Indigenous Sea and Forest Peoples and Forced Displacement: the Chao Lay and the Mani'q of Southern Thailand

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Topics

• The current situations of the Mani’q and the Chao Lay
• Limit to mobility, deprivation of cultural rights, and the process of “endangering”
• Suggestions for moving forward for cultural protection
• Issues for further investigation and discussion
Chao Lay and Mani’q

- Chao Lay (sea nomads or Orang Laut)
  - Groups: Moken, Moklen, Urak Lawoi
  - Provinces: 6 provinces on the Andaman coast
  - Approx. pop.: 15,000

- Mani’q (Sakai or Orang Asli)
  - Groups: 4 language dialects
  - Provinces: Trang, Satun, Phattalung, Yala, Narathiwat
  - Approx. pop.: 300

- ASEAN context?
Current situations of Mani’q

• The forest in Southern Thailand used to be vast, thick and abundant.

• Some areas were the base of Communist Party of Thailand, so the forest remained untouched by outsiders for decades.

• After the forest concession era, people from outside started to migrate into the area in search of a place to live and earn their living.
Current situations of Mani’q

• The Mani’q indigenous groups have made subsistent living in the areas. They were nomadic hunter-gatherers. The knowledge of herbal plants is considered to be supreme.

• They tried to avoid outsiders. But development is encroaching upon them and the forest.

• Their home and foraging grounds have been fragmented into pockets, food is scarce and herbal plants have become rare.
Current situations of Mani’q

• Several reference points have changed. The forest is not the same to them.

• With this change in their environment, their nomadic round has been disrupted and their cultural survival threatened. They have gradually changed their lifestyle.
• Map showing pop. Distribution
• 1920
• 1980

http://www.andaman.org/BOOK/chapter36/text36.htm
Three lifestyles of Mani’q

1. “Traditional groups” who remain living the forest with limited contact with outsiders
2. “Transitional groups” who seek help and contact with outsiders for survival.
3. “Permanently sedentarized groups” who no longer move, they are entirely dependent on outsiders. Some have been introduced to “modern life”. Many have been exploited.
1. Traditional Groups
2. Transitional groups
3. Sedentarized family (with nomadic groups)
State policy – national registration
Current Situations of Chao Lay

- The Andaman Sea as expanse of water frequented by the three nomadic/semi-nomadic groups
  - Moken
  - Moklen
  - Urak Lawoi
Current Situations of Chao Lay

• Development in the Andaman coastal areas and islands
  – Commercial fishing, fishing industry
  – Mining industry
  – Urbanization
  – Tourism industry
  – Etc.

• This all means in-migration and “encroaching” (claiming the rights) over lands and marine foraging areas of the Chao Lay
Current Situations of Chao Lay

• Conservation effort -- conservation refugees?

• Chao Lay definitely cannot compete. They only try to survive physically.
By Changing technology?
State policy--
Support of occupations
The Chao Lay and Mani’q

• Formerly mobile or nomadic/semi-nomadic groups, with self-limitation production and consumption

• Facing environmental
  – Alteration/Commodification/Manipulation
  – Degradation
  – Protection

• Impact – limited, displaced, removed, sedentarized ---> threatened, endangered
Issues for further investigation

• Policy towards “mass permanent settlement”
• Understanding migration and mobility?
• “habitual homes?”
• Factors for mobility – adaptive in terms of health, social, economic, etc.
AP, "Nomads no more, Rome resettles the once-wandering, much-scorned Gypsies, Frances D’Emilio, Rome, AP."
Issues for further investigation

• The Chao Lay and the Mani’q
  – Exploited into cheap/illegal labor works, some of which bring further degradation to the environment
Cultural survival? Environmental survival?

• Short term
  – Cultural Special Zone (Concept of Protected Area)

• Medium term –
  – Building cooperation/coordination of diverse sectors
  – Mainstreaming “cultural rights”

• Long term –
  – Questioning overdevelopment, overconsumption, and excessive affluence
  – Put forward the new politics of sufficiency and equity