

Charles F. Keyes, Field Notebooks, Thailand

July 1 through July 31, 1963.

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

Bān Nōng Tūn

July 1, 1963

Marriage

This morning there was a wedding in the village. Apparently this is a fairly auspicious day because there are weddings all over the area. The reason for this may be that this is the last time before Lent begins, and thus the last day to get married for three months. Also it is the first of the month, - an auspicious day.

Those who got married were นายสมอน สมพิทักษ์ (Samôn Somphithak) and น.ส.คำภา ทัพสุริย์ (Khamphā Thapsuri). The boy was the son of นายตาบ (Tāp), House, No.56 KY and the girl the daughter of นางเบ้ง (Beng), HSE. No.9, KW. The boy was 26 years old and the girl 25. The bride price was ฿796.

It is interesting that this boy was the son of Mr. Tāp who got a girl pregnant last year and whom was sent to Bangkok. An indemnity was paid for the fact that a marriage did not ensue. He has now returned and married this girl. Apparently Mr. Tāp objected to the other girl who got pregnant because her family was poor and Mr. Tāp's family wealthy. Apparently, thus there is some sort of status relationships determining marriage.

Wedding Customs

As I have described other weddings in length, I will not describe this one but only make a few notes to supplement other reports. I should add there was no *sattho* at this wedding because of fear of the police.

Sommā

The custom of *sommā* (ສົມມາ) (Lao) must be present in any wedding ceremony, no matter how brief, to make it a proper wedding. This custom is sometimes called *ໜ້ອໝາ* (*khô khamā*) in Thai. This custom is the presentation of flowers and candles (usually placed on a bowl) and sometimes money to the parents of the bride. This custom was demonstrated by the son of Mr. Tāp coming up to Mr. Wichian (who was present) on his knees. Pushing the bowl with flowers and candles in front of him towards Mr. Wichian and with head bowed until it almost touched the floor and arms outstretched touching the bowl. He remained in this position while Mr. Wichian explained some of the responsibilities and duties associated with marriage. This is the traditional way of doing things. When he had finished, Mr. Wichian touched the bowl and the son retired. This procedure was repeated with me. When I had finished, however, I was instructed to place the flowers and candles on mattresses behind me which the couple would use in the evening.

Sommā applies to a variety of practices: the presentation of the flowers - candles to respected people; the presentation on the first night of marriage of the bride to her husband, and at other times as well; the custom of placing the flowers and candles in the lowest step of the bridegroom's house just before he leaves for the wedding; and doing the same thing at the foot of the steps of the bride's house before she enters. These latter two practices are called *sommā bandai*. When he does it at his own house, he gets down on his knees and places the flowers-candles in the bottom step, saying while he does this such things as "now I will leave". He then rises, and bows and *wais* in several directions.

However, the most important *sommā* is that to the parents of the bride. If a couple have no ceremony, they must do this. And often, when they have no other ceremony, they will present some money to the bride's parents (a token bride price). Mr. Ngao and Nuan got married by having a *sommā* to her mother.

Village and Army

The villagers talk continuously about the (American) army. I think almost everyone in the village has been over to see the camp. One comment was that the soldiers "don't drink water". I imagine this opinion has arisen because the soldiers refuse local water and because of their great

fondness for cokes, etc. (We were even asked if we drank water before we came here by the villagers). Also discussed are their sleeping habits, the cigarettes they smoke, etc. At least when they leave the villagers will have some criterion by which to judge other farangs, - whether for good or bad.

Mr. Wichian is not particularly happy about the building of the new school because he says, and I agree, that it has difficult implications for the Community Development program of encouraging villagers to help themselves.

Return of the Miscreants

Today the six men taken by the police in the raid at the last set of weddings were returned by taxi to the village. They had spent 45 days in jail. They did not seem particularly repentant.

Mr. Ngao and Nuan

This morning at the wedding, Mr. Phon and others were talking about Nuan and Mr. Ngao. It seems that Nuan had spent ฿24 for some pills that were no good and Mr. Ngao had been quite unhappy about this and they had had a quarrel. This quarrel was soon known all over the village. The result was that Mr. Phon and others said that Mr. Ngao treated Nuan with little more respect and consideration than a servant.

As a matter of fact that was how the relationship began. First Nuan was a servant who came to help with the pigs. Then about four months ago they got "married", which in this case consisted of no more than *sommā* - the presenting of flowers and candles to Nuan's mother. There was no bride price.

This feeling among the villagers that Nuan isn't given proper status is interesting. For one thing I think that the expression of the idea represents a slight resentment on the part of the villagers toward the "capitalistic-oriented" person. But more than that, I think, that it reflected the feeling that Nuan was being maltreated, - that in other words she was being demeaned beneath the normal position of a married woman. In the village, a woman is entitled to as much equality and independence as a man (though there are division of labors).

Nuan's mother is a sister of Mr. Phon's first wife, a relationship which entitles Mr. Phon to refer to her as a relative.

Buddhism and Village Status

Mr. Phon, Mr. Tāp, Mr. Phā, Mr. Lā, Mr. Chū and others have never been ordained. Thus they don't have the title of *thīt*. Mr. Ngao says that if a person hasn't been ordained, he won't have a proper understanding of Buddhism and will be more likely to *tham bāp*. I am somewhat surprised that Mr. Phon has never been ordained because he has two younger brothers who have gone up in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. One is *phramahāseng* and the other, who is no longer a monk, is called *tamruat sing* - lit. "policeman Sing" because he is now a policeman in Sarakham. Mr. Sing's wife is a teacher at Bān Mī school.

Mr. Sī hā Thapsuri, the old *mōsuat* was in the monkhood many years and has a great amount of status. I have often seen him helping the priests in certain ceremonies. He was a monk in another village near Mahasarakham.

Some Personal Notes

Mr. Chāi the assistant headman was over. He said he has had 12 children, two of whom are now dead. Mr. Phon apparently had a fairly boisterous adolescence and was among other things a *mōlam* player. But the real *mōlam* person is Mr. Saw Thapthanī (hse. no. 8) who is an *ācān*. He learned his trade in Muang Phon where he lived with his wife, who is from there.

Changes in Custom

Mr. Ngao said Mr. Phon's daughter can *ramwong* very nicely as can Mr. Saw. I said that I had never seen any *ramwong* in the village except at the wat fair with "imported" girls. Mr. Ngao said that *ramwong* is a custom of times past. Nowadays there are the dances at wat fairs, and so the traditional village dancing isn't carried out much anymore.

Bridge Building

When the bridge was built on the road the other day, there were men from all khums participating. Mr. Ngao said that Mr. Phon chose the people who would work.

Wedding Invitations

The following are translations of wedding invitations used by villages in villages near BNT. (I copied the originals onto keysort cards.)

Although no one in BNT seems to use formal wedding invitations, a few people in other villages have emulates town patterns and have sent out such invitations. The following is a translation of two such invitations received by Mr. Ngao.

1. Nāi. 'Ōnsa Khamwisō - Nāi. Campā Mātrangāmmuang would be greatly honored if you would join the auspicious ceremony celebrating the marriage

between

Nāi Chū Khamwisō and N.S. [Nāng Sāw] Nū Mātrangāmmuang in Bān Nōn Khā, Mūthī
5, T. Thātūm, A. Muang, C. Mahāsārahām

On 1 July 1963

8 a.m. Partake in a meal

9 a.m. Travel to “send” [the groom] to the house of the bride (caw sāw)

2. Nāi Subin Khamsōnthā - Nāi Khian Khamsēnā would be greatly honored if you would join in the pouring of lustral water and the conferring of blessings on the occasion of the auspicious ceremony celebrating the marriage between...

Nāi Thōng⁴ in Khamsēnā and N.S. Sārāi Khamsōnthā

In Bān Mi, A. Muang, C. Mahāsārahām

On 1 July 1963

[At] 8:00 am [you] are invited to partake in a meal

In this second invitation, there is indication of emulation of central Thai patterns for the “pouring of lustral water” (*lan nām phra' phutthaman*) has been substituted for the more typical Isan custom of “tying of wrists” (*bāisī sūkhwan*).

Bān Nōng Tūn

July 2, 1963

Buddhist Lent

The 7th of July (แรม 7 ค่ำ เดือน 8) is the first day of *phansā* (Buddhist Lent). The day before, on the 6th, there will be ceremonies both in town and in the village. The ones in town are supposed to be quite beautiful.

Shaman:

There are two *môphīfā* (หมอผีฟ้า) in the village. One is the wife of Mr. Tāp, the other is Māē Pū (แม่ปู่) the wife of นาย สอน คำทอง (Sôn Khamkông) in Khum Yai.

Wat Committee

There is a wat committee.

Bān Nōng Tūn

July 3, 1963

Repairs on *Kuthi*

Today there was a work party to repair the *kuthi* at the wat. The major instigators of this were Mr. Phon, Mr. Ho, the man I have often seen at the wat [Mr. Sôn Sētraksā] Mr. Nôi, and the three priests. After the wooden drum was sounded, other people began straggling in to help so that in the end there were quite a few people working. The job was really a complete one in that all pole supports which had been eaten away by termites and cross boards which were broken were replaced. Also new boards were placed around the porchways. Mr. Phon explained that these repairs were made in anticipation of *khaw phansā*.

Buddhism

Mr. Phon says that there will be no ether men ordained as monks because there is no *ācān yai* at the wat. I have often wondered why *phra'mahā seng* doesn't come back during *phansā*. There seems to be a new little *samanēn* at the wat (now making two).

Rain-Making Ceremony

Mr. Phon says that tomorrow there will be a ceremony or event at the wat at noon to determine whether or not there will be a "rain requesting" ceremony. Certain astrological calculations by a *môdū* will be made. If such a ceremony is held, it will be a tug-of-war between teenage girls and boys. If the girls win, rains will not be long in coming.

Mr. Bunsuk

Mr. Bunsuk, the brother of Mr. Lā, who has been in jail with the others because of the incident at the last wedding, apparently has not lost his job because of his jail experiences. He

showed me his card today indicating that he is still the representative of such-and-such an advertising firm in Sarakham. He was going to Roi-et on business today.

Horse-Killing

Yesterday another horse was killed in Khum Pāhāt. Mr. Phon apparently indicated to those in charge of the slaughter that we didn't like horse meat. Mr. Ngao is afraid to eat horse meat and says that BNT is known for eating horse meat.

Jane's Interviews

July 3, 1963

Feeding and Raising of Pigs

Spoke with girl from B. Khwaw who came to buy bran. At her house there are 20 pigs which her family sells in B. Khwaw. Twenty pigs eat 10 *thang* of bran per day, and 1 *thang* costs 1 baht. Also told me there are three rice-mills in B. Khwaw, but occasionally they all run out of bran to sell, as on today. Hence came here to get it. Brought along a water-cart to carry it in.

Cost of Rice

Girl also said 1 *thang* of *khaw niaw* (*khāw sān*) costs ฿25.00.

Activities at Store

Two boys on their way through BNT came and cooked themselves 3 sausages and a big whack of *khaw niaw* over Nuan's fire. These they wrapped in papaya leaves. For this they paid ฿2.00 (i.e. Mr. Ngao also sells cooked food, or provides a rented cook-out).

Mr. Ngao

Today Mr. Ngao has been away in the market all day to see about buying a sewing machine. Jane noticed that when Mr. Ngao is away, Nuan's mother is around much more.

Courting

Occasionally in the quiet of a night, one hears the music of a *khāēn*. This is some young swain entertaining his sweetheart. Often both will be in the company of other young people.

Contacts with Outside

One of the major contacts which villagers have with the immediate world around them is through conversations they have with people who come from surrounding villages to have their rice milled by Mr. Ngao, to sell charcoal, buy bran, etc. These people sit around talking with other people, particularly villagers and gossiping. The store really takes the place of the coffee shop in other parts of the world. Currently, the major bit of conversation concerns the American soldiers who are building the new school. And we are repeatedly asked to explain their habits.

People come bringing *haps* of paddy or they may come by *khwian* (1 *khwian* equals 10 *thang*) with straw for the oxen or buffaloes while they are waiting for rice to be milled.

One of the standard contacts with the outside world is through the buses which pass through on their way to Sarakham in the morning between 9-10:30 a.m. and which return between 4-5 in the afternoon. These buses are always full, and people often stop to drink water or the bus will stop to take on goods and passengers at the store. The cost of travelling one of these buses is ₭1 to the corners (often done for a cigarette), 33 to Sarakham. At the corners, one can catch a bus to Roi-et for ₭3-4 (bargaining is even done in this case). A bus to Sarakham can be got at the corners for ₭2.

Bān Nōng Tūn**July 3, 1963****Vehicular Transport Through BNT**

I had started keeping a record of vehicular transport passing through BNT, but made only the following notes:

DATE	TIME	TYPE OF VEHICLE	DIR	COMMENTS
25/6/63	8:30	Bus	N	Goes to Mahasarakham
”	9:40	Bus	N	”-----”
27/6/63	9:40	Bus	N	”-----”
”	9:45	”	N	”-----”
2/7/63	9:20	Bus	N	”-----”
”	9:35	Lorry carrying fine wood	N	”-----”
”	”	”-----”	N	”-----”
”	10:15	Bus	N	Goes to MS
”	11:40	Small bus	S	”-----”
”	11:45	Lorry	S	Empty
”	12:40	”	S	”
”	”	”	N	With wood
”	”	”	N	
”	4:30	Bus	S	
”	4:45	”	N	

Bān Nōng Tūn**July 4, 1963****Women and Travel**

Today a woman from Nōng kāē (the pond surrounded by a number of villages where the American army is encamped) said she had bought her *phāsin* in Bangkok where she had spent 15 days in visiting relatives. This woman had also lived in Khonkaen and Udorn. This is one of very few village women whom I have met who has gone on such long *pai thiaws*. She speaks Bangkok Thai to some extent. There is one woman in Khum Nōn who has been in Bangkok recently.

Bān Nōng Tūn

July 5, 1963

Rain-Making Ceremony

Yesterday Mr. Phon had said that an *ācān* would come and determine whether there would be a rain-making ceremony or not. Unfortunately the *ācān* was unable to come. If he had decided that a ceremony was necessary, then six boys and six girls equally matched as to size and weight would have had a tug-of-war. Another custom for bringing the late rains is to place a cat into a fish-holding basket and set it afloat on the water. The subsequent cries of the cat were supposed to make the *thewada* aware of their responsibility of sending rains.

Unfortunately rains began last night and so all hopes for any ceremonies were dispelled.

Wedding

This morning there was a wedding between a boy in KNKN and a girl in Bān Jāng - a village near the road leading to the place where the soldiers are working. The groom was สม ทัพนานี (Som Thapthānī) son of นายชม ทัพนานี (Chom Thapthānī) - Hse. No. 86. He is 21 years old. It is interesting that this is the same boy who was supposed to be married to another girl from KNKN on May 2nd (see May 2, page 2) but was sick on that day.

The bride is น.ศ. นาง (Nāng) who is 18 years old. The bride price was ฿816 (฿20 more than would have been paid if he had married the other girl).

There was no *sūkhwan* ceremony for the boy.

While we were visiting the house of the boy, several guests pressed us to go with the procession to the household of the girl. We were said now to be villagers of BNT and therefore should go. I will never forget the wedding for we walked some 2-3 miles in heavy rains and barefoot through wad and water to get to the house of the girl. There was little difference in this wedding and those we had observed in BNT.

Types of Mōlam

Yesterday we talked with Mr. Wichian concerning *mōlam*. He said there are several types of *mōlam* among which are the following:

1. หมอลำหมู่ (*mōlammū*):

หมอ (*mô*) - "performer, doer, one skilled in"

ลำ (*lam*) - "to sing"

หมู่ (*mū*) - "group"

Group of singers who perform "folk operas" with themes taken from the Ramakhian and other sources.

2. หมอลำกลอน (*môlamklôn*)

กลอน (*klôn*) - "rhyme, poetry"

Singing done in rhyme by 2 or 3 persons who use great play on words.

3. หมอลำผีฟ้า - (*môlamphīfā*)

ผีฟ้า (*phīfā*) - "sky spirits"

Dancing and singing done to exorcise or placate spirits who are causing illness.

Kasetsart University

Bangkhen, Bangkok

Thailand

5th July 1963

Dear Bif and Jean

Thank you so much for your comments on the first half of the Khonkaen study. We liked them so much that enclosed in the remainder of the study for your perusal! Hope you'll be interested, will send us opinions and we'll return the manuscript! – SOON *

We'll write you a proper letter and comment on your comments soon. Are now seeking (as ever) to get this to the mail.

Take care of yourselves. Don't get sick or get converted by the communists. How are you holding out against the offers of the children?

Best wishes from us both, Millard and Jancis

* Because we are hurrying to get the thing rewritten we'd readily like your comments within the next two weeks.

Activities Connected with the Beginning of Buddhist Lent - Village

This evening people in the village will take things to present to the priests for their use during lent. There won't be much other happenings because this is such a small population in the wat and no *ācān yai*.

Activities Connected with the Beginning of Buddhist Lent - Town

In town there will be more activities. The following is a translation of the schedule of events to be held today and tomorrow:

Schedule of Events

'*ātsālahabūchā* (อาสาฬหบูชา)¹ and *khawpurimphansā* (เข้าปฐมา)² 2506

Saturday, 6 July, 2506 ('*ātsālahabūchā*)

7:30 a.m. Presentation of morning meal to priests and novices; hearing of *Thammacakkappanawattanasūt* (ธรรมจักรกัปปวัตตสูตร)³ sermon

7:00 p.m. Procession of candles around *phra' upbasōt* (พระอุโบสถ)⁴ at Wat Mahachai and a competition among "worshipping" lanterns.

Sunday, 7 July, 2506 (*khawpurimphansā* "Candle" competition)

2:00 p.m. Donors from all wats process with candles to the area in front of Sālākāng, Changwat Mahasarakham for competition.

2:30 p.m. Committee judges the candle competition.

5:00 p.m. All donors and believers take flowers, incense and candles and present them to the monks in the wat.

(Signed) Mahasarakham municipality 17 June, 2506

¹ อาสฬห (อาสาฬหะ) "the eighth lunar month"

² เข้าปฐมา "to enter the Buddhist lent"

³ ธรรมจักรกัปปวัตตสูตร *Dhammacakkappavattana sutta* (see Finst p. 182)

⁴ พระอุโบสถ formal word for "temple"

[also associated with this schedule was a Pali script to be used by worshippers "presenting flowers, candles, and incense on the day of 'ātsālahabūchā']

(notes added later)

Mahasarakham

July 7, 1963

In Mahasarakham where we attended a *khaw phansā* ceremony at the *Sālā klāng*.

Mahasarakham

July 8, 1963

In Mahasarakham

Bangkok

July 9, 10, 11, 1963

Biff to Bangkok; returned by evening train on 11th.

Letter from July 8, 1963

477 Nakhon Sawan Road

Mahasarakham, Thailand

8 July, 1963

Dear Millard and Jancis,

I have read the other half of your report with great interest. I really think that your study will be very valuable and I hope that it gets a wider circulation than, just among a few interested specifically in northeastern development.

I do not have very many comments to make but I will make a few which struck me while I was reading the report. First, a couple of minor points:

1. In the section on "General Description" under the rubric of "communications" you say that the road between Banphai and Mahasarakham is laterite and not all-weather. It is in fact one of the best roads in the Northeast - maccadanized and completely usable (except when a bridge washes out) in all seasons.
2. In the section under "religion" you mention the two sects of Thai Buddhism. I think that the most usual spelling of these are Mahanikai or Mahanikaj and Thammayut.

I only have two other more lengthy comments:

1. With regard to demography, you might mention that research needs to be done on

attitudes towards a potential birth-control program as this is in current official opinion one of the best ways to reduce population growth and hold down the pressures on the land in the Northeast. You yourself made the same comments in your "Letter to the Editor" in the World. I have just begun to investigate this topic and I find a complete lack of knowledge on the part of the villager's not only as regards "the pill" and devices, but also as to the rhythm method.

2. You say under the section on attitudes that you think that villagers seem unaware of the greater economic possibilities of the Central Plains, the North, and the South and thus tend to migrate to better-off areas the Northeast. On the contrary, I think that most villagers are of the greater economic possibilities of these areas, and particularly of Bangkok. Madge found in the villages surrounding Ubon that some 30% of village men had engaged in work in Bangkok (primarily as *samlor* drivers). I have found that the majority of seasonal migration among men is to Bangkok (and occasionally to Vientiane). However, villagers are also aware of the higher cost of living in Bangkok and of the more impersonal relations there. They prefer the warmth of village relationships among people who speak the same language and have the same cultural patterns and thus are willing to migrate for a short period of time to Bangkok but not permanently. They might, on the other hand, be willing to migrate to somewhere else in the Northeast where they feel that they will find at least an approximation to the type of relationships which exist in their own village.

Jane and I are doing a pretty good job of avoiding major diseases and the communists though we are presently plagued by a company of American soldiers who are building a school and dam some 6 kilometers from our village (they are here as an aftermath to the SEATO exercise).

Again, let me say that I think that your report is excellent. I am anxiously awaiting a final draft. Best wishes to both of you and the short Longs.

Bān Nông Tūn

July 12, 1963

Returned to the village after 4 days in town and 3 days in Bangkok.

Death

The sister of Mr. Lā who lives in Khum wat had an infant child who died this week.

Rain-Making Ceremonies

The village had originally planned to have a ខេវ៉ុន (*khôfon*) or rain-calling ceremony on Tuesday and had sent Mr. Ngao to town to inform us of this. However, as I was away, they postponed it. But yesterday the farmers decided they had better hold the ceremony or the rains would never come. The ceremony is held on three successive nights and in all cases consists of a tug-of-war between young girls and young boys.

The "rope" for the tug-of-war consists of long tough vines attached to a mortar placed in the middle. The *môsuat* came and lighted some candles and placed some leaves and tobacco on this mortar and then chanted a few words.

The belief is that when the tug-of-war is held, if the girls win, the rains will come; if not the rains will be delayed. This evening there were four competitions held among gay hilarity. The girls won three - not without some help from some young men - and the men won the first trial. Another go will be held tomorrow.

Bān Nông Tūn

July 13, 1963

Mr. Ngao bought two female pigs, one for ₭200 and the other for ₭300.

Another tug-of-war was held in the wat in the evening. Mr. Sīhā didn't show up so the ceremony wasn't for real. Three times the device being pulled broke, too, so the thing was something of a farce.

Bān Nông Tūn

July 14, 1963

Lack of Rains and Concern About "Starvation"

This morning Mr. Phon was worrying out loud about the lack of rains. He said, though laughing about it (as Thais seem to do about all serious matters), that if the rains didn't come

soon people would have very poor crops and people would starve.

I have noticed that Mr. Ngao has been buying paddy. He will mill and sell this to people who have run out of rice before the next harvest. There are apparently quite a few people who have to buy rice.

In the evening the rather half-crazy barber was over and saying he was starving. Mr. Ngao says he doesn't make enough from barbering to feed himself and family. This I can believe. He was rather curtly treated by Mr. Ngao and Mr. Phon.

Attitudes Towards Food

This could really be said to be a subsistence economy insofar as food is concerned. So far as I can tell, the only time that any family in the village buys food is at a time of a major celebration. There is "hunting and gathering" used to supplement the diet - to provide the *kap khāw*. Women go to the fields to look for frogs, snails, insects, plants, fruits, all sorts of leaves, bamboo shoots. Men fish, hunt lizards, and this morning one person brought in a 6 foot snake he was planning to eat.

Food is an area over which we have to be careful lest we damage our "rapport". Our diet is so vastly much more expensive than standard diet that it sets us off immensely. People gather around to see what garbage Jane throws to the pigs, and should we have some meat or fruit which has gone bad so that we have had to throw them out there has been much consternation among the onlookers.

Even when the financial level of a family improves, diet usually does not. The only difference between Mr. Ngao's diet and that of other villagers is that occasionally when he goes to the market he may bring back some meat. He also does not like certain things gathered or hunted, such as snakes and rats.

Probably the worst and most humiliating status that a family can be in is that of having neither rice nor the means to obtain it. Such a person is without the pale of the economic system and has become dependent on others.

Village Leadership

Mr. Phon has been headman now for 15 years. He says he will remain headman until he dies and then the villagers will choose another headman. The villagers choose the headman, but

the headman chooses the assistant headman. The Kamnan is always the headman of Bān Khwaw. The present one has been Kamnan 3-4 years.

Co-operative Labor

Mr. Phon says that work on the school will begin very shortly. In this case, every household must contribute a member to help. As only 20 people can work per day, there will be a rotation among households.

Ideas About the Outside World

There certainly has been an effect among the villagers in their knowledge of the outside world with the coming of the SEATO forces and the engineering company. Today I overheard a conversation among a group of young men (late teenagers) with such things as: - "Is Japan among the SEATO countries?" (They thought not). "Why don't Filipinos speak Thai seeing they look like Thais?" (They have small brown bodies also). "What language is spoken in Japan?" (Thought maybe English), etc. The point here is not the question itself but the fact that names of foreign countries were being bandied around at all. There was discussion not only of these countries but also of Australia, France, etc. One person commented that Russia and Red China ("red" is used in Thai as well) are Communist countries.

Also there was considerable discussion of the antics of the Americans, with particular mention being made of negroes. Some villagers have picked up such words as "Hi" and "OK" though they don't know what they mean.

It must be pointed out that these impressions made by foreign troops on the villagers have not been organized systematically in the villagers' minds. Ideas of what and where other countries are are still vague in the extreme. Nonetheless, the existence of other peoples and different ways of life has been visually impressed on the villagers. And this awareness has stimulated a curiosity concerning the strange. Also I am myself aware that probably more knowledge about the ways of Westerners has come, insofar as the villagers are concerned, via Jane and me than it has through the casual contacts with the American troops.

More Tug-of-War

At night there was an even bigger "celebration" at the wat – many more people who again

came to participate in the tug-of-war in order to bring the rains. It certainly is great fun for the young people. This time the girls (with Jane's help) won 3 out of 4 goes.

Bān Nōng Tūn

July 15, 1963

Rapport Difficulties

Jane has just returned from the school and it seems that Mr. Bunthiang was rather huffy and said he hadn't seen me for some time. I think he is hurt because I have been going over there very little of late whereas I used to go nearly every day. Also I think he felt that ours was a special relationship and that I would spend far more time with him than the rest of the villagers.

Villages Which Bring Rice to be milled at Mr. Ngao's Mill

People from the following villages bring rice to be milled at Mr. Ngao's:

B. Nok Kradōk	B. Nōng Duk	B. Hua Nōng
B. Yāng	B. Khôk Nôi	B. Sua kin ngua
B. Ling	B. Nōng Kung	B. Khôk rai
B. Nam thiang	B. Mī	B. Dōn Dū

In addition some people from as far away as Mr. Ngao's village (Nōng Khā) in T. Thā tūm come to have rice milled.

Attitudes Towards Lack of Rice

A woman came here today to buy rice who said "it was necessary to buy rice because the rains hadn't come yet and there was no rice to eat." She also said Jane's helping on the tug-of-war last night should help bring rains.

Khāēn

In the afternoon Mr. Ngao and I went to B. Song Pluai to buy a *khāēn* which Mr. Ngao was having made for me. In the evening we had a regular "jam session" in the house which people came to demonstrate my *khāēn* and play the *phim* [*phīn*].

The rains came in the evening, so there was no tug-of-war.

Bān Nông Tūn

July 16, 1963

Mr. Ngao's Pig Sales

This morning Mr. Ngao sold a sow to B. Khwaw co-operative. He had had it for two years. It has had two litters of pigs, but the second batch was not very healthy so he decided to get rid of it. He received ₭600 for the pig for which he originally had paid ₭100.

Buddhism

Mr. Ngao says that the man in Khum Nōn (Mr. Khun Thapthānī) where we got *sattho* the other night, used to be the *ācān yāi* in the wat up until February or March of this year.

Mahasarakham

July 17, 1963 (Notes added later)

In town.

Bān Nông Tūn

July 18, 1963

Head of Household Questionnaire

Began the head of household questionnaire today. Mr. Wichian came out to help me begin it. It is interesting the sort of channels that were gone through in getting the groundwork laid. First we went to Mr. Thiang and Mr. W. explained the questionnaire to him. He in turn called a meeting of all the students and explained to them about the questionnaire and told them to inform their parents. He also explained that I was not an outsider coming in to the village, but a person whom everyone knows. We then went to talk with Khun Nôi about being my interviewing assistant and I agreed to give him ₭300 for helping with the whole questionnaire (Mr. Phon had some doubts about him because he thinks he doesn't read too well and also thought the amount of money a little high). I think that maybe I will have a little trouble with him at first and then it will be all right.

We also talked with Mr. Phon and he seemed quite receptive to the idea. In fact the first three people to whom the questionnaire was given seemed quite agreeable, - Mr. Phan (KPH), Mr. Phon and Mr. Ngao.

Several comments were made:

- (1) Mr. Thiang says he thinks some people have a gun but as they have it illegally, they will not answer this question. Mr. W. was more sanguine.
- (2) Mr. W. added Korat as another city where people sometimes go to live and work.
- (3) The question on how many years the person has studied brings the response of how many were spent in studying as opposed to the number of years of schooling completed.

Bān Nông Tūn

July 19, 1963

Education

Today we had lunch at the school. This came about as a result of a monthly program at the school where a special lunch is prepared for the students. Each student is supposed to donate 50 *satang*. The total amount is used to buy chickens and the other food to be made for the lunch (the children each bring their own rice). It is indicative of the poverty of some of the families in the village that only about 3/4 of the students participated on this occasion (it may also be a function of the time of the year when farmers have the least money).

Six chickens were bought for ₪5 each, i.e. at a big discount (in the market they sell for ₪12 and up – Jane Keyes). Khun Beng and Khun Buaphā made the food, consisting of *kai yang*, *kāēng phaet kai* and *kai tōm*. Only [see caveat sp.] the latter two were given to the students, the *kai yang* being saved especially for the teachers and ourselves. There are rough hewn picnic benches situated near the *bōt*. It was here that the students were served. The two watery dishes were mixed together and then placed in small bowls for 3 or 4 students to eat from. As mentioned before, the students had brought their own rice. As soon as the students were finished, we ate.

There were three students standing apart and not participating. It seems they forgot their rice or else had none to bring. Finally the teachers called to them and had them come over. They shared the rice of other students.

Educational Committee

The Educational Committee includes the following people:

นาย พร ทัพสุริย์	Mr. Phon Thapsuri (Headman)
นาย ดี พลขันธุ์	Mr. Dī Phonkhan

นาย ชาย สมพิทักษ์	Mr. Chāi Somphithak Asst. (Asst. Headman)
นาย มี ทัพสุริย์	Mr. Mī Thapsuri
นาย ลา ทัพสุริย์	Mr. Lā Thapsuri
นาย สม ทัพสุริย์	Mr. Som Thapsuri
นาย พมมา เศรษฐรักษา	Mr. Phonmā Sētraksā
นาย สอน เศรษฐรักษา	Mr. Sôn Sētraksā
นาย ดาว ทัพธานี	Mr. Dāw Thapthānī

Description of School

The school is located in the *sālā wat*, a building open on all four sides. In front of the *sālā* is a small enclosed ground (enclosed by a low fence) in the middle of which are planted flowers and plants (also houses the flag – Jane Keyes).

Desks for the students consist of low benches about a foot above the floor. These are about a foot wide and about three feet long. Behind each of these three and sometimes four students will kneel on the floor. The students come in with their papers, erasers and rulers wrapped in a *phākhomā* or a piece of rough cotton. These are placed underneath the low desks when the children are in class. The four grades are divided by woven bamboo partitions which can be removed (as can most of the rest of the school equipment) when the *sālā wat* needs to be used for other purposes. In the front of each "classroom" are a chair, a desk (rough hewn) and a fold-away blackboard. These are used by the teachers.

There are various posters, announcements, pictures etc. placed on the posts in the building. The most important of these is an assemblage of the following things placed on the centre post: a picture of the King below which are the national colors and below that a "shrine" with a glass statue of the Buddha and vases of false flowers on it. There are also a number of placards which always begin with "พุทธ โอวาท *phut 'ōrāt*" or "Buddha says" followed by several words in Pali (written in Thai orthography with certain special symbols) and then a Thai translation of a moral aphorism such as "As a person speaks, so he shall do". There are also several little wooden blue boards on which a snippet of a poem, again usually with a moral overtone, is written. There are two biological diagrams, one showing the internal organs and one about the teeth. There is also a small map of Thailand. In addition there are several pictures of

important buildings and wats in Thailand.

As one enters the school there is the major blackboard on which "Statistics concerning numbers of students at Wat Bān Nōng Tūn school" is written. This includes the number of students in each class and is supposed to include the daily statistics on the number of students who are sick, tardy, truant. It also includes the names of each teacher and which classes they are teaching.

There is also another major blackboard on which important announcements are written, - such as "Today is examination day" or "Today is *wai khurū* day". There is another board on which pictures from magazines are occasionally posted.

Bān Nōng Tūn

July 19, 1963 (Notes added later)

kai yang: correctly ไก่ย่าง - *kài yā:ng* in Thai; *kái ngjā:ng* in Lao

kāēng phaet kai แกงเผ็ดไก่ - *kāēng phèt kài* (Thai); *kāēng phet kái* (Lao)

kai tōm: ไก่ต้ม - *kài tōm* (Thai); *kái tōm* (Lao)

Illegal Children

Yesterday the girl that had a child by the son of Mr. Tāp (the boy who married very recently) was around. Jane said Mr. Ngao was teasing her mercilessly on how the child had no father and how the boy wouldn't marry her because she has got too thin and about her having trouble finding another husband. Jane said she seemed to take it all in good humor which is more than she could have done. Mr. Ngao said the indemnity paid for getting this girl pregnant was ฿ 12 because the girl's family is very poor (her father is dead). However, if she had come from a rich family, the indemnity might have been as high as ฿5,000. However, it would usually be about ฿1,000. He also said that bastard children are somewhat looked down on, but I doubt this and think he may have been expressing a personal opinion. However, such a child might be teased because the Thai show no regard in talking about others' disabilities.

Learning to Play *Khāēn*

For two days now, Khun Nin from Khum Wat has been over to teach me to play the *khāēn*. He must be finding it a hard job. He himself is one of the better players in the village and has played for two years.

Miscellaneous

Continued census today. Another tug-of-war rain requesting contest at the wat in the evening.

Bān Nōng Tūn

July 20, 1963

Tham Bun at House of Mr. Lā

[Notes added later: *Tham bun bān*: ทำบุญบ้าน in Lao, more usually เถาบุญเฮือน *ao bun hian*]

This morning there was a ceremony of *tham bun bān* and *sū khwan* at the house of Mr. Lā - the *nakleng* - in KPH. Many people from all over the village attended and partook of his food and *sātō*. Told that ceremony held in his house every year, always in the 8th month. Held to placate the ancestral spirits and to make the house, its inhabitants and visitors happy.

In an inner room the two priests and a novice were chanting. When this was finished, a bucket (or more properly a basket) of water in which a candle had been allowed to drip and a twig was stirred during the chanting and then was taken by one present and sprinkled on the rest of us present. Then the priests went to the four corners of the house. At each place they did as they had in the case of Mr. Ho's house, i.e. a collection of food on a small piece of bamboo was propped up on a stick. Then a string was attached to this to which the priests held. Then they chanted. When they had finished, a hole was dug at the base of the post and the food was deposited therein. This food was for the *phī bān*.

Also a string was taken and wrapped around the house. This functions somewhat similarly to the *phūkkhāēn* on a person's wrist - a tying of the *khwan* of the house.

Mr. Ngao says that Mr. Lā had this ceremony to get rid of the bad influences of having been arrested by the police and thrown in jail. A *tham bun bān* ceremony is held in order to ward off accidents throughout the year. Only richer people or people who feel the need because of extenuating circumstances (such as Mr. Ho because of the deaths in his household) have the ceremony because of the outlay in money for food and drink.

Today completed six more questionnaires. Spent part of the day in town.

Mahasarakham

20 July 1963 (Added later)

In Mahasarakham fired Tong Chan who had been working for us at Dreger's house. Hired Suphan & Co., Suphan being a former servant of the Dregers'.

Mahasarakham

July 21, 1963

In town.

Bān Nōng Tūn

July 22, 1963

Army and Village

On Saturday a group of soldiers along with John McClean came to the village to present 34 roughly made tables and chairs for the school (very roughly made indeed). Unfortunately I wasn't in the village when they arrived. On Sunday I went to the army camp and discovered that BNT had been selected as a result of a list which Mr. Wichian and I had prepared concerning what villages in Tambon Khwaw most needed things and which we had given to Lieut. McCarden, the man in charge of Civic Action for this area during the SEATO exercise. BNT had been at the top of the list.

I informed Mr. Ngao and Mr. Thiang that I had been more or less responsible for the getting of the desks. They appreciated the fact, and I don't think our rapport was at all injured by this situation. In fact Mr. Thiang was a little effusive, saying that I had contributed ฿500 for the school and had been responsible for getting the students' SEATO kits and the desks (not exactly true, but true in part).

On Friday there was a major ceremony at the new school ("Friendship School") in which the head of JUSMAG came up to officially turn the school over to the Changwat. There were rumors floating around the village that Sarit himself was coming (though this was not true). Even if it had been the case, I doubt that people would have shown much more interest - a real contrast to the interest taken in the Queen and King?

Khun Nin

This evening when Nin was teaching me on the *khāēn*, he played the "King's song". He

also knows the words. This is interesting as regards participation in national cultural traditions. It is also interesting that the *khāēn* with its uniqueness is used to play a Western-type melody.

Bān Nōng Tūn

July 23, 1963

Mr. Ngao and Bangkok

Last night we discussed with Mr. Ngao about his experiences in Bangkok. He spent two periods there, each of three years. The first one was when he was 18-21, and the second 23-26. When he went down he first found a job in a Chinese store at ฿250 a month, but as this was too little, he changed jobs and ended up working in a Chinese noodle and cracker making company. He started this job at ฿400 a month. He was also provided with board and room (room being a dormitory with another 12 or so workers). He worked a night shift (all the time he worked for the company) of 7-8 hours a night, 7 days a week, every day of the year except the three days of Chinese New Year's. By the time he left the second time, he was earning ฿700 a month. He said that some of the other workers were earning up to ฿1,200 a month for doing the same job, but "they were Chinese".

He got his first raise by a demonstration of honesty. One day he came across an open safe full of "piles" of hundred-baht notes. He reported this to the owner, who as a reward for his honesty raised him to ฿500 a month the next month.

At the end of his second stay he had saved ฿7,000. He said that he deprived himself of most luxuries, restricting himself, for example, to two cheap cigarettes a day.

He says that many people from the Northeast work for the Chinese because they make better salaries this way than they can in working in other unskilled labor jobs such as construction. This is particularly true of his village, Bān Nōng Khā, but not so true of BNT.

School

The school is presently closed for 45 days during the planting and transplanting. Khun Buaphā herself will help with the planting in her parents' fields in Bān Khwaw. Mr. Thiang says that when the school re-opens there will be a Buddhist *suat mon* at the school.

Bān Nông Tūn

July 24, 1963

Elections and Village

Last night Mr. Ngao described the last election that was held for legislative representatives before martial law came into effect. There were 19 candidates for three positions and every voter voted for just one candidate (the three with the most votes were the three who got the seats). Mr. Ngao said the villagers really enjoyed the campaigning for one candidate had free movies in town and another went around giving medicines for villages. When it came time to vote, Headman Phon said he thought to vote for such-and-such a candidate was best because he would most consider the needs of the villagers. Mr. Ngao said, however, that if one didn't agree, he wouldn't have to vote for the candidate Mr. Phon suggested.

The actual voting took place at Bān Khwaw. Here there were a number of boxes - a number corresponding to a candidate. People deposited pieces of paper in the box corresponding to the candidate of their choice. The candidate Mr. Phon had suggested came in second and thus was chosen as one of the representatives.

Nôi

Mr. Ngao was talking about Nôi's family last night. It seems his father is a bit of a ne'er-do-well. He used to own farm land but sold it for ready capital. Now he fishes, makes charcoal and makes bamboo walling to sell. He buys two liters of rice per day from Mr. Ngao to feed 5-6 people in the family.

Nôi has been married before, to a girl in Bān Khwaw. One day he came here and never returned to her. No one knows why. He now claims to be single. There apparently weren't any children.

Amount of Land Needed for Subsistence

Mr. Ngao says that for a family of 5-6 people, 12 *rai* of poor land or 5 *rai* of good land is needed to produce enough rice for the family throughout the year.

Radio Listening

This evening Mr. Ngao had Radio Peking on (in Lao). He says he doesn't like to listen for

too long because it is illegal to listen and he is afraid of the police.

Travelling Salesman

This morning a travelling medicine salesman came to the village. He set up a small table on which he placed two types of gaily decorated bottles and several types of packets of medicine. When a crowd had gathered (all women and children except the priests and ourselves) one of his assistants passed out free packets of a powder to be used for aches and pains. Then he gave his spiel on his medicines, explaining their use and told the people they could get a cheaper price here and now than they could get in the market. He then offered a combination of two bottles and two packets for a total of ₭15. However, at this point the crowd dispersed and he made no sales. He left shortly afterwards.

He himself was from Kalasin and the medicines were made in Yasothorn.

Work in Vientiane

Nôi says that when he worked in Vientiane, he made 70-80 *kip* a month (at that time 4 *kip* equaled 1 baht). He says that now inflation has got so bad that his sister is waiting until the *kip* is worth more before she returns from Vientiane.

I asked Nôi the other day if any of the many people who have been to Laos have ever been in the Lao army. He said there was no one, but that he himself could have joined if he had wanted to. He said there was a man from Bān Khwaw who is in the Lao Paratroopers.

The following information arose during my survey:

Birth Control

Mr. Chāi who has had 12 children (10 still living) says that having so many children is very difficult. "One must lose so much money to raise so many children". He is interested in using birth control methods.

Sickness

Three of Mr. Chāi's children were sick with a fever of some sort. I really fear for them.

Mr. Sīha

The *môsuat* says that he has been an "*ācān*" for 48 years. He studied with some other man in the village in the arts of this practice. He can read both Lao and Thai though he never studied in school.

Bān Nông Tūn

July 25, 1963

Rice Cycle

1. Preparing the fields: Sometime during the period of late May to mid July (depending on when the rains come) the men will go to the fields with a plough made of hand-hewn wood with a cutting edge made of rough iron made in Roi-et. This is done after the fields have been dampened by sufficient rains to make the earth moist. With their buffaloes they will do the first ploughing. After it has rained more, they will plough the fields a second time and they will harrow the fields. The harrow is entirely hand-made in the village.

2. Planting: First unshelled rice kernels are placed in a basket. These baskets are floated (soaked) for two days (one full day and an additional night) in a small pond such as the one near the wat. This is to let the rice germinate.

One field is prepared and diked to hold the rain water. The germinated rice seedlings are then planted broadcast in this field. They are planted very close together.

3. Transplanting: When the rice has grown to about a foot high, the villagers of both sexes and all ages go to the fields to pull up the rice seedlings. Before this can be done, however, sufficient rain must have fallen to fill the diked unplanted fields. The rice seedlings are pulled up in such a way that the roots remain intact. The seedlings are shaken free of dirt and mud and then tied in bundles. The villagers then put these bundles on a *hāp* stick and carry them to the unplanted fields, where there is a layer of fine mud covered by a thin layer of water. The seedlings are here transplanted.

Bān Nông Tūn

July 27, 1963

Smallpox Epidemic

Some 18 or 19 years ago, according to Mr. Ngao, there was a smallpox epidemic in this area. He said that something like 100 people died in Nông Khā alone. Many people abandoned their homes and went to live in makeshift houses in the fields to escape from the uncleanness of

their homes.

Death

An infant child died in the village yesterday. The mother was around this morning but I didn't know her.

Killing of Buffalo

This morning a buffalo of Mr. Tāp's was slaughtered and butchered. It seems that in the last few days this buffalo, an old one, has been chilled by the rain and so Mr. Tāp decided to have it killed. The meat was sold to various villagers.

Politics and Village

Mr. Ngao last evening expressed some opinions on various political personages in recent Thai history. He believes that Pridi along with several of his friends were responsible for the death of King Ananda. He was surprised to learn that Pridi was still alive and was in Red China, and was also somewhat surprised to hear that Phibun was in Japan. He had very strong feelings against General Phao whom he considered an evil person in no uncertain terms. He thinks it was good that General Sarit "seized power" before Phao did. He thinks Sarit is a good leader.

He again expressed his dislike for the Red Chinese because they are anti-American. He also said the situation in Laos is terribly confused, a really funny situation, he commented, that such a small country should have both a Communist and non-Communist government. He is unaware of the personages involved in the Lao struggle for power. He was quite surprised to learn that Cambodia was not a Communist country. Why is Thailand not friendly with Cambodia if she isn't Communist? He expressed the opinion that Khao Phra Wiharn probably should belong to the Khmers since it did belong to them in ancient times. (He was in Bangkok during the height of the Khao Phra Wiharn crisis).

Mr. Saw and *Môlammu*

Last evening Mr. Saw was over helping me learn about the *khāēn*. He said he learned his skills of *môlammū* director in BNT, though Mr. Ngao says he perfected his skills while living in his wife's home in Muang Phon. Mr. Ngao says that every village has its *môlammū* group.

Mahasarakham

July 27, 1963

Returned to Mahasarakham

Mahasarakham

July 28, 1963

In Mahasarakham. Lunched with Mrs. Chuanphit (ชวนพิศ) at the Teacher's College.

Mahasarakham

July 29, 1963

Made a trip to B. Phai.

Bān Nōng Tūn

July 30, 1963

Returned to village.

Rice Planting

In the fields today saw people of all ages pulling up the rice seedlings from the seedling plots to be replanted in other fields. The women and young girls will strike the plants against their foot in order to shake the earth loose. The men do it against their thighs. The seedlings are gathered in bunches to be transferred to other fields. When they are replanted, they are merely stuck into the mud at about foot intervals between each row and between each plant as well. I would guess that there is some correlation between how close the plants are and the goodness of the soil in which they are planted. People seemed to be enjoying themselves in the fields, and I didn't notice anyone working alone. Several houses I passed were completely closed up as everyone had gone to the fields. This sort of work must be done when there has been enough rain so that the rice seedlings can be stuck into the soft mud. This period is one of intense activity and people seem to be away from the house from early morning until almost sunset.

Local Alcoholic Beverages

When we were in the field yesterday, Nôi took me to drink some *sātō*. This was in a large clay pot which had been buried in a rice field dike, the top being covered with a cloth and then a small metal dish. When people want to drink this, they uncover the pot and scoop out the wine. I imagine there are several reasons why the rice wine is kept here:

- (1) it has to age several days (this particular wine is 10 plus days old);
- (2) in the fields the police are less likely to find it (the making of local brew being

illegal).

At dinner, Mr. Ngao arranged for us to buy a quart of *sātō* from a man for ฿1 (Jane's comment: "Where else in the world could one buy a bottle of wine for a nickel?") This was a most welcome addition to the meal.

Local Lottery

In the surrounding villages (and I understand throughout rural Thailand) a local version of the lottery is run. This is based on the national lottery in the following way: a person chooses a number of two digits (often chosen by taking a baht bill and choosing the last two numbers of the serial number). He pays for this choice (as yet I don't know how much) and more than one person may choose the same number. The purchasing of the numbers is done on the five days preceding the announcement of the winners of the national lottery. The winners are determined by the last two numbers of the winning numbers of the national lottery. The chances of winning in the local lottery are much higher (1 chance in 90) than in the national lottery, but, of course, the returns are much lower.

Mr. Lā is the local person in charge of the local lottery. Nôi is the seller of "tickets". Actually there are no tickets, but Nôi will write down the chosen number on a piece of paper along with the name of the purchaser. The buying of a local lottery ticket is called literally "The buying of a number" (ซื้อเลข). The local lottery is illegal and Nôi says that if he saw a policeman coming, he would have "to run very fast".

Bān Nōng Tūn

July 31, 1963

Education

I have been struck in making my household census with the high incidence of literacy. However, I noticed that Kingshill says in Ku Daeng that "most people over 38 years of age are illiterate". He made his study 10 years ago, so I would expect to find most people over 48 are illiterate, which is an approximation of what I do find. I think I would find similar comparisons in Kaufman.

Talked with Mr. Sīhā this afternoon and asked him if he could remember how long the school has been in BNT. He couldn't, but he said it wasn't here when he was a youth.