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36 Etnosemiotica: risultati e prospettive
a cura di Francesco Galofaro e Paolo Sorrentino

Entangled in Translation
Insights from Semio-Ethnographic Fieldwork among the Moken of the Surin Islands[1]

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Abstract
The aim of this article is twofold. First, it presents the initial findings of fieldwork conducted in February 2024 on the Surin Islands, in the Andaman Sea (Thailand), as part of a broader research project. The research was carried out within a protected national marine park that is also home to villages inhabited by the Moken, the so-called "sea nomads." The article explores how these preliminary findings and working hypotheses relate to emotions, the perception of space, and the relationship between marine and terrestrial environments. Particular attention is devoted to the role of material objects – such as houses, boats, and even waste – in shaping everyday spatial experience within the village where interviews and participant observation were conducted. Second, the article investigates how tourism, although regulated by the specific conditions of a protected natural park, influences local perceptions, representations, and social dynamics. What forms of interaction emerge between the Moken and visitors? What tensions and contradictions arise when a maritime environment that has historically constituted the natural habitat of these "sea nomads" is simultaneously protected and regulated by a state institution in the name of environmental conservation? Finally, the article proposes a preliminary ethnosemiotic and sociosemiotic perspective through which to interpret these issues, offering an initial analytical framework that will be further developed in future research.

Keywords
Sea & space sociology; Roots tourism; Moken people; Sociosemiotics; Ethnosemiotics

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[1] This paper is a first and partial result of a wider research conducted under the co-supervision of prof. Emilio Cocco, research Coordinator, UniTeramo, Emanuela Diodati, UniTeramo and Roma3, in collaboration with Jirayudh Sinthuphan, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand), and Unimore, and it refers to the first research period, in Surin Islands, February 2024. But this research is ongoing, and we recently (February 2026) conducted a fieldwork period with the same team, this time among the fishing communities and villages of the Songkhla Lagoon area in southern Thailand.

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1. Introduction. Background and Research Objectives

This paper presents an initial socio-semio-anthropological exploration, as well as a preliminary ethnosemiotic investigation – supported by fieldnotes – of the relationship between the Moken people and the sea, focusing on their historical, cultural, and contemporary challenges. Based on fieldwork conducted on Surin Island and, subsequently, on Koh Lipe in February 2024 (coordinated by Emilio Cocco, together with the researcher Emanuela Diodati; see note), the study examines issues of spatial representation, social change, and the entanglement of tourism, conservation policies, and traditional ways of life. More broadly, this research forms part of an ongoing comparative sociological, socio-semiotic, ethnosemiotic, and anthropological project centred on the notion of the ocean and the sea as social spaces, with the aim of investigating the different forms of social relationships that diverse communities establish with maritime environments across several regions of the world.

The research originates from a broader comparative project launched in 2017 (see note), aimed at examining how different communities perceive and interact with the sea as a social space. Drawing on a combination of qualitative methods – including ethnographic diaries, interviews, cognitive mapping, and media analysis – the study seeks to explore the lived experience of the Moken people, an ethnic group traditionally known as "sea nomads" – a designation that is also widely employed in the media and tourism discourse – and their evolving relationship with the maritime environment of the Andaman Sea. More specifically, the study aims to understand how the Moken perceive the sea in relation to their identity and everyday life; to investigate the socio-semio-spatial dynamics within the community under the combined influence of conservation policies and tourism; and, finally, to explore the aesthetic and emotional dimensions of the Moken's relationship with their environment.

An important issue addressed in this article concerns tourism – and the emerging phenomenon of "roots tourism", which will be discussed in the final part of the paper –, the ways in which the Moken negotiate different forms of hospitality and the changing attitudes associated with them. More broadly, the research seeks to investigate the sea as a social space by emphasizing the diverse relationships that different communities establish with maritime environments. Through a multi-method ethnographic approach, we analyze the intersections of space, aesthetics, and emotions in the Moken's experience of the sea, paying particular attention to their interactions with the national park and to the ongoing transformations affecting their way of life. With regard to tourism, however, it should be emphasized that tourist activities have profoundly affected the Moken community, introducing both opportunities and challenges that have significantly reshaped their traditional way of life.

Historically, the Moken, renowned for their deep connection to the sea, lived a predominantly nomadic existence throughout the Andaman Sea. As will be discussed in the following sections, much of this area now falls within a protected national marine park. In places such as the Surin Islands, tourism has significantly transformed the Moken's living environment. For almost half of the year, Moken villages receive a continuous influx of visitors, dis-

rupting everyday life and generating a widespread sense of cultural intrusion. Although tourism within the park is regulated because of its protected status, daily visitors often treat the Moken settlements as spectacles or as a kind of "gadgetized" ethnographic museum, thereby undermining the dignity, autonomy, and everyday life of the Moken people.[2]

With regard to community-led tourism initiatives, the Moken have responded to these challenges by developing projects aimed at preserving their cultural heritage while fostering respectful interactions with visitors. By organizing local tourism teams, they offer guided experiences, including boat excursions and snorkeling activities, allowing them to play an active role in representing their own culture. Such initiatives can empower the Moken to exercise greater control over the narratives surrounding their identity while also generating more sustainable sources of income.

In this context, the concept of "roots tourism" presents a potential opportunity for the Moken. Beyond serving as a means of cultural preservation[3] (see, e.g., Cannas, 2022), roots tourism encourages individuals and communities to reconnect actively with their socio-cultural heritage. As an alternative to conventional mass tourism, this approach promotes forms of engagement based on authenticity, mutual respect, and cultural dialogue. Within this framework, the Moken's relationship with tourism continues to evolve. Although mass tourism poses significant challenges, there is growing recognition of the potential benefits offered by carefully managed, community-based tourism initiatives. By emphasizing sustainable practices and prioritizing the preservation of their cultural heritage, the Moken seek to negotiate the complexities of contemporary social change while maintaining their ancestral relationship with the sea.

The impact of tourism on the Moken community is therefore multifaceted, presenting both constraints and opportunities for empowerment. Through community-led initiatives and a commitment to forms of tourism grounded in authentic cultural exchange, the Moken strive to balance the preservation of their cultural heritage with the demands of an increasingly globalized world.

2. General issues concerning the Moken and the Present Research

The Moken are an ethnic group of sea nomads traditionally associated with a maritime way of life in the Andaman Sea (cf. Arunotai, 2003; 2006). They primarily inhabit the Mergui Archipelago, a group of more than eight hundred islands located off the coasts of Myanmar and Thailand. Historically, the Moken led a nomadic existence, spending much of their lives aboard traditional boats known as kabang. Their profound knowledge of the natural environment is reflected not only in their navigation and fishing skills but also in their remarkable free-diving abilities, often practiced without the aid of equipment. They are known to dive to considerable depths and remain underwater for extended periods, a capacity that some scholars have attributed, at least in part,

[2] See, for instance the dossier: <https://oceanographicmagazine.com/features/seafaring-moken-in-the-andaman-sea/>.

[3] Cf., concerning some information about Moken and sustainable tourism: <https://www.mokenislands.com/moken-people/>.

to physiological adaptations developed over generations. At the same time, as Arunotai (2006) also observes, the Moken maintain a close relationship also with the forest environment. Older generations possess extensive ethnobotanical knowledge, and when entering the forest they typically move in pairs or small groups, ensuring that they remain within calling distance of one another.

From a cultural and linguistic perspective, the Moken speak their own language, which belongs to the Austronesian language family, while their traditions, myths, and expressive practices are deeply intertwined with the sea. Their subsistence strategies rely primarily on fishing, shellfish gathering, and the collection of other marine resources, reflecting a highly sophisticated understanding of the maritime ecosystem that has long been essential to their survival. Over recent decades, however, this way of life has come under increasing pressure as a result of multiple factors, including the loss of traditional territories, restrictions on mobility, and the effects of modernization, further intensified in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami. These transformations have often compelled the Moken to adopt more sedentary lifestyles, resulting in profound changes to their cultural practices and social organization.

Finally, the visibility of the Moken – and of related groups such as the Urak Lawoi – increased significantly after the 2004 tsunami, partly because of the widespread circulation of traditional narratives that appeared to anticipate the disaster. In particular, the legend of the seven giant waves (*laboon*), interpreted as a cyclical event that periodically purifies the earth, offers a compelling example of how environmental knowledge is encoded, preserved, and transmitted through mythological traditions (Arunotai, 2006; Diodati, 2024). Overall, the Moken represent a distinctive component of Southeast Asia's cultural diversity, offering a remarkable example of the profound interrelationship between human communities and the marine environment. Yet the present article is not primarily concerned with describing the Moken just as a maritime community. Rather, it investigates how this historical relationship with the sea is being reconfigured through tourism, conservation policies, and the semiotic negotiation between marine and terrestrial spaces.

3. Methodology

This research, conducted in February 2024, consisted of a one-month period of fieldwork carried out on Surin Island and Koh Lipe. As anticipated, the study adopted a mixed qualitative methodology combining ethnographic diaries, in-depth interviews, participatory mapping, media analysis, and socio- and ethnosemiotic analytical tools. Beyond documenting the empirical context, the research also addresses broader processes of social change, focusing in particular on the paradoxical condition of a historically nomadic community that is now constrained by legal, economic, and environmental pressures. The Moken's transition from a maritime existence to a more sedentary way of life is shaped by multiple external forces, such as state regulations, conservation policies, economic transformations, and the environmental restrictions associated with the protected national park in which many of them now reside.

The research adopts, as anticipated, an interdisciplinary perspective that brings together anthropology, sociosemiotics, ethnosemiotics, and ethnographic fieldwork. Data collection combined semi-structured and unstructured interviews with members of the Moken community, photo-elicitation techniques, and focus groups involving both Moken participants and National Park rangers. More broadly, the methodological framework integrates ethnographic observation with sociosemiotic analysis in order to capture the complexity of the Moken's relationship with their environment. Among the principal research tools, the ethnographic diary played a particularly important role. It served not only to record myths, narratives, and observations of everyday life, but also to document the ways in which the Moken conceptualize their relationship with space, the environment, and, above all, the sea. In addition, exploratory interviews were conducted with National Park staff in order to investigate their perceptions of the Moken and of their role within the Surin Islands protected area.

A total of twenty-three in-depth, largely unstructured interviews were conducted with members of the Moken community, using photographs and other visual materials to stimulate discussion and encourage narrative reflection. Two focus groups were also organized: one with National Park rangers – during which one ranger also acted as a linguistic and cultural mediator – and another with members of the Moken community. Of particular importance was the use of participatory mapping.[4] Interviewees were invited to represent their "lived space" visually through drawings of their environment, including objects, paths, landmarks, and places of significance. Finally, textual and media analysis has been initiated and will be further developed as the research progresses. This analytical dimension includes thematic and figurative analyses of interviews, videos, photographs, and drawings, together with the examination of documentaries and tourism-related media representations of the Moken.

Overall, this interdisciplinary methodology has provided – and continues to provide – valuable insights into both the tangible and intangible dimensions of the Moken's socio-spatial practices, particularly the ways in which their everyday lives are negotiated between inherited traditions and contemporary political, environmental, and socio-economic constraints. Rather than treating interviews, maps, photographs, and objects simply as ethnographic data, this research considers them as semiotic devices through which the Moken construct, negotiate, and translate their relationship with the sea, the land, and the multiple institutional actors that increasingly shape their everyday life.

3.1. Ethnosemiotics: A Framework for Understanding the Moken's Entangled Spaces

More specifically, ethnosemiotics – a field that brings ethnographic observation into dialogue with sociosemiotic analysis of texts, discourses, images, material objects, and spatial practices – offers a particularly fruitful perspec-

[4] Regarding the use of mapping in the fields of semiotics and sociosemiotics, see also Pozzato, 2020.

tive for interpreting the lived experiences, symbolic worlds, and communicative practices of the Moken. Grounded in the study of spatial representations, embodied forms of meaning, and processes of narration, ethnosemiotics enables us to investigate how the Moken construct, negotiate, and continually translate their relationship with both the sea and the land through narratives, material artefacts, everyday practices, and forms of spatial organization.

According to Marsciani (2007), ethnosemiotics is an investigative approach that seeks to clarify the relationship between the observer's perspective and the observed situation, understood as a dynamic configuration of objects, spaces, practices, and interactions. Its objective is not merely to describe cultural practices, but to identify and analyse the semiotic processes through which meaning is produced, negotiated, and experienced. In this perspective, objects, gestures, narratives, and spatial arrangements are not treated simply as ethnographic evidence; rather, they are understood as meaningful articulations that reveal the ways in which a community organizes and interprets its lived world. In the present research, we adopt this general perspective rather than applying a predefined semiotic model or a rigid analytical protocol. Particular attention is devoted to the role of the researcher within the field, acknowledging that observation itself constitutes part of the production of meaning. Consequently, we consider not only what is said during interviews but also the different modes of presence that emerge while walking through the village, accompanying the Moken in their everyday activities, observing interactions within the National Park, and witnessing encounters between local inhabitants, tourists, and park staff. Drawings, photographs, maps, and material objects likewise become valuable analytical devices through which latent tensions, implicit forms of knowledge, and moments of negotiation can be identified and interpreted.

From this perspective, ethnosemiotics proves particularly suitable for investigating the paradoxes and semantic tensions that characterize the Moken's contemporary condition. A people whose identity has historically been shaped by mobility, maritime knowledge, and fluid spatial practices are now increasingly incorporated into fixed territorial arrangements regulated by state governance, conservation policies, and tourism economies. Rather than treating these transformations solely as social or political processes, an ethnosemiotic approach allows us to examine how they are experienced, represented, and translated into everyday practices, emotions, spatial configurations, and systems of meaning.

In this sense, the notion of "translation" adopted in this article should be understood in its semiotic sense. It refers to the continuous work through which spaces, maritime spaces,[5] objects, practices, and identities are negotiated across different cultural worlds. Boats, maps, tourist encounters, conservation rules, and even discarded objects become mediators through which different systems of meaning come into contact, overlap, and sometimes conflict. It is precisely within these processes of translation that the contemporary condition of the Moken can be observed. Ethnosemiotics, beyond methodo-

[5] See, in this regard, Sedda's work (cf., Sedda, 2020) – within the framework of cultural semiotics – specifically on the theme of islands as maritime spaces and, more generally, building on Lotman's research, on the theme of translation between semiotic and cultural systems.

logical and disciplinary boundaries, allows us to view tourism, environmental conservation, and sedentarization as processes of translation between different regimes of meaning.

4. The Moken People and their Universe: historical, cultural and sociological context

The Moken have traditionally inhabited the Mergui Archipelago, navigating the Andaman Sea aboard small wooden boats (kabang, see below) that functioned both as dwellings and as means of transportation (see Arunotai, 2006; Ivanoff, 1999; Diodati, 2024). Renowned, as said, for their intimate knowledge of marine ecosystems, they have historically relied on fishing, marine foraging, and seasonal movements between islands as the basis of their subsistence and social organization.

Over the last decades, however, a combination of external pressures – including conservation policies, tourism development, and post-tsunami governmental regulations – has progressively encouraged the transition from a predominantly nomadic way of life to more sedentary forms of settlement. The designation of the Surin Islands as a protected national park has significantly restricted access to traditional fishing grounds while reshaping local economic practices. Today, many Moken are employed in tourism-related activities and increasingly engage with patterns of consumption introduced through interactions with park authorities and visitors. These transformations have generated profound cultural changes and contributed to the gradual erosion of traditional ecological knowledge, challenging the historical identity of the Moken as a maritime people.

4.1. Naming the Moken: Identity, Representation, and State Categorization

Thailand is widely recognized for its cultural diversity, which includes a number of nomadic communities living both in the northern highlands and along the southern coasts. These groups have historically been characterized by a strong degree of autonomy and relative independence from the central state. Among them, the Moken remained largely invisible within public and media discourse until the 2004 tsunami. Their collective identity has been shaped not only by their own historical traditions but also by the labels assigned to them by governments, scholars, the media, and the tourism industry.

A variety of names have been used to refer to the Moken, each carrying different political and cultural implications. Chao Nam ("people of the water") is now considered an obsolete and derogatory designation and is generally rejected by the community (Arunotai, 2006), whose members identify themselves simply as Moken. By contrast, Chao Lay ("people of the sea") is more widely used, although it too often carries negative connotations associated with poverty, lack of education, and social marginality. Likewise, the expression Sea Gypsies, still common in tourism and media discourse, remains highly problematic, as it reproduces an exoticized image and has frequently been compared to the European use of the term "Roma".

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These shifting designations reveal broader tensions between the Moken's own forms of self-identification and external narratives that alternatively portray them as authentic remnants of a disappearing world or as populations requiring integration into modern society. In this context, the expression Thai Mai reflects the broader process of "Thai-ization", namely the gradual incorporation of historically nomadic groups into the administrative, educational, and political structures of the Thai state. As Arunotai (2006) observes, despite the persistence of ethnocentric attitudes within Thai society, the use of this designation also seeks to foster a sense of belonging by promoting the idea of becoming "equally Thai".

The visibility of the Chao Lay communities – particularly the Moken and the Urak Lawoi – increased dramatically after the 2004 tsunami. As Arunotai (2006) observes, these groups had "cleverly codified the danger of the tsunami disaster through their legend of the seven giant waves". According to this narrative, the laboon (the Moken term for "giant wave") periodically appears to purify the earth, an interpretation that was also frequently recalled during our field interviews (cf. Diodati, 2024). This legend illustrates how environmental knowledge, collective memory, and cosmological beliefs are deeply intertwined within the Moken cultural universe.

Building on previous anthropological studies (particularly Arunotai, 2006), one of the central issues addressed in this research concerns the historical nomadism of the Moken – a defining characteristic of their social organization that remains the subject of considerable debate today. As anthropological literature has shown, the Moken traditionally moved continuously between islands in order to exploit different ecological niches, participate in regional trade networks, and avoid epidemics, piracy, and armed conflicts. Today, however, this historical mobility has been profoundly transformed by state intervention, the establishment of protected areas, the consequences of the tsunami, and the expansion of tourism. Rather than representing merely external constraints, these processes have fundamentally redefined the ways in which the Moken inhabit, represent, and negotiate their relationship with both the sea and the land.

5. The Sea as a Semiotic Space. Some controversial element: interviews mapping and drawing. And main questions

Field interviews with the Moken began with two simple yet fundamental questions: "What does the sea mean to you?" and "What would life be like without the sea?" (cf. Cocco, Project Presentation, 2024; Diodati, 2024). From these initial questions, a series of interconnected themes gradually emerged, including the relationship with the National Park, memories of life before and after the 2004 tsunami, contemporary changes in comparison with the past, and the transformations affecting fishing practices and the use of boats. Photographs were subsequently employed as photo-elicitation devices to stimulate discussion and encourage non-verbal forms of reflection. In addition, several focus groups – particularly with National Park rangers and Moken community members – were conducted alongside systematic observations of the village, the protected area, and the coastal paths during fieldwork.

From an ethno- and sociosemiotic perspective, the sea is far more than a geographical setting or an economic resource: it constitutes a deeply embedded semiotic space, that is, a domain in which meanings, narratives, values, and embodied practices are produced and negotiated. The Moken's understanding of the sea is not abstract but fundamentally experiential, shaped through navigation, oral traditions, seasonal rhythms, and everyday practices. According to the interviewees' own accounts, the sea cannot simply be described through conventional spatial oppositions – such as near and far, inside and outside, or open and closed. Rather, it constitutes a relational universe structured by its own practices and system of meanings and values. Their distinction between the "wet sea" and the "dry sea" offers a compelling example of what might be described as a natural semiotics, in which environmental signs – currents, winds, tides, and animal behaviour – are interpreted as meaningful cues that orient perception, movement, and practical action. According to the interviews and anthropologist Arunotai (2006), the Moken's definition and naming of directions and places – and the orientation systems based on the sea, its winds, and its waves – is also important.[6]

The sea also constitutes a space of sacred and spiritual significance (cf. Cocco 2024; Diodati 2024). Within this symbolic universe, the sea redefines the meaning of objects themselves, transforming both their value and their enunciative function. The ritual practice of decorating boats and setting them adrift during ceremonial occasions exemplifies a sacred semiotics in which material objects – boats, offerings, and even, as discussed elsewhere (Montanari, 2024), discarded objects such as plastic bottles reused to mark sacred places, including cemeteries – operate as mediators between the human and the spiritual worlds. Likewise, the recurrent description of the sea in the interviews as both "home" and "a dangerous force" points to what may be understood as a mythopoetic semiotics, in which ambivalence, uncertainty, and paradox are not contradictions to be resolved but constitutive dimensions of the relationship between human beings and the marine environment.

These different forms of semiotics should not be understood as separate analytical categories but as interconnected dimensions of the same lived experience. The sea simultaneously functions as an ecological environment, a symbolic universe, a practical space of orientation, and a sacred landscape, making it the primary interface through which the Moken negotiate their relationship with the world.

Rather than dividing the world into land and sea, the Moken organize maritime space according to seasonal regimes of experience and practice. The distinction between the "wet sea" and the "dry sea" therefore constitutes not

6 According to Arunotai (2006: 4): "Like several other groups of island people, the Moken have two terms that signify direction with respect to land and sea – *kotan* (inland or towards the land) and *ta-ao* (seaward or towards the sea). These are similar to the Hawaiian terms *mauka* (inland or towards the mountain) and makai (seaward or towards the ocean). Through their nomadic marine life, the Moken are familiar with different areas and geographical features around the islands in the Mergui Archipelago – such as the bays, beaches, capes, and channels. They have specific names for these places and features. These names embody the social and cultural memory of landscape and they usually indicate commonly found flora or fauna or relate to historical events. The Surin Islands have been frequented by the Moken for centuries."

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merely an environmental classification but a culturally embedded way of producing spatial meaning.

5.1. Spatial and Symbolic Translations. Land, Sea, and The paradox of Territorial Mapping

As Michel de Certeau (1984) famously argued, space is not simply given but is continuously produced through practice. This perspective resonates strongly with the Moken experience, where maritime space is constituted less through fixed geographical coordinates than through movements, routes, seasonal rhythms, and embodied forms of environmental knowledge. From this perspective, the sea is not merely inhabited but continuously enacted through everyday practices of navigation, fishing, orientation, and social interaction. Similarly, Ingold's notion of wayfaring (2011) allows us to understand movement not as the passage between fixed points but as the very process through which places acquire meaning.

More broadly, one of the central issues concerns the transformation of the Moken's spatial world. Traditionally, their understanding of space was organized around the fluidity of the sea rather than the fixity of the land. However, the progressive transition towards permanent settlement has profoundly altered their spatial practices. In the particular case of the Surin Islands, following both the establishment of the National Park and the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, the Moken were gradually encouraged – and in many respects compelled – to settle permanently in a coastal village, fundamentally reshaping their relationship with mobility and place.

One of the central paradoxes emerging from this research concerns the Moken's relationship with cartographic representation. Conventional maps are largely foreign to their epistemological framework. Yet, when invited to represent their world, they consistently depict currents, winds, routes, and meaningful places, producing what might be described as a dynamic cartography. Rather than conceiving space as fixed and bounded, the Moken understand it as fluid, relational, and rhythmic. This perspective stands in marked contrast to processes of state territorialization, through which movement is stabilized and regulated by means of maps, administrative boundaries, conservation areas, and borders.

Kevin Lynch's (1960) methodology offered a useful framework through which to explore the Moken's perception of the sea as lived space, despite having originally been developed for the analysis of urban environments. Within this perspective, paths may correspond to traditional navigation routes grounded in detailed environmental knowledge; edges reveal new boundaries introduced by conservation policies, challenging the historical continuity between maritime and terrestrial space; nodes identify places of social interaction; while landmarks refer not only to symbolic sites such as sacred places or fishing grounds but also to dynamic environmental features. Using Lynch's categories of paths, nodes, edges, districts, and landmarks, it becomes possible to examine how the Moken translate their knowledge of the sea into forms of spatial representation that challenge conventional land-based cartography.

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Their landmarks are often not fixed constructions but moving entities – currents, winds, seasonal cycles – or named points distributed along the coastline. This suggests a remarkable semiotic inversion of conventional spatial categories: whereas modern cartography typically constructs land as stable and the sea as fluid, for the Moken the sea constitutes the primary structured and intelligible environment, while land increasingly becomes a space of constraint, discontinuity, and uncertainty. This inversion has become even more pronounced following sedentarization, environmental regulations associated with the National Park, and increasing state control over mobility.

The National Park itself occupies a particularly significant position within this process. Located close to the Myanmar border, it functions not only as a protected environmental area but also as a political and administrative threshold through which the mobility of Moken communities is increasingly monitored and regulated. At the same time, although tourist access is carefully controlled and visits remain relatively short, the daily influx of visitors transforms the Moken village into a place of continuous observation, where houses and everyday life become objects of photographic consumption and tourist representation.

The participatory maps produced during the fieldwork consistently distinguished between what the Moken describe as the "two seas", corresponding, as anticipated, to two different seasonal regimes:

Dry Sea: the calm season, facilitating travel, navigation, and gathering activities.

Wet Sea: the monsoon season, requiring different forms of mobility, subsistence, and environmental adaptation.

Rather than constituting purely environmental classifications, these categories reveal culturally embedded ways of producing spatial meaning. They challenge conventional cartographic representations by demonstrating that maritime space is organized according to rhythms of practice, perception, and experience rather than through abstract geographical divisions.

More importantly, however, both the existing literature and our interviews reveal that this maritime knowledge extends well beyond practical environmental expertise. The ability to interpret winds, currents, and changing weather conditions is inseparable from a broader cosmological framework. The Moken practice a form of animism in which both the sea and the land are inhabited by spirits (*Lobòn*), some benevolent and others potentially dangerous – they are also represented by a sort of totem pole standing at the entrance to the village (and, significantly, nearby we find stalls selling necklaces and other souvenirs and handicrafts, as well as signs for tourists). And with these spirits communication is mediated by ritual specialists or shamans who occupy an important social role within the village and community. From this perspective, the maritime environment cannot be understood merely as a physical setting but rather as a relational world in which humans, non-human beings, natural forces, and spiritual entities participate in the production of meaning. In this respect, the Moken worldview partially resonates with Descola's (2013) broader argument that animistic ontologies challenge the modern Western separation between nature and culture by attributing agency, in-

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tentionality, and communicative capacities to multiple forms of life. The sea thus emerges not simply as an environment to be crossed or exploited, but as an active interlocutor within a wider network of social, ecological, and symbolic relationships.

5.1.1. The *Kabang*: A Semiotic Mediator

The *kabang*, the traditional wooden boat of the Moken, is perhaps the most complex semiotic object within their cultural universe. From a socio- and ethno-semiotic perspective, it operates simultaneously on multiple levels, functioning not simply as a material artefact but as a mediator that connects different systems of meaning, practices, and forms of life.

The kabang is a dugout canoe traditionally carved from the lightweight wood of the Salacca tree, whose buoyant properties make it virtually unsinkable. Its distinctive bifurcated bow and stern serve practical purposes, facilitating movement into and out of the water during fishing and gathering activities. At the same time, these structural features possess profound symbolic significance. As Ivanoff (1999) demonstrates, the kabang metaphorically reproduces the human body: each of its components bears the same name as a corresponding part of the human anatomy. Technical knowledge and symbolic knowledge are therefore inseparable, making the boat simultaneously a practical object and a cultural model of personhood.

In *The Moken Boat: Symbolic Technology* Ivanoff (1999), shows how boat-building techniques cannot be separated from the symbolic universe in which they are embedded. The decision to construct a dwelling that is simultaneously a means of transport reflects not merely a technical adaptation to maritime life but a particular conception of identity, mobility, and social existence. Rather than distinguishing between technology and symbolism, the kabang embodies both dimensions within a single material form.

As a practical object, the kabang functions as a dwelling, a means of transportation, and an essential instrument of subsistence through fishing and navigation. At the same time, it constitutes a symbolic body. As Ivanoff argues, its structure—which replicates the morphology of the human body—suggests a form of embodied semiotics in which objects are not external to human experience but are integral to its constitution. The boat thus becomes an extension of the person rather than a simple instrument. And, at the same time, it was both a home and the setting for daily life throughout one's entire existence.

The kabang also performs an important ritual function. During seasonal ceremonies, it is transformed into a vessel of offerings, mediating between the material and the spiritual worlds. In this sense, the boat operates not only as a vehicle across physical waters but also as a symbolic mediator between different existential domains – life and death, humans and spirits, the visible and the invisible. It is therefore not simply a means of transport but a threshold object, continuously crossing and connecting different symbolic worlds.

From this perspective, the transition from life aboard the kabang to permanent settlement in government-built villages represents far more than a change in housing. It constitutes a profound semiotic transformation, mark-

ing the passage from a mobile maritime ontology to a territorially fixed existence. This shift is simultaneously spatial, social, and ontological, altering the ways in which the Moken relate to movement, dwelling, identity, and the environment. Our own field observations confirm this multiplicity of meanings. Although most Moken no longer live permanently on boats, many contemporary houses still reproduce architectural forms that recall the kabang, preserving elements of its symbolic structure. The boat thus survives not only as a historical object but also as a cultural model through which continuity with the past is maintained. It condenses mobility and permanence, memory and adaptation, tradition and contemporary life within a single material form.

From a sociosemiotic perspective, the kabang therefore emerges as a privileged mediator. It simultaneously connects water and land, body and dwelling, everyday life and ritual, subsistence and identity. As Diodati (2024), Arunotai (2006), and Ivanoff (1999) all suggest, it also mediates between life and death through its ceremonial functions. More broadly, the kabang exemplifies how a single material object may condense multiple symbolic, practical, and emotional dimensions, becoming a privileged site of semiotic translation.

Today, however, this symbolic system is confronted with a further paradox. Traditional kabang can no longer be constructed according to ancestral techniques because the felling of the trees from which they were traditionally carved has been prohibited by environmental and state regulations. Consequently, the Moken find themselves in a contradictory position: in the name of protecting nature, they are prevented from reproducing practices that had historically coexisted sustainably with the environment. As repeatedly emerged from both our field observations and previous anthropological studies, they are no longer able to inhabit the world as they once did, while simultaneously being expected to embody and perform that very tradition for tourists visiting the National Park. The kabang thus becomes not only a symbol of Moken identity but also a material expression of the tensions generated by the encounter between indigenous knowledge, conservation policies, and tourism. Rather than considering the kabang as a symbol representing Moken identity, it may be understood as what semiotics would define as a condensator of heterogeneous meanings: a material object in which technical knowledge, social practices, cosmological beliefs, emotional attachments, and political transformations become inseparable.

6. Tourism as a Regime of Visibility: Authenticity and the Semiotic Production of Difference

As anticipated, tourism introduces a powerful and often contradictory set of forces into the everyday lives of the Moken, shaping both external representations of their identity and their own negotiations of cultural continuity and change. As an industry that thrives on the production and consumption of cultural difference, tourism plays a central role in constructing the Moken as objects of fascination, exoticism, and nostalgia. As Urry (1990) famously argues, the tourist gaze transforms local communities into spectacles, producing images of cultural authenticity that are as much the result

of representation as of lived experience. Within this regime of visibility, the Moken are frequently portrayed as an imagined community suspended outside historical time, embodying an idealized pre-modern existence. Yet the very process that incorporates them into the global tourism economy simultaneously transforms the social and cultural conditions upon which these representations depend, generating new tensions between commodification, adaptation, and local agency.

MacCannell's (1973) classic analysis of staged authenticity remains particularly relevant in this context. Modern tourists seek encounters with cultural "others" that appear spontaneous and authentic, while often experiencing carefully mediated and socially constructed performances of local life. In the case of the Moken, this paradox is especially evident. Promoted as "the last sea nomads," they are increasingly incorporated into tourism narratives that emphasize their supposed isolation from modernity. Tour operators, travel blogs, and promotional materials frequently portray them as the surviving remnants of a disappearing world, reinforcing an essentialized image of indigeneity that corresponds closely to visitors' expectations of an untouched and exotic culture. Such representations are far from neutral. They shape not only how the Moken are perceived by outsiders, but also the conditions under which they negotiate, perform, and sometimes strategically reinterpret their own cultural identity within a tourism economy that depends upon their perceived otherness. Whereas state institutions seek to render the Moken administratively legible, tourism operates through a different logic: it renders them culturally visible. These two processes intersect but do not coincide, producing different and sometimes conflicting representations of Moken identity.

6.1. Producing the "Authentic Other": Tourism and the Construction of Moken Identity

The commodification of Moken identity unfolds through multiple – and at times competing – semiotic frames. These do not merely shape how the Moken are perceived by outsiders; they also influence the ways in which the community negotiates its own visibility, economic survival, and cultural continuity within a rapidly changing social landscape. Drawing on Lakoff's notion of framing (Lakoff 2010), tourism can be understood not simply as an economic activity but also as a mechanism that organizes perception. Through recurring narratives and visual conventions, it frames the Moken as "the last sea nomads", producing expectations of authenticity, timelessness, and cultural purity.

The primitivist discourse surrounding the Moken portrays them as a people existing outside historical time, reinforcing an idealized image of an unspoiled pre-modern society. Such representations respond to the tourist desire to encounter an "authentic" cultural other while simultaneously obscuring the historical complexity of Moken society. Travel brochures, promotional materials, and guided tours typically emphasize traditional kabang boats, remarkable free-diving abilities, and maritime subsistence practices, while overlooking the Moken's long-standing interactions with regional trade networks, state institutions, and processes of modernization. In some cases, Moken individuals

and families are explicitly – or more subtly, implicitly – encouraged to perform selected aspects of their cultural traditions for visitors, further blurring the boundary between everyday life and what MacCannell (1973) famously described, as anticipated, staged authenticity. From an ethnosemiotic perspective, these frames should not be understood simply as representations imposed upon the Moken. Rather, they constitute competing regimes of visibility through which tourism selectively highlights certain dimensions of Moken life while rendering others almost invisible.

6.1.1. The Ecological Moken: Conservation and Environmental Visibility

A second dominant frame, frequently promoted by NGOs and conservation agencies, represents the Moken as natural environmental stewards endowed with an innate ecological wisdom. This discourse reflects broader trends within ecotourism, where Indigenous communities are often portrayed as guardians of fragile ecosystems. While such representations rightly acknowledge the Moken's extensive knowledge of marine environments, they also risk reducing the complexity of their relationship with nature by overlooking their long history of fishing, trade, mobility, and adaptive practices linking both land and sea. Moreover, the incorporation of the Moken into conservation policies may paradoxically reduce their autonomy, as marine protected areas and ecotourism initiatives increasingly restrict access to traditional fishing grounds and reshape long-established forms of resource use.

6.1.2. The Working Moken: Labour, Performance, and Tourism

Tourism is frequently presented as a source of new economic opportunities; yet it also generates forms of dependency that may limit Moken autonomy. As the tourism sector expands, increasing numbers of Moken are employed as boat operators, cultural performers, tourist guides, or service workers. This transformation reveals another striking paradox: while visitors travel in search of the image of free-roaming sea nomads, many Moken find themselves increasingly engaged in land-based, service-oriented occupations structured by the demands of the tourism economy. Employment remains highly seasonal and economically unstable, making long-term financial security difficult to achieve. Moreover, the forms of cultural competence required by the tourism industry – particularly the ability to perform identity according to visitors' expectations – rarely translate into broader opportunities for social or economic mobility. Instead, they often reinforce new forms of dependency upon an economic system whose value derives precisely from the continued production of cultural difference.

6.1.3. The Governed Moken: Displacement and Territorial Regulation

Beyond its economic and cultural implications, tourism intersects with broader processes of territorial regulation and displacement. The expansion of marine protected areas and national parks – often justified in the name

of environmental conservation and ecotourism – has progressively restricted the Moken's access to their traditional maritime territories. Although these conservation measures are presented, as we have seen, as forms of environmental protection, they frequently result in the dispossession of Indigenous communities, encouraging permanent settlement on land and disrupting the historically fluid relationship between sea and land that has long characterized Moken life.

At the same time, tourism-driven coastal development introduces new forms of spatial enclosure. Luxury resorts, dive centres, and private beaches progressively reduce the areas available for traditional fishing, navigation, and other subsistence practices. Tourism therefore extends beyond the sphere of cultural representation: it actively reshapes the material conditions through which the Moken inhabit and experience their environment, often reinforcing existing forms of social and economic precarity.

From an ethnosemiotic perspective, these transformations should not be understood solely as processes of physical displacement: they involve a profound reconfiguration of spatial meanings. A maritime environment historically experienced as a lived, relational, and mobile space is progressively translated into an administratively regulated territory, governed through conservation policies, tourism infrastructures, and systems of territorial control. Displacement thus becomes not only a spatial condition but also a semiotic process, through which new ways of inhabiting, representing, and regulating the environment are continuously negotiated.

6.1.4. The State as a Semiotic Actor: Legibility, Territory, and Administrative Identity

The transformations affecting the Moken cannot be understood solely through the lenses of tourism or environmental conservation. They are also deeply shaped by the intervention of the modern state, whose presence extends far beyond legal regulation. From a semiotic perspective, the state may be understood as an actor that continuously produces categories, territories, identities, and forms of spatial order. Rather than simply governing existing realities, it translates historically fluid ways of inhabiting the sea into administratively legible forms of social and territorial organization. One particularly revealing example concerns civil registration. Until relatively recently, many Moken possessed no official identity documents and often did not know their exact date or place of birth.[7] Living within a predominantly maritime and oral society, such categories had little practical relevance in everyday life. Personal identity was grounded less in administrative records than in kinship relations, collective memory, mobility, and belonging to a maritime community. The introduction of identity cards, birth registration, and systems of citizenship therefore represents more than a bureaucratic innovation: it marks the translation of persons into administrative subjects. Identity becomes legible through documents, categories, and institutional procedures that render individuals visible to the state.

[7] See, Diodati (2024), and interviews.

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A similar process concerns the production of territory. Historically, the sea was experienced by the Moken as a relational environment structured through routes, currents, seasonal rhythms, and embodied knowledge. State institutions, by contrast, progressively reconfigure this maritime world through borders, protected areas, administrative jurisdictions, and conservation regulations. The establishment of the Surin Islands National Park, significantly close to the maritime border with Myanmar, as mentioned earlier, exemplifies this transformation. The sea is no longer understood solely as a lived environment but also as a governable territory, subject to surveillance, regulation, and environmental management.

From this perspective, state intervention should not be interpreted simply as a form of political control. It constitutes a broader semiotic process through which space, identity, and mobility are rendered legible according to institutional logics. In James Scott's (1998) well-known formulation, modern states seek to make societies "legible" by simplifying complex social realities into administratively manageable categories. The Moken case illustrates this process particularly clearly. Practices that had historically relied upon mobility, oral transmission, and flexible spatial organization become progressively translated into fixed settlements, registered identities, mapped territories, and regulated forms of livelihood.

Yet these processes do not simply replace earlier forms of meaning. Rather, they coexist and frequently come into tension with the Moken's own spatial practices and cosmological understandings. The result is not the disappearance of one system in favour of another, but the emergence of a permanent condition of negotiation in which different regimes of meaning, authority, and spatial organization continuously overlap. In this sense, the relationship between the Moken and the state is not merely political; it is fundamentally semiotic, involving ongoing processes of translation between distinct ways of inhabiting, representing, and governing the same maritime world.

6.2. Tourism, Visibility, and the Negotiation of Self

Tourism shapes not only the ways in which the Moken are perceived by outsiders, but also how they understand and negotiate their own identities. As participation in the tourism economy becomes an increasingly important source of livelihood, Moken individuals and families are required to balance the demands of economic survival with the desire to preserve cultural continuity. Some actively engage with tourists' expectations, strategically presenting selected aspects of their cultural heritage while retaining a degree of agency over their own self-representation. Others resist these expectations, questioning the assumption that their indigeneity should be packaged and performed for external consumption. Younger generations, in particular, are growing up in a context where tourism has become a dominant social and economic force. Consequently, new understandings of what it means to be Moken are gradually emerging. For some, tourism provides opportunities for recognition and cultural pride, as traditional skills and knowledge acquire new social and economic value. For others, however, it generates forms of cultural estrangement,

as identity increasingly becomes negotiated through the expectations and representations of outsiders rather than through internal processes of cultural transmission.

The impact of tourism on Moken identity should therefore not be understood merely as a question of external representation. Rather, it constitutes an ongoing process of negotiation, adaptation, and resistance.[8] While tourism undoubtedly creates new economic opportunities, it also reproduces simplified narratives that often obscure the historical complexity, mobility, and agency that have long characterized Moken society. The crucial question is therefore not only how tourists perceive the Moken, but also how these representations gradually reshape the social realities within which the Moken themselves construct their identities.

As the tourism industry continues to expand, several broader questions emerge. Who benefits from the commodification of Moken identity? How do the Moken themselves negotiate, challenge, or strategically appropriate the expectations imposed upon them? And what alternative forms of representation might allow for more nuanced understandings of Moken life – understandings that acknowledge their historical dynamism, contemporary transformations, and future aspirations rather than confining them to an imagined and static past?

From an ethnosemiotic perspective, the issue extends beyond tourism itself. It concerns the different regimes of visibility through which Moken identity is continually produced and negotiated. Many Moken now work in hospitality-related occupations, moving from the role of autonomous navigators to that of guides, performers, or service providers. These should not be interpreted simply as occupational changes; they also represent shifts in the semiotic construction of identity. Each social role makes certain aspects of Moken culture visible while simultaneously obscuring others.

As anticipated, Lakoff's notion of framing and metaphor (Lakoff, 2004; 2010) offers a useful perspective for understanding these processes. Frames do not merely describe reality; they organize perception by foregrounding certain meanings while backgrounding others. Tourism discourse repeatedly frames the Moken through a limited set of recurring narratives: the "last sea nomads", the "ecological guardians", the "authentic Indigenous community", or the "living heritage" of the Andaman Sea. Such frames shape not only visitors' expectations but also institutional policies, media representations, and, increasingly, the conditions under which the Moken themselves negotiate their own identities. The tensions generated by these competing frames reveal several persistent dilemmas. Tourists seek authentic encounters while often participating in carefully staged experiences. The Moken's ecological knowledge is simultaneously celebrated and constrained by conservation policies that limit traditional practices. Likewise, the National Park seeks to preserve the natural environment while restricting the everyday activities of the very communities that have historically contributed to its maintenance. Ultimate-

[8] Regarding these dynamics about indigenous cultures – involving resistance, preservation, or attempts to return to an identity, as well as forms of negotiation – see also Clifford (2013).

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ly, the question extends beyond tourism itself, it concerns a broader struggle: the issue is not simply who represents the Moken, but who possesses the authority to frame, make visible, and ultimately define the meanings through which Moken identity is understood and lived.

6.3. Waste, Recycling, and the Semiotics of Transformation

One of the most striking findings to emerge from the fieldwork concerns the use of discarded plastic objects to mark cemeteries, particularly children's burial sites located near the beaches or in the forest immediately behind them. These places are generally inaccessible to non-members of the community. At first sight, this practice appears surprising: plastic bottles discarded by tourists, abandoned by villagers, or washed ashore by the sea are carefully arranged to mark sacred spaces. What initially appears as waste is thus transformed into a meaningful ritual object. Certainly, throughout both Western and non-Western contexts, plastic bottles are commonly reused because of their availability and versatility, serving as flower pots, containers, fishing buoys, boat fenders, or a variety of other practical objects. What distinguishes the Moken case, however, is not recycling itself but the semiotic function assigned to these materials. Bottles are arranged in ordered sequences, often suspended along ropes surrounding cemeteries, where they no longer fulfil a practical function but instead operate as markers, signs, and ritual boundaries. Their significance lies less in their material properties than in the new relational meanings they acquire within a different cultural logic.

From an ethnosemiotic perspective, this practice challenges conventional oppositions between sacred and profane, natural and artificial, waste and value. Rather than simply reusing discarded materials, the Moken transform them through processes of re-signification. Plastic, one of the most emblematic materials of global consumption, is incorporated into ritual practices and becomes part of a sacred landscape. This process may also be interpreted as a subtle form of cultural resistance, through which the material residues of global capitalism are appropriated, translated, and integrated into local cosmologies rather than remaining symbols of environmental degradation alone.

More broadly, this phenomenon reflects one of the central arguments developed throughout this article. The Moken world is characterized by a remarkable capacity to translate, mediate, and reinterpret heterogeneous systems of meaning. Rather than existing as separate domains, sea and land, tradition and modernity, mobility and settlement, sacred and everyday life continuously overlap and become entangled through material practices. Waste itself becomes another mediator, revealing how objects may circulate between different regimes of value while generating new meanings.

For this reason, the Moken should not be understood as a "vanishing" people passively adapting to external pressures. Rather, they emerge as active participants in an ongoing process of semiotic transformation, continually reinterpreting their relationship with space, objects, institutions, and the sea. One of the central paradoxes highlighted by this research concerns precisely this condition: a community historically defined by movement now inhabits

a form of semi-permanence, yet continues to reproduce mobility symbolically through practices, objects, memories, and narratives. This paradox is reflected not only in spatial organization but also in aesthetic choices, emotional attachments, and everyday forms of material culture.

As one interviewee expressed it: "I can't live the sea, but I cannot live without it".

Beyond its ethnographic implications, this analysis also raises broader ethical and political questions concerning tourism, environmental conservation, and Indigenous rights. Rather than romanticizing the Moken as the "last sea nomads" or reducing them to victims of modernization, this study suggests the need to recognize their capacity to negotiate, reinterpret, and transform the multiple regimes of meaning through which their lives are continuously represented and governed. Rethinking mobility, space, materiality, and belonging from this perspective may contribute to more nuanced ways of engaging with maritime communities without reducing them to static relics of an imagined past.

7. Conclusion: The Paradox of Stillness. Toward an Ethnosemiotics of cultural Entanglement

The case of the Moken demonstrates that meaning is never fixed but is continuously produced through interactions among spaces, objects, practices, institutions, and people. From this perspective, ethnosemiotics makes it possible to observe not simply cultural representations, but the processes through which different regimes of meaning are generated, negotiated, and transformed in everyday life. Throughout this article, translation has therefore been understood not just as a linguistic operation, but as a broader semiotic process through which spaces, identities, material objects, and institutional practices are continually reinterpreted in relation to one another.

The Moken experience reveals that these processes unfold within a condition of permanent in-betweenness. Sea and land, mobility and settlement, tradition and modernity, conservation and everyday life should not be understood as fixed oppositions but as relational domains whose meanings are constantly renegotiated. Rather than describing the Moken as a "vanishing people", this study has argued that they actively inhabit a threshold where different spatial regimes, systems of knowledge, and institutional logics intersect. The central paradox is therefore not simply that a historically nomadic community has become sedentary, but that mobility continues to survive symbolically through objects, practices, memories, narratives, and everyday forms of material culture.

The various objects discussed throughout this article – the kabang, participatory maps, discarded plastic bottles transformed into sacred markers, identity documents, and even the National Park itself – should not be regarded merely as ethnographic evidence. Rather, they function as mediators through which heterogeneous worlds encounter one another. They condense practical knowledge, cosmological beliefs, political interventions, emotional attachments, and aesthetic values, making visible the ongoing processes through which meaning is continuously translated and transformed.

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In this sense, the Moken case suggests a broader ethnosemiotic perspective. The contemporary challenge is not only to understand how different communities inhabit particular environments, but also how different actors – the community itself, the state, conservation agencies, tourism, and researchers – produce competing ways of making those environments meaningful, visible, and governable. The sea is therefore never simply a natural environment; it is simultaneously a lived space, a political territory, a sacred landscape, a tourism destination, and an ethnographic field. These different spatial regimes do not replace one another but coexist through continuous processes of mediation and translation.

This condition might be described as a paradoxical stillness. Settlement has not eliminated movement; rather, movement has become transformed into symbolic, material, and narrative practices. Waste, abandonment, and accumulation – phenomena observed in many maritime communities (cf. Cernuschi-Salkoff's *La città senza tempo* [*The Silent City* on Comacchio in the Po Delta]) – coexist here with an extraordinary capacity for recycling, re-signification, and transformation. Objects do not simply survive their original function; they acquire other meanings. Likewise, the Moken themselves do not merely adapt to changing circumstances. Remaining physically in place, they continue to transform both themselves and the material world that surrounds them. The Moken continue to inhabit movement, even when remaining physically in place. As one interviewee poignantly observed: "I can't live the sea, but I cannot live without it."

More broadly, these reflections invite us to reconsider the relationships between materiality, space, identity, and the sacred after the embodied turn in the social and cognitive sciences. They also have important ethical implications for tourism, environmental conservation, and Indigenous rights. Moving beyond both romanticization and victimization requires recognizing the Moken not as passive subjects of change, but as participants in the continual production and transformation of meaning.



Figure 1. The Moken village 1. Photos by the author.

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Figure 2. The Moken village 2. Photos by the author.



Figure 3. The Kabang Boat near the stilt houses. Photos by the author.

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Figure 4. The children's Cemetery near a beach, marked by plastic bottles. Photos by the author.



Figure 5. The Moken village 3. Photos by the author.

The Moken do not simply inhabit the sea. They inhabit the continuous transformation of meanings through which the sea, the land, objects, institutions, and identities are mutually translated. Ultimately, the Moken case demonstrates that spaces, objects, and identities are never stable entities. They emerge through ongoing practices of mediation and translation, reminding us that cultures do not simply preserve traditions: they continuously remedy them. Finally, this essay was also intended as an attempt to show how semiotics and ethnosemiotics can describe the processes through which spaces, objects, and identities are continually produced, translated, and transformed at the intersection of different regimes of meaning.

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