

Charles F. Keyes, Field Notebooks, Thailand

January 1, 1963 – January 31, 1963

Field notes in this document were primarily written in Mahasarakham (Changwat Maha Sarakham), Thailand. This document is preceded by notes written in Mahasarakham province in November and December 1962 and is followed by notes written in February 1963.

Mahasarakham

January 1, 1963

Party with Khun Lamiad and Peace Corps volunteers (Lou Smith and John McLean) from Teacher's College.

Dinner with Dregers and the Mieses, missionaries from Roi-Et.

Mahasarakham

January 2, 1963

Conversation with Nai Charoen

On January 2nd I had a conversation with Nai Charoen, the Palat Amphoe.

Mahasarakham/Khon Kaen

January 3, 1963

Went to see Dr. Bucher at CMA leprosarium near Khon Kaen.

Mahasarakham

January 4, 1963

Conversation with Nai Charoen

On January 2nd I had a conversation with Nai Charoen, the Palat Amphoe, concerning statistical data in Tambon Khwao and on Community Development in Amphoe Muang.

In Tambon Khwao there are 12 villages:

No. Village	Name of Village	No. Households	Population
1	Bān Khwao (บ้านเขาวา)	347	1424
2	Bān Dōn Dū (บ้านดอนคู)	34	511
3	Bān Chiang Hian (บ้านเชียงเทียน)	208	962
4	Bān Han (บ้านหัน)	96	623
5	Bān Iat (บ้านเอ็ด)	96	662
6	Bān Nōn Sa phang (บ้านโนนสระพัง)	35	125
7	Bān Nōng Tūn (บ้านหนองตื้น)	100	755
8	Bān Mī (บ้านหมี่)	92	585
9	Bān Song Plūai (บ้านสงเปลือย)	81	506
10	Bān Lao Nōi (บ้านเหล่าน้อย)	39	259
11	Bān Mō (บ้านหม้อ)	83	416
12	Bān Tio (บ้านตี้ว)	178	850

Community Development in Amphoe Muang

The following information comes from a conversation with Nai Charoen, the Palat Amphoe, Amphoe Muang, Mahasarakham. In Amphoe Muang there are 13 Community Development Workers (*phatthanākōn*, พัฒนาการ). These workers are assigned to the various tambons in the Amphoe (there are 11 tambons in Amphoe Muang). This intensive program for the Amphoe is just beginning this year as Amphoe Muang has been selected as one of the Amphoes in the country for such a project. There are two supervisors in the Amphoe, one of whom works in the Amphoe office, the other working in the Changwat office. There are two changwat community development officers. Tambon Khwao last year was the tambon in which there was a pilot CD project. The project was centered in Ban Khwao and did not extend to other villages in the Tambon. Nai Wichian Sawāēngcarōēn was the CD officer in charge of this project.

STATISTICS ON AMPHOE MUANG, MAHASARAKHAM, 1963						
Statistic	Year					
	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	'Today'
Population in Amphoe	64,500	48,161	69,317	70,307	71,981	73,239
Population of Municipality	15,222	15,363	15,168	15,888	16,333	16,853
No. of Births/year in Municipality	504	527	549	584	576	443
No. of Deaths/year in Municipality	109	117	129	196	173	144
No. of households in Amphoe	10,311	10,328	10,328	10,356	10,442	11,269
No. of households in municipality	2,401	2,405	2,411	2,429	2,449	2,509
No. of persons in area covered by electricity	Same as population in municipality					
Source : Amphoe Office Records, recorded January 1963.						

RELIGIOUS STATISTICS, AMPHOE MÜANG, MAHASARAKHAM, 1963								
No.	Tambon (ตำบล)	No. wats	No. monks	No. novices	Total Clergy	Ave. Monks /wat	Ave. Novices / wat	Ave. Clergy / wat
1	Müang Municipality (เทศบาลเมือง)	14	124	191	315	8.9	13.6	22.5
2	Kāēng Loeng Cān (แก่งเลิงจาน)	6	22	16	38	3.7	2.7	6.3
3	Kāē Dam (แก่งคำ)	14	64	39	103	4.6	2.8	7.4
4	Koeng (แก่ง)	10	52	27	79	5.2	2.7	7.9
5	Dôn Wān (ดอนหวาน)	10	35	35	70	3.5	3.5	7.0
6	Nông Kung (หนองกุง)	19	49	39	88	2.6	2.1	4.6
7	Thā Sōng Khôn (ท่าสองคอน)	10	69	22	91	6.9	2.2	9.1
8	Thā Tūm (ท่าตุม)	10	33	18	51	3.3	1.8	5.1
9	Khōk Kô (โคกก่อ)	10	62	56	118	6.2	5.6	11.8
10	Wāēng Nāng (เวียงนาง)	16	68	49	117	4.3	3.1	7.3
11	Khwao (เขวา)	11	41	41	82	3.7	3.7	7.5
	Total	130	619	533	1152	4.8	4.1	8.9
Source: Amphoe Office Records, recorded January 1963.								

Display at school

This morning I went again to Bān Nōng Tūn with Mr. Wichian, the community development worker for Tambon Khwao. When we arrived in the village, there were a large group of men working on building a new house (or addition to a house). This building group, the headman explained, would finish their job by evening.

We then went with Mr. Thiang, the headmaster of the school, to look at the school. Only the first-year students were in class – having a class in arithmetic under the other teacher – a woman who is the wife of Mr. Thiang. The other three grades of the school were in ‘the woods’ cutting lumber to use, I gathered, to build things for the school. Furniture is certainly needed in the school. The chairs are most rickety and these are only for the teachers. The students sit on the floor and work at very rough benches as desks. The students looked as poorly dressed as any I had seen in any village which I had visited. However, all the students seemed to have pencils and paper. I asked about whether the students had adequate paper and pencils and the headmaster replied that they did because someone (I, didn’t gather whom) had donated pencils and paper. Mr. Thiang explained to the students who I was and why I had come to the village. I don’t know how much they understood about this.

On the school bulletin board were the figures on the number of students in the school:

<i>Prathom 1</i>	25
<i>Prathom 2</i>	25
<i>Prathom 3</i>	31
<i>Prathom 4</i>	27
Total	108

Today there were two absences from *Prathom 1*, but Mr. Thiang said that many of the poor families often kept their children home from school.

Other facilities of the school which I noted were a biological diagram, a small map of Thailand, the usual shrine to the king (also accompanied with a picture of the queen), a calendar (with a pretty girl in front). The school is located in the wat grounds.

Mr. Thiang asked me a lot of questions about myself and seemed quite pleased that I was coming to work in Bān Nōng Tūn. I asked him what level of education he had, and he explained that he had completed *Mathayom* 6 in the school in Mahasarakham .

He has completed just 1 full year in Nōng Tūn. He agreed to help Jane and I in learning Lao. Mr. Thiang and his wife live in the Tambon centre, Ban Khwao, and commute each day.

He explained that there are five hours of class per day, or 25 hours per week.

Mr. Thiang has studied English, but he can't really speak it very well. He can read and write a bit.

I also noticed in the school, a blackboard and quite a bit of chalk.

While we were talking, Mr. Thiang asked Mr. Wichian about some sort of development which he would like to see in the village. He then made an appointment with Mr. Wichian to come to the Amphoe centre on the morrow. While we were sitting at the school, I noticed a bus-cum-truck go by in the direction of the Roi-et-Mahasarakham Road (i.e., from the South). I asked where this bus-lorry was coming from and where it was going. Mr. Wichian explained that it was coming from a village south of Bān Nōng Tūn and was going to Mahasarakham. He further explained that it goes in the morning and comes back in the evening to the same village.

Mr. Wichian and I then left the school to go visit a neighboring *khum* while Mr. Thiang went to join the students in the forest. To this next *khum*, we were accompanied by Mr. Phan, the head of this *khum*, and the headman. This *khum* is known as Bān Lao (เหล่า). It has 17 households and about 100 people {though no one knew for sure how many people). We went to the house of Mr. Phan. One thing that struck me right off was that this house was not nearly as clean as other Thai houses I have seen – there was food on the floor and the house itself didn't seem too well kept. On the veranda of this house was a sewing machine which a man was using when we first arrived. I inquired about how many sewing machines were in the *khum* – the reply, only this one. The headman said that there were five in the whole village.

Village History

I then launched into some enquiries about village history. First, I asked how old the village was. The headman replied that he didn't know how old it was – it was so old that no one could remember. He said that he knew that the ancestors of all *khums* had come from Roi-et at the same time, he said, but all 'the old people who would know were dead.'

Later, I had the opportunity to enquire about the age of the wat and the *bōt*. The headman said that the *bōt* was ‘over a hundred years old.’ The *thāt* (ธาตุ) which stands in front of the *bōt* and which I thought might be quite old was said to be as old as the *bōt* – I would still guess that it is older. [A *thāt* is a ‘stupa containing relics’. One sees these stone constructions all around a wat compound in all wats.] The *sala wat* is 35 years old according to the date on the building.

Village Government

I enquired about the governing of each *khum*. There is a head of each *khum* but I didn’t gather what he is called. I asked whether there were regular meetings with the heads of the *khums* with the headman of the village, but the reply was that there were none. When some important thing comes up, the headman goes around to ‘tell’ the heads of each of the *khum* about the thing.

House Building

Since I had noticed considerable house building going on in the village, I enquired as to the customs surrounding house building. The headman said that before people could move into the house, they must circumambulate around the house. I asked why this was done, and the reply was that there was no reason but that was the custom.

As there was a new house being erected next to the house of Mr. Phan, I enquired about the customs surrounding that house. I asked if there was a *sao mongkhon* (เสามงคล), a ‘lucky post’, for each house newly erected. They replied that there was and took me to see the one in the house next door. This post is called *sao hāēk* (เสาแฮก). On this post, which is the only old one in the new construction, is put a basket. Inside this basket, which is an elongated one, is placed betel nut leaves, flowers, sugar cane leaves. In the hole in which the post is placed, are put fragrant water (*nām hōm*; น้ำหอม), some soil, and some money. The basket is connected to the post with some cotton string which is wrapped into a thick bunch. Also, hanging on this post is a shoulder sack in which a fish net is placed. Before the house is moved into, the owner takes the sack with the net in it and puts it on his shoulder and takes the cotton string and walks around the house leaving the house surrounded by the string. Also on this post, connected to the rafters, was

a long bow (*nā kēng*; นากิ่ง) and a cross bow. I didn't gather whether or not these were lucky or not, but I guess that they were of the same order as the fish net.

There was also some cotton thread and a spool of thread as well, on another post. On all the posts there were small bits of paper upon which were written some characters in what was said to be ancient Lao and which is called *phāsātham* (ภาษาธรรม) (*tham*, ธรรม, is a Buddhist word which means the 'Dharma' but in this case probably means something like 'religious writing'). Mr. Wichian said that this writing is known locally as *khāthā notkhum* (คาถานทคุ้ม). [*Khāthā* is probably related to *khātā-ākhom* (คาถาอาคม), 'black magic' as *ākhom* itself means 'black magic' or 'witchcraft'; *khum* certainly means 'to guard, to protect'; I am not certain what *not* means.] It was further explained that these pieces of sacred writing protect the house against fire.

After this discussion of house building, we left Khum Ban Lao and returned to the main *khum*. On the way, I asked how many households there were in the major *khum* and received the answer of 40.

In the major *khum*, we came across a small mound of earth in which there were four carved pieces of wood (rough carvings that look something like a fancy leg of a table). This place was explained to be *lak müang* (หลักเมือง), 'the centre of the village'. There is a ceremony held every year in the hot season in which the priests come to this spot.

Mahasarakham

January 10, 1963

Worked at the Amphoe Office.

Mahasarakham / Bān Nōng Tūn

January 11, 1963

Went to village in afternoon.

Mahasarakham / Bān Nōng Tūn

January 12, 1963

Yesterday afternoon, I went again with Mr. Wichian to the village. When we arrived at about 2:00, all the school children were working in an open field opposite the wat grounds

setting up poles. I asked the headmaster what was happening and he said the students were erecting the place where Thai boxing and *môlam* (หมอลำ) is to be held on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of February – in celebration of something, but I didn't gather quite what.

Introduction to Religion

I asked Mr. Wichian if we could go visit the wat and the priests. Thus, we went to the *kuthi* (กุฏิ) where the monks live. When we arrived there were two monks and three novices sitting in the *kuthi*. As I had seen another monk near the place where the children were working, I assumed that these were the three monks and three novices which I had been told live in the village. However, only one of these monks was from the village and he is now the only monk in the village. The other two monks and one of the novices come from Bān Nông Can Thā (บ้านหนองจันทา), a village about 4 kilometers from Nông Tūn.

The local priest says that during Buddhist Lent (*phansā*, พรรษา), he prays every day, but during the rest of the year, he only prays on *wan phra* (วันพระ). During Lent there were three priests and three novices in the wat.

I asked how many of the adult males in the village had been ordained. Both the abbot and the headman of the village replied that nearly 100 percent had been – excepting only those who had been ill or who couldn't be priests.

The abbot said that there are people from this village who are priests in other villages, but he himself is from Nông Tūn.

Inside the *kuthi* I noticed a drum which is called *klông phēn* (กลองเพล) or *kông phēn* (ทองเพล). The latter is the Lao term. *klông* means drum and *phēn* means the lunch of the monks. The drum is used ordinarily to announce that it is time for the monks to take their lunch – which they must do before noon. The headman said that the drum was also used to call the people of the village to the wat grounds if there was something important to occur or be announced.

I asked about services which are held on *wan phra*. These services are called *suat mon* (สวดมนต์), ‘to pray, chant’. I asked how often the *bōt* was used, but the answer was confusing – perhaps only in *phansā*, maybe *wan phra*, and on special occasions.

The praying on *wan phra*, I was told is called *pan upōsot* (ปั้นอุโปสถ).

Local History

I went with the headman to visit the *bōt*. Upon examination, I felt it wasn’t any older than 100 years as I had been told. Then, Mr. Phon (the headman) said that his father had helped build the *bōt*. Further, the images inside – at least the major images (two made of plaster) were constructed at the same time. There were also a number of wooden images in the *bōt*. (I nearly committed a major faux pas here by forgetting – or almost forgetting until Mr. Wichian told me – to take off my shoes before entering the *bōt*. Mr. Phon went on to say that the wat had existed for about 20 years before the *bōt* was built. The *thāt* which stands in front of the *bōt* was constructed about the same time.

We then set out (‘we’ here includes Mr. Wichian, the headman, two teachers from Mahasarakham who had come out for fun, and myself) to another *khum* where we would get some fruit. On the way, I raised the question about the name of the village. Formerly, the village was known as Bān Dong Bang (บ. ดงบัง), which means ‘the village hidden in the forest’ (*bang* means ‘to hide, screen, conceal’; *dong* means ‘thick jungle or forest’). Mr. Phon said he didn’t know when the village had changed its name. As for its present name, *tūn* has a double meaning: (1) ‘to be wide awake, to awaken’ and (2) ‘to be easily frightened’. Thus, the name of the village could either be translated as ‘the village of the wide awake pone’ or ‘the village of the easily frightened pond’.

Then Mr. Phon dropped something which greatly aroused my interest: that is, that the field where the children are working is known as *sanām khamēn* (สนามเขมร) or *nōng khamēn*. The legend is that it was on this field where Khmer soldiers once were stationed. The fact that I had just learned that there were Khmer ruins a bare 8 kilometers away made the long history of the village running back to Khmer times quite plausible.

Another Khum

We reached another *khum* where we were to receive some *makhām wān* (มะขามหวาน) or *bakham* in Lao which is fruit very much liked by the villagers. Several school boys climbed to the top of the tree and threw down the fruit which are encased in what looks a bit like an oversized pea pod. The fruit itself, which comes from a type of tamarind tree, tastes a bit like figs. There are several types of this fruit, but this one is particularly prized because it is sweet (*wān*).

This *khum* which is known as Bān nōn dōn dak dam (บ้านโนนดอนดักดำ) had only five households.

While we were eating the fruit, several children came up with blow guns which they use to shoot birds. These guns which are called *phū* (พู่) are a long (about 3 meters) bamboo tube (which has an opening of about ½ inch) into which a foot long arrow is inserted. This arrow is small bamboo piece on to the end of which is wrapped kapok. The arrow is sharpened with a knife. A demonstration proved that the arrow can be quite effective as this piece of wood (i.e., the arrow) was stuck into a solid wood bush with just a little blow.

Wednesday, while I was working at the Amphoe office, I had a discussion with Nāi Charoen concerning some aspects of my work. He told me that the characters on the pieces of paper on the poles of a new house which I had observed in the village were *khôm* (ขอม) (ancient Khmer) letters. Such characters are called *yan* (ยันต์), ‘cabalistic signs’.

Community Development

He said that Community Development workers had three objectives:

1. To change attitudes.
2. To improve everything in the village.
3. To supervise and demonstrate.

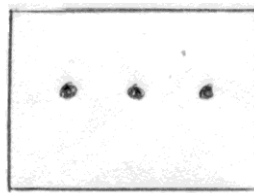
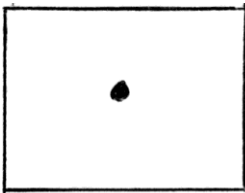
Khmer Ruins in Tambon Khwao

Yesterday afternoon when we were in the village and talking with the monks, the existence of a *kū* (កូ), which was reputed to be Khmer in origin was mentioned. I naturally expressed a desire to go see these remains and so Mr. Wichian took me.

The remains are located about 14-15 km. from Mahasarakham, near the Roi-et - Mahasarakham road. One travels through Ban Khwao to a point about 12 km. from Mahasarakham on the main road and then turns to the left and travels on about 2-2½ km. The remains are in Tambon Khwao, near Bān Dôn Dū (บ.ดอนคู) and near Nōng Krathum (หนองกระทุ่ม), an irrigation reservoir built about three years ago.

The remains are in two parts: The major part consists of an upright shrine which housed a Brahmanic statue (*thēwarūp*, เทวรูป). This statue has been removed to the provincial capitol building in Mahasarakham. Now in place of the *thēwarūp* is a Buddhist statue and the *kū* has been turned into a Buddhist shrine. The upright constructions which house the shrine is of typical Khmer style. In front of the shrine is what was once a vihara. The base of the ancient vihara still remains despite the fact that a new floor has recently been laid and a roof placed over it. In the vihara there are several stones which look a bit like stone benches on which are carved what look like Khmer inscriptions. One of these stones has a depression carved into it. Surrounding the *kū* and the vihara is a small stone wall.

A few paces away is what looks like the remains of a smaller building. Many of the stones in the *kū*, in the vihara, and in the wall have small bored holes in them..



According to my friends, the Fine Arts Department wants to do some excavations. The site has only been recently discovered (within the last ten or fifteen years). In April, people from many villages come for a festival at this place.

Mahasarakham

January 15, 1963

Tôi (ต๋อย) came to work for us.

Mahasarakham

January 16, 1963

Some Meandering Thoughts on Research in the Village

I must keep in mind that I am not interested in doing a traditional ‘village study.’ In other words I am not interested in ‘everything’ in the village nor do I consider ‘everything which I observe as data’. Primarily, I am interested in investigating those factors in the village which relate the village to the outside world and in particular to the national community. Therefore, I am interested in the following sets of data :

I. The ‘institutions’ in the village which relate the village to the national society. In this regard, I would want to examine in detail the following:

a. The School: Here it is important to investigate the relationship of the teachers to the village. In the case of Ban Nông Tün, the teachers do not live in the village. Therefore, they are a continual source of information on the outside world. Also, I suspect that the teachers are alienated from the village by identification with the outside world more than the village. I want to know their educational background, their desires for the village, and their feeling about the village. Also, I am interested in what the students are being taught, their feelings toward their studies, etc. Also, I should make a full inventory of the supplies and facilities of the school.

b. The wat: Since I have already discovered the wat at Nông Tün only has one priest, the importance of the wat will have to be studied throughout the year. Nevertheless, I can find at a certain amount of information concerning the wat and its activities in direct interview with the one priest, such things as the type of travelling around that the priest does, how he relates to the church hierarchy, etc.

c. The Government: Here I am primarily interested in the *Phuyaiban*’s connection with outside governmental sources. I do want during the course of the year to investigate the leadership structure of the village. But I am most interested to see how the headman fits into the ‘Broker’ pattern which Moerman has described.

II. By far the bulk of my ‘hard’ data will come from a rather elaborate house to house interview. I think, however, contrary to sociological practice, that it will be better not to make this interview until I have some degree of acceptance in village. Also, by postponing the house-by-house interview, I will have time to better perfect the schedule.

In this interview, I want such things as household size, income, number of times the members of the family have gone outside the village during the course of the year, if the family has any relatives (of the immediate family) living elsewhere.

Mahasarakham

Dinner at the Dregers.

January 18, 1963

Bān Nōng Tūn

Yesterday, when I arrived in the village, I stopped where the students were working on the preparations for the big festival which is to be held in the village on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of February. I sat and talked with Mr. Thiang while waiting for Mr. Wichian. While we were sitting there, a man from the tobacco factory in Ban Khwao came up and explained that the villagers were not drying the tobacco properly. I asked him a few questions about the tobacco growing in the area. He said that this was a big area for growing tobacco.

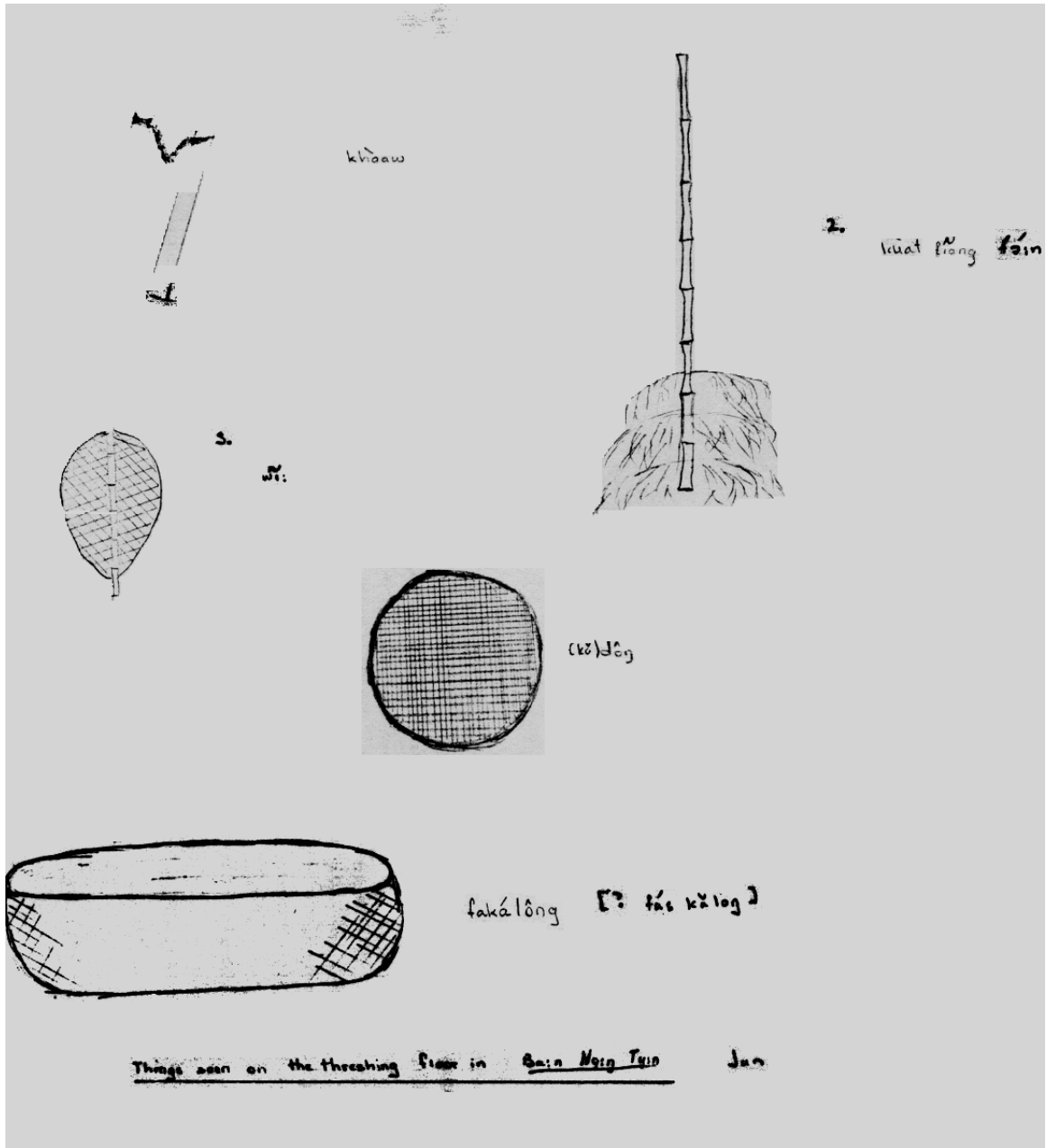
Then Mr. Wichian and the headmaster of the school at Bān Mī arrived in the village. The headmaster from Bān Mī, Mr. Thiang, the other school teacher from Ban Nōng Tūn, Mr. Wichian and I went to the field where they were threshing. On the one threshing floor which we visited there were a large number of things which I asked the names of:

<i>tong nā</i> (? นา)	threshing floor
<i>khan taen nā</i> (คัน ? นา)	‘dike’ (which are used to hold the water in when the fields are being irrigated)
<i>lōm khāo</i> (ลอมข้าว)	‘sheaves of rice or rice on the stalk, but already cut’
<i>kum khāo</i> (กุ่มข้าว)	‘paddy’
<i>fiang</i> (ฟ้าง)	‘straw’
<i>lao</i> (เหล้า)	‘granary’
<i>khāo phat lān</i> (ข้าวฟัดลาน)	‘the rice, chaff, and dirt which is left over on the floor’

<i>kuat fiang fō:</i> 'n (กวาดเพียงฟ่อน)	'rake which is used to pull the threshed rice up onto a pile of the rice'(see diagram, number 2)
<i>khāo wī</i> (ข้าววี)	Fan which is used in winnowing (See diagram, no.3)
<i>mai tī khāo</i> (ไม้ตีข้าว)	A pair of sticks joined with a piece of rope or cloth. The sticks are used to pick up a sheaf of rice so that it can be struck against the ground such that the rice can be separated from the straw. (See diagram, no. 1)
<i>fākalong</i> (ฝ้ากะลอง?)	Basket for carrying rice to the market. (See diagram, no.5}
<i>fat khāo</i> (ฝัดข้าว)	The process of shaking a paddy on a tray by throwing it into the air so that the rice is separated from the chaff.
<i>(ka) dong fat khāo</i> (กะดั่งฝัดข้าว)	Basket which is used for the above process. (See diagram, no.4)

In the field in which we were in, there was a large pile of rice from last year's harvest. This was explained that the owner was building a new granary and thus had his grain out in the open. He had fixed himself a bed in a straw cave (to protect himself against the cold). A mention was made about some sort of ceremony that the owner should do during this process of threshing but he hadn't because he had so much rice from last year.

Someone then asked me if I would like to try some local 'brew' and I naturally consented. Thus, we went to Bān Lao – one of the *khum* of the village. First, we went to the house of the head of this *khum* where I once before noted a sewing machine. It turns out that the man who runs this sewing machine is a tailor for the whole village. Then we went to the house of a man whom Mr. Wichian described as being a 'trader'. It was in this house that we had the local rice wine.



In this house were several people – the two teachers from Ban Nôṅ Tūn, the teacher from Bān Mī, the tobacco man from Ban Khwao, Mr. Wichian, and three local people (I never was certain which of two people was the trader and the owner of the house). First, the rice wine was brought out. This substance (which I was told was 15°) was milky in color and fairly sweet in taste. In fact it wasn't bad at all. During the course of the drinking, a platter full of fish was set in front of us. These fish, which resemble a catfish, are kept alive in the house. On occasions of this sort they are taken out, set on a chopping board. First they are hit over the head so that they are killed. Then, a knife is taken and the sides of the fish are sliced but not cut off. Then the fish is rolled in salt and toasted (*ping*). The Thai eat the whole fish, bones, head, and insides. The fish are then served as hors d'oeuvres to go with the wine. I found the fish to be quite good, but I couldn't bring myself to eat the heads.

In the room was a radio which was turned on to a Thai (as distinct from a Lao) station which was playing Thai music and modified Western music.

January 20, 1963

Left for Bangkok

January 21-27, 1963

In Bangkok and return to Mahasarakham.

Chinese New Year 24-25.

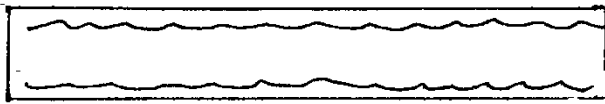
Bān Nôṅ Tūn / Mahasarakham

January 28, 1963

This afternoon I went to the village for the first time since I returned from Bangkok. It seemed as though the whole village was working on the preparations for the *ngān* which begins on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of February. School has been closed for the duration so that the students can help with the preparations. The fact that the headmaster is the sponsor of the *ngān* might have something to do with it.

I went to Mr. Thiang again – the headmaster. We sat and talked for a while – mostly engaging me in the meanings of certain words in English. Then we started talking about the subjects of geography and history. I asked if anything of non-oriental history or geography is taught in the primary grades. He said that very little is taught on anything but Thai history and the geography of Southeast Asia – particularly mainland Southeast Asia is taught in the primary

When we arrived in the village, the headmaster of Bān Mī took me in hand (as he was to do during the rest of the afternoon). We went to the wat. The wat has no *bōt* but only a school and a residence for the monks. The headmaster paid his obeisance to the monks by *khrap* (kowitz). Then we sat and talked. There were only two monks and seven novices in this wat. Both monks were young and one had a cataract over his eye. The headman was interested in showing me the traditional scriptures. One of the monks had at hand some bamboo strips on which had been printed (by a press in Bangkok) the *Jātaka* stories (story of the life of the Buddha). However, this was not the thing he wanted to show me. The monks brought some traditional scriptures – also on bamboo leaves, upon which were printed – or rather hand-written – the same stories in the Lao script. The monks said that they could read these scriptures and the headman proceeded to begin reading them himself (incidentally he was educated in Udon). The scriptures look something like this:



The headman said that there are readings for each time of the year (something like the Book of Common Prayer).

We then left the wat. I noticed in the wat was a Bo tree (which is in every wat compound) and a large swing-like construction which is used for gymnastics.

The headman also introduced me to a woman teacher of the village. She was better dressed than the rest of the villagers. She said there were only two teachers in the village and 30 pupils. We then wandered about the village a bit waiting for the advertisement to finish.

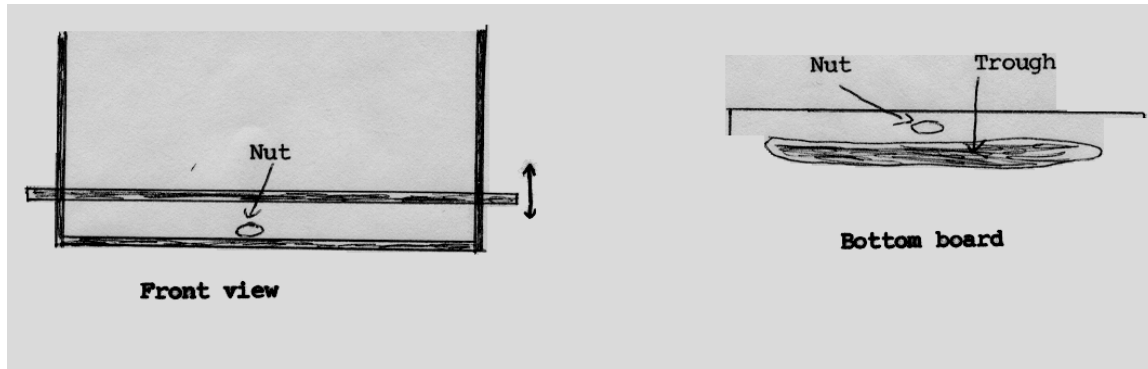
We came to a threshing floor and the headman asked me if we used man power or machine power for harvesting and threshing in America. I had an extremely difficult time explaining how we use machines for this in America. We then came back to the truck, where Mr. Thieng took the opportunity to explain to all present who I was – much to my embarrassment.

We drove to the next village, which is also located on a pond. The headman said that most villages are located on ponds because of the shortage of water. On arrival in the village, the headman and I set off for the wat again. In this wat there again was no *bōt*. There were two priests in the wat, but I didn't enquire as to how many novices there were.

There was a Buddha image in the living quarter of the monks which the headman kow-towed to three times. We had a short conversation with the monks, and then the headman asked me if I had ever seen a *pōng* (? sp. in Thai). I answered that I hadn't. A *pōng*, it turns out, is a large wooden bell which is struck to announce the time for the morning meal for the monks. There is also a drum which is used to announce the monk's noon meal, as its name indicates. However, in many villages there is no *pōng* – only a *khlōng phēn*. The drum is used to announce major events in the village, to call villagers together, as well as to announce the monks' meals. A *pōng* looks a little like this:



In front of the place where the monks lived was another wooden device about which I enquired. This device, which looks a bit like a guillotine, consists of two poles stuck in the ground. Along the bottom is a piece of wood which is about 5' wide. This piece of wood has a trough carved from its center. On top of this piece of wood is another piece of wood of the same size which is movable within the slats in the supports at each end. Thus this second piece of wood can be moved up and down. This whole device is known as a *lak takaman* (? sp, Thai) and was used (but is no longer used) to crush a nut – called *lūk bōk* (? sp, Thai), in order to make oil for burning during special ceremonies (Buddhist). The top board would be used to crush the nuts, the oil would then flow to the center of the bottom board and thus into the trough. Here the oil could be collected. Diagram, roughly is this:



As we were walking out of the wat I noticed some *thāt* (ຫ້າດຸ) which, though I knew something about, I asked the headman to explain to me. He said that these *thāt* were used as containers of the ashes of the cremated corpse of people who had died. They also serve as a memorial. On the front of a *thāt* is a small bird-type diagram which is used in all sorts of religious-political connections. Headman showed me a picture in a magazine of the queen. In the room in which she was, this design appears. On the side of the *thāt* appears an inscription which can be roughly translated thus:

In sacred memory of (mother) [so-and-so] who died on [date]
aged -[such-and-such]
This (*thāt*) was erected on [date].

We left the wat and walked back towards the village. On the way we found Mr. Thiang eating some food the local people had given him melon, sticky rice, *nām phrik*, *plārā* and boiled snails. Mr. Thiang took hold of me and guided me back to the car where he proceeded to give the villagers a lecture about me and, much to my consternation, attempted to get me to make a speech in Thai (which I refused to do).

This village – Ban Nām Thiang – has 38 households and 316 people.

After leaving the village we drove on to Ban Khōk Lām, a village of about 35 households. Though the village is in T. Thā Tūm, the children go to school in Ban Mī. Thus, the headmaster of Ban Mī knows the villagers well. He stated that the village was a very underdeveloped one – and I believe him. It seemed as poor as any village I have seen anywhere. It is the only village in which I have seen walls made with leaves rather than thatch bamboo or wood. In walking around the village, we came to the place where there used to be a wat – but no more. The headmaster told me that this land is sacred and cannot be used for secular purposes. There is a Bo tree in this ground. He further went on to say that he and Wichian had taken wood

from this ground to build a bridge near the village – I saw this bridge as we passed over it on the way out of the village. We then arrived in Ban Mī, the place where the headmaster teaches. This village, which is on the main Sarakham-Roi-et Road, is a very developed village. I noted a very well-stocked store. On our way to the school on foot, the headman stopped to talk to an old lady who was eating sticky rice which she was roasting over an earth stove. I couldn't help musing in watching this woman about the difference of this woman squatting over the fire and picking pieces of roasted rice off a stick and the elegantly-dressed woman with all the proper manners sitting down to meals in which eating was an art and not merely a biological function. I really didn't consider these two the same order of creatures. I was brought out of my musings by hearing the headmaster tell me that this woman is 'crazy'.

We passed by the village rice mill where they were loading bran on an ox-cart. We then crossed the road to the school. This school is quite good looking, being only 5 years old. It certainly contrasts with the run-down wood school in Ban Nông Tūn. There is also an open well in front of the school. The headmaster says that there is a need for irrigation water as the field in front of the school is very dry. I noticed a mass of scattered paper around the school even though the headman was telling me he had the students do everything around the school themselves.

While we were waiting for the car, a villager walked by carrying three fish traps. These long elongated bamboo containers have an opening into which fish can swim but cannot swim out because the hole is made with pieces of bamboo jutting inwards.

As we were leaving, it suddenly struck me that our little tour was one way in which people in the area learn about the outside world, are brought into interaction with other people, and have their relationships – village to village- dramatized.

Bān Nông Tūn / Mahasarakham

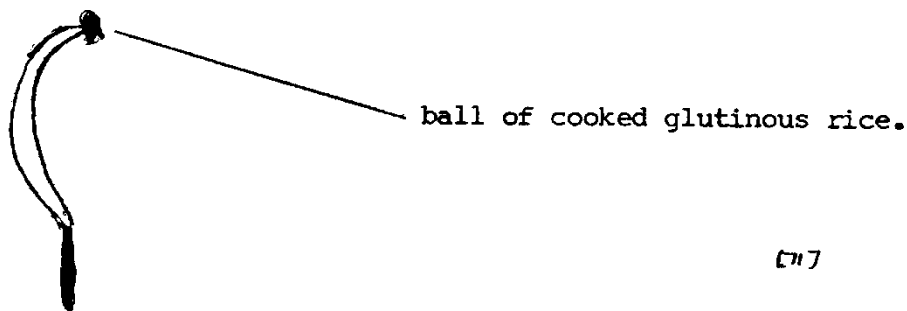
January 29, 1963

This morning Mr. Thiang and I discussed language. Other interesting points which came up were that he goes to Bangkok at least once a term, and that there are several villagers who also go to Bangkok occasionally. Amongst others who came up to listen were one boy who had a watch on, and an older man with sketchy beard and moustache who Mr. Thiang said was rich. (I must make further inquiries of him, as he seems quite knowledgeable regarding things of a traditional nature.)

Mr. Wichian then arrived and learnt that last Sunday there had been a special ceremony for the rice spirit. The villagers explained it to me, but their descriptions were mixed up with those of another ceremony. (Note: Therefore very difficult to get an accurate description of a ceremony without observing it personally).

The rice ceremony

The villagers believe the rice has a 'soul', and that when the rice is cut and put in a granary, they must perform this ceremony to make the soul of the rice happy. An auspicious day is chosen – in this case the last Sunday – by the headman, even though the rice has been moved to granaries before this time. The ceremony is performed for each granary. The owner of the granary takes a tray on which are put the following: Several scythes which have a little ball of cooked glutinous rice at each end. (see diagram).

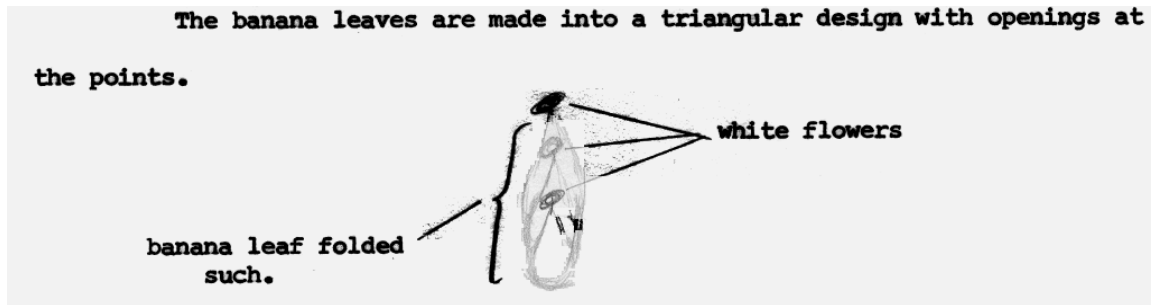


Some leaves.

In the middle of the tray is placed a bowl which contains the following:

- 2 hats which are called *phüak* (? sp. in Thai)
- 2 other kinds of nut-like things – *man bok hep* – which I couldn't identify
- 1 egg
- uncooked rice
- 3 banana leaves with flowers (see explanation below)
- 10 candles
- 1 bottle of *satō*
- a ball of cotton thread laid on top of the bottle neck

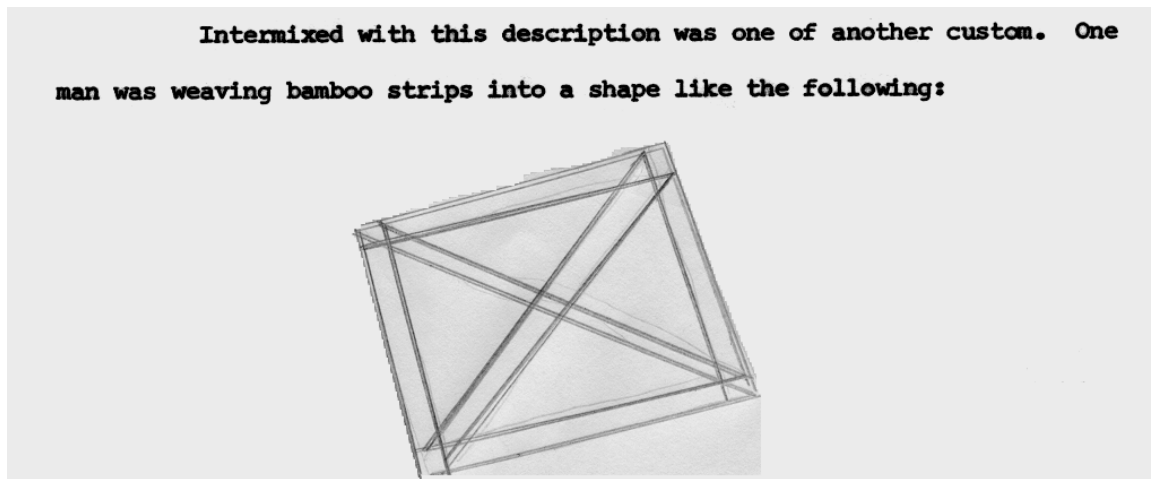
The banana leaves are made into a triangular design with openings at the points:



White flowers are stuck in the points on each of the leaves. Thus, there are three leaves and nine flowers.

The tray and its contents are taken into the granary and presented to the rice. A chant (which was repeated for me, but which I couldn't record) is made. In this case the ceremony was held in the morning and so a breakfast was held on which occasion the *satō* was drunk. However, if the ceremony is held in the afternoon, a dinner is served to the participants.

Intermixed with this description was one of another custom. One man was weaving bamboo strips into a shape like the following:



This thing is called a *talāēo* (? sp. in Thai) and it is the house of a *phī* -- the *phītahē* (? sp. in Thai) which is an evil spirit that lives in the rice fields. When the rice has been cut, this *talāēo* is taken to the field with some rice on it and put in a bamboo tree. This is called *lom lehāo*. This, I gather, will entice the *phī* who will then leave the cut rice alone.

In the group was a woman nursing a child with ugly red blotches on her chest from 'roasting' (*yūfai* or *yūkam* [อยู่ไฟ / อยู่กรรม]) after child birth, when a woman is placed next to the fire for several days after the birth of a child to cleanse and purify herself.

Understood from Mr. Wichian that the forthcoming *ngān* was being held to raise money for a few school (hence the sponsorship of Mr. Thiang, the headmaster) as had been done for a commune health center (now built) the previous year. The idea of having the *ngān* was Mr. Wichian's, - one of the forms Community Development takes.

Also learnt from Mr. Wichian that there would be a *bāi sī* (บายศรี) or *sūkhwan* (สุขวัน) ceremony during the *ngān*. This is for a priest, born in the village, but now in Wat Po Si in Mahasarakham, who passed the exam for *parīan* 5 (เปรียญ) ¹ and is now going to take the exam for *parīan* 6 this year. The ceremony is to give him assistance and to take place on Saturday morning. The monk's name is Phra Mahā Sēng Thapsuri (พระมหาเส่งทัฬหสุริย์). Kaufman defines *bāi sī* as “a small decorative, five-tiered structure made of banana leaf and flowers, and used in some religious rituals”. ² Phloyphrom defines it as ‘auspicious rice offering tray; auspicious rice; auspicious rice offered to spirits to bring good fortune’. ³ I think the last part of the definition by Phloyphrom comes near to what is meant in the village. Mr. Wichian said the ceremony of propitiating the rice soul was also a *bāi sī* ceremony.

At the time of the ceremony a *mō sūat* (หมอสูด) (literally a chanting doctor - *mō* being used to apply to all types of shaman and religious non-Buddhist practitioners in the village) will lead the ceremony. The ceremony will be held to help the priest pass his examination which he will take in Bangkok.

Today in the village, the *kamnan* of tambon Khwao plus the headmaster of the school in Ban Khwao plus other outsiders came. Therefore, there was a meal for them which I was invited to join. Main dish was *kāeng pā*, fish curry. Two live fish (catfish type) were killed by having their backbones broken at the neck, then filleted (without cleaning) head and all, and placed in a pot of boiling water with peppers, salt and vegetables. Other dishes included the standard fare of *nam phrik – kēo* in Lao, *plārā – pādēk* in Lao, sticky rice, and rice wine – *sā tō*.

¹ “Above the grade of Nak Dhamma First Class, the monks are divided into seven classes of Pali scholars called ‘Parien’ and graded from the lowest, or Parien, Third, Class, to the Ninth Class” (Wells, Kenneth E., *Thai Buddhism*, Bangkok: The Christian Bookstore, 1960, p. 15.

² Kaufman, Howard K., *Bangkok*, 1960, p. 227; see also pp. 147, 200, 202, 203, 204.

³ Plang Phloyphrom, *Modern Standard Thai-English Dictionary*, 1959, pp. 704-5

During the meal, I learnt of a ceremony to be held Friday morning at 9:00 called *būang sūang* (บวงสรวง),⁴ ‘to give worship to’, in the forest, about 300 meters from the center of the village, in order to propitiate *pū tā* (ปู่ตา) the guardian spirit of the village. (*Pū tā* literally means ‘grandfather’.) The spirit will be asked to protect the village from evil. The villagers have ‘chosen’ (this is the word Mr. Wichian used) a man to act as *khaočham* (เข่าจាំ) – a speaker or intermediary between them and the spirit.

Mr. Wichian and I also went to the health center in Ban Khwao. The commune health officer said about ‘90 percent’ of the villagers had liver fluke from eating raw fish. Also mentioned there had been some arrests made in the commune village (including the man at whose house I had seen a special pipe)⁵. Mr. Wichian said some arrested had been accused of being communists, and that some people from another province had come to the village to work as infiltrators.

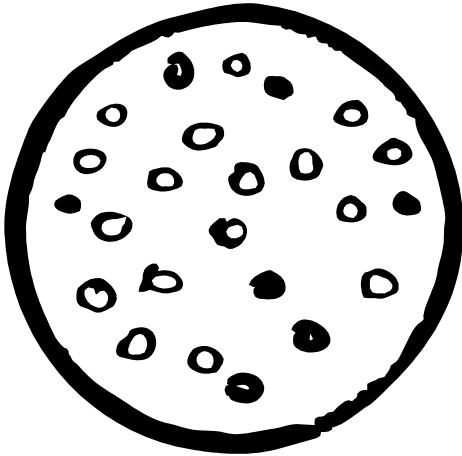
Bān Nông Tūn

January 31, 1963

First we went to see the making of *khāo pūn* (rice noodles). The process begins by making a rice dough which is put in a thing like a fish net and boiled in a kettle. The dough is then taken and put in the rice pounder (*khōk mān*, ? sp., maybe *mōng*, มอญ), to soften it to a manageable mass. Pieces are then torn off and put into a cloth which has one part in the center replaced by a piece of metal with holes:

⁴ McF., p. 467 (under บันนาม) “to vow promising a thank-offering if the request is granted.”

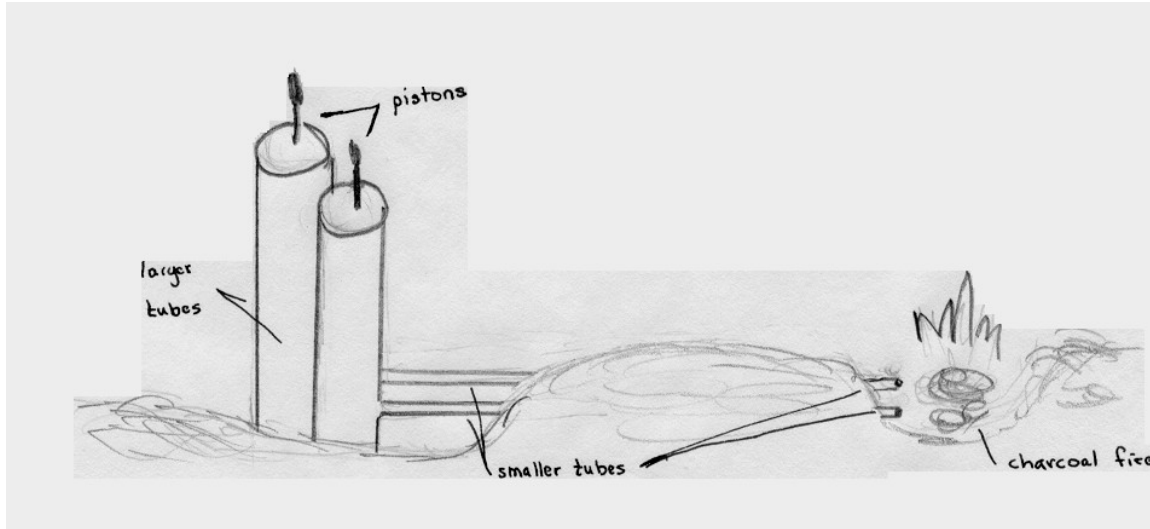
⁵ Probably used for smoking *kanchā* (กัญชา), marijuana.



The dough is squeezed through this sieve by squeezing on the cloth. The elongated pieces are dropped into boiling water.

The cooked noodles are then fished out with a small ‘fish net’, put first in cold water and then on a tray to dry in the sun. *khāo pūn* was being made all over the village, and there were even women from outside the village who had come to make noodles. I ate some with *kāēng pā*, and also a piece of flat toasted rice cake something like a chapatti, but some were purplish-colored, being made from ‘black rice’ (*khāo kham*). (Apparently some ears of *khāo niao* are black inside, as I saw.)

Also visited home of the blacksmith (*chā’ng tī lek* – literally, ‘craftsman who strikes iron’). Among the tools in his ‘shop’ in front of his house were bellows (*sāp*, ? sp.) consisting of two hollow tubes of about 3-4” in diameter in which piston-type things are put. These two cylinders are set in the ground with two smaller tubes leading from each of the larger upright ones and going underground to the fire.



The pistons are worked up and down, forcing air through to the fire. Also had a type of anvil plus several metal hooks used to bend metal, While the blacksmith's yard and house contained several items of traditional village use, e.g. rake, hoe, spinning wheel.

On the way to the tailor's we passed large mound where charcoal was being made. It seems that BNT makes charcoal to sell.

At the tailor's, I was treated to a concert on the *khāēn*, the traditional pipe instrument of the Northeast, and also I heard the songs of the *mōlam* – that is, *mōlammū*, which were accompanied by *khāēn* and a drum looking a bit like a bongo drum.

In this *khum* there was a man rebuilding his house with good boards as opposed to woven bamboo walling, and solid windows. He also has a new granary. I asked if he had cane into money, but I was told he was just 'developing'.

Also we passed two girls who were applying a 'black rinse' to one of the girl's hair. Black hair is considered very beautiful, and since this girl will be a *mōlam* singer, she must look as nice as possible.

On the way back to the main part of the village, we passed the field where the new school will be built (at a cost of ₪ 25,000) The field once belonged to the blacksmith, who donated it to the village.

Invitation for a Monk to Participate in the Forthcoming Festival in BNT

The following is a translation of an invitation sent to the abbot of Wat Ban Chiang Hian to invite him to participate in the forthcoming ceremony at Wat Ban Nong Tun. This invitation is similar to others sent to monks in various temples located in village neighboring BNT.

Wat Ban Nong Tun School

January 2506

To the abbot of wat Ban Chiang Hian in reverence and humility:

On the 1-2-3 of February 2506 the teachers and villagers of Nong Tun will sponsor a celebration of status-fans for *phramahā* Seng Pasananacittō

In order that the ceremony will be most auspicious we would thus like to humbly invite your reverence to come and chant the *chaimongkhon khātha*: at 4:00 p.m. on the first [of February] 2506.

Sent with evidence of my highest respect.

[signed] _____

Mr. Bunthiang Phanthu'kūn

Secretary of the Festival Committee

