Ko' Pipi would probably be between 200 and 300, so that the total would be between 270 and 400. When the monsoon season sets in, some of the nomads might settle on the islands near Ranong, but some may very well return to Burmese islands for that period.

In the case of Moklen and Urak Lawoi' people, as they are now officially Thai Mai, their figures would be included with the other inhabitants of their respective villages. A rough count I made four years ago showed over 160 households of Moklen, comprising, at a conservative estimate, some 800 people. This figure was incomplete as far as Amphur Khuraburi was concerned and Court quotes the Palat Amphur as saying there were 300 of them in that district. In view of this I think 1000 Moklen would be a more reasonable estimate.

Similar estimation for the Urak Lawoi' places their population as over 2,000, probably nearer 2,500.



### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRIBES

In personality and general cultural characteristics there is much similarity between the three groups. Much of Sopher's description of the Moken people and their ways (Sopher p. 71ff) can be applied to the Urak Lawoi' people. They regard themselves as being one people and inter-marry freely but yet recognise their tribal distinctions. Points of resemblance are as follows:

**1. Personality characteristics:** Many of them show timidity and even fear, regarding modern civilisation as a hostile environment with which they cannot cope. Those who have mixed more with the outside world show less of this, yet often display reserve and embarrassment in the presence of people of other cultures. They seem to regard themselves as not only poverty-stricken, but also as being quite incapable of bettering their position. Basically the majority of them are good-natured and law-abiding citizens. Those who have employed them in the tin-mining industry speak highly of their industry and trustworthiness, and they display resourcefulness and ingenuity in any problems connected with the sea.

**2. Marine livelihood:** They are all strand-dwellers as Sopher says, living either on boats or on the beach. The main exception to this seems to be some of the Moklen whose settlements are a kilometre or more from the sea. The Urak Lawoi' however say that they cannot sleep if they cannot hear the waves. They are excellent swimmers and divers, with exceptional breath control, willing to work at depths and for periods that European experts consider dangerous. They are good boatmen and skilled fishermen with an eye for the weather and the ability to navigate to off-shore islands beyond the horizon.

**3. Gatherers not cultivators:** Their whole culture is based on the gathering of sea produce, tripang, shellfish, fish, lobsters, coral and shells of different types. The only shore produce they normally gather is Pandanus leaves which they use to make sleeping-mats and a concertina type of matting called "kajak" which is used as tenting on their boats or ashore and was formerly used as a sail. The difference between tribes is apparent here in that the Moken adhere to this pattern of life even

when they settle down on shore as a group at Rawai have done, while the Moken and Urak Lawoi' have taken to cultivating rice-fields, coconuts and other garden produce when they have had the necessary land and capital. Possibly the Moken would do the same if they had the land and capital, but the habit of "What you gather in the morning you eat in the evening" seems engrained. They clean and smoke for sale the tripang that they gather, but do not dry fish to lay by for a lean period, preferring to buy dried fish in the market. The result of this is that many of them really feel the pinch if bad weather prevents them putting out to sea for a while.

**4. Handicrafts and arts:** They seem to have very little handicraft except that which is directly related to their livelihood. Most of them erect their own houses, of varying standards, but only a few display any skill in carpentry. Some are skilled boat-builders, building boats up to 25 feet long, which they say is the biggest boat that can be propelled by a "long-tailed" engine. They make their own fish-spears, harpoons, and fish-traps. There seems to be little indigenous decorative art and even their sacred spirit-houses are rather crudely fashioned. They have no dancing of their own, dancing either the Malay "ronggeng" or the Thai ramwong. The Urak Lawoi' say they have no songs but Thai or Malay ones. The Moken claim some rather simple songs as indigenous to them.

**5. Liquor and drugs:** In Burmese waters and possibly down as far as Ranong, many of the Moken used to be addicted to opium. I have found no trace of it among either group although many of them are addicted to liquor, that is to say to the cheap local spirits as they do not brew any of their own.

#### CONTRASTING DWELLINGS

The Moken people who still live in their boats make these boats their home as described by White and Bernatzik, and more recently Court. They spend most of the time wandering around in these boats in search of food, with the *towkay* (Chinese entrepreneur) who has advanced them goods acting as the focal point for their wanderings. They only come ashore when the monsoon season compels it and then live in poor huts near the beach until the monsoon clears. While living there they engage



in gathering sea-produce and work on their boats. Sopher refers to some of them in Burmese territory as having gardens in this period but I have not seen any but the most elementary types of these in Thai territory.

In contrast the Urak Lawoi' people are strand-dwellers, normally living in houses near the beach. They often travel away from their village on expeditions to gather shells or other sea-produce and may stay away for several days, sleeping either in their boats or under kajak shelters on the shore. This however is only temporary and they return to their home when the expedition is over. Sometimes a considerable number from a village will move to a more favourable location for a period to gather tripang, when they will erect a little village on the new site, and then later return to their original village.

### CUSTOMS AND RELIGION

The Moken do not appear to have any distinctive ceremonies apart from those connected with their "lobong", two square poles, crudely carved, which their shaman invites the spirits to inhabit. Associated with this is a little spirit-house. The group at Rawai had two poles of this type when I first met them 13 years ago, but these have gradually rotted away until now there is only the stump of one pole left. They have not replaced this as they say they have no shaman who could perform the necessary ceremony. They have however erected a new spirit-house in the last few years alongside the original one, which is still intact. A number of informants stated that they prayed every day, but I have not been able to confirm this, although I have seen a group of them having a drinking party beside the spirit-house apparently communing with the spirits of the deceased.

The Urak Lawoi' have many customs and religious practices which parallel those of Malay folk-religion, but with practically no trace of Islam evident. Weddings are celebrated in a simple way with a party of the bridegroom's friends bringing three gifts to the bridal house, including a complete betel-nut tray and gifts of money. The party parades around the house three times before presenting the gifts to the bride's relations. The wedding is then celebrated with drinking and dancing.

In dealing with sickness and misfortune shamanism and related practices are sometimes invoked but the Health Clinic and the Government Hospital are becoming increasingly popular. One shaman claims to have travelled many miles to assist in curing the mentally afflicted but sought regular medicine for the care of his own conjunctivitis. There does not appear to be any overriding fear of the spirits such as is evident in some cultures and they seem to observe little in the way of taboos or fetishes.

Urak Lawoi' houses do not have spirit shelves or spirit houses but instead have one spirit house for the village, which they call the "rumah dato'" (house of the tutelary spirit) or "balai dato'" (court of the tutelary spirit). These spirit houses seem to incorporate decorative features of both Thai and Chinese cultures. It appears the people only worship at these spirit-houses during the spirit festivals described below, or at other times as required by the shaman. They are called "kramai'" (place of supernatural power) as are certain capes and other places regarded as being sacred.

Twice a year, in the sixth month and the eleventh month by Thai reckoning, they have a spirit festival which lasts for two or three days. This varies from place to place, according to the "bumol" or witchdoctor in the village, and in many places seems to have practically died out. It is still kept up at Ko' Sireh and many come from as far as Ko' Lanta to attend the festival. At Ko' Sireh they first make a boat, about five feet long, principally of "kumal" (the zalacca palm, maj rakam in Thai). Every house in the village places in this boat crudely shaped "dolls" made of wood, one for each member of the household. With this are placed other objects such as small red peppers, fish paste, cakes, candles, nail parings and hair clippings. The children rub puffed rice on their bodies and put it in the boat to take away their bad luck. On the fourteenth day of the lunar month, this boat is taken out to sea and released to take away the 'bad luck' of all the villagers. The day is then spent in drinking and dancing on a platform in the centre of the village. This part of the festival is called "hari bēlajak" (meaning uncertain).

Then on the fifteenth day of the month in the morning they gather wood from the jungle and make seven wooden crosses which are left on





Urak Lawoi' spirit house (rumah dato') at Laem Tugkee Village, Ko' Sireh, Phuket.



Maren, a leading Urak Lawoi' shaman at Sepum, Phuket Province.



Men of Laem Tugkee Village, Ko' Sireh, Phuket preparing the boat to be used  
in the "bela jak" festival.



the beach at one end of the village. After drinking and dancing all day, a party goes along the beach late in the afternoon and brings the crosses to the village where they are planted at intervals along the beach to prevent the bad luck, which has been sent away in the boat, from coming back to trouble them. This part of the festival is called "hari pahadak" (day of protection) and the crosses are called "kayu pahadak" or "kayu hadak" (the wood that protects). The drinking and dancing is then continued until funds are exhausted.

Enquiries in various centres have failed to produce any coherent account of the origin of this festival or how long it has been practised, but apparently it has been done as long as any of them can remember. They are very insistent that it cannot be abandoned as they say that their whole existence as "Sea People" depends on its continuance. No-one has been able to tell me how long the use of crosses has been included in the festival and it is interesting to speculate as to whether it is something they have borrowed from a Christian source.

The festival as practised in Ko' Sireh involves a fair expenditure of money. Most of this is obtained by requesting various employers and other benefactors for a donation. Sufficient is raised in this way to purchase all the necessary drink, and to hire a generator, lights and amplifier. Everyone in the village puts on new clothes for the occasion and the children all get a new toy. The last few years all the older girls and young unmarried women turned out for the occasion in a uniform type of blue mini-skirt, quite a departure from their normal sarongs. Apparently these were produced by a local dressmaker on a pattern similar to that used for ramwong girls.

I have not been able to observe a funeral ceremony but understand that burial is carried out the same or the next day as the death. The burial ground is at a point near the village, where the dead are buried with a stake or stone at head and feet. A canopy of corrugated iron or kajak is put over the grave to protect it from the rain. The Headman of Ko' Adang has told me that the people in that island group used to bury their dead in caves. I have had no opportunity of finding out the normal Moken practice but those living at Rawai bury their dead the same as the Urak Lawoi' do.

They do not seem to have any highly developed ideas concerning such issues as the location or state of the soul after death, or the existence of 'heaven' or 'hell' which appear to be concepts unknown to them. However, if a member of the family is sick they may make a vow to the spirit of a dead ancestor with a view to obtaining a cure. If the patient recovers they then carry out the vow as by making a trip to the cemetery and presenting some food and spirits at the grave of the ancestor concerned. Speeches are made to him praising him for his help and all present drink in fellowship with him.

#### LEGENDS AND ORIGIN

Few people amongst either the Moken or Urak Lawoi' appear to have detailed knowledge of the ancient legends of their people. All that most of them know is that "Tuhāt bēsār de' atas" (Great God above) is God over all, and the Creator, that "Adap" and "Hawa" (Adam and Eve) were the first man and woman who ate some forbidden fruit which poisoned them. In addition most older Urak Lawoi' know that Ko' Lanta is the original home of their tribe. It is hard to find anyone who knows more than this. The Moken at Rawai tell me that there is an old Moken man on an island off Victoria Point, called Kaseh, who is skilled in telling legends and stories and singing their songs. "He can tell stories for three days and nights without stopping", several of them have assured me. As this is in Burmese waters I am unable to follow up this lead. Several times the Urak Lawoi' have told me of an old man who is skilled in the old stories, but when I have asked where I can find him, it is usual to find that he died some years ago!

When visiting Ko' Adang in April this year I met Risi', an old man of 87 and Napet who must be between sixty and seventy years old. They told me there was an older man, Hitap, on the adjoining island who knew the old legends but I was not able to visit him. Risi' said that his grandfather had been a Buginese who had come with a group of Buginese who travelled up the coast as far as Ranong and back. Some members of the group had settled in various places along the coast and his grandfather had settled on Adang and apparently married into the Urak Lawoi'. Napet supplied in an aside the fact that the Buginese trip had been for



piratical purposes. Risi' said they travelled in a kind of boat called a "jukok" which was "sharp like a duck". The Malay dictionary gives one meaning of "jongkong" as a short beamy boat, so no doubt he was describing the Buginese type of boat from Southern Celebes which is broad-beamed for its length and could be regarded as shaped like a duck. He gave the origin of the tribe as Ko' Lanta, but said "sěmiya duhulu" (the men of old) came from the mountain Gunung Jerai (Kedah Peak on the coast of Kedah north of Penang). He said that was a long while ago, then they "běrpěchah hanyoi'" which means either they "drifted apart" or "floated apart". Some settled in the forest of Kedah, some settled at Baw Jet Luuk (in Amphur Langu, Satun Province), some settled at Ko' Lanta. He said the reason they dispersed like this was because they were a fearful people and fled from opposition and trouble they were experiencing.

Napet then supplemented this with the story of "Nabi Noh" (the prophet Noah). He said Noh was a servant of God who dwelt above, not on earth nor yet in the sky, but in the middle. He would fly backwards and forwards on God's business. God sent him to ask men if they would submit to him, but men did not like to do this as Noh was covered with skin-disease which made him dirty, smelly and ugly. The men said they would not submit to God or to Noh, so Noh cursed them. So the men moved their houses right away (from where was not stated) and came down (came ashore) at Mount Jerai. Some entered the jungle and became jungle men, some became monkeys (of two different kinds) some became squirrels, and some became the Urak Lawoi', the Men of the Sea.

When asked further, Napet said that Noh was the last prophet of the Urak Lawoi' people and he knew no stories of any later prophets, which makes it doubtful whether he obtained this story from Moslem sources. It certainly does not seem to owe anything to the Biblical account of Noah. He said that Nabi Noh was the prophet of the Urak Lawoi' people, the one who watched over them, but I have not heard him mentioned elsewhere. It is interesting to note that Evans (1937) quotes Schebesta as saying that some of the Kintak Bong group of the Semang tribes of Northern Malaya believe they originally came from the west near Mt. Jerai and were originally one tribe with the adjoining

Kensiu group of Semang. The Kensiu in turn have a story that they once lived on an island in the west.

The only other origin legend we have had is from Nai Mae, the leading Urak Lawoi' man of Rawai village, Phuket Province. Nai Mae's old father, now deceased, was one of the old leaders of the village and is said to have known all the old stories. In discussing the origins of the tribe with Nai Mae, in Thai, he told the following story which he claims is a "true legend", "it actually happened".

"Many long years ago a wonderful teacher came from God with the book of God. He had twelve disciples whom he taught all about God and how to read the book, so they could teach others. When they had finished studying, the twelve disciples went in a boat with the book to take it to others. A big storm came up and the boat sank and the twelve disciples were all drowned and the book was lost.

"Seven years and seven days later a Thai boy was by the sea-shore when he saw something had been washed up by the waves. When he went and looked he found it was one of the twelve disciples who had been washed up from the sea. He was all covered with shells and barnacles and sea-growth from his time in the sea, but was still alive. His tongue was stiff however and at first he could not speak at all. Some Thai people took him to live in a Thai temple where they tried to teach him Buddhism and how to till a ricefield. However he could not learn these things and could not speak Thai but just wanted to get back to the sea-shore. So the Thai people looked down on him and would not help him any more. Then some Malay people took him to the mosque and tried to teach him Malay and the Islam religion and ways. Again he could not learn these things and could not live away from the sea-shore, so they would not help him any more.

"So he went back to live on the sea-shore and resolved to be an Urak Lawoi' (a Man of the Sea) and that was the start of the Urak Lawoi' tribe. That is why the Urak Lawoi' do not like being dominated by the Thai people. They submit to it but they do not like it. But if the Thai teacher hits their child in school, they take the child away from school so he can live as a true Urak Lawoi'."



Unfortunately I did not take this story down on the tape-recorder and when subsequently I have asked Nai Mae if he would repeat the story in his language he has always excused himself. This may be because he has to be in the mood to tell a story, or because he is embarrassed at having passed on a treasured story. On the other hand he may have made the story up as he went along and be afraid to repeat it in case his facts did not agree. No-one else has told us a story resembling this, and it has notable resemblances to stories common among others such as the Karen people.

On the basis of this, it would seem that the tribe comes from the locality of Ko' Lanta with considerable admixture from intermarriage with Malays, Thai, Chinese and some Buginese. The ultimate origin, however, may have been in the locality of Mount Jerai in North Malaya.

### **TYPES OF BOAT**

The Moken who have retained their nomadic habits continue to use the distinctive type of boat described by White and Bernatzik, the "Kabang". The basis of this boat is a tree-trunk hollowed out and spread out in the middle until it is very wide and almost flat, but rising to a peak at the ends. A large U-shaped cut is made in the front of the bow and the back of the stern to provide a step for climbing into the boat from the water. The sides are built up with lengths of the zalacca palm, held between light uprights notched into the edge of the hull at intervals, and lashed down tight with jungle withes. A length of bamboo is inserted between the lengths of zalacca palm at deck level, and then the zalacca lengths continue for a short distance above that to provide a bulwark. They say that when the zalacca palm becomes wet it swells up and so seals itself without the need for any damar or caulking. However it has the disadvantage that it only lasts about six months before it has to be renewed. This makes a very light and seaworthy boat which the Moken build from jungle produce with an absolute minimum of tools.

These kabangs are decked with split bamboos or similar decking on which the family lives, using the space beneath for storage or refuse disposal, as White says. There is a notched upright a little way from the bow and another one aft of midships to carry the pole for their kajak

roofing. This makes a flexible cover which can quickly be removed or renewed as necessary. In one case the after upright was carved for the full length visible, but the owner of the boat said that this had no special significance. Court says he has seen one of their boats with a long-tailed engine, but those I have seen used sails or paddles.

The Urak Lawoi' and the Moken who have settled with them use boats similar to the Malay people of this area, with a regular framework and plank sides. There is a spade-shaped piece of wood projecting up at stem and stern, called a "boya" (Malay "buaya"=stem and stern pieces). The boats may be painted or oiled but are not normally decorated or garlanded. They usually put a light decking of split bamboo at the level of the thwarts and put their goods or catch below while they sit cross-legged on top, unless they are rowing. I have seen no boats with sails but they say that they used to use sails made out of the kajak matting referred to above, or canvas. Most of the larger boats nowadays use a "long-tailed" outboard engine for propulsion.

The Moken kabangs have forked sticks rising above their bulwarks fore and aft to provide a cradle for laying masts, poles, oars, etc. The Urak Lawoi' boats often use a similar device if they are going on a longer trip. They also make splash-boards of attap which extend from near the middle of the boat to near the stern so as to protect the occupants and goods from spray. If they are sleeping out in the boat at night this provides the walls on which they stretch a section of "kajak" to make a cover for the night.

I have checked with some of the older men for recollections of the type of boat used by Orang Laut Kappir as quoted from Annandale and Smyth by Sopher (pp. 190-192). They cannot recall seeing one of the type sketched by Smyth with a raised stern, but agreed that in the olden days they used dugout boats with sides made of the zalacca palm as do the Moken, but without the raised bow and stern with the step cut in it. From the age of two of the men I discussed this with I would judge that these boats were still plentiful sixty years ago, but more or less went out of fashion about 40 years ago.





First stage in building a Moken "kabang"—Elephant Island, Ranong Province.



Second stage in building a Moken "kabang".



View from the bow of a Moken kabang. Note the step cut in the bow, the framing for the decking with a low bulwark above it, the framework for the sides of the deckhouse including the cradles for masts, oars, bamboos, etc.



### ACCULTURATION

As far as the Moken are concerned the only place where I have been able to observe them in detail is at Rawai, where they live as "poor relations" of the Urak Lawoi'. Their houses are poorer and their surroundings very dirty. Few of them have an engine for their boat and those there are are very dilapidated. Very few of their children go to school as they just cannot afford the small expense involved.

For both Moken and Urak Lawoi' the main handicap to progress lies in their view of themselves as "Urak haja'" which may be translated as "poverty-stricken people". They are certainly extremely poor but it is unfortunate that they regard this as inevitable. The old Thai viewpoint was to regard them as "pret", those living in a state of punishment or suffering on account of sins committed in a previous existence and so incapable of improving their lot. This view of themselves seems to have sunk deep in their souls. When in October the Buddhists go to the temple to make merit for the souls of the departed, the Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi' go to line up at the temple as beggars do to receive a handout. Now they are Thai Mai, some are embarrassed at this and prefer to go to a temple in an adjoining province where they won't be recognised. Others take toy blowpipes and bangles made from tortoise-shell to sell but receive charity with the others.

The extent to which the Urak Lawoi' have adapted themselves to the Thai culture varies from village to village. For instance, here on Phuket we have the three villages of Ko' Sireh, Rawai and Sepum. Ko' Sireh is quite handy to the town of Phuket and has made most progress. There has been a school there for about 30 years and most of the children are now enrolled there, although all are not regular students. Many of the men are in regular employment at one of the tin companies, the council quarries or on fishing boats. Quite a percentage of the houses are better constructed with mill timber and corrugated iron, and have fitted windows and doors. Some of the houses are painted. Little fishing for sale is done by the villagers as the sea in front of the village has been fished out by commercial fishing boats. A few families are engaged on gathering shellfish for the Phuket market, often travelling twenty miles on their gathering expeditions. The ground on which the

village is located is a barren spit of sand with mangrove swamps behind and a mudflat in front and is owned by the local *towkay*. The villagers have no gardens and no rice-fields. A few years ago some people tried growing hill-rice but later decided that they lacked the necessary capital and, furthermore, that it was not practical if they were to continue to make the sea their source of livelihood. On the whole the village has a good spirit and seems mildly prosperous.

Rawai is at the southern tip of the island, about 16 kilometres from Phuket. There has been a school there for about 12 years but the percentage of children attending is much smaller and adults who can read are comparatively scarce. There is little employment available locally and few have regular jobs. The Moken end of the village is desperately poor and many in the Urak Lawoi' end seem little better off. Only a few have houses of a better type of construction. Many of the villagers go fishing among the islands off Rawai, selling some locally and some to agents from the Phuket market. Shellfish is collected for their own consumption rather than for sale. One of the villagers has a prosperous business as a middleman for the sale of shells, corals, sea growths, and more recently tropical fish. The village is situated in a coconut plantation belonging to a local *towkay*, but the villagers claim that they were living there first. Some years ago they were given the island of Ko' Bon, just across from Rawai, so they could move there, but they preferred the convenience of staying on Phuket Island. A few families have gardens on Ko' Bon, growing hill-rice, coconuts, bananas, etc.

The village of Sepum is seven kilometres north of Phuket town, located on an unattractive piece of mudflat which is often flooded at high-tide. The villagers seem depressed and dejected and most of their houses are very crude. No one in this village is in regular employment and none of the thirty children go to school. Most of the income is derived from gathering shellfish and from making "kajak" roofing at which they work very hard for a small return. Their houses are surrounded by rubbish and shell middens. None own gardens or land and only one person seems to be at all prosperous.

On the island of Ko' Lanta Yai, the Urak Lawoi' have two villages near Sala Dan at the north of the island. Here the people have been





A Moken man in his house at Rawai, making toy blowpipes for sale at a Thai fair.



A temporary Urak Lawoi' encampment at Chelong Bay, Phuket, for gathering tripang.





given good-sized blocks of land and many have settled down to build comfortable little farms with their own wet-rice fields and coconut trees etc. My one brief visit there suggests that they are more integrated with the local Thai community than any other Urak Lawoi' community. Two other settlements near the south of the island have not received so much land and do not seem so well integrated.

The third major settlement of Urak Lawoi' is found in the Adang group, 80 kilometres west of Satun. Under the sponsorship of a former governor of Satun Province, Adang Island was given to the tribe for their use and there are little settlements of them all round the island. Most of the 500 inhabitants of the group live on the adjoining Ko' Lipe however, and others live on Ko' Rawi. This group is quite isolated from normal Thai life, their main contacts being the handful of traders who have settled on Ko' Lipe and the fishing craft from Satun on which many of them work. They have more contact with Malaya than the other Urak Lawoi' settlements so that many of them speak Malay as well as their own dialect and they tend to mix Malay words in with their own dialect. My visits there have been too brief for me to be able to comment on the degree of acculturation but it seems that the community is thriving because they own their own land and are able to find remunerative employment on the fishing craft.

Also in Satun Province there is a small group of perhaps forty people living on Ko' Bulon opposite Pak Para in Langu District. In Krabi Province there is another village situated on Ko' Pipi, which I have not yet visited.

Among the children who are enrolled in schools the rate of absenteeism is very high. There are several contributing factors. Apart from a normal disinclination to study, many of the parents are not convinced of the necessity of schooling and do not compel the children to go. The children are frequently embarrassed before their schoolmates by the lack of good clothing and because they lack money to buy food at school. This applies to the Moklen people too and an experiment is being conducted in Thai Myang Amphur with a small school for tribal children only. Of those who have been through school few are able to maintain their reading as very few have books in their homes.

## COMPARATIVE LIST OF WORDS

To show the differences in the languages I have prepared the following list of words in the Malay, Urak Lawoi', Moken and Moklen languages. The wordlist is based on the Swadesh 100-Word List (Samarin, 1967). The Malay words are based on Wilkinson's Dictionary, while the other three languages are written phonetically. In some cases the informants gave me two alternatives which are separated by a comma, with the favoured rendering first.

| ENGLISH        | MALAY      | URAK LAWOI' | MOKEN           | MOKLEN       |
|----------------|------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| I              | aku        | ku          | choi, chui      | jai          |
| thou           | engkau     | kau         | bi' eng         | bai' eng     |
| we (incl.)     | kita       | kita        | eta', apungeta' | apung eta'   |
| we (excl.)     | kami       | kami        | kamoi           | jai (?)      |
| this           | ini        | ini         | ni              | ni           |
| that           | itu        | itu         | idup, alang     | alang        |
| who ?          | siapa      | sapa        | achau           | achau        |
| what ?         | apa        | nama        | anong           | onong        |
| not (negative) | tidak+verb | tet+verb    | verb+ha'        | verb+ha' ka? |
| not (have not) | tiada+noun | hoi+noun    | noun+ha'        | noun+ot      |
| all            | sěmua      | sěmuha      | tapung          | tang pung    |
| many           | banyak     | banya'      | na' ban         | tahan        |
| one            | suatu      | sa          | asa', abulat    | cha'         |
| two            | dua        | duwa        | tuwa            | tuwa'        |
| big            | běsar      | běsar       | ada'            | ada'         |
| long           | panjang    | panyak      | data'           | data'        |
| small          | kěchil     | dumi'       | nek             | ne'          |
| woman          | pěrěmpuan  | nibini      | binai           | minai        |
| man            | laki-laki  | kilaki      | kanai           | kanai        |
| person         | orang      | urak        | měnut           | měnut        |
| (mankind)      | manusia    | měsiya)     |                 |              |
| fish           | ikan       | ikat        | ikan            | ikan         |
| bird           | burong     | buruk       | chichum         | tichum       |
| dog            | anjing     | asu         | oi              | ii           |
| louse          | kutu       | gutu        | gutoi           | gutoi        |



| ENGLISH        | MALAY      | URAK LAWOI' | MOKEN         | MOKLEN      |
|----------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| tree           | pohon kayu | puhot kayu  | ka'e          | ka' au      |
| seed           | biji       | biji        | keman         | keman       |
| leaf           | daun       | dawut       | da'on         | dě'on       |
| root           | akar       | jakat       | jakan         | yakan       |
| bark (of tree) | kulit      | kule' kayu  | kølet         | kølet       |
| skin           | kulit      | kule'       | bulang        | bulang      |
| flesh          | daging     | lulu        | jukut         | yukut       |
| blood          | darah      | darah       | dalak         | dalak       |
| bone           | tulang     | tulak       | klan          | klan        |
| grease, oil    | minyak     | minya'      | minyat        | minyat      |
| egg            | tělur      | těloť       | kělung        | kělung      |
| horn (of cow)  | tandok     | tano'       | kading        | kading      |
| tail           | ekur       | ikoť        | ikun          | ikun        |
| feather        | bulu       | bulu        | buloi         | buloi       |
| hair           | rambut     | po'         | buloi atak    | buloi hotak |
| head           | kěpala     | pala        | atak          | hotak       |
| ear            | tělinga    | tělinga     | tenga         | tenga'      |
| eye            | mata       | mata        | mata          | mata :'     |
| nose           | hidong     | hidok       | cahung, chahy | yung        |
| mouth          | mulut      | muloi'      | okang         | okang       |
| tooth          | gigi       | gigi        | lepan         | kæpan       |
| tongue         | lidah      | lidah       | kělæ          | klæ         |
| finger nail    | kuku       | kuku        | kəkoi         | kukoi       |
| foot           | kaki       | kaki        | kakai         | kakai       |
| knee           | lutut      | lutoi'      | ta' ot        | ta' ot      |
| hand           | tangan     | tangan      | nengan        | ngan        |
| belly          | pěrut      | proi'       | lake          | lake        |
| neck           | leher      | lihel       | tukø          | lukøng      |
| breasts        | susu       | dada        | jøjoi, sěsøi  | tujoi       |
| heart          | hati       | hati        | hatai         | hatai       |
| liver          | hati       | hati        | —             | katai       |
| drink          | minum      | o'          | mě' am        | mě' am      |
| eat            | makan      | makat       | nyam          | nyam        |
| bite           | gigit      | gige'       | no'kot        | no'got      |

| ENGLISH      | MALAY      | URAK LAWOP  | MOKEN        | MOKLEN       |
|--------------|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| see          | lihat      | lihai'      | mēlit        | pēna         |
| hear         | dēngar     | mēningai    | nenga        | nenga        |
| know         | tahu       | tahu        | nyēdan       | dan          |
| sleep        | tidur      | lina'       | kēlet        | tēklet       |
| die          | mati       | mati        | matai        | matai        |
| kill         | bunuh      | bunoh       | munu'        | munu'        |
| swim         | bērēnang   | bētēnang    | nangowi      | nangoi       |
| fly          | tērbang    | tribak      | ticum (?)    | tichum nayak |
| walk         | jalan      | jalat       | lakau        | kau          |
| come         | mari       | marēh       | ngadin       | din          |
| lie, deceive | bohong     | mē'upay     | kawau        | kawau        |
| sit          | dudok      | dudo'       | mēdō         | dōk          |
| stand        | bērdiri    | bīdiri      | yenan        | yenan        |
| give         | bēri       | bri         | mē' on       | 'on          |
| say          | kata       | mēlau       | mēkau        | klau         |
| sun          | matahari   | mata' ari   | mata' aloi   | mata' aloi   |
| moon         | bulan      | bulat       | bulan        | bulan        |
| star         | bintang    | bitak       | bituak       | bituak       |
| water        | ayer       | aye         | uwen         | u'en         |
| rain         | hujan      | hujat       | hujan        | kōyan        |
| stone        | batu       | batu        | batoi        | batoi        |
| earth        | tanah      | tanah       | tanai ketam  | tanai tē'et  |
| sand         | pasir      | tanah patai | tanai bētiak | tanai panat  |
| cloud        | awan       | kēmawang    | kēniang      | kēdet angin  |
| fire         | api        | api         | apu :, apwi  | apwi         |
| smoke        | asap       | asa'        | ahoi, kahoi  | kfi          |
| ash          | abu        | habu        | kaboi        | gihai        |
| burn (noun)  | luka angus | hangoi'     | tutung       | tutung apwi  |
| path         | jalan      | jalat       | jalan        | yalan        |
| mountain     | bukit      | buke'       | ta'lai       | tē'lai       |
| red          | merah      | merah       | mēlat        | mēlat        |
| green        | hijau      | hijau       | ngōmō        | yau          |
| yellow       | kuning     | kuning      | kunyik       | liang (Thai) |
| white        | puteh      | puteh       | putiak       | putiak       |



| ENGLISH               | MALAY         | URAK LAWOI'   | MOKEN       | MOKLEN      |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| black                 | hitam         | hitap         | měnap       | nap         |
| night                 | malam         | malap         | kěman       | kěman       |
| hot                   | panas, hangat | hangai'       | holat       | kolat       |
| cold                  | dingin        | bějeh         | tayam       | tayam       |
| full                  | pěnoh         | pěnoh         | pěnu        | pěnu'       |
| new                   | baharu        | baru          | kěloi       | klai        |
| good                  | baik          | baji'         | amon        | amon        |
| round                 | bulat         | bulai'        | kělum       | klum        |
| dry                   | kěring        | krik          | kětæ        | 'etæ'       |
| name                  | nama          | nama          | nganyan     | —           |
| eat rice              | makan nasi    | makat nasi    | nyam jøn    | yam jøn     |
| Where are you going ? | pěrgi mana    | pi diha       | lakau pita  | kau tam     |
| What are you doing ?  | bikin apa     | bwai' nama    | bo' anun    | bo' anong   |
| Whose boat ?          | pěrahu siapa  | prahu sapa    | kabang acha | kabang acau |
| my boat               | pěrahu sahaya | prahu na' ku  | kabang jui  | kabang jai  |
| a big ship            | kapal bėsar   | kanan bėsar   | cěpə' ada'  | kabang ada' |
| go to catch fish      | pěrgi tangkap | pi riga' ikat | měngap ikan | měngap ikan |
| my mother             | mak sahaya    | ma' de' ku    | ěnong joi   | inong jai   |

It is obvious from these lists that the four languages belong to the same language family, with Malay and Urak Lawoi' being more closely related to each other and Moken and Moklen forming another pair. Experience has shown that the dialects are not mutually intelligible unless there has been some mixing together. For instance, few of the Urak Lawoi' on Phuket can speak Malay and a Malay-speaker would not be able to follow their conversation. However the Urak Lawoi' in the Adang Group have mixed with Malays more so that most understand Malay and they use more Malay words than those in Phuket would. Similarly the Moklen from the north of Phuket Island do not understand a Moken speaker because they rarely meet them, while those in the Ko' Phra Thong area who do meet them can talk with them.

It will be seen that there is a systematic pattern of phonetic changes evident between these various languages. I have commenced to analyse the variations between Malay and Urak Lawoi' and find they follow similar patterns to those evident in other languages closely related to Malay, such as Pattani Malay. Moken and Moklen seem more distantly related to Malay.

Miss Lewis (1960) has listed 1430 Moken words. Of these she has found Malayo-Polynesian affinities (or loans) for 365 words, Mon-Khmer affinities (or loans) for 46 words, 69 words possibly Thai loan-words and 36 words possibly Burmese loan-words.

I have not yet analysed my Urak Lawoi' vocabulary in that way, but of the 110 words listed above there are only these ten words for which I cannot see a cognate Malay word: hoi (have not), dumi' (small), lulu (flesh), po' (hair), o' (drink), mēlau (say), kēmawang (cloud), bējeh (cold), diha (where?), na' (of). However a word checklist of this type can be deceptive and give a false impression of the resemblance to Malay. It makes no indication of differences in syntactical structure, and by concentrating on basic words which may not vary much from one language to another, and by the small size of the sampling used it can obscure the real situation. For instance in 106 Moken words above I can see 49 which have obvious parallels in cognate Malay words, which is to say there is a 46% correlation. Miss Lewis' list with 1430 words and 365 affinities obviously gives a much more realistic correlation of 25.5%

#### URAK LAWOI' PHONEMIC STRUCTURE AND ORTHOGRAPHY

Urak Lawoi' has 23 consonantal phonemes: the unaspirated voiceless stops p t c k' (glottal); the voiced stops b d j g; the rare voiceless aspirated stops ph th ch kh; the voiceless fricatives s h; the nasals m n ny ng; the laterals l r; and the semi-vowels w y. All these occur initially in syllables, but only the following 12 appear syllable-finally: the stops p t c k'; the voiceless fricatives s h; the nasals m n ng; the lateral l and the semi-vowels w y. Phonetically both "r" and "l" occur syllable-finally, but they are interpreted as one phoneme "l" because of the lack of contrast.



Of these consonants, all except "j g ny" appear in the Thai alphabet, so they are represented in Thai by the normal middle and lower class consonants. Less frequently used Thai letters ณ ญ and ฦ are borrowed for "j g ny".

Thai does not have the sounds "c s h l" appearing syllable-finally. Using the Thai letter ฮ finally for "h" does not cause any complication, but the Thai letters for "c s" ฅ ษ are pronounced "t" finally, and final "l" ฦ is pronounced "n". A primer has been prepared to aid those who can read Thai to learn how to pronounce these letters in Urak Lawoi', e.g.: "c" is phonetically equivalent to "i"; "s" is equivalent to "ih"; and "l" is pronounced as an alveolar or blade-palatal "l" according to its context. This may be seen in the words: "darah" ดาหรื (blood); "proc (=proi)" ปุริจ (stomach); "atas (=ataih)" อาต๋ฮื (on); "lihel" ลีลื้อ (neck); "bumol" (=bumolh) บุมออล (doctor). The Thai letter ฦ has been used for syllable-final "l" because of variations in the pronunciation of this letter in the dialects of various speakers.

Urak Lawoi' has eight vowel phonemes "i e i̯ ε a u o ɔ", which approximate the pronunciation of the equivalent Thai vowels as they are spoken in the Southern Thai dialect of Thai. There is no phonemic reason to distinguish between long and short vowels in Urak Lawoi' but the Thai pattern has been followed so that Urak Lawoi' people who learn to read in their own language first will be prepared to make the transition to reading Thai. The short "i̯" symbol —<sup>̣</sup> is also used to indicate the indeterminate transition vowel which occurs frequently and is used for the vowel "i̯" when it appears in an unaccented pre-final syllable, throwing the word stress on to the final syllable. This symbol—<sup>̣</sup> in Urak Lawoi' never implies a concluding glottal stop as it does when it appears syllable-finally in Thai. In the word-lists above this vowel is written "i̯" to match the way it is written in the words taken from the Malay dictionary. Examples: Transition vowel - "kèlamel" คีลามีล (coconut); unstressed syllable "kěna (=kĩna) "กีน" (to experience), contrasting with "kĩna" กีน (because).

Tones are not phonemic in Urak Lawoi', appearing only in a few loan-words from Thai.

A full description of the phonemics and orthography of Urak Lawoi' has been prepared and is to be published by Dr. W.A. Smalley of the United Bible Societies in his book "Phonemes and Orthography in Marginal Languages of Thailand".

#### SAMPLE OF URAK LAWOI' TEXT

The following brief sample of Urak Lawoi' text will show some of the pattern of the language and how it is written in Thai characters and in phonemic script:

โกะ นานะ ชิมัย อีน กูญา มินุกัด ป็ โรงเรียน กะมัตอ เอ็ด เตะ ญา  
ko'nana' simay ini, kunya minyikat pi rongrian. ka'gitf et de' nya  
The children age this, they are-lazy go school. So, mother of him

ฆาเตาะ ฆาเตาะ ซักัด นะ ป็ ซุกา นะ บุดอ เตะ บิลาัก ทื่อ  
gato' gato', "sik at na' pi, suka na' budo." de' bilakak ti,  
beat, beat, "Lazy to go, likes to-be stupid." In-the-end particle,

baru ป็ บิลาฉ้อ บิลาฉ้อ บิเล็ ปานัย ตะ บิเล็ ทื่อเบะ  
baru pi bilajal. bilajal bileh panay da', bileh tibe',  
then goes studies. Studies gets skill particle, can leave (school),

บรี ชินัง ฮาติ เต็ด บิเล็ ทื่อเบะ ชินัง เปะ ดิฮา ฮี  
bri sinang hati. tet bileh tibe', sinang pe' diha? hi.  
gives heart-at-rest. Not can leave, rest place where. Ejaculation.

A free translation would be: "Children of this age are lazy about going to school. So their mother beats them repeatedly, saying, "Lazy to go; Likes to be stupid!" Afterwards they go and study. When they have studied and got wise, they can leave school with their heart at rest. If they cannot complete school, where will they find rest?"



This text shows a high proportion of words cognate with Malay, with only "sřmay" and "rongrian" as loan-words from Thai. The word "ko'" is a unique feature not found in Thai or Malay, a definite article preceding a noun. Verbal prefix to the verb as in Malay is seen in the words "sřkat-mřnyřkat" (to be lazy). The particle "na'" derived from the Malay word "hřndak" is used similarly to a Thai modal particle. The particle "ti'" acts as the boundary marker of a temporal phrase. The particle "da'" acts similarly to the Thai specific adjective "leew" (เลว). The particle "bri'" acts similarly to the Thai "haj" (ก็) (=so that). It will be seen that the syntax incorporates features resembling both Thai and Malayan.

#### SIMILAR LANGUAGES IN THIS AREA

On a recent visit to Malaysia I made enquiries for any other Orang Laut tribes on the west coast of Malaya, whose language might be related to Urak Lawoi'. There were two possibilities, the Mah Meri tribe in the Kuala Langat district of Selangor and the Orang Kuala tribe on the west coast of Johore. Williams-Hunt (1952) says that Besis is the language of the Mah Meri tribe, but he says that they are an aboriginal Malay group, mainly Senoi in character. Samples of Senoi I have seen show that it has no resemblance to Urak Lawoi'. Similarly Sopher (p. 53,67 & 333) says that the Besis had been referred to in the literature as Orang Laut, but he considers they should not be included in this category. Professor Mohd. Taib bin Othman of the Malay Studies Department, University of Malaysia, informed me that a lecturer in his Department was working on this language, but I have not yet been able to consult with her.

The Orang Kuala tribe, otherwise known as Desin Dolaq (=Sea People), are accessible on Pulau Sialu, near Batu Pahat in Johore. I was informed that there are approximately 4500 in this tribe living on this coast, but that the use of their language was dying out. This tribe is more numerous on the south-east coast of Sumatra opposite Johore. An ethnographic and linguistic study of these people has been written by Kähler but I have not been able to refer to this. I was not able to visit Pulau Sialu, but through the courtesy of Che Shahrum bin Yub, Director of the Museums Department, I was able to peruse Mr. H.D. Collings'

word-list from this tribe. *The list was rather brief, but the vocabulary was noticeably different from that of Urak Lawoi' and there was not the same systematic variation from Malay as Urak Lawoi'.*

There used to be a settlement of Orang Laut on Pulau Brani in Singapore but Sopher says (p. 106) that by the 1920's they were quite assimilated to the Malay population, and apparently speaking only the Malay language.

It appears then that there are not other extant dialects of Malay which are closely linked with Urak Lawoi'. Largely cut off from other members of the Malay race they have maintained their own distinctive language and remnants of their culture and remain the Urak Lawoi', "The Men of the Sea".



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