

Charles F. Keyes, Field Notebooks, Thailand

June 1 through June 30, 1963.

Field notes in this document were primarily written in Mahasarakham (Changwat Maha Sarakham), Thailand. This document is preceded by field notes written in Mahasarakham in May 1963. This document is followed by notes written in Maha Sarakham province in July 1963.

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 1, 1963

Mr. Ngao's *Tham Bun* Ceremony

He held this yesterday in order to bring "good fortune" on his house and business. The monks came in the morning and he fed them. Then they chanted *suat mon*. They placed something at each corner of the house (and our house, too - E. Jane Keyes) When they had finished and gone, the villagers came to eat and drink. He fed them *khāw niaw*, *sen mī*, fish and chicken as well as liquor and *satto*.

Innovation and Mr. Ngao

In the field near Mr. Ngao's holdings and between the store and the house of Mr. Ngao's "mother-in-law" corn has and is being planted. I watched Mr. Ngao's "mother-in-law" planting it this morning by taking a stick, poking holes at random and putting kernels of corn from a cob. However (primitive?) this method may be, the fact remains that this is an innovation - and at Mr. Ngao's instigation.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Phon came over in the morning. From him we learned that those who had been caught by the police at the time of the wedding were still languishing in the Changwat jail as they have been unable to raise the necessary 35,000 fine. Also learned there are now five new priests in the wat, but only one novice (one former novice has now been ordained.) Some relatively young person in Khum Yai died while we were gone, - several days ago. The wife of Mr. "Cāēk" is very ill, unable to eat and reportedly a living skeleton. She is not expected to live more than a week or so.

Skyrocket Festival

On the 1st of June and early in the morning of the 2nd there will be a celebration at one of the wats on the outskirts of Mahasarakham. The main event at this ceremony will be the *bông fai* which will be set off early in the morning on the 2nd. These sky rockets are to propitiate the gods to bring the rains. I asked Mr. Ngao if such ceremonies exist in the Central Plains, and he answered no, that the custom was limited to Lao people. Mr. Ngao said that this ceremony originally is of *Khōm* (Khmer) origin. Whatever the case may be, here is a cultural tradition which draws the village into participation with the whole of the Lao tradition.

Death

Can bua (จางขี้บัว), about 38-39 years of age - the person who died.

Miscellaneous

Met Mr. "Cāēk". He looks quite ill. Confirmed that his wife is unwell.

Bông Fai Ceremony

At mid-morning we returned to town to see the *bông fai* celebration. Mr. Phon had said before we left that he and some other villagers would be coming to see the setting off of the rockets early tomorrow morning. Mr. Ngao said he would be coming too.

In the afternoon we saw the procession in down town Mahasarakham. The procession was very similar to that at the *kū* at the time of the ceremony there. In the front of the procession were some men with high head dresses - I think that these were supposed to be Brahmic. There were men dressed as *fôn lep* (ฟ้อนเล็บ) dancers. Following them was a truck carrying the largest *bông fai*. Then spread throughout the rest of the procession were men dressed as women, dancers (men and women) consisting mainly of drunken men and *fôn lep* female dancers, the medium-sized *bông fai* prepared by villages, people playing the *khāēn*, drums (one of which was a large tin can), people carrying small *bông fai*, etc.

As I understand it, this ceremony, which is held every year, is one in which the rains are called (ขอฝน). The "gods" are notified that the time has come for the rains to be sent. It may be

significant that Mr. Phon and others in the village feel that it is most important to attend the actual lighting of the rockets.

The time for holding this is variable but it must be around this time of year. This particular *fête* is held for Mahasarakham and environs.

Bān Nông Tùn

June 2, 1963

Bông Fai Ceremony

Last night there were big festivities connected with the *bông fai* ceremony at *wat ?uthaidit* on the other side of the bridge on the road to Roi-et in a small village suburb. We didn't attend these though from what we learned this morning, the activities were very similar to most wat fairs.

This morning we went to see the shooting off of the *bông fai*. Activities began at about 7:00 this morning and continued till noon. Mostly, what occurred were the shooting off of small and medium sized rockets leading up to the major event of the firing of the large rocket, which looked like something out of Cape Canaveral.

The crowd there was the largest gathering of people I have seen anywhere in my stay in the Northeast. We learned later that one person was killed by a falling rocket (our servant says that someone gets killed every year).

One thing which occurred was that some of the men participating went into the muddy fields and muddied up one another from head to toe. This was explained to be "customary" at this *fête*. I think it is probably connected with the rain-requesting purpose of the ceremony. There were also the groups of male dancers, drunkards, and men-as-women as in yesterday's procession.

Mr. Ngao

Mr. Ngao explained about his rice-mill today. The generator (motor) and mill together cost 25,000 baht. The motor has never broken and appears to have been taken very good care of. He said he bought the machinery in Sarakham. He now has had the machine nearly 3 years. It took him about two years to regain his capital investment.

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 3, 1963

Death

Saw a group of men building a coffin in the wat grounds. As Mr. "Cāēk" was among the group, I guessed that perhaps his wife had finally died. However, she hasn't quite died yet, though she is expected to momentarily.

Education

The new male school teacher has quit as he didn't enjoy teaching, so now there are only three again. There are 106 students in school this term.

Miscellaneous

Talked with Mr. "Cāēk" about visiting places around Sarakham. He says he hasn't even been to Roi-et, much less other places in the N.E. (though he did work in Bangkok as a young man). He was familiar with Ubon having been the old capital of the Isan circle. He also mentioned its relationship to Champassac. He said that until recently there were not vehicles to go around places.

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 4, 1963

Miscellaneous

Last evening I found Mr. Phon and Mr. Chai sitting next door having a drink (after a long day's work according to Mr. Chai). Learned that *Phra mahā seng* is the headman's younger brother. Also that there will be another ordination in the wat at the beginning of *phansā*. Mr. Phon says there will ultimately be 12 monks in the wat (there are now 6).

Incidentally, earlier in the day in talking with Mr. Thiang, I learned that the monks will give religious instruction at the school during the lenten period.

Mr. Chai's eldest son is now continuing his education in *Matayom* 8 in Bangkok. He finished M. 6 in Sarakham. (Must find out where he is getting his financial support).

During the rainy season, the farmer not only plants rice, but also makes his garden and plants his other crops. Mr. Phon and Mr. Chai also plant corn. Corn is not a recent innovation to the village, though it is still done on a very small scale. Today at 10:00 Mr. Wichian and an agricultural officer are having people from the 4 villages of B. Khwaw, B. Dōn Dū, B.N.T., and

B. Sôn Pluai meet at the corners where there is government land. This land will be cultivated by the people from these 4 villages in new crops - primarily vegetables, etc. - as a demonstration plot.

Health

Mr. Ngao told me he had heard 3 people had died recently in B. Kung, the next village down the road. He said he was worried about this because they apparently died of something they ate, 3-4 hours after they ate it. He showed me a bottle of aureomycin tablets which he says are good for stomach troubles. These tablets cost B7 apiece (quite expensive for villagers).

He is quite a health fanatic in a way. He has heard about the cholera epidemics in India and surrounding countries. When I told him we had taken shots against cholera in Bangkok, he decided to go to the health center in B. Khwaw to get one too.

Food

Mr. Phon and Mr. Chai say *khāw niaw* should be soaked at least 3-4 hours before cooking, otherwise it will expand in the stomach and cause stomach pains.

Mr. Ngao gave us a small fish - about the size of large minnows - which he says need to be deep fried and then eaten whole.

The Village and Me

Ever since we returned from Bangkok, people have been asking whether we were coming back or not. Despite the fact we still had things at the house, people began to think we had returned to America. Mr. Phon says we brought good fortune when we returned. While we were gone it hardly rained at all. Since we have been back it has rained every day.

There is currently a SEATO exercise going on in Thailand (Exercise Thanarat). SEATO is stationing its troops all over the N.E. In conjunction with this, they are giving away large rain storage tanks to some villages in the area in which they are stationed. I have seen these tanks at the Sala Klang in Sarahkam. As these tanks are for village schools, Mr. Thiang asked me yesterday to go to see Nai Charoen to see if I can persuade him to get one of these tanks for the BNT school.

This puts me in an interesting position. On the one hand I see no reason why BNT

shouldn't get one of the tanks as the decision as to where they go is somewhat arbitrary. Also, if I can use my influence to do something good for the village, it would be beneficial for all concerned. However, to do so means I must ask a favor of Mr. Charoen. However, I think I can ask this in Thai fashion, but I doubt it will be granted. Nonetheless, I will have tried.

Death

Talked with Mr. Wichian about having seen the making of a coffin for the wife of Mr. Hô before she had actually died. He said this was quite common when a person is very near death. The coffin is called *hīp sop* (หีบศพ) in C.T. and *kalōng/lōng* (กะโลง/โลง) in Lao. The canopy (?) which is sometimes placed over the coffin is called *mēn* (เมรุ) in C.T., i.e. Meru.

Bông Fai

Had a talk with Mr. W. about the *bông fai* ceremony. He said that one of the reasons the ceremony was held was to raise money for a new *bôt* at the wat where the ceremony was held. Still the main purpose was to bring the rains and to worship certain gods (*thewada*), especially พระยาแลน (*Phra Yāthāēn*) who is the god in charge of dispersing rain. Old belief, still held by some old people, according to Mr. W.

He told me a story of the origin of the *bô:ng fai* ceremony (he wasn't certain of all the details and is going to check these for me).

The story originates in นอนหาร (*nōng hān*) in what is now Sakhon Nakhon province. Prince พระยาขอม (*phrayākhôm*) of เมืองนอนหาร (*müang nōng hān*) had one daughter, นางไอ่ (*nāng 'ai*), who was supposed to be the most beautiful girl at that time. She had many suitors including the prince of เมืองผาพงษ์ (*müang phāphong*) and the prince of เมืองนาค (*müang nāk*), the home of the Nagas. *Phrayākhôm* doesn't know how to decide among the suitors. Finally he decides to have a fireworks competition and whoever's *bô:ng fai* goes highest will be the successful suitor. Prince ผาแดง (*phā dāēng*) of เมืองผาพงษ์ (*müang phāphong*) won the hand of

nāng 'ai by this method. พังคี (*phang khī*), the son of พระยานาค (*phrayānāk*) was very angry at this outcome.

He transformed himself into a squirrel (กระรอก, C.T. กระรอก) and went to live in a kapok tree. A hunter killed the squirrel and it died. In the small body of the squirrel there was much meat. *Phrayākhôm* sent the meat to many many provinces. The father of prince *phang khī* was very angry and used the Naga people to destroy towns by burrowing in the ground (water filled some of these holes caused by the burrowing and thus small lakes such as the one at Roi-et were formed). The origin of *bô:ng fai* comes from this story because the Naga caused earthquakes which brought the rains. (This is an oral story and so far as Mr. W. knows is not written down).

Mr. Wichian

His elder brother is a graduate of Kasetsart University and now teaches at the Teacher's College in Sarakham. Several other of his brothers and sisters are also teachers. The family comes from a village near Roi-et. He says that this village is more progressive than Roi-et itself as it has good land and crops. Father was apparently a relatively well-to-do farmer. From what I saw of the photographs of the funeral of his father, it was rather grand by village standards as there was a fancy casket and a canopy. Mr. Charoen and a number of teachers from the Teachers' College attended the funeral.

Experiment in Diversified Cropping – Community Development Program

Villagers from B. Khwaw, B. Dōn Dū, BNT and B. Sōng Puai (but particularly from BNT and B. Dōn Dū) were gathered at the corner where the road from the village meets the main road for the beginning of the experimental plot under Mr. W.'s C.D. direction. The plot will include several *rai* under the supervision of a government agent (as the land is government land) for growing diversified crops. From what I gather from the villagers (who will do all the work and reap the harvest), the idea is a good one because they will be able to cultivate things for nothing except expenditure of work. In other words it is a relatively good deal.

Water Tank

I did go to town to inquire about getting a water tank for the village, but it turned out the

decision had already been made by someone in SEATO, and B. Mī, B. Chiang Hian and the Health Center at B. Khwaw are the only places in the tambon which are getting them.

Conversation with Mr. Som Thapthānī

Mr. สม ทัพธานี (*som thapthānī*) whose very small infant had died on 29/4/63 (see notes, 29/4/63) came to visit me. He lives in H.H. 27 and is the son-in-law of Mr. Phon. He says he lives half the year working in Bangkok and the other half in the village. In Bangkok he earns B620/month working for a factory making some kind of biscuits or cookies (though he said he has had many jobs). Prefers living in Bangkok because there are more things to do and see. However, because he has a wife and family and a farm here, he must return to live here part of the year.

Says (I think) that his father was former headman before Mr. Phon. Has at least one brother in the police - River Patrol - in Mukdahan. Maybe has another brother in the police as well (in Udon).

He has several children, the eldest of whom is studying P.3. I asked him if he would like to have his children continue their education. His immediate response was that he doesn't have enough money to do so.

Asked him if he had another wife in Bangkok. Answered that he didn't.

Said that the northeastern equivalent of *nām plā* is *plārā*. Maybe this means there is a possibility for change in diet.

He speaks excellent Bangkok Thai - as a matter of fact all who lived in Bangkok do. In fact most of those who have been around a bit even if not to Bangkok speak C.T. and this dialect is certainly becoming an indicator of participation in larger social milieu.

Periodic or seasonal migration to Bangkok certainly makes it difficult for any N.E.ner to advance far in the jobs in Bangkok.

Discussion with Mr. Ngao

Last evening we sat and talked at length with Mr. Ngao about a variety of subjects:

1. Birth control - Much to my surprise, he said villagers would prefer to have smaller families - 2 to 3 children being the ideal. He had never heard of medicine or instruments for birth

control and was very interested in having us tell him about them. Said that he would like to buy some. Said he had guessed such things might exist, but he has never seen them. He said he would prefer 3 or 4 children himself. He said that people in Thailand are poor and it would be better if they had fewer children as they wouldn't "lose so much money". Some people had asked him that since we didn't have any children if we used medicine. He had answered he didn't know. Didn't touch on rhythm method but from what I gathered, however, most would not be familiar with it.

Mr. Chāi has had more than 10 children by one wife - "each year one child". Mr. Ngao has kidded him that he ought to go to Bangkok for 2-3 years to have a respite from having children. His wife no longer produces enough milk to feed her new children. Never uses a wet nurse (such don't exist in the village), but buys milk from the market.

2. Plural wives - Nobody in BNT has more than one wife. The Kamnan of Nōng Kun, however, has 6 wives. He is a very rich man.

3. Woman who had caesarian - The woman at whose house we had seen a *sūkhwan* ceremony for her new baby on 7/3/63 (see above) had had a caesarian operation. Her labor had been very difficult so her relations finally rented a taxi for ฿50 and took her to the hospital in Sarakham. There the doctors performed a caesarean and told her she must not have any more children. Her stay in the hospital was expensive as well (฿2-300). It is very rare for people to go to the hospital from the village.

4. Education - Mr. Chai's son and Mr. Boonsuk are the only two currently obtaining advance education.

5. Courting - Young men and women sit and talk on the porch of the girl's house while her parents are sleeping. Mr. Ngao stresses that this practice is not allowed in the Central Plains. Young men come from other villages for this purpose.

6. Mr. Boonsuk - This young man was working for an advertising company in Sarakham before he was caught by the police in the village raid. Mr. Ngao says he will never be able to hold a job again as he now "has a record".

7. Robbers - There has been some "cattle rustling" in this area recently though not in BNT. Somebody stole a ฿2000 buffalo from Nōng Kung a few days ago. Mr. Ngao is worried about his pigs though there have not been *khamois* in BNT since he has been here. He says that

robbers make much "demerit".

8. Liquor - Rice wine only keeps 10 days. A few days old is best for it is sweetest then.

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 5, 1963

Death

Mr. Hô's wife died last night. First Mr. Ngao told us and then Mr. "Cāēk" came himself to invite us to his house today. This we did at about 10:00 this morning. There were a large number of friends and relatives being fed. We were shown into the room where the body in the casket was laid out. We were asked if we wished to see the face and said we did. A young relative took the top off the casket and pulled back the shroud. The face was so emaciated and powdered with white powder that she looked like the relics of a Catholic saint.

We sat in the room where some women were preparing a *bangsakun*. In this was put money, rice, candles, incense, flowers, etc. One sack had already been prepared and was placed near the coffin.

At about 10:30 three priests came including a son who had just donned the yellow robes to make merit for his mother. They sat in the room where the coffin was and chanted some funerary scriptures. When they finished chanting, the priest-relative took the *banksakun* and the priests departed. One person present said the priests come 2 or 3 times to "give merit".

We, too, were given some food and cigarettes. We also saw a chicken brought in which I guess will be used for the meal after the funeral, which will be held at 2:00.

Credit at the Store

Mr. Ngao says there are several people who owe more than ₱1,000. He charges no interest on his credit.

Funeral

At about 1:15 Mr. Phon came and led us to the "cemetery". When we reached there, someone looked for a good tree where the *phī* of the woman could live. When a likely looking tree had been selected, someone took a raw egg and threw it in the air. If the egg breaks, then the *phī* is satisfied with the place of residence. If the egg doesn't break, then another tree must be found. Four tries were made before a tree was found where the *phī* would be happy to live. Over

the place where the broken egg lay, the funeral pyre must be built.

The men first cleared the area of brush and small trees (as a relatively clear area had been selected first). A place was made where mats could be placed for the priests.

The priests included some of those now at the wat (though not all), *phramahāseng* who had come out and two relations of the deceased who had just been ordained. The second person is a son (the one I identify because he has such prominent buck teeth) and in actual fact remained in the monkhood something around three hours. Being "ordained" in this case meant simply the donning of the yellow robes and shaving one's head and performing certain functions at the funeral.

When the pyre was finished, the priests got up and went to stand over the coffin. The top of the coffin was removed and the shroud was pulled back so as to uncover the head of the deceased. The priests poured coconut water and *nām hōm* over the face of the deceased. When they had finished other people came and did the same thing. I also noticed that food had been prepared for the dead person (or more likely for her *phī* and placed near the coffin. This food was later put on the pyre and burned also.

Then a lay person walked around the pyre scattering popped rice. This was to "feed the *phī*" - and here I think *phī* refers to the spirits in general which inhabit the forest of the cemetery. When the water pouring was finished, the coffin was closed and the *bangsakun* was placed inside. The priests came forward again and chanted some sutras. Then one of the newly-ordained priests (not the one with the buck teeth) took the *bangsakun* and the priests withdrew.

Then the coffin was lifted up by 4 men on a litter (as it had been carried to the cremation grounds). A cord of cotton and silk thread was fastened to the front of the coffin. Three priests in a row took a hold of this cord. The first priest was *phramahāseng* followed by the two newly ordained priests. They led the uplifted coffin 3 times around the funeral pyre. They were preceded in this circumambulation by the layman who tossed popped rice on the pyre. When the 3 circles had been completed, the coffin was struck 3 times against the side of the pyre.

The coffin was then lifted up onto the pyre. Here 2 men on top of the pyre removed everything from the coffin proper - clothes, towels, blankets, a mat, etc. These were strewn on the pyre as were other things that the dead person might need - a water scoop, a basket, mattresses, etc.

A small fire had been made nearby where torches were being prepared. First the priests

came forward and took torches which they then placed in the pyre. There other people, but not all present, also did so. Others added fuel to the fire to make certain that it was going well. While this was occurring some people lit candles and attached them to the pyre.

Several large logs were placed against the side of the coffin and pyre to prevent the casket from falling during the flames. Mr. Phā also placed a number of green trees against the pyre and over the casket. He also placed a bamboo log over the casket (to prevent the body from rising up?).

When the fire was going well, people left the scene. We went to a cool place near the edge of "the river" where Mr. Hô had brought a large jug of *sattho* which had cost him about B 20. The scene was somewhat comparable to a "beer bust" with the good humor heightened by Mr. Hô's return wearing a monkey scalp (hair and all) that the brother of Mr. Phā had brought from Bangkok. I never cease to be amazed at the outward lightness with which Thai people face death and to a lesser extent illness.

At the scene of the cremation, Mr. Hô was at first not present. Mr. Phon and Mr. Ngao explained that since he was the husband of the deceased, perhaps he would not come. This is often the case according to them. However, not long afterwards, Mr. Hô appeared and stayed for the whole proceedings.

Spirits of the Field

On the way back from the "cemetery" we passed a field in which there was a circular place made by ploughing in a circle. It was explained that this place had been made to propitiate the "spirits of the field" before the actual plowing began. We were also shown the shrine of the "spirits of the field". This consisted of a rough post on which were attached two pieces of wood, one for the "floor" and one for the "roof" of the "house".



Nearby was a small bundle with the candle, flowers and leaves tied together which is used in nearly all worshipping of any spirits. Mr. Phon says that these spirits must be propitiated at the beginning of planting, during the growing, and at the harvest.

Brother of Mr. Pha

The brother of Mr. Phā has just returned from Bangkok where he works most of the time.

Wake

In the evening we went to a wake at the house of Mr. Hô. Here there were almost exclusively young people who were having a gay time (the fact that there were not more older people may in part have been due to the fact that there was a meeting of elders going on at the same time). The young people were playing games as on other occasions until Mr. Ngao brought over the radio when they all stopped playing to listen to *môlam*. These parties go on three nights in order to cheer up Mr. Hô. In actual fact when we arrived he was asleep. I think the expectation that a funeral will bring in its wake a gay party for young people in part dulls the edge of the sorrow of the day.

Meeting of the Elders

In the evening at about 9-9:30 p.m. a meeting was called at Mr. Phon's house to discuss the erection of the posts for the new school. Mr. Thiang accompanied by Mr. Tonduan, the headmaster of B. Mī school, had come to the meeting.

Tamrā Bōrān

There is a book called the *tamrā bōrān* (ตำราโบราณ) written in Lao which contains the chants for the Brahmic ceremonies as used in the village. This book is traditionally written on the leaf books as I have described before. Mr. "Cāēk" possesses two of these books and his son is able to read them. (In actual fact they belong to the wat).

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 6, 1963

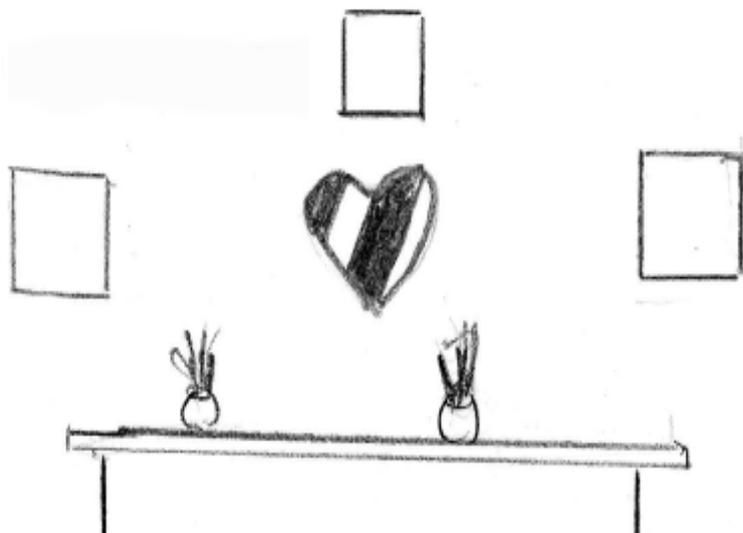
Beliefs Concerning Death

Relatives usually do not go to feed the ancestral *phī* in the "cemetery". If a person misses a close relative very much, he may go to the woods to feed the *phī* of the relative, but this is rare. There are occasions when *bangsakun* are presented to the ancestral *phī* at the wat. The *phī* are called by striking a special drum. (The ancestral *phī* may also request food through the guise of a sick person).

Wai Khrū Ceremony

Today was held the annual *wai khrū* (ไหว้ครู) ceremony at the school. This ceremony is held on the 1st Thursday of June every year and in nearly every school in the country. The ceremony was supposed to begin at 10:00 in the morning but in fact didn't start till about 10:30. The students had been asked to bring "flowers, candles, joss sticks (Bermuda grass, egg plant)". These appeared in little leaves wrapped around the flowers, candles, and joss sticks.

First the students lined up in front of the school in two rows of boys and two rows of girls. They then marched into the school in pairs (first the boys and then the girls) and knelt down in front of a fixed "shrine" with a picture of Buddha on top and a picture of the royal standard, a heart-shaped shield with the red-white-and-blue colors of the country, and a picture of the king below. Below this was a shelf where two vases of artificial flowers were placed.



Next the flowers, candles and joss sticks were gathered up by the teachers and laid on the desk where they were then sorted into their respective varieties.

Mr. Thiang then addressed the students on why the *wai khrū* ceremony is held. He spoke in Central Thai. He then directed the students to look at the shrine. The boys were then directed to stand and pay homage to the king. Then they sat down and the students took the *wai* position and worshipped the Buddha led by one student. Then all the students stood, put their hands in the *wai* position and repeated the injunctions of Buddhism. Then Mr. Thiang took from his pocket a piece of paper from which he read with the students repeating after him, - a sort of student's pledge.

Khun Beng and Khun Buapha had removed the vases of artificial flowers from the shrine. They now placed these back on the shrine filled with flowers and with the incense and candles.

Mr. Thiang gave a sort of moral lecture about the importance of being a student, the relevance of the school to Buddhism, the duties and responsibilities of the student, etc. This completed the ceremony.

Education

The new teacher, - a female -, is named บัวภาแฝงสีพน (*buaphā fāēng sīphon*). She is from B. Khwaw. She studied at Padungnārī (พดุงนารี) School in Sarakham (*Mathayom 6*) and then two more years at the Teachers' College. This is her first teaching appointment. She is as yet

unmarried.

The second male teacher apparently is not meant to teach but to help Mr. Thiang in the building of the new school. He has studied carpentry but is still paid as a teacher.

The meeting last night about "erecting the posts" of the new school apparently lasted a long time but I didn't find out what actually occurred. The school didn't meet the rest of the day after the *wai khrū* ceremony but the students went to help plant jute on the school ground under the supervision of the teachers.

Funeral Rites

Yesterday Mr. Ngao explained that a man usually wears a dark shirt to a funeral (village type work shirts being the most common). This arose because I had a white shirt on. This practice contrasts with the urban custom of wearing a white suit with a black arm band.

Mr. W. was over this evening. He explained that the circling three times with the coffin around the funeral pyre is to symbolize the three states of "Birth, suffering and death": - เกิด, เจ็บ, ตาย (*kōēt*, *cep*, *tāi*). This symbolism for those present shows that they too will soon be like the now dead. The striking of the coffin against the pyre is to inform the spirit of the dead person that this is the final end of his earthly existence.

Invitation to Presentation of Water Tanks by SEATO Forces

The following is a translation of an invitation from the Nāi Amphoe to attend a ceremony of presenting water tanks by representatives of SEATO forces to villages in Mahasarakham.



3115/2506

District Office, Mahasarakham

6 June 2506

Rē Ceremony of presenting water tanks by SEATO

Tō Mr. & Mrs. Charles F. Keyes

On the 7th of June 2506 at 8:00 am the province has arranged a ceremony at the Mahasarakham provincial office to receive of rain water storage tanks to be presented by a unit of the American army in the name of SEATO. The governor of Mahasarakham will receive [the tanks] in the name of the government.

It would be considered a great honor if you could attend this ceremony. It is hoped that you will be able to honor us on this occasion. Thus, this message conveys an invitation to and expresses our gratitude in advance.

With demonstration of respect,

/s/ Nāi Phin Imsuwan

Nāi Amphoe, Mahasarakham

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 7, 1963

SEATO Exercise

During the 1st half of June, SEATO forces are having exercises in Thailand. Though the actual exercise doesn't begin till 11th June, there are more and more American troops here all the time. This morning in conjunction with these exercises, there was a ceremony in town in which some water tanks were given to various villages in the area. We attended this ceremony. The implications of the SEATO exercise are likely to be ramified with regard to their effect on the villages. I am a little apprehensive as to the effect this may have on my work.

History of Bān Chiang Hian

In the afternoon I went to Roi-et with the Community Development officers. On the way we passed through Chiang Hian and Mr. W. started to tell me about the village. In the legend of the origin of the *bōng fai*, one of the "towns" mentioned is Chiang Hian. Apparently there was an ancient capital here - or seat of a prince. He went on to say that many artifacts have been found there including some gold statues of the Buddha which have since been stolen. Dave. W. and I had noted that there is what looks like a moat around the village. This may be a sign that the

village was inhabited in Dvaravati times. (I must enquire more into this matter).

Silk Raising and Community Development

The purpose of going to Roi-et was to visit the Agricultural Station, where there is a mulberry tree and silk worm experimentation going on. Here we met the director, who has studied in Japan concerning the silk process. He explained the varieties of mulberry bushes (there are some 30 of them) and the different types of silk which come from these trees. He also showed us the worms being fed on these leaves.

Mr. W. is taking two varieties of mulberry bushes to use at the demonstration plot at the corners, at B. Mī and for several people including Mr. Pim in Khum Pā Hāt in Bān Nōng Tūn. There two varieties are the best for Thai silk.

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 8, 1963

Visit to B. Nōng Khā, T. Thā Tūm

Today went to B. Nōng Khā in Tambon Thā tūm to take pictures of Mr. Ngao's family. We also took ones of the wat and the river at Thā tūm, the wat at B. Nōng Khā and of his family. We were served a delicious lunch of *lāp kai* and chicken curry along with a number of different leaves including ginger and mint leaves. In Thā tūm we were asked by one of Mr. Ngao's relatives if the American soldiers had come to the N.E. to fight. Mr. Ngao's brother also didn't really understand why the soldiers were here. I was amused because a Civil Action Lieutenant the evening before had shown surprise that there was any misunderstanding as to the troops being here, for they had sent a P.A. equipment truck to broadcast the message. The word "exercise" (in the military sense) doesn't seem to have much meaning to villagers. And I can understand why.

"Patron-Client" Idea and the Village

Mr. Ngao told us with regard to the possibility of getting one of the SEATO water tanks that Mr. Phon had said that if Mr. W. had tried to get the tank he would be unsuccessful. However, they expected that I would be successful.

Bān Nông Tūn

June 13, 1963

Mr. Ngao

Today Mr. Ngao is planting some 50 banana trees which he bought from Nông Kung. He is planting these quite near the house of his mother-in-law. The older brother of Nuan - Mr. Ngao's wife - is now around the house. I don't know whether he has just returned from somewhere or whether I haven't noticed him before. Mr. Ngao's brother has been around a lot lately. He came today with some rice for milling. He just left to walk home.

Army and Village

Mr. Ngao says that the villagers don't seem to understand why the soldiers are here. He himself seems to because he has listened to the radio and seems to understand the word "Exercise". The villagers got very excited yesterday when a helicopter landed very near here.

Health

The wife of the headman was over with one of her sons. She explained that he had been ill for several days and from her description, I would guess that he has had measles. From reports there are quite a number of other children afflicted by measles or some other disease, as some report fever and pains but no rash. The wife of Mr. Phon is using "local medicine" for her son which I gathered to be a mixture of some sort of fruit juice plus herbs. If they go to the Health Center, cases of measles will be treated with Vitamin B complex.

The villagers believe that eating food which has been touched by flies may cause cholera. However this may be, they at least recognize the importance of avoiding food touched by flies. Mr. Hō was around asking for some "Western headache medicine". I claimed that we used only local stuff which could be obtained next door. This seemed to satisfy him.

Visit to Nōn Khwaw Nôi

In the afternoon Mr. Ngao invited us to go on a tour of the fields where there would be some plowing for us to see. Just as we were getting ready to go, Mr. Wichian drove up with Mr. Seng. They joined on our excursion which led from Khum Wat through the fields behind the wat towards Khum Nōn Khwaw Nôi. It wasn't until we reached this khum that we actually found people plowing. Here they insisted I take a go at plowing, but I had a hard time controlling the

buffalo and plowing a straight line, for the plow kept digging too deep into the ground.

Mr. Wichian and Mr. Phon had come to the khum to discuss planting of mulberry trees, the planting of some special rice seed and the forthcoming visit of some American soldiers on Sunday. This last situation was prompted by a query of Mr. Thiang on how the villagers were going to feed the soldiers, as they were planning to be here at mealtime. I explained that they most likely would have their own food, but Mr. W. replied that even if that is the case, it was good Thai custom to provide food for guests. I noticed that corn was being raised in this khum too and inquired whether the planting of corn was a recent innovation. According to Mr. Phon, corn has been planted in the village for a long time and Mr. Ngao said that maybe it has been planted here since the reign of King Taksin (an exaggeration to say the least).

We also came on some men sawing boards from a log. It will take two days to saw 9 boards, after taking a turn I can see why, though I doubt I could get through more than two boards a day, no matter how good my partner.

As we were leaving the khum, there were some comments by one of the young girls followed by a real outburst of laughter. Mr. W. explained that one of the young girls had said that if I didn't have a wife, she would like to be my wife and go to America, and in any case she would like to have a baby by a "white man". Mr. W. couldn't stop chuckling over this. There certainly is a lot of sexual joking among villagers.

Meeting of Village Council

In the evening we heard the "bell" (a hollow log struck by a stick) calling the village council together. It seems that on a trip through here a few weeks ago, the Nai Amphoe noticed how bad the road had become and had ordered the villagers to repair it. Thus, they were getting together to discuss how to repair the road starting tomorrow. Mr. Wichian will come to supervise these repairs.

Courting

Last evening we heard a *khāēn* being played nearby and Mr. Ngao said that it was some young swain serenading his girl friend.

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 14, 1963

Mr. Ngao and Charcoal Selling

Last evening a truck came and loaded up with the charcoal Mr. Ngao buys from the villagers. He pays ฿7 a sack for the charcoal and resells it in the market for ฿13 a sack. It then retails for ฿14-฿17 sack. He, of course, has to pay transportation costs as well.

Marketing

Mr. Ngao says that people usually come to the village to buy rice. The villagers rarely take the rice to the market.

Food

In the evening Mr. Ngao showed us how to make *khāw niaw wān* - lit. "sweet rice" but in fact a fermented rice. The most important ingredient, that which is called simply "starch", are little tablets which look a bit like a small biscuit. These are some sort of local yeast or "culture". Mr. Ng. buys them in the Roi-et market at 20 tablets for a baht. He resells them at 5 for a baht.

Cooked glutinous rice is taken and thoroughly soaked in water. It is then kneaded so that there are no hard balls of rice in it. It is then put in a big bowl. Half or a whole tablet (depending on the amount to be made) of the yeast is crushed into a fine powder, sprinkled over the rice and thoroughly worked into it. When this is done, the product is taken and placed into bowls which are covered and allowed to stand for 2 to 3 days.

The result tastes like rice that has been soaked in a sweet wine. It is quite good. However, the making of it is illegal, so that Mr. Ngao has to beware of the police in doing it.

Bān Nōng Tūn

(about) June 15, 1963

Needs of Villages in Tambon Khwao, Amphoe Muang, Maha Sarakham

At the time of the SEATO exercise in N.E. Thailand, the Civic Action group of the U.S. Army arranged for the distribution of roughly made desks to some of the schools in the area. One of the areas which they covered was Tambon Khwao. As a guide for the Civic Action Program, I made up a list of villages in the Tambon with their needs in terms of desks and wells noted. The

villages were listed in order to poverty, i.e., the least poor being listed last, and the most poor the first. This poverty ranking was made by Mr. Wichian, the CD officer for Tambon Khwao. The following table gives the information:

Village			No. of Pupils	Needs well	Need for school desks
1.	B.	Nông Tũn	106	yes	Needs desks for all students.
2.	B.	Mô	130	yes	"
3.	B.	Mĩ	181	yes	Already has 30 desks but needs more.
4.	B.	Dõn Dũ	65	yes	Needs desks for all students.
5.	B.	Sông Pluai	83	no	"
6.	B.	Saphang	—	yes	No school, students attend neighbouring school.
7.	B.	Iat	160	no	Needs desks for all students.
8.	B.	Klāng	—	no	No school, students attending neighbouring school.
9.	B.	Law Nôi	—	yes	"
10.	B.	Tiw	140	no	Needs desks for all students.
11.	B.	Chiang Hian	200+	no	"
12.	B.	Khwaw	?	no	Has already about 70 desks; needs about 30 desks for double seating or 60 desks for single

Bản Nông Tũn

June 16, 1963

The Day the Soldiers Came

Today in the village some American soldiers came to present packets of pencils, paper and rubbers to the students at the school. The villagers had heard about their coming two days ago and as the village was on the schedule for lunchtime, food was prepared. The students had been prepared for their coming by being told what to say (in unison) when the presentation was made.

The teachers had brought the food which had been prepared in B. Khwaw (including chicken curry and fried chicken - Thai style), and had also brought soda pop. In this way and in

others, I got the feeling that the villagers themselves were left out of things. This was enhanced by the presence of Mr. Wichian, Mr. Sen and ourselves. Thus, there were a number of outsiders who more or less ran the show.

Things were ready and waiting at about 9:30. The soldiers were supposed to show up at 11:30, and finally arrived about 12:10. The group included Mr. Cheun Chai (the Changwat Primary Education Director), the headmaster of BK and BCH schools, some Thai army people and about five Americans. Some pretence was made at introductions (but more for me, I fear, than for the leaders of the village). They then served lunch, which some of the Americans ate.

The students were lined up in front of the school once the eating was finished. A short ceremony was held to give over the packages to the students. Mr. Cheun Chai and one of the Thai Army officers spoke on behalf of the education department and SEATO respectively. A response was made on behalf of the school by Mr. Bunthiang. The ceremony was cut somewhat short by a rather heavy rain, in all lasting about an hour.

In addition to the packets, leaflets explaining SEATO and the exercise were given to Mr. Bunthiang to distribute to people in the village. I was rather surprised at the desire of the men in the village to have these pamphlets. Quite a number came up to ask for them. I don't know how well these will be read, but I can have some sort of check in my future questionnaires and interviews.

The teachers held a short ceremony in which each student came forward, bowed and claimed their packet. There were several students not present - (ill?).

Many villagers crowded round the area to observe the proceedings, but my general impression was that the villagers had somewhat of a mystified misunderstanding of what was happening. As I said before, I think the villagers themselves didn't feel as much a part of the proceedings as the recipients of largesse from outsiders, including those who spoke on their behalf.

Death

Mr. Phon informed me that Mrs. Sōi Thapsuri (ส้อย ท้าสุริย์) aged 60-65 died last night. She died in KY and had fever, swollen body and kidney trouble. While we were involved in the army ceremony, we saw the casket being carried by to the cremation grounds.

Bān Nông Tūn

June 18, 1963

Visit of the King

Today the king toured certain of the military installations in the Northeast including the one in Boribue. Some villagers went to see him. Others believed he was also going to Roi-et and went there as well.

Thai Attitudes Towards Having Children

The other day, we got onto the subject of children and marriage with Mr. Wichian. We mentioned we had been married just a year yesterday. He said it was too bad, and we asked why. He said Thais believe that if a couple doesn't have a child the first year, that is unfortunate and bad for the marriage. And those who don't, people talk about as though they are not capable. Mr. Sen indicated that he thought that that was the case with us. It was obvious in the course of the conversation that Mr. Wichian has no conception of birth control devices. He said that it was about time that we start having a child.

New School

Today they were supposed to erect the poles at the school as the first step towards constructing the new school. Apparently these cement poles will cost B1,900.

Attitudes Toward Army

I mentioned to Mr. Ngao that the army is supposed to leave on Wednesday. He said he didn't think they would leave, but would stay to fight in Laos.

Education

Miss Buaphā, the new teacher at the school, was quite insistent today that I should see a "correct" *wai khru* ceremony at a school in Sarakham so that I am not misled by the incorrect ceremony in the village.

Bān Nông Tūn

June 19, 1963

The integration of village components into the nation-state has two levels. The first level is that of integration which comes about by the existence of the nation-state - i.e., such things as

a marketing system which has its boundaries at the boundary of the nation. The second level stems from overt attempts by the government of the nation-state to raise the awareness and participation of the members of the state through such mechanisms as mass communication.

Bān Nông Tūn

June 20, 1963

Invitation to a funeral:

The following is a translation of an invitation to a funeral of the mother of Mr. Wichian

SCHEDULE [OF EVENTS AT] CREMATION

[OF]

Khun Māē Tun Sawēncarān

At mēn B. Pluai, Village no.20, T. Rôp Muang

A. Muang C. Roi et

Wednesday 19 June 1963

11:00 a.m. Presentation of noon meal [to monks]

7:00 p.m. Chanting of Abhidharma [*aphitham*]

Thursday 20 June 1963

11:00 a.m. Presentation of noon meal [to monks]

12:00 noon Delivery of sermon in front of the corpse

1:00 p.m. Movement of corpse to the mēn

4:00 p.m. Chanting of *mātikā*¹; *bangsukun*

5:00 p.m. Collection of songs

[You] are respectfully invited [to attend the cremation]

Sponsors:

Mrs. Butsayarat Bunwisēt, Daughter

Mr. Chārī Sawēncarān, Son

Mr. Sāthōn Sawēncarān, Son

Mr. Wichian Sawēncarān, Son

Mr. Chātrī Sawēncarān, Son

Mr. Niphon Sīruchē, Nephew

Mr. Plian Plônsin, Nephew

Mr. Nukūn Kārisuk, Nephew

¹ *mātikā*, a sutra chanted at funerals

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 21, 1963

Three days ago the mother of Mr. Wichian died. The funeral was held yesterday in a village very close to Roi-et. I went over with the Nai Amphoe, Mr. Charoen, and some other officials. One of the things that struck me here was that Mr. Phon and Mr. Ngao from BNT were present at a ceremony which included high status people from the Teacher's College (Mr. Wichian's brother is a teacher there) and government officials. This is certainly one way in which the village has contact with the outside world.

On the way back from Roi-et, we stopped at the school at B. Khwaw so that the Nai Amphoe could look at the possibilities of rebuilding the new school building which blew down. Here I learned that the Nai Amphoe knows the name of Mr. Phon. He has taken an interest in BNT, I believe, partially because of Mr. Wichian's pleas and partially, I think, because of our being there. Mr. Cheun Chai and the Nai Amphoe visited the village while we were in Bangkok to investigate the potentialities of the new school. This interest, nonetheless, is having an effect on the villagers' attitudes toward the outside world.

Inheritance

When a person dies, his property is usually divided among his daughters and not sons of the family, for the men go to live with their wives in their households. The daughter who receives the actual house is the daughter (usually along with her husband) who takes care of her parents until their death. Usually this is the last daughter to marry, though not necessarily the last daughter. She will, however, not receive as large an amount of land as will her sister.

When a man marries, his wife will receive land from her parents, for him to farm.

If a man's wife's parents have very little land, or his parents have much land, he will also inherit land from his parents.

Health

There was a very dirty child in front of the store today. Mr. Ngao said that the boy had a

fever and that villagers don't bathe children with fevers.

Insofar as villagers buy medicines, go to health clinics, etc., health is one way in which the villagers have contact with the outside world.

Birth:

Mr. Ngao says that people usually wait more than ten days after birth before giving a child a name. If a child becomes sick, his name is changed.

Bān Nông Tūn

June 22, 1963

Death

Yesterday at about 5:00 p.m. Mr. Sā Thapsuri (สา ทัพสุริย์), aged 20, died. He was the brother of Mr. Phā (พา), the fellow who was recently married. He lived in the house with his other brothers as his parents were dead already. The cause of death was said to be some intestinal trouble which caused his stomach to swell but not much pain. He was ill about a month. A local "doctor" had advised him to go to the hospital, but he hadn't. He had never been ordained or married.

I won't describe the cremation except insofar as there were unique characteristics different from the other funerals we have seen. In this case, no one was ordained to make merit for him. This was because he was a young person.

On the way to the forest, I saw someone throw away a bundle of bamboo and other wooden sticks. I had seen this occur at other funerals as well, but hadn't known why it was done. These pieces of wood are a make-believe casket which are placed at a place where the phī might be in order to fool them.

An interesting object was burned with the corpse, namely a pistol. Apparently the boy had been a shooter.

In the forest we saw a *thāt* made of wood. This was a grave marker placed over the grave of a woman who had died in childbirth 2-3 years ago. The boy was cremated at the same place where his parents had been.

A Crazy Visitor

This morning when we arrived in the village there was quite a commotion going on around Mr. Phon's house. As we drove by, a grey-haired late middle-aged woman did a deep *krāp* to us. I thought this was rather strange and noted that I had never seen her before. When we reached our house, she was not long in following. She spread her white shoulder cloth in front of her and began *krāp* -ing and begging. Mr. Ngao soon appeared on the scene and advised us to give her no heed as she was crazy. This was soon substantiated. She kept making obscene jokes and would occasionally hike up her phasin above her buttocks and would then wave her nude bottom at the crowd. She was made the butt of a lot of good-natured, obscene joking by the villagers, though there was a note of maliciousness in their teasing.

I asked Mr. Ngao if she was possessed by a spirit, but he said she was just crazy.

People kept trying to get her to leave, - going to the extent of taking her belongings (two baskets of things) down the road toward Nōng Kung. But she kept coming back and said she had come to live in BNT. I gathered that the villagers, and particularly Mr. Ngao, were embarrassed for our sake. One boy kept taunting her and she would chase after him with a stick. Also, it was obvious that children were afraid of her.

Every so often she would break into song which was like *mōlammū* except that she would throw in things about BNT. She also would occasionally dance in Thai traditional style. And she was always paying her obeisance to us and asking for money to buy liquor.

Finally, in the afternoon, after we returned from the funeral, she did leave. But Mr. Ngao is worried that by knowing farangs live here she will come back.

Mr. Ngao

Today Mr. Ngao showed us a small woods behind his place which he said he had just bought. This land is less than 1 *rai* and he paid the fantastic sum of ₪40 for it. He bought it from a married daughter of Mr. Tāp whom he said is quite poor and needed to sell the land to get money.

He also said he had sold 3 pigs to the B. Khwaw co-operative for ₪500 apiece. He was supposed to pick up his ₪1,500 today but he knew it wouldn't be ready.

Education:

Mr. Ngao pointed to one of the students from the school and said that he had completed P.3 but guessed that he was not able to read yet. He said that when he was in school, he knew more by the end of two years than the students here do when they finish P.4. He said he had very good teaching in his school (implying that the teaching here wasn't the best).

Bản Nông Tùn

June 23, 1963

Ideas on Birth Control

During the evening in the course of conversation, Mr. Ngao brought up the subject of birth control devices. We explained to him the difficulty of equipment and the expense of pills. We also found he knew nothing of the rhythm method, but was extremely interested, and not at all embarrassed to use words like "period" and "intercourse" in front of us. He is really keen to learn and says he wants to limit his family to two children.

Wake at Mr. Phā 's House

Tonight was the second night of the "wake" at Mr. Pha's and his brother's house. When we arrived, we were placed near the radio which apparently no one was listening to. It turned out that the radio was tuned to Peking and the news was on. Mr. Pha didn't seem to know it was a Communist station and was confused because he knew they also broadcast in English. Mr. Ngao knew the station was Communist and said he didn't like it because they said nasty things about America.

Nōi and a girl were playing a modest version of strip poker. Nōi would offer three straws held so that only their tops were showing. Then he would ask long, short or middle. If she chose the right one, she would get some article which belonged to him. If she didn't he would win back the article or win an article of hers. As it was he "lost" a watch, a ring, a flashlight, a môlam script and maybe some other things. However, he didn't lose them in earnest, for tomorrow he will go to her house with creme or face powder and "buy" back his things. For tonight, though, they were hers.

There were several young men from other villages who had come a-courting. There was a game of cards being played by young men (for stakes) in one area. And there was someone

playing a *khāēn* and another singing *môlammū*. However, Mr. Phā and his older brother, the ones whom the wake was supposed to be cheering up, seemed rather down, and I suppose that the party reminded them more than took their minds off their dead brother.

Economics and Mr. Ngao

Mr. Ngao says he charges either 1฿ or 1 litre for a *hāp* of rice (around 20 kg.). Last year was a good year and he said he made up to 2-3000 ฿ per month (this would mean he milled upwards of around 60,000 kg. per month). He says that, to explain that a large family like Mr. Chāi's, the assistant headman, eat 10 kg. of rice a day. He also says that people come from kilometers around to have their rice milled here. People who live in khum N.K.N. come here also because they don't like the way Mr. Phonmā's mill works.

Incidentally, a litre is worth about \$1.25 as compared with B1 cash for charge.

He bought the rice mill on installment, paying ฿1,000 per month until it was all paid off. He paid it off last year. (Somewhere else I have ฿25,000 as the price he paid for it). The mill is an English make and he bought it in Sarakham.

Material Culture

In the evening Mr. Ngao came in with a piece of bamboo about 4' in length and 2 1/2" in diameter. One end was closed, with a slit on top of about 6" in length and 1/4" wide, At the other end, a woven device (made also of bamboos) was inserted. This fitted the opening perfectly, but had long malleable fingers on the end which came more or less together. This device is a fish trap for eels. You place crab or shellfish meat in the tube. Then it is placed in the water. The eel smells the meat and swims through the opening, the bamboo fingers allowing him to pass. Once in, however, he can't get out. The slit on top is for air so that the eels don't suffocate.

Sewing Machines

The following is a list of people who have sewing machines in the village.

Name	Khôm	No. of Machines
นายพัน ทัพสุริย์ (Phan Thapsuri)	KPH 77	2
นายเบิ่ง ทัพสุริย์ (Mrs. Beng Thapsuri)	KW 9	1
นายสี ทัพธานี (Sī Thapthānī)	KY 61	1
นายแก้ว นามนตรี (Kāēo Nāmmontrī)	KY 54	1
นายชาย สมพิทักษ์ (Chāi Somphithak) Asst. Head Man	KY 48	1
นายพรมมา เศรษฐรักษา (Phommā Sētraksā)	KNKN 105	1
		TOTAL: 7

Most of these are Japanese-made – the cheapest kind. Mr. Ngao explained to us that he too is planning to buy a machine. He says he would like to get a Singer as it's the best. Also he would like to have Nuan get the best lessons, even if it costs B100 because he says that “if they are the best, that is not too expensive.” I am continually amazed at his excellent conception of economics and capitalism.

Radios

There are five radios in the village. The following is a list of those who own them (no one owns more than 1):

Name	Khum
นายลา ทัพสุริย์ (Lā Thapsuri)	KL 78
นายสัง ทัพสุริย์ (Sang Thapsuri)	KL 84
นายพรมมา เศรษฐรักษา (Phommā Sētraksā)	KNKN 105
นายสม ทัพสุริย์ (Sôm Thapsuri)	KNKN 27 [currently KNKN 97]
นายเหง่า คำวิชา (Ngao Khamwichā)	KW 26/1

Army and Village

Yesterday Mr. Ngao pointed out a young man who had just returned from "Home Guard" army service in Sarakham. He was there for a total of a month during the Thanarat exercises. He was the only one from this village who took part in these army activities.

Nuan's Mother

She is some close relation of Mr. Phon.

Sale of Buffalo

This afternoon Nang Khen's husband sold a buffalo and calf for ฿685. He had made the deal to sell the buffalo to a man from Tambon Nong Kung for ฿500 and later threw in the calf for another ฿185. When the deal actually came to be concluded, Nang Khen put up a protest - whether about the price or whether because these were their only two beasts, I don't know. At any rate, despite her objections, the deal was concluded. Mr. Ngao says this was a relatively cheap price, as a good buffalo will sometimes sell for more than ฿1000 (his father sold two male buffaloes last year for ฿1100 each). But he says the old female buffalo in this case probably won't live more than a year. He also said the man who sold the buffalo will use the money to buy a new one.

Bān Nông Tūn

June 24, 1963

Today we went with Mr. Ngao to Roi-et on a *paithiaw*. One of the first things which I noticed when we reached the town was the lake with the island shrine in the middle of town. Mr. Ngao explained this is an ancient lake with which the town of Roi Et has always been associated.

All over town there were *môdū* who had tapestry-like paintings with Brahmanistic signs on a wall behind them. We must have seen at least a half dozen of these people. Also, as we were returning, we saw another fortune teller at the bus stop. This consisted of a man and woman who used dice made of small shells, astrological calendars, and a large book to answer set questions which a person could put to them. A person could ask two of these questions for 1 baht.

Mr. Ngao purchased a new device for his rice mill which cost over ฿200 (it was cheaper in Roi-et than in Sarakham).

When we returned, we stopped at the corner to wait for a bus to take us to the village. While we were stopped there, I met a boy from Tambon Nong Kung. He spoke excellent Bangkok Thai and I asked him if he had lived in Bangkok. He answered that he had lived there for 6 years, returning only once in the interim (about three years ago). He has now returned to farm.

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 25, 1963

Mr. Sôm Thapthanī

In further conversations with Sôm (see 4/6/63) I learned that he has also worked in the building business in which he makes ฿20 a day. He says he returns to Bangkok as soon as the rice-cycle is no longer demanding.

Tham Bun for the Dead

This morning went to the house of Mr. Phā where they were having a *thambun* ceremony to end the "rites" for the dead brother. The priests had come (3 priests and 1 novice). They were in an inner room. Events began here with the *môsuat* from KY chanting some things to which the priests would respond. This went on for a little while with the people in the inner room sitting in the "wat" position, but the people outside doing whatever they pleased (including listening to the radio). Then the priests began chanting *suatmon* and everyone adopted the correct position. When this was finished, the priests ate, or rather were served their breakfast. When they had finished they chanted some short verses and then everyone ate. When all the eating was finished, the *môsuat* went back into the inner room and started the chanting back and forth again. Then the priests chanted again (again with only the people in the inner room taking the "wat" position). While this was going on, one of the priests took a *thang* basket full of water and took a branch with leaves on it. He placed the branch in the water and then sprinkled it on the people in the inner room and some on the porch as well. This is called *nāmphraphutthamon* (น้ำพระพุทธรมนต์). Mr. Phā explained that this was done in order to scare away the *phī*. When this was finished, the

priests departed and the ceremony was over.

The food this morning was different from what I had seen before. In addition to rice, there were 4 dishes: (1) bamboo shoots, chicken, green peppers, and *makhya*; (2) leaf (*bai khathin*), chicken, peppers, *nampla*; (3) leaf (different kind), chicken, peppers, *nampla*; (4) jack fruit, peppers, *nampla* (crushed up together).

Other Customs Connected with Death

1. An older woman came with a ball of rice and went round touching each of the close relatives and inhabitants of the household with it 3 times. This was to protect these people against any malevolent *phī* who might be bringing fevers and diseases.

2. In a small bamboo triangular box were placed red, black and glutinous rice, peppers, *makhya*. Over this was poured "water". This was food for the *phī*. The box was taken by one of the brothers of the dead boy and placed at a "corner" ("4 corners is all right; 3 corners will do too"). This was done after the priests had left.

3. *Kan bān* (L.): When a person dies, a priest or some other respected person will take a string and wind it around the house. This is called *kan bān* and is done to protect the inhabitants against the *phī*. (Addition to notes: *Kan bān* co prob กั้นบ้าน lit, to protect [through interception or prevention of malevolent acts] the house or household)

4. When a person dies, a *mô* will come and change the stairway, either by moving it to a different place or turning it around. This is done in order to confuse the *phī* who might try to enter.

5. The *nangsü borān* which I thought belonged to Mr. Ho. Actually belongs to the wat. When a person dies, it is taken to the house of the dead person and retained there until all the ceremonies for the dead person are over. Apparently, it is not used to read but is kept more-or-less as a sacred object to help the spirit (*winyān*) of the dead person. In Lao, this book is called *nangsüphuūk* (หนังสือผูก). (Addition to notes: *Nangsüphuūk* (หนังสือผูก) – I prob. Understood this as being the Lao equivalent of *nangsübōrān* or of "sacred book" since *phuūk* is merely the classifier of a family of a palm leaf manuscript)

6. The putting of remains into a *thāt* or *chēdī* can only be done on the 4th, 6th or 12th months. Thus, the relatives of those who die must keep the ashes for several months at least.

However, some people wait maybe two years before placing the ashes into the *thāt*.

7. When a person dies, a relative, usually a son, may be ordained for a short time. This is called *thambun buat hai phūthītāi pai* (ทำบุญบวชให้ผู้ที่ตายไป - lit. "making merit by being ordained for a person who has died".) In the case of Mr. Phā's brother, no one was ordained, but when the parents of Mr. Phā died, a son was ordained.

I had thought that maybe more extensive death customs were carried out for the brother of Mr. Phā because the parents had already died and maybe people thought the house was jinxed. But the parents have been dead for several years, so this would not seem to be the case.

The American Army and its Relationship to the Village

This morning when I was at the *thambun* ceremony, the major topic of conversation was the school which the American Army is building near Bān Khôk Nôi in T. Nông Kung. The Corps of Engineers, which has followed the SEATO forces here, are building school, dams, wells and maybe other things as part of the Civic Action program of the Army. Probably the biggest topic of conversation was the fact that the soldiers plan to get the school finished within 15 days - a surprising speed for the Thais.

In connection with this Mr. Thiang was over this morning trying to get me to go to speak with the soldiers and try to get them to repair the road to BNT. I get a little annoyed with his continually trying to use me to get things from the Army, though I must admit that it is a natural assumption on his part that I might be able to do so.

Mr. Phon also approached me on going to see the American soldiers, so at about 2:30 Mr. Phon, Mr. Ho, Mr. Sôm and Mr. Ngao accompanied Jane and me on a hike across the fields to visit the camp. Naturally, I was unsuccessful. But what was interesting was the reactions of the group from the village to the numerous soldiers and particularly to the large equipment. I don't think they could believe their eyes.

Many people from the village, including the priests and women, have walked over to see the camp. They often don't understand that everyone in the camp is an American because of the different shades of coloring (including black, there being several negroes). They are impressed that the soldiers are hard workers. But they simply can't comprehend the magnitude of the endeavor or why all efforts are being concentrated in one place.

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 27, 1963

Concerning Mr. Phā

Mr. Phā has left his wife and returned to the village. Apparently he didn't really like her and so they have "divorced". He is also a bit of a philanderer. He has several children by a woman in Khum Nōn Khwaw Nōi.

Marriage and Divorce

There is no formality in divorce, - a man just returns home. However, the bride price is not returned, but the bride's family keeps it. When a couple has made known their divorce, they are free to marry again. Mr. Ngao says that quite a few people in the village have been divorced.

In the case of plural marriages, a bride price must be paid every time and there is no diminishment in bride-price with succeeding wives. Actually this is understandable, because the only way that a man with several wives could persuade another girl's parents to let him marry her is to offer a substantial bride price.

There is a couple getting married in Ban Mī on the 1st of July. This is a fairly rich couple (someone involved works for the Road Dept.). They have sent out printed invitations. The bride price in this case is ₤4,000. There is also a wedding in Mr. Ngao's village also on the 1st of July for which wedding invitations have also been sent out. In this case the bride price is ₤3,000. This is supposedly a moderately rich family. Mr. Ngao said that he doesn't think there has ever been a bride price of ₤2,000 in BNT and most are around ₤1,000. People in BNT never send out wedding invitations.

The Killers of Buffalo

We discussed the killing of buffalo and cattle in BNT with Mr. Ngao. Apparently most of those which are killed are killed by Mr. Lā (the *nakleng*, still in prison) or Mr. Chū, the brother-in-law of Mr. Lā. This latter person has never been ordained and has no fear of the *bāp* which he would make by killing a large animal. Mr. Ngao says that he would be very afraid of killing a large animal because that would be really big *bāp*, but that he will kill only small animals such as chickens, because that is small *bāp*.

Religious Sects and Religion

The wat in this village, as most wats in the area, belongs to the Mahanikai sect and only "forest wats" belong to the Thammayut sect. There are apparently no Thammayut wats in the area though there may be one in Sarakham. Also, there are no *māē chī* (nuns) except in Sarakham.

The monks in Wat BNT are not able to study much because there is no *ācān yai* or abbot. They apparently don't go to study at B. Khwaw. People in the village take food to them but they don't go around begging. Different people take food at different times so that all who wish can make merit. Nuan usually takes food on Wan Phra.

Death

This morning we learned that the granddaughter of Mr. Ho died last evening. This little child was 5-6 years old and was the daughter of Nāng Nōi. Her husband (i.e. father of the girl) had died last year. The girl was the only child. She died of fever and had black vomit. She had been sick only two days and people were surprised when she died.

Mr. Ho has become worried because there have been so many deaths in his house recently. He thus went to visit a *môdū* who determined that there are *phī* in the house who have come to farm (?) and are causing all the trouble. Thus, Mr. Ho will go find a famous *mô tham* to come and exorcise (ฆ่าผี) the *phī*. This *mô tham* is not from the village. He usually charges about ฿300 for his work.

Nāi Ho

Mr. Ho has two daughters and one son.

Bridge Building

Today the villagers (men) were out building a bridge over a spot in the road that floods quite badly. This was really an occasion of cooperative labor. There was a whole work gang under the direction of Mr. Phon.

Nang Khēn

A few days ago Jane had a conversation with this woman, the one who had the Caesarean. She is 35 and married 4 years ago (the reason why she married late may be because she is slightly deformed – hunchback and one eye closed. Husband also physically deformed). She spent 10 days in the hospital at a cost of ฿300 and tells me that she is no longer able to have any more children. I asked if anybody else in BNT had ever been to the hospital in Sarakham. She said one other woman had, also to have a Caesarean. In this latter case, the child died, while the woman

(age 20) was also unable to have any more children (this is either a poor reflection on treatment at the Sarakham hospital, or possibly that they didn't get the two respective women into the hospital until the 11th hour, by which time it was hard to help them). The woman with whom I was talking said it hurt very much at the hospital.

N.B. check into who the 2nd woman was. Lives close to us, a couple of houses down.

Bān Nōng Tūn

June 29, 1963

Mr. Ho, Death and Phī

Mr. Ho is still planning to have a *môtham* come to exorcise the *phī* in his house. But as this is going to cost quite a bit of money, he will have to sell a buffalo.

Tomorrow morning he is also planning a *thambun* ceremony.

Pig Selling

A man from the pig station in B. Khwaw - Nai Phan - was over to investigate buying pigs from Mr. Ngao.

Rice Milling Record

Mr. Ngao keeps records of how much rice he mills plus yield per kilo of paddy. He does this for tax purposes. He also pays ฿480 a year tax for his rice mill and thinks that the tax will go up to ฿700 this year.

Wedding

Tomorrow there will be a wedding in the village - one couple, the son of Mr. Tāp.

Relations of Mr. Ho

In Mr. Ho's house there is a young boy called *lān*, called "little buffalo" because he tends the cattle. He is a grandson, his mother having been a daughter of Mr. Ho's.

Mr. Ho's son, the bucktoothed one, is presently unmarried. He was previously married to Nang Khēn.

Tham Bun Ceremony at Mr. Ho's House

Because of the many deaths in Mr. Ho's family of late, he had a *tham bun* ceremony this morning. First, the priests came and were fed and chanted. Then the "head priest" chanted in Thai using a book to read part of the chant. I didn't understand it all, but gathered this was a special chant for getting rid of malevolent spirits. I heard the word "thewada" mentioned a number of times.

Then two water baskets full of water were taken. Mr. Ho took some wax and rubbed it on the inside of the baskets. Then some leaves were placed in the baskets. Then a tray with a baht note, some leaves, cigarettes and home-made candles were presented to the priests by a layman (not Mr. Ho) in the traditional way. The "head priest" chanted while both priests held the candles over the baskets to let the wax fall into the water. When that was finished, the water was taken and sprinkled around the house on the people. The priests chanted during this. One woman had the priest pour water over her head (this was the grandmother of the child and the mother of the father of the child who had died last year).

When this was over, the priests again chanted as several people slowly poured water through the slats in the floor of the house. This is called สวดน้ำอิมินา (*saat nām ?iminā*). It is somehow connected with the *phī*. Then the head priest took the baht note and all of the priests went downstairs.

Below the house at each of the 4 corners of the house, the following occurred:

1. Mr. Hô placed a small bit of food (several kinds) on a piece of coconut supported by a small pole about a foot high. To this was attached a string.

2. The priests passed the string from one to another and when all of them held it, they chanted.
3. Some sand was placed in a hole dug at the foot of the post. The head priest took a small spade and covered the earth over. While he was doing this, the priests chanted.

This last custom is called สูดถอด (*sūt thôt*) and is performed in all *thambun bān* ceremonies to improve the earth of the house. The *phī* won't like this new earth and so they will leave.

Saat nām ?iminā (สวดน้ำอิมินา) I have been unable to locate the last word. In Lao, *suat* becomes *sūt* (สูด)

Sūt thôt (สูดถอด) – lit. “to chant [a formula of] removal”