

## Hunter-gatherer data information sheet/questionnaire

**Be sure to put reference number and page # after each entry.**  
**[2 points for each quantitative entry, 1 pt for other.]**

### I. Description

**1.1 Name of group and language family:** Moken, Moken (Austronesian Language Family)

**1.2 Location:** “Their home is the Mergui Archipelago, some 800 islands scattered along 250 miles (400 kilometers) of the Andaman Sea, off Myanmar (formerly Burma)” (1)

**1.3 Population size (local group, breeding):** “Ten years ago, some 2,500 Moken still led the traditional seafaring and spiritual life in this archipelago. That number is slowly diminishing and is now at perhaps 1,000.” (1)

Local Group: “Nuclear families form the primary residential boat unit. Five to ten boats form a community and travel together.” (4 p. 583)

**1.4 Home range size (yearly, life):** “Most Moken communities rarely wander more than about 50 kilometers in any direction from their home-base island.” (4 p. 583)

**1.5 Density (person/km<sup>2</sup>):** 1999: 0.0625 (2500/40000) 2009: 0.025 (1000/40000)

**1.6 History** “[The Moken] are a nomadic sea culture of Austronesian people who likely migrated from southern China some 4,000 years ago, and, moving through Malaysia, eventually split off from other migrant groups in the late 17th century.” (1)

“Today many of these groups, much like rainforest hunter-gatherers, are faced with environmental loss as mangrove and coastal forests are cleared for farming, charcoal production, plantations and other kinds of coastal development. Thus, many former boat nomads in southwestern Thailand have been forced into an increasing reliance on inshore fishing, where they face competition and, increasingly, assimilation by established coastal populations.” (6)

### II. Environmental Features

**2.1 ecotype:** Central lowlands ringed by steep, rugged highlands. (7)

**2.2 temperature:** Burma climate is monsoonal, with three distinct seasons: the cold and dry season, from November to February, with average temperatures of between 20°C and 24°C. The hot-dry season from March to April with average temperatures of between 30°C and 35°C. The wet season between May and October with average temperature between 25°C and 30°C.

**(seasonality)**

**2.3 rainfall:** Tropical monsoon; cloudy, rainy, hot, humid summers (southwest monsoon, June to September); less cloudy, scant rainfall, mild temperatures, lower humidity during winter (northeast monsoon, December to April)(7)

**(seasonality)**

**2.4 patchiness (temporal, spatial)**

### **III. Economy**

#### **3.1 Main carbohydrate staples (% of energy in diet):**

##### **3.1.1 return rates upon encounter**

##### **3.1.2 resource abundance, density**

##### **3.1.3 sharing patterns of carbohydrate staples**

#### **3.2 Main protein lipid sources (% energy, % protein-lipid)**

##### **3.2.1 return rates upon encounter**

##### **3.2.2 resource abundance, density**

##### **3.2.3 sharing patterns of protein-lipid sources**

##### **3.2.4 Search Party/Pursuit group size for major protein-lipid resources**

#### **3.3 Dietary intake: (calories per capita)**

**(seasonality)**

#### **3.4 Special tools and foraging techniques:**

Kebang – small hand built boats (1) that are 6-9 m long.(2) “The men's most arduous work is, undoubtedly, the building of the kabang. To begin with, they have to go to one of the larger islands where they can find not only the hard, durable wood of a tree of sufficient height and diameter, but also make a camp, well hidden from boats passing up and down through the islands.” (3 p.266)

Only spears and dogs for hunting, (in 1922) (3 p.262)

“Other spear-like weapons are made having two long points or prongs. They are useful in lifting fish out of the water, and they can be used for reaching down wild fruit from the trees of the jungle.” (3 p. 270)

#### **3.5 Storage:**

“The Moken are hunters and gatherers, not fishermen, and have little interest in savings or the accumulation of resources. This refusal to become part of the merchantalist economy has led to their relegation of their status to the lowest rung of the social ladder.”(1)

#### **3.6 Sexual division of production (% calories, % protein-lipid by males and females)**

“Division of labor: Women were as efficient boat handlers as men. Women gathered strand fauna and wove pandanus mats for sleeping and barter. Men hunted, built boats, and dived for marine life, which women processed by cooking or drying.”(4 p. 585)

#### **3.65 Cooperation during production (% time in cooperation, % cal produced cooperatively, do men hunt solitarily or together, etc.)**

#### **3.7 Age divisions of production (production by children and elderly):**

Children do much of the same work as adults:

“Speaking generally, it is not possible to pick out occupations as being particularly those of children. So completely do they share the life of the adults that a line cannot be drawn.” (3 p. 247)

### **3.8 Non-foraging economy:**

“[Moken] harvest sea products for both subsistence and exchange. Most groups trade fish, shellfish, crustaceans, sea cucumbers, pearls, etc. for rice and other agricultural foods, clothing and tools.” (2 p.279)

#### **Time use:**

#### **3.8.1 Men's food acquisition work: (hr/day)**

##### **(seasonality)**

##### **food processing**

##### **tool work**

Boat building (3 p. 261)

“Another work which occupies a considerable portion of the men's time is the making of the different kinds of spears required for harpooning and for hunting.” (3. p269)

##### **housework**

#### **3.8.2 Women's food acquisition work**

##### **(seasonality)**

##### **food processing**

“The sun-drying of food is another occupation of the women” (3 p. 251)

“Collect water for drinking and cooking, and usually collect the wood for the fire” (3 p.251)

##### **tool work**

The making of pottery.(3 p.251)

##### **housework**

Plaiting of sleeping mats, cooking, cleaning of kabang. (3 p.249)

#### **3.8.3 Children and Elderly food acquisition work**

##### **food processing**

“The search for food is an ever-present necessity, and when the tide ebbs the kabang may put in to a rock-bordered island and boys and girls will scramble about the boulders in search of limpets. Some strength of fingers is required to detach these limpets from the rocks to which they firmly adhere. The children learn to become adepts at it, and soon collect a good boiling.” (3 p. 247)

Children also help with the cooking. (3 p. 247)

##### **tool work**

“If the elders happen to be collecting boulders, the children will assist them by carrying the smaller stones, helping to load the kabang with such a cargo of deadweight as it will safely carry.”(3 p. 247)

##### **housework**

Children do much of the same work as adults:

“Speaking generally, it is not possible to pick out occupations as being particularly those of children. So completely do they share the life of the adults that a line cannot be drawn.” (3 p. 247)

## **Food sharing patterns:**

### **3.9.1 Percent meat kept by nuclear family of acquirer**

**(by game size)**

### **3.9.2 Percent collected kept by nuclear family of acquirer**

**(by package size or resource)**

### **3.9.3 Kin bais (close kin fraction/ non-relative fraction)**

### **3.9.4 Other specified sharing patterns**

“When the family is feeding, all eat together, helping themselves out of the one pot.” (3 p.253)

## **3.10 Food taboos**

## **IV. Anthropometry**

### **4.1 Mean adult height (m and f)**

**m:** 5'4.5"

**f:** “Most women to not attain this height”(3)

### **4.2 Mean adult weight (m and f)**

### **4.3 Age specific child weight or height**

### **4.4 % wasted/stunted, nutritional status**

## **V. Demography and Life History**

### **5.1 Major causes of mortality (0-5, 5-60)**

“The most common cause of death is malaria.” (3 p. 231)

### **5.3 Juvenile survival rate (0-1, 0-15 m and f)**

### **5.4 Adult survival rate (15- 55, 15-70 m and f)**

### **5.5 Age first birth (m and f)**

### **5.6 Completed family size (m and f)**

**(range and variance, percent non-reproducers)**

### **5.7 Inter-birth-interval (f) 12 – 18 months. (3 p. 199)**

## **Marriage and parenting**

### **5.8.1 Age first marriage (m and f)**

Teen years (3 p.200)

### **5.8.2 Mean number of "divorces" (age 15-50, m and f)**

### **5.8.3 Polygyny (%males, % females, mean and range of spouse #)**

“The Moken are monogamists. I did not come across a single instance in which the man had taken to himself a second wife and concubines. I am not in a position to say that no case exists, nor that an instance of a man doing so has never been known amongst the Moken.” (3 p. 199)

“While there is no proscription against polygyny, it is uncommon.” (4 p.583)

### **5.8.4 Arranged marriage, bride purchase, evidence of coercion.**

“Moken recognize couples as married when they begin having sexual relations. Couples arrange their own marriages with the consent of the bride’s parents, whom the groom asks through an intermediary. The groom may provide a small bride-price to the bride’s parents. Marriage ceremonies are only found among Islamized communities.” (4 p.583)

#### **(kin preference)**

“Few restrictions are placed on the selection of a spouse; partners may be from within or outside a boat community. Marriage between Moken women and non-Moken men is not uncommon.” (4 p. 583)

### **5.8.5 Percent of time spent in childcare**

#### **Sex ratio**

#### **5.9.1 ratio at birth**

#### **5.9.2 juvenile ratio (age 5-15)**

#### **5.9.3 adult ratio (age 25-40)**

#### **5.9.4 sex biased homicide/neglect**

#### **Warfare/homicide**

#### **5.10.1 Percent adult male deaths due to warfare**

#### **5.10.2 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death (ratio)**

#### **5.10.3 Percent children killed before age 10**

#### **5.10.4 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing**

#### **5.10.5 Percent females in residential group captured by raiding**

## **VI. Social Organization and Interaction**

### **6.1 Residential group size:**

“Nuclear families form the primary residential boat unit. Five to ten boats form a community and travel together. Communities come together annually, forming flotillas of up to thirty or forty boats. During the southwest monsoon season, boat flotillas form in protected bays to wait out the bad weather.” (4 p. 583)

#### **(seasonality)**

### **6.2 Mobility pattern:**

“Most Moken communities rarely wander more than about 50 kilometers in any direction from their home-base island.” (4 p. 583)

During monsoon season, Moken typically move to land.

**(seasonality)**

### **6.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):**

### **6.4 Post marital residence:**

“[After the marriage ceremony] the wife returns to the kebang (boat) of her husband: she will live with his people until he strikes out for himself by fashioning a kabang. This step may not be taken for years, or it may follow close upon the birth of the first child.” (3 p. 204)

**(first marriage, mid-life)**

### **6.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense)**

“The ethnic consciousness of the Moken is created through 4 aspects of collective identities, i.e., speaking the Moken language, living on the Surin Islands, collecting sea snails for trading and (their) personal abilities and characteristics. These collective identities are constructed aiming to differentiate themselves from other groups. These “others” include both distinct ethnic groups such as the Thai but also the same ethnic group who live outside the Surin Islands. Their boundaries are constructed resulting from interethnic relationships which provide comparisons between them and the other groups. Any identities which lie outside their boundaries are considered as “otherness”. The Moken regard their language as the most important marker for their Moken-ness.” (5 p. 28)

### **6.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex)**

“There are no permanent corporate kin groups. Boat groups are composed of bilateral kin who could provide aid. The large flotillas that come together are probably larger bilateral kin groups.” (4 p. 583)

### **6.7 Special friendships/joking relationships**

“Cousins are called ‘friend’ (ja), suggesting they are outside the family’s inner-circle.”(4 p.583)

### **6.8 misc. social relations.**

Relationship with traders:

“Traders established an exploitative monopoly by putting Moken into debt and dependence through opium addiction. Traders also acted as intermediaries for Moken with the outside world.” (4 p. 585)

## **VII. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion**

### **7.1 Time allocation to ritual, ceremony and religion**

“There were the spirits, who could help or hurt. And in the inicha-berfs incantation we have the name of the chief of the spirits who can help. This spirit is supplicated, but not adored. There is nothing in the nature of worship. And there are no tabus. Evil spirits are not worshipped ; they may be avoided or propitiated, or their aid sought in working harm.” (3 p.288)

“Shamans pull pain spirits from the sick and lure them into carved figures that are disposed of later. Moken have an annual ceremony for which a number of neighboring boat groups come together to “feed the spirits” and ask for good health and a good year’s sea harvest” (4 p. 585)

**(seasonality)**

### **7.2 Specialization (shamans, etc)**

Micha-blen - a doctor or “medicine man” (3 p. 222)

Shamans – see second paragraph of 7.1

“Shamanic ability is not inherited. Women may become shamans. Sorcerers are believed to be capable of causing sickness and death.”(4 p.585)

### **7.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal)**

Death Ritual: “The traditional method of disposal was to place the corpse on a four-post platform wrapped with bamboo sticks; boat owners were buried in their boats, which were cut in half. The boat then became part of the grave goods, which also included the individual’s personal possessions. By 1850 platform burials were abandoned for burial on the beach” (4 p. 585)

Seasonal Ritual: see second paragraph of 7.1

### **VIII. Other interesting features, anecdotes, etc.**

Moken story for creation:

“At first there was only one woman; there is no account of how she came to be. She was unhappy because she was alone. Thida saw her sorrow and bade her bend down and turn to the west, when he caused conception from the east; the result was the birth of a girl. Then the woman was told to bend to the east, and there was conception from the west; of this a boy was born. Then from the north and south a male and a female child were born. When the children grew up the girls were allowed to play with a python. One of the girls reported to her mother that the creature pushed her about, and the mother said she was not to mind that. One day python and girl were missing. After a search the python was found in the roof of the house, and upon being cut open the body of the girl was found inside. The other daughter was married to an orang-outang. A child was born, and mother and child were taken to the top of a htein-tree. The orang-outang searched for honey and brought it in leaves to his wife. This diet being insufficient, the girl wanted to return home, and she complained of being dull, and got the orang-outang to bring her some shaw fibre to spin. Of this she made a rope and let herself down and ran home when her husband was on an outing. The orang-outang followed her, but was delayed by a swollen stream. At last he reached the house and angrily claimed his wife. He was persuaded to live there as the honey was not enough for her needs. Then the mother said that he could share the house, and the father (who appears from nowhere, be it noted) suggested that the husband should work with him in the smithy, taking care to keep his eyes shut and his mouth open. One day the father pushed a red-hot shovel down the husband’s throat and killed him. The widow next married an alligator, which ate her up, but her child lived and was married to a tiger. They had children and lived happily. The original lads of the first lone woman married female animals and had children. And so the world was peopled.” (3 p. 143)

**References (list and label references with numbers: 1, 2, 3...)**

1. Ivanoff, Jacques  
2005 National Geographic: Sea Gypsies of Myanmar  
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2005/04/sea-gypsies/ivanoff-text/3>
2. Endicott, Kirk  
1999 The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers  
New York: Cambridge University
3. White, Walter Grainge  
1922 The Sea Gypsies of Malaya: An Account of the Nomadic Mawken People of the Mergui Archipelago. London: Seeley, Service & Co. Limited
4. Bisht, Narendra and Bankoti, T.S.  
2004 Encyclopedia of the South East Asian Ethnography
5. Nawichai, Patcharin  
2008 Ethnic Group Livelihood Strategies and State Integrations: Moken and the Hill people in Negotiation with the State
6. Sather, Clifford  
Sea Nomads and Rainforest Hunter-Gatherers: Foraging Adaptations in the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago
7. CIA  
The World Factbook  
(available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>)