

Charles F. Keyes Field Notes, Thailand

March 1 through April 25, 1964.

Field notes in this document were primarily written in Mahasarakham Province (Changwat Maha Sarakham), Thailand, although the last few pages were written in Bangkok. This document is preceded by field notes written in Mahasarakham in February 1964. This document is the last of the field notes organized chronologically for fieldwork conducted from 1962 – 1964 in Thailand.

Mahasarakham In Mahasarakham.

March 1, 1964

Mahasarakham

March 2, 1964

Traditional Marketing Patterns in Mahasarakham

Today I had a discussion with Mr. Cheunchai and Khrū Bunloet concerning the traditional marketing practices in Mahasarakham. The discussion was rather informal and Mr. Cheunchai did most of the talking.

Traditionally, Mr. Cheunchai said that there were very few items which were sent from MK to Khorat or Bangkok in exchange for goods to be resold here. The goods which were brought back here by Chinese merchants were such things as clothes, books, and other items which could not be produced locally. These goods were purchased almost exclusively by the local elite for the villagers were nearly if not completely self-sufficient. Obviously, in order for people to buy anything they must either have things to trade or else they must have money. Mr. Cheunchai said that after the fifth reign, *cao müang* (เจ้าเมือง) officials were salaried from Bangkok [**note** - **very important point!**] Before that, certain items (which were also used to make up tributes - see below) were used as trading items.

Merchants and tribute carriers at least as long as 100 years ago moved only towards Bangkok and not toward Vientiane or any other center. The routes for their trade and tribute payments were originally through Phayakaphum onto Khorat (skirting the "Plain where the Burmese Cried"). Afterwards, the railway was carried to Surin and the route changed to through Roi-et, Thātūm and Surin. Other changes occurred as the railway came on up to Khon Kaen. Before the railway was laid, goods were carried from Khorat down through the passes by oxcart to Bangkok in the same way as they had been carried to Khorat. Though traders and tribute

carriers from MK have during the past 100 years moved with single-mindedness along routes which eventually connect with Bangkok, there were traders who came from other places to trade in MK. These traders were walkers who carried goods in the traditional *hāp* (หาบ) style. Khorat traders would bring dyes and Burmese would bring "diamonds". These things and others were traded usually for silk thread.

Bunloet identified the traditional tribute of MK, which Bunchuai has called *phonreo* (พลเรือ) as not applying to a type of fruit at all, but being a Lao word *phonreo*, a categorical term for wealth or items of wealth in general. Thus, the tribute of MK consisted of those items of wealth which could be obtained locally and which had currency within the 'nation.' Mr. Cheunchai later said that this was not correct, but after discussing it with many people, had learned that *phonreo* is, as Bunchuai had stated, a fruit known in Lao as *mahnāēng* (มันเนง) whose dried seeds are used for a medicine and was sought after in Bangkok. [Note: I have later discovered that Mr. Cheunchai was correct and *phonreo* is a name for 'wild cardamom'. CFK 20/9/64].

The following is a list of things which may have been used traditionally at least as trade and perhaps as tribute from the MK area: silk (especially silk thread); elephant tusks (used to be many elephants in the area); lac (Thai *khlang*; L *khang*, ครั่ง); silver ore; copper ore; peacock feathers; deer antlers; dried venison. Other things which I asked about, but which according to my informants were traditionally neither items of trade nor tribute included kapok (it existed but was not used), tamarind (also existed but not used), leather, and rice.

Maharakham In Maharakham.

March 3, 1964

Ban Nong Tun

March 4, 1964

Bun Phra Wēt

Saturday and Sunday (*lāēm 9-10 kham*) are the days for the *Bun Phra Wēt* in BNT. Today people have been making *khāo kiap* – a *khanom* particular to this ceremony and to *Bun Khāo Cī*. Also this evening there will be a "flower making" session at the wat under the direction of the priest.

Jane gives the following description of making *khāo kiap* (L) / *khāo kriap* (T)

"This can be made from white or black *khāo niao*, but the black seemed to be popular. After being steamed it is pounded to a flour in the rice pounder, and mixed either with a little sugar or with water in which a root known in Lao as *tot mā* (ตดหมา) have been soaked. (These stalks have the property of sweetening, in the same way that beet sugar does).

"Once pounded into a sticky paste, the paste is placed in a container and taken away to be made into patties. To prevent the mixture from sticking, banana leaves are coated in grease first (in this case fish grease into which the yolk of a hard-boiled egg had been blended). After similarly greasing one's hands thoroughly, lumps of the rice paste were pulled out of the container, patted into balls in the hand and then pressed down on the greased banana leaf. The rice patty is then pressed outward continually until it forms a flat round. These are then placed on a straw mat to dry, and then the process repeated until all the rice mixture is used up." These patties are then kept until time to be used. Then they are toasted over the fire and while being toasted they expand and the rice puffs out. They are toasted until browned and crisp and then are eaten. Most, however, are put aside and stored until the morning of the bun when they are taken and presented to the wat."

The priest is in charge of the ceremony and it is he who arranges for invitations to other wats for their priests to participate. I visited him at the *kuthi* this afternoon and he showed me a list of different sections of the *phra wēt* story, and the names of the wat or the priest who read/chant that section. The list was broken down into the following categories: (1) Number (consecutive); (2) name of part of Bun Phra Wet story; (3) section of each part by number (6 sections to a part); (4) name of wat, priest, or novice in charge of the section; (5) finally, a column for those who will "sponsor" or "receive the sermon" of the specific section.

The way of selecting a sponsor or recipient of the sermon was as follows: on slips of paper had been written the name of the part of the sermon, the number of the section, the name of the wat who will send the priest or novice to read the section (in about half the cases, the person in question would be a priest or novice from BNT and in those cases, the name of Phra Mahā Seng, Phra Thôngsai, or Nēn Mai was written instead of the name of the wat). These pieces of paper were then rolled up into small cylinders and placed in a *bāt*. When a person came to volunteer to sponsor a section, he would draw one of these from the *bāt*, and then his name would be written in the appropriate column. As of today, the following people had already

agreed to sponsoring a sections Phô Hô, Phô Sīhā, Phô Bunsī, Phū Chuai Chasi, Lung Lāē, Nāi Hōm/ Nāi Lāē (KY), Lung Sao, Nāi Nan (the barber). There are a total of 78 sections to be sponsored and all will be allotted before the time arrives. This means that about 75-80 percent of the households in the village will participate in this part of the bun. The priest showed me the *bailān* that will be used for the ceremony. It is interesting that the version which is being used, entitled *lam mahā chāt* (ลัมหาชาติ) is the Northern rather than the NE'ern version though both would be published in Bangkok. He also showed me some traditional *bailān* (in Khōm script) which he said were also the *Bun Phra Wēt* sermons. I asked him if anyone in the village can still write this script and he said that Phô Sīhā can and does.

Books and Literature

In the wat there are several types of books: (1) printed books in Thai script in Thai/Isan concerning religious practices, chants, and sermons; (2) printed *bailān* in Thai script in Thai/Isan (priests style) which are usually sermons; (3) written *bailān* in Khōm script, in Lao/Isan which are either sermons, or (the older ones), *nithān*.

The following is the book which the priest used for sermons connected with *bunbān* and ways of doing things: เทศนาอนิสงส์สมัยใหม่ (เล่ม ๔๔ อน่ง) โดยพระอาจารย์ ทองดีอินโท (ตรวจแก้โดย มหาเถื่อน อุซุกโร) (พระนคร ร.พ. วัฒนาพานิช). The book contains the sermon, for ex., for *bunbhāocī*.

Ranks, Statuses, Titles

I was noticing on *Bun Phra Wēt* list that the priest had written and used several titles: *phônjai* (L) / *phôyai* (T) (พ่อใหญ่) ("grandfather") for Mr. Hô; *phôcan* (L) (พ่อจันทร์) for Mr. Sīhā; *lung* (L, T) (ลุง) ("uncle") for Mr. Lāē; Nāi (L/T) (นาย) ("mister") for Mr. Hōm and Mr. Lāē (KY); *phūsui* (L) / *phūchui* (T) (ผู้ช่วย) ("assistant" [headman]) for Mr. Chāi; *sammānēn* (L/T) (สามเณร) ("Novice") for Novice Mai. For himself he had written either *phrachā* (T) / *phāsā* (L)

(พระเจ้า) or simply *chā/sā* (L) (ชา). This latter title comes to a priest after he has passed through the ceremony of *hōtnām* (L) (สดน้า).

Roi-et

March 5, 1964

I went to Roi-et with Mr. Ngao today.

Nôi's Wedding

I asked Nôi when his wedding was going to be and he replied that he didn't think that there was going to be one. It seems that the father of the bride feels that he can't afford the food, drink, etc., incumbent on him at a wedding and so he requested that Nôi just move in on an auspicious day and dispense with formalities (other than the presentation of the *sommā*). Since Nôi also comes from a poor family, he will probably agree to this.

Mr. Ngao says that Nôi's mother is not too pleased with the new wedding as she was quite partial to the first wife by whom Nôi had one child.

Bān Nōng Tūn

March 6, 1964

School Statistics

I spent the day working on school statistics. The following table shows statistics on examination success/failure for the year 2506. As these were recalled out of Mr. BT's head without reference to the records, there is a little doubt as to their reliability.

EXAMINATION RESULTS, BNT SCHOOL 2506				
Grade	Total No. of Pupils	No. Pupils Taking Exam	No. Pupils Passed	No. Pupils Failed
P.1	25	25	25	0
P.2	24	24	24	0
P.3	33	33	30	3
P.4	28	28	24	4
Total	110	110	103	7

Bun Phra Wēt

All day today preparations were underway for the *Bun Phra Wāt* ceremony tomorrow. In the morning, since it was *wan phra*, people went to the wat to present food. While there representatives from each family chose a name from the *bāt* full of the information described above in order to determine what section and what wat the household would sponsor and "receive the sermon". Jane chose a slip of paper on which was written the following:

Kummānratan (กุ่มมารัตน์)

kan 2 (กัณฑ์ ๒)

Bān Mī thēt (บ้านหมีเทศ)

What this meant is that we would "receive the sermon" of Section 2 of the part of the *wētsandon chādok* known as *kummānratan* which would be given by a priest/novice from Bān Mī. The implications of the sponsoring of a section of the sermon were that we would provide a tray full of gifts for the priest/novice reading that section. This tray would be a *kanthēt*. Mr. Ngao says that in former days when priests came from a long way away, the "sponsor" of the section which the priest was to give must meet the priest as he enters the village, provide him with blankets, mattresses, water, cigs., etc. In addition they must make, as the practice still is, a present of the *kanthēt* when the priest had finished his section of the service. For priests who came from long distances, vestiges of this hospitable treatment still exist. Also, in the morning, a delegation composed of Fa Hô, the headman, and his brother, Hōm, went around the village gathering donations from each household in the village. Donations ranged from ฿5-25 (insofar as I could see) and we gave ฿15 whereas Mr. Ngao gave ฿10 for his own household and ฿10 for Mother Hōm's. The money collected in this way would be used first to pay the expenses of the bun – the rental of loudspeaker equipment, the *môlam* fee, etc., and secondly for the Burmese gong. All donations were merit-making devices for the donors.

During the day families were engaged in making (and eating) *khāo phūn* and *khāo tom*. This was also a time when relatives from other villages came to help in making the festival foods and to participate in the fun and food. Usually, such relatives were young *bāo-sāo* who saw the

festival as a time for meeting members of the opposite sex. For example, Mr. Ngao's younger unmarried sister from B. Nong Khā came. The units making the foods were extended, usually matrilineal kin related groups. For example one such unit was composed of the family of Mo. Hōm, Mr. Ngao (son-in-law) and Nuan, but also with Mr. Ngao's sister and Jane thrown in for good measure.

In the wat the priests and other people, esp. the men most closely associated with wat activities, were busy decorating the wat. For several nights previous, young *sāo* and some *bāo* had gone to the wat to make wooden flowers, colored shiny decorations known as "spider webs" because that is what they resemble. These occasions of decoration making had been especially *sanuk* time for the young girls. The following is a list of the main important and significant decorations for the ceremony:

1. *thung wētsandon* (ธงเวศยันตร): 'Vessantara Flags': these are pieces of specially woven material which are about 20' in length and which are strung from long bamboo poles. Nine of these poles are placed around the *sālā*. At about 3 1/2' up from the ground on each pole is constructed a small bamboo basket which will be used for holding food offerings for the *phī*.

2. *hō-utpakhut* (หออุคพะกุด): a special shrine dedicated to the saint/ god *utpakhut*. Mr.

Wichian says that this god/saint will protect the ceremony against all evil and bad things such as, for example two people falling into a fight with one another during the processions around the wat.¹ The shrine is made of bamboo and is on stilts. It is placed at the southeast corner of the *sālā*. This is the same position as it occupied last year for

¹ In the original version of my field notes, I had written (4/9/64) that in trying to trace down the meaning of this word, I have discovered that *khūt* is the Lao for the Thai word *khрут* (ครุฑ), "Garuda". The word *pha* is obviously the Thai word *phra* (พระ) and goes with *khрут* to indicate the divinity of the being. *ut* here is obviously a misspelling for *up* which possibly is a prefix "conveying the meaning of above, over upwards, beyond, further" (McFarland, p. 1007). In any case, the meaning of this set of words is "a shrine dedicated to the Garuda". This turned out to be totally spurious. The term actually refers to Upagupta, a disciple of the Buddha. "Upakhut is an important figure in local belief in many areas of Burma, northern Thailand and Laos. The stories of his origins are numerous. (For those interested, *The Legend and Cult of Upagupta* by John Strong has a wealth of detail.)" [Andrew Walker, "Uphakhut – Saint and Spirit," <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2007/04/25/upakhut-saint-and-spirit/>].

the same ceremony and was in the same position in the ceremony of B. Dôn Māk Yā. In this *hō* are placed a rubber sandal; Buddha statue; *bāt* containing the priests cloths of *sabong* and *ciwôn*; food consisting of a tray on which had been placed a *khāo niao* basket and two dishes of prepared food; a *bāi sī*; a teapot; opened umbrella over the *hō* and a container called in Lao *khiang hōi khiang phan* (เครื่องร้อยเครื่องพัน), lit. "100 items, 1000 items". According to some people this is supposed to contain 100 pieces of betel, 100 cigs, 100 pieces of food, etc. totaling 1000 pieces. Why, no one could give me a good reason.

3. Thammāt (ธรรมสถาน): After all the school things had been removed from the *sālā*, the ‘pulpit’ was placed in the middle. Newspapers were placed on the outside to shield the ‘preacher’ from his audience. The pulpit faces south. At the back was stairway/ladder which looked about 20 or more years old and on which were carved Nagas. The *thammāt* or ‘pulpit’ had, like a house, an empty space underneath it. The space was surrounded by a bamboo ‘fencing’. Between the two sides of the pulpit and on a sort of "mantle" were placed *bāisī*, flowers, banana stalks, etc. Below were placed pots and other things which were called in Lao *Nām*, *pā*, *cók*, *nāē*. I am still not clear as to the significance of these things but apparently *cók* means ‘glass’ and *nāē* is a special type of plant known in Thai as *sālāi nām*. These have some symbolic significance of which I am not certain.
4. Decoration of the *sālā*: The whole interior of the *sālā* had been especially decorated for the ceremony. Banana stalks and palm leaves had been used to set off the room into sections. From the ceiling were hung the "spider's webs", and just over the *thammāt* was hung a mock "honey comb". Wooden flowers were placed around and above the banana stalks. Colored crepe paper streamers were hung from the ceiling. People said that these decorations were for "decoration" (*pradap*) and "worshipping devas" (*būchā thēwadā*). However, there were most likely symbolic significance to the "spider's webs" and to the "honey comb". Around the outer edges of the *sālā* was hung as a sort of wall a very long tapestry from Bān Mī (and the one used at BDMY) depicting the Phra Wēt story.

During the afternoon and evening priests and novices from more distant villages came to stay for the night.

At night there was a *môlam* performance put on by a troupe which is headquartered in *Khum Lao*. Their style of performance, incidentally, is known as Vientiane style. The first part of the performance we understood fairly well. It seemed that there was a King (of Vientiane?) who had a beautiful daughter. The time came for her to marry. Many suitors came, but the three who appeared on the stage were a "Black Khmer" (*khamēn dam*), a Burmese (*phamā*) and an Annamese (*kāēo*). These were all portrayed with characteristics supposedly belonging to the ethnic group in question. The king brought his daughter to confront these suitors and asked her to choose one. However, it seems that in a previous life the daughter had been a wife of *Phra In* (พระอินทร์) or Indra and so was destined to marry him again in this life. She therefore refused to marry any of the 3 suitors and was accordingly whipped by her mother. She was again brought before the suitors to make a choice. At this time, however, a "crazy old man" (the clown of the play who always is in every performance) appeared. Of course, he was an incarnation of *Phra In* and she immediately chose him to be her husband. She was banished from her parents for making such a foolish choice. She and her husband wandered away. Night came and it was necessary to go to bed, so they made a bed. In sleep, the old man was transformed to his true self (portrayed by a separate actor). At this point the story shifted completely and we lost track of the theme.

Bān Nōng Tūn

March 8, 1964

Bun Phra Wēt

Today was the ceremony proper of Bun Phra Wēt. This ceremony quite obviously is one of the biggest *bun* in the village calendar and holds an important place in the festival cycle of Lao and Thai-Lao peoples. The ostensible reason or function of the celebration is the making of merit associated with an all day preaching of the story of the 10th incarnation of the Buddha – the last incarnation before he became the Enlightened One. This story is also known as *mahā chāt* (T) or *mahā sāt* (L) (มหาชาติ), "Great Life" and *Mahā wētsandon chādok* (มหาเวสสันดรชาดก), The Vessantara Jātaka. Why this particular Jātaka has been given particular emphasis in the

Thai-Lao and Lao interpretation of Theravada Buddhism, I do not know. However, it also was emphasized at Ayuthaya as evidenced by the large number of paintings depicting scenes from this Jātaka which are still extant from that period, it is still important in the North (see Kingshill pp. 208-212, 248-50) where a distinct version of the story exists for *thēt* (see above), and is important also I believe in Burma.

The festival is not a fixed one, but is determined by a village meeting. When I told Mr. Ngao that the ceremony was celebrated in the 2nd lunar month in the North, he said that it was possible and indeed a wat Mahasarakham follows this practice. However, the general practice seems to be for a village in this region to hold the ceremony in the 4th month.

The general format of the ceremony is as follows: (1) Feeding of the priests and *phī*; (2) The main theme is the recitation of the *thēt* depicting the story of Vessantara by different priests and novices reading individual sections; (3) Presenting of *kanthēt*; (4) Presenting of the *kanlôn*; (5) Miscellaneous activities.

1. Feeding of the priests and the *phī*

The beginning of the recitation of the Jātaka actually begins before the "feeding" but this is an initial stage and so the feeding will be dealt with first. Representatives from each family (usually women) come to the wat at about 7:30-8:00 and first go around to each of the *thung wētsandôn* and place bits of food in the offering holders for the *phī*. They then went to the *kuthi* and *liang phaa* in the normal way except that rice was brought in *khāo niao* baskets rather than placed in the *bāt*. This was probably the result of there being too many priests for the *bāt* available. After the feeding was finished in the *kuthi*, food was taken over to the *sālā* where other priests and novices were presented food. Food was again presented at noontime.

2. Recitation of the Jātakā

The main theme was the "preaching" of the Vessantara "sermon" which is divided into 13 parts:

1. *thotsaphon* (ทศพล)
2. *himaphān* (หิมพาน)
3. *thānkan* (ทานกัณฑ์)

4. *wannapawēt* (วรรณปเวศ)
5. *chūchok* (ชูชก)
6. *cunlaphon* (จูลพล)
7. *mahāphon* (มหาพล)
8. *kumān* (กุมาร)
9. *matcī* (มัทจี); Kingshill writes this as *matsī* (มัทศรี)
10. *sakabāp* (สักบรพ)
11. *mahārāt* (มหาราช)
12. *chakasat* (ชกษัตริย์)
13. *nakhonkan* (นครกันท์)

For a description of what each of these sections represent see Kingshill pp. 249-50. Each of these parts are divided into 6 sections thus meaning that there is a total of 78 different sections. A priest or novice takes a different one of these and though the local priests and novices (i.e. Phra Maha Seng, Phra Thongsai, Nēn Mai) took many sections, no priest or novice read more than one section in succession. The recitation began at about 6:30 in the morning and continued until 9:00 at night without break. During the recitation of the sermons, there would be perhaps other sermons being given by other priests not in the *thammāt*. Also, people came and went during the day and only the old and very religious (pretty much the same thing) persons would stay for any prolonged periods of time. Nobody really seemed to be listening to the sermon, but one's presence entitled one to the merit accruing to the listener to the sermon-story.

3. Kanthēt (กันท์เทศ)

At the end of each sermon – or rather each section of the Vessantara story – the family who is "receiving that sermon" is responsible for presenting a gift called *kanthēt* to the

priest/novice who has just finished the section. The *kanthēt* is a collection of items brought to the wat usually in a wash basin type of container. The elements of the *kanthēt* usually included a coconut, *khāosān*, raw cotton, money, tobacco/cigarettes, uncooked vegetables (e.g., beans, squash, egg plant, etc.) rice *khanom* (e.g. *khāo khriap*, *khāotôm*), *khriangbūchā* (candles, flowers, incense), and other embellishments which the giver may wish to include. We ourselves did not quite copy this pattern, as we were unable to obtain all the above items. We gave the following in our *kanthēt* for a priest from B. Mī – *khāosān*, orange dye (priest's colour), notebook and pencil, 5 store bought cigarettes, 2 packages of candles, large cucumber, *khāo khriap*, *khāotôm*, ฿8.

Mr. Ngao explained that some of these objects have symbolic significances (1) rice and rice *khanoms* means that one will not lack rice in the next life; (2) the vegetables means that one will not lack *kapkhāo*; (3) money means that one will possess sufficient if not great wealth; (4) the notebook and pencil means that one will be a diligent student.

The presentation of the *kanthēt* usually takes place away from the centre of attention – the *thammāt* and the *sālā*. We were guided in our presentations by the old *sālāwat* from KNKN who began by presenting a bowl in which had been placed raw cotton, and two lighted candles. The presentation followed the order generally of *waiphra* presentation, *hai phon*, *truatnām*.

4. *Kanlôn* (กัณฑ์หลอน)

One of the most exciting features about the ceremony are the presentations of *kanlôn*. These presentations to the monks are supposedly surprise offerings. During the sermon reading one suddenly hears the sound of drums, cymbals, maybe a *khāēn*. This means that a presentation of *kanlôn* is coming. The procession enters the wat and amidst great hilarity, and merriment, a procession circles the *sālā* 3 times, led by male dancers and the "orchestra", usually in a state of mild or total inebriation. Following the leaders will be a *kanlôn* carried by a donor or a representative of a group of donors. As the procession circles the *sālā*, people seated inside the *sālā* will throw handfuls of rice at the procession, and perhaps some men, boys in the procession will reach into their pockets and pull out a handful of rice to throw back. After the procession has made its circles, it moves off to a place to sit down (in the wat position) to await the priest/novice to whom the presentation will be made. This priest/novice is most usually the one who is

chanting the sermon at the time the *kanlôn* procession enters the wat, though special instances may be made and a particular priest may be selected as recipient though this is thought not quite cricket.

The *kanlôn* is basically a "money tree" – a decorated artificial "tree" either handmade from bamboo, purchased in the market, or cut from the forest – on which baht notes, cigarettes, maybe other things such as *khāo khriap*, *khāotom*, *khriang būchā*, are placed. The presentation follows exactly the same routine as for presenting the *kanthēt*.

In our case, we specifically directed our presentation for Phra Mahā Seng because part of our *kanlôn* was a picture we had taken of him. Our *kanlôn* was basically a "tree" made of gold paper which we had bought in the market to which were strung 10 one-baht notes, 10 cigarettes, a picture of PMS, flowers. It was placed in a dishful of *khāosān*.

Mr. Ngao's *kanlôn* consisted basically of a branch to which was attached money, cigarettes, *khāokhriap* and colored crepe decorations.

Either individuals or groups could sponsor *kanlôn*. Often it is whole villages who sponsor *kanlôn* in which case the cash is considerably greater than for individuals. This was what BNT had done in B. Dôn Māk Yā a few weeks ago.

5. Miscellaneous

All during the day, rice is thrown around and young people (particularly teenagers) get quite a bit of pleasure in doing this to their friends and "fans". I would suggest, however, that it has something to do with showing that a plentiful supply of rice has been produced and thus people can afford to throw some away so as not to incur the displeasure of the gods.

The Function of Bun Phra Wēt²

As I said above, this feast is one of the biggest if not the biggest of the Thai-Lao festival year. It is usually held at a time when the rice harvest is over and therefore is the culmination of those ceremonies, *sūkhankhao*, *thambunbān*, *bun khāocī*, which mark the thanksgiving for the harvest and the propitiation of the spirits and gods for an auspicious ensuing year.

² For other descriptions of *bunphrawēt* see especially: Bunrüang Cānyāsī, *Moradok Chāo Īsān*, pp. 515-530; Marie-Daniel Fauré, "The Boun Pha-Vet," in *Kingdom of Laos*, pp. 294-300; Konrad Kingshill, *Ku Daeng*, pp. 208-12; 248-50.

The ceremony is marked by great feasting and drinking (though non-communal) and by mid-day many men are and continue to remain completely drunk. This plus the gaiety and hilarity accompanying the *kanlôn* processions and the rice throwing provide a mechanism for releasing tensions. Also, it is a time when young girls and boys (*phūsāo* and *phūbāo*) from neighboring villages to meet one another – at the *môlam* performance, at the sermon listening, and at the *kanlôn* processions.

But, by far the most important function of the *bun*, and the one which is most explicit in the minds of the villagers, is the merit-making. Merit can be made mainly in the following ways: (1) donating to the *bun* in general; (2) donating a *kanthēt*; (3) donating a *kanlôn*; (4) listening to the sermons (both the Vessantara story and the extemporaneous ones which also occur; (5) presenting food in the morning and at lunchtime to the priests. The first 3 of these have a cash value and it might be interesting to note the amount which we gave, though our donations would be amongst the highest in the village (our donations were determined in consultations with Mr. Ngao).

A. Donation to *bun* in general: ₭15.00

B. Donation in form of *kanthēt*: ₭13.25

- a. *khāosān*, ₭1;
- b. *khāokhriap*, *khāotôm*, ₭-; 3;
- c. Orange dye, ₭1;
- d. notebook and pencil, ₭1.25;
- e. 5 cigs, ₭1;
- f. pkgs of candles, ₭1;
- g. 1 cucumber, ₭ – ;
- h. Money, ₭8

C. Donation in form of *kanlôn*: ₭19.00

- a. "Gold tree", ฿7;
- b. 10 cigs, ฿2;
- c. cash, ฿10;
- d. *khāosān*, ฿ – ;
- e. flowers, ฿ –

TOTAL DONATION: ฿47.25

Death of Mr. Sao's Wife

About 4 a.m. this morning the wife of Mr. Sao died. It seems that she had been ill for some time and had not enjoyed eating anything except salt and rice and thus had apparently starved to death. She had a baby about 3-4 months ago and everyone fears that this child will also die as it is extremely emaciated and now lacks milk. On later seeing the child, I could not believe that such an emaciated creature could continue living.

It seems that Mr. Sao was not at home when his wife died – that he had imbibed a little too heavily of wine and festivities and had not made it home. This was a topic for considerable comment and there were a stream of visitors from early morning on telling of the death and of the untoward behaviors of Mr. Sao.

We went over to the house and there learned of some customs concerning the 1st things that occur after death. First, the body is bathed with boiling water "to wash away the illness". Then it is laid out with the head pointing toward the west. The hands are elapsd together with money placed in the palms. A coin is placed between the lips. A white cloth is placed over the body and in this case there were a plastic cloth and *phākhaomā* also placed over it. Food is placed at the head of the body in order to provide food for the spirit.

Mr. Sao came over to the store to buy candle wax and nails for the coffin. Mr. Sao gave Mr. Ngao ฿1 for them, but Mr. Ngao returned the note, *wai*-ed Mr. Sao and said to take the money "for the dead". During the morning some friends and relatives helped to make a very rough coffin which had no canopy. In the afternoon there was the cremation and that was the

end. There was no wake for "in the houses of the poor there are no wakes". Mr. Ngao couldn't explain this for wakes require no expenditure of money on the part of the bereaved, but he said that people were reluctant to hold a wake in the house of the poor.

One explanation of the death of the woman was that she had been bitten by a spider 4-5 years ago. But I think that such an explanation was (1) because there was no other major cause and (2) because attention wished to be drawn away from the starving condition of the woman.

This was the first time that a death has touched us closely in the village – not because we were close to the deceased but because we like Mr. Sao so much. I am still unable to regard death in other than the western way where such an event is usually traumatic and grief is great. Here, very little grief is shown, though Mr. Sao who has had some experience as a *mô* said a lot of *kathā* to speed the spirit on its way. The attitude is that one should never get too emotional and thus intense grief, as intense love is looked upon as unnatural. Such a situation is possible in a small community where no matter what happens one is always surrounded by friends and relatives. Such is not the case in the in personal Western Community (though more true in a place like Idaho Falls than in a transient suburb). Coupled with a value on non-intensity of emotion is a fatalism which springs from two sources: (1) the first is one which is common to all primitive and peasant communities where sudden illness for which nothing can be done and equally sudden death are common occurrences; (2) the second is based on the philosophy stemming from a belief in *kam* (กรรม) or Karma – that one's life is controlled by cosmic forces influenced by actions which one committed in previous lives and over which one now has no control. Death, then, is viewed as an event over which no control can be exerted and for which one should show little grief.

This particular case also brought home to us the existence of poverty in a very definite form in the village. The comments on Mr. Sao's wife's starving to death, the certainty of the starvation of the infant for whom no food nor wet-nurse can be procured (and for whom death may in fact be the best and desired thing), and the wretchedness of Mr. Sao's clothing and surroundings all help compose a picture of a case of poverty which we see counterpointed against the potentiality that had Mr. Sao been born in other circumstances, he might have been a scholar or an artist; a man whose desire to please, whose optimistic spirit, whose good humor have been impressed on us. In such a case we came to realize that the idyllic life which our romantic minds have made of the village could in fact be very much improved upon.

Making Merit and Age

This morning Mr. Hô came over very drunk. Mr. Ngao chided him that he shouldn't be so drunk on the day of a *bun* because he is an old man and ought to be interested in making merit before he dies as that might happen very soon. Mr. Hô replied that it was a *bun* and thus a time for getting drunk. Mr. Ngao later explained that Phô Sīhā doesn't drink, eat *lāp dīp*, or *plārādīp* (he even cooks the latter!). Phô Sīhā has never drunk.

Food Taboos and Prohibitions

Mr. Ngao says that when a woman has had a baby there are many food prohibitions that she must follow. In fact, there are more prohibitions than there are permitted foods to eat. For example, she can eat *plāduk* (ปลาดุก, silurus), *plāmô* (ปลาหมอ, a type of perch), *plātaphian* (ปลาตะเพียน, dace) but only the local variety and not the type which comes from Ayuthaya, bananas, *somtām*, papaya, vegetables, some leaves, and some other things. But she can't eat pork, buffalo, horse, *phakchī* (ผักชี, coriander), *plāchôn* (ปลาช่อน, a "serpent-headed fish which is extremely common in the area), *phākkātkhāo* (ผักกาดขาว, "Chinese cabbage"), *phakkātnā* (ผักกาดหน้า), onion leaves, etc. In fact it would be nearly impossible to get a complete list of prohibitions. These are not really taboos, because there are no ritual or spiritual punishments for not obeying them, but only that the woman will be unwell. The prohibitions are usually lifted after the next pregnancy begins or when the child stops suckling though Māē Hōm, 7 years after the birth of her last child. That, still claims that she can't eat pork or buffalo. Mr. Ngao says that he doesn't understand why women living in towns can eat everything and women in villages can't unless it be that women in town can get medicine or treatment every time they are ill after breaking these prohibitions.

Courting

The following are Jane's notes: "This evening I went to the wat with Nuan and with Mr. Ngao's younger sister to sell goods. We set up a small stall at the foot of the *sālā*, when the final sermons of the bun Phra Wēt were being given. We took along assorted *khanoms* (none over *salūng* each), cigs., popcorn, and the money tin plus two little wick lamps. This was my first

chance to observe the selling of goods as an opportunity for young men to come around courting. Several young men came round to talk with Mr. Ngao's sister while ostensibly buying cigs. One more 'pushy' one kept trying to fix up an assignment for her to come to his house or vice versa."

Bān Nông Tūn

March 9, 1964

Conversation with Māē Hōm

The following are Jane's notes: "Went over and chatted with Māē Hōm for a long time. She was busy weaving a maroon and white checked *phākhāomā*: to be given to Biff on our departure, and mentioned that she will also be making him one of the standard black and white ones too. The frame she was using makes a *phākhāomā* 12-13 checks wide, but she says they can go up to as much as 30 checks (I take it this would be a very long sarong). The word she used to refer to the check, or rather the changing set of color across the weaving frame was *lūp*.

"We sat and talked first of the death of Mr. Sao's wife. It seems that she was only 35 and has been sick for a couple of years. She was unable to eat anything but rice and salt: everything else affected her stomach so adversely that she just, gave up eating them. Māē Hōm therefore confirmed that she did in fact die of lack of food, though clearly she must have had some stomach disorder which prevented normal digestion. Māē Hōm said also that she almost never left her house, in contrast to her children, who would "*thiaodī*". However, she claimed the children were only given to "*paihālen*" whereas at least the eldest (aged 10 or more) should have been helping with the family work by now. It seems that Mr. Sao's wife, who comes from Mūang Phon, was very much alone in the world. Her parents are dead, and while she had brothers and sisters who were informed of her being ill, none ever came to visit her. I asked who would look after the children now and Māē Hōm said that once a suitable time had elapsed, Mr. Sao would have to find another wife. I asked if he would find somebody in BNT, but Māē Hōm said that this would be very difficult. For one thing he is very poor – the land he farms and the buffaloes he uses are not his but belong to a younger relative – then there are the children to support, and furthermore Māē Hōm said Mr. Sao is said to be *khan* (I took this to be a shortening of the Lao *khīkhan* meaning "lazy", and have subsequently heard it used in this way). [Poor Mr. Sao. His "laziness" is probably his fondness for *mōlammū* and for liquor now and then]

"Mother Hōm then went on to talk about poverty in general. She said that in former times there were no "rich" people in the village as there are now. Only her father was markedly richer

than the rest of the villagers (to substantiate this point she mentioned that her father had no less than 4 rice barns – one of which he subsequently sold to Kamnan Lô). I asked if there weren't villagers who sold cattle and buffaloes and thus enriched themselves, but she said there was very little of that. I gained the impression of a virtually self-sufficient subsistence economy.

"The change came about 5-10 years ago, she said, when *Khum Yai* got quite rich on kenaf. I asked if *Khum Wat* hadn't grown kenaf too and she said yes, but that *Khum Yai* had the advantage of the pond. She said, though, in general it is very difficult for villagers to make money, and that they have to go hunting for food, make their own cloth and charcoal, etc., in order to make ends meet.

"Other topics we talked on were the *môlammū*, and her late husband. With regard to the former, I learned that *môlamwiang*, i.e., which is derived from the Vientiane style, is prized far above the *môlammūsāisin*. With regard to her husband, I learned that he was from BNT, son of Thit Khāēn [I think the name Khāēn; Biff], Māē Hōm was very proud of the fact that her father-in-law had long connections with the priesthood and had made the pilgrimage to Thāt Phanom (as his son did after him). She wants Muan to *buat* at wat BNT once he reaches 20, to make merit for his late father. She made one somewhat curious statement to the effect that if you tried to *buat* before you were *tem sào* ("fully 20"), you would fall sick (cultural bias against entering priesthood before this age reinforced by legend that it will affect the health?). I also asked if there used to be a senior priest at BNT and she said yes, and that not only that but that formerly there were several priests and novices at Wat BNT. She gave me no reason for current falloff in numbers.

We also discussed politics and nationality. Māē Hōm clearly stated that the people here spoke Lao and formerly came from Laos, but are of Thai nationality. She also spoke highly of Phibun Sônggram and felt that he had helped people and had been generous in gifts. She believes he is dead now."

Bān Nông Tūn

March 10, 1964

Incident of the Shrewish Wife

Today Nin and I were to go to see about buying a new *khāēn*. Just after he arrived, his wife showed up in front of our house and started yelling at him, telling him that he should ask

money from me for teaching me to play the *khāēn*. Why had he wasted his time teaching me if he had got no recompense, etc., etc. And that he ought not to go with me now.

This public vituperative scolding is referred to as *dā* (දා) and is thought to be very much in bad taste and form, particularly for a wife to be doing it to a husband because he loses face. Nin nonetheless did go with me and didn't outright request anything (I had given/him a *khāēn* worth about ₨25 though he says that this has now disappeared and he doesn't know what has happened to it.).

Apparently Nin's mother-in-law is just the same as Nin's wife and Mr. Ngao thinks she may have been behind the whole scene. Mother-in-law has even struck Nāi Piam, her husband, such that blood came. Mr. Ngao said that she made *bāp* by doing this. He said that "a wife is like little novice and a man is like a priest." Thus, a woman should stand respectful of her husband and never embarrass him publically.

The whole family (at least the female side) does not like us at all and sees that we are rich – part, compared to their poverty – and should be used for getting money and not treated to favors gratis. Mother-in-law when selling us charcoal has tried to charge us double and sister-in-law is always heckling Jane.

Nuan says that Nin's wife hates him and treats him like Hell all of the time. Why, then we enquired, doesn't he leave her? Mr. Ngao said that 2 years ago he did but came back, Jane and I guess that it probably has something to do with sex because Nin himself is very interested in sex and his wife, as many bitches, is probably as passionate as an Arabian belly dancer. In any event, Nin is a very weak-willed man whose philandering probably incites his wife to her shrewishness.

We were naturally somewhat upset by this incident lest we had committed some trespass on people's expectations of us. Mr. Ngao sensed this and said he would discuss with Nin if perhaps we should give him some money. Mr. Ngao suggested about ₨10 – a sum which I am certain won't begin to satisfy his wife.

In what may have been a sequel to this incident Mr. Son and Nin came over in the evening with about three-quarters of a bottle of *sātō*. They offered me a glass and I finally drank about ½ a glass as did also Jane. Then, Nin said that he didn't have any money for the wine and would I mind paying ₨1. When I reluctantly indicated my willingness he jumped the price to ₨2.

I suspect that this was only a ruse to get at least a little money out of me to assuage his wife's anger and she had probably sent him over to our house under some sort of threat that he was to get some money. Poor, hen-pecked Nin. I am certain that all 2 would do is to kindle his wife's vituperativeness.

B. Nông Khā, Bān Nông Tūn

March 11, 1964

Local History

Today we went to visit Mr. Ngao's family at B. Nông Khā. While there we met an old man who claims to be the age of 109 who had come over to visit the family of Mr. Ngao. It seems that this venerable ancient was headman of the village in the 5th reign (King Chulalongkorn) and at that time had the title of *khunmūn* (ขุนมุน) – a title apparently given until 1932 to headmen. He came over to have his picture taken in an old official jacket made of white silk and in 19th century style which he said had been given to him on his becoming headman.

I tried to ask him a few questions about conditions at the time he was headman and though his hearing is very poor and his memory a little beclouded, he did have some interesting things to say. He said that there was no *cao mūang* or *nāi amphoe* in Mahasarakham or Roi-et (not true) and that the village was under Ubon (probably part of Monthon Ubon). He received no wages, but occasional grants of food when he had to go to a meeting. Meetings were held in Ubon and he used to travel 15 days with neighboring headmen on foot.

At that time he said that the tribute levied on the villages was first ฿2 per family and later ฿6 per family. In lieu of paying this tax, a family could send a member to work in *corvée* labor. At that time there were many thieves (more than now) though they carried knives and not guns. However, they didn't steal cattle because everyone had plenty of cattle due to the fact that there was still lots of forest land for them to graze on.

He said that his paternal grandfather was one of the original settlers/ founders of the village of B. Nông Khā. He first said that the people had come from Roi-et, but then changed this to saying that they had come from around Vientiane. If this is true, the village is probably about 150-175 years old.

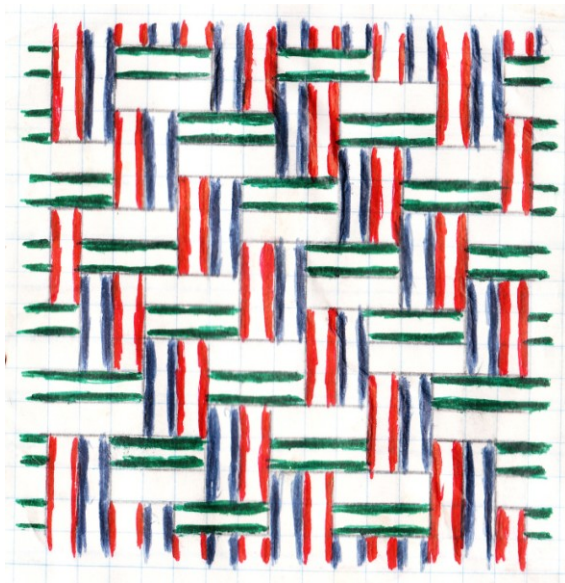
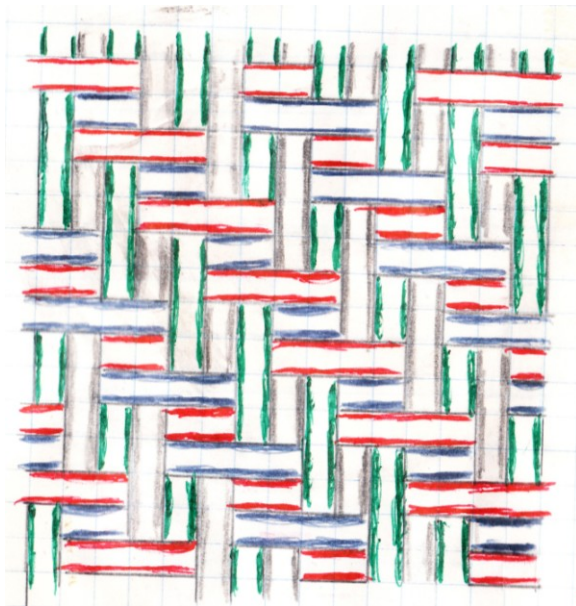
He said that when he was headman, there were 130 households in the village compared with 110 at the present time. Mr. Ngao's father says that many people have moved away to other places.

Bản Nông Tũn

March 12, 1964

Bamboo Matting Weaving Patterns

The following are the two most common (and only one's I have seen) bamboo-matting patterns.



Objects Found in Household

The following is a list of some other objects found in a household (Jane):

- wood frame for carrying water bottles
- fish nets
- chicken wicker popovers
- big loose mesh wicker baskets for holding cotton, etc. (like big waste paper baskets but more open)
- cotton gin
- extra leaves of bamboo walling to form awnings
- occasionally a glass (usually *khan* with smaller dipper inside)
- torch (electric)

- suitcase
- gourd
- carrying hook

Cotton Cloth Cycle

1. Growing

In June the land is plowed and harrowed. The cottonseeds are mixed with earth to hold the seeds together. The seeds begin growing in about 4-5 days time and about a week later weeding (*thôn ôk* ถอนออก) must begin. 15 days after planting, the earth should be loosened around the plants. In the 10th month, the "flowers" are picked. By Nov. (1st month) the picking can be begun. In planting it is believed that one should have a *hāp* stick with a "tree" on the back side and the basket containing the seeds to be planted on the front, for then there will be much cotton. The seeds are broadcast planted.

2. Harvesting and Drying

When the cotton has been picked, it is kept for 3 days. Then it is placed in the sun 1 day to make the balls explode. Then the cotton is picked away from the shells and the dirty or weevil-infested parts are picked away from the cotton.

3. Ginning

Then the cotton is ginned (*iufāi* อีวฝ้าย) with a wooden gin called an *iu* (อีว).

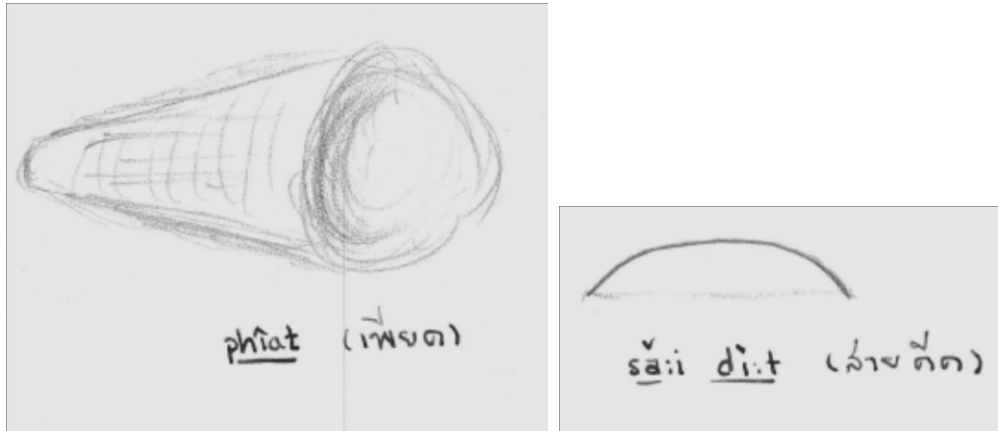
4. Drying

The ginned cotton is then placed in the sun to dry for a day (to make it expand more). Some people don't do this.

5. Fluffing

The cotton is then placed in a cylindrical basket called a *phiat* (เฟียต). A bow looking instrument with a taut string (bow made from bamboo and string made from *wai*, rattan) called a

sāidīt (สายดัด) is taken and held inside. The string is plucked so that it pings against the cotton, fluffing it up. The process is called *dīt fāi* (ดัดฝ้าย).



Illustrations of a *phiat* and a *sāidīt* used in fluffing cotton

6. Rolling

The raw cotton is now taken and rolled into balls (*thamrōfāi* /T/, ทำรอฟ้าย; *hetlōfāi* /L/ เฮ็ดลอฝ้าย) by placing cotton on a smooth, flat surface and rolling it around a bamboo stick (*mailōfāi*, ไม้ลอฝ้าย) over it until the rolls are formed.

7. Spinning

The cotton is then spun (*khenfāi*, เข็นฝ้าย) with a spinning wheel (*naifāi*, ไนฝ้าย). The spindle is called a *lēknai* (เลขไน).

8. Transferring Thread

The cotton thread is then transferred from the spindle to a *bia* (เบี้ย) of which there is a drawing below.

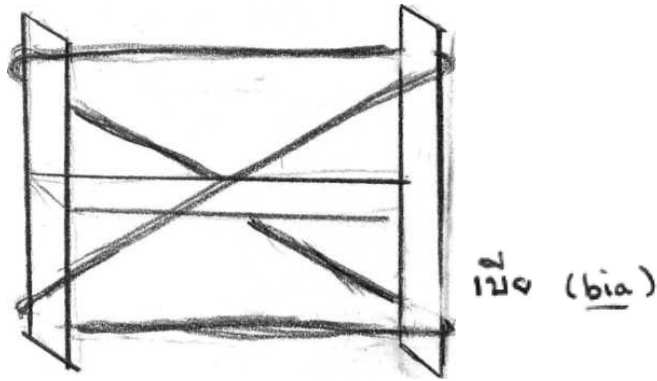


Illustration of a *bia* (ហ្នឹង), the wooden object on which cotton thread is transferred after being on the spinning wheel spindle

9. Shrinking

After sufficient thread has been placed on the *bia* from the spinning wheel, it is taken off as a hank (*pot*, ប្រត) of thread. These hanks are then soaked in water in order to shrink them and then they are hang out to dry.

10. Dying

The thread is then dyed (*njôm*, ឃ្លីង or *cupsia*, ត្បូងស្រី) usually in a dark blue dye that is popular but also in other colors. The dyes may be local dyes made from stones, roots, etc., or artificial dyes (usually German) purchased in the market. When the dying is completed and the thread has dried, it is washed. Then it is boiled in cassava flour and water in order to starch it.

11. Placing on kong

The hanks are then placed on a *kong* (កង) which is shown below. This is called a *kung* sometimes in local dialect.

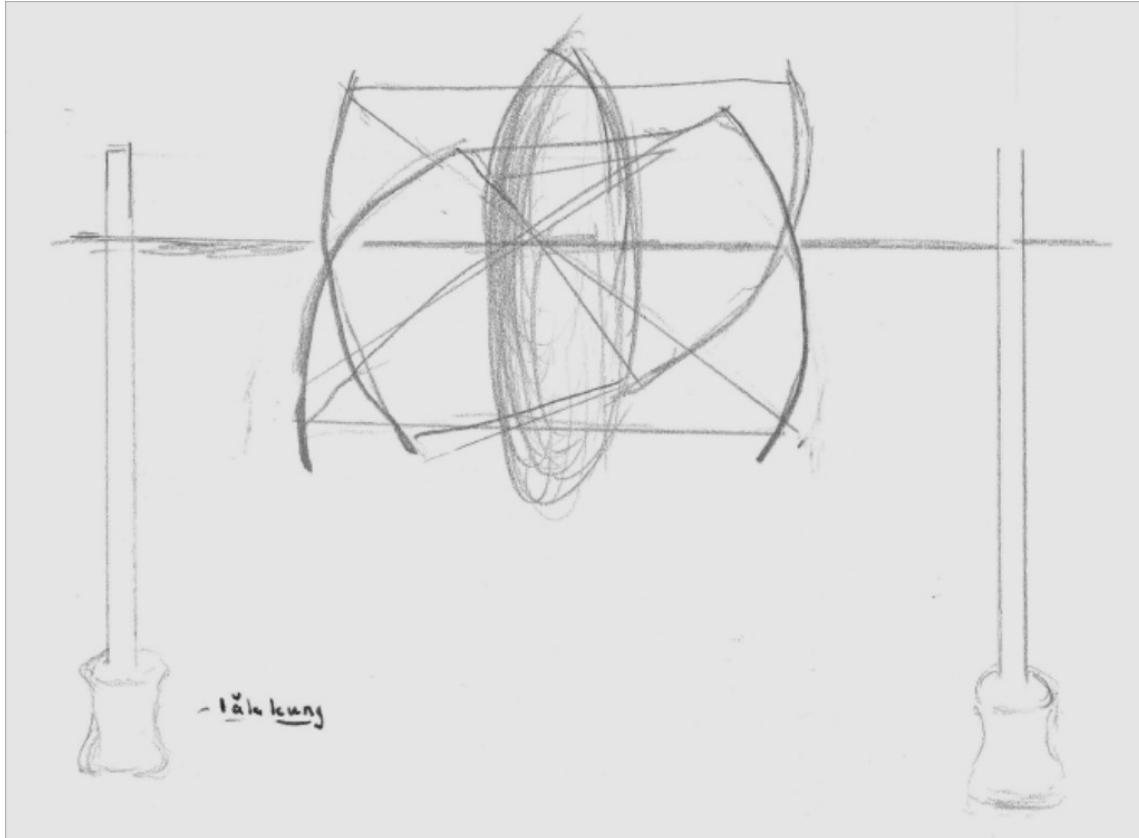


Illustration of a *kong*, or *kung*, known as a ‘swift’ in English weaving terms

12. Winding thread on an *ak*

From the *kung*, the thread is wound, in order to make a spool of thread, onto an implement known as an *ak* (อักษ) which is shown below.

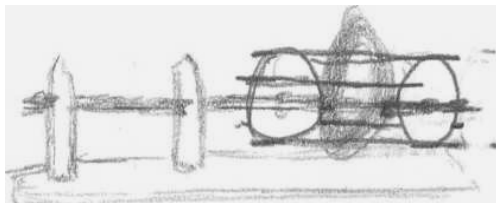


Illustration of an *ak* (อักษ) or large spool, onto which thread is wound as it comes off the *kung*

13. Making thread ready for weaving

Some string is taken from the *ak*, and wound onto an implement called a *lakfia* (หลักฝ้าย).
If double string thickness (or more) are desired, string is simultaneously taken from 2 (or more)

ak. The thread placed in this way will be subsequently placed on the *fūm* (ฟืม) or part of the loom which forms the warp of the thread.

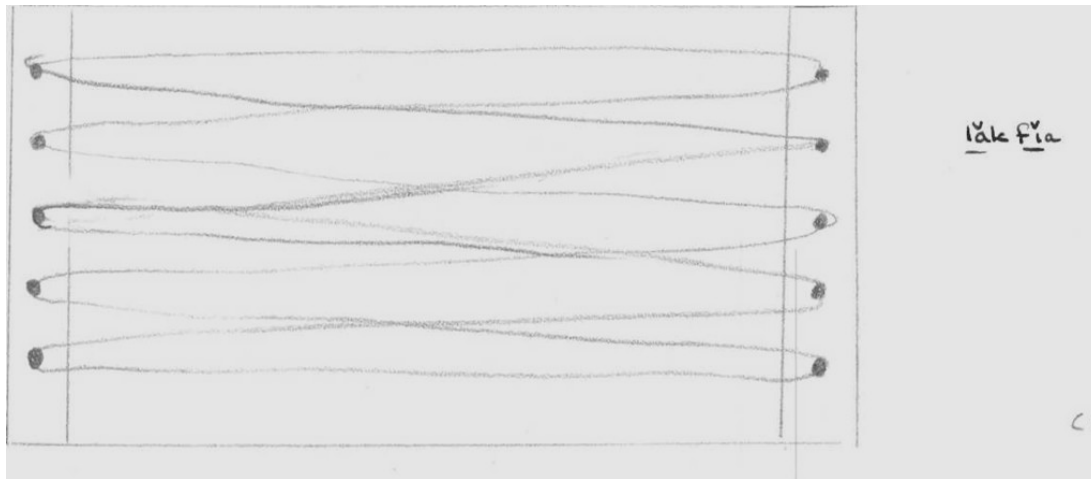


Illustration of a *lakfia* or ‘warping board’ on which the warp is wound

Other thread is taken and wound from the *kung* or *ak* (number depending on thickness of thread desired) onto spools by using the spinning wheel. These spools are called *lôt* (หลอด) and are placed in a shuttle (*krasuai* /T/, กระสวย; *suai* /L/, สวຍ).

14. Weaving

The cloth is then woven. This is known as *tamhuk* (ตำหุก) in Lao and *thôphā* (ทอผ้า) in Thai.

15. Preparation of Cloth

The cloth is then prepared for use. Usually, the homemade cloth is used for *phākhaomā*, *sin*, village shirts – i.e. traditional clothing. Modern clothing – pants, women's blouses, etc., are usually bought in market or from local dealers. There is some overlap in these practices and the tendency is for more and more clothing to be purchased.

Silk Cycle

First mulberry trees are planted ("mulberry tree" – *ton môn* ต้นหม่อน). Then the silk butterflies (*bia*, เบื่อ) are obtained in a quantity of 100-200 insects or more depending on how much silk one wishes to raise. These are placed on a white cloth. After one day all the male butterflies are removed, and the females are placed under a container still on the white cloth. They are left for one night, then the butterflies are discarded and the eggs are retained.

The cloth is then folded up and kept for 7 days when the eggs hatch into worms. Then mulberry leaves are collected and chopped up very fine and fed to the worms. After 3-4 days, the worms are placed on a *kradong* (กระด้ง) or *L kradong* (กะด้ง) which is a large circular shallow basket. A cloth is placed over the basket to protect the worms from insects. Twice a day mulberry leaves are cut up to feed to the worms. This continues for another 7 days when the worms go into a sort of hibernation (*kamlang nôn*, กำลั้งนอน or *nônkhikhon*, นอนจีจัน). This is the "first sleeping" and lasts for 7 days. Then the worms shed their skins (*thôtkhāp*, ถอดคาบ). They feed for another 7 days when they again "sleep" and shed their skins after 7 days sleep. Each time they change sizes. One cuts the mulberry leaves larger each time. Raise another 7 days, "sleep" 7 days, 3rd time shed skin again. This time the leaves are not cut but are fed to the worms whole for another 7 days. Then the worms sleep the 3rd time (*nônyai*, นอนใหญ่) for another 7 days.

Then the worms are placed on a *cô* (จื่อ) which is a circular tray larger than the *kradông* and is divided into circular compartments somewhat giving the impression of a maze. A cloth is also placed near the *cô*. In the tray the worms spin the silk. The tray is left for 3 days during which the spinning into balls takes place. These balls are known as *faklôt* (ฟักหลอด). Then the balls are placed in the sun for one day in order to kill the worms.

The *faklôt* are then taken and placed in a pot of boiling water which is kept over a fire so that the water continues to boil. On this pot a device known as *phuangsaō* (พวงสาว) is placed. This device is a horse-shoed piece of wood which has clamps attached to it and which are used

for attaching it to the pot. About a third of the way up the horseshoe is a stick which has a hole in the centre and is connected to both sides of the horseshoe. Above this is a wheel device connected again to the two sides of the horseshoe. A stick with a split in the middle at one end is taken and placed over the cocoons.



Illustration of removing silk from cocoons, using a *phuangsaō* (ฟางสาว) device on a pot

A thread is begun by pulling it through the split in the stick and up through the hole in the first stick and then around the cylinder and finally out to a basket that is used for holding the thread. The stick is used to move from one cocoon to another and for some reason unbeknownst to me the thread continues from one cocoon to another. This process is termed *sāolôt* (สาวหลอด).

From this stage the silk making process follows that of the cotton making process. First the thread is placed on a *bia* (เบี่ยง)...

Other Notes on Cloth-Making Process

When making double threads, two *ak* (ອັກ) with thread wound around them are taken. A thread from each is taken and wrapped (twisted) together. Then it is started on a spindle of a spinning wheel which has the shuttle on the spindle. As the threads are wound onto the shuttle, the woman will run the threads through her fingers keeping them twisted together. This method is especially used with different coloured threads of silk so that one gets the "shot" effect in the final cloth. In the village there are different "weights" of cloth depending upon whether they are single, double or quadruple thicknesses of thread.

Silk is used especially for *phāsin*, *phāsabai*, *phāsalong* and more rarely for such priests cloth as *phāsabong*, *phāwicôn* and can be used for almost any type of clothing though very rarely done so.

Ban Khwao, Bān Nōng Tūn

March 17, 1964

Meaning of Ceremony at Kū

Yesterday, we went to Ban Khwao for a farewell party for us at the house of Khrū Orawan. Before we went there we stopped to talk with some B.K. village women. They were asking the usual questions about why we didn't have any children. They said that Jane should go *khôlūk* (ขอลูก) at the Kū. I had known that there were fertility overtones to the Kū and to the ceremony which will be held there shortly but this is the first time I had heard it quite so expressed. They said that one can also "request" especially male children if a family has none. I asked Mr. Wichian if one requests children from the *thēwadā*, but he answered that one requests children from the *thēwarūp* which are, of course, statues of a specific Deva.

Bān Nōng Tūn

March 19, 1964

Language and Literature

The script used in Laos is called locally *Lao wiang* (ลาวเวียง) or *Thai nôi* (ไทยน้อย). The script used by Tai-speaking peoples in the north and in Burma (i.e., among the Lanna-Thai and Shans) is called *Thai njai* (ไทยใหญ่). And the script used traditionally in the N.E. is called *tua*

tham (ตัวธรรม). Mr. Sao says that *môlam* scripts were originally written on *bailān* in this script.

The following is a listing of the characters in the *tua tham* script according to Mr. Sao.

19 March, 1964

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE:

The script used in Laos is called locally *lāo wāng* or *thāj nāj*. The script used by Tai-speaking peoples in the North & in Burma (i.e. among the Lanna-Thai and the Shans) is called *thāj nāj*. And the script used traditionally in the N.E. is called *tua tham* (ตัวธรรม). Mr. Sao says that *môlam* scripts were orig. written on *bailān* in this script. The following is a listing of the characters in the *tua tham* script according to Mr. Sao.

ไทย (Thai)	ตัวธรรม tua tham	ก	ค	น	ร
ก	๓	๓	๕	๓	๕
ข	๔	๔	๖	๔	๖
ค	๑	๑	๗	๑	๗
ด	๒	๒	๘	๒	๘
จ	๖	๖	๙	๖	๙
ฉ	๗	๗	๑๐	๗	๑๐
ช	๘	๘	๑๑	๘	๑๑
ซ	๙	๙	๑๒	๙	๑๒
ฎ	๑๐	๑๐	๑๓	๑๐	๑๓
ฏ	๑๑	๑๑	๑๔	๑๑	๑๔
ฐ	๑๒	๑๒	๑๕	๑๒	๑๕
ฑ	๑๓	๑๓	๑๖	๑๓	๑๖
ฒ	๑๔	๑๔	๑๗	๑๔	๑๗

List of characters in the *tua tham* (ตัวธรรม) script, traditionally used in the Northeast, along with

Thai characters, page 1

19/3/44

ทอ	ทอ	ท	ท	ท	ท
๑	๑	๑	๑	๑	๑
๒	๒	๒	๒	๒	๒
๓	๓	๓	๓	๓	๓
๔	๔	๔	๔	๔	๔
๕	๕	๕	๕	๕	๕
๖	๖	๖	๖	๖	๖
๗	๗	๗	๗	๗	๗
๘	๘	๘	๘	๘	๘
๙	๙	๙	๙	๙	๙
๐	๐	๐	๐	๐	๐
๑	๑	๑	๑	๑	๑
๒	๒	๒	๒	๒	๒
๓	๓	๓	๓	๓	๓
๔	๔	๔	๔	๔	๔
๕	๕	๕	๕	๕	๕
๖	๖	๖	๖	๖	๖
๗	๗	๗	๗	๗	๗
๘	๘	๘	๘	๘	๘
๙	๙	๙	๙	๙	๙
๐	๐	๐	๐	๐	๐
๑	๑	๑	๑	๑	๑
๒	๒	๒	๒	๒	๒
๓	๓	๓	๓	๓	๓
๔	๔	๔	๔	๔	๔
๕	๕	๕	๕	๕	๕
๖	๖	๖	๖	๖	๖
๗	๗	๗	๗	๗	๗
๘	๘	๘	๘	๘	๘
๙	๙	๙	๙	๙	๙
๐	๐	๐	๐	๐	๐

List of characters in the *tua tham* (ตัวธรรม) script, traditionally used in the Northeast, along with

Thai characters, page 2

Hotnām Ceremony and Status of Monks

The traditional way of "acquiring" different statuses within the monastic ranks in Thai-Lao practice was by having the *hotnām* ceremony (lit., "pouring water") (สคน้ำ) performed for a priest. This ceremony can be performed twice for the same person and is done for priests by relatives or members of the community in order to honor a priest for length of service, devotion to his work, and/or in recognition for his being well respected. The monk must have served at least one *lenten* period and plan to stay in until the next *lenten* period before the ceremony can be performed for the 1st time.

Those planning to sponsor the ceremony will take the traditional offering (*khan hā*) and invite him to participate in the ceremony the next *lent*. At the ceremony must have gifts for the priests including the *borikān* 8 (บริการ ๘) and the ceremony is similar to *buatnāk* except for the "pouring" part. This was the ceremony which we observed at B. Mī at the beginning of the *lent*.

The second *hōtnām* ceremony is the same as the 1st except that the persons must have gone through the 1st before having the 2nd. Only have to wait one year before the 2nd, however, it is usually performed for an older, respected monk as in the case of the B. Mī ceremony.

These ceremonies determine in part the statuses a man has while in the monkhood and the status and title he has after leaving (*sūk*, สึก, or *sik*, คิก) the monkhood. The following list gives the statuses in the monkhood:

Title while in Monkhood	Title after <i>sūk</i>	Explanation
1. <i>cao hua</i> or <i>pha</i> (เจ้าหัว or พระ). Mr. Wichian says orig. also used title <i>somdet</i> (สมเด็จ) but villagers didn't recognize it for this area. It is used in Laos.	<i>thit</i> (ทิส)	Person who has been ordained (<i>buat</i>) but has had no <i>hōtnām</i> ceremony. Nor passed beyond <i>parian</i> 3 exam. Must have been properly ordained.
2. <i>njāsā</i> (ญาชา) / <i>phāsā</i> (พระชา) / <i>caohuasā</i> (เจ้าหัวชา) / <i>cansā</i> (จันทรชา)	<i>can</i> (<i>sā</i>) (จันทรชา)	Person who has had 1 st <i>hōtnām</i> ceremony performed.
3. <i>njākhū</i> (ญาครู) / <i>huakhū</i> (หัวครู) / <i>caohuakhū</i> (เจ้าหัวครู)	<i>can</i> (<i>khū</i>) (จันทรครู)	Person who has had 2 nd <i>hōtnām</i> ceremony performed.

4. <i>phamahā</i> (พระมหา)	(<i>can</i>) <i>mahā</i> ([จันทร] มหา)	Person who passed <i>parian</i> 3 exam or higher.
----------------------------	---	---

Other titles which I have heard applied to priests but don't know quite how to fit into the above categories are (1) *ācān* (อาจารย์) which is a general title for a priest – particularly a learned one; (2) *ācānyai* (อาจารย์ใหญ่) for the headpriest in a wat; (3) *khūbā* (ครูบา) which is a general term usually used for a learned priest. There are also other titles such as the one given to Phra Khrū Choei which shows his status as a person who can ordain other priests.

First Plowing Ceremony

The "First Plowing" Ceremony which is called *rāēknā* (แรกนา) in Thai and *hāēknā* (แฮกนา) in Lao is held in the 6th month just before the rains begin. The following description was given by Mr. Sao in collaboration with Mr. Ngao.

An offering consisting of 4 cigarettes, 4 chews of betel, 2 flowers, and 2 of candles/incense are placed in a *thong/thung* 9 (ตุง / ตุง) – the type of *thong* which we saw used in the exorcism of bad dreams. This is placed on the shrine of the field *phī – tāhāēk* (ผีตาแฮก). At the shrine a person presents the offering to the *phī* and says: "While plowing the first time if the buffalo defecates, there will be good rain; if he urinates, there will be floods; if he does nothing, it will be a dry year." Then beginning at the shrine, the farmer begins plowing towards the west and circles the fields so that the area in the middle produces good rice. The following diagram shows the method of first plowing.

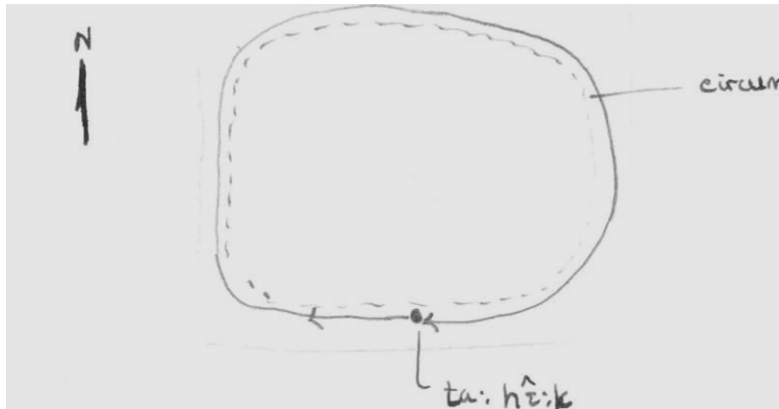


Illustration of the method of “first plowing” during the *rāēknā* (แรกนา) / *hāēknā* (แฮกนา) ceremony

Following this there is the "first planting" of a handful of seed thrown broadcast.

The ceremony is usually held on a Wednesday in the 6th month. Each household has a separate ceremony (not just one ceremony for the whole village) and each farm has its own *tāhāēk*. The plowing is done around each separate parcel of land owned by the family.

The Village and Rice Marketing

In BNT Mr. Ngao is the main and almost sole salesman of rice. The price which he charges for milled glutinous rice, *khāosān* (ข้าวสาร) are 1 *thang yai* (ถังใหญ่) for ฿20 cash or ฿22 credit per *thang*. There are no gradations according to quality for rice sold in the village. In the market, Mahasarakham, however, there are a range of prices varying according to quality. Both in the market and in the village there are seasonal variations according to time away from last rice harvest. The present time is about the lowest the price reaches and in the rainy season (towards the end) the highest. The top price in the village usually reaches about ฿22-23/*thang* cash at the end of the rainy season as that is when people have run out of their own rice stores.

Paddy rice in the village, *khāo plūak* (ข้าวเปลือก) sells for ฿6/*thang* and in town for 0.55/kg. Mr. Ngao says that one gets about 1 *thang* of milled rice for every 3 *thang* of paddy.

No white rice *khāo cao* (ข้าวเจ้า) is sold in the village. In Mahasarakham, the price for milled white rice ranges from about ฿20-30/*thang* depending on quality with ฿25 being for rice that is only slightly broken. White rice paddy in Mahasarakham sells for 0.65/kg.

Mr. Ngao mills rice at the price of ฿1 or litre milled rice for every 3 *thang* of paddy milled. He also keeps the bran, *ram* (รำ), which he sells for ฿1/*thang* (when and if he can) or else he feeds it to his pigs. Some USOM agricultural officials said that this was an unusual practice but I have observed the same in other rice mills at least in this area (referring to the practice of also keeping the bran as part of the payment for milling).

The standard units of measurement in the village for rice are *lit* = litre (ลิตร); *kilō* = kilogram (กิโลกรัม); *thangyai* (ถังใหญ่) which = 10 kg. or 20 litres; 1 *hāp* (หาบ) = 3 *thang*. Also used are a *thanglek* (ถังเล็ก) = 10 litres or 5 kg. and a *khwian*.

According to the Bangkok World the commodity prices for rice on the Bangkok market on the 19th of April [March?] were as follows:

TYPE	GRADE	PRICE ฿ PER PICUL
White Rice	100 p.c.	96-99
	5 p.c.	92-95
	10 p.c.	88-90
	15 p.c.	78-80
Glutinous Rice	10 p.c.	72-75
	15 p.c.	69-71
	paddy	810-930/ <i>coyan</i>

Bān Nōng Tūn

April 13, 1964

The End

Yesterday we left the village for good and were seen off at the Ban Phai railway station by a group from the village. The days immediately preceding were full of such stress and strain,

for me at least, that I hope that I never have to repeat the same events. However, these same events did serve to illustrate certain aspects of Thai life.

Perhaps the most strainful were our relations with Mr. Ngao. Up until the end we had felt that he was our one true friend in the village who didn't view us — as for example Nin's wife's family do — as rich *farangs* who are to be used for all the financial gain which can be made of them. However, we wrongly intruded business into our relationship with Mr. Ngao. First he expressed interest in buying most of the things in the house in the village. Then he heard about things for sale in town and made a trip into town to examine them and promised to buy certain things. But, of greatest importance, was his interest in buying the motorcycle. On all of these things we had acted according to our practices in the West — i.e. that since he was a friend, we would give him a special price on things. This was our first mistake. This concept seems alien to the Thai-Lao — at least to Mr. Ngao, the villagers, and the people with whom we dealt in MK. Business is business no matter whom one is dealing with and let the seller beware for the buyer is out to wreak the best advantage he can. A corollary to this is that if the deal is not heavily weighted in the buyer's behalf (unless it is something he can't do without), the buyer won't buy — particularly if (1) he knows that the seller has to sell and or (2) the seller can afford (according to the thinking of the buyer) to sell at bargain rates.

When it came down to the wire, Mr. Ngao reneged on every single thing except a ฿150 food cupboard which Jane had regrettably named at ฿35. His reneging did not stem from our prices being too high relative to the intrinsic value of the things but because in the end he didn't want to put out money unless he was getting a damned good deal.

This was the first of a set of events concerning Mr. Ngao as a potential buyer of our goods. The second concerned my Tilley pressure lantern. When Nôi had assisted me on the household survey I had paid him ฿300. Thus when Mr. Ngao had helped me on the Economic Survey, though he demanded no compensation and protested that he should be given any, I felt that he should get a similar reward. However, as he hadn't seemed particularly in the need of money, I gave him my pressure lantern which I placed at a value of ฿300. He seemed quite pleased about this at the time. Later, however, when he was trying to get a cheap price on the

motorcycle, he wanted to give the lamp back and reduce the price on the motorcycle by ₪300. At first I tried to sell the lamp — to please him — but got no takers and so finally had to tell him outright that I wouldn't sell the lamp — that it was his and he could dispose of it as he pleased — and I wouldn't reduce the price on the motorcycle anymore. Then one day we made a trip to R.E. [Roi Et] I told him to enquire of the store-keeper where he usually buys his goods if it is possible to buy Tilley type mantles in RE. It turned out that the father of that particular store-keeper had owned a Tilley lamp and had paid “₪300 *kwā*” for it. From that time on the value of the lamp was depreciated to ₪200 in Mr. Ngao's eyes (a figure he settled on because of the interest of the wat perhaps in buying the lamp at that price).

In the end we decided that we couldn't very well transport our goods in the village back to town to try to sell them for two reasons: (1) we would lose face in the eyes of the village and (2) it would be a difficult and complicated procedure. Thus, we decided to make the best of a bad go and give Mr. Ngao the goods. He wasn't at all grateful — probably due to the tension in feeling which had developed by this time. Furthermore, he had, in my mind, the audacity to ask after having been given the lamp and the goods, "And the wages for helping on the survey?" I simply replied, "I think I have given you sufficient goods."

But the greatest trouble centered on the motorcycle. Mr. Ngao had been greatly interested in buying it from the start price we would set. Finally, I worked out from talking to several people that I couldn't expect much more than 1/2 of the original cost. I decided that I would request ₪2,800 and hope to get ₪2,300-2,500. At that time since we were still on very good terms with Mr. Ngao, I wanted to give him a price which though representing a sacrifice to myself would mean a good deal to him. Thus, we said that we would ask a special price of ₪2,000 from him alone. As I said above, this was a mistake, for there is no such thing as a "special price for a friend" in this society. At first he seemed agreeable to this price but then later got involved with buying a revolver for ₪2,000 which put somewhat of a financial strain upon him. This was when he first tried to get a further reduction in price by returning the lamp. At first in an attempt to maintain friendly relations, I made an effort to try to sell the lamp. However, as time grew shorter, I realized that I must hunt for a buyer for the motorcycle and not for the lamp. I finally

had to tell him that I wanted ฿2,000 at least for the motorcycle and that he could do as he wished with the lamp but unless he was willing to pay the ฿2,000, I would have to search for another buyer. This was the first of a number of direct confrontations which we had and which are seen as highly undesirable by the Thais. He in turn replied that he really didn't want the lamp as he already had one. But we said that he could dispose of the one I had given him as he wished as time was too short for us to find a buyer and the motorcycle was a more important item to sell. This conversation was the real turning point in our relations. The next day was beclouded by the tension to his unhappiness in being directly and openly thwarted and secondly at the thought of not getting the motorcycle which at the time he still very much wanted. Finally, the day following, which was the day before we were to leave for a trip to Laos, I went to town to consult Mr. Wichian about finding another buyer for the cycle. This was the last straw, for Mr. Ngao said later in the day that he would buy the motorcycle for ฿2,000. And it was just at the time of leaving next day when we told him that we would give him – free – all the goods in the house, hoping that this might assuage his sorrow about expending the full ฿2,000.

The day we returned from Laos, Mr. Ngao was, perhaps due to the free alcohol present at a farewell party for Mr. Wichian in B. Khwao (Mr. Wichian is being transferred to Nong Khai), was extremely friendly and he said that he was definitely going to buy the motorcycle. I set a date for him to come to town to transfer the registration. In between these two events it became apparent that he was beginning to have second thoughts. I continued, however, to operate as though the deal was all set. He indeed did come to town — 4 days before we were finally to leave — and went through the transfer of registration — though he insisted that I pay the cost of registration (meaning that I paid for both the license which I had paid for at the first of the year and for the cost of registration). He did not pay me at this time, though I did not quibble as I was still using the cycle. The following day I was not able to go to the village. The next day which was a Thursday did go. I discovered that on Friday Mr. Ngao was to go to R.E. and as Saturday was our going away party, it was obvious that it would be necessary to go to the bank on that day or Mr. Ngao would not be able to get the money for me. He at first made the suggestion about going to the bank himself, but later suggested that we wait until after the party on Saturday — a suggestion that was clearly indicative of his renewed desire not to pay for the motorcycle. That

this was true was further evident by his continued stalling about going to town. I began to get quite upset as I knew the bank closed at 3 p.m. He was well aware of my upset. Finally at 2:15 I said outright that if we didn't leave for town immediately we would not get to the bank on time. He was extremely annoyed at my bluntness but he did go. Unfortunately on the way to town the sparkplug clogged—a fact which didn't enhance his desire greatly to be separated from his money. We only made it to the bank at 5 minutes to 3 and though he did draw out the money, he didn't pay me and made a number of comments which made it obvious that he wasn't happy about buying the motorcycle.

I was so upset at this state of affairs that on returning to the town for the evening, I went to speak with Mr. Wichian. I poured out all tale of woe, something I probably shouldn't have done to a Thai, but he made sympathising noises and agreed to help me in either getting the money from Mr. Ngao or else in getting another buyer.

The next day before we went to the village, I made certain that the motorcycle was in as good as shape as I could make it. Then on reaching the village I acted as though the deal was still to be completed by giving him the key, giving him instructions and explanations. He fell in with what he must have thought was inevitable and took great interest in learning everything. Later that evening he did pay me the money. From then on he made an effort to have good relations until the end though he did later reveal to me his true feeling when he said that he probably would not keep the cycle but would try to sell it.

An interesting facet to this whole affair was the headman's asking me on that day that I did get the money whether Mr. Ngao had paid me yet or not. When I answered in the negative, he said that he would help me in getting the money. From this little incident I was made aware (1) of the knowledge of Mr. Ngao's behaviour *vis-à-vis* the motorcycle (2) the fact that village pressure could be (and perhaps was) brought to bear on Mr. Ngao to comply with an agreement. It may also have been indicative of a feeling in the village that Mr. Ngao has, as Mr. Wichian put it, "the characteristics of a merchant". That informal pressure can be brought to bear is something I knew and was my reason for visiting Mr. Wichian and explaining to him about my difficulties. This is why I said that Mr. Ngao may in the end have felt that he had to comply with the inevitable.

This affair with Mr. Ngao coupled with the incident of Nin and his wife and the demands (particularly the excessive demands of Mr. Sōn and Mr. Ngao) by the villagers for photos made

me realize that the villagers basically viewed us as very wealthy people who could be used — *chuai ōkāṭ* ฉวย โอกาส), "to take advantage of", for their own profit and gain. That such was the case is not surprising when given the contrast between our state with our material possessions, ready cash, better clothes, etc. and the poverty of the village, but it was somewhat disappointing. [These words were written somewhat in the flush of the events. I now feel that I was being too harsh, esp. after receiving such a warm letter from Mr. Ngao. CFK 20.9.64]

Our taking leave of the village was partially dampened by the somewhat hard feelings on the part of Mr. Ngao and partially because we were not all the time in the village, but mostly because there was nobody willing to be a sole co-ordinator. Thus, it ended up that Mr. Ngao did some things, particularly with regard to the food, Mr. Wichian helped in spurring on the others, Mr. Phon and more so Mr. Hōm in making the invitations. The latter two invited the *môlam* troupe, and Mr. Hōm went with me to invite the priests (*nimon phra* นิมนต์ พระ) and other people from Ban Khwao. I was impressed with his efficiency and quickness in assuming authority all through the affair. He is obviously one of the major village leaders.

The events of our leave-taking were as follows: the night of the 10th the *môlam* performed. This was not preceded by a *suatmon* because Mr. Wichian said that there was not a "quorum" of priests. The following morning we fed the priests who included Phra Mahā Seng and a friend from Wat Po Si, Phra Thongsai, Phra Khru Choei, and Phra Mahā Non.

Unfortunately, our food preparations, lavish that they were, were slow in being undertaken, and Mr. Wichian who is a stickler for correctness regarding Buddhist behaviour insisted that the priests eat before 9:00 so that they had finished their morning meal before the proscribed time. Thus, our food didn't arrive until the priests were half-finished. After the priests had finished the *baisī sūkhwan* ceremony was held. This certainly had the effect of separating the sheep from the goats, in terms of who regarded us highly enough to attend. Many more women tied the strings than did the men and thus Jane had many more strings than I did. The two conspicuous absences whom I noted were Mr. Lū and Mr. Sôn. Of course, many people didn't tie the strings because they could not afford even the *bāt* which custom dictates (or else didn't feel that we were worth the baht). The gift of money at the time of tying strings is to bring the recipient wealth. As each person tied the string they would give us a "blessing" — for our health, safety, safe journey, wealth, and/or return to Bān Nōng Tūn. Phô Sīhā officiated at this

ceremony. Towards the end, the priests had prepared "holy water" and Phra Mahā Non sprinkled it plentifully upon us.

After the ceremony, everyone ate the food that had been prepared. Then the events were over except for the re-feeding of the monks at 11:30 which was fouled again by the lack of sufficient food. In fact there were so many hitches in the events that I began to go steadily nuts. We were particularly touched in the end by the large show out of people who did tie our wrists and the large number of hand-made pillows, *phākhomās*, *phāsins*, etc. which were given us. And on Sunday morning were some 25 of them piled into the bus with the liquor which had been distilled the night before to go to see us off at the train station at Ban Phai, playing the *khāēn* on the way, and then giving us a warm farewell which included the especially touching *phūkhaen* of Mr. Saw, the sad eyes of Phô Hō, and the near-tears farewell of Mr. Ngao. Then we truly regretted our departure and felt horrible that we had precipitated such tensions at the end.

Bangkok

April 17, 1964

Statues at Kū

Just before leaving the village, I went to Wat Ban Khwao to take pictures of the statues which originally had been found at the Kū. The statues had been removed from their safekeeping at Sala Klang to be used in the forthcoming Songkram festivities which were to be especially big at Ban Khwao this year. They were definitely referred to by a local teacher (who was seconded by others) as *phra sīwa* (พระศิวะ) i.e., Śiva. However, Mr. Boeles at the Siam Society, to whom I today showed the pictures, said tentatively that it was a statue of an incarnation of Śiva known as Vajiasarttra and that the statues were "a late variety of local" style.

Bangkok

Saturday, April 25, 1964

Robbery in Bangkok

A thief broke into Marv Brown's apartment through the bathroom window. He stole the following things belonging to us:

- 1) Olympia portable typewriter in black case
- 2) ฿1,200 in cash
- 3) \$250 in Bank of America Traveler's checks
- 4) checkbook for Westminster Bank, London