

## **Charles F. Keyes Field Notebooks, Thailand**

**February 1 through February 29, 1964.**

Field notes in this document were primarily written in Mahasarakham Province (Changwat Maha Sarakham), Thailand. This document is preceded by field notes written in Mahasarakham in January 1964 and is followed by notes written in Mahasarakham in March 1964.

### **Mahasarakham**

**February 1, 1964**

(Notes added later.) Jane to see Mr. Chuanphit.

### **Mahasarakham**

**February 2, 1964**

MK

### **Mahasarakham**

**February 3, 1964**

MK

### **Bān Nōng Tūn, Mahasarakham**

**February 4, 1964**

#### **Bun Khāo Ci**

This evening and especially tomorrow morning will be the ceremony of *khāocī* which is pronounced *khāokī* (ข้าวกึ่ง) in the local dialect. Yesterday, people made or prepared one of the special *khanom* for this ceremony — the *khāo kīap* (Lao ข้าวเกียบ) or *khāo khriap* (Thai ข้าวเคียบ). Yesterday and today they also made the two ubiquitous rice dishes which appear at nearly all ceremonies — the *khāo phün* and *khāo tōm*. Finally, tomorrow morning they will make, just before going to the wat, the particular *khanom* for this ceremony the *khāocī* (ข้าวจี). *Khāo kīap* are only made for this ceremony and for the ceremony of *Bun Phra Wēt*.

#### **Traveling Medicine Salesman**

When we arrived in the village this noon, a traveling salesman — rather salesmen — were here. The main salesman was giving his pitch by showing magic tricks. The only one which we observed was the placing of an empty handkerchief on a empty board and yet apparently something was underneath the handkerchief because he moved and he hit it with something and it sounded hard. The magical slight-of-hand is termed *kōn* (which one person

spelled for me as กล้วย). The main salesman was accompanied during his patter by others on drums and cymbals. They were selling laxatives and a medicine "to protect the teeth". Laxatives were quite popular and Mr. Ngao says that most people take laxatives at least once a month.

## **Bān Nōng Tūn**

**February 5, 1964**

### **Bun<sup>h</sup>khāocī**

This morning I observed the ceremony of *khāocī* (*khāokī*). Every household was preparing *khāocī*, cooking the *khāo kīap*, and making the *kāp khāo*. *Khāocī* is prepared by taking already cooked glutinous rice, forming an egg-shaped lump which is then stuck on the end of a bamboo stick. This lump is warmed over the fire and then is painted with beaten-egg, and toasted again over the fire until the result is a nicely browned lump. Then it is removed from the stick and some people will place a lump of palm sugar in the end of the *khāocī*. However, in a poor village like this, many people don't place the sugar in the *khāocī*. Such a situation as this apparently, is what has given rise to the traditional saying that "If palm sugar is not placed in the *khāocī* the novices will cry." (For explanation of this saying see *mohoradok chāo isān*). We have not yet got the full method for preparation of *khāo kīap*. All the trays or other containers on which the food for the priests is placed would include the rice dishes of *khāocī*, *khāoniao*, *khāo kīap*, *khāophün*, plus some dish of *kap khāo*.

Also we saw Mother Hōm preparing a banana stalk container exactly like those used in the *thambunbān* ceremony. Again, this is called *thōng nā ngua* (correct spelling ทองน้ำจ้ว) and is an offering for *nāng thōlānī*. The offering includes some items in the *thambunbān* ceremony, except in this case pieces of *khāoci* and *khāo kīap* are also added. Mother Hōm says that this offering is always and only prepared for the *thambunbān* and the *khāoci* ceremonies. Certainly, I have not been aware of seeing them at other times.

The ceremony took place primarily in the *kuthi*. Representatives of every household (almost invariably a woman —very few men present) would bring their trays of food and their *thōng nā ngua* to the *kuthi*, then a little bit of food of each kind would be taken by each participant and placed on top of a basket shaped like an egg timer:



Illustration of a basket on which food offerings are placed during the *khāoci* ceremony

This offering was called by one person *hān khāo ph(r)ā* (ฮ่านเข้าพระ). The head priest called the container *khāoyōng* (ข้าวฮ่อง). Mr. Ngao says this latter spelling may not be correct and he termed it, in Thai, *phrakayōng* (พระกะขวง) instead of (ข้าวฮ่อง). All agree on the use of this offering. At the end of the ceremony, the priests(s) will take it to the *bōt* and present it to the Buddha statue (the main one). My first informant said that it would be presented first before the Buddha statues on the ‘altar’ in the *kuthi* and then taken to the *bōt*.

The participants food would be taken and divided up according to kind so that all the various rice dishes and *kapkhāo* would be collected together. People set their *thōng* down in the *kuthi* also. Some women brought bottles or other containers of water which they would use during the *truat nām* part of the ceremony.

The priest and a novice from B. Dōn Māk Yā had come to participate in the ceremony. The head priest from B.D.M.Y. acted as head priest.

Before the ceremony began, a bowl of rice was placed on the 'shrine' at the back of the *kuthi*.

The ceremony followed the pattern similar to that in all other *thambun* ceremonies. Phô Sīhā, the thayok, acted as leader and began the chanting. In front of him had been placed the *khāi mongkhon* which held *khāo tôm*, three piles of cotton, leaves, candles, and flowers, a *fai mongkhon* attached to the horseshoe shaped stick and passing from pile to pile, and two lighted candles. Phô Sīhā 'requested the precepts' after which the two lighted candles were taken from the *khāi mongkhon* and placed in a separate water scoop and placed in front of the priests. The head priest of BDMY gave the ‘precepts’ while holding a *kathin* fan in front of his face. (That is, holding a fan which had been presented to him in a *kathin* ceremony, and not one indicating status).

When this was finished, Phô Sīha chanted again and presented the *khāi mongkhon*. The thread was passed from priest to priest to novice to novice. Then followed a chant while the thread was being held. During this chant, Mr. Tāp took a small water scoop and went around collecting money. This money was later divided up and given to the 2 priests and the two novices. Towards the end of the chant, the string was re-collected and passed down to the head priest who rewound it around the horse-Shoe shaped stick, and placed back on the *khāi mongkhon*.

Then Phô Sīha chanted followed by the 4 priests and novices chanting. During this time the food was brought forward. Then followed the presentation of the food lead by Phô Sīha. Fantastic amount of food; many trays of *khāo kīap*, *khāoci*, a bīp full of *khāo tōm*, but only one tray each of *kap khāo*, which included also the *khāo phūin*.

The priests finished and the people ate. Before people had quite finished, Phô Sīhā began chanting again, requesting a ‘sermon’. The head priest gave the *thēt* concerning the ceremony of *khāo cī* which he read from the book (in this case 'head priest' refers to the one from BNT). Many people did not remain to hear the sermon, and still others continued eating during this time. Some time during the time when the people had been eating, the elements of the *khāi mongkhon* were placed on the 'altar'.

Following the *thēt* the priests made holy water — *nām phraphutthamon* (น้ำพระพุทธรมนตร์).

Then followed the *truat nām*, during which some people poured water through the floor, while others poured it into *thōng* offerings.

Then came the *rotnām / hōtnām* (รดน้ำ - T / สดน้ำ - L) during which the priests made a short chant. What was left of the holy water was taken home by the people.

After this formal part of the ceremony, the following things happened: (1) some people placed rice on the fence, on the trees, and perhaps on the *thāt* in the wat grounds; (2) the offerings for *phrā nāng thōlānī* (the *thōng*) were placed in front of the wat gate in the field known as *boeng bān* or *nong khamēn*. They were placed here 'because this is the central part of the village' (according to the BNT head priest). This was a central place for placing offerings, though some people placed them other places (Mr. Bunthiang says that if the offering is three-cornered it is placed at *sāmyāēk* but if it is 4 cornered — a rectangular box — it is placed at *sīyāēk*); (3) the priest took the offering for the Buddha image and presented it in the *bōt*.

### Meaning of the *Khāoci* Ceremony

I tried from several people—the headman, Mr. Bunthiang, the head priest of BNT and Mr. Ngao—to get at the meaning of the ceremony. The consensus was that the ceremony must be held in the 3rd month, after the rice had been brought in and the ceremony centers around the offerings *phā nāng thōlānī*, the Earth Goddess. This latter fact is pointed up in that the bun made at the ceremony is given to the Goddess by means of pouring water into her offerings during the *truat nām*.

It would seem that the basic meaning of the ceremony is as a thanksgiving to the Earth Goddess for her bountifulness during the past rice cycle. Thus, the placing of a variety of rice (black, yellow, red, white) and rice preparations (*khāo tōm*, *khāo phün*, *khāo kīap*, *khāoci*) in the offering and the preparation of special rice dishes for this particular ceremony.

#### Household Wealth and Possessions

Today Mother Hōm showed us her prize treasures — kept wrapped up in rags and placed in the granary. She had old money (a long oblong, beaten copper from Laos, a little silver ball which had been worked and which used to be the money in the rural areas, and some old Siamese coins), a silk *phānūng* (called in Lao *phā yāo*) which her mother had made and her father once wore when he was a *phūyaibān*), silver earrings of her mother's and her own gold earrings. It was a really pitiful and touching sight to see her parade out her family's worldly possessions. She also owns a large coffin-like chest called a *tō* which apparently is not used for anything. This chest has a sliding board on top as an opening. It is apparently a traditional hand-made piece of furniture which is found in several homes, including the current headman's. She also has a bayonet mounted on a stick.

In showing these things, a couple of interesting remarks were made. She pointed out that the Northeast used to be included in Laos (made in reference to the Lao coppers). She also said that she used to own a lot of *bai lān* manuscripts which she sold to a traveling *mō* who came through.

### History of Families in Villages

Māē Hōm also had the remnants of a book which had been prepared by Phra Mahā Seng on the occasion of a *kathin* sponsored in the memory of his father. This book had two pages concerning the history of his father (very scanty to say the least). At least one interesting point should be noted -- Mr. Phon's father had also been headman. Mother Hōm



four elements - which correspond to the traditional four elements in Western thought: *din* (ดิน), 'earth'; *nām* (น้ำ), 'water'; *lom* (ลม), 'wind/air'; and *fai* (ไฟ), 'fire'. In the human body these correspond to flesh, blood and other liquids, body heat located in some innerpart, and breath.

## **Bān Nōng Tūn**

**February 7, 1964**

### **Rice Milling**

Mr. Ngao charges ฿1 or 1 liter of rice for every 3 *thang* of rice milled (if I had written differently before, it is wrong). In local village usage, one *hāp* (หาบ) of rice (two baskets carried on a pole) equals 3 *thang*. A *khwian* (lit., 'ox cart') full of rice equals 30 *thang*. Getting 1 liter of rice is better than being paid in money because 1 liter is equal to app. ฿1.25.

### **Other Units of Measurements**

In gold, the unit of measure (weight) is the *bāt* (บาท) which is fixed at 16 grams. The *bāt* is divided into 4 *salüing* which in turn are divided into *hun* (หุน). Mr. Ngao didn't know how many *hun* there are in a *salüing*.

In village measurements a *sōk* (ศอก) is a traditional unit being the distance between the elbow and the tip of the middle finger. This unit is used for measuring such things as bamboo walling which are a little more than 3 *sōk* square.

### **Mr. Phon's Family**

The parents of the present headman had 12 children, all of whom survived. These 12 siblings have had a great influence in the affairs of BNT. They are listed below with place of residence and status if any:

1. Nāi Mī Thapsuri (นายมี ทัพสุรินทร์) BNT
2. Nāng Ôn (นาง อ่อน) BNT
3. Nāi Phon (นายพร) BNT BNT Headman
4. Nāi Phan (นายพัน) BNT

5. Nāng Phan (นางพัน)	BNT	Wife of Nāi Lāē
6. Nāng Wan (นางวัน)	Dead	
7. Nāi Hōm (นายโอม)	BNT	Assist. Headman, BNT
8. Nāi Som (นายสม)	BNT	
9. Nāng Son (นางสน)	BNT	Wife of Nāi Dī
10. Nāi Sang (นายสัง)	BNT	
11. Phon Tamruat Sing (พ.ต. สิงห์)	MK	Policeman in Mahasarakham
12. Phra Mahā Seng (พระมหาเส็ง)	MK	Priest at Wat Pōsī, MK

#### Some Objects of Material Culture

*ū* (L); *ū* (T) (อุ) -- a cradle which is suspended from sort of beam.

*katāi* (L) (กะต่าย) lit. 'rabbit'; a carved wooden 'rabbit', the head of which is a coconut grater, and body of which can be sat upon to stabilize the grater when in use.

*khoeng* (L and T) (เคียง): a bamboo tray, used as a sieve for bran. Māē Khian in KY is a specialist in making these sieves.

*pōng* (L) (โป่ง): a traditional wooden drum which in BNT hangs underneath the *kuthi* and which is used rather than the 'skin' drum inside the *kuthi* for notifying people of the priest's morning meal (except on *wan phra* when the 'skin' drum is used) and in calling villagers together for meetings.



Illustration of a *pōng* (L) (โป่ง), a traditional wooden drum

### A Magic Charm

A couple of months ago I heard and (and read in the Bangkok *World*) about a child who had been born in Udon province who claimed to be a *phūwisēt* (ผู้วิเศษ)- a ‘supernatural being’ or ‘one endowed with supernatural powers’. The foundation to this claim was that during the pregnancy the mother’s stomach had swollen and contracted as though, as she believed, the child left and re-entered many times. Yesterday, a salesman came to the village selling pictures of this child mounted on a pendant for 3 baht. This charm, it is believed, will ward of evil influences towards children, and thus they are worn exclusively by children.

### Current Activities in the Village

Women and girls: Tamarind perpetration and some market of tamarind; cloth process.

Men and boys: Bamboo wall making; some kenaf preparation and marketing (though this is mainly finished).

**Mahasarakham**

In MK

**February 8, 1964**

**Ceremony of *Lāng pācha* at Bān Mō**

Today we witnessed the ceremony of *lāngpācha* at Bān Mō (ล้างป่าช้า) or "cleansing of a cemetery" at B. Mō. The cemetery had to be cleansed of evil spirits so that it could be used for building a new school.

The first thing that people did was to dig up the bones of the dead in the cemetery. These were collected together and placed in a special coffin along with small banana stalk images of people which represented the dead persons. In cases where no bones were found but people remembered a dead relative, a name was written on a slip of paper and placed in the coffin.

The coffin was decorated with black and yellow paper decorations and was made of wood. It was covered with white cloth. Four yellow paper flags were placed at the 4 corners. In front was a pot filled with sand in which burning incense was stuck. Pots behind the coffin were to be used for *nām hōm* which is used in washing the bones. The bones in the coffin will later be taken and be given a new cremation at the new cemetery.

Present at the festivities was a traditional Thai orchestra — *pīphāt* (ปี่พาทย์) — made up of people from the two villages of B. Mō and B. Māēt who share the cemetery. The orchestra included a wooden xylophone (*ranāt 'ēk* – ระนาดเอก), cymbals (*ching* ฉิ่ง), "circle of gongs" (*khōng wong yai* ฆ้องวงใหญ่), paired drums (*klōng* กลอง) and a flute (*khlui* ขลุ่ย). This orchestra played from time to time during the lulls in proceedings. This incidentally is the first case I have seen of this type of orchestra, which is Thai, in a N.E. village.

A temporary *sala* had been constructed on the grounds of the cemetery. It was here that the main part of the ceremony took place. There were raised platforms for monks, mats for most people (villagers), and chairs for some higher status individuals who included the Amphoe educational officer, teachers, Mr. Wichian, and ourselves. As the ceremony is for the purpose of cleansing the cemetery so that a new school can be built, it seemed that all the teachers were present and the headmaster was more or less the master of ceremonies.

The ceremony began by the *thayok* leading the people in *waiphra* during which the people lit incense. This was followed by the *khōsin* and then the *thaoāi* 'ahān hai phra (not the same as *sangkhathān* which is used only on *wan phra* — a day which is also called *wan*

*sawana* (วันพระ). In presenting food to the monks, *khāoniao* baskets were used instead of *bāt* because it was 'āhān *phlēn* or the noon meal.

There were 10 priests present. Mr. Wichian says that for this ceremony there can be a group of monks consisting of 5, 7, 9, or 10 people. But for a funeral, it is only necessary to have 4 priests—a group which is known as *khana song* (คณะสงฆ์).

During the time that the priests ate, the orchestra played. After the priests had finished eating, they gave the *haiphon*. Then the people ate.

After the people had finished eating and returned to the *sala*, a *bāt* which would be used for making holy water (that is, in which was placed a branch and water and to which was attached two lighted candles) was placed in front of the head priest. To this was attached a string — the *dāi sāi sin* (สายสายสิน) which led to a small altar where it was attached to the picture of the king and then to a Buddha statue. The string was passed by the head priest to each other priest until the 10th priest was holding the remainder of the ball. Then the third priest, who was *phra mahā non* from Bān Iat, held a monk's fan in front of his face and began chanting. Then he laid down the fan and all the monks chanted the *suat mon* during which the head priest made the 'holy water'. Towards the end of the chant, the ball of string was rolled up and then the head priest sprinkled a little water.

Then Phra Mahā Non (or Nun) gave a sermon. This sermon was a *mātikā* (มาติกา) in which he asks that all those who have died may go to heaven.

Then a string was attached to the casket and passed from priest to priest. Then followed the presentation of gifts for the monks (*thawāi không* ถวายของ). Gifts actually for the dead, but given to the priests in lieu of the dead. Then *haiphon* led by the head priest who held a fan in front of him (*phattā* พัด). Then followed the *suat / truat nām*.

Then the casket full of bones was taken to be given a new cremation in the new cemetery which adjoins the old one. When we reached there, the pots which had been used for the *nāmhôm* for 'bathing the dead' were shattered so that these pots were never used for anything again. Only burned the casket, with everyone, led by the monks, contributing to the fire. But not a full cremation ceremony. Five priests chanted the *suat mātikā* (for the dead) but not at the same place as the cremation actually occurred.

## History of Bān Mô

The head man of Bān Mô says that villagers originally came from A. Nōn Sūng (อิน. นุง), Changwat Khorat about 100 years ago. Some of the pot makers / sellers also live in the village of B. Tio.

### Maharakham

February 10 - 15, 1964

10 Feb 1964 MK  
11 Feb 1964 MK  
12 Feb 1964 MK  
13 Feb MK  
14 Feb MK  
15 Feb MK

### Bān Nōng Tūn

February 15, 1964

Phā Nāng Thōlānī (Phra Nāng Thoranī) and Truat Nām

This evening Mr. Wichian was over and we discussed the *truat nām* part of the *thambun* ceremonies. I knew that this was for the purpose of "spreading merit" to other beings, subhuman, human, superhuman, and is called in Lao, *yātnām* (หยักน้ำ). Mr. Wichian expanded on this, however, by explaining that *phānāng thōlānī*: (L sp.) is merely the distributor of this merit and not the recipient. In other words, she can take the merit which is deposited (*fāk* ฟาก) with her by means of the water pouring to the earth and distribute (*cāēk* แจก) it to all beings. This same principle holds for the *truat nām* into the *thongnāngua* but in this case the merit is meant for specific *phī* so that they will leave the household alone. There is an accompanying expression in Lao used for referring to this practice of sending the malevolent *phī* away: *phô:kphī lāi phāi phī pāo* (พอกผีหลายผายผีเป้า). I am not quite certain of the meaning.

### Tham bun bān Customs

There were several customs concerning the *thambunbān* ceremony which I enquired into with Mr. Wichian. On two occasions, I heard reference to a type of *phī* which is called in

Lao *pīsāt* and which was spelled in the village as ปรี่สาท, but which Mr. Wichian and Mrs. Cheunphit says should be spelled ปรี่สาท (see pp. 539 and 543 [January 29, 1964] in notebook). Mr. W. says that this one type of *phī* who apparently is associated with rice and household and who is placated during this ceremony. I can find no definition in the dictionary for this word. [NB 3.9.64—1 found in McFarland the word spelled as such; *phī pīsāt* or *phī disāt* (ผีปศาจ, ผีตีสาย) and which he defines generally as "the devil, demons; malevolent genii"; McFarland, p. 547.]

The *thongnāngua* received its name because of its three-cornered shape resembling the shape of a cow.

### Death Customs

When a person dies, his body is laid with head facing west. Mr. W. does not know the reason for this custom. At any other time during one's life, such as in sleeping, the head must not be pointed in that direction. This explains the distress of our servant when seeing how we had changed our bed to receive the benefit of the breezes, said that we should fear the *phī*. The ceremony for the dead in which bones are placed in a *thāt* is called *cāēk\_khāo* (แจกข้าว) — lit. "to distribute rice."

### Birth Customs

Mr. Wichian explained about the placing of a new born child on a winnowing tray after it is born. He said that the child is taken outside and the tray is shaken while the person says if the spirits do not claim the baby now, then it belongs to the parents. This corresponds to the pattern which Phya Annuman described in the Central Plains (P.A., "Customs Connected with Birth and the Rearing of Children," in *Life and Ritual in Old Siam*, p. 133) in which the expression used is "Three days a spirit child, four days a human child Whose Child is this? Take it!"

Why a winnowing tray is used, Mr. W. was not certain, but thought that it might have something to do with its round shape.

Earlier this week our house watchers in town — Suphan — had her first child. The question of *yūfai* arose. It seems that there is no real set period for how long this must last but

it is a function of when the woman feels her insides are 'dried'. Also, there does seem to be some correlation between the number of children and the length of time spent in *yūfai*.

Last evening a young man by the name of Bunloet Sāēnsak (บุญเลิศ แสนศักดิ์) and his wife, La'ô (ละอ้อ) paid us a visit. This is the second occasion on which they have done so.

The history of Bunloet's family is very interesting. His father as a young man, after he had been ordained here/walked to Korat and then took the train to Bangkok. He spent 18 years there. I asked if he was a priest all this time, and he answered yes because that was the only way to receive education at the time. He returned here with a large number of old books written in *khom* and Burmese (or Shan) script. He then became head abbot at wat in Sarakham for awhile. But he didn't want to remain a priest and so he *sūk* and married the older sister of Mr. Pranôt, the Changwat Education Supervisor. I asked what occupation he followed, and he answered that none because he didn't like the Changwat officials. Thus, he returned to farming. Nonetheless, he retained all of his old books which are now in the possession of his son (one of which was given to me).

Bunloet is a teacher at *lakmüang*, the main primary school of Changwat and one which Mr. Chüenchai used to be headmaster of. It was most unusual that his wife accompanied him here, as Thai wives very rarely accompany their husbands.

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Yesterday, I was talking with Bun'iam, the Chinese proprietor of one of the shops in town. He was telling me about how he studied in the Teochiu part of Kwantung when he was younger - for a period, he says, of 1 1/2 years. He learned the writing system - and even studied the new simplified system for 1 month.

One of the traditional ways of spreading of information about other areas for villagers was the travelling of monks to sacred shrines (*thāo namatsakān*). This, for example, was how Māē Hōm's family know about Thāt Phanom and the *Phū Thai* because her husband, when he was a priest, made a pilgrimage there. It would be interesting to know what the traditional (and present) sacred sites for a NE priest to visit (other than Thāt Phanom) were.

**Bān Nōng Tūn**

**February 16, 1964**

I asked Mr. Wichian about what pronouns he uses with wife and vice versa. He said that he might use (เธอ, น้อง, หนู). She in turn would use พี่ for him and หนู when referring to herself.

He said that in the olden days, people used to use ข้าหลวง (literally slave of the king') or เทศา which was short for เทศาภิบาล ('Lord Lieutenant of a province') for a governor of changwat.

**Bān Nōng Tūn**

**February 17, 1964**

**Cooperative Movement in Bān Khwāo**

This morning I attended a cooperative seminar in the new assembly hall on the school grounds at Bān Khwāo. This is an annual affair when the members of the Cooperative (or Cooperatives) come together to hear lectures by people from Bangkok and Sarakham.

T. Khwao has had a Co-op organization (*samākhom sahakon* สมาคมสหกรณ์) since B.E. 2486 (1943). A Co-op must have no fewer than 10 members, but if it gets large (no set size), then it may split into two groups. Thus, there are 2 such organizations in B. Khwao, another in B. Dōn Dū, B. Tio, B. Han, B. Mī, B. Chiang Hian, B. Song Phlūai, but not in B. Nōng Tūn. Mr. Hōm is the only BNT person who is a member and he joined when he was living in B. Dōn Dū. Mr. Ngao says that people in BNT don't want to borrow money from this source.

The coop movement is strongest only in 3 amphoe (incl. A. Müang) in Mahasarakham. Apparently, B. Khwao and Amphoe Müang are special projects of the Dept. of Coops.

The main purpose of the Cooperative, insofar as was explained by the people from Bangkok, is to provide loans for farmers, primarily to be used for capital improvements. Loans are made at interest rates of 0.85 baht per ฿100.00 borrowed per month or 10 baht per 100 baht borrowed per year. There are different types of loans, depending on how they are to be used, and the length of time in which the principle must be paid back varies accordingly — anything from 1-10 years, but the interest rate remains the same.

To found a new organization, at least 10 people from a village must apply together at the Amphoe office. Their petition will be considered by the Amphoe, esp. by the officer who

will forward information to Bangkok, Apparently the way an individual becomes a member is to apply to the local organization.

### Thāo Namatsakān

I asked Mr. Wichian what shrines people in the N.E. made pilgrimages (*thāo namatsakān* ที่เขานมัสการ) to. He said it consisted almost exclusively of one shrine, Thāt Phanom. A few would go to Phra Phutthabāt in Saraburi and fewer still (though I personally doubt this) to Thāt Luang in Vientiane.

### Titles in Village

The elder brother of the headman is called *Phô Salā Mī* (L. พ่อสะละมี), because he is a *salāwāt*.

### Death Rites in the Village

Tomorrow Mr. Mī will sponsor the ceremony of *cāēk khāo* for the purpose of placing the bones of his dead wife into a *Thāt*. In the evening he will sponsor a *mōlam* performance.

### Bān Nōng Tūn

**February 18, 1964**

### Nôi's Forthcoming Marriage

Nôi was over this morning to invite me to accompany him when he goes to request the hand of his wife-to-be (*khô sāo*) tomorrow evening at 6 p.m. He says that the *thaokāē* of the girl is asking ฿400, but he thinks it should be about ฿200. He himself will be represented by Mr. Phan of KL as his *thaokāē*.

### A Migration

I noticed this morning that the house of Mr. Son Khamkông, the house that looks like it was once a coffee shop, had disappeared. Mr. Ngao says that he and his family have moved to B. Khwāo.

### Thambun for Putting Bones/Ashes into a Thāt

Today and tomorrow there is the ceremony of *cāēk khāo* for the dead wife of Mr. Mī, the elder brother of the headman. This morning, preparations were being made. People were

making the *hōbangsakhun* -- a pyramidal structure which I have described before. This is a make-believe house for the dead and is called (I think) *phasātphoeng*. Inside this device is placed two pieces of betel, 2 rolled cigarettes, silk and cotton thread, *khāo tōm*, *khanom hō* (package containing *khāo sān*, peppers, salt), coin.

In the morning the only things that seem to occur was the feasting on the *khāo phün* and special food which had been prepared. Also, other preparation, such as decorating the area in front of the house. In the afternoon, the priests and some people went to the forest to collect bones. Apparently they hadn't been collected before and Phra Mahā Seng says that the collecting of bones doesn't have to be right after the 3rd day of the wake.

In the evening, the priests, *suat mon*, and then there was the entertainment — a *mōlam* performance with a troupe from another village, near Roi-Et.

### **Bān Nōng Tūn**

**February 19, 1964**

#### **Thambun for the Dead**

There were two *thambun* ceremonies for the dead this morning. One was a continuation of the events at Mr. Mī Thapsuri's house and the other was held at the house of Mr. Khūn in KN. At Mr. Mī's the ceremony followed the usual form of the *thambun*, with the chants through the presentation of food and ending with *truat nām* and *hōt nām*. Mr. Ngao says that it is unusual for a ceremony of *cāēk khāo*, which this ceremony was, to be held at the house rather than at the wat.

After the ceremony finished at the house, the scene did shift to the wat where the bones were ceremonially placed in a newly prepared *thāt*. Unfortunately, we did not witness this aspect of the ceremony as we were spirited off to the house of Mr. Khūn in KN.

The affair at Mr. Khūn's was quite a different thing, though for the same purpose -- a 'dedication' or *thambun 'uthit bangsakun* (ทำบุญอุทิศบังสกุล) ceremony for a person who has died, been cremated, but whose bones have not been "honoured". In this case, the person who was being so honoured was the father of Mr. Lom Thiprüangtai (นายลม ทิพเรืองใต้) who lives in KW (HH No. 19/1) and the father of two men who have since migrated to Petchabun province (one of whom visited here last year) and who had returned for the ceremony and of the wife of Mr. Khūn Thapthānī (HH No. 68 KW). The ceremony was held at the Mr. Khūn's because that was where the dead man had lived.

This event is to be a two day affair as well. The first days events consisted primarily

of the following. Two well known priests - Phra Mahā Seng and Phra Mahā Non (Nun), the abbot of Wat B. Iat, had been invited to 'give sermons'. The setting was behind the house of Mr. Khūn where under two *makhām* trees, small platforms facing one another had been erected. On these platforms were placed mattresses, pillows, *bāi sī*, spittoons, water and cigs. In the middle between them was placed a *bangsakun* including *phākhaomā*, pants, and some other things. Next to it, and also on the mat which had been laid there, was placed the bottle of bones wrapped in a rough white cloth.

First the priests were given food and then the people ate. Then the priests took their places facing each other. The ceremony began by the usual chants -- *waiphra*, *Namo*, "I take my refuge in...". The PMS gave a short sermon followed by a very long discourse by Phra Mahā Non on the meaning of death and death customs. Then followed a 'sermon' dialogue during which Phra Mahā Seng would ask in an informal conversational tone about various death customs and beliefs of Phra Mahā Non who would then talk (and even joke) about them.

When they had finished, the monks were given presents. Then the *bangsakun* was presented by taking a string and stretching it between the two priests, touching the *bangsakun* and bones along the way. When the priests had finished a short chant for this (a chant which I think is called *mātikā*), the string was collected and the monks chanted *truat nām*. After this, the *bangsakun* was divided and presented to the two priests (this is interesting as priests can use neither *phākhaomā* or pants). The priests were then given lunch.

### Miscellaneous

One of the brothers from Petchabun — one who used to be an "induction doctor", *môcit yā* (หมอฉีดยา) for the army—says that he is a *nak 'āēo* (นักแเอา), a word which he says has the same meaning in Thai as one skilled in *môlam khlôn* in the N.E. Actually, I think it refers to the Northern version of *môlam khlôn*.

### Bān Nōng Tūn

February 20, 1964

#### Thambun for the Dead (continued)

This morning the *thambun* ceremony for the father of Mr. Lom et al. was continued at the wat. First I saw a procession pass by in which the "house", *phasātpoēng* (?sp.), *bangsakun*, and a tray of things was being carried. These were followed by various relatives

on their way to the wat. As it was *wan phra*, some other people had also come to the wat to present food.

The *phasāt phoeng* or "house" for the dead consists of woven bamboo shaped like a house and placed on two bamboo poles. The "house" is covered with banana leaves, raw cotton, and unmade candle wax.

In a basket was placed a *thong* (lit. "flag"; pronounced *thung* in this dialect of Lao) which was wrapped around a banana leaf container of popped rice, flowers, candles, cigs, betel, *khanom* (*khāo tōm*), and a banana leaf container of food which is called *hōkhāo hai phī* (ห่อข้าวให้ผี), lit. "food for the spirits". The *thong* was made of rough cotton cloth which had a pole at one end sewed in so that it supported the cloth, and little pieces of wood tied at the other end — attached by string. Also, in the basket was the food to be presented to the monks.

Finally, there was a tray on which had been placed raw cotton, flowers, cigs, and *khriiang būchā*.

The priests were not present when we first arrived as they had to go to a *thambunbān* ceremony. When they arrived they placed themselves in the following manner: to the far left, inside the main room of the *kuthi* and facing away from the altar were seated on mats first Phra Mahā Seng and then Phra Thōng sai. Behind the latter sat a visiting monk. At some little distance away were seated the BNT novice and a visiting novice. In front of the priests sat the 3 brothers and brother-in-law. On the porchway sat the women and a few other males sat to the far right.

First the *khriiang būchā* and flowers were taken from the tray and placed on a smaller dish (the cigs. were given to the head priest of BNT). Then the incense was lit and the ceremony began by *waiphra* during which the *khriiang būchā* were held up in front of the participants. Then PMS held the priests fan in front of his face while the "precepts" were "requested" and given. Then the food was presented to the monks and novices.

A mat which had been brought to the *kuthi*, was laid on the floor. On it were first placed two dried banana leaf pieces with fresh banana leaf containers placed on them. These were prepared as offerings to the ancestral *phī*. Food was placed in the containers and cigs. The large basket which is regularly used for offerings to the Buddha image was also placed on the mat and as food was placed on the other offerings, food was added to it as well (when people had first arrived they had placed food on this basket). In this case all the food being used came from the family of the dead father. Also placed on the mat were a pillow and

clothing and in front of the mat was placed the *phasātphoeng* or 'house' for the dead. A cup of water was poured over the food offerings. Also, I noticed that the rice which is usually saved back by people coming to the wat on *wanphra* to be placed on the *thāt* of ancestors was partially used in the making up of these offerings (see photograph of this collection of offerings).

Then, when this arrangement had been made, and the monks had finished eating, the large basket (used usually for the Buddha image offering) was taken and placed in front of the priests while one of the sons (the one who lives in BNT presented some *khriiang būchā*. Candles were lit and attached to the banana leaf offerings and to the large basket which was then presented to the priest and then taken and placed on the altar. Then the *bangsakun*, the clothes, the pillow, the mat, and one banana leaf offering were taken over and placed in front of the priest. The *bangsakun*, followed in order by the banana leaf offering, the mat, the pillow and clothes were presented to the priest. Then the 'house' was taken over and presented. As things were presented they were removed and placed back in their original place. Then the priests chanted *truat nām* during which one of the sons (the one from Petchabun) began pouring water through the floor. Later at a certain point in the chant, other people joined him. During this chant PMS held a fan in front of him. N.B. If there is any water left in a container at the end of *truat nām*, it is emptied at the end.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the large drum in the *kuthi* was struck 3 times. The *bangsakun* in the 'flag', the banana leaf containers of food and the 'house' were removed from the *kuthi* and taken to the wat grounds below. A hole was dug between the *kuthi* and the large Bo tree. One small banana leaf container was placed underneath the Bo tree. In the hole, the other banana leaf container was placed, then the contents of the 'flag' were poured on top of this. Then *Nām hōm* was poured over the things in the hole. The hole was filled with dirt and the flag placed in the hole and loose earth was brought up around it. The flag would be left standing for a few hours and then would be removed by the priests. At the end, water was poured around the flag on the loose earth, and the remnants of the *nām hōm* was poured on as well. The 'house' was thrown away just outside the wat grounds. Then everyone returned to the *kuthi* to listen to a sermon by PMS. The sermon was 'requested' by presentation of *khāi thēt*. PMS gave an extemporaneous sermon, but held a book in front of him while speaking.

In this ceremony, the ashes were not placed in a *thāt* as is normal practice, but were sprinkled on the Lam Chī 'for the fishes to eat'. This was the wish of the dead man, and Mr. Ngao says that it was a most exceptional occurrence--one that he had never heard of before.

Phra Mahā Seng says that most people, after they have reached 10 to 12 years of age, are placed in *thāt* after death and cremation.

It is specifically stated that these ceremonies are for the purpose of giving gifts to the dead person and a *bangsakun* (T) or *sak anīca* is exactly that (though in sophisticated circles, even in the village, it is thought that such gifts are for the monks but the merit accrued by presenting the gifts goes to the deceased). The same idea is contained in the term *cāēk\_khāo*. Thus, gifts of clothes, mats, etc. which can be of specific use for the dead but not necessarily for the monks are presented as *bangsakun*. Mr. Ngao and others say however that things should not be given directly to the dead but to the monks in their stead.

Note -- at the end of ceremony one woman stuck balls of rice on a tree.

### House Buildings

Mr. Mī in KW is building a new house today. This is apparently not a proper day for building houses (*khun 8 kham düan 4*) but Mr. Mī's father said it was ok, so he is building it. Mr. Ngao wanted to build the house for Mother Hōm today, but he was dissuaded because people felt that it was inauspicious day and though he himself is not concerned, he respected the wishes of others. He will build the house on *khun 10 kham* -- an auspicious day. He said that people believed that if one builds a house on an inauspicious day, they are thus inviting illness.

### Uses and Change in Language

There have been some definite changes in village language since Thai influence appeared and particularly since education has spread. I have noticed that most people when they write letters (if they write them) will write in Thai rather than Lao -- both as regards script and language. Mr. Ngao explains this as because people have studied written language only as Thai and not as Lao/Isan. This is not quite correct, I should say, as people do also study the written language for *bai lān* -- the *tua tham* (ตัวธรรม) -- but relatively few people (exclusively men) can read this script and even fewer can write it. Furthermore, this script is reserved exclusively for the subject matter which appear in the *bai lān* -- the religious and legends.

I have also noticed that with priests in formal situations, they will use, often, Thai words and even Thai pronunciation for some words, though they still are essentially speaking Isan. I noticed in the "dialogue sermon" between Phra Mahā Seng and Phra Mahā Non that

they used Thai pronouns and the *khrap* ending, though such does not appear in their informal conversations.

Also, I have observed that many people, particularly with some education or status who speak in front of an audience, even though the audience be composed nearly exclusively of Lao speakers will prefer speaking Thai.

I discussed this language question with Marv Brown and he pointed out some other things which indicate change in language. In Standard and Written Thai there is a 3-way distinction /r/:/l/:/h/; In central Thai, words with initial /r/ change to /l/. Marv claims that traditional in Lao all the same words would change to /h/. However, he claims that through the influence of Thai, words which originally were pronounced with an initial /h/ in Lao have been borrowed back from Thai with an initial /l/. For example the word "to study", which is written with an initial /r/ in the written Thai, /rian/ is /lian/ in CT and /hian/ in Lao. However, the word for "school" which contains the element /rian/ is written in the written language as /rōngrian/ and is /longlian/ in CT. In NE Lao the word is not as one would predict - /hōnghian/ but /lōnglian/. Obviously, according to MB, the word has been borrowed from CT into N.E, Lao. In Lao one finds, currently, the following situation with words which are written with an initial /r/ in the written Thai (1) some words beginning with /h/; (2) some words beginning with /l/; and (3) some words which may or do appear with either /h/ or /l/. Marv postulates that the words in the first case are ones which belong originally to Lao; those in the 2nd case are borrowed words from Thai; and those in the 3rd are ones that have a borrowed CT form competing with the traditional Lao form.

It is undoubtedly true that many CT words have been borrowed into Lao and that the language is changing accordingly. Mr. Ngao will often point out that there are words which the old people use which the younger generations do not use.

## **Bān Nōng Tūn**

**February 21, 1964**

### **Setting a Bride Price**

Last evening a group of villagers (about 10 in all) went over to B. Yāng to settle on a bride price for Nôi. All in the group were men. When we arrived at the house, Nôi sent us on ahead because he couldn't enter into the bargaining. Those who were really to bargain were led into an inner room—this included Mr. Phim (KL), Mr. Lū (KL), Mr. Chāi (asst. headman, KY), Mr. Phan (KL), a relative from B. Khôk Sūi who was originally from BNT and whom Nôi had especially asked to come, and myself. Also, inside were the representatives of the girl's side — an old grandfather who said he was 86 and some other men, but not, I believe,

the father to whom I was introduced later. Certainly, he did not participate in the bargaining. Water and tobacco (but not liquor or food which would be brought out only on the successful conclusion of an agreement), were placed in the centre of the room along with one small kerosene lamp. No women were present. The conversation began in a general way but very rapidly moved to the subject at hand. The first figure I heard was from the male side and it was ₤166. The female side asked ₤600, a figure they stayed at for a long time. During the course of the bargaining, the relative merits and disadvantages of Nôi and his girlfriend were discussed. One that I heard was the girl's side mentioning that Nôi had been married before. This was shrugged off by the male side as being of little importance. A disadvantage mentioned for the girl's side was that her mother was dead.

Mr. Chāi and Mr. Lū seemed to carry on most of the bargaining for the male side, making successive offers of ₤186, 206 and finally 246. By this time the bride's side had countered with a request for ₤306. It is interesting to note that all figures always include the number 6. This it was explained always occurs in bride prices (or nearly always). Mr. Lū tried to explain to me why. He said that there are two sets of 3 each of which are especially auspicious and then together they equal 6 and make a doubly auspicious omen. People believe that if "6" is not included, the marriage won't last long. Similar reasons are given for holding weddings.

When the point was reached where the male side was offering ₤246 and the female side ₤306, somewhat of a stalemate was reached. Finally, the female side said that if ₤266 were offered, that would be acceptable. There was great consternation among members of the male side and finally Mr. Chāi said that he would have to ask Nôi and he went out to find him. He subsequently reported back that Nôi wouldn't accept ₤266. The girl's side said that this was the final figure, take it or leave it. More discussion ensued on the male side. Finally, Nôi was asked again and persuaded for this was the figure decided upon. After the decision was reached, Mr. Lū let out a cheer which was seconded by others.

Liquor was sent for. While we were waiting for it, two other things occurred (1) Mr. Chāi brought out a ₤100 note which was given to the grandfather in a formal way by placing it in a water scoop and Mr. Chāi *krap*-ing before the grandfather. The Grandfather examined

it closely and reiterated several times that ฿166 was still to come and received the agreement of the male side. If perchance, the marriage were not to occur, then the ฿100 would not be returned.

Also, a date was settled on. In this case it will be *lāēm 10 kham dūan 4*. This is interesting as Nôi originally told me that he would be married in the 6th month.

Then and only then was the liquor brought out. Also, at this juncture food preparation began. If no decision had been reached, no food or liquor would have been provided. In fact, at one stage, Mr. Chāi had threatened to return home because of the intransigency of the girl's side and had actually made moves toward the door.

The bargaining had lasted a good 2 - 2 1/2 hours. When we reached BNT, we were given more liquor by Nôi's father. It was 11:30 by the time I reached home.

#### Bartering

This morning some women from a village along the Chī R. came "searching for rice" (because their rice crops had been destroyed in last year's flood). To get rice they brought fish (fresh and fermented) which they used to barter (*lāēk* แลกเปลี่ยน) for rice. Mother Hōm bartered 1 *thang yai* of paddy for 4 "bowls" of *pādek*.

### Mahasarakham, Bangkok

February 23-29, 1964

23 February 1964

To MK

24 Feb.

Travel from MK to Bangkok

25 Feb.

Bangkok

26 Feb.

Bangkok: Dinner at Peter Bee

27 Feb.

Bangkok: Dinner at Sheldon Juine's

28 Feb.

Return from Bangkok to MK

29 Feb.

MK