

Olivier Ferrari
Kunlasab Utpuay

Narumon Hinshiranan
Jacques Ivanoff

Turbulence on Ko Phra Thong



in collaboration with :
M. Bourdon, M. Boutry, T. Lejard, A. Mohamed

Olivier Ferrari
Kunlasab Utpuay

Narumon Hinshiranan
Jacques Ivanoff

Turbulence on Ko Phra Thong (Phang Nga Province, Thailand)

in collaboration with :
M. Bourdon, M. Boutry, T. Lejard, A. Mohamed



Associating the researchers with a reconstruction project seems to be a daring bet. They always criticized and they are considered dissociated from the practical reality of the reconstruction project. Nevertheless, their knowledge about the region of intervention of the humanitarian aid is essential. It can prevent many problems from occurring by offering the victims the very best chance, a chance to clarify and explain their own willingness.

This book is the best proof of such utility. These researchers, who came together to this aching process of reconstructing Ko Phra Thong, shared with us spontaneously their knowledge about the region... which seems common sense and yet, far from the standard. Many of the humanitarian organizations consider themselves as having the outstanding and sufficient know-how.

The project of "bringing back into function" Ko Phra Thong was proposed by Mrs Micheline Calmy-Rey, Swiss Minister of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with Thai authorities during her touching visit in January 2005 of the region affected by the Tsunami. The SDC regional coordinator, M. Jordan, made a bet in inviting Moken and Moklen specialists to take part in that project. The questions were raised: how can we adapt our help to the people about whom we hardly know? How can we reconstruct things in such blurred situation during which we do not always know the good interlocutors, and sometimes even the victims are not clearly identified?

The local multiethnic land of Ko Phra Thong is complicated (Moken, Moklen, Burmese, Thais, Chinese-Thai). And it was natural to verify the competent on linguistics, ethnology, biology, sociology and geology. The idea was to collect the maximum informations which would allow us to reconstruct things for the interest of the victims and especially those whose voices are not much heard, the Moklen. There must be an interdependent and practical team on site to act as the middleman who puts down his academic part in order to put the necessary information to the hand of the SDC. There must be a cog in a machine to offer most profitable results. And the book we are now presenting you is a proof. Since the situation on the island is very dynamic and there are many facts and realities which the researchers are not able to cover in such a short time, the book should be taken as ad-hoc reports compiled into a publication. In addition to the question concerning the culture, about the history of the island which we would like to present to the island's residents, we must also understand the different methods of land appropriation, the political and economic game that would preside to various reconstruction methods. To make a choice in the best condition possible, the information from the fieldwork is essential.

The interviews and the participant observation method during few months made it possible to understand the traditional exploitation system to which the Moklen contribute by doing "sustainable development" even before the word was known by the Westerners. This method of land management and the access to natural resources divided between villages to ensure their regeneration and the survival of the island, showed that the Moklen know how to survive and adapt themselves. We must use them as our example in many fields. And this proof offered through this book

would allow us to understand what a traditional knowledge and balanced management of land means. The book allows us to understand better why, in spite of the catastrophe, it can still be possible to propose the victims a future and to solve the underlying problems of the island.

The houses of the Moklen were not destroyed because they know the safe place. What if we had asked them for their opinion earlier? They also were the first group who get themselves involved in the searching of the dead, sending injured people to the hospitals; they were also the first group who came back to their island. And this is the first message from the community of Moklen in Ko Phra Thong: they came back to their island, refused to rely on humanitarian aid and chose their own destiny. They decided to go home and assumed the right of their ancestors over their own land. Others did not come back to their home, waiting for help and protection from international organizations. The Moklen got back to the island and since that time, they started to force the choice upon the people responsible for making decision. The future of the island cannot do without them and it does not matter if we help them or not. The Moklen know the Nature and its impulses, its destruction also. But for them, the entire story is a lever for reconstructing differently the future which we have to always depend on. The national parks, the ecologists, the tourist developers and everybody who want to change Ko Phra Thong to more than it was, destroy the secular equilibrium established by the Moklen in their island's management done with the Chinese-Thai and Thai people. Going into the modern world, the populations of this island have to join together and also have to bear in mind the tsunami victims in their desires and the island's development capacity.

The second message : the Moklen want themselves to be integrated to the island's development and the reconstruction. Like other residents, they must be allowed to move on and pass the Tsunami trauma. And what did they ask for?

A school, a reconstruction of their school, Thung Dap School. The SDC has taken into consideration this wish of a small population who made the island back into their function.

Hans Peter Erismann, Ambassador of Switzerland in Bangkok

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	I
PrefaceThe Project : History and Methods	1
I. Aftermath of the Tsunami : The Moklen in the vortex of International Aid.....	1
II. Ko Phra Thong, the Moklen, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Researchers : a mutual and natural collaboration.....	3
III. Methodology	5

PART I – A Moklen Island ? Socio-economic Dynamism and Ethnic Identity

First Chapter : From the Origins to Today.....	17
I. Nomadism and Royalty	17
The Moken and the Princess Mother	17
The Moklen and the Princess Mother	17
Memory and Geneological Amnesia, Tradition and Modernity.....	20
II. The Colonization of the Island	23
The Impact of the Second World War.....	23
Tin	26
Ko Tchat, the “Chinese”	26
III. The Villages.....	28
Tha Peyoy or Datang ?	28
Pak Chok or Kalan ?	29
Thung Dap or Dap ?	34
Second Chapter : The Words of the Moklen.....	39
I. History.....	39
II. The Moklen Settlement on the Island	39
Third Chapter : The Burmese Community of Tha Peyoy	43
I. The Burmese Population of Tha Peyoy.....	43
II. Immigration and Social Status	45
III. Cultural Elements of the Burmese Community of Tha Peyoy.....	47
Fourth Chapter : Genealogy and History.....	51
I. Thung Dap.....	51
II. Tha Peyoy	53
Fifth Chapter : The Moklen	57
I. A Pluriactive People	57
II. Moken and Moklen	58
The Moken	58
The Moklen	59
The Ancestor Sampan or the Origin of the Moklen.....	62
III. Ethnonyms, Endonyms, Exonyms.....	64
IV. Census	65
Moklen census (1992 and 1997).....	65
Moklen census 2005, post-tsunami	66

PART II –A Moklen Territory? Appropriation and Recognition of Rights of Usage

Prologue.....	79
First Chapter: Cultural Dynamic of the Island. Technical appropriation and transmission	85
I. Land Ownership	85
Introduction	85

Land Property in Thung Dap.....	87
The Example of Pa Ma's family (<i>cf.</i> Genealogy)	88
Transmission	89
Exploitation.....	91
Land Property in Pak Chok.....	91
Land Property in Tha Peyoy.....	93
II. The <i>khlong</i> , Canals : the Memory of the Island	94
Second Chapter: Symbolic appropriation of Ko Phra Thong.....	101
I. Ko Phra Thong : A Moklen or a Thai Island ?	101
Introduction	101
Ko Phra Thong : "The Island of the Golden Buddha" ; the History of Pota Hin Kong.	101
The Island of Lice or the Island that rises ?	102
The Island of Lice	103
The Island that Sinks.....	104
II. The Importance of Beliefs in Mobility and Appropriation	104
The Ritual Calendar.....	104
Khun Talay	108
Phay Theung	108
Wind	109
The Ancestor Natikan and the Wind (unknown narrator)	109
Mae Ya Nang.....	112
III. Exploitation Map	114
Third Chapter : The Words of the Moklen	117
I. Land	117
Fourth Chapter : Rice, from Spatial Space to Cultural Space	121
I. Shifting Cultivation : Appropriation Marker and Sedentarism	121
Slash and burn land and landowners Essarts	121
II. The Soul of Rice	122
A Moklen Ritual: The Rice Festival Among the Sedentary Nomads.....	122
Herbarium	135
PLANTS USED IN BUILDING HOUSES OR MAKING INSTRUMENTS.....	136
MEDICINAL PLANTS.....	140
OTHER PLANTS.....	143
DOMESTIC SPACE.....	145

PART III – An Island for the Moklen ? Needs Assessment on Education and Learning for Phra Thong Island Communities

Preface	149
1. Introduction.....	150
2. Research Methods	151
3. Current situation of Phra Thong communities and villagers.....	151
Pak Chok Village	151
Tha Peyoy Village	153
Thung Dap Village	155
4. School and formal education.....	155
Ko Tchat Village School	155
Pak Chok Village School	156
Kietpracha School	157
Teachers.....	159
Number and continuity	159

Attentiveness and dedication to teaching.....	160
Recommendations pertaining to school, and teaching-learning activities.....	162
Teachers.....	166
School and equipment.....	166
Teaching activities.....	166
Scholarship.....	166
Recommendations pertaining to teaching and learning activities.....	166
5. Non-school or non-formal education.....	168
6. Local knowledge and resources around Phra Thong Island.....	169
Moklen knowledge – the dying science and art.....	170
The traditional learning process of the Moken and the Moklen.....	172
Local knowledge related to different places on Phra Thong Island.....	174
Knowledge about natural environment and community history.....	174
Knowledge about art, music, and crafts.....	175
Knowledge resources on Phra Thong Island – individual person.....	176
Knowledge resources on Phra Thong Island – natural sites and environmental groups on Phra Thong Island.....	177
Mangrove Forest and Community Forest Group of Thung Dap.....	177
Turtle conservation hut.....	178