

# **Thailand’s “Chow Pah Negritos” (Maniq) in 1897 and 1899: Smithsonian Records of W. L. Abbott’s Expeditions to the Trang-Phatthalung Border Highlands**

**Paul Michael Taylor**

ABSTRACT—Adding to the very few pre-1900 accounts of the Maniq groups of Thailand, this paper presents new information from archives and ethnographic collections at the Smithsonian about two visits by William Louis Abbott at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the group now generally called the Maniq, considered a subgroup of the Semang and the northernmost Negrito group of the peninsular region of southern Thailand and Malaya. These sources indicate the position, within 19<sup>th</sup> century theories about evolutionary sequences of societies, that Thailand’s “Chow pah” came to serve, for Abbott himself and for the Smithsonian anthropologists with whom he corresponded.

This paper provides previously unpublished information from archives and ethnographic collections at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C, about two visits by the American naturalist collector William Louis Abbott (1860-1936) in 1897 and 1899 to the Negrito group now generally called the Maniq, considered a subgroup of the Semang and the northernmost Negrito group of the peninsular region of southern Thailand and Malaya. Abbott used the term “Chow pah”, or “forest people”, for this nomadic hunter-gatherer group. After summarizing literature on early visits to this group, including the question of names by which they are referenced in that literature, this paper briefly summarizes relevant aspects of the historic and scientific context for the two expeditions undertaken to Thailand in 1897 and 1899 by Abbott, then specifically for his two expeditions to the Trang-Phattalung border area. Abbott’s observations and collections from the Negrito groups whom he called the “Chow pah,” his observations on their relations with surrounding Thai and other ethnic groups, and his later correspondence with scientists attempting to interpret these data, are also summarized.

Abbott himself was dissatisfied with the quality of his ethnographic and biological collections from these trips to the Chow pah regions. None of his photographs seem to have survived. Serious illness required him to leave the area quickly on his first trip, leaving behind his collections. Travel and transport of collections were difficult again when he returned in 1899. Yet the material collected,

given the ethnographic collecting philosophy Abbott shared with the Smithsonian's head curator of anthropology, Otis Mason, seemed to confirm the Chow pah's especially early position in the evolutionary sequence of societies as measured through the progress of technologies. For years after his visit, Abbott continued to correspond with scientists about aspects of the Negrito population he had visited during his travels in Lower Siam.

### **Abbott's "Chow Pah" in the 1890s and the Tonga or Maniq today**

Any discussion of the ethnic minority population whom Abbott visited, or their descendants today, needs to begin by considering the terminology used. Abbott's term "Chow pah" (Thai *chao pa* or "forest people") clearly reflects the term his Thai interlocutors used for the non-Thai population whose very dark skin, small stature and woolly hair led him, and others also, to classify them as Negritos, thus comparable to the "Negritos" already then known from the Andaman Islands and Nicobars, as well as other so-called Sakai groups of the Malay peninsula in Malaysia.

According to *Ethnologue* (Grimes et al. 2005:518 & map 831) "Tonga" is the name for the language indigenously spoken by the Negrito population living today in the area Abbott visited, and about 300 people of the Tonga ethnolinguistic group live in Thailand, though the Tonga language as of the year 2000 may be extinct as a spoken language (ibid.). "Maniq" (one local name for "human being") is another widely used term today for all the Negrito populations of southern Thailand. *Ethnologue* however considers this term "Maniq", in its more restricted sense, to be one of a group of names for a separate single language spoken by communities further south along and beyond the border with Malaysia, to which it gives the canonical name "Kensiu" with many local names for speech communities speaking Kensiu dialects ("Kensiu, Kense, Kensieu, Kenseu, Kensiw, Sakai, Moniq, Maniq, Moni, Menik, Meni, Ngok Pa, Orang Bukit, Orang Liar, Mos Mengo, Tiong, Mawas, Belubn"), on both sides of the Malaysian border (Grimes et al. 2005:515 & 454; map 831). *Ethnologue* estimates there are about 300 "Kensiu" speakers in Thailand and 3,000 in Malaysia, classifying Tonga and Kensiu as very closely related but distinct languages within the North Aslian subgroup of the Aslian languages (all within the Mon-Khmer language family). Nevertheless the terms "Maniq" and "Sakai" are also both used more broadly in Thailand for all Negrito populations. Hamilton (2006) notes that the term "Sakai" was also formerly commonly applied in Malaysia to these and other allied forest populations, though that word has generally been replaced there by *Orang Asli* ("indigenous" or "original" people) (cf. Endicott and Denton 2004). Because "Sakai" has the connotation of "slave, servant" (Brandt 1961:128), it is not considered polite in Thai and has been replaced with the term *ngo* or *ngo paa*, a reference to the rambutan fruit, and thus to the physical appearance of these Negritos, who have dark skin and thick woolly hair (Hamilton 2006:294).

Hamilton concludes that "in order to avoid the use of prejudicial terms such as Sakai or *ngo paa*, many ethnologists and linguists increasingly use the term Maniq for these people," as accepted by many recent authors (e.g. Albrecht and Moser 1998, Thonghom and Weber 2004).

By contrast, Brandt's (1961) detailed account of the "Negritos of Peninsular Thailand," after reviewing terms for his topic, concludes, "With this confusion surrounding terminology for the entire group I feel it safe to call the pygmoid Negro, "Negrito", in order to strip him of the multitudinous derogatory and misleading names with which he has been burdened, with further breakdown into band names, if known, or into the geographic location in which the band is found."

Of the seven principal bands, which Brandt lists in his survey, the first or northernmost of the Negrito groups is the one in the area Abbott visited:

1. The Negrito of Pattalung-Trang, Thailand, called *Tonga*, Mos and Chong Negrito, which inhabit the Kau Ban Tat Range dividing Trang and Pattalung Provinces. [...] The Pattalung-Trang Negrito, whom I will arbitrarily call Tonga, range through dense jungle of the Kau Ban Tat Range. (Brandt 1961:129-30)

Here it should be noted that F. W. Brandt is the source of a much later Smithsonian ethnographic collection of seventy-nine objects representing Negrito populations of Thailand, collected by him in the 1960s and acquired by the Smithsonian in 1969. (Accession no. 285733 having catalog numbers 410853 through 410929.) These objects document a remarkable continuity of manufacture from the 1890s to the 1960s, having for example quivers and darts remarkably similar to those collected by Abbott in 1899 (see Figure 7).

In 1961 Brandt considered that this group, whom he calls the Tonga and had earlier been visited by I.H.N. Evans, probably had a population well under the figure of one hundred individuals, which had been Evans's estimate of their population when he wrote in the 1930s. Evans (1937:23-24) noted visits to this group by Paul Schebesta in 1924 and 1925 respectively (Schebesta 1927, 1952-57; cf. Brandt 1961:126), as well as Evans' own 1924 visit reported in this publication and previously in Evans 1927:1-14, in which he seems to have followed much the same route as Abbott twenty-seven years earlier, entering Siam at the Trang port of Kantang in April 1924 and taking the road to Phatthalung as far as Chong. Evans notes that Schebesta obtained the terms Tonga, Mos, and possibly "Tenga" (shown instead of Tonga only on the foldout map at back pocket of his book, not in his text, Schebesta 1927), though Evans found none of these names on his visit. Evans noted:

The Siamese call the Negritos Ngok, Ngok Pa, Chao Pa or Kuan Pa. The first name is preferable. It appears to mean "frizzy". The term Chao Pa, which seems to be about equivalent to "jungle folk", appears occasionally to be used

in speaking of jungle-dwelling Siamese, and there is thus some danger of confusion arising if one enquires for Negritos under this name. The (Chong) Negritos call themselves Monik – Menik is a common term for themselves among the Perak Negritos [...] while they refer to the Siamese as Homik. (Evans 1927:4)

Well before these scientific visits of the 1920s, Thailand's King Chulalongkorn took much interest in his aboriginal subjects, and visited the Negrito of Phatthalung-Trang in 1904, bringing a youth named Kanang back with him to his court in Bangkok. Hamilton (1961:307) speculates that the child may already have been in service to a local dignitary, and notes that in the official account the child was presented to the King by the governor of Phatthalung. The King wrote a description of the "Ngo Paa" (Negritos), and later composed a romantic drama of the jungle people in verse entitled *Ngo Paa*, widely read today in Thailand (see Hamilton 2006:307; Brandt 1961:127). Hamilton (2006) reviews the Thai reception of this drama alongside other examples of how the Maniq (Negritos) in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have been part of Thai consciousness and even more recently Thai ecotourism. She also reviews recent studies of DNA linkages between this region's Maniq populations and Negritos of the Andamans; as well as some archeological evidence that more widespread "Negrito" or Mongoloid populations speaking Aslian languages might have occupied much of Southeast Asia exclusively until around 3,000 or 2,000 B.C., concluding, "It seems certain that the Aslian peoples occupied the Peninsula for thousands of years, certainly prior to the present-day Thai." (Hamilton 2006:313).

Such issues of understanding the place of the Trang-Phatthalung Negritos and related populations within the history and evolution of the society around them, still unresolved today, formed a subject of great interest to Abbott. Given his interest in finding new biological species from unstudied and uncollected regions, alongside contemporaneous efforts to study human societal evolution through collections of material culture, he very much sought the chance to visit this seemingly "remnant" or more "primitive" Negrito hunter-gatherer population in the mountainous fastnesses of Lower Siam.

### **William Louis Abbott in Thailand**

As Taylor (2014) has outlined, there is currently at the Smithsonian an important group of ethnographic, biological, and unpublished archival materials deriving from two expeditions to southern Thailand by Abbott, the first from February 1896 to April 1897, and the second from late December 1898 to March 1899.

Abbott's lifelong collecting was entirely self-financed, since at the age of twenty-six he received a large inheritance upon the death of his father (1886), allowing him to carry out his series of expeditions, beginning in East Africa and

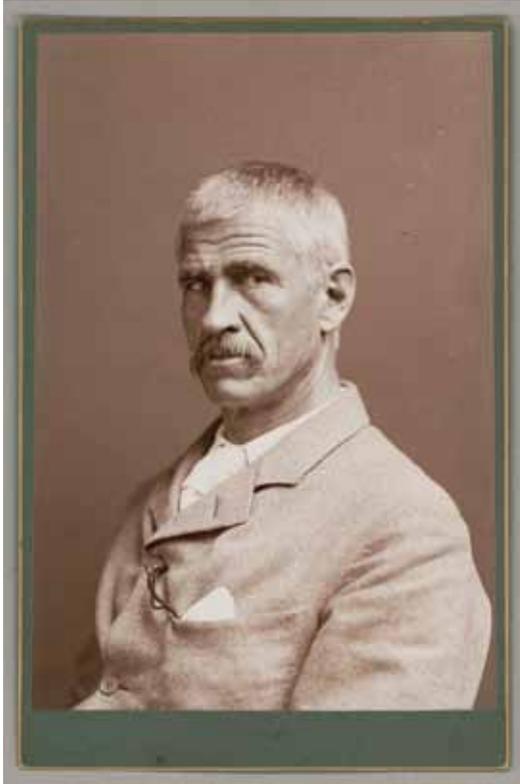


Figure 1: William Louis Abbott (1860-1936). National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

outbreak of the Spanish-American War, for which he rushed back to the U.S.A. to fight as part of the Cuban invasion. By the time he returned to Singapore in December 1898, en route to his second trip to Thailand, he had decided to outfit a schooner in Singapore. That schooner, which he named the *Terrapin*, would later become his moveable base of natural history collecting operations for the ten years following his return to Singapore from the second Lower Siam expedition (thus until 1909). The second Thailand trip took place while he waited for the schooner to be finished. That schooner later allowed him to sail through the East Indies and along the Malay peninsula, collecting biological specimens and over 6,000 well-documented artifacts from

continuing in South and Central Asia before arriving in Southeast Asia where he began his explorations in Thailand. His many practical difficulties included problems obtaining appropriate supplies (traps, rifles, proper packing material for shipment), logistics of keeping collections dry enough to preserve, pack, and send, and worries about safely leaving collections at a central location while he traveled to distant field sites, in addition to his long unproductive periods of waiting for the end of heavy rains in order to start collecting again.

Between the two Thailand expeditions, he returned to northern India (Ladakh and Kashmir) while ordering supplies and equipment to be sent to him for his return to Southeast Asia. His return was delayed, however, by the



Figure 2. "Grass [sic] wallet" of the "Chow pah tribe, Siam" collected by William Louis Abbott in 1899. Smithsonian Institution, Department of Anthropology, catalog # E202853. Plant fiber (pandanus?), approximately 36 X 20 cm. Unlike some other Abbott collections, this object has no surviving original label handwritten by Abbott, but has one old handwritten museum label and one recent barcode label (associated with the present digital collection database).

the peoples he visited, interviewed, and photographed, until he became afflicted with partial blindness in 1909.

As also noted in Taylor (2014), Abbott's ethnographic collecting was deeply influenced by the work of Smithsonian Head Curator of Anthropology Otis Mason (1838-1908), with whom Abbott maintained an active correspondence regarding his travels in Lower Siam and elsewhere. Mason's career was dedicated to studying museum collections in order to establish artifact typologies and to posit from them evolutionary culture-historical sequences and culture areas (Hinsley 1981:84-117), with special emphasis on basketry.

The basketry and other artifacts Abbott sent to Washington, alongside material coming to the Smithsonian after 1898 from America's new Philippine colony "seemed to fill gaping holes in Mason's culture history," (Hinsley 1981:115) because most represented a stage of development midway between North American Indians and the early civilizations of the West. Mason prepared a well-illustrated publication on the *Vocabulary of Malaysian Basketwork: A Study in the W. L. Abbott Collections* (Mason 1908) "with the view of having a lucid nomenclature in describing the Abbott specimens more at length in a larger work" (Mason 1908:1), though due to Mason's death that larger work never appeared. ("Malaysian" basketwork of the title referred to basketry and woven plant-fiber matting from what is now Indonesia as well as Malaysia and Lower Siam.) Due apparently to the difficulty of reading Abbott's handwritten notes, Mason mistakenly refers to the group Abbott visited, whose basketry is included in his study, as "Chowpal: Negritos of Trong, Lower Siam" (1908:3). The examples of material culture collected among them, however, represent only the simplest levels of technological complexity, such as the plant-fiber "wallet" collected in 1899 (Figure 2) of a kind whose structure seemed to classify those who produced it as being at a lower level of societal evolution than more developed cultures of Southeast Asia and America, whose more advanced basketry forms each had distinctive elaborations of the simplest plaiting or weave. (Both Abbott and Mason here use the word "wallet" in its common 19<sup>th</sup> century meaning,<sup>1</sup> a bag for holding provisions on a journey.)

Malaysian baskets are much more broken up into parts than American. In both areas there will be, in the plainest structures, such as mats, wallets, and checkerwork baskets, wrong side and right side, outside and inside, top, bottom, and sides. But the full-fledged carrying basket is a bewildering association of parts. A technic part or unit is the full movement of the active parts once. The result is one check, decussation, twill, stitch, curl, bend, bight, hitch, coil, or knot. (Mason 1908:35)

<sup>1</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, "A bag for holding provisions, clothing, books, etc., esp. on a journey either on foot or on horseback" OED Online, examples given from 1405 to 1914; accessed September 2014, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/225307?redirectedFrom=wallet>

Though the Chow pah examples are not discussed in detail, it is easy to see how both Mason and Abbott would envision that the earliest levels of societal evolution had not progressed beyond such very basic structures of technology such as the checkerwork which "abounds in the Abbott Malaysian collections." When "made in strips of soft material, like pandanus leaf, this technic lends itself ever for both useful and decorative work – for matting, baskets, wallets, reticules, and so on." (Mason 1908:41). The simplicity of this Chow pah manufacture contrasted markedly with the elaborate Siamese basketry and fishtraps that so interested Mason (see Taylor 2014:145-147).

In addition to his biological and ethnographic collections at the Smithsonian, William Louis Abbott's papers,<sup>2</sup> including his correspondence with Mason and other curators to whom he was sending specimens, and with his family, are now found in two of the Smithsonian's major archives,<sup>3</sup> and in field records stored in the Smithsonian's Mammals Library and its Botany Library. Unfortunately, none of Abbott's photographs from these visits to the Chow pah seem to have survived. Abbott's correspondence provides our clearest window into his expeditions, including recollections of these trips in letters written many years afterward.

### **Abbott's expeditions to the Trang-Phatthalung border highlands, 1897 and 1899**

We can piece together the sequence of Abbott's travels on his two Lower Siam expeditions from the information (where available) on objects collected, and from archival correspondence. Most important, for the 1897 visit, is his June 5, 1897 letter to ornithologist Charles Richmond describing his travels in Trang (Abbott often wrote "Trong"), which enclosed what he referred to as his "sketch map of Trong, with my collecting stations marked." There he wrote, "As is the case with the whole of the Siamese part of the Malay peninsula, the country is unsurveyed & unmapped. Although the country is populous and anything but a wilderness, it is terra incognita to Europeans." Within Abbott's archival correspondence, this sketch map (Figure 3), along with another map apparently made in part from it (Figure 4) have been located.

In February 1896, Abbott had arrived in Thailand from his travels in Kashmir, and began a series of collecting trips from the capital at Kantang (which he sometimes

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<sup>2</sup> Abbott's correspondence and papers have been transcribed, organized, and annotated for publication, Taylor *in press*. Earlier publications about his Indonesian collections include Taylor 1985, 1995, 2002, and Taylor and Hamilton 1993, and examples in Taylor and Aragon 1991; Taylor 2015 surveys his Madagascar collections; and Asian Civilisations Museum 2009 describes collections Abbott donated to museums in Singapore.

<sup>3</sup> National Anthropological Archives, and the separate Smithsonian Archives, which include early Registrar's records for the National Museum of Natural History.

Figure 3. Sketch map by W.L. Abbott, likely the “sketch map of Trong [Trang], with my collecting stations marked” referenced in Abbott’s June 5, 1897 letter to Charles Richmond.

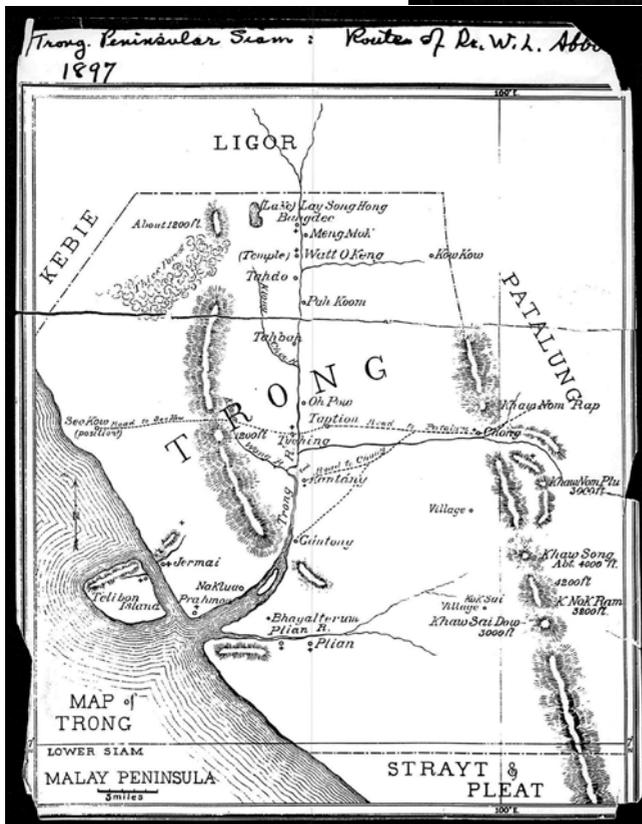
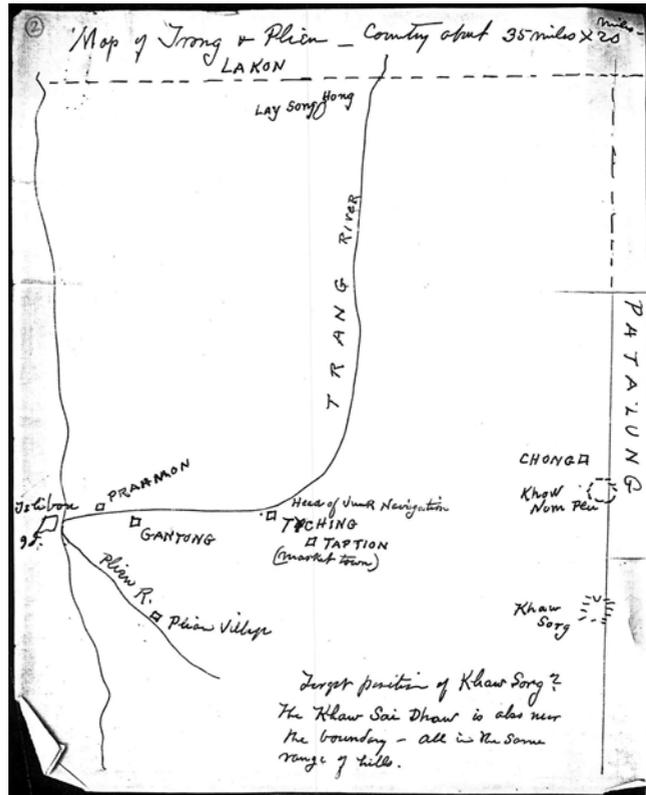


Figure 4. Ink-drawn map of Trong, “Routes of Dr. W.L. Abbott, 1897” (Smithsonian Archives.)

wrote *Canton*; or *Gantong* / *Gántong* as in Figures 3 and 4) (Taylor 2014). From Abbott's correspondence about his travels and collecting prior to visiting the Chow pah, we know he must have been inquiring about them at Trang's capital of Kantang and elsewhere. Abbott was aware of the Negrito "Sakai" population of Malaya, and of the question of Negrito origins and potential similarities to Negritos of the Andamans, Nicobars, and Philippines. By August 27, 1896, comfortably encamped at his collecting station at the lake near "Bangdee," whose name he writes as "(Lake) Lay Song Hong," Abbott wrote to his mother:

There is no place like the uninhabited wilderness for real comfort. Have got a fairly good house about 14 x 15 feet, & six feet off the ground. Nothing will dry this damp weather so have had to keep a fire going to dry the skins & insects. It is a pity that there are no Sakai (wild men, forest tribes) in this district, as they are capital hunters & trappers, especially for small animals, & use the sumpitan or blow pipe. They are found on the main range of hills in the middle of the peninsula.

By January 1897, Abbott was ready to begin his first expedition to those hills, via the road from Tyching eastward toward Phatthalung. On January 13, 1897, he wrote to mammologist F.W. True, "The dry season has at last arrived & I am leaving in two days for the mountains. Am told there are plenty of Rhinoceros & tapir there. There are Sakai (wild tribes) there & I ought to do well. It is only about 12 miles away in straight line, but it takes 2 days with elephants, owing to the bad road." By January 20, 1897, however, he wrote to ornithologist Charles Richmond:

Am rather disappointed in not finding Sakai (wild tribes) close by this place. They live on the mountain just to the southward. & if I can communicate with them they are capital collectors & know everything in the forest. The Siamese are not particularly good hunters. The wild people may not be Sakai as they are called in Perak, but may be Samangs. They use the blowpipe or sumpitan like the Dyaks of Borneo.

But in subsequent days he succeeded in locating the group that he, from then on, definitively calls the "Chow pah," and this first encounter is most extensively described in a letter to his mother dated January 23, 1897, which notes their similarity to the Semang (written "Samang") Negritos of Malaysia and is also revealing of their relations with the Thai population:

There is a small tribe of Chow pah (forest people) living close by here. They number about 20 of all ages. Apparently they are the same as the Samangs of Perak. They are timid & inoffensive & rather shy. The Siamese of course now treat them well,

but I suspect that formerly they treated them as the Malays did the Sakai & Samang in the Southern part of the peninsula, that is ill treated them & took them for slaves. They are armed with blowpipes shooting little poisoned arrows.

The whole crowd came yesterday to look at me, as of course my proceedings are of the greatest interest, where no white man, let alone a naturalist was ever seen before. I should be regarded with greater curiosity if I wore European clothes. Besides am nearly as dark as many of the Chinese. The Chow pah men were not particularly bad looking, but the women were about as ugly specimens as could be made to order.

They appeared strong & healthy & each one had a small brown baby, fat as butter, hanging on one of her breasts. One old hag, toothless, bent, & decrepid was an extraordinary specimen of ugliness. I should like to see a good deal of these interesting people, but they are so shy & suspicious that I dont know if I shall succeed.

Abbott notes that a valley to the east of that place had a name meaning “the falling water”; and that he planned to go to “Nom Rap” for a few weeks then to Chong Mountain to the southeast, where he hoped to hunt the plentiful “tapir, bear, and other animals.”

On January 29 he wrote again to his mother from “Nom Rap,” which he described as “a most beautiful place in the forest” with “Magnificent tropical vegetation in all directions, with clear cold streams in all the valleys.” Though he was disappointed in the scarcity of large animals he was pleased to have collected several birds he had never seen before; adding an ethnographic note to this letter also:

I went to a camp of the Chow pah, they shift their camp every 2 or 3 days, so it is not always easy to find them. The camp consists of a semicircle 18 feet or so across. Formed by slanting the stalks of the giant calamus, or some such plant, so as to make a lean to about 6 feet deep & 6 feet high. All open in front. They sleep upon couches formed of the stalks of reeds or smooth poles, slightly raised at one end. Their whole possessions appear to consist of their blowpipes & poisoned arrows, a spear or two, an earthen pot, & a dirty rag for the waist.

“Such an absence of worldly gear certainly has its advantages,” he joked to his mother. Referring indirectly to the previous year’s acute economic crisis in the U.S.A. (known as the “Panic of 1896”), as well as the bitter debate in America over “bimetallism” or “free silver” vs. gold as America’s monetary standard, and writing barely six months after William Jennings Bryan’s famous “Cross of Gold” speech at the 1896 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Abbott informed his mother from his encampment at Nom Rap that the Chow pah “cant suffer from robbery[;] panics & silver agitations pass them over unscathed.”

Unfortunately no correspondence or field notes subsequent to that January 29, 1897 letter have been located from Abbott's first expedition to Thailand. Our first records of subsequent events are in an April 7, 1897 letter sent to his mother from Penang, describing the serious bout of "remittent fever" and 35 pounds (16 kg) weight loss he suffered in the forest at the Trang-Phatthalung border, informing her that "my scene of action has been transferred from the forests of Trong to the General Hospital, Penang." He explains that "The only bad time I had was when I was first taken ill over in the forest, my temperature ran pretty high I eventually got an elephant to carry me to Tyching & that was the end of my troubles." Though he recovered sufficiently to leave for Penang and insisted he was "going about now almost well," he adds, "But am much disgusted at being unable to finish my work satisfactorily in Trong. I did not get in any work upon the hill that I had been looking forward to."

My address is % King, King & Co. Bombay  
 Penang - Straits Settlements -  
 May 7. 1897  
 Dear Mr. True

Yours of Mar. 22<sup>d</sup> reached me  
 a few days since - The *Journal* came 2 or 3  
 months ago, but unfortunately I did not get it  
 until too late, & have not had any chance to try  
 it -

I sent 6 cases off today for the Smithsonian  
 they are all small boxes & contain mostly birds.  
 Have had the devil's own luck - Until January 1<sup>st</sup>  
 it did nothing but rain, 2 or 3 months longer  
 than usual, then about the middle of January,  
 I moved over to the hills in the middle of the  
 peninsula & had 2 pretty good months - Then March  
 12<sup>th</sup> I moved camp to the foot of the Khaw Song  
 about 4,000 feet high, ~~where the~~ the 2<sup>d</sup> highest peak  
 in Trong - Rhinoceros were said to frequent the  
 summit, & Tapirs judging from their paths & tracks  
 were plentiful on all the hill tops - I never could  
 catch sight of any however - Well on the 22<sup>d</sup> of  
 March was taken down with Remittent fever, &

Figure 5. Handwritten letter from W.L. Abbott at Penang to Smithsonian mammologist F.W. True, May 7, 1897.

Abbott further explained the circumstances later (May 7) in his letter to Smithsonian mammologist F.W. True, a sample page of which is illustrated here (Figure 5) partly to show that Abbott's difficult-to-read original handwriting requires careful transcription for any study of his collections and observations:

Have had the devil's own luck. Until January 1st it did nothing but rain, 2 or 3 months longer than usual, then about the middle of January, I moved over to the hills in the middle of the peninsula & had 2 pretty good months. Then March 12<sup>th</sup> I moved camp to the foot of the Khaw Song about 4,000 feet high, the 2d highest peak in Trong. Rhinoceros were said to frequent the summit, & Tapirs judging from their paths & tracks were plentiful on all the hill tops. I never could catch sight of any however. Well on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March was taken down with Remittent fever, & for 9 days was just about as miserable as possible. Did not have any antipyrin & could not get my temperature down by cold bathings as there was no good bathing place. & of course Quinine is no use in remittent. On the 9<sup>th</sup> day managed to get one elephant & rode down to Tyching on the Trong river.

I had to throw away some of my stuff as I could not get enough carriers. Two days after came down to Gantong, where the Rajah of Trong lives, & put up in the custom house with his nephew. Here I felt a bit better, being in a bed & inside a house. Then I came over here & was in hospital 2 weeks more. Was only out a week, when I went up Penang hill & got a chill, which resulted in dysentery & had to return to hospital for another two weeks. Got out 2 days since, & am now all right.

He set out to return to India and regain his health. Abbott's subsequent travels in Central Asia were interrupted by the Spanish-American War of 1898, for which he rushed back to join the invasion of Cuba as part of the self-financed volunteers serving under W.A. Chanler. Arriving back in Singapore in November 1898, soon after the peace declaration, he began the construction and outfitting of the schooner he would later use in his collecting expeditions. Abbott began his second expedition to Lower Siam in December 1898 as the schooner was being prepared (Taylor 2014). He quickly reached approximately where he had left off in 1897; by January he had arrived at a camp on "Khow Nok Ram" (translated as "Big Bird Mountain") in the territory of the Chow pah, and in a letter to his mother on January 8, 1899 contrasted his situation with the camp in Cuba:

Altogether there is no comparison between being in camp here & in Cuba as regards comfort. It is very different being only one among thousands of others & under someone else's orders & being on one's own hook free to come & go as I please & half a dozen boys to look out for one. There being no horses to

look after or bother with is another large item of happiness.

That same letter, worth quoting at length, describes the Chow pah he observed in that setting:

Am back in the forests again in much the same sort of place I was two years ago. This place is rather higher than any of my former camps in Trong—about 1700 feet, & as a result it is very damp. There seems to be no dry season here in the mountains, particularly near the summits. This place is upon one of the paths over to P'talung [Phatthalung] on the Gulf of Siam side, & it being North East monsoon it is rainy season on gulf side. [...] I had the present house built for me in advance for 2½ dollars. It is a hut 10 feet square raised 6 feet from ground. The roof leaks pretty bad & I have had my boys engaged today in putting up more palm thatch. This morning walked up to the divide where the path descends into P'talung. It is about 2300 feet & the hills are higher on either side, it was pouring rain & too miserable to attempt to cut our way to either summit.

My original intention was to attack the Khow Sai Dow first. But the elephants left me & my belongings at Kok Sai which I then found to be too far off from that hill to attempt it. So I am putting in awhile on the Khow Nok Ram. It is 8 miles up here a gradual ascent from the plains, & through magnificent forest. The forest leeches are very troublesome owing to the dampness.

However it would be perfect heaven to me if the rains would only let up. Two years ago, in February it was quite dry. [...]

Am doing only fairly well collecting. I seem to have done the plains quite thoroughly 2 years ago—& my principal object this time is the summits of the hill—& today, my first day there, it rained.

A tribe of "Chow pah" the wild men of these forests came & camped near me at Kok Sai. They have woolly hair & are negroid (not negro) in appearance. Like the other wild tribes of the peninsula they use blowpipes & poisoned arrows. These blowpipes (like the sumpitan of Borneo) are 8 or 9 feet long & formed by joining 2 joints of bamboo. This sort of bamboo is 4 or 5 feet between the knots. They the Chow pah are of medium size & seem to be of rather low order of intelligence—a few of the men speak a little Siamese, but it is very hard to talk to them. They are always hanging around to get some rice or food of some sort & I want to get a number of their blowpipes. Money is no use to them – they are in a happy condition – but they highly prize chopping knives, axes, cotton cloth etc.

The Siamese inspector of Police at Gantong, had told me that the Chow pah had got to fighting amongst themselves & had entirely left the district, so I was very glad to see a string of them arrive one day at my camp. I dont know

if this tribe has ever before been seen by a European, they much resemble the Samangs of Perak.

Despite the lack of further surviving correspondence from the Chow pah area, there is some additional information in subsequent letters, including one which references photographs he took there (none of which seems to have survived) in his letter to Smithsonian mammologist F.W. True, dated March 16, 1899:

I met with a tribe of Negritos in Trong, & obtained a number of Photos, which as usual turned out badly. It always happens so when one particularly wants good pictures. Others, of no especial interest, of Siamese & Chinese turned out very well. Obtained a couple of blowpipes with 2 quivers of poisoned arrows from these Chow pah (forest people), which I hope will reach the Museum safely. They were put into long bamboos & sown up in gunny. These Chowpah were not numerous & they by no means liked to part with their weapons, being too lazy to go up into the mountains to obtain the long bamboos of which they are made. The tribe was especially interesting as being the most northerly occurrence of Negritos from the Main land of the Peninsula. Of course they are found much further north in the Andamans and Philippines. Besides their blowpipes and a few knives & choppers, obtained from the Siamese, with an old earthen pot or two, these wild people possessed absolutely nothing. Of course they dont know or understand money & were by far the lowest & least intelligent savages I have yet met with.

Abbott included some additional information on this expedition in another letter, dated March 15, 1899, to Smithsonian ornithologist Charles Richmond written aboard the "S.S. Palamcotta. Between Penang & Singapore":

I returned to Penang from Trong 10 days since. & expect to reach Singapore tomorrow. Have shipped 8 packages to the Smithsonian from Penang. Had 2 months in Trong, most of the time in the mountains. They did not prove as productive as I had hoped. The bird collection contains about 250-300 skins. Most of the species were in the former collection, but there are about 20 not in the former lot. [...] The hills in Trong did not turn out quite as high as I had expected. 3200 feet was about the highest I ascended & the bird fauna proved scantier than I had hoped. There are lots of species that I never shot, am certain. But much doubt if many new species remain to be discovered in the Peninsula, on the mainland at any rate. Some time hope to visit the small islands off coast & will doubtless find new species on them.

It is very curious that there should be so few Parrots in the Peninsula. [...] In Hindustan parrots are among the commonest of birds. Did not meet with any

large game this trip. It is not plentiful in Trong. In Siam all the natives have guns. Over in Tenasserim in British territory where guns cannot be carried by natives, am told there is plenty of big game. There were tapir & Rhinosceros tracks everywhere in the Mountains in Trong, but the jungle was so dense one would only meet with them by chance, and the natives were very poor trackers. Hoping the birds will reach you all right

Most interesting from the expedition perspective is the long "PS" Abbott adds to this letter, giving Richmond a detailed list of his collecting localities, reflecting the relative importance of detailed collecting locality and date information for biological species, though such details were at the time considered far less important in the documentation of ethnographic collections (see Taylor 2015). The list provided in the "PS" of this letter is therefore the best description of the expedition route and localities from which Abbott's biological and ethnographic collections and observations derive on this trip:

P.S. My itinerary in Trong was as follows.

Left Tajah (Plian) Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> 98. & marched westward [*sic*, = eastward?] & next day reached Kok Sai at Foot of the Khow Nok Ram. Camp on edge of heavy forest.

Kok Sai Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> - Jan 8.99. Scrub & secondary jungle & large tracts covered with wild Plantains. Mountains covered with very heavy forest.

Camp on Khow Nok Ram (1,700 ft.) Jan. 8 - 18. heavy forest in all directions. Hills ascended to summit 3,200 ft. Higher peaks not visited. 5 or 600 ft. higher.

Kok Sai (1st camp) Jan 18 - Feb. 1st

Camp on slopes of Khow Sai Dow. 1,100 ft. Heavy forest in all directions. Hills ascended to 3,200 ft. Summit of Khow Sai Dow.

Feb. 1st to Feb. 21st.

Kok Sai Feb. 22d to Feb 25th

Naklua village on Trong River below Gantong.

Mar 2d - Mar 5th. Secondary scrub & jungle, very dry.

Some dry Paddy fields.

Kok Sai was about 12 miles W.N.W. of Plian as marked on sketch Map sent at conclusion of former trip in 1897. The camp in the mountains (on Khow Nok Ram) was 8 [( ] 5 in straight line [ )] miles distant by road. The camp on Khow Sai Dow was 10 miles from Kok Sai about S.W. (7 in straight line).

To this small number of first-hand descriptions of Abbott's visit can be added some subsequent correspondence in which Abbott remembers years later events among the Chow pah, including his April 21, 1907 letter to Smithsonian physical anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička (1869-1943), for whom he had been collecting some

orangutans in Borneo as well as alcohol-preserved brains of “a few monkeys and gibbons.” Abbott writes of the recent publication by Skeat and Blagdon (1906):

Prof. Mason wrote that you were reviewing Skeats book. Are you not disappointed in it? Skeat himself never saw many Negritos. He used to come in contact with a family or two of Sakai (?) who lived near where he was stationed in Selangor. To this day no one else seems to have met with the “Chow pah” of Trong, since I saw them in “.99” All my photos turned out badly. They were Semang type.

Later that year, when Abbott heard that Smithsonian anthropologist Walter Hough was thinking of writing a comparative paper on blowdarts, Abbott wrote to him on October 4, 1907 urging him, “& dont forget to look up the two specimens I sent from Trong 9 years ago made by the Chow pah (Semangs?) & also 2 from the Antanala country in Madagascar. These last were cut in two pieces for convenience of shipment. Unfortunately I never was in the Sakai & Semang districts to get their blowpipes.”

Yet the significance of the blowguns, within Abbott’s and Mason’s collecting philosophy, lay precisely in their survival in diverse parts of the world from some prior stage of societal evolution. Abbott recognized that just as similar, closely related animals could survive as “living fossils” in distant parts of the world, types of primitive industrial technology could point to common stages of societal evolution in distant places. Among the examples Abbott collected to illustrate this commonality were the blowpipe and darts from Madagascar and Trang. Abbott writes to his mother (May 18, 1899) upon arriving in Singapore from Java: “The blowpipes of Malaysia & Madagascar are totally different from anything used in Africa. Though the tribes of the Upper Amazon use a similar weapon.” It is for such comparative purposes that Abbott’s material culture collections were assembled, providing the evidence for evolution of human societies and cultures just as his biological collections provided the evidence for evolution of biological species.

### **Abbott’s “Chow Pah” ethnographic collections**

Taylor (2014) described the overall organization of Abbott’s Thai collections at the Smithsonian; here only some additional observations are made on the “Chow pah” ethnographic objects, all within the accession (or group of objects acquired together) given the accession number “35322.” Many of the paper catalog cards and their later digital database formats perpetuate Mason’s incorrect transcription of Abbott’s handwriting, naming the ethnic group “Chow Pal.” Abbott was unable to bring ethnographic material when he left the Chow pah area suddenly in 1897 due to illness; all these are from the 1899 trip. The extant collection consists of two



Figure 6. "Chow pah" blowpipe (disassembled), maximum length: 234 cm. Collected by W.L. Abbott, 1899. Catalog number E202852. The top section (with mouthpiece at right) is inserted into the lower one; the longer length and stability provides a more accurate aim.

Figure 7. "Chow pah" quivers with darts, E202849 with 22 darts (left) and E202848 with 33 darts. Quivers approximately 30 cm. maximum length.



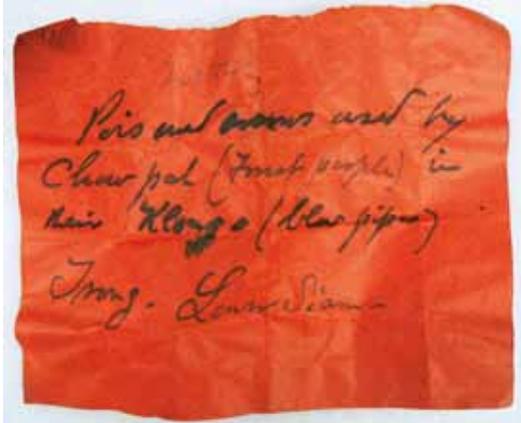


Figure 8. W. L. Abbott's handwritten label accompanying quiver, E202849, reads "Poisoned arrows used by Chow pah (Forest people) in their Klongo (blow pipes) Trong, Lower Siam-." Currently information on such labels is often unavailable in the catalog database.

Figure 9. "Chow pah" net used both for fishing and for catching birds. Length of wooden poles: approx. 101 cm. Collected by W.L. Abbott, 1899. Catalog number E202850.



blowguns or "blow-pipes" having the local name "Klongo" (catalog numbers E202851 and E202852, see Figure 6); two quivers of darts (shown in Figure 7): E202848 with 33 darts and E202849 with 22 darts; the "wallet" shown in Figure 2 (E202853) and a now very fragile and damaged net consisting of plant-fiber netting strung between two wooden poles. Due to its current fragility this net can no longer be expanded for photography into a shape like that of its original likely use. Nevertheless, the net as it looks now in storage can be seen in Figure 9. Though no original label hand-written by Abbot survives on this net, the early catalog record for this object indicates it is a "Net for Catching Fish and Birds" of the "Chow pal [sic] (Forest people) Negritos." In addition, the museum registrar's papers documenting the accession of this group of objects within the Museum's collection (Accession 35322), now at the Smithsonian Institution Archives, include an undated piece of paper written in Abbott's handwriting, which surely refers to this net, the only net we know of that Abbott collected anywhere in Trang. The entire text on that page reads as follows:

Net used in fishing & also for catching birds. When used for birds, a decoy tame bird is used – Forest partridges etc. & the nets (4 or 5) stood up around this decoys cage. The nets stand so they will fall easily. The wild birds come up to interview or fight the captive & run or fly against the nets & get entangled.

Used in fishing by standing them up in shallows & driving the fish towards them. – Trong. Malay Peninsula

### **Abbott's records, and the Maniq in ethnography and history**

Abbott visited the Maniq population at a time of transition for them and for Thailand, and within a historic context that has yet to be reconstructed for this tribal minority. His observation that Chow pah were so unwilling to give up their blowpipes since the source of the bamboo was far away contrasts with later descriptions after these artifacts became a commonly sold trade item and ethnic identifier, still a favorite of ecotourists today.

Abbott's observations contrast markedly with the recurring reports by later visitors as summarized in Hamilton's (2006) article on the motif of the "disappearing Sakai." For instance, Abbott notes that "Siamese of course now treat them well," and that the entire Chow pah band rather than retreating at his presence came as a "whole crowd" to look at him, "as of course my proceedings are of the greatest interest, where no white man, let alone a naturalist was ever seen before." Furthermore we observe in his letters the simple fact that the Chow pah, while seeming to him "shy" and "timid," nevertheless stayed camped nearby and did not quickly "disappear into the forest" as reported by so many later observers who came into contact with them, according to Hamilton's survey. Quite by contrast, Abbott wrote on January 8, 1899, as quoted above, that at Kok Sai a "tribe of 'Chow pah' the wild men of these forests came & camped near me" – quite unlike later reports. Careful study and inferences even from incomplete visitors' reports like these might explain the transformations that this tribal minority chose to, or was forced to, take from the 1890s to today, leading to such different observations over time.

Additionally, as Taylor (2014) noted with examples cited there, a productive mode of recent scholarship places objects in historical and ethnographic context by taking images and information about legacy collections back to the descendants of those who produced them, engaging descendants of the peoples who created museum objects with their interpretation and presentation. "Re-visiting" historic expeditions now provides opportunities to ask the descendants of peoples, such as those whom Abbott visited, to help interpret objects and archival narratives. Hopefully, contemporary ethnographers in Thailand, and descendants of the "Chow pah Negritos" or Maniq people Abbott visited in 1897 and 1899, will find these records useful.

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