

Natural and Cultural Trail “Tabing Kotan”

“Let’s learn
about our
Moken’s way
of living as
well as plants
and animals
along the trail”



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"We are presenters, ...nope, ... actually we are young guides who will take you along this trail and tell you our version of forest knowledge.

My name is "Khe" and my little friend is called "Kompaen". Kompaen speaks very little but he eats a lot!

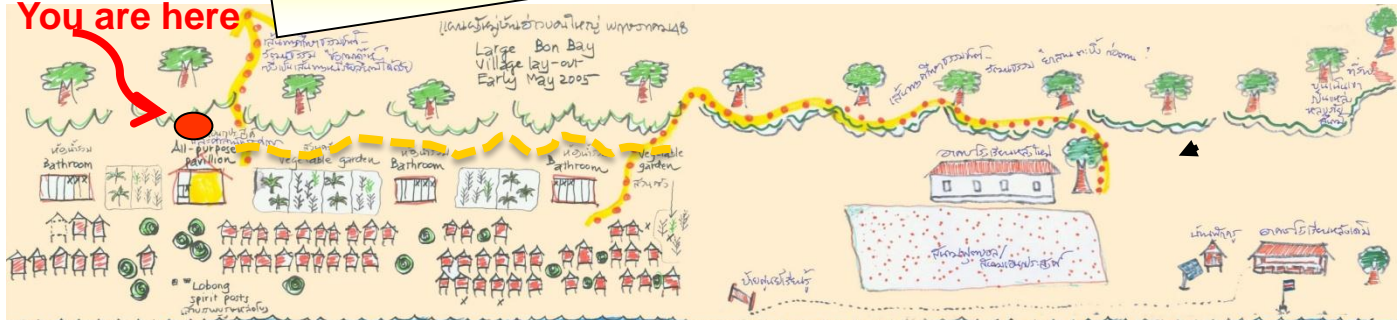


The trail is about 200 meters long so it is an easy walk. You need to be careful anyway because there are lots of mosquitos in some areas (of course, this is part of the forest, so what do you expect?). The starting point of the trail is near our school building (community learning center as they call it). This trail was originally the route that we used for collecting food but now it has been opened for the public to learn about Moken ethnobotany. We Moken are indigenous people who have lived among the forest and the sea for centuries.

We call this trail "Tabing Kotan". "Tabing" means the edge or the rim and "Kotan" means forest. Therefore, "Tabing Kotan" Trail can be translated into English language as "the path along the edge of the forest".

Have you ever tried walking along “**Chok Madah**” natural and cultural trail? The beginning of the trail is quite steep but there are many interesting things to see. The bay at the end of the trail is so nice that the late uncle Madah often moored his boat there.

You are here



Along “**Tabing Kotan**” trail, there are 19 post signs for natural and cultural interpretation. This trail was developed by the Moken community in collaboration with the Social Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University and Friends of Tribal People Foundation. The English version was edited by Dr. Chris Carpenter and Dr. Thanit Kunkhajonphan who also provided valuable input to the trail interpretation.

Are you ready? If so, please follow us...



Station 1 : “Koyang”



What are the leaves that have a beautiful heart shape?

We call this plant “**Koyang**”. Koyang is an ivy in Vitaceae family. It grows on the ground and wind itself around the trees nearby. This area is abundant with Koyang.

We Moken use the leaves to give a sour taste to our dish. Lime and tamarind are hard to find on our Islands. When the leaves are cut, they will stem back again so we know for sure that Koyang will be available for us to eat forever.

Station 2 : “La-lad Cha-uad”



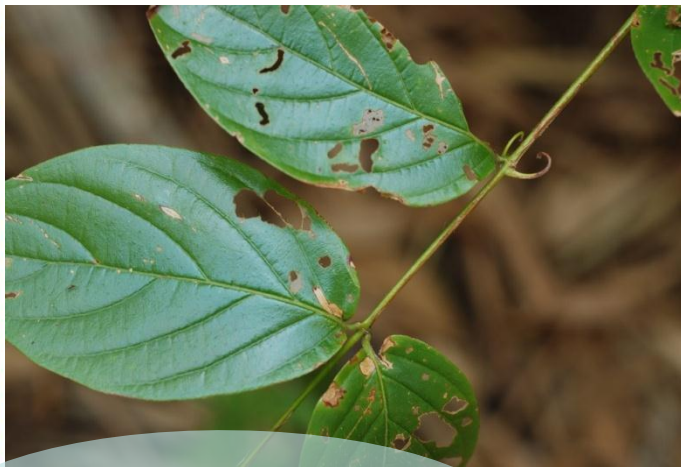
La-lad in Moken language means “vine”. We use it to make a rope or string to tie and fasten our stuff.



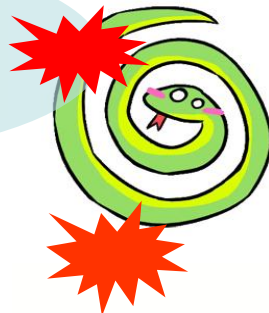
It is very useful.



Station 3 : “ Ja-wiek”



We always feel safe with
Jawiek stem along side
when forage in the forest



Yan Kiew Khob (Biting Fang Vine) or Ja-wiek in Moken language has a scientific name of *Uncaria* and belongs to the Rubiaceae family. It is a creeper which has snake fang-like antennae at both sides of the stem.

We hold a belief similar to many local Thai people that hanging a Ja-wiek stem on the entrance of our home or tucking it at our waist string when going to the forest will protect us from snakes or other poisonous bites. We believe that Ja-wiek's little fangy stem will scare away snakes and other biting animals.

In the past, we liked to chew fresh Ja-wiek leaves to make us feel refreshed and active. This is like how the other people drink coffee to keep them fresh and awake. The difference is that you have to buy coffee but Ja-wiek is free of charge!

Station 4 : “Viewpoint”



Before the tsunami in 2004, there were two Moken villages, one near Fisheries Conservation Unit on North Surin Island and the other on South Surin Island. After the tsunami, we were encouraged to move to this Ne-ah Ada Bay or Large Bon Bay. It has become the largest village in Surin Islands because in the old days we scattered into small bands or villages.



The cape that you see in the distance is part of North Surin Island. We call it **“Poto Oted Ban”**. (If you want to know the meaning, you can ask us!). We have proper names for over 100 places around these islands. This indicates that we Moken have frequented the areas for a long time and have developed a deep attachment to every nook and cranny of this place.

Station 5 : “Ton Lued”



The trees are living things. When Ton Lued is wounded, it releases red sap that looks like blood.

Ton Lued means blood tree in Thai language. We call it “Ka-e Dalak” (*Knema* sp.), it is in Myristicaceae family. It has red sap that looks like blood. We use the wood to make oar and planked floor.



We learn to make use of nature in a well-balanced way.

Station 6 : “Yaning Kae-pa”

The fruit of this tree is dark purple in color, like the color of mangosteen peel. The tree yields fruit during November – June. We will pound Yaning Kae-pa peel and apply the juice to heal blemishes on the face or parts of the body that are exposed to intense rays of the sun.

See? We find herbs to make medicine just a few easy steps from our community!

**Now you know the
use of this tree,
right?**



Station 7 : “Lukyee Pa” or “Buwak Yi-ngin”



www.oknation.net/.../233/2233/images/v10.jpg

“**Lukyee**” is a traditional plant of Southern Thailand. Its scientific name is *Dilalium indum*. in the Leguminosae family. Its fruit bunch is edible when ripe. The fruit is green when raw and turns black when ripe; the flesh inside is brown. When fully grown, the fruit is the size of our thumb and the taste is sour and sweet. Lukyee tree yields fruit when it is 30 years or older.

The forest in Surin Island is so abundant that we have different kinds of fruit to enjoy all through the year.



Station 8 : “Plung Tanak” and “Plung Batoy”



“Plung” is a hollow or a hole. “**Plung Tanak**” is a hole in the ground and “**Plung Batoy**” is a hole in stone or rock. 𑜋𑜧𑜨 or Chicken Crabs (or “Katam Plien” in Moken language), one of our favorite foods, dwell in this area. During the day, the crabs hide themselves in underground holes or holes in rocks. During the night, the crabs will come out to find food. We use “Kodo” (iron hook) to catch them. There is another kind of hole along the trail that we will show you later.



Station 9: Wild Bamboo or “Ka-Oon Batung”



**handles for
spear and
harpoon**



Wild bamboo or Ka-Oon Batung actually belongs to the grass family (Gramineae) and is considered as the largest and tallest grass on earth. There are many types of bamboo in Thailand. Bamboo propagates by sprouting new shoots. Bamboo shoots are a staple for us during the rainy season.



**“Ae-Bab (grand
dad)...plumpy bamboo
shoots look so delicious”**

Wild bamboo is very useful plant in tropical areas. It serves as raw material for our tools – handles for spear and harpoon, and we split the bamboo into lath floor for our boat and house. In the old days, every boat had to carry bamboo containers because fresh water is very important when we are out at sea.

Station 10 : Climbing bamboo or “Ka-Oon Yihang”



Do you know how we make use of “Ka-Oon Yihang”? (Choose only one answer, please)

- 1) Making harpoon handle**
- 2) Making lath floor**
- 3) Making smoke pipe**



Bamboo propagates naturally in many parts of the world.

You may be familiar with bamboos that stand straight like the one we use to make Khaolam (glutinous rice cooked in bamboo), but do you know that there are bamboos that climb from the ground and in big trees?

Indeed, it is not surprising at all because bamboo is a plant that has evolved from the grass family. Bamboo is known as the grass that has longest lifespan. Climbing bamboo is classified in the genus *Dinochloa*.

Station 11 : Pandanus or “Jakae Kadong”



Pandanus or “**Jakae Kadong**” (*Pandanus Tectorius*) is a distinctive kind of palm. Pandanus is genus found easily throughout the Surin Islands. We cut the leaves to make mats, baskets, containers or we sew them together to make a large pandanus sheet and fit that as a sail, a roof, or a wall.



When we cut pandanus leaves from the tree, we make sure to leave some on the tree so that the new leaves can spring later. There are several kinds of pandanus on this island. Can you distinguish between “Jakae Kadong” and “Jakae Jijoo”?

Station 12 : Yam or “ La-ang”



Yam..



Yam has been an important staple of our people for ages. Back when rice was hard to find, we ate yam as our main starch food. Grilled yam is the children's favorite food.

Yes, now you know that there are several types of holes around here, some are habitat of chicken crabs and some are man-made holes!



During the rainy season, the sea is rough with high waves, making it hard to travel by boat back to the shore. When the rice supply becomes short, our parents will go to the forest and find yams. Some holes that you saw on the trail are those from yam digging.

Station 13 : “Katieng” or “Khla”



Katieng or Khla (*Schumannianthus dichotomus*) belongs to the Marantaceae family. We make use of this plant by cutting and weaving its soft peel to make the sides of our traditional boat, the Moken kabang. Nowadays, not many people in the village know how to weave Katieng into a sheet.



Here it is...the example of Moken kabang boat.

The sides of the kabang can be made from Kratieng peel, wintergreen wood and bamboo.



Station 14 : “Shiliak”



The **shiliak** tree (*Borassodendron machadonis*) has beautiful leaves. The leaf stalks rise up high and spread over the area where you are now standingit seems as though we are standing under neatly cut jagged-edged umbrella!

Thai people call “**shiliak**” the “**Crying Elephant Palm**”. It is a rare member of the palm family. Perhaps the name comes from when that elephant tried to pull the leaves out to eat, and its trunk was cut by their sharp edges. The poor elephant must have cried out in pain.

We certainly won't cry, since we can weave the leaves to make the roof for our house. However, the roof made from Kor leaves is more popular because the leaves can spread wider than those of Shiliak.

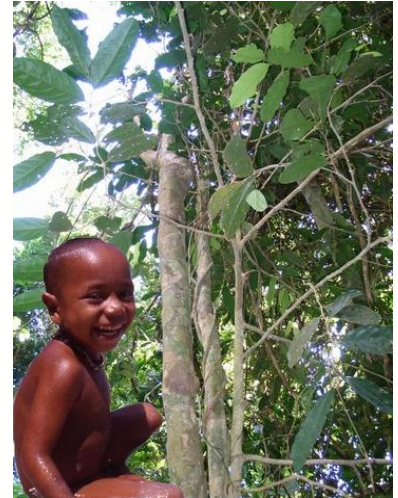
Auntie got bitten
by a snake!



Station 15 : “Ka-e Laping”

The forest area of Surin Islands is plentiful with diverse plants. Our elders teach us how to make use of these plants. For example, the leaves of “**Ka-ae Laping**” tree (*Aporosa* sp.) can help relieve the pain from the bite of a poisonous animal.

When we are bitten by a snake or stung by lionfish or stonefish, we will set a fire and put fresh Ka-e Laping leaves on it. Then we place the wounded area over the slow fire. The heat and smoke with sooth and relieve the pain. Anyway, it's best not to get bitten or stung!



Station 16 : “Mound”



Those who live in wooden house are afraid of termites, right?

We call termite “Mound” as “Po-Loke”. Termites are social animal that like to live together in a group. Termites usually spend most of their life in the nest under the ground. But if you walk on “Chok Madah” trail, you will see some colonies on the tree. Surprisingly, some termites like to live a high life!

In termite society, work is distributed clearly. Worker termites are responsible for building the nest. Soldier termites protect the nest from intruders, while reproductive termites are responsible for breeding and laying eggs.

Termites have evolved to feed on wood. They can digest wood, making the wood decay easier and faster. When the wood has deteriorated, it becomes a source of nutrients for living plants. This cycle helps to sustain the forest.



http://www.forest.go.th/FIG/pests/others/termites_t.htm

Station 17 : “Elephant Ear” and “Water Rattan”



Elephant Ear or Bon (in Thai) or what we call “Bilak” has very big leaves in the shape of an arrow head. Elephant ear is a short-lived monocotyledon plant that grows in wetland or swamp. The shoots of Elephant Ear are in the soil and the leaf stalks sprout up above the ground. Elephant Ear can breed very fast and it produces sticky sap that will cause itching when touched.

We will never use this kind of Elephant Ear for cooking. We will get a bad itch in the mouth and throat if we eat it.



There is a useful rattan here. Which we call water rattan, “Kwai Boo Bon” (*Calamus godefroyi*). We split the rattan into thin hard strings and sew pandanus leaves to make a roof or sail for our kabang. This roof can be rolled up and carried here and there. Our kabang roof is “convertible”. Cool, isn’t it?



Station 18 : “Ta Ngad”



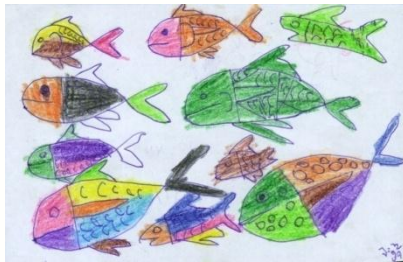
We have plenty of fruit to eat throughout the year.

“Kam Chat” or “Ma Huad” tree (*Lepisanthes rubiginosa*) is called “Ta Ngad” in Moken language. It is a member of Sapindaceae family. We collect Ta Ngad fruit during March – April. Ta Ngad fruit has dark purple peel like Java Plum but it tastes a bit acerbic and sour. We like to eat Ta Ngad leaves with chili paste.



www.oknation.net/.../16_1210903732.jpg

It seems that we have a greater variety of fruit to eat than the city people. Our friends from the city told us that fruit served in a city restaurants is mainly papaya, banana, orange, watermelon, and pineapple. In the Surin islands, We have many kinds of fruit ripening at different times of the year. Wanna move here yet?



Drawings by Moken Children, Surin Islands

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The Surin Island number 5 and are situated in the Andaman Sea, about 60 kilometers from Khuraburi Town in Phang-nga Province.

The forest on the islands is pristine, and the coral reef is considered to be one of the best in the country. The islands are also home to us, the Moken, an indigenous group who have roamed the Andaman Sea for centuries. We are familiar with the sea, and we are also knowledgeable about the plants in the forest.

On the “*Tabing Kotan*” Nature-Culture Trail you will learn about our plant knowledge and see how our cultural practices have contributed to natural conservation.