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Moken, Sea Gypsies of Andaman Sea

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The Mokens spend all their lives on the sea. They began migrating along the coast from the Malay Peninsula to the southern part of Myanmar over four thousand years. The Moken, the so-called 'Sea Gypsies', lives on a residential boat called 'caban' at the Andaman Sea in Southeast Asia where they remain nomadic, moving from place to place across borders. As their livelihood depends on fishing, with their exceptional vision and their expertise in their own diving techniques and a bamboo harpoon, they catch fish with ease. The Mokens are known to never take a fish more than they need; they do not sell their catches either.

Thanks to their outstanding capacity to predict climate symptoms, the Mokens were able to escape from the deadly tsunami of 2004. This incident brought them to attention, but at the same time completely changed their life. Restricted within a refugee camp due to possible dangers at the sea, the Mokens faced unexpected divisions and conflicts between generations.

Since 1998, a number of production crews have been recording the Moken's change of life and acculturation in a new environment after the tsunami. The Sea Gypsies have been limited to live on the land, and much restriction is placed for their return to the sea. There is an increasing threat to the Mokens by the trawlers, the fishermen who continue to fish illegally, as well as migrant fishermen. Furthermore, loss of their source of livelihood led to lose their status or rights and become workers at minds or farms, subjugated to land owners. The Mokens, who used to freely cross seas and the islands along with the seasonal cycles for thousands of years are on the edge now, and no one is sure how much longer they can continue to keep their way of life alive.