

The Legend of To' Kiri; unraveling an oral tradition about the homeland of the Urak Lawoi'

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Abstract

The Urak Lawoi' are a Malay ethnic group nowadays living primarily in permanent settlements on the islands of Phuket, Phi Phi, Jum (also called Pu), Lanta, Bulon, Lipe and Adang along the Andaman coast of Thailand. Originally, they were a nomadic sea people, living mainly on their boats and in temporary settlements along the islands' coasts. From around 1910 the Urak Lawoi' appeared rather suddenly on the islands along the Thai coast, where they sought a living for several decades. Their business was fishing and gathering other fruits of the sea, such as crustaceans or tripang. To They would repair to temporary shelters on the islands when their catch had to be cured for trade, or when weather conditions made it impossible to stay on open sea. Depending on the seasons and the connected availability of sea products they would either stay on coastal islands like Lanta, Talibong or Tarutao, or venture further out and camp on the outlying islands of Adang, Lipe, Rawi, Rok Nai or Phi Phi. Beginning in the 1940ies the Urak Lawoi' settled on the islands which had formerly been merely their provisional domiciles, and they became permanent, though not yet fully legal, citizens of Thailand. The Urak Lawoi' people have no literary tradition. Literacy among the Urak Lawoi' dates from the time of their settlement, when their children started to follow curricula at Thai schools. Texts in Urak Lawoi' are strictly modern, and written in a modified Thai script. Due to this fact it is impossible to know from written sources where the homeland of the Urak Lawoi' lay. A story widely told among the Urak Lawoi' gives us a glimpse of the possible whereabouts of the land of their ancestors. According to this oral tradition, the founder of the Urak Lawoi' 'clan' arrived in Thailand four to five generations ago, from the Indonesian *Daerah Istimewah*² Aceh, or, as it was then called, the province of Atjeh in the Netherlands Indies. This paper aims to determine the true homeland of the Urak Lawoi' people by unraveling the oral tradition concerning their origin through linking available historical and linguistic evidence.

Keywords: Southern Thailand, Andaman Coast, Aceh, Sumatra, Urak Lawoi', To' Kiri, ethnic homeland, oral tradition

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² 'Special Area'; an administrative unit within the Indonesian Republic with a great degree of self-government.

ตำนานไต่เกี๋ย : เรื่องราวพื้นบ้านเกี่ยวกับความเป็นมาของชาวอุรักลาไวย์

ยาก็อบ ไว เดอะโครต ³

บทคัดย่อ

ชาวอุรักลาไวย์เป็นกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์มาลาโยซึ่งปัจจุบันนี้ตั้งถิ่นฐานถาวรบนเกาะภูเก็ต เกาะพีพี เกาะจำ เกาะลันตา เกาะบุโหลน เกาะหลีเป๊ะ และเกาะอาดังชายฝั่งทะเลอันดามันของไทย ชาวอุรักลาไวย์ดั้งเดิมเป็นชาวทะเลร่อนเร่ อาศัยอยู่บนเรือ อพยพไปตามชายฝั่งเกาะต่างๆ เมื่อปี พ.ศ. 2453 มีผู้พบชาวอุรักลาไวย์ตั้งหลักแหล่งทำกินในบริเวณหมู่เกาะตามฝั่งทะเลไทยมาแล้ว อาชีพหลักของชนกลุ่มนี้คือการจับสัตว์ทะเล พวกเขาจะกลับเกาะเมื่อต้องนำสัตว์ทะเลที่จับได้ไปตากแห้งเพื่อนำไปขาย หรือเมื่อสภาพฝนฟ้าอากาศในทะเลไม่ปลอดภัย ชาวอุรักลาไวย์เลือกอาศัยบนหมู่เกาะใกล้ชายฝั่ง เช่น ลันตา ตะลิ่ง (ตารูเตา) หรือเสี่ยงภัยไปตั้งค่ายพักที่เกาะห่างไกลเช่น อาดัง หลีเป๊ะ ทั้งนี้ขึ้นอยู่กับฤดูกาลและปริมาณผลผลิตทางทะเลที่หาได้ ระหว่างปี พ.ศ. 2483-2493 ชาวอุรักลาไวย์ได้เริ่มตั้งถิ่นฐานบนเกาะซึ่งเดิมเป็นเพียงที่อยู่ชั่วคราว และเริ่มเป็นราษฎรถาวรของประเทศไทย ชาวอุรักลาไวย์ไม่มีประเพณีทางวรรณกรรม พวกเขาเริ่มอ่านเขียนได้เมื่อมีการตั้งถิ่นฐานถาวร และบุตรหลานเริ่มเข้าเรียนในโรงเรียนไทย ด้วยเหตุนี้ข้อมูลจากภาษาเขียนจึงไม่อาจช่วยให้เราสืบทราบได้ว่าชาวอุรักลาไวย์อพยพมาจากท้องที่ใด กลับเป็นประเพณีการเล่าเรื่อง การศึกษาครั้งนี้เปิดโอกาสให้เราได้รู้จักบริเวณที่อาจเป็นที่อยู่เดิมของบรรพบุรุษของพวกเขา ตามที่เล่าสืบกันมาว่า "ต้นสกุล" อุรักลาไวย์มาถึงประเทศไทยเมื่อสี่ถึงห้าชั่วอายุคนที่ผ่านมาเดินทางมาจาก Daerah Istimewah⁴ อาเจะห์ หรือตามที่มิซึฮิโตะในสมัยนั้นว่าจังหวัดอาเจะห์ในหมู่เกาะอินดิสตะวันออกของดัตช์ บทความเรื่องนี้มุ่งศึกษาและกำหนดแหล่งที่อยู่เดิมของชาวอุรักลาไวย์ ด้วยการคลี่คลายตำนานเกี่ยวกับที่มาของชนกลุ่มนี้โดยอาศัยการเชื่อมโยงหลักฐานด้านประวัติศาสตร์และภาษาศาสตร์ที่มีอยู่เข้าด้วยกัน

คำสำคัญ: ภาคใต้ของไทย ฝั่งทะเลอันดามัน อาเจะห์ สุมาตรา อุรักลาไวย์ ไต่เกี๋ย ความเป็นมาของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ ประเพณีการเล่าเรื่องพื้นบ้าน

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⁴ เขตการปกครองพิเศษ-พื้นที่ที่มีการปกครองตนเองในประเทศอินโดนีเซีย

Myth, legend or truth: What has been written?

When the Princess Mother visited Ko Lipe in 1986, Her Royal Highness did not only endow every Urak Lawoi' on that island with the Thai nationality and the surname Hantalay⁵, she also unveiled a brass plaque on the North beach of the island, near the cemetery of the first Urak Lawoi' elders who had lived their life and died on Ko Lipe. An inscription on the plaque tells the story of the coming of the Urak Lawoi' community to Ko Lipe, led by their leader To' Hiri, or Jae Kiri, a Muslim from Aceh. The text of the inscription is in Thai, not in Urak Lawoi', and it describes among other things the journey that To' Hiri and his companions made and why they came to live on Ko Lipe:

ประวัติแจกรี (โต๊ะกรี)

แจกรี เป็นชาวมุสลิม ได้ชวนเพื่อนอีก 3-4 คน แจวเรือมาจากอาเจะห์ ประเทศอินโดนีเซีย เพื่อหาหลักแหล่งที่ทำกิน ระหว่างทางได้หยุดพักที่เทือกเขาสูงชันญะรีย ประเทศมาเลเซีย ต่อมาเดินทางมาแวะพักที่เกาะบูโหลน แล้วจึงเดินทางต่อไปยังเกาะลันตา จังหวัดกระบี่ เพื่อนของแจกรีทั้งหมดแต่งงานตั้งถิ่นฐานที่เกาะลันตา แต่แจกรีมีความตั้งใจเดินทางต่อเพื่อแสวงหาที่ทำกิน และได้เดินทางมาถึงเกาะหลีเป๊ะ จึงตัดสินใจตั้งถิ่นฐานที่เกาะหลีเป๊ะ เนื่องจากเกาะหลีเป๊ะมีความอุดมสมบูรณ์ด้วยทรัพยากรบนฝั่ง และในท้องทะเล

จากนั้น แจกรีชักชวนเครือญาติมาอยู่ที่เกาะหลีเป๊ะ ในปี พ.ศ.2452 และแต่งงานกับนางแบฮ๊ะ ซึ่งเป็นชาวเกาะลันตา จังหวัดกระบี่ มีบุตรกับนางแบฮ๊ะ 2 คน เป็นผู้ชาย 1 คน ชื่อ นาย สบู่ หาญทะเล และผู้หญิง 1 คน ชื่อนางดารา หาญทะเล

นายสบู่ หาญทะเล แต่งงานกับนางบีเยะ หาญทะเล (ปัจจุบันเสียชีวิตทั้งคู่) มีบุตรด้วยกันทั้งหมด 7 คน

นางดารา หาญทะเล แต่งงานกับนายบรรจง อังโชติพันธ์ มีบุตรด้วยกัน 5 คน

A genealogy, a short word of reverence to the Princess Mother and a list of Village headmen since To Kiri follows.

The translation of the plaque at the cemetery of Ko Lipe is as follows:

The history of Jae Kiri (To' Hiri)

Jae Kiri was a Muslim, who, together with 3 or 4 of his friends, came rowing in a boat from Aceh, Indonesia, in order to find a permanent place to settle and make a living. On the way, they stopped and stayed for a while at the mountain range of

⁵ In Thai : หาญทะเล, bearing the meaning of: 'bold at sea', 'valiant at sea', 'sea-bold'

Gunung Jerai, Malaysia. Afterwards they traveled on and stayed on Bulon Island, and then they traveled on to Lanta Island, Krabi Province. All Jae Kiri's friends married and set up their domicile on Lanta Island, but Jae Kiri was determined to travel on in order to seek for a place to make a living, and he travelled on to Lipe Island, and he decided to set up his domicile at Lipe Island, because Lipe Island had an abundance of natural resources on its land and in the sea around it.

Thereafter, Jae Kiri persuaded his clan to come and live on Lipe Island in the year of the Buddhist Era 2452 (1909 AD), and married with Ms Be-a, who was from Lanta Island, Krabi Province. He had two children with Ms Be-a; a son, called Mr Sabu Hanthalay, and a daughter, called Ms Dara Hanthalay.

Mr Sabu Hanthalay married with Ms Biya Hanthalay (now both deceased). Together they had 7 children.

Ms Dara Hanthalay married with Mr Banchong Angchotipphan, and had 5 children. An alternative, slightly different version of the text on the brass plaque on Ko Lipe (and without the genealogy) is found in a school primer used in a school for Urak Lawoi' children at Ko Adang⁶:

ไต่เกีร์เป็นชาวมุสลิมจากอินโดนีเซีย แวะเรือมาจากอาเจะห์เมื่อประมาณ 100 ปีมาแล้ว ระหว่างทาง ได้หยุดแวะพักที่หมู่เกาะนิรัย มาเลเซีย และชวนเพื่อนรวมจำนวน 4 คน ได้แก่ ไต่เอิม ไต่บือ และแจบิเนะ ออกเดินทางหาหลักแหล่งที่ทำกินต่อไป โดยแวะพักที่เกาะลิดีและเกาะบุโหลนใหญ่ ต่อมาเพื่อนไต่เกีร์ทั้ง 3 คน ได้แต่งงานและตั้งถิ่นฐานที่เกาะลันตา แต่ไต่เกีร์ยังคงมีความตั้งใจจะเดินทางแสวงหาที่ทำกินต่อไป หลังจากแต่งงานกับภรรยาคนแรกซึ่งเป็นอุรักลาไวย์ที่เกาะลันตาและมีบุตรด้วยกันหนึ่งคน คือ ไต่เต๊ะ แล้วไต่เกีร์กับแจบิเนะ ได้ออกเดินทางต่อจนถึงเกาะหลีเป๊ะ จึงได้ตัดสินใจตั้งถิ่นฐานที่เกาะหลีเป๊ะ เนื่องจากเกาะมีความอุดมสมบูรณ์ มีบึงขนาดใหญ่กลางเกาะ ใช้เป็นพื้นที่เพาะปลูก รวมทั้งมีแหล่งทำมาหากินทางทะเลที่สะดวก หลังจากนั้นไต่เกีร์ได้ชักชวนครอบครัวและเครือญาติย้ายมาอยู่ที่เกาะหลีเป๊ะ ต่อมาเมื่อภรรยาคนแรกของไต่เกีร์เสียชีวิต ไต่เกีร์ได้แต่งงานกับภรรยาคนที่สอง ชื่อนางมีฮะ มีบุตรสองคน คือนายซาบูและนางดารา และมีภรรยาคนที่สามชื่อไต่ตึง ไม่มีบุตรด้วยกัน

Translation of the text in the school primer:

To' Giri was a Muslim from Indonesia, who rowed a boat from Aceh around 100 years ago. On the way he stopped and rested at Gunung Jerai, Malaysia, and invited his group of four friends, consisting of To' Uem, To' Bue, and Jae Bine to travel and find a home to make their living. stopped and stayed at Ko Lidi and Ko Bulon Yai. Next, the

⁶ โรงเรียนบ้านเกาะอาดัง (n.y.). หลักสูตรความรู้ท้องถิ่นของชาวอุรักลาไวย์หมู่เกาะอาดัง-ราวี (Ban Koh Adang School (n.y.), Course on knowledge of the living area of the Urak Lawoi' in the Adang-Rawi archipelago).

three friends of To' Kiri got married and set up their domicile on Ko Lanta. But To' Kiri still had the intention to travel on and look further for a place to live. After having married his first wife, who was an Urak Lawoi' of Ko Lanta, and with whom he had a child named To' Te', To' Kiri and Jae Bine travelled on until they reached Ko Lipe, and they decided to make a living on Ko Lipe, because the island was fertile, there was a large pond on the island, that could be used as a place to cultivate and sow, and there were plenty of places that were suited to make a living from the sea. Next, when the first wife of To' Kiri died, To' Kiri married his second wife, who was called Mi-a. They had two children, who were Mr. Sabu and Mistress Dara. And he had a third wife, who was called To' Ting. They had no children together.

The stories are similar, but not identical; characteristic for two separate renderings of the same oral tradition that has existed among the Urak Lawoi' for more than three generations.

When meeting any Urak Lawoi' today, he or she will repeat either of the two stories when asked questions on where the Urak Lawoi' people originally came from: "To' Kiri was a Muslim man from Aceh who led the Urak Lawoi' to their present domicile." Or: "To Kiri was a Muslim man who led the Urak Lawoi' from Aceh to islands where they presently live". The names To' Kiri, Jae Kiri and To' Hiri are not heard in everyday speech. The ancestor is called To' Kiri by most Urak Lawoi'.

The Urak Lawoi''s Acehese roots: looking for evidence of a homeland

The Urak Lawoi' are one of the several sea peoples who live in the Malay Archipelago and near the surrounding countries of Southeast Asia. Other sea peoples include the Orang Suku Laut of Riau, the Bajau Laut of the Southern Philippines and Sabah, and the Moken and Moklen of the Northern Andaman Sea. As any people, the Urak Lawoi' adhere to their legend of origin. In the case of the Urak Lawoi', it is even part of their faith. To' Kiri is considered a founding father and a Holy Man. Represented by an effigy, his spirit dwells in every 'rumah dato'⁷ in every Urak Lawoi' settlement, and is honoured by the people with offerings of food, drink and flowers. Legends around him are still told when Urak Lawoi' meet and reminisce. To' Kiri was able to lure fish in the nets with his voice and to find protected places where the Urak Lawoi' people could go ashore when storms were blazing. He led the Urak Lawoi' to the islands where they eventually took up residence.

⁷ U.L.: 'ຮູ້ມັຍ ດາໂຕະ' – The spirit house, found in an auspicious place in every Urak Lawoi' village.



**An effigy of To' Kiri in a rumah datu'
on Ko Lipe**

According to the oral tradition that is still told, and on which the inscription on the plaque on Ko Lipe as well as the entry in the school primer are based, To' Kiri originally came from Aceh, and sailed the at least 225 kilometers (shortest distance between Aceh and Ko Rawi, the furthest outlying island of the Adang-Rawi archipelago) either alone, with a small group of companions or with the whole Urak Lawoi' people to the Thai Andaman coast. The Andaman Sea and the Straits of Malacca are not particularly dangerous or rough seas, but a voyage that far in one of the small boats that the Urak Lawoi' use for their foraging and fishing might have been rather perilous. The coast of Aceh is not visible from Thai territory. The only

landmark that stands between Aceh's east coast and the Andaman Islands is a tiny rock island, Pulau Perak ($5^{\circ} 39' 22.42''$ N; $98^{\circ} 58' 07.45''$ E). This island is visible from both the shores of Ko Lipe and Rawi, and from only a few miles off the coast of Aceh (on fishing distance). The island indicates the right direction for sailing either from Aceh to Adang or vice versa, and may have been a landmark for the Urak Lawoi' when they sailed from Aceh to Thailand's Andaman coast.

The fact that Aceh is an area known by the Urak Lawoi' is an indication that indeed some of their history might have taken place there. And if the Urak Lawoi' people did in fact leave Aceh at the beginning of the 20th century, the reason for their departure may be considered obvious. Since 1873 a war between the Acehnese and the Dutch colonizers of Indonesia had been going on in the area. The war would last until 1913, when the Dutch eventually consolidated control over Aceh and integrated the territory in their Netherlands Indies colony. A bloody and vicious war fought by two parties over a part of Sumatra that included Urak Lawoi' territory may have made the Urak Lawoi' decide to leave for greener pastures.

On the other hand, there is no evidence to be found whatsoever about a sea people staying in Aceh during the latter part of the 19th century and the start of the 20th. Moreover, linguistic comparison of Acehnese and Urak Lawoi' doesn't bring us any

further. Acehnese and Urak Lawoi' are both Austronesian languages, but there the relation stops. Urak Lawoi' is Malayic and can, dependent on which standards one maintains, even be considered a dialect of Malay. Acehnese belongs to the Chamic branch of the Austronesian languages, and phonologically it rather differs from Malay. Thus, no language family relationship indicates a long or tight bond between the Acehnese and the Urak Lawoi'

The Urak Lawoi' language, notorious for its borrowings from all languages it comes into contact with (even fleetingly, like English), has no terms that can be reduced to Acehnese, apart from words with common Austronesian roots. Also, seen from a sociological point of view, intensive contact between the Urak Lawoi' and the Acehnese is improbable. The Acehnese are one of the most devout Moslem groups within Indonesia. If there had indeed been question of a more or less permanent stay in Aceh by the Urak Lawoi', contact with the Acehnese would at least have led to more converts to Islam than just To' Kiri, their deified founding father.

It looks as if the only connection existing between the Urak Lawoi' and the Acehnese might be To' Kiri, himself, and his band of traveling friends. But why would a Moslem Acehnese have a name like To' Kiri? The cognate word for Urak Lawoi' 'to' in Acehnese is *teuku*⁸ (Malay: *datuk*⁹), which is a title for officials in the court of the Sultan who hold a non-religious rank (especially army). Possible cognates for 'Kiri' in Acehnese are 'giri', 'kire' and 'kirek'¹⁰, hardly words that make suitable names for an Acehnese leader. Here

⁸ *Teuku* n gelar, panggilan kpd pezawaipegawai sultan yg berjabatan keduniaan spt *keuchik*, *panglima*, *imeum adat*, *uleebalang* dan *anakanak* mereka, juga kpd orang-orang besar sultan yg disetarafkan dng *uleebalang* pd masa dahulu, (*teuku* n: title, appellation towards (army) officials of the sultan who hold a worldly rank, such as *keuchik*, *panglima*, *imeum adat*, *uleebalang* and their grown-up children, also towards officials of the sultan who were of an equal rank with *uleebalang* in an earlier period) –Abu Bakar et al. (1985), *Kamus Bahasa Aceh-Indonesia*

⁹ Chamberlain; official managing a sovereign or noble's household. Note that the word *datuk* in Malay has the secondary meaning of 'grandfather'

¹⁰ *giri* n boh *giri*, buah jeruk: –Aceh, buah jeruk Aceh yg biasanya masam rasanya; – Bali, jeruk Bali; – cina, jeruk cina yg manis rasanya (*giri* n *giri* fruit; lime, lemon: – Aceh, Acehnese lime which normally has a sour taste; – Bali, Balinese lime; – cina, Chinese lime with a sweet taste); *kire* n belut: *eungkot* –, ikan belut (*kire* n eel: *eungkot* – snake-like fish); *kire* v mengirai, membuang, mengekirek *kisang-kiset* luarkan (*ump bulu*, *rambut*, *sampah dijala*) (*kire* v to segment, to throw away, to pry out remnants (f.i. hairs, stuck garbage); *kirek*, *girek*, *kurek* v mengorek-ngorek ke dl atau pd suatu sambil memutarakan (*ump dng bulu* ke dl lubang telinga yg gatal) (*kirek*, *girek*, *kurek* v to pull on something while turning (f.i. with hair in the ear-hole that is clogged) –Abu Bakar et al. (1985), *Kamus Bahasa Aceh-Indonesia*.

it must be said that also the word 'kiri' in Malay or Urak Lawoi' (it means 'left' in both) doesn't make much sense either as a leader's name. But then, for the Urak Lawoi', the name is supposed to be Acehnese.¹¹

Weighing the likelihood of an Indonesian background

If not in Aceh, linguistic evidence shows that the Urak Lawoi' have been spending some time in Indonesia, maybe since a distant past, and probably in contact with an Indianized area. The fact that the Urak Lawoi' are a Sumatran rather than a Javanese people can be accounted for by the basis of their language, which is Malay, not Javanese. The Urak Lawoi' language has a few words from Sanskrit that are cognate with the Indonesian/Malay versions of those terms, indicating either direct contact with an Indianized state when that state was the major political power in the area, or – later – a lasting bond with Standard Malay speaking peoples despite cultural and religious differences. The following words are some examples of loans in Urak Lawoi' from Sanskrit:

SK	rupa	(picture)	UL	rupa
SK	manusia	(man)	UL	səmiya ¹²
SK	dosa	(sin)	UL	dusa
SK	kapala	(head)	UL	kəpala
SK	kunci	(lock)	UL	kuci
SK	cerita	(story)	UL	ceta

¹¹ In Malay there are the following other words that sound somewhat like 'kiri' or 'giri': giri kl n gunung (giri classic n mountain); girik n 1 kupon; surat kecil (sbg keterangan dsb); 2 kartu giliran (untuk jaga, ronda, dsb) (girik n 1 coupon; small certificate (as a testimony etc); 2 rotation number (for watch, patrol, etc); girik (girik-girik) n gobek (girik (girik-girik) n betel grinder); girik n 1 surat pajak hasil bumi; 2 surat pemilikan tanah (girik n 1 land tax receipt; 2 certificate of land ownership); giring, menggiring v 1 menghalau binatang ke suatu tempat; 2 mengantarkan (membawa) penjahat dsb ke suatu tempat; 3 membawa lari bola dng kaki (giring, menggiring v 1 to drive animals to a certain place; 2 to take (to lead) criminals etc to a certain place; 3 to take the ball away with one's feet) – Dendy Sugono et al. (2008), Kamus Bahasa Indonesia.

¹² Can be reconstructed via metathesis < +masiya < +mānasiya

Early evidence of Hinduism in Indonesia is found in the 4th century Tarumanagara inscriptions found in West Java. In the 8th century AD Hinduism was well established, and until the 15th century AD it was the prominent religion in both Java and Sumatra. In Java, the Hindu kingdoms Kediri, Singosari and Majapahit flourished. In the case of the Urak Lawoi', they have apparently been in contact with the maritime Hindu kingdom of Srivijaya, to which Sumatra as well as a large portion of the Malay peninsula belonged from the sixth century until the 13th century AD. The Straits of Malacca was part of an important trade route, and people living along that route profited from trade as well as the culture that trade brought with it. However little, The Urak Lawoi' must have had part in this trade, as the Sanskrit loanwords in their language prove.

These loanwords give us a useful hint about the origin of the Urak Lawoi': Their form in Urak Lawoi' indicates that they are early, direct loans, i.e. not loaned via other Malay languages. This is a further indication that an Urak Lawoi' homeland area outside the main trade route can be dismissed. Not only are the Sanskrit loans still actively used and cognate with the same loan words in Standard Malay, also a developed and derived loan as 'səmiya'¹³ leads us to the conclusion that the loans were not just terms for alien notions, but were already fully integrated in the language in a pre-modern stage.

Still, the loanwords do not tell us much about the role of the Urak Lawoi' in international society of the time. Were they already seafaring people when they established contact with Sriwijayan merchants, or were they still a tribe of land dwellers who would only later take to the sea?

This last possibility has had a precedent: The Orang Suku Laut of the Riau Archipelago, a sea people whose language and culture have been well described, possess a culture that is generally comparable to that of the Urak Lawoi'. The Orang Suku Laut may have originally been Proto-Malays who immigrated into the area before 1000 AD, or maybe "most of the forefathers of the present Orang Suku Laut were an integral part of the population of the kingdom of Malacca-Johor and the sultanate of Riau-Lingga respectively, and belonged to the stratum of the nobility's vassals (orang kerahan)"¹⁴. The Urak Lawoi' are in no way related to the Orang Suku Laut. This is a fact that can be proven clearly if one compares the languages of the two distinct

¹³ 'səmiya' is the 'inclusive' word for 'person', 'people' in the Urak Lawoi' language, whereas 'urak' is the 'exclusive' word, except in the name of the people 'Urak Lawoi'.

¹⁴ Lenhart, 1997. pp 8-9

groups. Still, it is not impossible that the Urak Lawoi' found their way to the sea in the same manner as the Orang Suku Laut did: as original land dwellers or sedentary fishermen, who at a certain time were either forced or made the choice to lead their lives on boats, mostly away from land.

Other than Standard Malay (Malaysian and Indonesian), Urak Lawoi' is characterized by an uncomplicated grammar and unproductive affixation. Regular sound changes that can be observed when comparing Standard Malay with Urak Lawoi' are: diphthongization has occurred before alveolar fricatives or stops (*-s and *-t) in final syllables. Final *fricatives and *stops have been glottalized. Final nasals have been changed into their corresponding voiceless stop (except if the final syllable started with a nasal). Homorganic nasal/plosive combinations have been reduced to single plosives. Final *-l has become -n. Allophones of the Malay trill *-r have been formed. Mid vowels in final syllables have a tendency to become low rounded back vowels. (j) in clusters with homorganic nasals has become (y). Homorganic clusters in Malay have been reduced to single consonants in Urak Lawoi'¹⁵. The distance that Urak Lawoi' has taken from Standard Malay may be compared to that of dialects c.q. languages as Betawi or Moluccan Malay, but is not nearly as profound as the distance between Standard Malay and the Malayan language Minangkabau, let alone Chamic Acehnese. Urak Lawoi' stands further away from Standard Malay than the language of the Orang Suku Laut of Riau, though.

A never Islamized society

Arab and Persian Muslim traders entered Indonesia as early as the 8th century, but it was not until the end of the 13th century that the actual process of Islamization began in the archipelago and the Malay Peninsula. Islam was at first introduced through Muslim traders, but was later spread by the Indonesian people, themselves. As Malay and Javanese rulers adopted the religion, their subjects would automatically follow. Islamization accelerated as Muslim traders married Indonesian women.

By the end of the thirteenth century, Islam had been established in North Sumatra; by the fourteenth in northeast Malaya, and by the fifteenth in Malacca. By the 16th century Islam had superseded Hinduism and Buddhism as the dominant religion of the region.

¹⁵

De Groot, 2010. p. 10

Despite their being part of the Malay world, the Urak Lawoi' were never Islamized. Their religion is animistic in spirit, and ancestor worship – ancestors such as To' Kiri – forms its spine. Nowadays Christian missionaries do their best to convert the Urak Lawoi' to Christianity, and indeed some Urak Lawoi' have taken that faith into their heart. But by far most Urak Lawoi' are still animists. Because the Urak Lawoi' people missed conversion to Islam (the religion that is now such an important symbol of Malayness) original Malayan words or loan words from third languages feature in Urak Lawoi' vocabulary where Standard Malay prefers the use of an Arabic or Persian loan:

SM kubur (Arabic: grave)	UL	jirai'
SM kabar (Arabic: news)	UL	habal
SM kərusi (Arabic: chair)	UL	ko' e (possibly from Thai เก้าอี้ - kâw'îi)
SM kahwin (Persian: to marry)	UL	bəkapok
SM miskin (Persian: poor, abject)	UL	naja'

In Indonesia, only peoples that lived in secluded areas before the coming of the Portuguese and Dutch never made contact with Islam. In western Indonesia those were for instance the Toba Batak, the inhabitants of the Island of Nias, the elusive Kubu, the Orang Suku Laut of Riau, and most probably the Urak Lawoi'.

Considering all linguistic and historical evidence, we can determine that the split between Urak Lawoi' and other Malay dialects (including Standard Malay) occurred between Indianization and Islamization of the Western part of the archipelago between the 13th and the 16th century.

This leaves only a small part of the world from which the Urak Lawoi' could originally be: A stretch of Sumatran coast North of Riau and South of Aceh's borders, which had belonged to Srivijaya but was only much later actively incorporated in one of the Muslim Malay Sultanates that followed Srivijaya as centers of power in the area (Melaka, Riau and Siak Sri Indrapura). This hypothesis actually leaves more space for the possible origin of the Urak Lawoi' than one should have to build a foolproof premise, but it does away with an accepted but unlikely homeland as Aceh. Along the coast of East Sumatra, the side of the island facing Malaya, several Malay dialects are spoken, and sedentary as well as semi-sedentary fishermen populate the area. Especially on the Sumatran side, the sea is shallow, and everyone who has ever taken a PELNI-ship down from Medan can testify to the great number of off-shore dwellings one can spot in the distance against the backdrop of the Sumatran coast. Those rickety looking structures

are the permanent or semi-permanent homes of people who still are, or have been Sea People in the not too distant past. Another supporting fact for this hypothesis is: Distances across the Straits from this part of Sumatra to Malaysia are sometimes as short as 37 km; an easy trip for a few men in a small boat, with land always in sight.

The Malayan connection

According to legend, after leaving Aceh, To' Kiri, and his companions arrived in Malaysia, then British Malaya. They 'stayed for a while'¹⁶ at the foot of Gunung Jerai, an imposing mountain, visible from the sea, but lying about twenty kilometers inland. A more likely scenario is that the Urak Lawoi' took temporary residence on one of the beaches facing the mountain. The backdrop of Gunung Jerai was impressive, and the name was remembered, though for an Urak Lawoi' (to whom a 'gunung' means nothing more than a 'cloud'¹⁷), venturing nearer toward the mountain would be illogical and impractical. It is unknown whether the Urak Lawoi' stayed in only one place in Malaya or had fixed stations along the coast. Through linguistic evidence we can be quite certain though that before their arrival in Thailand the Urak Lawoi' did indeed stay and had regular contact with the Malays in Malaya. In Urak Lawoi' both modern Standard Malay and English words have been loaned. Consider the following examples:

Loan words in Urak Lawoi' from Standard (Malaysian) Malay:

SM	kopi	(coffee)	UL	kopi
SM	lotɛŋ	(loft)	UL	lotɛŋ
SM	rumah	(house)	UL	rumah

Loan words in Urak Lawoi' from English via Standard (Malaysian) Malay:

EN	engine	SM	enjin	UL	ijen
EN	stocking	SM	stoking	UL	sətukin

¹⁶ On the brass plaque we read the verbs 'หยุดพัก', meaning 'to stop and rest for a while'. 'พัก' indicates a short stay or rest.

¹⁷ The word 'gunung' in Malay means 'mountain', but in Urak Lawoi' it means 'big cloud'

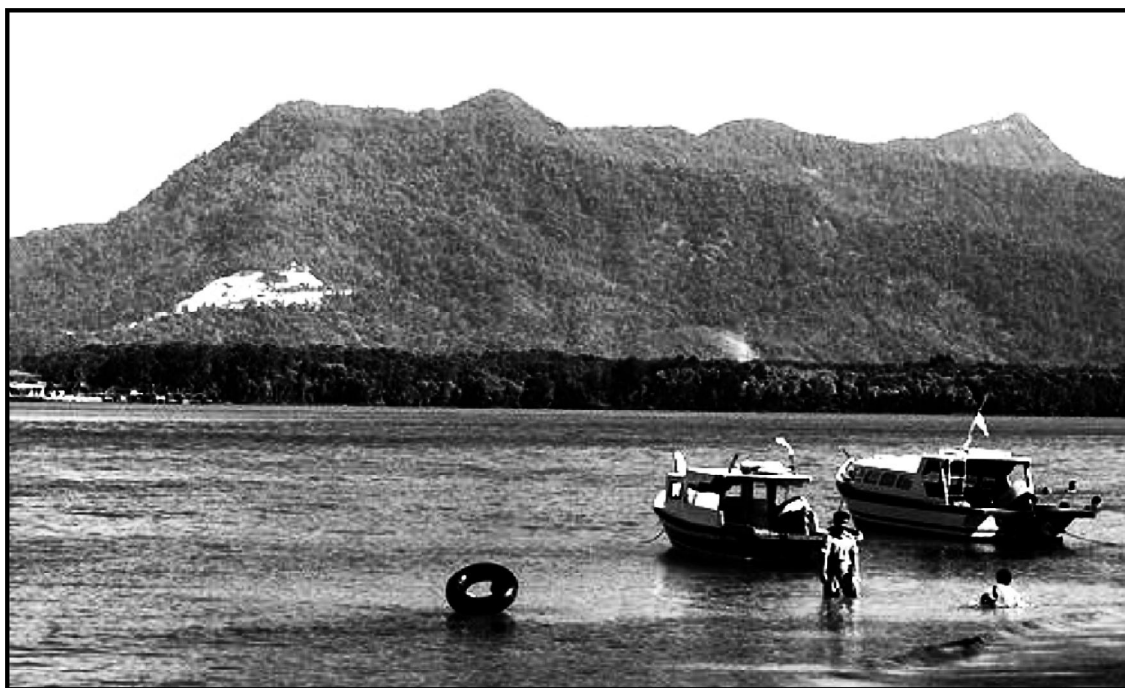
Direct loans from English (not loaned from English in Standard Malaysian Malay):

EN motorboat UL mutuboi?

EN bomb UL bom (to fish with dynamite¹⁸)

EN hammer UL hama

Whether it was near Gunung Jerai or not, linguistic evidence proves that the Urak Lawoi' once lived in or were in regular contact with Malaya/Malaysia. Nowadays no Urak Lawoi' have a permanent domicile in Malaysia, but many of the Urak Lawoi' of Ko Lipe trade with the Malaysians on Langkawi Island. Some Urak Lawoi' products, such as coconut oil, are popular on Langkawi. Most Urak Lawoi' on Ko Lipe speak Standard Malay in varying degrees of fluency.



The Malaysian coast near Yan (Kedah), with Gunung Jerai in the background. (Photo: Meity Wenas)

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Practiced until recently

Conclusion

Other than stated in the – now recorded – Urak Lawoi' oral tradition (the plaque at Ko Lipe and the text in the school primer of the Ban Koh Adang School), and contrary to the stories almost every Urak Lawoi' has been brought up with, the legend of To' Kiri must primarily be considered what I have called it throughout this paper: a legend. The legend of To' Kiri is a beautiful story about the origin and development of the Urak Lawoi' people. Stories like these are told and eventually written down by most societies. Origin myths abound everywhere on earth. They provide a legitimization and a reason for a people's existence and the essence of their presence on earth.

The Netherlands Indies battleground of Aceh was probably well-known to the Urak Lawoi', as it was to everyone in the region. Indeed Acehnese sailors and travellers might have encountered Urak Lawoi' fishermen in the waters between Malaya and Sumatra and talked to them about their predicament. Some Urak Lawoi' seafarers maybe had been as far as Banda Aceh and had seen the onslaught with their own eyes. Aceh was a land that made one's heart beat faster.

On the other hand one should consider how a world without maps and definite names looked and felt like to an illiterate people. With so many languages and dialects vying for prominence in the Andaman Sea/Straits of Malacca area, and with information ('kabar angin'²⁰ very likely) coming from all over the place, it is doubtful that the Urak Lawoi' could get all their records straight. Aceh, after all, can easily come over as the equivalent of the 'Cathay' where Europeans in the Middle Ages were looking for, or the proverbial 'Timbuktu': a place far, far away.

That the Urak Lawoi' haven't always lived where they live now, however, becomes clear from linguistic and circumstantial evidence. The legend of To' Kiri tells us that in the beginning, there was travel; and that is something the Urak Lawoi' always had always done before settling down on the Thai islands in the Andaman Sea. By means of linguistic evidence, we can pinpoint the earliest presence of the Urak Lawoi' in Indonesia through their application of Sanskrit loans and concepts.

This exercise in weighing possible homelands of the Urak Lawoi' using available information leads us to the conclusion that the Urak Lawoi' are in origin most probably a Sumatran people, though not from Aceh. Legendary and deified leader To' Kiri might have had Acehnese roots, but without even an Acehnese title or name, this is not

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News that comes with the wind; gossip (Malay)

probable. The Urak Lawoi' stayed for longer than they care to admit near Gunung Jerai and/or in other places in Malaya/Malaysia, loaning words and concepts before they eventually moved north to the Thai islands in the Andaman Sea, where they arrived in the early 20th century. In Thailand they found unspoiled and scarcely inhabited islands (There were Chinese living on Phuket, Muslim charcoal burners on Lanta, and some scattered Thai Muslim fishermen on the other islands). In the late 1940ies the Urak Lawoi' settled down in permanent dwellings, and eventually they became Thai Mai: new Thai citizens, with a surname ceremonially issued by the Princess Mother.

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