Describing Oral Tradition of Sea Gypsies in Thailand

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The Sea Gypsies

Moken
Moklen
Urak Lawoi

Tabtawan Village, Phang-nga Province
Moklen Cultural Heritage

Housing
Way of life
Spiritual Belief & Folklore
Language (Spoken language)
Moklen as an Endangered Language

- ~6,000 speakers (UNESCO)
- Spoken language
- Only seniors speak the languages
- New generation uses official languages
- Teaching Moklen in schools
## Preservation & Revitalization of Endangered Cultural Heritage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documentation</th>
<th>Immersion</th>
<th>Diffusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Longevity depends on medium</td>
<td>• Integration with formal education system</td>
<td>• Use or consume outside the originating community, particularly in the domains occupied by majority language (e.g., government officers, schools)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Substantial supports from established social organizations and a large group of active community</td>
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</tbody>
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Ethnographic Approach

- Shadowing and home visits
- In-depth interview & Observation
- Language probing
  - Human parts
  - Daily activities
  - Animals
  - Plants
  - Household equipment
  - Work and business
  - Folklore and story
- Daily briefs and debriefs
# Digital Collection in Moklen Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item/Contributor</th>
<th>Community Members</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Researchers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital images</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital videos</td>
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<td>Audio recordings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fieldnotes</td>
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</table>
Language as a medium of oral tradition
Dictionary-based Data Model for language preservation

- Dictionary writing system (DWS) or dictionary production/publishing system
- TEI Lex-0

- Syntactic representation
- Semantic representation

- Entries
- Forms
- Senses
- Translations
- Cross-reference
Moklen-Thai-English Dictionary

Features
- Moklen in lemma
- Definitions
  - Thai morphemes (if any)
  - English morphemes (if any)
- Example usages
- Audio
- Images
Thai-based Orthographic Design

Elements
- Consonants
- Vowels
- Tonal marks
- Word embodiment
- Sentence structure
Conceptual Model

Orthographic form

Dictionary Entry

is realized in

Physical Object

is realized in

Concept/Story

is realized in

Performance/Event

Language

has language

Language

has language

Event

is realized in
"Languages can only exist where there is a community to speak and transmit them. A community of people can exist only where there is a viable environment for them to live in and a means of making a living. Where communities cannot thrive, their languages are in danger."

(Romain, 2007)