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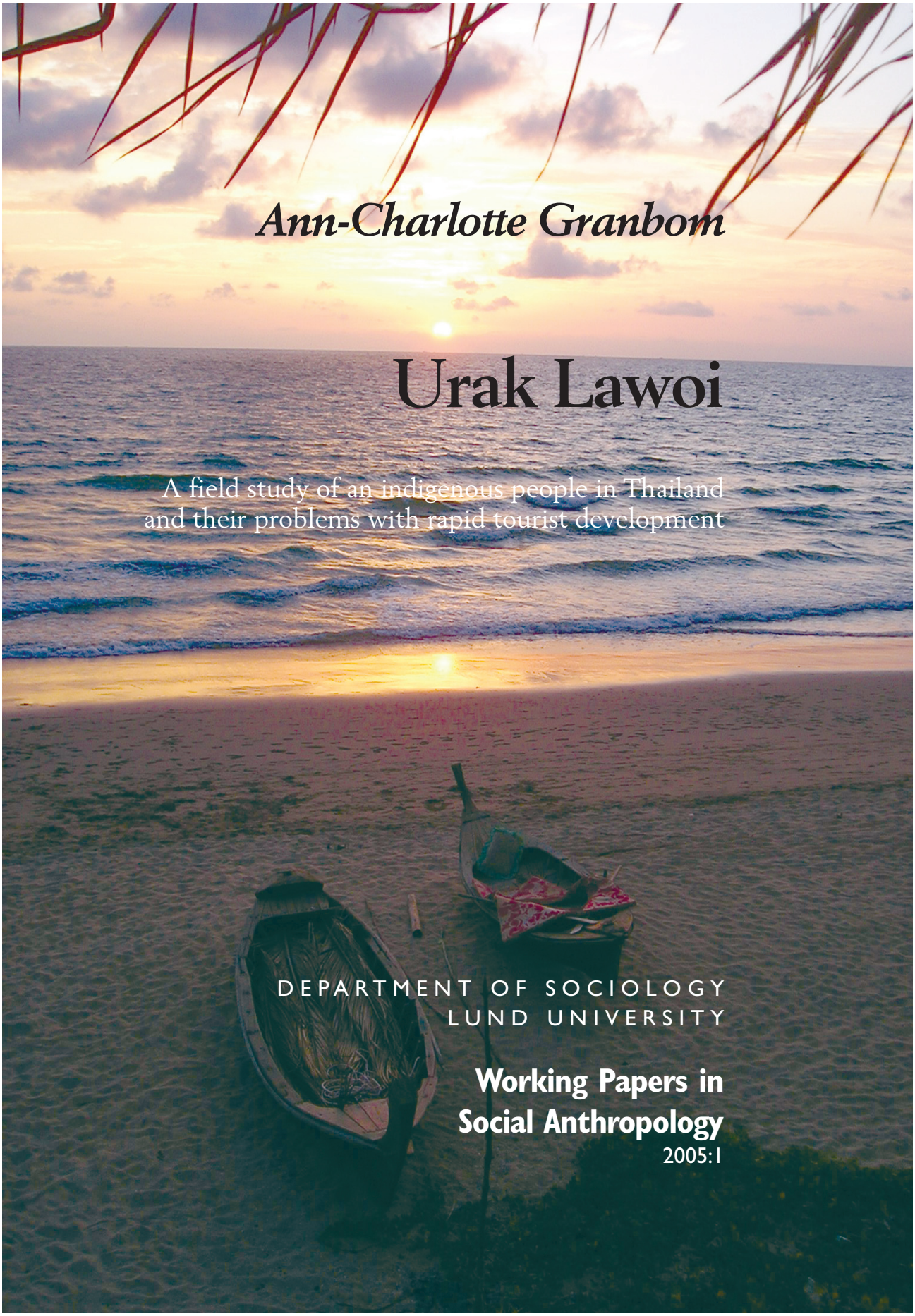

Ann-Charlotte Granbom

Urak Lawoi

A field study of an indigenous people in Thailand
and their problems with rapid tourist development

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
LUND UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This essay is about Urak Lawoi, an indigenous people in the Andaman Sea outside the West Coast of Thailand. The study shows what has happened to them when being deprived of their territory and forced to abandon their culture, lifestyle and traditional economic subsistence.

Urak Lawoi have until recently maintained a culture, language and life style set apart from that of the rest of Thai society. During the last one and a half decades, rapid tourist development, with large-scale hotels and bungalow resorts, has impacted significantly on the nomadic life style of the Urak Lawoi. They have been pushed farther from the shore and into unproductive areas. Powerful global forces linked to the world market economy result in a situation that is not favorable to the Urak Lawoi and their ecosystem.

My intention is to find out how the Urak Lawoi act in response to a rapid change of life style, increasing contacts with outsiders, forced relocation due to the establishment of national parks and integration into the global market economy. My essay will also show how the inferiority complex of an ethnic community increases under circumstances of social, political and economic pressure. I have focused on the situation of the Urak Lawoi in Ko Lanta, an island outside the West Coast of Thailand.

Photo 1 *A little girl in Sanga-U brings her daily catch of fish.*

Supplementary Note

It should be noted that this report was completed in December 2004, immediately before South-East Asia was hit by the tsunami on the 26th of that month. It was written in the autumn of 2004 after six months of anthropological fieldwork among the Urak Lawoi. By then, I had visited them on two earlier field trips. There were not many people who had heard about 'sea gypsies' prior to this catastrophe. The tsunami occasioned a lot of changes for the Urak Lawoi. The material damage to their boats and dwellings along the coast was great. However, despite the vulnerable location of their coastal habitat, only a few of them were killed.

I returned to the 'sea gypsies' at the beginning of February 2005, as Pon, a Urak Lawoi residing in Ko Lanta, had given me a call on the 15th of January and asked me to help with the money for new boats. I thus immediately began to gather the necessary means from my friends and their friends in turn. In the spring of 2005, I participated in the building of boats and other crucial tasks on a voluntary basis (for more information, see www.lottagranbom.blogspot.com). I should mention that I was not the only person being engaged in the local losses of boats and houses after the catastrophe. Aid and attention from the world outside reached gigantic proportions. I could notice, however, that while certain local people who had been badly affected by the tsunami were given a lot of help, others did not receive any assistance at all. There were Muslims who had been stricken by the disaster and begun to call themselves 'sea gypsies' as a convenient way, they believed, to get some help from outsiders.

Temporary camps had been created for those in need. Sicken, the medicine man, smilingly explained to me that it was an internal joke among the Urak Lawoi to say that now the 'rich' people are living in the tents, while the poor have to stay in their simple dwellings. This because those who lived in the tents received a lot of help from the outside.

I noticed that the tsunami had resulted in many changes for the Urak Lawoi. Christian missionaries had arrived to distribute food a couple of times each week. They then congregated to pray with the Urak Lawoi in their villages. Calendars with the picture of Jesus Christ also hang inside their primitive dwellings. This I had never seen before. The missionaries told me that one of their goals was to build a church in close proximity to the Urak Lawoi settlements.

I also received the disturbing news that the government had offered modern homes to the Urak Lawoi further up the mountains. In my understanding, this offer would hold no matter if they had lost their houses or not. Many of them were tempted to make the move as it meant that they would live in a real house for the first time and because their own dwellings were overcrowded. Others were quite aware of the consequences of having a longer distance to travel in order to reach their boats as fish-

ing is their main source of income. It was also explained to me that for those who had lost their houses, the only possibility of being compensated with a new home was to move away from the coast. If they wished to rebuild their house at its original location, they had to finance the undertaking themselves. I was struggling with many unanswered questions concerning the situation of the Urak Lawoi when I returned to Sweden on the last of April 2005.

In October 2005, I returned to Ko Lanta only to notice that many people had been engaged in their situation. I could also see that increasing outside attention had strengthened the Urak Lawoi as a group. The anxiety that I had noticed during my previous fieldwork among those Urak Lawoi who were living on leasehold property and who worried about a compulsory transfer seemed to have disappeared. They had been strengthened by the commitment of outsiders and had obviously decided that nobody would chase them away. Chumchon Thai Foundation has begun a project for defending the interests of the Urak Lawoi. They recognized that their situation had not been advantageous before the tsunami and that things did not seem to have improved after the catastrophe. In the project, there is cooperation between locals, authorities and various organization. This represents something fundamentally new. Anthropologists, historians, artists, musicians, architects and villages leaders are involved. The project is financed by UNDP (United Nation Development Program) and that part of it having to do with reconstruction after the tsunami will continue until December 2005. Those participating are working actively to stop the resettlement of the Urak Lawoi in the mountains. Rather, they consider the houses in that region as complementing their previous dwellings and as offering an opportunity for the younger generation to have somewhere to live since a lot of people are living under crowded conditions and do not have enough money or land to increase their residential space.

The major goal of the project is to retain the cultural distinctiveness of Ko Lanta. Its earlier setting is to be preserved and recreated in the southeast part of the island from Old Lanta Town to the south. It is too late now to initiate a similar project for the northern part of the island where exploitation has gone much further in recent years. An ethnographic museum is planned for 2006, together with a *Rong Ngeng* house, where Urak Lawoi will have the opportunity to educate the younger generation in their native culture. Outsiders are responsible for building and financing the museum in collaboration with Urak Lawoi. According to plan, the museum will be run by the Urak Lawoi alone from 2007.

Acknowledgements

First of all I want to thank Professor Kajsa Ekholm Friedman who persuaded and encouraged me to conduct my second fieldwork among the Urak Lawoi for my master thesis. She is a person I admire not just for her professional knowledge, but also because she has not forgotten how to be a woman and mother with all that this entails. I also want to thank my supervisor Ulf Johansson Dahre who has given me guidelines and good feedback. Finally, Johnny Persson: for your great personality, skill and intellect, your main expertise is at hiding in your shell. I appreciate your questions that have made me think one step beyond.

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Many thanks to the members of Smålands Nation's committee who provided me with three scholarships from Ekedahl-Lundbergska fonden, Stiftelsen Dagny & Eilert Ekvalls premie- och stipendiefond and Stiftelsen Sjögrenska stipendifonden thus making it financially possible for me to do this research. I want to thank Kjell Johansson who privately gave me a contribution for the project.

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Without a functioning private life this study would not have been possible. My neighbors Gunnar and Ingrid Alexandersson have always been of great assistance at home, taking care of my mail, house and many other things. Stefan Franzén, with his good humor, has also helped out with my house. Thanks to Peter for your generosity and everything you have done for my girls and me.

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Since I started my anthropological studies I have had four different medical operations. I want to send special thanks to my doctor Lars Gustavsson Wallander who thought my field was interesting and always made me feel that I was doing something good with my studies.

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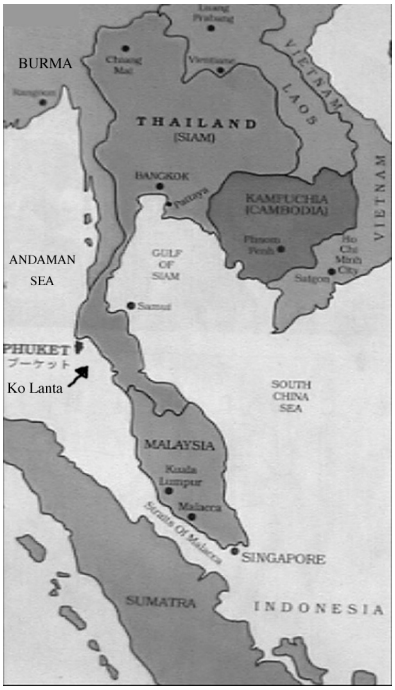
To my daughters Malin, Ebba-Lotta and Lisa, of course, who can stand living with a mother, who constantly thinks, dreams or talks about 'sea gypsies'. I know it has not always been easy for you when I have retreated into my 'own world'.

Lotta Granbom, Bergkvara november 2004

Chao Ley or Urak Lawoi

Chao Lay is the Thai expression for those people considered here. Sea Gypsies or Sea Nomads are the western terms. Chao Lay are described as forming three different groups, known as Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi. The islands in the Andaman Sea and coastal regions along the western shores of Thailand are their home. They are known as nomads of the sea and described (Hogan 1972:206) as animistic strand-dwellers, gatherers rather than cultivators. Even if these peoples have, in some cases, for several generations been living on the shores or as semi-nomads, their life style, language and culture differ from the rest of Thai society (Sandbukt 1983:3; UNESCO 2001:9).



Map 1: Thailand.

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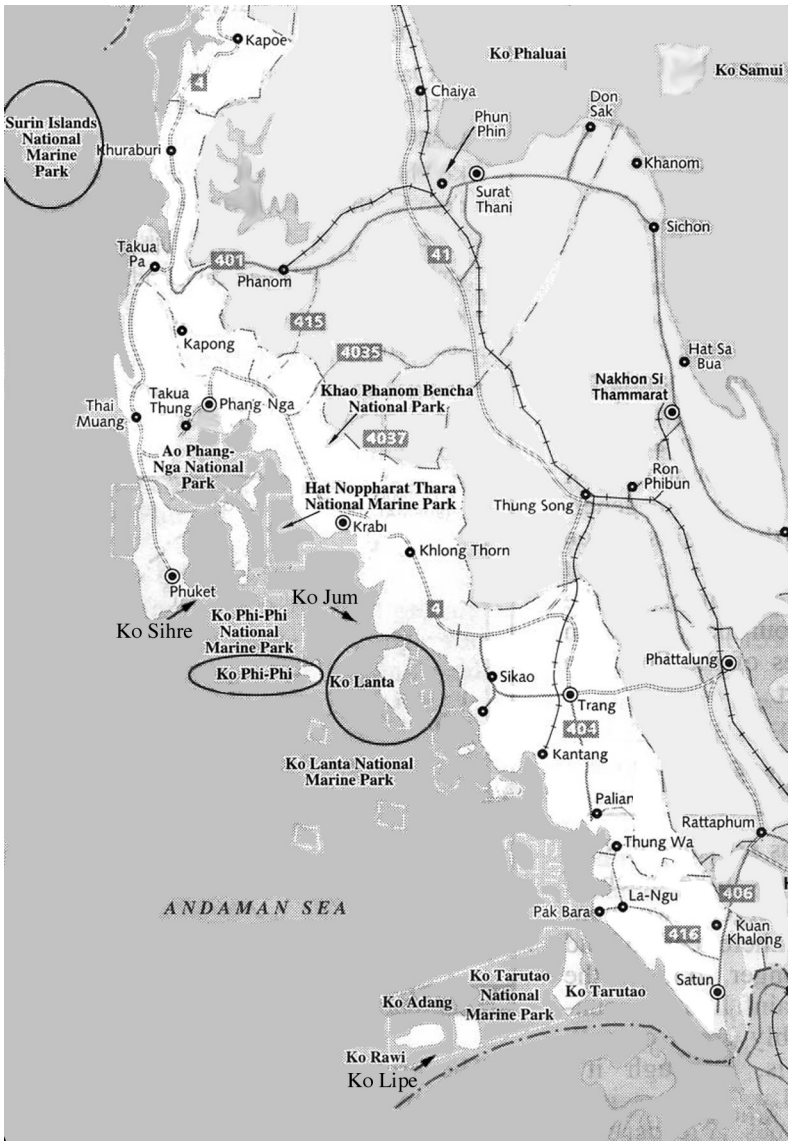


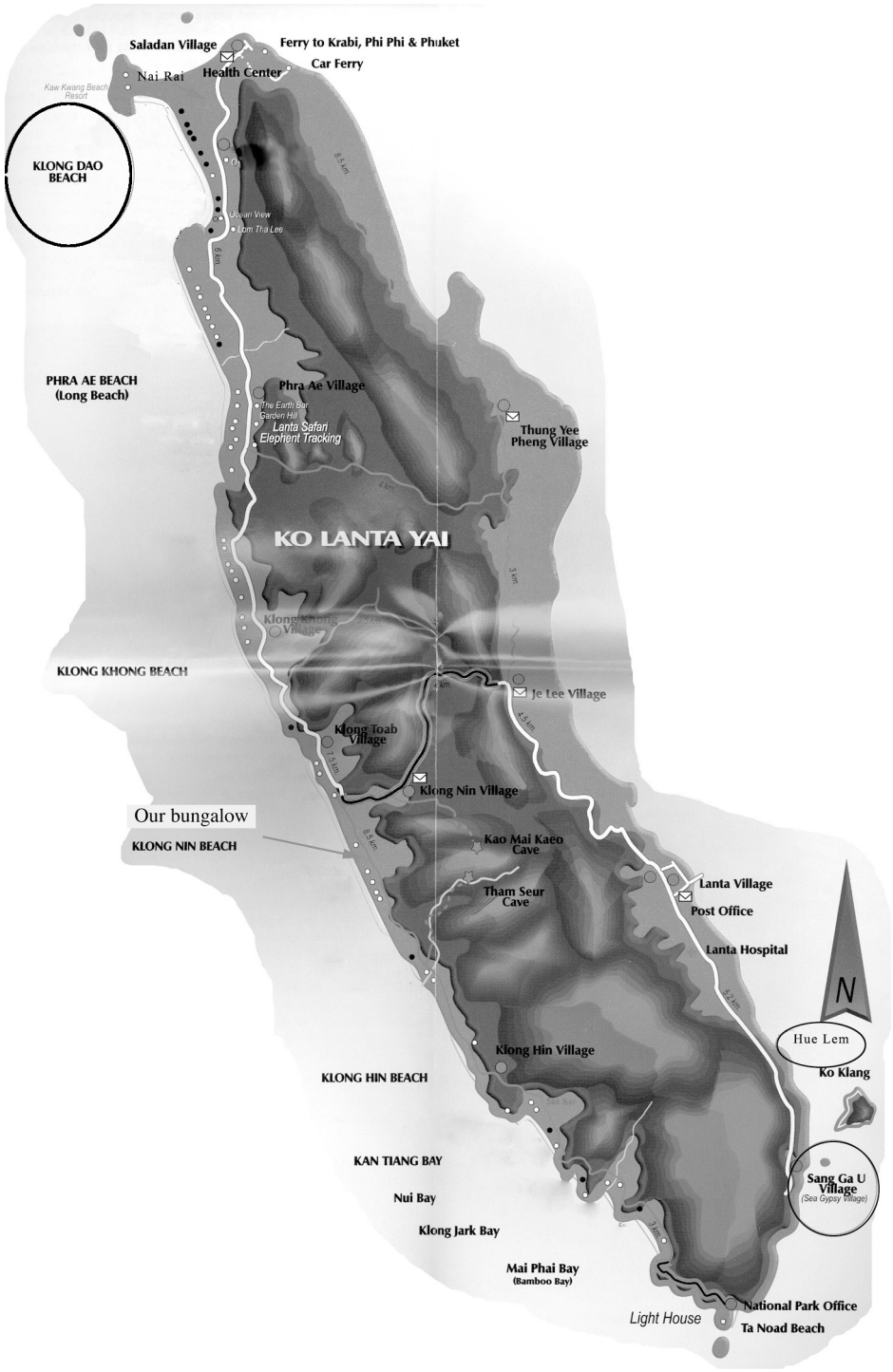
Map 2: Islands settled by Chao Lay dealt with in the essay

Foreword

It was in the middle of December 2002. I had just returned to Sweden from 31 days of fieldwork among the Urak Lawoi in Ko Lanta. It was my second trip there in the same year. I did not know what I was doing back home after such a short time. Would it not have been better if I had sent after my kids to come and stay with me among the Urak Lawoi? That Christmas I stayed at home as much as possible. I did not gladly leave my house. I stayed at home with my three girls in our big house right on the Baltic Sea. We played games, talked about life in front of one of the five burning tiled stoves. I started to make plans in my mind that I would go on a longer field trip. My friends wondered what had happened to me. It was like I had withdrawn into my own world and I just knew one thing for sure; I had to go back as soon as possible to the Urak Lawoi. There was so much information that I wanted to gather about this people. I could not get them out of my head. My children wanted to go with me. I did not want to risk that someone told me how impossible it would be to go back and do field-work with my kids. Therefore I did not tell anyone about our plans. I knew that my oldest daughter could not come with us. It was not the right time for her as she was going to a boarding school for designers. But she could visit us for Christmas.

I had no idea where I would get the money. I just knew we would leave in the middle of October, ten months later. We would stay in Ko Lanta, the main island of the Urak Lawoi in Thailand. But first I had to write my B.A. thesis about the Urak Lawoi and I did not want my children to tell anybody about our plans before it had been examined. There were many practical things to organize before we left. Many of the things had to do with my big house. I asked myself, why did I keep it? But at the same time I knew I was coming back.

On the 3rd of June 2003, the seminar for my B.A. thesis was held at the University of Lund. From now on, I could start looking more seriously for scholarships. For financial support I borrowed money from the bank to paint my house. But instead of letting someone else do it for me, I painted the house myself in the summer. The money I borrowed was put in my saving box for the Urak Lawoi project. The months before we were leaving, I was busy applying for scholarships. When we left on the 14th of October, I had no idea if I would receive any.



Map 3: Ko Lanta Yai.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Inconvenient Picture of the Pristine Paradise for Tourists to Witness

In two daily Swedish newspapers, *Expressen* (2004-05-16) and *Aftonbladets bilaga* (2004-03-07), we learn about a Swedish family that, as a result of being exhausted and 'burnt out', quit their jobs, sold their house and everything they owned to move to Thailand. We are told how the pressure and continuous strife for higher achievement became too much for them in their daily life. From the mid 1990s, 'burn out' has become a major social and economic problem in Sweden. Mostly, the reason is found in working life. Associate professor and assistant vicar Christian Braw wrote in the daily Swedish morning paper *Barometern* (2004-06-28) that another reason for our new endemic disease 'burn out' is a sense of 'lacking of identity' and this causes feelings of insecurity. He claims that a way to prevent this lack of confidence is by achievement. As one's identity in western culture is affirmed through one's job position and achievement at work, this contributes to the condition of 'burn out'. Elsrud (2004:20,89,122,175) talks about how travelers escape from clocks, work schedules and other structuring instruments at home (normally in the 'west'). Journeys appear to release the pressure from daily activities. 'Here you can just be what you want to be'. Alneng (2002:463-464) points out how escaping from dictated routines to an illusionary space as a tourist has become an unofficial right of normalcy in western society. We are talking about 'getting away from it all'. Smith (1989: 23) argues that people look down upon the ones staying at home for vacation and it is considered as not having any vacation at all. My conclusion is that by traveling you become 'somebody'. One gets attention and may have interesting talks with others like oneself. This could be one reason for escaping our society for longer periods of time. The journalist and writer Karolina Ramqvist (*Aftonbladet* 2004-07-19) claims that the wealthy minority considers traveling a human right. Travelers are asking for good tourism, 'a tourism where tourists can feel as good as they deserve' (my translation). At the UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) and World Tourism Organization conference in Sao Paolo, summer 2004, it was claimed that tourism could play a key role for development in poor countries. Yes, if so, it must be a good transaction indeed – westerners need a change of environment and poor people can profit from it. But there are questions to be asked about this transaction. An interesting testimony to this is that the tourists' experience might not be the same as that of the locals. They are experiencing two different worlds from the vantage point of the same place. As Ekholm Friedman (1998:22,39) states in her

work on Hawaii: what the tourists generally meet is not the local culture, but a 'simulated world' built for their consumption.

What happened to the family that left Sweden and moved to Thailand as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter? Today, they arrange 'theme journeys' to Thailand for Swedish tourists, including Yoga, meditation and therapy talks. The Swedish actress Malin Berghagen is hired as an attraction for directing Yoga courses. A Swedish school is established and a 'Swedish colony' is under construction, where Swedes are offered to buy bungalows on the beach. The place chosen is Klong Dau Beach in Ko Lanta. The paradoxical problem is: Klong Dau Beach used to harbor the settlements and temporary strand-dwellings of the indigenous people Urak Lawoi. Swedes are now going to Klong Dau Beach to find 'the inner peace of their souls'. On the travel agency's website on the Internet (www.travelinsight.net/utvecklingsresor) one can read:

> 'For you who want to break away, listen to yourself and others in an exotic environment. Here you get a chance to develop your capabilities, widen your outlook and find your own horizons' (my translation).

This Urak Lawoi settlement is today further inland, away from Klong Dau Beach. In agreement with Elsrud's (2004:16) description, the wealthy tourist industry has bought much of the coastal area in Thailand forcing fishing families inland, away from their normal source of income. Travel, as the largest global industry, is not innocent of capitalism (Hutnuk 1996:214). Nothing is stated in the travel agency's information about the Urak Lawoi and the destitution in which many of them live today, having been pushed away from the beach. Pictures do not show the 'downside'. One of the Thai 'outsiders' who had move to Ko Lanta to make a profit from tourism, said to me: '[...] there are no 'Sea Gypsies' in Ko Lanta [...] There are just poor Thai people'. Thailand is one of the most ethnically homogeneous countries in Southeast Asia and national identity is clearly defined according to the interests of the dominant Thai group (Michaud 1997:129). How does this fit the Rio declaration of 1992 and Agenda 21, where it is proclaimed that state organizations should have respect for the needs and desires of indigenous peoples before any development projects are started? The development plans should take into consideration their culture and way of life (see, e.g. Johansson-Dahre 2001:23,126). As Damm (1995:8) states those who make money on tourism do not have to be the ones who suffer from the consequences of such an 'invasion'. Johansson-Dahre (2001:126-127) argues that the pressure of developing tourism often results in stagnation for the local culture because of the economic impact. Is this what we may call 'natural' development or a modernization process? Or should it rather been seen as an extension of imperialism?

This essay will concentrate on the Urak Lawoi. There is little written documentation on this indigenous people. Empirical information for this study has therefore been compiled through fieldwork among the Urak Lawoi. Their settlements are located along many of the island beaches from Phuket down south to Ko Lipe at the Malaysian boarder. Ko Lanta is counted as their island of origin in Thailand. My first

visit to the Urak Lawoi was in March 2002. My second visit was in November the same year. I returned later in October 2003 for six months additional fieldwork. My base was Ko Lanta. I have also visited different islands in the Andaman Sea where Urak Lawoi or Moken have their homes.

1.2 Aim of the Study

Tourism has become the world's largest industry and an important factor in shaping our world. It has become an unofficial civil right and a normal behavior in Western society to escape from the monotonous routines of everyday life. In Thailand tourism has become the source of foreign exchange. Thailand's development as an international tourist destination started with the US military presence after the Vietnam War (Hitchcock, King & Parnwell 1993:16,19). To satisfy the demands of tourists, the locals had to change their way of life (Alneng 2002:463-464, 484). Great investment in tourist development may draw resources away from other projects, enterprises and social welfare institutions and, not unusually, others than the host population may benefit from tourist development. In Thai development strategies of tourism, as Parnwell states (1993:300), the priority is economic growth rather than the pursuit of social and distributive justice.

Anthropologists have been slow to recognize how tourism has become an important social fact and to put it on their agenda. The purpose of this essay is to find out how the rapid economic and tourist development affects the Urak Lawoi culture and way of life. According to the *UNESCO report, Indigenous People and Parks* (2001:14), rapid tourist development has drastically impacted on the nomadic life styles of the indigenous people Chao Lay (Urak Lawoi or Moken) in the Andaman Sea. Because of great pressure on marine resources in their traditional environment concomitant with a rapidly changing society, their mode of subsistence is in serious danger of disappearing. FN:s declaration, 'Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples', from August 1994 expresses 'the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights and characteristics of indigenous peoples, *especially their rights to their land, territories, and resources,* which derive from their political, economic, and social structures and from their cultures, espiritual traditions, and philosophies' (de Carbonari 2001:23). Chao Lay rights to own land or other property are ambiguous under Thai law because, like many indigenous groups, many of them are not recognized as Thai citizens and therefore not allowed to own land (UNESCO 2001:14,31). This increases the risk of corrupt exploitation by external competitors. A common conflict situation that I encountered in Ko Lanta concerned who the legal landowner was. It was not unusual that two persons claimed that they had the rights to the same property. This, of course, leads to legal controversy.

It is not uncommon in the literature of tourist anthropology that some ethnic minorities are described as 'disappearing' while others who integrate with tourism may

give you the impression that their cultural heritage is strengthened by tourism. I have focused on the following questions: *To what extent does the rapid economic and tourist development affect Urak Lawoi culture and way of life in Ko Lanta. To what extent can the Urak Lawoi control the tourist process in Ko Lanta? In what way do they make use of it and how are they excluded? What stress factors and problems do these indigenous peoples face when outsiders are exploiting what the Urak Lawoi consider as their territory? How can the future be forecast in terms of Urak Lawoi livelihood?*

I am going to show what damage that rapid tourist development may do to a local culture and how an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the dominant culture may develop among its members when they lose their territory.

The point of view presented in this essay is exclusively that of the Urak Lawoi. Opinions regarding tourist development held by authorities, outsiders and other local ethnic groups, though of interest, are not presented. It does not discuss the role of local political leaders in developing plans for tourism. This turned out to be a more delicate matter than I had expected when visiting the *Amphur* or the district office of Ko Lanta. After a warm welcome because of my interest for local history and information concerning the district, suddenly a silence came over the room when I asked about Urak Lawois rights to land. I wanted to see maps of their legitimate territory. 'There are no such of papers or maps', I was told. Due to my lack of knowledge of Thai society and since it turned out to become a very sensitive subject, I shall go no deeper into how problems may arise when two persons claim equal legal rights to the same piece of land.

Other important sources of information which I touch upon but have not investigated more thoroughly in this essay, are interviews with local and outside entrepreneurs thinking about tourist development and their plans for the future.

My research does not explain why people get 'burnt out' or why they travel. Other information left out are the cosmological insights of the Urak Lawoi. From an anthropological point of view, cosmology is a culture's image of the world. The process of creation, the spiritual world and its forces which are thought to influence human life, are included in this image. The role of the *To Maw* (medicine man) and the cultural meanings of ceremonies are just superficially mentioned in this essay. Another important area of study, of course, is the women's world, of which I have not sought to gain any deeper understanding.

The essay is divided into four different parts. Part 1 contains a detailed presentation of the fieldwork. It also includes a detailed description of Ko Lanta Yai society. This was done on purpose since I have personally experienced a lack of written documentation on the society where I was doing fieldwork or on the period before the development of tourism. In case of any future interest in this society, I wanted to make a description of it in its transition into a new kind of society. Part 2 presents ethnographic information about the Urak Lawoi and provides a description of the society and environment of Ko Lanta. Part 3 discusses the empirical material of this study. Loss of Urak Lawoi territory can be seen as their main problem, and it is undermining Urak Lawoi identity. A suggestion is discussed concerning the new prob-

lems and conflicts which the Urak Lawoi face with the loss of their territory and tourist expansion as considered in Part 4.

Finally, the study is discussed as to the results. How the Urak Lawoi have become 'the victims of tourist development in the Andaman Sea. Their inferiority complex increase with Western culture taking over their territory it is also shown how thinking independently is splitting the group and how Thai culture is successfully integrating the Urak Lawoi into Thai society as poor Thai citizens.

1.3 Theory

All around the world governments have made reductions in the territories of indigenous peoples and modifications of their traditional systems in favor of state-controlled systems and forced them into a market economy. Cultural as well as biological diversity now decreases rapidly all over the world. Today the territories of such peoples have declined to about 12-19 percent of the earth's surface (de Carbonari in Johansson-Dahre 2001:20). Small-scale economic systems have therefore been hard to maintain and to be able to sustain a small-scale culture indigenous peoples must be allowed to control a territory of sufficient size to preserve their society and culture. Anthropologists have started to realize that the greatest victims of industrial progress have been the several millions of indigenous peoples who, back in 1820, controlled over half of the globe and the world's ecosystems.

In *Victims of Progress* (1999) John Bodley deals with indigenous peoples around the world who have historically been conquered, colonized by industrial nations and controlled by various nation states. He discuss how political autonomy is lost when state societies gain control over territories inhabited by indigenous peoples, preventing them from acting in their own defense to expel outsiders. Government control always implies a transformation of tribal organization and tribal peoples must integrate with larger social and political systems. Bodley points out those tribal peoples who have surrendered their political autonomy can remain self-sufficient on a small scale as long as they have access to their territory and are not exploited by outsiders. Experience tells us that many isolated tribes around the world have had contact with civilized traders and kept their culture as long as their territory has not been encroached upon. A more common consequence, however, of political conquest is that 'underdeveloped' resources controlled by indigenous peoples are quickly appropriated. Bodley talks about how the frontier first makes contact with indigenous people. Resources are easily available for exploitation by outsiders. Prior ownership rights and interests of the aboriginal inhabitants are irrelevant both to states and invading individuals who are 'cunning' in obtaining land, labor and other resources.

Indigenous peoples lose economic autonomy because they must maintain control over their resources to stay self-sufficient. This economic incorporation of small-scale cultures into the world market economy is critical. Bodley explains how it has ruined

millions of indigenous peoples and cultural groups. It is well known that economic exploitation leads to apathy, dependency, alcoholism and increases the susceptibility to diseases among such peoples. Among the diseases there are diabetes, obesity, hypertension, but also poverty diseases appear in association with the crowded conditions of slums (Bodley 1999a: 133-134). I quote Bodley's statement: 'What *is* remarkable is the extent of the destruction and the fact that this familiar and uniform pattern has been repeated over the years throughout the world and still continues in some areas today with the implicit approval of the governments involved' (1999:31). He claims that people must themselves determine their participation in the cash economy. Only in this way can the 'price of progress´ be minimized. Bodley argues that indigenous peoples differ from the contemporary world because they share a small-scale way of life that is technologically less complex than urban-based societies organized by industrial and political relations and the market economy. What Bodley calls *small-scale cultures* have a tendency to enjoy greater freedom, equality, security and access to food and natural resources. There is less cultural stimulus to accumulate wealth as well as little incentive to expand the consumption of resources. They tend to make light demands on their environments and to support themselves easily. The opposite is true for the culture of capitalism where societies devastate their own local resources and outgrow their boundaries. Bodley discusses how ethnocentrism threatens small-scale cultures today through its support of culturally insensitive government policies. An example of ethnocentrism as discussed by Bodley is when tribal peoples are considered to be incompetent and childlike, similar to the relationship between a tribal people and the state as 'parent-guardian'.

In agreement with Bodley's argument, that 'the greatest victims of industrial progress have been indigenous peoples', I suggest in this essay, that the main victims of tourist development in the 3rd World are indigenous peoples. It has a tendency to follow the same pattern as 'conquests'. I will try to show this with the help of my ethnographic field study of the impact of tourist development on the Urak Lawoi in Thailand.

Historical background:

About 6000 years ago the macro-cultural process of politicization started to supersede the micro-cultural level. Some people created centralized political authority and institutions of government. Politicization, a new form of organizing social power, replaced social equality as found in tribal micro-cultures. Bodley (1999a: 5) calls this new culture type *large-scale culture* were he claims that central political rulers take away production and distribution away from households and individuals and promote new technology and population growth to enhance their social power. The earliest states were developed out of chiefdoms, which were created out of small-scale cultures that became chiefdoms when chiefs got political control over more than one local village. The development of chiefdoms was a new kind of organization for small-scale egalitarian societies. Some were forced to become chiefdoms and states to

defend themselves, but usually small-scale cultures were conquered and transformed into taxpaying peasantries.

Colonization started in the 16th century and the expansion of market capitalism led to the modern world system which Bodley calls *global-scale culture,* based on a global market economy. 'In the global culture, the economy assumes an independent existence and economic growth is universally recognized as the highest priority for government policy, even when what is good for the economy conflicts with the interests of particular human groups' (Bodley 1999:6). The real problem for indigenous peoples who want to maintain cultural autonomy is that their cultural heritage relies on social equality and is the antithesis of global-scale cultures (ibid.: 7). Within the last 250 years many self-sufficient small-scale cultures have disappeared and dramatic resource shortages and environmental disasters have occurred (ibid.: 12).

After World War II, governments started a new worldwide campaign for rapid economic growth. Nations everywhere attempted to raise their GNP. In this project, professional development experts, including economists, anthropologist, geographers, agronomists experts and other specialists from different countries were involved. They turned their attention to indigenous peoples because their 'backward' cultures were seen to cause obstacles to economic goals. These experts devised special programs to bring unwilling indigenous peoples into the national economy. It is surprising, Bodley writes, that so many cultures have survived after the event of state control of tribal lands and efforts to acclimatize tribes to the dominant culture. Bodley states that once state societies embark upon a policy of integrating small-scale cultures, they could completely destroy the cultural diversity of small-scale societies with massive cultural modification programs. Schooling has been the prime instrument here.

During the 1970s indigenous people who had experienced external pressure started movements that aimed at self-determination, that is, a return to full local political, economic and cultural autonomy. This does not mean isolation from the world, but rather that they would be allowed to control their own territory. Many who are prominent in the self-determination movement have had extensive experience of and opportunities in the dominant commercial society but have rejected it for their native culture. In recent years there has been a steady emergence of regional, national and international political organizations that have been working for the self-determination of indigenous peoples. The only 'movement' that I know about among the Urak Lawoi is the *Andaman Pilot Project,* which is supported by UNESCO[1]. I have been in touch with and written to the organization for more information, but have not received any answer. A similar project, 'A place for indigenous people in protected areas, Surin Islands, Andaman Sea, Thailand', was initiated in 1997 to explore development options for and with the Moken people in the Marine National Park on Surin Island. The key players in the project are the coordinator Narumon Hinshiranan at Chulalongkorn University and UNESCO Bangkok Office, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the interdisciplinary and inter-

1 A brief two-page presentation of the people Urak Lawoi can be found on the web site www.cusri.chula.ac.th/andaman/en/uraklawoi.

sectional platform for 'Environment and development in costal regions and in small islands' (CSI). Anthropologist Narum Hinshiranan has made a great effort to make it possible for the Moken to maintain their traditional culture and life style in spite of park regulations. The Moken no longer have the rights to continue traditional resource harvesting or live within the park.

My thesis why the Urak Lawoi have not started any similar movements is that they do not 'know the other world yet'. Right now they are at the stage where many of them would still like to integrate with the dominant culture. They feel an inferiority complex. Most of the Urak Lawoi cannot read or write and they have been promised many favorable opportunities if they integrate and collaborate with the dominant culture.

1.4 Literature

It is not long ago that anthropological studies of tourism became accepted as a social scientific field. They are still in their formative stage where exploration is important and boundaries are not well established. There is not a great deal of theoretical discussion (Nash 1996:15, 162). One reason why this field has not been taken seriously and scholarship has been held back is because studying tourism may appear too much like taking a vacation and getting paid for it (Wood 1997:3). Interestingly, tourists now go to the same kind of places where anthropologists used to do fieldwork. The contrast is that when travelers go they are enjoying themselves and usually have no understanding of local peoples (Nash 1996:2,17). The anthropological study of tourism started when researchers accidentally discovered that tourism affected those societies they had chosen to study (Nash 1996:20; Wilson 1993:33). So far, the main anthropological studies of tourism have relied on a developmental perspective as applied in particular to the 3rd world. Earlier anthropological studies showed that tourism may affect indigenous peoples in a devastating way. Foreign capitalists control of tourist development and make it impossible for the locals to remain because of a rise in the value of landed property and a lack of knowledge and money that prevents them from investing in tourism. They are given no other opportunity than to work as unskilled laborers in the tourist business. Inhabitants in national parks may develop a dependency on tourism as they are banned from living there in terms of their traditional life style. Debates on tourism in developing countries have focused on whether its effects are beneficial or negative. Dennison Nash is critical of anthropologists who consider tourist development a bad thing. He states: 'If one already 'knows' the value of something one is investigating, there may be a tendency to slough off diligent science' (Nash 1996:81). I am critical in his statement here because, as I began to study Urak Lawoi culture and identity, I found a number of unexpected threats to their human rights that emanated from the tourist industry. At that point, I had no knowledge at all of any anthropological studies of tourism.

Scholars from North America and northwestern Europe have dominated the field. An early and important contribution to this literature was Valene L. Smith's book *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (1977). It may be the best-known publication in the field. A year earlier 1976, UNESCO proclaimed that tourism 'more than an economic phenomenon with social and cultural effects has become a phenomenon of civilization' (1976: 75). The literature I use in this essay is a mixture of research that has contributed to an understanding of the impact of tourist development on indigenous peoples.

Malcolm Crick (1994) has given the field its legitimacy and has so far written the only ethnography. Dennison Nash (1981, 1996) proposes cooperation between anthropologists and tourist entrepreneurs. Anthropological expertise of the cultural background, he claims, may contribute to a better understanding on part of the travel agencies. Erik Cohen, Wise Professor of Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who has since 1977 studied tourism and social change in Thailand, states that there is limited information on the native peoples on the islands in the Andaman Sea in contrast to the hill tribes in the north. His research on the islands in Thailand seems to shows that development was at first favorable to the locals while later there has been a tendency for 'outsiders' to obtain control. With an accelerating development, locals have found it increasingly harder to enter the tourist business.

Other important writers on tourism in South-East Asia are Michael Pichard and Robert E. Wood who have edited *Tourism, Ethnicity, and the State in Asian and Pacific Societies* (1997), were they are looking at the importance of the state in developing tourism both in terms of general economic and its own particular interests. Pichard claims that as long as ethnic minorities have an influence on tourist development there are no boundaries between 'ours' and 'theirs'. He talks about a 'touristic culture' where tourism has become an integral part of the local culture and its interaction with tourists and thus is a central component in the definition of ethnic identity and authenticity. Other important authors in this anthology are Laurence Wai-Teng Leong and Jean Michaud. Wood and Leong, in their contribution, discuss governmental promotion of tourism may suppress indigenous groups. Michaud draws on her experience of doing fieldwork among the hill-tribes in the northern Thailand. Her work has been good to compare to my experience of the Urak Lawoi and indicates why few tourists have any knowledge of the Urak Lawoi. The opposite is true of the hill-tribes who are marketed for tourism.

Other works contributing theoretically to this essay are some articles collected in *Tourism in South-East Asia* (Hitchcock, King & Parnwell 1993). These articles make for a better understanding of what happens when the traditional economy is banned and ethnic minorities become dependent on tourism. The consequences for ethnic minorities living in national parks are also discussed.

There are also some Scandinavian studies used for investigating the subject of this paper. Professor Kajsa Ekholm Friedman at the University of Lund has together with her husband Professor Jonathan Friedman done extensive fieldwork on Hawaii in several periods since 1980. They have mainly lived in the 'last Hawaiian fishing village', but to pursue a comparative view they have also done fieldwork in other loca-

tions on the islands such as tourist-invaded Waikiki. Their work contributes to a better understanding of my own research as to why the Urak Lawoi experience an inferiority complex and how this feeling might change with education and an active participation in Thai society.

Social anthropologist Victor Alneng at Stockholm University is working on his Ph.D. project concerning domestic and international tourism in Vietnam and has written a couple of interesting articles on the subject. *Att kräva livet åter: ursprungsfolkens kamp* (1997), a book edited by Ulf Johansson Dahre, contains articles from the discussions of IWGIA-Lundagruppen about indigenous peoples in 1995 and 1996. These articles consider land rights and conflicts caused by development and the extraction of natural resources, which often occurs in areas inhabited by such groups. Torun Elsrud has written a doctoral dissertation at Department of Sociology at Lund University in 2004 that deals with backpackers' journeys to the 3rd world. It can be understood as a creative effort by individuals to regain the control over time and space thought to be lost in the places they call home. Backpackers conjure an image of the 'primitive other' and think they are simply 'individual' travelers mastering adventure and risk, but they also create a new life style in the 'hosts' society'. Finally, anthropologist Ingrid Damm discusses the influence of local peoples on developing tourism and argues that the infrastructure makes it easier to manage 'tourist invasions' in the West than is the case in the 3rd World.

1.5 Material from the Field

Since this study is based on fieldwork the main emphasis is on the empirical material. I have chosen to let the voices of my informants guide me to the conclusions of my thesis. Much of the material that I gathered during my fieldwork is of a rather sensitive nature. I have chosen to let my informants remain anonymous to protect their identity. However, I have used a number of additional sources for gathering the contemporary situation historical information.

Anthropologist Arporn U-krit from Krabi Cultural Center has been of great help to me with her experience from the field concerning the Urak Lawoi in Ko Lanta. She presented her M.A. thesis *Urak Lawoi Social and Cultural Life in Ko Lanta* in 1989 at Silpakorn University, Bangkok. This source is invaluable. Dr. Supin Wongbusarakum has also been of great help. She took her doctoral degree on the Urak Lawoi in the Adang Archipelago at the department of Geography, University of Hawaii in Manoa in 2002. Even if she has been very busy with different projects, she has never hesitated to assist me when I needed it. I have kept in touch with her by e-mail, but also visited her for a week on Ko Lipe, while she was in charge there of an Island Ecology and Culture Class consisting of a group of American students from the University of Chiang Mai. By coincidence we also met at Ko Surin on the border to Burma. We were both there for the first time. A week earlier Dr. Supin had visited Ko

Surin; she tried to get in touch with me later to visit me in Ko Lanta. As I had a lot of trouble with my e-mail, I never received her message. Anthropologist Narumon Hinshiranan from Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok has been so kind to reply to my e-mails and questions to make my report about the Urak Lawoi more complete. She is the coordinator of the project 'A place for indigenous people in protected areas, Surin Islands, Andaman Sea, Thailand'.

I also want to mention Vira and Pon Changnam as especially good sources for my work. Vira, who comes from Switzerland, is married to Pon who is a Urak Lawoi. She is the only westerner I know of in Ko Lanta who is married to an Urak Lawoi. Vira and Pon have their son Toby and live with the Urak Lawoi in Ko Lanta. Vira has many years of experience of Thai society, and as a western citizen, she has faced the problems of the Urak Lawoi from a close distance and with an emic perspective. She has been an enormous help to me as a westerner in understanding the culture I am writing about. Vira and Pon also opened their home to me and their hospitality and generosity always made me feel at home when I visited them.

Photo 2 *Pon and Vira Changnam.*

1.6 The Reason for Selecting the Site of Research

An interesting fact about these indigenous people is that they tend to remain ethnically distinct from other coast-dwelling peoples, despite having lived on the shore for many generations (Sandbukt 1984:3). They are described as shy and escaping extremely fast without any prior warning (Granbom 2003:7). According to Bodley (1999:27) there are tribal peoples who have managed to escape in order to preserve their cultures. He emphasizes that there are many little-known tribal peoples around the world who have managed to retain their cultural integrity until recently. Rarely have these people been recognized publicly or by professional agents of cultural change. During my earlier fieldwork for my B.A. thesis about the Urak Lawoi, I

found a lot of unexpected problems for the group. In the last two decades the Urak Lawoi have been stressed by the increasing exploitation and dominance they are exposed to in what they feel is their territory. As exploitation is going very fast, I felt the urgency to write about the kind of problems they are facing. I chose Ko Lanta Yai as my principal base because this is the island the Urak Lawoi count as their main island in Thailand. Another important fact was that I had become acquainted with the Urak Lawoi and other locals who could make my field study easier to accomplish. Ko Lanta Yai was situated in the middle of tourist development. In some islands (like Phuket and Phi Phi) tourism had made its entrance at an early stage thus affecting the Urak Lawoi way of life. In contrast, islands like Ko Lipe had been developed later than Ko Lanta Yai. This made Ko Lanta Yai interesting as a point for comparing the impact of tourism on the Urak Lawoi before and after tourism began.

Until recently, the Thai government has been reluctant to admit the serious problems that tourism has entailed (Alneng 2002:483). The environmental resources of Thailand and the islands of the Andaman Sea are rapidly being degraded under pressure from expanding populations and economic development strategies. Natural and cultural landscapes are being exploited in the pursuit of tourist dollars. According to the Surin Island Project (UNESCO, 2001) the west coast of southern Thailand is an area where the conservation of the marine environment is part of the national development plan for tourism.

Despite the awareness of conservation requirements in this area, there is reason for concern. Many times states will try to solve the problems of minority peoples, but it is not how the minorities want to solve them. The solutions often develop their society according to the interests of the dominant culture and the state. This lack of knowledge and solidarity may be a fatal mistake in terms of survival for both human populations and ecosystems. The explosive tourist development on the islands in and around Phuket in the Andaman Sea has had a major ecological and social impact on Urak Lawoi communities. Many of the unprotected coastal areas have been developed into bungalow resorts. The Urak Lawoi are pushed further and further into areas with diminishing resources.

This study will hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the Urak Lawoi's problems as caused by the extremely fast economic development around the Andaman Sea and the expansion of tourism. It may add to our knowledge about how Urak Lawoi livelihood is shaped by tourism, modernization and the market economy.

1.7 Method

The material presented here is based on fieldwork and the main emphasis is on this empirical material. I have spent eight months in total in what the Urak Lawoi consider their territory in the Andaman Sea. My base has been Ko Lanta Yai – the main island of the Urak Lawoi in Thailand. I have also visited and stayed with the Chao

Lay, 'Sea Gypsies' or Urak Lawoi who inhabit other islands in the Andaman Sea such as Ko Phi Phi, Ko Jum, Ko Siehre, Ko Lipe, Ko Adang and Ko Surin. I have lived with the Urak Lawoi in their homes in Nai Rai in Ko Lanta, Ko Sihre in Phuket and Aow Sai-En and Aow-Born in Ko Surin. The Chao Lay (also called Moken) of Aow-Bon in South Ko Surin told me that I was the first *farang* (white person from the West) who had stayed in their village. Doing fieldwork is not easy and I experienced what Nash (1996:2) calls the fieldworker's lot: anxiety, rage, accidents, disease and even death.

My fieldwork has been conducted from an ethic point of view, since I came from a different cultural setting to study 'the other'. At the same time, however, I have tried to live close to the Urak Lawoi, and under similar conditions, to attain an emic understanding.

My material was gathered at interviews and conversations that I wrote down shortly after they had taken place. I also gathered material through observations. My informants were of both sexes and all ages. I did not notice any significant differences in terms of openness between people who belonged to the various categories.

Since Ko Lanta has a heavy cultural mixture of Thai Muslims, Thai Chinese and Urak Lawois I had to find a way of distinguishing between the different cultures. I also had to spend time with Thai Muslims, Thai Buddhists and Thai Chinese to understand the society and borders of the different cultures on the island. It was not easy to try to learn about so many different ethnic groups at the same time. But it was necessary in order to understand the Urak Lawoi situation more clearly. Urak Lawoi symbols, traditions and beliefs may have been influenced by their Muslim and Chinese counterparts, which I as a westerner may have misunderstood due to a lack of cultural experiences. I also want to point out that fieldwork incorporates the personality of the anthropologist in relation to the culture and the people being studied. Consequently, the impressions of me formed by the Urak Lawoi would have played an important roll in what kind of information that was given to me. Two anthropologists who are studying the same society will probably make two different interpretations depending on their problems and background.

I used motor-bike or boat to reach Urak Lawoi settlements. I tried to maintain a daily contact with the Urak Lawoi. To travel long distances by motor-bike from one place to another in a heat of 30-40 degrees Celsius was a tough experience for a Swede used to good asphalted roads, not dusty or muddy roads lying under water.

I used an interpreter when talking to the Urak Lawoi. To work with an interpreter has made me realize how close you get to a person who you are working with in this way. Sometimes I almost felt like we were two persons in one. My first and main interpreter looked me up when I had arrived to Ko Lanta. I had met him previously during the field study for my B.A. thesis. He told me that if I needed his help, he was available. He was a Thai Buddhist and lived in his own hut in the Urak Lawoi village of Sanga-U. My interpreter was also a musician who had moved to Sanga-U because of his interest in Urak Lawoi culture, as he was now writing songs about them. It turned out that he was a well-known person in Thailand. He was very popular, not just by the Urak Lawoi, but also in the government. He opened lots of doors for me.

He was diligently engaged in different commissions, such as organizing a Harley Davidson Party in the south of Thailand, a fire show in Bangkok and other kinds of festivals. He wanted to bring me along to these activities. Of course, it would have been interesting, from a close distance, to see how these festivals were organized. I was even invited to stay with the popular music group *Job to do* (their popularity may be compared to that of Per Gessle in Swedish terms), while he was working on one of his festivals. But I was in Thailand for different reasons and had a limited time to collect my information. Because of this I had to hire a second interpreter. He was a Muslim who could speak the Urak Lawoi language. He, like my first interpreter, contacted me and said that if I ever needed his help, he would gladly assist me. The fact that he was a Muslim made me realize how it is to live like a Muslim. Five times a day, we had to stop for prayers. We could not stop and eat just anywhere. Sometimes this could make things complicated as we had to go on a long detour on our motorbike for a cup of coffee. He did not drink any alcohol. My Muslim interpreter also turned out to have been well-known. He used to be a singer in a rock band. In those days, he did not have to pay in restaurants or hotels. I found that it was still the same. We seldom paid when we visited a Muslim restaurant. I do not know if it was because he was a Muslim or because he used to be a 'star' or just because it was him. I also want to mention that if we for some reason had to buy something while we where working, he never let me pay. I was told that it would be a shame for a Muslim man if he felt that he could not pay for a woman's expenses. To have two different interpreters from the Thai Buddhist and Muslim world respectively made me come closer to these cultures. This also benefited my work with the Urak Lawoi.

My need for interpreters to conduct fieldwork may have influenced my results. In some cases the interpreter may have been looked upon as a Thai authority by the Urak Lawoi and therefore important information was perhaps not given and is therefore missing from this report. Considering the turbulence associated with tourism, you must speak their language in order to completely understand the Urak Lawoi as that increases their confidence in the investigator. Sometimes I did not use an interpreter at all. I just observed some ceremonial event or the Urak Lawoi way of living.

I had invested in a new digital multi-player to make my interviews. As my lap top travel mate had broken down a couple of times while I was doing fieldwork, I felt at risk taping my interviews when unsure whether they had been properly transferred to the computer. Therefore, I took field notes when talking to the Urak Lawoi. Sometimes I just let my movie camera go and later listened to what had been said on the film. Or else someone later explained to me what the Urak Lawoi where doing in the film. I have taken all photographs in this essay apart from a few that were taken by my kids' teacher Yvonne.

1.7.1 My Abode in Klong Nin Beach, Ko Lanta

I was invited to have my permanent stay in the Urak Lawoi village of Sanga-U in Ko Lanta. I could not accept the offer, because my two girls had to go to school. Swedish

school regulations did not allow my second daughter to stay with me without regular schooling. Therefore, I employed a Swedish teacher together with another Swedish family living in Ko Lanta. The school was in the northern part of the 30 km long island, which is the most exploited part of Ko Lanta. Sanga-U was in the south. I decided on the central region and to have our permanent residence in Klong Nin Beach. This beach was mainly settled by Muslims who inhabited the middle part of the island. Klong Nin Beach is still a quiet place where westerners and backpackers come to stay but is nevertheless under heavy development and rapid change. Long-staying backpackers and tourists from all over the world get together here in a 'fantasy world'. People escape from their daily life into an imaginary world evoking their wishes and desires. Alneng (by Spawning in Alneng 2002:465) calles it a 'touristic phantasm'. Such phantasms bring people from different cultural contexts closer to one another for a period of time, while distance is upheld and reconfirmed. Many of the tourists in Klong Nin Beach are keen on 'grass' as it is easy to obtain.

When we arrived in the middle of October, the rainy season was not over. I did not want to stay in a bungalow resort. By coincidence I met some Thai people from Bangkok who had moved to Klong Nin Beach. They invited us to stay with them. I was free to borrow their motor-bike and car any time and we cooked together and practiced the Thai language. After a week I found out that they were heavily into drugs. They even cultivated their own. I was frustrated about the situation. Maybe they wanted a mother to stay with them together with her children to cover up what they actually were dealing with? I knew that I could not stay there with my children. At the same time I refused to stay in a bungalow resort. If I could not for practical reasons stay with the Urak Lawoi, I would at least stay with Thai people. I could have solved the problem by staying in the Urak Lawoi settlement of Nai Rai. It is located in the northern part of Ko Lanta near the school in Klong Dau Beach that my girls were going to (see Chapter 1:1 about the Swedish family who moved there). Klong Dau Beach used to be a Urak Lawoi settlement before they moved to Nai Rai located further away from the beach. Klong Dau Bech is now exploited mainly by outsiders and packed with bungalow resorts and restaurants. It was here that my girls went to school. But they refused to stay there. They thought this part of the island was too exploited with a lot of tourists. As my second daughter said: 'What do the kids expect to find and see when they are snorkeling in a swimming pool?' Even if I had my favorite lady Beeda with a high status among the Urak Lawoi living in Nai Rai, I found it better to just visit her and stay with her overnight sometimes. The change of life style for the Urak Lawois in the northern part of Ko Lanta was greater than for those living in the south of the island where many tourists still do not go.

One evening when I was feeling frustrated about our situation, I went for a walk on 'our beach', Klong Nin. Suddenly I heard *Rong Ngang* music – the Urak Lawoi music and dance. I saw a hut made of leaves right on the beach. In the light from an oil lamp and the moon I could see a guy dancing and people sitting in a circle around him. Without thinking I ran up to them. To my knowledge there were no Urak Lawoi on this beach. It was Trai who was dancing – a Thai from the mainland. He was dancing every night to *Rong Ngang* music to put his friend Charlee's two small kids

to bed. Charlee was married to Net and he had a connection with the Urak Lawoi in Sanga-U, since he used to live there and had his 'adopted' Urak Lawoi parents living there. It all ended with Charlee and Trai, the day after, offering to build me a bungalow of my own, right on the beach. I paid for the material and they did the work.

Photo 3 *Net and Charlee and their two girls.*
Foto: Yvonne Malmsten.

Photo 4 *Trai and Lotta in my bungalow.*

Charlee and Trai were poor Thai Buddhists, but they opened their home for us. The hut became our home for the next six months. I wanted to live as far as possible in the same circumstances as most Urak Lawoi. I therefore built my hut with no fan or air conditioner. I had natural air from the chinks in my floor or walls or my windows without glass. I slept on the floor on a two-centimeter mattress (the Urak Lawoi often sleep on leaves right on the floor). We first showered in the river beside Charlee´s house. I later invested in a regular shower – a luxury for the Urak Lawoi.

Photo 5 *Our habitation in Ko Lanta Yai.*
From left: Ebba-Lotta (Shaba), Lisa, Lotta and Malin.

A life surrounded by Muslims was a new experience for me. Five o'clock in the morning the prayer from the mosque woke me up. I always felt accepted by the Muslims living on the beach. Even if they may have looked a little suspicious when a lone western woman with kids moved in with Trai, Charlee and his wife Net. Because I lived

on a Muslim beach, I did not often swim in a bathing suit in respect of them. Instead I had my fisherman trousers on. The Muslims laughed at me when I told them that I had bought a *burka.* It made sense, I said, to use it to protect my hair when I was riding the motor-bike on the dusty roads. I did not use the *burka* there, however, but found a practical use for it in Ko Lanta.

I used to have my morning coffee at a Muslim restaurant. The women were fun talking to and liked my dread locks. I could not have any opinion about their hair as most of them covered it. I felt fully accepted both by the women and the men. One day a little Muslim girl came running to me while I was out walking on the road. She gave me flowers. They were from her parents who wanted me to have them.

Thai Buddhists who recently had moved from the mainland also lived in Klong Nin Beach. They had opened up businesses for tourism. Most of the businesses had to do with alcohol, since Muslims are not allowed to sell alcohol. One elderly Buddhist couple had opened a liquor store. Many young Thai Buddhist boys with an uneasy background had come from the mainland. Some were working in bars owned by Thai migrants from the mainland. They worked for free to have somewhere to sleep and eat. If the boys were lucky they got some profits from making jewelry or tattoos as many of them have an artistic talent. Other boys were running bars in co-operation with local Thai Muslims, who had opened bungalow resorts. Bars were run in connection with restaurants at Muslim resorts. I always found the relationship between Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims to be very good. I also found them helping each other with different things if one of the parties had too much to do. But I did not see Muslims stand behind the bars. I did not see any Thai girls working in the bars in Klong Nin Beach as was the case in Klong Dau Beach. For some of the Thai boys running their bar in co-operation with Muslims, it had gone very well. The profits from the bars, they had invested in land either in Ko Lanta or on the mainland. The boys made fun of me and could not really understand why I wanted to spend time with Sea Gypsies, or Chao Ley, as they called the Urak Lawoi. Many of them called me 'mom'. Others called me 'the witch' (with humor) when I came to get my girls at night, as they were very keen on 'baby sitting'. The Muslim men, I think, looked at me with respect. If my children or I needed a ride by car it was never any problem. I did never have to pay anything for the ride. Some of the older Thai Buddhist men and women said that I was different from other *farang* because, as they said to me, I was one of them.

1.7.2 Personal Experience of Doing Fieldwork

I used a low profile during my fieldwork. I did not take for granted that Urak Lawoi would greet me with great enthusiasm when I forced my presence as a curious anthropologist upon their culture and society. In my first contact with the Urak Lawoi, I found them reserved towards me. But they always treated me with kindness and warmth with a few exceptions when some women looked suspiciously at me. I interpreted it as a sign that they regarded me as a rival for their men. This feeling did not

last very long. The Urak Lawoi have always treated me good, but it was not until the end of my stay that this feeling changed into something even more positive. They started to treat me different in a positive, more open way. Among other things, they told me in advance when they where having a ceremony. Otherwise, this could be a problem to figure out only using their moon calendar.

Doing fieldwork was not always easy. Many times I questioned why I had exposed myself to an environment that was dirty and unhygienic. I got two different skin infections in the tropical climate (I have still not got rid of them eight months after returning to Sweden and having finished this essay). The heat was often hard to stand, and sleeping on the floor with big rats in the hut was not fun at all. Why did I spend all my savings on doing this? No one had asked me to do it. I could just as well have taken my money to live a decent life for six months among the other tourists in Klong Dau Beach. Why did I not do so when I found life so hard sometimes?

Photo 6 *Beeda and Lotta*

I actually did try to live in a comfortable way. When my daughter Sha-ba returned from hospital in January after her illness, I had to hire a bungalow right beside the school in Klong Dau Beach. But it felt useless to live there when I knew that my favorite lady Beeda was living in her shelter not far from my bungalow. She slept on the floor. No air conditioning, no toilet or bathroom. She was poor but she never complained about her situation. Beeda was the Urak Lawoi dance leader and a beautiful, graceful lady who was proud of her heritage. The culture she belonged to was rapidly falling apart. I wondered what she was thinking about when she took me for walks in Klong Dau Beach. We could not communicate with each other. She took me on a walk up the small mountain at the end of the beach. She sat down at the top and looked out at the Andaman Sea. She looked down at Kaw Kwang Resort below. This was the first bungalow in Ko Lanta that was built in the area where the Urak Lawoi used to have their settlement before they had to move to Nai Rai.

Beeda walked with a steady pace up and down the little mountain. She often took a quiet break from the walk. She just sat down and looked out at the Andaman Sea or Klong Dau Beach. We walked along the beach, visited the three Urak Lawoi graveyards, now surrounded by bungalow resorts. She showed me the graves of her ancestors and wiped the tomb stones off. I felt sad when I walked beside her. Klong Dau Beach had been exploited very rapidly. There was no way back. Not many years ago this was the beach where she had lived and stayed for camping for months, collecting food. The same story was repeated again. Western culture had overturned the ethnic minority's way of life. They had been pushed further away from their territory. To survive, the Urak Lawoi were forced to acclimatize to the world economy.

1.7.3 Unexpected Occurrences during My Fieldwork

I experienced some unexpected situations during my fieldwork. I will mention a few of them to indicate what problems may arise from being an Anthropologist and not a tourist in Ko Lanta. I often spent some time in the bars, discussing anything that could be of interest to know about Ko Lanta and the life of the Urak Lawoi. A Chinese Thai from the mainland ran one of the bars I used to visit. I always felt welcome there, even if I sometimes thought to myself that they probably were more interested in my money than my person. One day there was a new guy in his mid-40's working for them. Because he was new, I wanted to be polite and talk to him. I started with the usual opening phrases when you meet someone for the first time, like 'Where do you come from?', 'Do you have a family?' and so forth. He just looked at me with an angry suspicion and started to yell at me; 'I know why you are here! They have told me. But I tell you there are no "Sea Gypsies" in Ko Lanta. You are making up a story to get back to Europe and write a book, so you get rich. Understand? There are no gypsies here. They are just poor Thai people'. I was kind of shocked by this unexpected unfriendly behavior. He never talked to me again even if I still visited the same bar and walked up to him with a smile and held out my hand towards him and told him that I thought we should sit down to talk and become friends. But he ignored me and showed me very strongly that I was not welcome to Ko Lanta.

Later, some Thai people warned me about continuing my investigation about Urak Lawoi land rights. The corruption in Thailand can be bad. First, I ignored the warning. As a Swede, I found it kind of exaggerated. But when I got the warning a second time from another source and I heard that there had been a few fatal shootings in Ko Lanta during my stay there, I felt disturbed. I therefore stopped my investigation of Urak Lawoi land rights for a while. The fatal shootings, I was told, had been over internal disagreements. None of the cases that I know about had anything to do with the Urak Lawoi.

On the tourist exploited island of Phi Phi, I was later told by the locals that Urak Lawoi who had refused to leave their settlements two decades ago, when Phi Phi started to become developed, were actually killed. I was told that there were bungalow resort owners who exploited the Urak Lawoi settlements on the beach. One of

them had hired someone to perform the execution. For obvious reasons I had no chance to check this information.

A Swedish tourist company in Ko Lanta wanted me to bring some Urak Lawoi and speak about this indigenous people for a Swedish group having a Yoga course. It could have been a good idea if it was not for their peculiar arrangement. The tourist company wanted me to bring some Urak Lawoi as an exotic element. They wanted the Urak Lawoi to show their handicraft on a small island where the actress Malin Berghagen was holding a Yoga course. It would have taken the Urak Lawoi and me the whole day to travel by boat to this island. I felt that it was disrespectful of the Urak Lawoi to take up so much of their time for half an hour's appearance (like monkeys) to meet with the tourist company's tight schedule without any pay. I want to point out that I do not think that Malin Berghagen was informed about this event and probably had nothing to do with the arrangement.

It was not only unpleasant, unexpected situations that I experienced. When I arrived in Ko Lanta, the authorities treated me very well. They welcomed me to live there and write about the local culture. One government official offered to drive me around and show me Ko Lanta. Once I was invited to an opening ceremony for a bar, where also the Nai Amphur from the district of Ko Lanta were honored guests. I was seated at the main table among all the district officials.

When the 'Sea Gypsy Home' had its opening ceremony, I was invited as a special privileged guest. The 'Sea Gypsy Home' is sponsored by business people and is a centre for preserving and exhibiting the Urak Lawoi's unique culture for tourists. At the grand opening many tourists came and I was asked to make a speech about the Urak Lawoi. I did not just talk about their culture; I also saw my chance to talk about Urak Lawoi land problems.

One day I received a telephone call. It was from a senator in Thailand. He had heard about me and wanted to see me. It felt more like an order. I did not feel comfortable going by myself. I therefore brought my friend Charlee. We arrived to see the senator, his luxurious bungalow and the hotel construction that he was building. The senator invited me to stay. I could come anytime I liked and of course stay for free. He told me, he had been in fifty-nine countries and he would like to have me as his travel mate. I did not accept his invitation but visited his resort a few more times. I never went there by myself. I did not get clear information as to what type of land he was building the resort on. For me it seemed like he was building it within a national park, but he denied that.

A more positive invitation came from Walailak University in Nakon Si Thammarat, where I made a speech about the Urak Lawoi for students. I was invited to come back, but the time was too short and the distance too long from where I was doing my fieldwork.

1.7.4 Disturbing Things about My Fieldwork

The most disturbing thing in my everyday life in Ko Lanta was the school situation of my kids. Every day it reminded me about our western civilization and undermined my attempts to become acclimatized to the local people. It also meant that I could not bring my kids to the Urak Lawoi and their society. But my kids adjusted and became comfortable with the Thai people in Klong Nin Beach. Even my oldest daughter Malin did so when she came over to visit us for five weeks. My kids started to speak Thai. My third daughter Lisa was 'adopted' by a Thai family and my second daughter Ebba-Lotta was given the Thai name of Sha-ba. Western people who saw her said to me that she even walked and behaved like a Thai. Soon she had more Thai friends than Swedish friends back home. We realized how important she had become among her new friends when she was ill on Christmas Eve and had to be submitted to the local hospital. Many local people visited her and all brought her presents, even if she was unconscious and did not know who was visiting her. Two days later the ambulance had to bring her to the mainland and a bigger hospital. It would take a long time before she recovered. But that is another story...
After a few weeks when we had returned to Sweden from my field study, my daughter Sha-ba was asking me: '*Mom what are we doing here?*' I had no answer to give. I felt the same. There were so many more things I wanted to find out about the Urak Lawoi. Next time when I go back, I shall live with the Urak Lawoi and if the kids want to go with me they have to follow me. If we bring a teacher, the teacher will have to live on our terms during the fieldwork.

2. An Ethnografic Description of the Urak Lawoi

2.1 Society in Ko Lanta Yai

Ko Lanta is in fact the name of two of the islands in the district of Ko Lanta, Ko Lanta Noi and Ko Lanta Yai. I had my base in Ko Lanta Yai. This 27 km long island has plenty of fine sandy beaches. The local Urak Lawoi name for the island is *Pulao Satak*, which fittingly means 'island with long beaches'. The beaches stretch along the western coast and are separated by some rocky areas.

Ko Lanta is the home of three very distinct cultural groups – Urak Lawoi, Thai Muslims and Thai Chinese. According to information given to me, they have lived together in peace on the island for hundreds of years. The Chinese are considered as having the highest rank, the Muslims come immediately below while the Urak Lawoi occupy the lowest level in the hierarchy.

The first people, who inhabited Ko Lanta, more than 500 years ago, are said to have been the Urak Lawoi, who consequently are counted as Ko Lanta's indigenous people. Malay Muslims migrated to the island after the Urak Lawoi. Many of the Muslims had, and still have, their income from fishing and coconut or rubber plantations. Chinese merchants arrived to the island later, about 100 years ago. Today they live on the island as entrepreneurs, agricultural farmers and fishermen.

Ban Ko Lanta (Lanta Village) in the south used to be the main town in the district of Ko Lanta. Historically this town, known as *Old Lanta Town*, played a major role as a port for traders from Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. It acted as the commercial center of the island and provided a safe harbor for Arabic and Chinese trading vessels sailing between the larger ports in Phuket, Penang and Singapore. Today, Old Lanta Town is a sleepy Chinese-inspired city with 100-year-old wooden shacks and shop houses built on stilts above the water. Not many tourists go there, but there are some western artists and writers who have found it to be a peaceful place to work. As the location of the only hospital, police station and post office on the island, Old Lanta still reminds us that it used to be the main town in Ko Lanta.

Ban Saladan at the northern tip of the island is nowadays the largest settlement and has a couple of piers with several of ferries and is the business center and area where most visitors arrive to the island. This part of Ko Lanta Yai is the most exploited part. Since a road connecting the northern part of Ko Lanta to the mainland was finished 1996, the main center has moved to Ban Saladan.

The district *(amphur)* of Ko Lanta has 24 912 residents (according to information from the district Amphur Ko Lanta in 2004). As mentioned above Ko Lanta is actu-

ally two islands. Ko Lanta Noi is the smaller of the two and is bypassed by visitors who are coming by road and car ferry to Ko Lanta Yai. Both islands are part of the Ko Lanta National Park, an archipelago of fifteen islands in the Andaman Sea. The protected area is 134 km2 and covers the sea around the southern tip of Thailand in the Krabi province. The National Park was established in 1990.

2.2 Government in Ko Lanta

Thailand is the only country in South-East Asia that has never been colonized by foreign powers. The government of Thailand has mostly been a constitutional monarchy. The king appoints all the judges who sit in Thailand's Supreme Court.

Thailand is divided into 76 *Jangwàt* (provinces). Each province is divided into *Amphur* (districts), which are then further divided into *kíng-amphur* (sub districts), *Tambon* (commune or village groups), *Mo baan* (villages) and *thetsàbaan* (municipalities).

The Krabi province is divided into eight districts *(Amphur),* with Ko Lanta as one of these. Amphur Ko Lanta is divided into five *Tambon* – Lanta Yai (4 861 inhabitants), Saladan (3 443), Lanta Noi (4 195), Kro Krang (6 556) and Klong Yang (4 853). Ko Lanta Yai, where the main part of my fieldwork was done, consists of *Tambon* Lanta Yai and Saladan; Lanta Yai is divided into eight *Mo baan* and Saladan into five.

District officers *(Nai Amphur)* are responsible to their provincial governors. *Tambon* are represented by elected commune heads *(Gamnan)* and *Mo baan* represent by elected village chiefs *(Po yài baan).* I only know of one Urak Lawoi, *Po yài baan* from Sanga-U, who represents a political district.

2.3 Urak Lawoi as First People

Sea gypsies have been mentioned in the literature since the seventeenth century (Hogan 1972:207). A characteristic of this group of people is that they carry their homes on their boats as nomads of the sea. They are known as incredibly good divers and are, according to Hogan (ibid.:207), described in some of the early literature as being wild and piratical nomads. In contrast, present-day sea gypsies or Urak Lawoi are described as an unwarlike people, timid and disheartened, obedient to authorities and anxious to avoid any kind of trouble.

The Urak Lawoi of the Andaman Sea are according to Non Changnam (a Urak Lawoi informant) and anthropologist Arporn Ukrit (from Krabi Cultural Center) living in the Satun Province (Ko Bulon, Ko Lipe and Ko Adang), the Phuket Province (Siehre Island, Sapum, Ban Nua, Laem La, and Rawi Beach) and in the Krabi

Province (Ko Chum [Jum], Phi Phi Don and Ko Lanta). If this information is correct, Wongbusarakum's (2002:71) report about Urak Lawoi settlements has to be corrected. Laem La and Tha Chatchai is in fact the same place. Ko Bulon is not situated in the Krabi Province, but in Satun. No Urak Lawoi lives in Ko Poo or Ko Ngai. The Urak Lawoi are living in a minority situation both as an indigenous people in a setting where the Thai culture is dominant and in relation to the Thai Muslims and Thai Chinese inhabiting the islands in the Andaman Sea. They prefer to stay in their customary locations. Living as a Urak Lawoi is the lowest step on the social and economic ladder. As many indigenous peoples around the world, they are poor and the least educated.

2.4 Name

Sea gypsies, sea nomads, Urak Lawoi, Chao Ley, Thai Mai… The names used for these people are many, and may at first sight seem a bit confusing. Where do the names come from and what is the 'right name'?

English writers have referred to boat nomads as 'sea gypsies' or 'water gypsies'. The word 'sea gypsies' has become popular and is commonly used in the tourist brochures. The term 'sea nomads' has the same meaning as 'sea gypsies', but is used mainly by German and Dutch writers (Sopher 1965:51).

According to local informants, *Urak Lawoi* means 'brother from the sea' (*urak* = brother and *lawoi* = sea). This is their name in their own language and is, according to Wongbusarakum (2002:68), equivalent to the Malay *orang laut* (sea people). In Thai they are called *chao ley* or *chaao talay* (*chao* = people and *ley* or *talay* = sea) with different spellings in the literature such as *chao lay, chao tala, chaaw thalee*. I found that they do not appreciate to be called this and neither *chaao nam* (*chaao* = people and *nam* = water), *chaao ko* or *kon ko* (*chao* or *kon* = people and *ko* =island) which are other Thai expressions (ibid.:68). In summary, then, the various terms for sea gypsies in Thailand all refer to the same people in different languages: Urak Lawoi = Orang Laut = Chao Lay = Sea People.

The name *Thai Mai* (*mai* = new), meaning 'new Thai', is an introduced word created to integrate the Urak Lawoi into Thai society. Thai Mai, however, does not only refer to the Urak Lawoi. It is a term used for a number of different minorities in Thailand[2].

I was told that in old maps of Ko Lanta, the Urak Lawoi are called *Orang Lonta* (U-krit as quoted in Wongbusarakum 2002:68), which means 'people half of the land and half of the sea' sea because they live on land, but make a living from the sea.

In Thai literature, the Urak Lawoi are often grouped together with other sea nomads, such as Moken and Moklen. Earlier literature often identifies these different

2 For more information about their name, see Granbom 2002.

groups as one group called *Chao Lay.* Information given to U-krit (interview 2002-03-10) by Moken in Ko Surin, the Moken divide themselves into *Moken Pulau* (island) and *Moken Tamul* (land). *Moken Tamul* live close to the beaches and the land and are married to Urak Lawoi in Phi Phi, where they also have their settlement. They still make their living from the sea, however.

2.5 Origins

Ko Lanta is considered the original home of the Urak Lawoi of the Andaman Sea in Thailand, but their origin has been much disputed. This is the story told by older informants and the *To Maw* (medicine man) Sicken of how the first Urak Lawoi came to Ko Lanta: The Urak Lawoi were sailing in deep water on open sea when they were surprised by a big storm. They followed the fish *Kraben Kra-O* (*Kraben* = fish and *Kra-O* = the personal name of the fish), which could talk to them. A white bird, called *Bolong Puté,* flew and sat down on the top of the boat's mast. When *Bolong Puté* sat down on the mast, the storm became silent. They were sailing between two cliffs outside Old Lanta Town in Ko Lanta. It was like a door had opened before them with Ko Lanta in front of them.

Photo 7 *Urak Lawoi spirit house in Hue Lem. The white bird is symbolized on the roof.*

The white bird *Bulong Puté* is a very important symbol for the Urak Lawoi in their Rong Ngeng song. Its white wings are reproduced on Urak Lawoi spirit house in Hue Lem. They believe that this bird can calm storms. The myth says that *Bulong Puté* knows the way back to Gunung Jerai, Kedah Peak, on the coast of Lawoi Kedah, north of Penang in the Saiburi State of Malaysia, from where they believe they were sailing to Ko Lanta. Hogan (1972:218-219) thinks that the Urak Lawoi originated from Celebes. From there they traveled by sea to Gunung Jerai and further north to Ranong. According to U-krit (quoted in Wongbusarakum 2002:71) the connection

to Gunung Jerai may relate to To Kiri, a Muslim traveller and adventurer, who came to Ko Lanta and married a Urak Lawoi woman. The general opinion among local informants is that their heritage goes back to Sumatra and the Malay Peninsular.

Sopher (1965:62,67) claims that the Urak Lawoi were called *Orang Laut Kappir* (*kafir* = unbeliever in Arabic) in Ko Lanta, whose original home was Langkawi in Malaysia, which was conquered by the Malays who tried to force the Urak Lawoi to become Muslims. They refused and escaped by sea to Ko Lanta. Hogan (1972:210) too mentions Langkawi as a possible home of origin before they came to Thailand, but he does not believe that they had lived there for many years. Interestingly Damm (1995:43) writes about 70 fishing families from Langkawi who in 1984 were abruptly removed from the beaches to leave space for hotel constructions. Outsiders often refer to the Urak Lawoi as fishing families. I have not found out if the Langkawi families belonged to the Urak Lawoi, but it is not unlikely. According to the Urak Lawoi in Ko Lipe, they still have relatives in Langkawi and I was told that when the border between Malaysia and Thailand was created after the War, they wished that Langkawi had been included in Thailand[3].

There are also disputes whether the Urak Lawoi are related to other 'sea nomads' or not. According to informants in Ko Lanta, the Mokens and the Urak Lawoi used to be the same people, but now have problems understanding each other's languages, which have changed due to influences from surrounding countries and populations. Like Hope (2001:158), who met Urak Lawoi in Burma, I met Moken from Burma and Ranong in Ko Lipe and Ko Lanta.

2.6 Characteristic Features

The Urak Lawoi are described as good seamen, excellent divers and skilled fishermen (Wongbusarakum 2002:87). They are described as having a great capacity for holding their breath for long periods of time while diving and catching fish with their bare hands (ibid.:87) and can see rather well under water (Gislén 2003:3). They are characterized as being shy and peaceful and as much as possible to avoid conflicts of any kind (Hogan 1972:207). Escaping from problems may be explained by their experience of pirates from Malaysia, who caught both women and men as slaves. Their shyness may also be considered a tactic of avoiding acclimatization to the dominant culture. Hogan (ibid.:220) states that the Urak Lawoi do not like to be dominated by the Thai. In earlier literature, it is often described how they suddenly disappeared unobserved from an island. From an outsiders point of view, it may have seemed as if they but in a few minutes had packed all their belongings into their boats and disappeared. This can be compared to how an 'outsider' described the Urak Lawoi to me during fieldwork, as not making any plans in advance. However, if they come up with an idea for a project they start immediately. They cannot wait till tomorrow.

3 For more information about origin people the Urak Lawoi, see Wongbusarakum 2002:70-71.

Photo 8 *Bada is making an anchor.*

Local informants, other than Urak Lawoi, who resided in Ko Lanta, described the Urak Lawoi as goodhearted people who listen to others and trust what they are told. However, they do not directly inform you about what they are thinking. They are known to avoid being involved in discussions and voicing an opinion.

In terms of physical features they have a darker complexion than Malays, Burmese and Thai. Their hair is black and can be straight, wavy or curly. They are described as having a good physical condition with muscular arms and chest (Sopher 1965:164-165). During my field observations I found that many of the younger and middle-aged women were extremely huge and fat (see more about this in Chapter 4.7). I never saw a fat elderly woman, they were often very lithe.

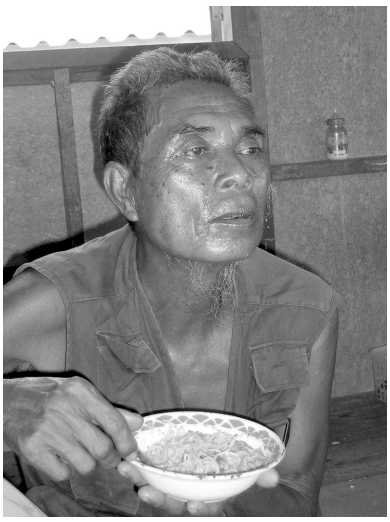


Photo 9 *Rudon.*

Photo 10 *Lotta, Dila and Ebba-Lotta.*

The language of the Urak Lawoi descend from Malay Polynesian which may, according to U-krit (interview 2004-04-11), be considered a dialect of Malay. In the *Ethnologue report for language* (www.ethnologue.com), however, one can read that their language descend from Austronesian – Malayo-Polynesian – Western Polynesian – Western Malayo Polynesian Sundic – Malayic – Malayan – Para Malay. There is no written form of the Urak Lawoi language.

2.7 The Urak Lawoi Settlement in Ko Lanta

The Urak Lawoi settlements in Ko Lanta are two villages in the north, Nai Rai and Ban Klong Dau, and Hue Lem and Sanga-U in the south. I was told that Sanga-U is divided into Sanga-U, Ma Prao, Ao Bon (Pou) and Jo Molé. Jo Molé begins south of the spring in Sanga-U. I found that the Urak Lawoi who lived in the exploited northern part of the island are more integrated with the outside world than those who lived in Sanga-U.

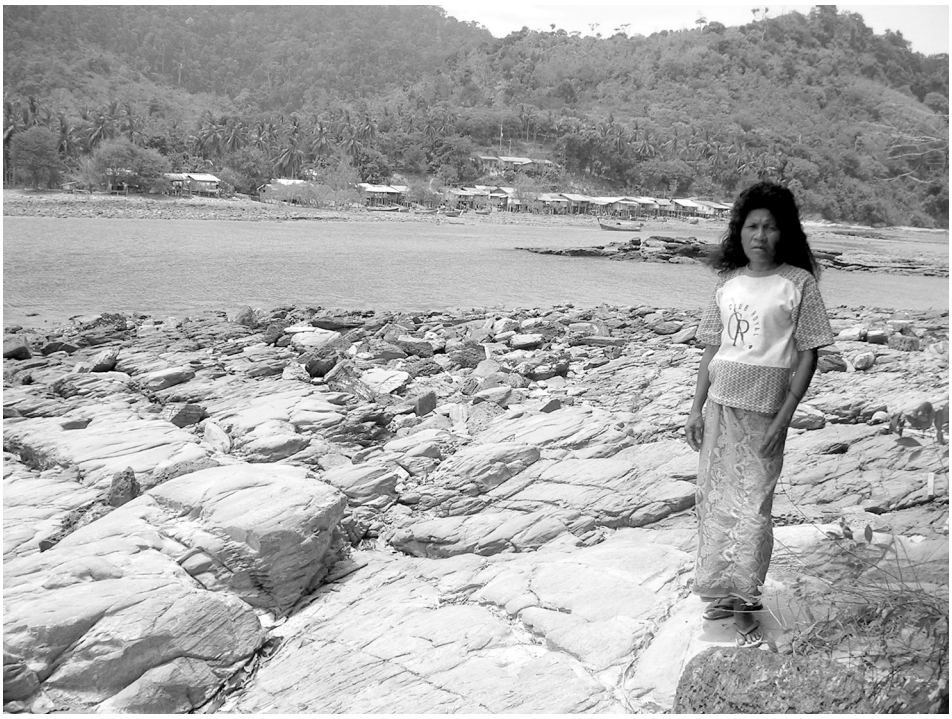


Photo 11 *I-ham in Sanga-U.*

The mother of the king Rama IX visited Ko Lanta 35 years ago. She was told about the Urak Lawoi's land problems. She got engaged in their situation and made sure

they obtained land for themselves. According to Arporn U-krit (interview 2004-03-10), Sanga-U was therefore given to them in 1986. After this event, many Urak Lawoi moved to Sanga-U. One year after the land was given to the Urak Lawoi, 376 Urak Lawoi lived there – 184 men and 192 women (interview with U-krit 2004-03-10). Sanga-U is still a village where the Urak Lawoi are left alone and, in agreement with Hogan (1972:225), I did not find this part much integrated.

Hue Lem is still populated by a mixture of Muslims and Urak Lawoi. I found that they are very tolerant about their differences in beliefs and culture (see more about this in Chapter 2:11).

In the middle of 1990s, the Urak Lawoi population in Ko Lanta was about 900, but there are more people today (interview with U-krit 2004-03-10). I do not know of any census taken of the total Urak Lawoi population in Ko Lanta. There are 632 Urak Lawoi living outside Saladan (interview with U-krit 2004-03-10) and 358 in Sanga-U (www.cusri.chula.ac.th/andaman/en/uraklawoi). It is not clear if this estimate includes all of the Urak Lawois in the northern part of the island. It does not include everyone in the south, however, since the Urak Lawoi in Hue Lem are not counted. I want to point out that the modern state in Thailand wants all ethnic groups to share the Thai national culture. Therefore all Urak Lawoi may not be registered as Urak Lawoi (more about this in Chapter 4:1). A guess from Vira (from Switzerland who is married a Urak Lawoi), is that there are about 2 000 Urak Lawoi in Ko Lanta, but this figure is not reliable. According to Hogan and Bradly the total Urak Lawoi population in Thailand is 3000 people (www.ethnologue.com).

2.8 *To Maw* and Relationships between Women and Men

To Maw plays an important role in Urak Lawoi culture. He acts in a advisory, but non authoritarian way, which is very common in 'primitive' societies. He has no right to decide or any special privileges, but everyone pays him respect. *To Maw* is the medium who communicates between the Urak Lawoi and the spirits and conducts a ceremony whenever a new house or boat is built. *To Maw* can be seen as a doctor or medicine man and is called upon in cases of illness. He uses herbal medicine and 'magic'. Other important informal leaders are the 'dance-leaders', the 'party-leaders' and the 'handicrafts-leader' (interview with Apinan Jitsopa 2002). They have no decision-making function, but perform their main tasks by calling people together.

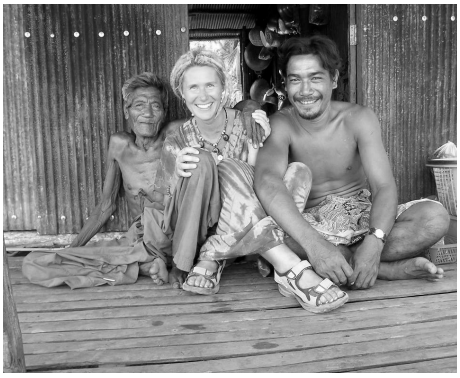


Photo 12 ***To Maw*** *Sicken, Lotta and Chai.*

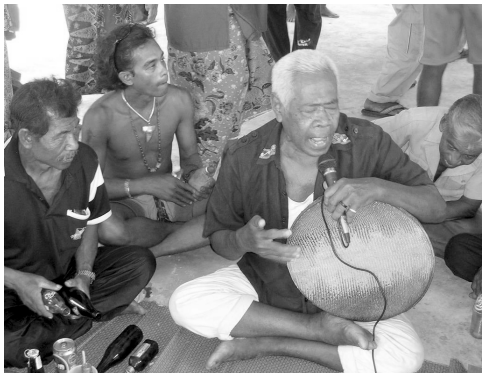


Photo 13 ***To Maw*** *Boden.*

I was informed that *To Maw* may also be a woman. If so, she has more power than the male *To Maw*. According to *To Maw* Boden (interview 2004-04-11), it was usual for women to be *To Maw* in the old days. No woman has ever been *To Maw* in Ko Lanta as opposed to Ko Adang. Women, Boden says, are more eager to learn new things than men. I did not obtain any answer, however, as to why women have never been *To Maw* in Ko Lanta.

Traditionally, Urak Lawoi society has been seen as a matriarchy. *To Maw* Boden (interview 2004-04-11), claims that Urak Lawoi women used to have more power than the men in the old days. He thinks that the women are more important, saying: 'God created the woman first and then the man'. Even nowadays, Boden thinks that women have more power. One informant said: 'When a man makes an official decision, you always know that the decision comes from the women'. My own observation, visiting different islands and Urak Lawoi settlements is that the more integrated a local group is in commercial life, the less power the women have. I want to point out, however, that my field studies in different settlements were too short for any reliable conclusion.

Vira from Switzerland, who is married to a Urak Lawoi man and has lived in Ko Lanta for many years, had made the observation that the behavior of Urak Lawoi men toward their wives is different from that of Thai men. She claimed that the status of Urak Lawoi women and men are equal. She had experienced that Urak Lawoi men respect and treat their women better than Thai men do, since Urak Lawoi men listen to what the women say before making a decision. Vira thinks they are equal. When her future husband brought her to his home for the first time, she was not aware that he was a Urak Lawoi. She thought he was a Thai man. But since she had lived in Thailand for a long time and had an earlier experience of Thai relationships, she soon realized that these people behaved differently from the Thai she had known. Shortly after her arrival to Ko Lanta, she saw some women sitting and talking to her boy friend. The females gave him good advice about how to treat his woman and he was told that, from now on, he could not have any other women.

2.9 Marriage and Family

According to Wongbusarakum (2002:76), 72% of the Urak Lawoi families had in 1992 made the transition from extended to nuclear family. It is not unusual that the girls get married at an early age. One day they are in love, the next day they are married. Not infrequently, the girls have babies at the age of 14 or 15. Usually the boys are not much older. Giving birth at home was common in Ko Lanta until the late 1990s and is still practiced. I was given contradictory information whether the man is present at birth or not.

Generally they marry their first boy, or girl friend. It seems like it is important that the girl is a virgin. The Urak Lawoi are expected to live as monogamists (a norm I found, that differs from that of many Thai men). The parents and other relatives never meddle with whom they want to marry. Maoris, an elderly Urak Lawoi man told me: 'The important thing is to like making love to each other. You prefer making love to sleeping'. Mixed marriages have always been accepted as well as homosexual relations. The important thing has been to stay with one partner at a time.

In agreement with Wongbusarakum (2002:78), I found that people who have a mixed ethnic background with only one Urak Lawoi parent, consider themselves as being pure Urak Lawoi. Hogan (1972:221) has found, however, that intermarriage occurs with Malays, Thai, Chinese and some Buginese[4]. When I visited Ko Jum I found that many Urak Lawoi women mix with Thai Muslim men. It was in Phuket that it first became a common practice to marry outsiders, especially Thai Chinese (interview with U-krit 2004-03-10). Information that was given to me confirms that historically the Urak Lawoi have always mixed through marriage with the Chinese. Many Chinese who immigrated were bachelors who married local women. It is not uncommon that Chinese men marry Urak Lawoi women to strengthen economic relationships. My fieldwork experience is that young Urak Lawoi wants to continue living among Urak Lawoi after they get married. This is common, even when they marry outsiders. I found that they normally bring their partner to their own family and move into the house of the Urak Lawoi parents. There they stay until they can afford to build their own hut or house. Most common, however, is the practice that Urak Lawoi marry among themselves, if not with partners from the same island, so at least from other Chao Ley settlements in the Andaman Sea. Divorce has always been accepted, but is not very common.

I want to finish this section by telling what happened during my stay in Ko Lanta. An Urak Lawoi girl in Sanga-U had a Thai boy friend, which was running a bar in Ko Lanta. One day a *farang* (westerner) girl showed up at their place to visit the Thai boy. It turned out that she had been his previous girl friend and moved into the Thai's place during her stay in Ko Lanta. It was a shame for the Urak Lawoi girl that her Thai boy friend let another girl stay with him. I was told that since this is not a cus-

4 The Buginese cluster (Bugis) includes the Buginese and four other closely related groups: the Maiwa, the Mamuju, the Mandar and the Pattae'. Except for the Buginese of Malaysia, all of these tribes live in the South Sulawesi Province of central Indonesia.

tom of the Urak Lawoi, she felt so ashamed in front of her family that she ran away from home. Her parents were very worried about what had happened to her and where she had gone. I never found out if they got hold of her again, but I know that the *farang* girl left the Thai man and Ko Lanta after spending her holidays there.

2.9.1 Bride Price

Nowadays bride price has to be paid by the bridegroom to the bride's parents. According to my Urak Lawoi informant Bada (interview 2004), the amount of money varies depending on the value of the land were the girl comes from. The most expensive girls to marry are those from Saladan. If the man does not have the money, he cannot marry the girl. Bride price varies in the following way according to the girl's home district:

Saladan	55 000 Bath
Sanga-U	15 000 - 30 000 Bath
Phuket	1 000 - 2 000 Bath
Jum	2 000 - 3 000 Bath
Lipe	2 000 - 5 000 Bath
Moken	2 000 - 5 000 Bath

2.10 The Traditional Economy Situation

Photo 14 *Women are also involved in fishing.*

The Urak Lawoi are considered as one of the few hunter-and-gatherer peoples still existing in Thailand (Wongbusarakum 2002:76). Hogan (1972:215) describes the Urak Lawoi as 'strand-dwellers', who live near the beaches. Temporarily, they would leave their village to gather shells, tripang and other sea-products. They slept in their boats or under the kayak shelter on the shore. Sometimes they built a new little village in more favorable place, but they always returned to their original village. In agreement with Hogan's account from the early 1970s, people told me how the

whole family used to go camping (*bagad*) on the beach for months, collecting food such as oysters, shells and sea cucumbers. *Bagad* usually took place during the dry season (Wungbusarakum 2002:86). The popular beaches were on the western side of Lanta Noi and on the mainland to the north of Lanta Noi (information from my Urak Lawoi informant Pon Changnam). With their semi-nomadic life style, the Urak Lawoi make maximum use of their natural ecosystem (ibid.:86). Food was traditionally shared with those who did not have enough. This meant security for everybody. To be independent and free has always been important to the Urak Lawoi. Changes in the semi-nomadic life style in the northern part of Ko Lanta began as soon as the island started to become exploited.

According to anthropologist Arporn U-krit, the men have traditionally had the main responsibility for supporting their family. The women's main duty is to stay at home to cook and take care of the children. Sometimes they go fishing together with their men. *To Maw* Sicken told me that the women's work used to be different in the old days. Then they were busy fishing, picking sea cucumbers and shells. Both men and women also had to carry fresh drinking water from the springs. Today, many women are working at the bungalow resorts while many men, beside fishing, are working as paid laborers (see Chapter 4:3 for more information about the economic situation). Bodley (1999a: 111) emphasizes that cunning outsiders may coerce and manipulate small-scale economies and thus assimilate them to the market economy. This may be compared to how Chinese *taukey* (a kind of patron-client relationship) introduced boats run on gasoline to the Urak Lawoi. The use of such engines was a primary reason for their dependence on cash.

2.11 The Relationship to Outsiders

It is not unusual for the Thai Chinese to visit the Urak Lawoi spirit houses. Everywhere, I was told, where the Urak Lawoi has lived, some Chinese has settled down among them. According to the Urak Lawoi, this has always resulted in the Thai Chinese getting rich and the Urak Lawoi working for him. Historically, the Urak Lawoi, like many other isolated tribal peoples around the world, have had contact with outside traders. In the Urak Lawoi case, such an economic bond has been forged with a *taukey*, resulting in a kind of patron-client relationship. The Chinese have often played the part of *taukey* (Hogan 1972:214; Wongbusarakum 2002:130). T*aukey* may be considered to have an entrepreneurial or patron-client relationship to the Urak Lawoi. Often this contact has been the only one with outsiders. Urak Lawoi provide their *taukey* with labor and knowledge in harvesting sea products. The normal pattern everywhere is that the *taukey* advances goods to locals (such as boats and fishing gears in the Urak Lawoi case) on credit in exchange for labor and products to be delivered in the future (Bodley 1999a:41; Wongbusarakum 2002:139). From the Urak Lawoi point of view, this results in an unequal exchange. The negative aspect is

that they cannot sell their catch directly on the market. The *taukey* keeps the price down so that he can negotiate a better price with a retail dealer on the mainland. To give an example by means of monetary prices in April 2004, *To Maw* Sicken estimated the kilo price given to Urak Lawoi for fish as 80 Bath and for prawn as 120 Bath. The *taukey* gets 120 Bath per kilo fish and 320 Bath for prawn (100 Bath is about 20 Sv.kr).

Wongbusarakum (2002:143) states that many Urak Lawoi have become dependent on their *taukey* in a capitalist way. The trick used by the *taukey* is that the debt is never fully paid to him. I was told that if a Urak Lawoi needs money or something else, he always turns to his family first. If they cannot help him, he turns to the *taukey.* O. (A Urak Lawoi informant who wants to become anonymous) gave me an example of how the *taukey* deals with them. The *taukey* would buy nets for the Urak Lawoi and pay for the repair of a boat. If the Urak Lawoi, as in this case, gets paid in advance, the kilo price of the sea harvest is lowered to pay the debt to the *taukey.* It is not easy to substitute one's *taukey* for another, once you are in debt to him. For production you are completely dependent on the *taukey* and cannot afford not to go fishing. People are caught in a trap and many Urak Lawoi are never free from working for their *taukey.* Bodley argues that this may be seen as a kind of slavery.

The positive aspects of having a *taukey* are the following as suggested by my informants: 'You just have to leave your catch for the day right on the pier with just one dealer' and 'You can always borrow money from your *taukey* or ask him for an advance payment'. Wongbusarakum claims that the positive reason why Urak Lawoi may choose to work for *taukey* is related to security. They have someone to rely on, 'a source of credit, an economic insurance, protection from insecurities and assistance in time of hardship or shortage of necessities' (2002: 139-140).

Muslims and Urak Lawoi have generally maintained a good relationship in Ko Lanta. Their relationship has mostly differed from that to the Chinese. An example is given by my informant Pon: 'If a Muslim wanted to keep his buffalos on our land, they could give us one for free. We always got something back when they asked us for something'. If I understand it correctly, Urak Lawoi feel more equal to the Muslims, instead of becoming 'the losers' after an agreement. In Hue Lem they live side by side. When the Urak Lawoi are celebrating their ceremonies you may at the same time hear the prayers from the Mosque not far away. The Urak Lawoi describe the Muslims as thinking more about the future than they do themselves, taking each day as it comes. They experience the Muslims as being one step ahead. For example, when the Urak Lawoi have a bike, the Muslims have a motor-bike.

2.12 Ceremonies

Photo 15 ***To Maw*** *Sicken's ancestors greeting join the* ***Patat Jiri*** *Ceremony in Hue Lem.*

Photo 16 ***Ramana*** *music.*

I will not go deeper into the meaning or symbolism of the various ceremonies that the Urak Lawoi are still performing. Just eight months of fieldwork is not sufficient to understand their meaning and symbolism. I have participated in and filmed many of their rituals and I will mention a few of them. I also want to point out that because of the seeming lack of cultural differences in Ko Lanta, there might be things that

have been brought into the local culture from neighboring areas in the Andaman Sea that I perhaps have not noticed since lacking the knowledge of these cultures due to my short stay in the field.

Photo 17 *Gongs.*

I want to mention that at all the ceremonies I observed, people were dancing and playing *Rong Ngeng.* Their music is unique as drums and violins are being combined. According to my informant Arporn U-krit, this music is more than 1000 years old and includes a mixture of violin, Arabic drums, Chinese gongs and songs in Malay dialect. The *Rong Ngeng* music is said have come from Spain and later got mixed with Muslim music in Malaysia and from there on it was spread to the Muslims and Urak Lawoi in Thailand.

I found that the ceremonies were held in the daytime. The reason for this may be that many Urak Lawoi from other islands come to the rituals. If they went back the same day, I observed them leaving before sunset.

Photo 18 ***Rong Ngeng*** *dance & music.*

The moon calendar decides in a general sense when the ceremonies are to be held, but the precise time when they are started is decided upon the same day. I found it very hard to be there in the right time for the different rituals. Often I was given the day when the ritual was supposed to be held, only to find out, when I arrived, that it had either been held the day before or was going to be held the next day. I might even be given the exact time when the ceremony would start the next day. On my arrival, however, I discovered that the *To Maw* had started it an hour earlier. Sometimes an unexpected ritual could be held without any announcement. 'It has to do with the nature', was the only explanation I got. Therefore it was hard to work out a schedule in advance for many of the ceremonies. Possibly, it could also have

something to do with me. Perhaps the Urak Lawoi were careful not to involve me in their private matters, since I found them more open and willing to tell me when different cermonies were being held at the end of my stay.

The Andaman Pilot Project (www.cusri.chula.ac.th/andaman/en/uraklawoi) considers the follow two ceremonial occasions as the most important:

1. Paying respect and giving offerings to the female guardian of a boat. It is believed that doing so will prevent the crew from the dangers at sea.

2. **Loy Rua** (boat-floating) is the most important ceremony held during the full moon in May and October when a ritual boat is built of zalacca palm (Hogan 1972:216). The festival lasts for two or three days and is performed to take away any 'bad luck' from the villages. Urak Lawoi come from distant islands to participate. Carved effigies that represent clan members are placed in the *Bajak* boat together with other objects, such as food and personal things like nail-clippings and hair cuts. On the last day of the ceremony, the boat is taken to the sea. It is said that it will go to the place were the Urak Lawoi originally came from. A big party is then held with a lot of alcohol. The old songs that are sung are about the place where the *Bajak* boat is going. It is bad luck to find the boat again.

There are other important ceremonies that I observed:

3. ***Paniai*** (Urak Lawoi) or *Kaebon* (Thai) is a 'thank-offering ceremony' for the spirits when someone has been ill and then recovered.

4. **Tambon Ban Party** or 'Luckeyparty' is celebration when a house is completed. It will bring success to the people moving into the house and keep diseases and other misfortunes away from the family. I was told that Buddhists are celebrating a similar ceremony.

Photo 19: *Patat Jiri* Ceremony

5. **Patat Jiri,** Teng Pleo (Thai) or 'Cleaning the Grave'- I found this ceremony to be very big and important, since it is celebrated on different days in different Urak Lawoi graveyards on different islands in the Andaman Sea. People come from distant islands to participate in this ceremony. Patat Jiri is held to honor the dead ancestors and spirits. After the ceremony is completed, a party is held in the graveyard where people are drinking and eating together with their dead relatives.

6. **Loy Krahtong** is an animistic custom, but today it also includes religious elements. It is celebrated at full moon in November as one of Thailand's biggest festivals. The spirit of the sea is honored. A basket or part of a bamboo tree is decorated with flowers and candles and put adrift at sea after sunset. Personal things such as haircuts and nail-clippings are also placed in the basket to symbolize that bad luck is going away.

To conclude this chapter I am going to describe an occurrence that happened to me only to show how misunderstandings may happen when two cultures meet – in this case, I as an anthropologist from the West and the Urak Lawoi with their animistic beliefs.

I was invited to participate in the *Patat Jiri* ceremony (cleaning the grave) in Hue Lem. The ceremony started early and I was there at seven o'clock in the morning. Urak Lawoi had come to participate from all of Ko Lanta and the nearby islands and visitors from so far away as Ko Lipe was also present. Everyone was just waiting for *To Maw* Sicken from Sanga-U to turn up and start the ceremony. Finally he arrived as a passenger on the back on a motor-bike that a young Urak Lawoi fellow was driving. They stopped the motor-bike in front of me. I was surprised by the Urak Lawoi's reaction, because when the *To Maw* finally got there it was like everybody ignored him. I felt a bit ashamed about their impolite behavior towards him. This old, timid and sensible man, I thought, was at least worth some respect. But no one paid any attention to him and I felt that I had to do something to make him feel welcome. I therefore stepped forward and greeted him in the Thai way with my head bent and held my hands together under my face. His reaction to my greeting astonished me, since he waved me away. He showed me clearly that he did not like me to be there and did not greet me back.

I did not understand what I had done wrong, since Sicken always use to greet me with a great smile and welcome me into his house. His reaction towards me was something entirely new. I had disturbed the ritual pattern through my greeting. It was later explained to me that walking in front of the *Ta Maw* when he arrives at the ceremony was not good at all. It meant bad luck to step in front of him since he was driving away evil spirits. Someone walking in front of him might carry the bad spirits along.

3. Tourism Makes Its Entrance into Ko Lanta

Expectations of a pristine paradise have made Ko Lanta an interesting destination for westerners and tourists. Tourist development came suddenly to Lanta Island a few years ago. The same Chinese family started the first resorts of Kaw Kwan and Lanta Villa, both in Klong Dao Beach, in the early 1990s. A third resort, Paradise, was built in Klong Nin Beach by a local Muslim family. In 1997, there were seven resorts in Ko Lanta. Today (April 2004) there are between 150 and 170 resorts on the island. Since the late 1990s the exploitation has greatly increased. One reason for the pressures of an expanding population in the north is the road and ferry connection (1996) from the mainland over Lanta Noi to Saladan. It put Ko Lanta within easy reach. Putting efforts into road constructions are still a major enterprise, since the condition of the roads is a big problem. Before the tourist exploitation, travelling to different parts of the island was mainly done by boat. Traffic accident levels are high in Ko Lanta, especially on the unmade roads. According to Lanta Hospital, the numbers of accidents recorded in 2003 where 291 in Ko Lanta, 28 by car and 263 by motor-bikes, including 4 fatalities by motor-bike.

Migrations from the mainland and western tourism have put severe pressures of an expanding population on Ko Lanta as far as tourist development strategies are concerned. Outsiders come to make a fortune in the tourist business. Many of them are westerners. Some of the players are big tourist companies with knowledge of the business. Others are Thai Chinese or small investors from the mainland. Local investors are Muslims or Thai Chinese. Many locals have become dependent on the tourist industry. People from northern Thailand and the countries on its northern border have come to work in the tourist business in Ko Lanta as unskilled laborers. Sex tourism is not yet a big thing in Ko Lanta, but the situation is changing and especially in the northern part of the island it has started to appear. Thailand is now one of the countries where AIDS and HIV increase rapidly because of tourism (Aleng 2002:483). It is also very common in Thailand, however, that tourism brings electricity, roads and telephone connections to the islands. The telephone net in Ko Lanta was established in 2000. Electricity arrived in the late 1990s.

The contact with the western world has caused a lot of social problems and worries for the Urak Lawoi. They attempt to assimilate into Thai society, accommodate to the market economy and adapt to modernization in order to survive. Their view is dualistic – they want to integrate with the dominant culture, as they suffer from an inferiority complex, and many of them are now striving for material goods on a daily basis. They feel ashamed to belong to the poor, uneducated minority Chao Lay (as

labeled by the Thai) and prefer to be called Thai Mai (New Thai). At the same time they feel proud of their heritage (within the group) and are worried about the rapid changes of their life style.

When the Urak Lawoi understood that I had not come to 'spy' on them, I found that they had strong sense of pride in terms of their ethnic origin. The closer I got to them, the more open they became about their heritage and negative incidents they had experienced. They do not gladly talk about their problems in front of outsiders. Wongbusarakum (2002:164) had the same experience when doing fieldwork in Ko Lipe, where she finally was told that 'they might be shot if they say something'. One day I was asked unexpectedly: 'Is it true that there is no corruption in Sweden?' I was surprised by the question, since I had not talked to any informant about corruption earlier. 'You do not have to be afraid of getting arrested when you write?' I found them cautious when complaining about their situation and, as they told me, they where afraid of getting into trouble and being arrested. But I did not find them playing the part of victims who had been pushed away from their settlement or temporary camps.

Loss of land, the growing fishing industry and the establishment of national parks are the main problems that the Urak Lawoi face. These problems may lead to other problems. According to Johansson-Dahre (2001:119), restrictions in the accessibility of land (which in the case of the Urak Lawoi should also include the sea) is a general threat to the life of indigenous peoples. Losing what they consider as their own territory is tantamount to breaking the core of Urak Lawois identity. [5]

3.1 The Urak Lawoi Abandon Klong Dau Beach

Urak Lawoi informants in northern Ko Lanta told me how their life had changed dramatically about fifteen years ago, when tourism made its entrance: 'Life wasn't stressed in the old days. There was plenty of time to socialize [...] One had the feeling that we all belonged to each other and lived together [...], […]no alcohol problems in the old days [...]The nature around Klong Dau Beach has changed a lot in the last few years[...]Klong Dau Beach used to be a silent place [...]'

At the beginning of the 1990s, when tourists found their way to Ko Lanta and 'outsiders' came to begin tourist development, the Urak Lawoi life style on Klong Dau Beach started to get disrupted. The group moved away from the beach, settled down in different places some distance from the shore and started to split up. Many Urak Lawoi who lived in Klong Dau Beach fifteen years ago claim that they did not have any intention of leaving the beach. '[...]we did not want to move, but everybody moved[...] We did not want to stay alone in Klong Dau Beach[...] And people started

5 Part III will continue the discussion of how the Urak Lawoi are deprived of their territory which can be seen as the key problem that creates many new problems.

to frighten us, who did not want to sell[…]in the night[…]they made us sell. We were afraid […]'

Most of Klong Dau Beach has been developed and this part is the most exploited on the island. The northern part of Klong Dau Beach, what is now known as Kaw Kwang Resort, was first developed, in about 1990. In the southern part of the beach, the Urak Lawoi used to live where Lanta Garden Home is now located, and utilized Klong Dau Beach to its very southern end, where two of their graveyards are located.

Many Urak Lawoi moved to Nai Rai (not connected to the beach) and some moved to the mountains. The first concrete house of he Urak Lawoi was built in Nai Rai at the beginning of the 1990s. This piece of land was earlier used for rice cultivation. The present Urak Lawoi settlement in Nai Rai is built on the ancient rice fields. The jungle was at that time close to Nai Rai and buffalos still used to walk on the beach at Klong Dau (information from local Urak Lawoi). Today the remaining jungle is located in the center of Ko Lanta.

Sorn Kobkon, who is 25 years old was born in Klong Dau and now resides in Nai Rai. She told me about the development in Klong Dau Beach (interview 2004-04-02): '[...] Seven years ago the tourists on Klong Dau lived in bamboo bungalows with the toilets outside. There are no longer any simple huts in Klong Dau Beach. The bungalows are built more luxuriously from cement [...] tourists who are looking for nature and Thai inspirited bungalows go to Klong Nin Beach [...]'

A western resort owner from Klong Dau Beach told me that when he arrived in 1996 there were still Urak Lawoi camping on the beach, which belonged to his newly purchased land. The Urak Lawoi could remain for three months camping. He thought it was okay as long as they did not stay there permanently.

According to Bodley (1999a: 77) complex networks, not easily understood by outsiders, generally control access to land in self-sufficient small-scale societies. That someone would have a permanent right to a piece of land is inconceivable. Land is to be used by the tribe, not owned by individuals. All tribal members have access and can use the land. Often land also has important symbolic and emotional meaning for indigenous peoples as a repository of ancestors, clan origin points and other sacred features. Best known historically are the North American Indians who lost millions of acres against their will. They were threatened or misled about what they had agreed upon. Hunter-gatherers often use their territory in a cyclical way and leave some areas undisturbed, later to return to them. Some areas are used only at special occasions. Governments have often considered non-occupied land as wasteland, especially in areas with increasing land value (Bodley 1999a: 78). Bodley claims that state officials will not see the contribution that nomads make to the national economy. Governments have usually solved the 'nomad problem' by converting them into sedentary villagers, making propaganda about the benefits of settled life and the new opportunities it brings. Surprisingly, Bodley argues, there are some social scientists that have supported the government's attempts at assimilation. This was the case with Awad, who in 1960 participated as chairman of the UNESCO executive board. He felt that the initiative must come as rapidly as possible from the government to convert such groups to a sedentary life (Bodley 1999a: 107). Governments around the

world show little willingness to protect the rights of tribal peoples against intruding settlers. Most often the government is responsibility for deciding what a tribal land is or not. The killing of tribal peoples has generally been a strategy to remove them from the land. Less violent, though equally efficient methods, have also been used. For example, the aborigines in Australia and the indians in North America became unable finally to feed themselves and were forced either to beg for food at the missions or to work for settlers to stay alive. As soon as governmental control has been established over tribal land, it has been used to maximize economic profit.

3.2 Deprivation of the Urak Lawoi Territory

Cohen (1996:161) describes how the so-called sea gypsies, who used to live in boats around Phuket, are now settled in slum villages. They may be mentioned as local attractions in the tourist brochures, but not as inhabitants of the beaches, which have been taken over by tourists. Leong (1997:72) claims that the government stimulates the marketing of some local groups for tourists while other groups are forgotten or ignored. This has to do with the interests and international struggles of the states itself. My suggestion why the information for tourists concerning the Urak Lawoi is not favorable is the need for the beaches and their territory. The tourists have everything they may ask for – beautiful beaches in beautiful weather, were they can relax and sun bath. To receive tourists, it is not necessary to market some 'exotic, ethnic minority', which may cause tension as the tourists and the Urak Lawoi demand the same environment.

I found that Urak Lawoi society has a strong tendency to split up as it enters the 'modern world' because loosing its territory. This is a big problem, since belonging to one's group has always been the basis of Urak Lawoi identity.

3.3 Land

Wongbusarakum describes the Urak Lawoi in the following way:

> 'They are tolerant and forgiving,
> managing to live peacefully side by side with people they have had trouble with,
> including those who violently forced them off their property,
> or those who make their livelihood difficult' (2002:78).

The two types of land ownership that are normal today are either state or private property (Vaddhanuphuti 1996:86). This chapter deals with how the Urak Lawoi

were and still are being cheated of their land in the process of tourist development. Bodley (1999a: 92) considers the fact that tribal peoples in Thailand had the same rights to land as other citizens. This, he argues, was probably the simplest way to accomplish the goal of replacing tribal peoples with more productive populations and ownership systems.

In contrast to Hogan (1972:224-225), who made a visit to Ko Lanta more than thirty years ago, I found that the Urak Lawoi who live there today have a big problem with the lack of land. Many of them say that this is their biggest problem. I was told the same story over and over how the Urak Lawoi had sold their land to outsiders. They did not understand the consequences of selling it, since it had not been important for them to own land. Cohen (1996b: 245) states that changes in land ownership is the most serious problem for the Chao Lay (Urak Lawoi) threatening both the survival of their society and their identity. Mr. Tem, who used to live near Kaw Kwan Resort (the first resort built in Ko Lanta), told me how his family did not understand that a sale of their land was going on. They sold their land like others and moved away from the beach as everyone else did. Wongbusarakum describes how land was alienated from the Urak Lawoi in Ko Lipe: 'their relatives on other islands sold their land to capitalists for a lump sum of money. Not knowing how to save the money, these relatives soon spent it all and were chased out by capitalists who now owns the land' (2002:187).

T, a 45-year-old man who is working for one of the resorts as a gardener and who is driving tourist on snorkeling tours, believes that one of the reasons why it has not been important for them to own land is that they do not make plans for the future. They live for the day. The important thing for an Urak Lawoi is to have enough food and to enjoy life, as they believe that such pursuits do not make you ill. The Urak Lawoi probably did not considerer the earth's resources a major problem.

This is what I was told by Urak Lawoi in Nai Rai regarding the selling of land in the northern part of Klong Dau Beach. Next to Kaw Kwang Resort they were selling their pieces of land because they were eager to get some money. They were told that if they moved to Nai Rai, they would get a better and more comfortable life. As any surpluses are shared in their culture, many Urak Lawoi did not save any money for the future. Some Urak Lawoi refused to move from Klong Dau Beach, but felt in the end that they had to. They were frightened to be left behind, since everyone else was leaving and the Urak Lawoi always used to live together. They were threatened that their huts would be burnt if they did not sell their land and move. They were also afraid at night, when they felt that people might sneaked around their settlement and frighten them. They could never picture what it would mean for them, selling their land and moving away from the beach. They could not image the rapid changes to come. Someone said: 'We had never been in a city, so we did not understand how it would be. Life was much better before'. They did not know what kind of papers they were signing before moving, because they could not read. They did not really understand the purpose of selling land. But they were attracted to the money they would get. With money they could buy alcohol, a car or motor-bike and even build a concrete house.

I was told that it still happens today that the Urak Lawoi get cheated. I was informed about the following events that happened during my stay in Ko Lanta. An Urak Lawoi family that still owned land in Klong Dau Beach was under pressure to sell its land. Even if they knew what would happen, they decided to sell after a much deliberation. Their land was surrounded by bungalows and other developments and they needed the money. They thought they got a fairly good price; if they sold their land on the beach, they could keep their land further away from the shore. The money would be enough for building four concrete houses for the big family. The sale was carried out. They got their money and asked for papers on their property. The buyer told them that something went wrong with the papers. Their land was not divided into two parts. The papers said that he had bought all their property, but of course since being a nice fellow the new landowner would let them build their houses on 'his' piece of land. The Urak Lawoi family is now building their new concrete houses on leasehold property. Even if it is not a problem right now I know that this may be problem for them in the future, having built their houses in a developing and very attractive part of the island.

It even happens in Nai Rai, the little village where the Urak Lawoi had to move from Klong Dau Beach, that they get cheated. One of the stories that I was told refers to events that happened in 1996. A Chinese man came to one of the elderly ladies. He was very friendly to her, made jokes and offered her whisky. Without her children's knowledge she sold land to him. She sold it for 'nothing' and her grandchildren believe that she misunderstood him. The buyer built a big house fit for four families right on the land border. He then rented out three of the homes and lived in the biggest himself. Because he built his house right on the land border, he had no space for a garden. He therefore 'quietly' extended 'his garden' into Urak Lawoi property. The Urak Lawoi around him were afraid to do anything about it, however.

Many Urak Lawoi claim that lack of land is their biggest problem. Their children have no money to get their own pieces of property on which to build their huts. They asked me: 'What can we do about it?' This is a common problem facing many locals around the world. Land speculation raises the cost of living and makes it impossible for the locals to buy land (Ekholm Friedman 1998:37).

3.3.1 Lack of Land for Burial Sites

Photo 20 *The graveyard in Ko Jum.*

This section deals with conflicts that arise with respect to tourist development on some of the beaches where the Urak Lawoi have their graveyards. Of tradition, they need a lot of land to honor their ancestors. In contrast to the Thai Buddhists, the Urak Lawoi bury their dead. I noticed that they care very much for their ancestors' graves, more so many times than for their own homes.

Photo 21 *One of the three graveyards on Klong Dau Beach, in Ko Lanta.*

To Maw Boden explained that if they do not care for the graveyards lots of ghosts will look for them. According to Arporn U-krit, the reason why they take very good care of the graves is that, in doing so, their ancestors and spirits will give them good luck in the future. If they make money, they will build a roof to shield the grave. The reason why Urak Lawoi are buried in the sand is because they want to hear the waves from the sea. *To Maw* Boden told me that it is always important to locate the graveyard at a good spot, close by the water. The climate is more humid close by a stream and it rains more often while not being too hot. It brings good luck to have the rainbow over the graveyard.

Photo 22 *A grave in Ko Jum.*

On Klong Dau Beach there are three different graveyards. They conduct their ceremonies there and I found that it is customary for the Urak Lawoi to party together with their dead ancestors. This, however, has become a problem for the Urak Lawoi, since their graveyards in Klong Dau Beach are now surrounded by resorts. Tourists complain about the noise from their ceremonies and the trash that results from a party. Even I noticed such complaints from tourists. When I told them the purpose of the party, they seemed to accept the noise during daytime. Often uninvited guests join the festivities. The Urak Lawoi do not understand why 'outsiders' join their parties as uninvited guests. As they said to me: they would never go uninvited to someone else's ceremony, at Christmas, for example. 'Why do "outsiders" come to our ceremonies?' They believe the reasons why 'outsiders' join their ceremonies might be that they like dancing. The Urak Lawoi ceremonies always include a lot of dancing and music. Many Urak Lawoi are worried about future celebrations of their ceremonies in the graveyards because the surrounding bungalow resorts squeeze their graveyards into narrow strips on the beach. 'How can we organize a ceremony in the middle of bungalow resorts in the future?' Their main anxiety is that ceremonial performance in the graveyards will be forbidden.

Developers have occasionally tipped soil in one of the graveyards. The Urak Lawois feel that 'outsiders' do not share the same respect for their graveyards. It has even happened that their graveyards have been vandalized. Another problem in one of the graveyards is that a proper path has not been constructed. They now have to walk over the land of other people. As long as bungalows are not built, there it is no problem, but there is concern about what will happen in the future. Many Urak Lawoi also keep their boats and fishing equipment in the graveyard, since it is located on the beach and their homes are now located further inland. They work from the graveyard. This causes problems due to the development of the beach. Developers are not happy to have them close to the tourist bungalows because tourists complain about the trash around their working spots.

The lack of land in their graveyards is a problem. Traditionally, they needed a lot of space for their dead ancestors. If I understand it correctly, the lack of clarity regarding the rights of ownership of graveyards land has caused some worries for the Urak Lawoi. Some said, however, that the government has talked in favors of them keeping most of their graveyards.

In the southern part of Ko Lanta, I was told that they had to move ten bodies from one graveyard in 2002, because the land did not belong to them. The bodies were moved to Hue Lem and Sanga-U. They had no choice but to move the bodies. Otherwise, Thai people would build over the graves. Hue Lem is said to be the oldest graveyard in Ko Lanta and this land belongs to the Urak Lawoi.

Photo 23 *The graveyard in Hue Lem.*

During my fieldwork they had to move their spirit house to the graveyard in southern Hue Lem. The land was sold to new owners who did not want the Urak Lawoi temple to be there.

Information given to me about who owns the land in the graveyards in Klong Dau Beach is as follows. The southern one is a smaller, older graveyard that belongs to and is cared for by the same Urak Lawoi family. The land of the middle graveyard belongs to Muslims. Earlier there have been problems with this graveyard since the owners would like to sell the desirable land for exploitation. All surrounding and nearby land has been bought for exploitation. The government has talked to the Muslim family

about this problem and the Urak Lawoi do not feel worried anymore about being chased away from this holy place. The northern graveyard belongs to a Urak Lawoi family.

3.4 Fishing Industry

At the night one can see the commercial lit up boats on the horizon outside Ko Lanta. The fact is that commercial fishermen catch much larger quantities of fish than locals. This chapter will try to answer the questions how the extensive fishing industry has affected the self-sufficient life of the Urak Lawoi and to what extent they may benefit economically from the increasing demand for fish that is associated with tourist development.

Since 1960, fisheries in South-East Asia have experienced a rapid development. New efficient techniques and technologies have been employed for industrial purposes. Thailand has been the most successful country in South-East Asia in accomplishing in this. For Thailand, products from fishing have become one of the major assets in terms of foreign exchange (Torell 1984: 77,83,89). Thailand is one of the top ten nations in fishing industry (Wongbusarakum 2002:146-147). The catch has grown extremely fast from 220 000 tons in 1960 to 2 900 320 in 1998. The National Encyclopedia on internet (www.ne.se) states that the production was 3 600 000 tons in 1996.

Two separate fishing sectors have developed that run parallel to one another – one traditional or small-scale and one modern or high-technological. The conflict between small-scale and large-scale fishermen is one of the biggest problems within the fishing industry as most authors on Thailand agree (Torell 1984: 108).

The commercial fishing has no connection with Urak Lawoi small-scale fishing. Few Urak Lawoi have worked on these commercial boats. But large-scale commercial fishing has nevertheless had a major impact on Urak Lawoi living and fishing.

Commercially fishing requires access to money and large investments which cause many fisheries to go after large quantities of fish, even 'trash fish' (small in size and low in price). Torell (1984:111) claims that the effects of over-fishing are more serious for small-scale fisheries than for the large-scale ones as a decline in catches is immediately noticeable.

Illegal methods and equipment in prohibited areas such as the national marine parks are very common (Woungbusarakum 2002:146-157). Wongbusarakum (ibid.:156) states that according to the Urak Lawoi, trawlers are causing the most damage to coral reefs and turtles. The most common illegal act is fishing with trawlers within the forbidden area of three kilometers from the shore (which I have personally witnessed a few times). The Urak Lawoi complain about the trawlers fishing closer than three kilometers thus 'sucking up' all the prawns. Small-scale fishing activities are usually limited to fishing close to the coast (Torell 1984:104). Damm

(1995:43) reports how shellfish are slowly disappearing in Thailand. This is a big problem for the Urak Lawoi and they find it increasingly harder to harvest prawns and squid when they are diving.

In agreement with Wongbusarakum's study, I found that the Urak Lawoi complained about how commercial fishing boats damage or destroy their small-scale gear and are responsible for the loss of fishing traps when operating in shallow water thus crossing the legal fishing zone. Corruption and the advanced communication systems on the boats make it easy for trawlers to get away with their illegal actions.

Chai (a Urak Lawoi informant), still making his living by fishing, told me that the Urak Lawoi are not allowed anymore to catch squid in traps close to Ko Lanta. They have to go far out in the Andaman Sea, which means that their traps may get damaged by commercial fishers. He believes that the trawlers do not want them there because they regard it as a problem that the Urak Lawoi are fishing with traps.

The Urak Lawoi complain that the competition for catching fish has become tough with increasing tourism and commercial fishing. It has become harder for them to find fish for themselves, since *farang* demand fish at the resorts. Especially in Sanga-U are they complaining about how their lives have become harder with smaller catches as they do not speak any English there and those have hard times to find any jobs within the tourist industry. Others mean that it is better with the tourists since they get good pay selling their catches during tourist season, but some claim that this rise in prices does not compensate for the rise in prices for other goods.

Another problem is the need for gasoline on the boats. They never know for sure if they will get any catch when they go out fishing, but the expenses for gas are the same with or without a catch. Some Urak Lawoi state that they started to get dependent on money when *taukey* gave them engines in order for them to catch more fish.

A new problem for the Urak Lawoi is, as they suggested to me, that only 'rich' people can afford to have their boats moved to the pier in Saladan. Before, the Urak Lawoi and Chinese used to collaborate in terms of fishing and it was no problem for the Urak Lawoi to have their boats there. Now, the Chinese are building houses at the pier that are aimed for tourists and it is not easy to keep boats there anymore. Other problems have also arisen from having boats at the pier. The boats can be stolen. According to the Urak Lawoi, this happens every year. They claim that the police do nothing about it. The Urak Lawoi believe that the police get bribes from those who steal the boats. They do not have any money to pay bribes themselves and they do not like paying bribes as they think that justice should reign.

To sum up, the Urak Lawoi are worried about their situation as far as fishing is concerned. Smaller catches every year means less food. It is impossible for the Urak Lawoi to live without a dependence on other economic sources.

3.5 The National Marine Park

'We can no longer go out fishing in the National Park or Kaw Kwan.
The area has to be protected for tourists who go snorkeling.
But we need fish... since we have no education...'
Pon Changnam describing the National Park.

Lanta National Park was established in 1990 and comprises the southern tip of Ko Lanta Yai and another fifteen small islands nearby in the 134 square kilometer archipelago of the Krabi Province. It became Thailand's 62nd official national park. The Urak Lawoi do not have their settlement in their park, which in many ways makes their living easier than that of the Urak Lawoi in Ko Lipe, for example, who live in the national park. There, they feel pressure and frustration from living in a park and do not experience it as having been beneficial to them. 'The way of living before the park came was *sanuk* (fun)' (Wongbusarakum 2002:166). Now they need permission to build a hut to live in. Often, the establishment of national parks is based primarily on a concern for environmental conservation rather than the needs of the local population. It can easily be argued in agreement with Nash (1996:27) that the restrictions that local peoples who live in a national park experience as to their traditional ways of supporting themselves make them dependent on the tourist industry.

I was met with different opinions about the national park in Ko Lanta. Some considered it good for nature to be left alone without exploitation by outsiders. Others claimed that the national park had influenced their life in a negative way. It has caused problems with fishing and collecting important things in the forest and from the sea. I was told that a big problem for the Urak Lawoi was wood cutting, because they need wood to make fishing traps (*sai*) and build houses. Cutting down trees is not allowed in the national park or in the jungle anymore. The police may catch anybody who fishes or cuts down trees in the national parks. They get arrested and put in jail at the police station in Old Lanta Town. Wongbusarakum (2002:168) reports that the park official in Ko Lipe admits that the amount of tree cutting by the Urak Lawoi is relatively small as compared to that by outsiders.

I want to point out that, since the Urak Lawoi are reluctant about discussing their problems with outsiders, they might have been cautious when telling me about their concerns. It may also be what anthropologist as U-krit says that the national park has not brought a big change in terms of the Urak Lawoi way of living. But as is well known from around the world, it is not unusual that national parks affect local peoples. The people on the island of Komodo (between Sumbawa and Flores in Indonesia) can be taken as an example of this (Hitchcock 1993:310-315). After their territory was declared a national park, cultivation was restricted, hunting and the felling of trees was regulated while continued fishing was permitted. New buildings were allowed only to replace existing ones. Scientists hoped the people would find employment as guides, seamen, laborers, hotel workers and by making handicraft for sale. It has been shown, however, that the local people did not benefit from tourism. Employment in the park was restricted largely to unskilled posts. Trained personnel were

brought in from other parts of Indonesia to run the park. The population of Komodo grew rapidly in the 1980s, but the number of jobs could not keep pace with the rising number of people. Making handicraft for tourists did not succeed as they lacked the material needed. Unable to support themselves in the traditional way made the local inhabitants dependent on imported food, which had to be paid for by cash. The national park made a big difference to the life style of the local people of Komodo, but they did not gained much in economic terms through tourism.

3.6 Environmental Consequences of Tourist Development

The rapid increase of population in Ko Lanta is causing unexpected environmental problems. Problems that emanate from tourism are to be found in most developed destinations in Thailand (Cohen 1996a: 226). The Urak Lawoi in the south complain that there is not enough water for them anymore. They claim that the waterfall used to have plenty of water, but nowadays it has dried out. *To Maw* Sicken mentioned that people cut down the trees in the jungle. He let me know that it is not allowed, but a lot of strangers came and cut down the trees. Wood is needed for the new houses and bungalows that are constructed for tourists. *To Maw* Sicken thinks that there are too many people living in Ko Lanta today as they utilize the resources of nature more than what is good for it. Tourist-generated environmental problems have a special impact on tropical islands. For two reasons: First these islands have fragile ecosystems, their resources are limited and the most attractive spots, the beaches and coastal waters, are sensitive and easily devastated. Second, such islands are usually advertised for tourists as pristine paradises. The gap between image and reality may have a negative feedback effect not only on tourism itself but also on the local economy (Cohen 1996a: 226-227). Conflicts may easily arise between the needs of indigenous peoples for natural resources and development plans. In many cases, and especially in the 3rd World, the realization of the goals of economic development is seen as a human collective right even if it affects the environment in a negative sense (Johansson-Dahre 2001:126). Leong (1997:71-72) argues that state interests cannot be left out of tourism, as tourism is a primary industry in generating foreign exchange. For this reason, the state acts as an overseer of private tourist enterprisers. It has an interest in providing services for tourists such as water, housing, roads, electricity, etc.

4. Urak Lawoi and the 'Modern World'

> 'The modern state, particularly in Thailand, tends to create a kind of national culture. Even though there is recognition of ethnic minority culture, the national culture is what the government would like all ethnic groups to adhere to, expecting them to speak Thai language. Buddhism is the religion [...] According to the government, ethnic groups may remain different in terms of language, custom and clothing. But they will have to share the common national culture, including learning the national language and subscribing to national religion and ideology.'
> Vaddhanuphuti 1996:87

The chapters in Part IV deal with problems and stress factors which the Urak Lawoi are facing by losing their land and the pressures of integrating with the dominant culture. In what way do the expansion of tourism and the integration into the global market economy affect their culture and way of life? Can the Urak Lawois make use of these processes or are they left out?

The introduction of television meant a big change for the Urak Lawoi. According to Pon, a 28-year-old guy, it was with the appearance of this medium that he and his friends understood that it was not 'normal' to be naked in front of the other sex. He told me the story at the place where he grew up next to Kaw Kwan Resort, now located in Klong Dao Beach. The girls and boys were swimming naked together after a long walk back from school. Their school was located a bit outside of Saladan at that time. At the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s they started to hide their naked bodies. He explained how 'city life' made its entrance and so did clothes. Before, both men and women used to have naked torsos.[6]

Mr. O. who is a Urak Lawoi informant, in his late 40s, works in a resort twelve hours a day, seven days a week and all year around. He has worked at the same resort for fifteen years and has never had a vacation. He works as a gardener or drives the long tail boat for tourists on snorkeling trips. He earns 4 500 Bath (900 Sv.kr) a month. Before his family sold their land, he lived next to Kaw Kwan in Klong Dau Beach, where he was fishing: 'Life was much better before the tourists came to Ko Lanta and we still lived at Kaw Kwang. We lived much more freely at that time and lived closer to nature'.

According to Mr. O, life did not turn out the way he thought it would be when they moved to Nai Rai, further from Klong Dau Beach. They where promised more than it turned out to be: 'Even if it is not a city we live in, life reminds us more about

6 The Chao Lay (Moken) at Surin Island still had naked torsos, but they were told by the staff of the national park, to get dressed when working among tourists in the park.

that kind of life style, than the life we used to live [...] They told us that we would get a better life if we moved... It is not true. It was better before [...]'

Moving from the beach means that it is impossible to collect food the way they used to do. Tourism results in the need for money. They have to start cultivating or earn money to buy food. Hogan claims that there were Urak Lawoi who started to cultivate already before exploitation began. I similarly found that the Urak Lawoi on other islands had been cultivating before exploitation began. The difference is that before exploitation began they were not dependent on it for a living.

Vira from Switzerland who is married to a Urak Lawoi, believes changes went to fast for the Urak Lawoi to acclimatize to the new world. They had no chance to adapt. Damm (1995:101-103) argues that it is important that the development of tourism is slow and at the pace of local people. A rapid development often ruins the authenticity of particular places because of tourist demands. An informant said: 'It was a shock for us how fast the change went [...] suddenly we saw beautiful houses and boats growing up... Very fast... we had never seen a city and could never expect how it would be in Ko Lanta [...] we did not know this kind of life existed [...]'

Vira told me how she brought her mother-in-law to the city for the first time. Her mother-in-law was 'scared to death' when using the escalator. Someone described the situation as that of being caught behind a fence or in a blind alley where escape is impossible. People know that it is impossible to return to the old life style, at the same time they cannot get rich (as someone expressed it) and nowadays they do not even dispose of their own land. They sold their land for a pittance to make it possible to build a house or buy a long tail boat or simply just a boat engine.

4.1 The Outsider View of the Urak Lawoi

This section will discuss how the dominant culture regards the Urak Lawoi and how the Urak Lawoi themselves want to be recognized by outsiders.

To be a Urak Lawoi is a matter of choice. They are born Urak Lawoi but also as Thai citizens. If they chose not to be Urak Lawoi, the rapid tourist development would soon acclimatize them into Thai people and outsiders would look upon them as poor Thai people.[7] This statement can be compared to Sjöberg's research on the Ainu people of Japan. The dominant Japanese culture asserts that all inhabitants belong to a homogenous group of people and has tried to assimilate the Ainu and make them 'invisible'. They may choose if they want to register as Ainu or not (Sjöberg 2001:106-107). Many development authorities declare that tribal peoples should have a freedom of choice whether they want to belong to their own culture or the dominant civilization. The problem is that tribal peoples do not generally know what

7 See Introduction I and Chapter 1.1, 1.7.3 how it was explained to me that there are no Urak Lawoi – just poor Thai people.

they are choosing and are not given a clear picture of how the future will be. 'Educational' programs may deny them of choosing their own culture (Bodley 1999a: 23). In Thailand, the Urak Lawoi are given the new name 'Thai Mai' (New Thai) to make them feel integrated with the Thai, a name that is given not just to the Urak Lawoi, but to all ethnic minorities that are registered in Thailand.

I found that many Urak Lawoi who are working in the tourist industry are denied of their heritage. It could happen that I recognized someone from a village working at one of the resorts or restaurants that I visited. When I said 'hello', he often acted like he had never seen me before and thus denied that he belonged to and lived with the Urak Lawoi. The next time I saw this person (it could be at one of the ceremonies) he ran up to me with a familiar smile. The Urak Lawoi wanted me to recognize them as Urak Lawoi but not outside of the group. It is among their own people that they find a sense of belonging. I found that many of them felt ashamed of their heritage, working in tourism for non-local entrepreneurs. In agreement with Sjöberg's research on the Ainu, I discovered that many Urak Lawoi wanted to become Thai on the promise of being full Thai citizens, as they believed it would favor them and make life easier. The problem is that when becoming a Thai, the Thai look upon you as poor Thai people – the lowest in the hierarchy. Today many outsiders and tourists cannot differentiate the Urak Lawoi from other Thai inhabitants. The only difference is that they look upon them as poor Thai people. For the Ainu, this discrimination has resulted in their land being taken away from them to satisfy the dominant culture. This overexploitation of nature has put restrictions on Ainu needs (ibid.:112).

4.2 The Transition from Sharing to Market and World Economy

'If a Chinese and a Urak Lawoi earns 10 Bath each,
the Urak Lawoi spends 9 of these and the Chinese 1 Bath'.
(Pon Changnam about Urak Lawoi handling of money)

Reciprocity and generosity are important in Urak Lawoi society. As Wongbusarakum writes: '[...] food was shared when another party needed it, and this provided a basic security for all' (2002:77). Sharing one's possessions is an important feature of Urak Lawoi culture. As Dila, the only Urak Lawoi I met with a university degree expressed it: 'It is important for us to give, because you know it always get back to you in one or another way. The things should circulate... when you know you have had something long enough; you give it to someone else'. Chou found during her fieldwork among the 'sea gypsies' Orang Laut in Malay, that 'they aim at restricting the circulation of things to insiders only. These forms of exchange construct and maintain group boundaries for the Orang Laut and Malays' (2003:86).

Circulating things may be implicit or ideal behavior (ibid.:86). It does not only ensure survival, but also strengthens the social bonds within the group. It is customary within anthropology to explain exchange networks as linked through reciprocity, a phenomenon to which Marcel Mauss has contributed the most well-known theory as far as primitive societies are concerned. He claims that giving is not only an economic activity, but a total social fact, including the social, political and religious aspects of a society. Prestige is obtained by giving the most, not by owing others a lot. Wongbusarakum (2002:77) notes that the Urak Lawoi feel proud about sharing the harvest with those who did not for the moment get any catch in the Adang Archipelago. I would like to add my personal experience from my first visit to Ko Lipe (November 2002) which was later developed than Ko Lanta. When I arrived there and told the Urak Lawoi that the purpose of my visit there was my interest in the people, an Urak Lawoi informant said to me: 'You have to talk to Jerry. He is a good man [...] He splits everything 50 - 50 of what he earns'. I met Jerry and he told me about his ideals:

> 'When we are born, we have nothing.
> When we die, we still have nothing.
> And we only have day and night.
> You do not die in the daytime, but at night and that is what you will bring with you.
> It will only be words left, talking about you.
> Either they speak good or bad about you.
> What people talk about you after your are dead, continues to live...'

Wongbusarakum found that the sharing practice that was common in Ko Lipe is unusual in many other Urak Lawoi villages today. The Urak Lawoi in Ko Lanta claimed that the moral obligation of helping one another is not common today, because people have first of all to think about supporting their own nuclear family. They did not have to think in this way earlier as there was plenty of food and they did not have any need for money. Today they need money to satisfy their material needs (www.cusri.chula.ac.th/andaman/en/uraklawoi). But a Muslim informant said to me that the Urak Lawoi are still different from Muslims and Chinese, and he claimed that they were good and generous people. The argument that he presented is that the Urak Lawoi always feed their guest and shares their surplus with others. He finished his statement with following worlds: '[...] no they are different.. They have a good heart'. I am told by Urak Lawoi informant, that sharing not only used to be an Urak Lawoi custom. It was also a Muslim tradition in the old days (as late as the 1980s) in Ko Lanta. My own experience of generosity was that I found the Muslims to be more into the practice of giving than any other group.

The new economic view is that of saving for tomorrow – even if most Urak Lawoi do not live according to this principle. Anthropologist Arporn U-krit does not think that tourist development has changed the Urak Lawoi. Saving for the future is still not the custom of many Urak Lawoi. A conflict arises when they are being integrated into the market economy.

4.3 Economic Situation

This section deals with the consequences for the Urak Lawoi when unable to pursue their traditional self-sufficient life. Considering the need for cash, what opportunities do they have in the transition of supporting themselves to participating in a market economy?

In the course of human history, we have been hunters and gatherers for ninety-five per cent of the time (Waehle 2000:1). However, this heritage and life form seems to be forgotten and lost to most people today. The Urak Lawoi is one of the few hunting and gathering peoples still found in Thailand. What makes the Urak Lawoi different from other hunters and gatherers is that fishing and food collecting on the shores is their particular self-sufficient life style. What they gathered during the day they ate in the evening. Wongbusarakum (www.unesco.org/csi/act/thailand/adang) proposes that with increasing contacts with outsiders, integration into the global market economy through tourism, commercial fishing and modernization, their traditional way of foraging has changed. Their livelihood now depends upon resource sharing with outsiders and rapid integration into the market economy. They are making their living by fishing, tourism (driving tourists on snorkeling trips or diving tours, working in restaurants or cleaning bungalow resorts, etc.) and as paid laborers on road constructions. In Ko Lanta there is some interest among the Urak Lawoi to start their own tourist businesses, but they lack capital and access to attractive land. They have no choice but to work as unskilled laborers with low salaries.

It is not unusually around the world for dominant groups to market ethnic minorities for tourism and making a profit on them, peoples they used to look down upon as savages. Their traditional economic ways of life are banned and they become dependent on tourism as unskilled laborers. The capital and knowledge for entering tourist business are missing (Nash 1996:20-21, 35; Hitchcock, King & Parnwell 1993:19-20, 295; Wilson 1993:41; Wood 1993:62). Social anthropologist Jean Michaud has done fieldwork and doctoral research among the Hmong, a 'hill tribe' in northern Thailand. The Thai state has prohibited their traditional economic way of life by clearing the forests and their nomadic life style by forcing them into permanent villages. Many Hmong must today, for economic reasons, periodically leave their villages for paid work, which they find very stressful. Another economic resource that the Hmong have become dependent on is trekking trips for tourists. In sum, only about 1.5 % of the money paid by the customers to the travel agency does in fact reach the Hmong village. Trekking tourists often ask for opium and drugs. Since the Hmong nowadays rely on cash to buy what they eat, the selling of opium makes a welcome income. Abandoning agriculture for hosting tourists breaks the community circle and isolates the family, which is the most important segment of their society (Michaud 1997:133,140-147). This is a general problem, not just for indigenous peoples and hunters and gatherers in Thailand, but all around the world.

Like the Hmong hill tribe in northern Thailand, I found that some Urak Lawoi travel to other parts of Thailand to work in tourism. Those who have worked and

lived away from their family have a tendency to move back home again. The explanation they gave for this was simply that they wanted to live near their family. Narin a 28-year-old man, who returned both with money and the knowledge of how to speak English, explained: 'I am happy here. People are not sick here. If I move from here, maybe my mom will be sick [...]' It is hard for the Urak Lawoi to get used to work for a boss or somebody else. Some are too proud to put themselves in that position. They want to be free. Some men have brought back aids to their community after returning from working on the big boats in the fishing industry. I have no record of how many Urak Lawoi who are infected by aids, but I was told there are at least two or three Urak Lawoi in Nai Rai who have died from this disease.

The Urak Lawoi traditional way of providing for the family still exists, but it is rapidly falling out of use. They are forced into a job market where they are employed as laborers with minimum wages. According to an interview with the Urak Lawoi woman Sorn, the normal monthly wage for someone working in a resort is 3 000 Bath (about 600 Sv.kr.). If one is lucky, the salary might be as high as 4 000 - 5 000 Bath a month. A normal pay for a day laborer is 200 Bath (40 Sv.kr.), but some make no more than 100 Bath a day. Ekholm Friedman (1998:36-37) claims that the tourist industry often demands 'low-skill and low-pay' workers to cope with competition. It is not unusual that the tourist industry leads to deteriorating conditions for local peoples. Travel agents and tourists do not question why labor is cheap or what consequences this may have for local peoples. Cohen, who has studied tourism in Thailand since 1977, notes that the total income from tourism is larger for 'outsiders' than locals after the rapid development. Dielemans observes that 70 % of the money spent by tourists in Thailand is leaving the country (*Dagens Nyheter* 2004-10-24). Not all western entrepreneurs hire locals. The travel company started by the Swedish family mentioned in the introduction may be taken as an example. They have brought their own staff from Sweden to work as 'specialists' for low salaries to get the opportunity to live in a 'pristine paradise'. There are other cases where *farang* work for food and accommodation but no salary. In other words, the locals do not benefit from such tourist exploitation in any economic sense.

After Cohen's research on tourist development on the beaches of the Andaman Sea, he found that many locals at first look upon outside initiatives as new opportunities. After the development rapidly takes off (this stage is initiated by outsiders as a response to the increasing demand for tourist facilities), the locals find it harder to enter the tourist business and may be squeezed out from it. Land rises in value and luxurious resorts replace small entrepreneurs from the beach (Cohen 1996a: 18,161,215,223-224). Accordingly, the future employment of the Urak Lawoi in Ko Lanta does not get a very optimistic prognosis.

I will give an example that demonstrates the critical point in the transition from insider to outsider control in Ko Lanta. Bau (a local Thai from one of the nearby islands) is married to a Urak Lawoi woman from Ko Lanta and have two children. They are exceptional in terms of the Urak Lawoi in Ko Lanta, since they started a restaurant for tourists in Klong Dau Beach in the 1990s. The restaurant is built on a small piece of land right on the sea, surrounded by fancy bungalow resorts and res-

taurants. The whole family is working in the business along with their Urak Lawoi relatives. They rent the 75 square meters of land from a *farang* and since the *farang* is not the true landowner, he in his turn rents the land from a Thai citizen in Trang. Bau pays 20 000 Bath a year in rent. Next season (2004-2005) he must pay 100 000 Bath if he wants to keep his restaurant in what has now become a very valuable piece of land. He is worried about the situation and when I left Ko Lanta (April 2004) he was not sure whether he could keep his business or not.

4.4 Garbage

'Investors take everything... The local people get garbage and pollution'
Traisawasdichai as quoted by in Cohen (1996a:234)

My first visit to the Urak Lawoi was in March 2002 (Granbom 2003:5). I came to Sihre outside Phuket and I must admit that it was kind of a shock when I saw how the people that I had come to study were living. The areas around their sheds were full of garbage. It did not at all look like the 'pristine paradise' that I had read about. The house I stayed in did not have a water-closet or bathroom. Between the narrow sheds I took a 'shower' from the water in a big bucket. In the morning when I was going for a swim at the beach, it was full of shit. It was not tempting to have a morning swim or a clean up. I found that garbage in the Urak Lawoi settlement is quite 'normal' today. When I asked why they just threw the trash at their own feet instead of disposing of it, I was simply told that they were not used to plastic bottles, cans and boxes filled with food. In the old days they just throw everything away, since everything they used came from nature. I was told that they had not got used to the new custom of taking care of trash. Bodley (1999a:136) discusses how sanitary disasters in slum villages are followed by infections, increasing stress and poor nutrition. According to Cohen's study (1996a: 233) in Phuket, the total garbage production is 750 tons a day, but the provincial government is only able to pick up about 170 tons of rubbish a day. If this is correct, it means that the uncollected garbage amounts to almost 600 tons a day!

The paradox is that tourists are asking for a healthy, well-preserved environment, but the increase in tourist development means an increase in garbage and damage to the environment. Leading sewers directly into the sea may scare away fish and damage corals (often sewers go right out into the ground), while garbage is thrown into the water and in unprotected areas. Tourist development has expanded much faster than the capacity of the public and private sector to provide sewerage and energy supply for the disposal of waste water (see, e.g.,Hitchcock, King and Parnwell 1993:21). Boats that go with tourists between the islands pollute the water (I witnessed an extreme pollution of the water by the ferries). The so-called paradise becomes a man-made tourist location as swimming pools take over the beaches, air-conditioned

rooms are built, etc. (Cohen 1996a: 152). The pollution that tourism inflicts upon the environment should be an issue of the highest priority. As Akeroyd states that 'the tourist takes his cultural baggage with him but expects the host community to meet his requirements; whereas [...] (say) Turkish labor migrants in Europe, it is the migrant who is primarily expected to adapt [...]' (quoted in Nash 1981:468). Not surprisingly tourists may abandon places that suffer from environmental degradation in the future. This has already happened in Pattaya Beach: problems with waste water and pollution of the sea have become so acute that tourists now prefer to swim in the pool (Cohen 1996a: 233). I could see the same tendency on Phi Phi Island.

4.5 School and Education

This section deals with the efforts of the Thai educational system to integrate the Urak Lawoi into the dominant culture. Bodley (1999a: 101-102) states that education has been the primary instrument for cultural modification and a highly efficient way of destroying minority cultures and fostering new needs. Teachers from the dominant culture have power over the students, their parents and traditional leaders. A conflict arises between children's education and their participation in their own culture. Tribal cultures are generally based on specialized knowledge of the natural environment and special training in folklore, religion, ritual, etc. The time that students need to study their own culture competes with that for studying the dominant culture as depicted in the textbooks. According to Urak Lawoi tradition, Arporn U-krit states, people raise their children until they are 5-6 years old. Then the boys join their father on trips to the sea while the girls help their mother doing housework (www.cusri.chula.ac.th/andaman/en/uraklawoi).

The ideology taught at school is that of the dominant Thai culture and this is done in the Thai language (Vaddhanuphuti 1996:83). There are no teachers from the Urak Lawoi population. Education makes the students feel ambivalent about their cultural heritage. However, many of them wish that their traditions and culture would be taught at school, and they also find it important to be taught in their own language. Nowadays everyone may go to school for nine years.

Schools are different in Sanga-U and Saladan. The students in Sanga-U are all Urak Lawoi. In Saladan, however, Urak Lawoi students are mixed with Thai Chinese and Thai Muslims. They have friends from different ethnic groups and are influenced by the Internet, fashion, city life, parties, drugs and tourism. It is different in Sanga-U were the Urak Lawoi are more isolated. Most children finish school after six years in Sanga-U. It has never happened that anyone from Sanga-U has sent their children to high school. I was told that, in the northern part of Ko Lanta, there was one student who had higher education – he was trained as a farmer. The reason why the Urak Lawoi do not pursue higher education is, apart from the lack of money, that they feel isolated when being away from their homes and families. They do not know

anybody who can take care of their children on the mainland. People on the mainland make fun of them and call them 'stupid people', as they speak a different Thai accent. In other words, they suffer from an inferiority complex because of their heritage.

C, a man in his 30s from Sanga-U, told me that he would like to speak to the government about sending children from Sanga-U to high school. When I asked why he did not do so, he answered me that he is afraid of doing it. He is afraid to talk to 'the people who decide'. He said: 'Everyone is afraid to talk to the one who has the power'.

I never understood what they were afraid of. The only explanation I received was that they do not know how to talk to authorities. They have not learnt how to talk to them and do not feel that they understand their world, since they are not educated. They feel inferior and uncertain with respect to authorities. Sometimes, C. told me, they talk to *Tambun, Moban* and *Abaton,* but these men do nothing about this problem. They feel they need to talk to a senator in the province about their education problem. Some of them said to me: 'Going to school means you get a good job and a good life'. It seems like many of the Urak Lawoi would like to send their kids to school if it was possible. At the same time, however, it seems as if many of them do not think that it is necessary.

Many Urak Lawoi find it important to learn English in school so they have a better chance to get a job in the tourist industry. They do learn English at school, but think that there is not enough teaching. After finishing school they have to pay 3000 Bath a month for an English course (as compared to the normal monthly salary of 3000 Bath for working at a resort).

4.5.1 The Language of the Urak Lawoi

As mention earlier, the Urak Lawoi have kept their language in spite of living close to other ethnic groups and being surrounded by Thai society. The Urak Lawoi language is spoken at home, even if most people speak Thai today. I found, however, that the younger generation in Nai Rai do not use the Urak Lawoi language in their daily conversations at home. Although they understand the language, they do not use it when talking to their parents or one another. I also discovered that many Urak Lawoi in this part of the island understand English. The explanation, of course, is that Nai Rai is developed and many people work in the tourist industry and therefore find it is more important to learn how to speak English. Many of those who do not speak Urak Lawoi have also married people from other ethnic groups, while still living among the Urak Lawoi. Those who do not speak their language at home said to me that they will start to do so when they have their own children. Many feel worried about their language disappearing since it is not unusual to marry a Thai. Of course, Thai will be the language such couples speaks at home with their children. Some Urak Lawois are concerned about the trend among young people to avoid speaking

their own language. As Jerry said: '[...] if the language is gone, we are gone. We do not know our heritage'.

I also discovered a kind of dualistic reasoning among the Urak Lawoi in the northern part of Ko Lanta who seemed to be well integrated within Thai society and the market economy. At first they denied that they were different from the Thai and in the next moment they expressed their worries about their language disappearing. They seemed concerned that the Thai government did not think that it was important for them to keep their own language. They compared themselves to the American Indians and were afraid that they would experience the same destiny and forget about their heritage.

In Sanga-U everybody still speaks Urak Lawoi at home.

Photo 24 *Celebrating **Patat Jiri** at one of the burial sites, Klong Dau Beach.*

4.6 Alcoholism and Drugs

I discovered that both men and women consume a great deal of alcohol. Chang beer and cheep Thai whisky are important in their ceremonies. The use of alcohol is not an indigenous custom of the Urak Lawoi. I was told that it started to become a problem one to two decades ago. According to my Urak Lawoi informants, they did not drink at their parties or ceremonies in the old days. The increasing consumption of alcohol can be seen as an escape from the pressures of the new life style. Vira from Switzerland, who is married to a Urak Lawoi, thinks that the greatest problem of the Urak Lawoi is alcohol since many people spend money on it as soon as they get their salary. A bottle of Thai whisky costs 70 Bath in Ko Lanta. As compared to this, those

who are lucky are paid 200 Bath for a day's work. Ten day's of working and drinking mean that 700 Bath are spent on alcohol instead of being saved for tomorrow, when perhaps no job is available.

I did not find any Urak Lawoi who smoked marijuana or used any other drugs, even though drugs are quite common among Thai citizens and tourists in those parts of Ko Lanta developed by tourism. Narin, an Urak Lawoi living in Ko Lipe, claimed, however, that Thai who had moved to the island of Ko Lipe brought marijuana that some Urak Lawoi had become addicted to. I was told that the drug had become a problem when they were diving. Some had died from being 'high' while working under water. The main reason why the Urak Lawoi in Ko Lanta do not smoke pot, I believe, is the lack of money. I did not see any abuse of opium in any Urak Lawoi settlement.

A common everyday drug of both women and men – young or old – is betel nut. I witnessed how older women gathered and started their day by chewing this drug before eating.

Photo 25 *The abuse of betel nut.*

4.7 Changes in Diet

I found many of the younger and middle-aged women extremely huge and fat. I never saw any old women being fat, however. Many of the older women showed proof of their agility when dancing by bending their bodies close above the ground. According to anthropologist U-krit, some families are obese and others are lean, but I never saw any obese men, apart from some very young boys. My hypothesis is that

changes in food habits may be a reason. Today, coke and beer are very popular. Factory-made snacks and instant noodles have become popular food since adaptation to commercial life began. Bodley (1999a: 138-139) claims that changes in diet for indigenous people who are involved in the world economy has been catastrophic. White flour and refined sugar are two major things. Their traditional diets are adapted to their nutritional needs and available food resources. Anthropologists have long recognized that dental and physical condition is excellent among indigenous peoples who have retained their traditional diets. Another reason for obesity among Urak Lawoi ladies may be the change in life style for the women, who, according to *To Maw* Sicken, used to work more actively in the old days (see Chapter 2.10).

4.8 Participation in the Modern Life Style

This section deals with how Urak Lawoi daily life has changed since tourist development began and how the future may be forecast for the Urak Lawoi considering their increasing contact with TV, new kinds of music, etc.

To Maw Boden in Nai Rai is concerned about the rapid changes in life style. He let me know that it is hard for the Urak Lawoi to find their role in the new society, but he also understood the impossibility of finding a way back to the traditional way of life. *To Maw* Sicken in Sanga-U pointed out how they used to live a simple life before the tourists came to Ko Lanta. In many ways, however, they find life easier today. It has become easier, for example, to move between the different Urak Lawoi settlements on the islands. It does not take such a long time to visit as it used to do. *To Maw* Boden also found it convenient with electricity.

Mavee, who is in his mid-sixties and Sanga-U's violin player, told me what tourism has done to the children. 'The children want to become like tourists [...] piercing and new music. Young people do not like *Rong Ngang* music'. Since Mavee is a man with strength and the only violin player left in Sanga-U, I asked him if he was teaching their traditions to the younger generation. 'How can this be done?' he asked me. Mavee meant there is no time anymore for the young to learn about their culture. 'Nowadays everybody has to work for money and they have to work hard for it'. In his understanding there is not enough time to teach the culture. Urak Lawoi do not have much free time or any vacations. Their traditional way of living is impossible to pursue today. Stefano who has come from Italy and is now living on Ko Lipe is married to a Urak Lawoi woman. He told me how the Urak Lawoi used to travel and visit each other during the dry season. This is not possible anymore, he said, since for the last 3-4 years everybody has become dependent on tourism and cannot just take a leave from work as they like. A conflict arise. The traditional hunting and gathering life of the Urak Lawoi would seem to have given a lot of free time for socializing. It did not take long to gather food or fish for the family and there was thus plenty of time for visiting, entertainment and dancing. A lot of leisure was normal. It might

be true as Nash (1981:464) writes that people in hunting-and-gathering societies spend more time in tourist activities than people do in any industrial society. This may be seen in contrast to the 'modern-world' where working to support one's family is necessary to satisfy the material needs.

Arporn U-krit does not think that the tourist invasion has changed the Urak Lawoi way of thinking more about the future. They still live for the day but what has changed is the importance of getting a TV or a car. Arporn U-krit and Mapin Taleluk claim that young people are not interested in learning the old music or songs. They are not interested in learning how to play the violin. Maybe it depends on TV, they think. New impressions from TV, radio and CD have replaced the old traditions. They believe that the old culture will disappear. This resembles what was discussed at the Chang Mai Conference in 1995 (Vaddhanuphuti 1996:84): it would seem that the more the ethnic communities in Thailand are exposed to the forces of development, the less capable they are to maintain control of their own life, managing their own resources and retain their ethnic identity.

4.9 Outsiders Marketing Urak Lawoi for Tourists

This section reflects on current problems when it comes to celebrating Urak Lawoi ceremonies. It also deals with how outsiders market the Urak Lawoi as an exotic people.

Ko Lanta, as the tourists experience it, is a society that is different from the rest of the host society. One effect of this is what Nash (1981:466) calls the 'demonstration effect' as outside developers, entrepreneurs or locals create 'invented traditions' for the tourists. Invention is a common practice in the on-going development of authentic cultural identities. The complex question is in what way tourism enters and takes part in this on-going process (see Nash 1981:466; Hitchcock, King & Parnwell 1993:8-16; Wood 1993:59, 64-66). The fact that the conceptions that tourists have are inaccurate or unrepresentative does not make them less real to them. In Ko Lipe, for example, their *Rong Ngang* music and dance as performed for tourist has been influenced by Hawaiian elements. When I observed their entertainment at Lipe Restaurant, the Urak Lawoi had flowers in their hair and the appearance seemed to be important since everyone dancing was young and beautiful. I had never seen Urak Lawoi perform this way before. When I had witnessed their dancing at ceremonies their age and sex had been mixed. Older women were always more well-represented as far as dancing was concerned than young girls, boys and men. This, however, was not the case at the arranged performance for tourists in Ko Lipe. I want to point out that traditionally the participation of younger people probably used to be more representative of the *Rong Ngeng* dance than it is today, since disco music has become the important musical expression among teenagers.

It is crucial for the Urak Lawoi to keep their traditional ceremonies alive, even though drinking and partying has become an important element in celebrating these events. By getting together, people experience a sense of belonging. I have focused on their main ceremony *Loy Rua* that is celebrated twice a year. I did not myself witness the occasion that I am going to write about now, because I arrived to the island one week after the festival was held in October 2003. However, I was told the following: in 2003 the Urak Lawoi were given a new piece of land and, as they understood it, it was given to them by the government or the queen. The government gave its permission for *Loy Rua* to be celebrated twice a year in May and October. I was told that the queen gave her agreement for the Urak Lawoi to celebrate their ceremonies on this piece of land. The land is situated close by the pier in Saladan, next to the sea and surrounded by nature and forests. Informants told me that papers were signed on this agreement. The Urak Lawoi was allowed to build huts to live in during the festival. They were happy about the outside attention and wanted to start immediately. First they had to build a long wooden bridge to get to the area, since the place is like a swamp. They were told that they could take any wood they needed for free. A Thai citizen who kept his big boat close by this place wanted them to build a jetty for him to anchor his yacht. They did so, cut trees and built bridges. Some built small huts. A new temple was built in cement. All Urak Lawoi who could was involved in the project. They complained about those who did not help with the tasks. But those who could not be there to assist in constructing the new ceremonial place told me it was because they had to work. Not all of them could just get off their job and work for nothing since they had a family to support and obligations to their employer. Many of those who were busy working on the project held the opinion that those who did not help should not be allowed to participate in the ceremony.

Some Urak Lawoi, who were working with the jetty for the Thai citizen, suddenly interrupted their woodwork, as they were thinking: 'Why do we do this? This bridge has nothing to do with our ceremony and we are building a long jetty for a man who does not even pay for the wood'. They stopped building when there was only one meter left to connect the jetty to their bridge.

At the beginning of October 2003 the *Loy Rua* ceremony was held for the first time on their new holy place. Many outsiders were involved in the ceremony and different TV channels were invited to participate and make programs about the unique Urak Lawoi culture.

After the ceremony was over, the staff of the TV channels and the 'important' guests at the ceremony left the island. A few weeks later the Urak Lawoi were ordered by local authorities to tear down the huts. The huts were just meant for ceremonial purposes. The Urak Lawoi were shocked over this treatment. They thought they were given this piece of land for recreation and would be left alone close by the water with their customs. 'How can we build up everything again when we know we have to take it down again after a few days? We are not lazy, but we do not have the strength to do it twice a year. It seems useless to work when you know you have to destroy everything after a few days. It feels more like we are doing this ceremony for others, not for ourselves anymore'.

Photo 26 *The Loy Rua ceremony place, Saladan.*

Photo 27 *After the trees have been cut, Saladan.*

Why did they have to move their houses, I asked? They were not clear about why they had to tear down their huts after the three days of ceremony in October 2003. One thing that they heard was that some Thai citizens wanted to extend their property close to the pier. The Urak Lawoi did not think that the queen knew anything about this. Six months later they were expected to rebuild 'the scene' for a new *Loy Rua* ceremony.

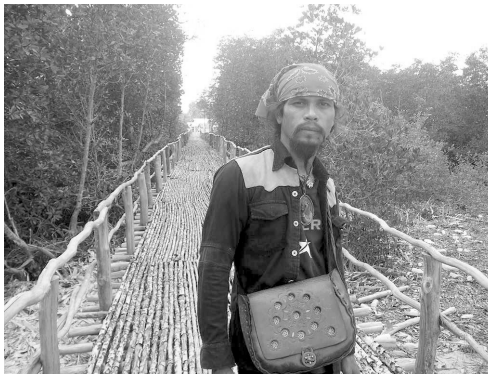


Photo 28 '*Deang Cowboy' in front of the wooden bridge to the* ***Loy Rua*** *ceremony place.*

Photo 29 ***Phee Phea*** *protecting Urak Lawoi from bad spirits.*

Leong (1997:72-73) discusses how states used to look at minorities and 'primitives' as a problem since they had difficulties assimilating to the dominant culture but how states now have found that minorities may contribute to the economy by means of tourism. Wood (1997:11) suggests that since states have a great deal of power over tourism and its development, to meet its requirement they also have a great deal of influence on what is to be marketed in terms of cultural meanings and practices.

The 'Sea Gypsy Home' (see Chapter 1.7.3) may be another example of how outsiders market Urak Lawoi culture. Business people who want to exhibit the unique culture of the Urak Lawoi for tourists coming to Ko Lanta sponsor such centers or

'new village'. It is a good idea to preserve their culture in one place and to leave the Urak Lawoi alone in their settlements. The criticism leveled at this arrangement, however, is that the initiative has come from the outside and no Urak Lawoi have an active part in the project. The Urak Lawoi are expected voluntarily to build up the village with all its important elements such as a spirit house and boat. Only outsiders, however, are living in the village and making a profit from it. The Urak Lawoi do not manufacture any of the jewelry and art. If no special arrangement is to be held, there are no Urak Lawoi in the center. I found that the Urak Lawoi do not have much influence on such a 'Sea Gypsy Home'. In the spring of 2004, I discovered that it was a popular place for *farang* and Thai immigrants to visit and smoke pot. I want to point out, however, that I do not think the landowner or sponsors knew anything about this. In agreement with Leong (1997:72-73) I found that ethnic differentiation is not based on anthropological concerns for humanism or the survival of cultural groups. Tourism, including issues of ethnicity, is a resource to generate income. I will finish the story about 'Sea Gypsy Home' by saying that such centers may have function differently with other people in charge.[8]

4.10 *To Maw* or Local Leadership

This section will discuss who act as a political representative of the Urak Lawoi in- and outside the group.

To Maw (medicine man) is representing the Urak Lawoi (See more in Chapter 2:8 about *To Maw's* duties). I found that most of the *To Maw* in different islands are quite old. A major concern is who succeed them. Since it is hard to find a qualified *To Maw,* anyone 'good enough', who knows the duties involved. Anyone who is interested in learning from the *To Maw* is welcome. The *To Maw* may inform the other members of the group who will be the next *To Maw.* The problem is that younger people do not take the time to learn the customs. Another problem is that Urak Lawoi traditional leaders only have an advisory function as opposed to an authoritarian one with rights to decide for the group. A conflict may thus arise since this pattern is very different from how the dominant culture thinks about political leadership.

A new informal leader has emerged among the Urak Lawoi what Apinan Jitsopa (interview march 2002) call 'business leader'. Jitsopa has written a research about Urak Lawoi *Rong Ngeng* music for 'the Culture commission ministry of education' (2001) in Thailand. This new type of leader is someone who knows how to make money. He maintains, according to Jitsopa, his popularity by giving. It may be a boat for the village or money to individual Urak Lawoi. To some extent he is replacing the

8 After my visit to the 'Sea Gypsy Home' after the tsunamin in the spring of 2005, I discovered new people in charge and some Urak Lawoi involved in the center, however. The information about the 'Sea Gypsy Home' may therefore be updated.

To Maw, but the problem is that he is not familiar with the *To Maw* duties. He cannot be seen as a representative of the Urak Lawoi, since he has money and may often feel like an outsider to the group. Never the less he is usually the one person that people from the dominant culture contact when they have information to give to the Urak Lawoi.

The Thai government has a tendency to expand its control over ethnic minority communities and new leaders are therefore appointed to represent the Urak Lawoi instead of the *To Maw.* This is a common way to replace the traditional leaders (Vaddhanuphuti 1996:84). The government's duty is to guarantee law and order and to work for development and economic improvement.

Ko Lanta Yai consists of two *Tambon* where the elected community heads, *Gamnan,* represent the Urak Lawoi and are their spokesmen before the district officers *(Nai Amphur)* and the government. *Gamnan* also represent the Urak Lawoi in TV and the media. Ko Lanta Yai is divided into 13 Mo Baan (villages) with *Po yái baan* as there representatives. I only know of one case in Ko Lanta where the Urak Lawoi are represented by a *Po yái baan*. The relationship between the Urak Lawoi and government officials is tense. They are afraid of talking to the governors because they do not know how to express themselves. They explain this as due to their lack of education and ignorance of how Thai society works. They feel inconvenient in the company of people with authority such as lawyers and the police. They are afraid of being arrested or taken away since they want to stay with their family. The Urak Lawoi are afraid of becoming the enemies of anyone. This causes problems since it means they are afraid of helping one other by a alerting the authorities. The Urak Lawoi think that this may be one of the main reasons why they tend to split up and that people just think of themselves. They do not cooperate like they used to do and this makes the group split up. Some realize that if they would collaborate they would become much stronger. 'But everybody is just thinking of money', someone said. 'Thai, Buddhists, Muslims, Chinese and Urak Lawoi are the same'.

Wongbusarakum (2002:163-164) had the same experience during her fieldwork in the Adang Archipelago that the Urak Lawoi do not voice their opinions to outsiders and especially not to government staff. Some people even told her that they might be shot if they express themselves. Because there is much corruption in Thailand, the Urak Lawoi try to stay out of all kind of problems and avoid supporting those who have trouble with outsiders. In Thailand, people with money can pay bribes to get out of problems, but since the Urak Lawoi do not have any money they avoid as much as possible to get involved in such situations.

4.10.1 *To Maw* or Hospital

To Maw are still acting as their medical experts. When someone gets ill, he is sent for. In this study, I will not analyze their medical treatment. Some Urak Lawoi prefer to be treated by their *To Maw.* Their opinion about the hospitals is ambiguous. Many find it a good thing that they can go to the hospital if they need to. Because they have

access to an identity card that proves that they are poor, they are entitled to discounted hospital treatment. They experience that they do not get the same good treatment as others because they get this reduction and do not have to pay more than 30 Bath for a visit to the hospital. Under 13 years of age they go for free. This fee, however, does not apply in the case of an accident. Many are superstitious about hospital treatment, as they think that 'one seldom comes back alive from there'. If this is because they go there too late or if it is, as they say, that they are not getting the best treatment, I do not know.

Some of my Urak Lawoi informants consider the ferries a problem for the Urak Lawoi when they are in need of an emergency visit to the hospital on mainland. It costs 50 Bath to go by car ferry. If the car ferry does not run, it costs 2000 Bath. In case of an accident or emergency, the Urak Lawoi are not allowed to bypass the queue to the ferry. The ferry does not leave until it is completely full. A third discrimination that the Urak Lawoi experience is if the ferry has already departed when they arrive. Then it does not turn back to pick up the person who is ill. The Urak Lawoi told me that the ferry does so for other people. 'It would be better for us with a bridge if we need to go to the hospital'. I want to add my own experience of the car ferry while I lived in Ko Lanta. As an outsider I did not have the same experience as the Urak Lawoi. I found the service very good. In some cases even better than I would have expected in my own country. My daughter Shaba was ill and had to be transported by ambulance to one of the hospitals on the mainland. We did not have to wait in any queue for the ferry, but drove right onboard. Another experience was when my daughter was on her way to the airport to fly back to Sweden. After we had been in a dramatic car accident, our taxi arrived late with us to the ferry. The people driving the ferry were alerted. In the middle of Ko Lanta Yai and Ko Lanta Noi, the big ferry turned around to pick us up. This also happened another time when we were taking the public ferry to the mainland. The Muslim who was driving us to the ferry drove very slowly. When we got there the ferry was on its way out of the harbor. Packed with tourists, it made an inconvenient turn-around and pick us up.

To Maw Calling...

I want to finish my essay by writing about my last day in Ko Lanta before flying back home to Sweden after my six months of fieldwork.

On my last day, I was writing e-mails from an Internet cafe in Saladan. While I was sitting there writing I saw Sorn, a 25-year-old Urak Lawoi woman pass by on the street outside. Sorn is a 'modern' woman who has acclimatized to the new world. She knows how to speak English and has a good job with a good pay in a scuba diving enterprise. She is not married and does not have any children. I ran outside and called her name. While I was shouting her name, my mobile phone rang. I ran inside to pick up my phone. To my surprise when I answered the telephone, it was Sorn! 'Ooo... I saw you', I started to say. 'You are in Saladan?!' Sorn just answered: '*To Maw* is waiting for you. He wants to see you. He is waiting for you at his home'. I told

Sorn, I would be right there, since I had rented a car for my last day in Ko Lanta. Twenty minutes later I was sitting in front of *To Maw* Boden's veranda. Sorn was also waiting for me. I was surprised that she had returned so quickly from Saladan, but I did not want to take up *To Maw* Boden's time by asking how she came back. Instead I had an interesting talk with Boden for a few hours with Sorn as an interpreter. At the end of our conversation he started to talk about how the Urak Lawoi can be seen at two places at the same time. I had heard the story before but had not paid much attention to it. I looked at Sorn while Boden was telling me how the Urak Lawoi could be at two different places at the same time. My heart started beating faster. 'Sorn where were you actually when you called for me to come and see *To Maw*?' 'I was calling from home'. 'But I saw you in Saladan... I know it was you. You even had your hair the same way and the same clothes...' Sorn and Boden just looked at me. That was my last visit and chat with the Urak Lawoi before returning home...

Photo 30 *Lotta and Bada visiting the Moken in Ko Surin on the border to Burma.*

Conclusion

The purpose of this essay is to explore the extent to which rapid developments in economics and tourism have affected Urak Lawoi culture and life style in Ko Lanta. To what extent are the Urak Lawoi able to control the tourist process in Ko Lanta? In what ways do they make use of it, and how are they excluded from it? The answer is that the Urak Lawoi cultural heritage is still important to them, but it is falling apart. Through loss of land they are losing their self-sufficiency and are becoming increasingly dependent on money to support their families. This causes the group to split and makes it difficult for the entire community to gather and celebrate their ceremonies. Ranked lowest in the new social and economic hierarchy that has been imposed on them, they have no chance whatsoever to control Ko Lanta's tourist development; the only economic profits they gain from it is as unskilled laborers.

From my earlier research on the Urak Lawoi (Granbom 2003), it appeared that as if they had been able to maintain their culture, identity and language despite the influences from surrounding ethnic groups. Though they have adjusted their economy to the dominant culture during historic contacts with civilized traders, they have kept their own unique culture and identity alive because they have had access to their traditional territory: the sea and the shores on the islands in the Andaman Sea. Previously, this province was uninteresting from a western economic perspective. However, territorial deprivation is the greatest threat to Urak Lawoi culture as tourist development takes over their pristine paradise, its beaches and crystal clear waters.

To what extent does rapid economic and tourist development affect Urak Lawoi culture and life style in Ko Lanta? The Urak Lawoi are considered to be one of Thailand's few remaining hunter-gathering groups. The loss of access to natural resources within 'their' territory has forced them to abandon their traditional self-sufficient life style, thus making it hard for them to maintain their culture. They are unable to sustain their long-established habit of living for the day which entails leaving their home base temporarily for long sea voyages or extended periods of shoreline camping to gather sea products. Without access to traditional food sources, they become dependent on cash and payment for their labor in order to buy food and other goods. This creates an inferiority complex with regard to western culture. As individuals begin to operate more independently, identity crises grow among people who are accustomed to belong to a tightly knit group.

The elected community heads who represent the Urak Lawoi are outsiders and they have difficulties to understand their problems. The Urak Lawoi fear authorities and do not discuss their problems and concerns freely with outsiders. According to Bodley (1999a:10), political autonomy is lost when the state takes control of a territory, which can be observed in the Urak Lawoi case. Government control leads a radical transformation of tribal organization, as tribal peoples must integrate with an un-

familiar social and political system. My conclusion is that Urak Lawoi loss of control over their traditional territory makes it increasingly difficult for them to retain their cultural heritage.

To what extent are the Urak Lawoi able to control the tourist process in Ko Lanta? In what way do they make use of it and how are they excluded from it? It appears as if the Urak Lawoi, as an indigenous people, do not benefit or enjoy any great economic advantages from the gigantic tourist developments on the island because outsiders and other ethnic groups exploit 'their' territory alone. The Urak Lawoi are forced to accommodate to new circumstances as they lose their access to attractive land, making it very difficult for them to remain self-sufficient. Lacking knowledge, the capital to run a business and access to prime land deprive the Urak Lawoi of the economic benefits from tourism, and they cannot rise above the level of unskilled laborers. Outsiders exploit their *Loy Rua* ceremony, forcing them to adapt it as a tourist attraction. However, the economic profits from it mainly benefit outsiders. My conclusion is that the Urak Lawoi have no real influence over tourist development in Ko Lanta, and they are with few exceptions excluded from its benefits.

What stress factors and problems do this indigenous people face when outsiders exploit what the Urak Lawoi consider their own territory? The main stress factor is lack of natural resources. Development has led to jungle deforestation and has dried out waterfalls. They are concerned about the lack of fresh spring water for the future and reduced access to free food and fish. They are worried that they will not have enough money to support their families and that the attractiveness of local land for tourism may increase its value beyond what they can afford to pay for it.

Change has created ambivalence to identity. The Urak Lawoi do not feel at home in the dominant culture as poor Thai people, and being recognized as an 'invisible' minority increases their feeling of being outsiders. As a result of this, and other problems stemming from tourism and the new market economy, drug use has become a major concern in the last decade. There seems also to be a general increase in stress-related health problems, for instance the Urak Lawoi talk about unexplainable stomach pains and insomnia.

The Urak Lawoi express concern that their own language is being replaced by Thai and English, and that they no longer have free time to socialize because they work long hours to support their families. The Thai educational system also competes for family time, and teaches the younger generation new customs in an attempt to acclimatize them to Thai society, though they have difficulty ultimately finding a place in it. After elementary school teenagers must find work to assist with family support and to finance new cravings brought about through increasing exposure to wealthy outsiders and tourists. However, there is no tradition or money to send them on to higher education on the mainland. Thus, they may find work only as laborers. My conclusion is that the dominant culture is 'successfully' in integrating the Urak Lawoi into Thai society as poor Thai citizens.

Final Discussion

I find ample evidence to support my hypothesis that the Urak Lawoi inferiority complex has increased with expanding exploitation by outsiders. They fear authority figures. The Thai population looks upon them as poor, 'stupid' Thai Mai (New Thai), on the lowest rung of the social ladder. They are ashamed of this before outsiders, with whom they try to erase their identity. Convinced of their own inferiority, they seek to assimilate to the dominant Thai culture, believing this will make them more efficient and provide new opportunities. The Urak Lawoi are also afraid of the official consequences if their integration with Thai culture fails. But their integration is only superficial. For example, they pretend to be Buddhists, but never attend the religious ceremonies in a Buddhist temple. They still believe in the worship of their ancestors. This may be compared to Ekholm Friedman's (1998:63-64) report concerning the Hawaiians. They did not want to identify themselves as Hawaiians, but in their own minds they still were, and they did not disappear in the cultural sense to become 'the other'. In the case of the Urak Lawoi a strong feeling of belonging has made the remaining part of the groups' identity important. This is demonstrated by those of a mixed background who never hesitate to say that they are Urak Lawoi. They do not think of themselves as being mixed.

My hypothesis regarding the future of the Urak Lawoi is that as long as they have no influence over or confidence in the outside world that now dominates their territory and dictates changes in their life style, they will continue to suffer the effects of the resulting inferiority complex. This tendency is not unusual. Worldwide, as long as indigenous peoples are oppressed and naive about their circumstances, they feel inferior and are easily dominated. According to Ekholm Friedman (ibid.: 68) education increased the Hawaiians' ethnic self-awareness and empowered them. Through education, indigenous peoples may gain influence in the dominant culture and quite often enjoy a rebirth of native pride and a new interest in their minority rights. For instance, outsiders considered Hawaiian culture to be lost and for many years it was disadvantageous to be a native Hawaiian. When the native movements started, however, the number of registered Hawaiians suddenly increased as people began to celebrate their cultural heritage again.

I would suggest that the Urak Lawoi have not yet had any 'native pride' movement because of their fear of authority and their lack of knowledge and experience of 'the other world'. Most Urak Lawoi cannot read or write. They are currently at a stage where their inferiority complex compels many of them to integrate with the dominant culture, which has promised them opportunities if they collaborate. Once some of them receive proper education and take non-menial jobs it will be easier for them to stand up for their ethnic identity and culture. Though they are not completely cut off from their cultural roots in the way that is common for members of western society, they recognize the loss of identity, which might be the cause of new problems as previously discussed in my introduction to this essay. Another factor contributing to their fear of authority could be the occurrence of unexplainable shootings in Ko

Lanta. During my fieldwork, three locals were shot to death. It was widely believed that the authorities or those they had hired carried out these murders. I only learned of this because of my friendships with the locals.

By encouraging cultural pride instead of feelings of inferiority, states may intervene to save ethnic minorities. However, this is usually done in their own interest to strengthen some tourist project. The 'hill tribes' in northern Thailand are one example. The goal of saving these tribes is to provide an attraction for trekkers, who visit these exotic minorities during their vacations. By contrast, in the homeland of the Urak Lawoi, it is exotic enough, just to experience Thai culture and the natives find themselves competing with tourists for the use of the sea and the beaches.

It is well known that a society is not so sensitive to changes if tourism supplements rather than replaces customary support systems. Societies where inhabitants return to their traditional life style during low season are more stable. The Urak Lawoi's increasing dependence on tourism is therefore a big worry as they lose their capacity to sustain a hunter-gatherer economy through their lack of access to the sea and the beaches. Recently, terrorist attacks on tourists have featured in the news. Disturbances in the Muslim-dominated southern part of Thailand are likely to increase with devastating consequences for tourism. Certain developers fail to consider both the social and environmental costs, including the fact that the population in Ko Lanta is 80% Muslim. The lack of social sensitivity has brought tourists in bikinis plus a thriving sex industry. The fact that this is unwelcome by the local Muslim population is one reason why terror attacks are feared in the tourist destinations. Secondly, Ko Lanta's developers lack a consideration of the environmental consequences of their projects on an island with limited natural resources. For example, tourists are big consumers of water for showers, swimming pools, beautiful fountains and gardens, and the island has no capacity for the volumes of garbage they generate. Additionally, no busses run on the island. Small entrepreneurs have found that they can earn a better living as taxi drivers rather than bus drivers, which creates a tremendous traffic burden on Ko Lanta's undeveloped roads.

As an island destination, Ko Lanta is highly susceptible to falling out of favor with tourists when it becomes less endowed with natural scenery. It is well known in Thailand that tourists tend to avoid over-exploited resorts that have put too much pressure on the environment, the very resource on which the industry is built. Islands are especially sensitive due to their limited resources. By the time this development is completed, the natives have forgotten their traditional livelihood and life style. Thus a drop in tourism upon which they depend would have devastating consequences. Tourists will continue to abandon one 'pristine paradise' and popularize another, which probably meets the same destiny if environmental controls are not put in place.

Another potential problem is that foreigners may outnumber locals on Ko Lanta, producing a social stress when tourists invade the privacy of locals (Smith 1989: 10). This is especially problematic when a new 'elite' from the outside control the development process to its own advantage. A personal experience may illustrate this. We wanted to surprise my oldest daughter with a birthday party a few days before return-

ing to Sweden. She was visiting us at the time, so we had temporarily rented the most luxurious bungalow in Klong Dau Beach. The western resort owner knew about the surprise party that was to be held during the daytime. As our guests began to arrive we soon realized that there was a big problem . . . all of them happened to be Thai and not high ranking in the social hierarchy. A few days later we were asked to leave the resort, as they did not like having locals coming by to ask for us.

It is important for the future that the Urak Lawoi get involved with local tourist development if there is any possibility to 'be what they are'. If more 'Gypsy Villages' are to be built, they must be involved, organizing the project and profiting from it, without outside interference. If current trends continue, coping with the inferiority complex and the need to integrate with the market economy will keep young people away from their native culture, music and *To Maw'* duties. Important knowledge about customs and traditions will follow older Urak Lawoi into the grave. Possible movements in the future to strengthen Urak Lawoi identity may then be built on nostalgia and new traditions be invented. It is important to remember that cultural identity is an on-going process and the interference of tourism and its effects on that process is a complex issue.

The lack of written information about the Urak Lawoi is an obstacle to research. The Urak Lawoi has no written language and have therefore not produced any literature. With environmental geographers providing nearly all the information that exists about tourism and the environment on the islands of Thailand, there is certainly a need for anthropological studies of the Urak Lawoi and island tourism. Detailed ethnographic studies are pressingly needed at the moment. Anthropological material is needed through empirical research strategy. As human beings, the Urak Lawois' voices must be heard and heeded. They are unable to tell the world about their situation themselves and therefore the need for anthropologists to bring their concerns to the public is very urgent. The Urak Lawoi wish that outsiders would get involved in their situation. This need seems acute since, as Cohen states (1996b: 238), minorities in Thailand are forced to enter the wider society as the lowest in rank. Thai people tend to disregard hunter-gatherers since they are considered barbarian, savage and non-human, and have even been put on display in Bangkok department stores.

In summary: My research confirms Bodley's (1999a: 12) conclusion: just as 'the greatest victims of industrial progress have been indigenous peoples, indigenous peoples are now the victims of tourist development in the Third World. The Urak Lawoi in Ko Lanta, Thailand are following the familiar pattern. Their political autonomy was lost when the state gained control over their territory. Tourist exploitation in Ko Lanta can be seen as an extension of imperialistic activity. It may convince the Urak Lawoi and other local peoples that such exploitation will eventually benefit poor people. Even if economic gain is realized, the relationship between hosts and guests has obvious colonial overtones. If the plight of the Urak Lawoi is not heard, most of them will live in miserable slum villages as poor Thai people in the near future.

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