

Charles F. Keyes, Field Notebooks, Thailand

September 1 through September 17, 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 August 1963. No notes were written between September 17 and October 2, because Charles Keyes was traveling. This document is followed by notes written in Mahasarakham province in October 1963.

Bān Nōng Tūn

September 1, 1963

National Holiday

According to Mr. Ngao, who heard it on the radio, today is some sort of national day. There is no ceremony in the village, but some people were interested in listening to the speeches of the King and Queen on the radio.

Effects of Radio Advertising

Mr. Ngao bought a special health tonic called "Lion's Blood" (เลือดสิงห์) which costs B5 because he "heard it advertised on the radio so often". One thing that impressed him about the tonic was that it was invented by a doctor who studied medicine in Germany (or so the advertisement states). The association of a product with a foreign country is a ploy that is used greatly in Thailand.

Khaw Sāk Ceremony

Apparently the *khaw sāk* ceremony is a very important festival in this area. Today and tomorrow people go to visit relatives - especially son-in-laws living in different villages will go to visit parents and relatives in their home village. Mr. Ngao gives several reasons why visiting is donē (1) it is "customary" at the time of the *khaw sāk* ceremony; (2) people have been working in the fields and haven't had time to visit their relatives; (3) people want to go to get bananas and coco-nuts to use in making special foods which will be prepared tomorrow for the ceremony.

Today Mother Hâm has a young relative (about 16 years old) from Nông Duk staying or visiting. She specifically says, in connection with this young man's visit, that "on this day people go visiting to make merit and to think of everything (คิดทั้งหมด)".

Ethnic Conceptions

Mother Hâm was today talking to Jane about some Khā people who used to come here to trade. These people, she says, are very dark with teeth (ฟันดำ) and wear only loin cloths. She says that they have very dark knees (probably tattooed - Biff). They carry things on their backs and on their shoulders. She says they don't live in villages but "in the forest". She has only seen men, no women. (Mr. Ngao has never heard of them, so they apparently no longer come). They wear gold earrings. Interestingly, she says that they come from "the East". A few speak Lao, but most know only their own language. (I would guess from this description that they are similar, if not in fact, to the *phi thông lüang*.)

She pointed out that "dark" people are always ugly.

She also says that the Suai people "from the South" (Surin, Sisaket) come up sometimes "in search of rice because they don't have enough to eat". She also pointed out that these people are darker.

In the dry season some Thai-Khmer from the south of the Northeast come through in order to take their animals to That Phanom to the big fair there. They make their living by taking their elephants around and having people pay for rides. It apparently is a very colourful scene with the women in red *phasins*. These people also speak Lao. They are, she pointed out, also darker.

Jane asked her if she considered herself Thai or Lao and she was a little taken aback by the question. She finally answered by saying that "people in the Northeast are Lao".

Bān Nông Tùn

September 2, 1963

Thôt Thian

Last night the priests, young people (particularly girls) and a scattering of old people paid a return visit to Bān Nông Duk, the village that held the *thôt thian* ceremony in BNT a few nights back. One of the reasons that this particular night was chosen was that there was a big

celebration with cinema being held last night. The reason for the festivities is that today is the opening of school day, and there is to be a major ceremony at the "Friendship School" - the school built by the American Army. The group did not return from the village (they left about 8:30) until after 1 a.m.

Preparations for *Khāw Sāk* Ceremony

Today has had a really festive nature. For the first time since rice-planting began, people have been at home - except for those who have gone on short *pai thiaw*. The main occupation throughout the day has been the making of various glutinous rice sweets *en famille*. The atmosphere reminded me of my family's making of popcorn balls at Christmas time. We have been involved with "our" family - namely Mr. Ngao, Nuan, and Nuan's family. They have been, with Jane pitching in, making three types of goodies: *khāw tōm*, *khāw nôm* (like for the *pradap din* ceremony) and *khāw tōm phat*. All these take quite some time to prepare and have required the buying of coconuts and bananas. I think that the children of the village must truly get ill on all the sweets they have eaten. And the kids are in fact complaining of stomach pains.

Mr. Ngao as a Money Lender

Mr. Ngao went to Sarakham this afternoon. He mentioned that among other things he was going because it was the first of the month and he wished to collect some money which he had lent to some teacher at 10 per cent per month interest.

Bān Nōng Tūn

September 3-6, 1963

Local Health Practices

This morning the headman was over and said that he has had a stomachache for several days. I asked him what medicine he used. He said he didn't use medicine but only local remedies (ยาพื้นบ้าน — *yā phün bān*). I asked him where he got the medicine and he said from the "doctor" (*mô*), who turns out to be Mr. Saw, the *môlammū* director.

Castration of Pigs

Mr. Ngao had three pigs castrated this morning - the big boar and two smaller pigs. A "doctor" came from another village to do this. Mr. Ngao paid him B5 apiece (total B15) for the work. He also took the testicles.

Education

Today went over to the school which had opened today (official opening of the school was yesterday) but the teachers had to go to a meeting of the teachers from the amphōe and so school didn't open today. The teachers were busy poring over records at the school, including which was another book of registration of students prior to the one I had already seen and copied. In one book, the Headmaster's "Diary", Mr. Thiang had copied a brief history of the school. The first sentence of this book gives the date of the official founding of the school:

"The school (at wat BNT) was established on the 1st of February, 1934". (โรงเรียนได้ตั้งขึ้นเมื่อ ๑ กุมภาพันธ์ พ.ศ. ๒๔๗๗)

(Notes added later.)

3 September 1963

Returned to Mahasarakham.

4 Sept.

In MK.

5 Sept.

In MK.

6 Sept.

In MK.

Bān Nōng Tūn

September 6, 1963

Khāw Sāk Ceremony

The *khāw sāk* ceremony was held in the village on the 3rd. Today I talked with Mr. Wichian concerning the ceremony and so will combine the two notes.

Meaning and Function of the Ceremony

There actually seem to be several functions connected with this ceremony. All these functions stem from the basic idea of feeding supernatural beings. The ceremony is called บุญข้าวสาก (*bun khāw sāk*) in Lao and พิธีวันสารท (*phithīwansāt*). The official government dictionary defines สารท (*sāt*) as "concerning or born in the autumn; festival season at the end of the 10th (lunar) month" (พจนานุกรม ฉบับราชบัณฑิตยสถาน, p. 906). The Pali word for this is สารท (*saratha*) and the Sanskrit is สารท (*sārt*). In the Modern Standard Thai-English Dictionary (p. 1343), the word is defined as "autumn; autumnal merit-making ceremony". I had never heard of the ceremony and can find no references to it in any of the literature on village life in the Central Plains. However, many people up here believe that it is a ceremony held all over Thailand. Everyone agrees on the fact that it is a ceremony of Brahmic origin. The linguistic indications would support this idea. What I don't understand linguistically is why the name of the ceremony in Thai is based on the word สารท (*sāt*) and yet this word is said to be the same word as สาก (*sāk*) in Lao. Why does the /t/ change to a /k/?

One story that is told as the reason for the ceremony was given to me by Mr. Wichian. He says that some of the souls (วิญญาณ — *winyān*) of dead ancestors (ผีเสื้อ — *phīsūa* in Lao; บรรพบุรุษ — *bapburut* in Thai) have gone to hell (นรก *narok*). One day a year the king of hell allows the spirits to return to the earth. If the descendants take the opportunity to present food and gifts on that day, the ancestors will be able to accept them. This one day of the year is at the time of *khāw sāk*.

This ceremony is also connected with the rice-cycle. It is held at a time of the year when the rice is mostly all planted and people are now waiting for it to grow and ripen. Mr. BT, the headmaster, says that the ceremony is held to "make the rice grow". The people, he continued, make merit which they transfer to the gods, benevolent spirits in the hopes that they in turn will assist in the rice growing process. Mr. Thiang confirms this and says that food and "merit" is presented to the spirits of all growing plants, - trees, rice, etc. - so that they will grow well. These

things are also presented to the "spirit of the Earth" พระแม่นางธรณี (*phra' māē nāng thoranī*) for her help in the rice process.

I asked Mr. Wichian to explain the difference between this ceremony and the ceremony of ประดับดิน (*pradap din*) which had been held a fortnight before (but in the 9th month), and which seemed to me to be for the same purpose. He said he wasn't certain, but *pradap din* was "a smaller ceremony".

The day on which the ceremony was held was *wan phra'* and was the 15th day of the waxing of the moon (i.e. full moon) of the 10th month. People had prepared not only the special rice foods, but also other foods as well, so that the ceremony was certainly a feast day.

The Events

1. Feeding of the Priests at Morning Meal

In the morning, the priests were fed as usual in the *kuthī* by having people take food to them. However, there were many more people and much more food than on an ordinary day or even on any other *wan phra'*. Jane went with Nuan to present food to the monks. The following is her report of what took place.

"Went to wat with Nuan to *liang phra'*. We each took a trayful of food, hers consisting of a bowl of *kāēng kai* some *khaw tōm*, *khaw nōm*, cigarettes, betel, white flowers and *khaw niaw*; mine of *khaw niaw*, omelette stuffed with pepper beef, a separate bowl of peppered beef with more water, onions and chillies to make it like a *kāēng*, also *khaw tōm* which Nuan had donated. We carried the trays up on our shoulders and took them over to the wat, depositing them at the foot of the central section of the *kuthī*. There was one old woman there (grandmother of the illegitimate child) tending plates of other food which had been brought by earlier arrivals. The novice and the old woman took the food from our trays, but left a little rice on each. After we had taken leave of the priests (we did not wait till they had eaten, unlike at lunch), we took the rice over to the wat grounds and each deposited a small piece on the *thāts* of Nuan's maternal grandparents and that of the headman's father (also a relation). The headman's father has a very tall *thāt* to the right of the steps leading to the wat grounds. It is decorated with a mirror, as is that of the headman's mother."

2. Main Ceremony

About 10:15 Mr. Sīhā, the *mōsuat*, went to the *kuthī* and struck the big drum there. Shortly afterwards women bearing baskets and accompanied by their children began to arrive also. They went to the centre room and on to the porch of the *kuthī*. There were very few men present throughout the ceremony, and all totalled there were only seven (other than myself and the priests). These included Mr. Sīhā, Mr. Sôn (father of the head priest), and later Mr. Tāp (the *khaocam*). The reason given several times was that only women came because men had to work in the fields. It was deemed important only that there be a representative of every family at the ceremony. And certainly all the women with their children made quite an impressive gathering and was one of the largest gatherings I have witnessed since coming to BNT.

The women brought the following types of items:

1. paired banana leaf containers, one full of food, the other of betel and tobacco.
2. *khaw niaw*
3. rice sweeties including *khaw tōm* and *khaw nōm*.
4. candles and flowers or flowers and leaves
5. food such as curries, broiled fish, etc.
6. bottles of water.

Some of these were taken by a woman in the centre of the room and divided into categories according to type. Some of the men also helped in this sorting, but the one woman did most of the work. The items that were taken and placed in separate containers were especially items 1, 3, 4 above. People also retained some of these items in their own baskets. When I first arrived, the priests were not present, but their mattresses were arranged in the back of the room in front of the altar. Finally the priests entered. They had been newly shaved for the day. They took their places on their mattresses. In front of them were placed various curries, rice in their bowls, with one bowl being filled with sweeties, and other food. In front of this an array and facing the priests was the row of seven men. Then behind them were the women.

The *mōsuat*, old Mr. Sīhā, started chanting. Then he took a water tray in which were placed flowers and candles. He presented these to the head priest who indicated his acceptance by touching the bowl. This chanting and presentation, it was pointed out to me by one man, was

the (*khô sin*), - the "requesting of the precepts". When this request had been made, the precepts were chanted by the priests and repeated by the laity with Mr. Sīhā acting as lay leader.

When this was finished, the big baskets of items which had been divided beforehand were brought forward. Then there was the chanting of presentation by the laity. Then these baskets were presented to the head priest who touched them. The baskets were then taken away and redistributed among the women. The priests then began to eat what had been previously placed in front of them. Some big containers of the rice sweeties were taken away and placed in another room where they could be kept for the morrow.

The women took their baskets and went around the wat grounds placing offerings on the *thāt* of the ancestors, at the base of certain Bo trees, and on the fences. At the base of the *thāt* the women would place open bundles of food, tobacco and betel. Then they took their bottles of water oil and slowly poured the liquid on the ground near the offerings. This pouring, according to Mr. BT, is called หยาดน้ำ (*yāt nām* - lit. "to dribble water") or หยาดน้ำมาทาน (*yāt nām mā thān* - lit. "alms giving water") according to Mr. Wichian. This is done in order to transfer the merit made in presenting food to the monks and in listening to the precepts to the ancestral spirits.

Some people told me that food and these items would be taken to be given to the spirits in the fields. Francis Cripps who had observed the ceremony at the larger wat at Bān Sīsawat (near Maha Sarakham's Teachers' College) had observed that women came during the sermon and collected the already made offerings in the wat grounds to take and present them in the fields. The monks said that this wasn't quite right. Incidentally, at the ceremony he observed, only the small banana leaf packets attached in pairs - one containing food (of everyday variety) and the other containing betel and tobacco - were used as offerings to the spirits. The special rice sweeties were all consumed by the people themselves or else given to the monks.

When all the presentations had been made in the wat grounds, the participants (but not all) returned to the *kuthī* to request and listen to a sermon by the head priest. The *mōsuat* was the one who ritually requested the sermon. The head priest read the sermon from a book. Francis Cripps said that at Wat Sisawat the head priest preached a sermon on "the spirits being allowed to come from Hell" theme. I am afraid that I didn't understand the sermon given at BNT - partially, because there was so much noise with people talking that it wasn't possible to hear. It would seem that what Kingshill has said is true - only the fact of "listening" to a sermon is important, and that "understanding" is not important. When the sermon was over, the priests

chanted and when they reached a certain point, water was slowly poured through the cracks in the floor by one man with a scoop. This is always done in *thambun* ceremonies and is done to notify *phra' māē nāng thoranī* of the proceedings.

Money had been collected during the whole affair - most people donating about 50 satang. When the chanting was over, the money was divided up and given to each of the priests and the novice.

Other people, though only a fraction of the participants, were also eating in the *kuthī*. We ourselves were encouraged to eat (sweeties, toasted fish, rice) or else we wouldn't make merit. I think there is a particular significance attached to the special foods made for this ceremony – the *khāw tōm* (and/or *khāw tōm phat*) and the *khāw nōm* (called *khāw sak* in Lao). Both are made from *khāw niaw* and both are thought to be special treats. Since one of the purposes of the ceremony is to make the rice, which is glutinous, to grow well, it would seem that there might be something to the idea that the spirits on seeing what delectable things can be made from the rice would be more prone to helping the rice grow.

3. Mr. Ngao's Private Ceremony

Because Mr. Ngao is not a rice-farmer, but has a special relationship to the rice, he held a private little ceremony in the rice mill. He took two plates of offering plus candles and put them on the two major parts of the rice mill - the mill itself and the engine. These plates contained incense, *khāw tōm phat*, cookies (from the store), flowers and a bit of canned fish, two cigarettes, two chews of prepared betel, rice, meat, egg, colored paper. Two candles (called "egg candles") were placed beside each plate. When he had placed these on each piece of machinery, he lit the candles, the incense, the cigarettes. He then repeated the "I take refuge in ..." and asked the spirits to come and bless the mill, make the equipment run properly, make the mill popular and help make lots of money. He said that he was worshipping (*būchā*), *thēwadā* (บูชาเทวดา) *phra' māē nāng thoranī* and the three elements of the Buddhist trinity, the Buddha (พุทธ *phut*), the Dharma (ธรรม — *thām*) and the Sangha (สังฆ์ *sang*). He says that he does this ceremony every year. He also says that he has seen the Chinese do the same sort of thing at their rice mills.

Buat Hā

Mr. Wichian says that when a close relative of a recently deceased person enters the monkhood for a short time (sometimes less than a day) to make merit for the deceased this is called บวดหา (*buat hā*).

A Person Knowledgeable About Northeastern Custom

Mr. Wichian says that the abbot of B. Iat, near B. Khwaw, knows much about Northeastern customs and ceremonies.

Maharakham

September 7, 1963

Conversation with Francis Cripps

I was talking with Francis Cripps today. He says that in Amphoe Caturaphakphimān (อ. จตุรพักตรพิมาน), there is a village called B. Müang Hon. (บ. เมืองหงษ์) which has a wat which was registered in R.S. 1 (1st year of the Bangkok Era). Very old *bōt* - probably Khmer. He suspects that the village, which is very large having over 400 houses, was probably originally a Khmer town. He says that there are a number of interesting artefacts in the *bōt* including some old *bāilān*. The villagers are planning to pull down the *bōt* in a couple of years time to build a new one.

This whole amphōe (Catu) is on high ground, and Francis suspects that the whole area was a Khmer stronghold. There are many ruins in the area (in the village of a student from the Teacher's College - Sangnga - there are very old ruins of a *bōt* with an interesting Buddha statue.

(Notes added later.)

Attended going away party for John McLean field at house of Peace Corps girls.

Bān Nōng Tūn

September 8, 1963

Material culture and culture change

I was thinking the other day that a good little illustration of cultural change as regards material culture could be made of tracing the history of various lighting mechanisms in BNT. For

example, there are a variety of devices still used in the village, but some have lost a prominent place and others are gaining greater prominence. The following lighting mechanisms now exist: (1) brush torch; (2) kerosene wick lamps which are sometimes placed into "mailbox" containers to make torches of them; (3) electric torches; (4) candles; (5) hurricane lamps. There are also other things such as the resins which are used to light fires and matches.

Not only has the type of lighting mechanism changed, but how they are constructed has also changed. For example, the introduction of matches, kerosene, and gasoline. These have replaced the local resins and saps which come from such trees as what is known locally as "rubber" trees.

Bun Khāw Sāk

Last night we had Mr. Chūnchai and Mr. Čharōen to dinner. They said that there are two *wat pā* (Thammayut) in Mahasarakham.

I was also trying to get at the origin of the word *khāw sāk* (ข้าวสาร) and why it differs from the word *sāt* (สารท) which is the equivalent in Thai. They said that they thought that the word *sāk* (สาร) is the word for 'pestle' because of having to use a large mortar and pestle to make the paste for the *khāwtôm* (ข้าวต้ม). They also brought up the word *salāk* (สาราก) in this connection, but I didn't quite follow them in their discussion.

September 9-10, 1963

(Notes added later)

9 September 1963

In Mahasarakham

10 Sept.

In MK.

Travelling Cloth Salesmen

Today a group of about 10 young men who sell cloth came to the village to peddle their wares and to spend the night. Most of this group originally comes from Nakhon Phanom or That Phanom. I doubt that any of them is much over 25-30. We talked with one young man whose home is That Phanom. He says that these particular goods he has come from a store in Khon Khaen. He has travelled all over the Northeast from Ubon to Korat to Udorn, etc. They never travel by bus, but always by foot. He apparently has never been to the Central Plains, but has been to Thaket, Savannakhet and worked for an ice-making company in Vientiane. He says he used to go across to Savannakhet by means of his own boat. These young men stay in the wats (courtesy of the priests) in the villages they visit. I wasn't quite certain how they get their food, but probably buy it from villagers. They have been on the road on this particular trip now for something over a month. They won't return to Nakhon Phanom for another six months. These young men certainly have the opportunity to bring news "to people from all over the Northeast. And Jane pointed out that they would make ideal Communist agents. However, my impression was that they were barely tolerated by the villagers. This was probably partially because of their youth.

Religion

In the Northeast, at least in the villages, women can't enter the *bōt*.

Status Terminology

There are a number of terms which are used as titles and which indicate certain acquired statuses. This evening I discussed some of these terms with Mr. Ngao.

1. *cān* (จารย์):

Mr. Ngao says that this term particularly applies to people who have been in the monkhood long enough to have had the *hōt phō'* (Lao) ceremony performed for them. (This was the ceremony we observed at Ban Mi at the time of *Songkrān*). I asked if people who were *mōsuat*, *mōtham*, *mōsūkhwan*, etc. also had this term. He said they often do but not because of this knowledge, but because of their length of stay in the monkhood. During their long stay, however, many of these men acquired these specialized knowledges.

2. *thit* (ทิต):

This is a title for one who has once been a monk, but was not in the monkhood long enough to receive the title of *cān*.

3. *chiang* (Thai); *siang* (Lao) (ເຢິງ / ເຢິງ):

This is a title for one who has been a novice, but never a monk.

4. *tā* (ตา);

This is a title used for a no longer young man, usually married, who has never had any religious experience as a monk/novice.

5. *cam* (จ๋ำ) (Lao only):

This title is given to the *khaocām* — the village's representative to the patron god. In this case the incumbent, Mr. Tāp, has never been in the monkhood and so this is obviously not a criterion for the position.

6. *phra*'(T); *phā*'(L); (พระ):

A person who is now a priest. Usually used for a term of reference rather than a term of address.

7. *‘ācān* (T and L) (อาจารย์):

This term is susceptible to a variety of interpretations, depending on the situation in which one is. In Mahasarakham the term is used for teachers at the Teachers' College. In Bangkok it is used for professors at Chula. However, it has a much wider usage than the English word "professor". In the village setting one hears the term applied to priests, particularly head priests. If the priest is an old and respected "abbot" (*sōmphā:n*) he will be called *ācān yai*. I have also heard this title ascribed to others with extensive specialized knowledge such as one renowned for his Brahministic skills or one who is a major teacher of *mōlam mū*.

8. *khū bā* (L. only) (ครูบา):

This term means roughly the same thing as *‘ācān* in the Lao village setting. Priests are often called (reference and address) *khū bā*.

9. *khūrū* (T); *khū* (L); (ครู):

This term can be translated as "teacher". In the village setting, the term as a title (though other people may be "teachers" of some skill or other) is reserved almost exclusively for the teachers of the village school (except in the combined form above in number 8). If the individual concerned is headmaster, he will be called *khṛū yai*, but will be called *khṛū* so-and-so.

10. *phūyai* (T) , *phūnyai* (L), (ผู้ใหญ่):

The headman of a village is called *phuyai bān* (lit. "big man of the village"), but carries the title *phuyai* in front of his name. Thus Mr. Phon, the headman of ENT, is addressed as *phūn yai phon* (1) - lit. "Big man Phon".

There are other statuses as well, as, for example, *phūchui phūyai bān chāi* (T), or "the assistant headman Chāi ", but though this is a specific status, there is no title of address carried with it. A lay person who has considerable knowledge as to Buddhism is known as a นักพรานณ์ (*nak prāt* - T.) but again there is no special title. The term (*mô*), usually translated as "doctor", is a special case. A person who is called *mô* may be a herbal doctor, a specialist in Brahmanistic or animistic practices, or a variety of other things. Though there are a number of people in the village who have such knowledge and are *mô sūkhwan* (like *mô Sthā*) etc., I have never heard them called *mô* so-and-so. The one individual who has some knowledge as to herbal medicines, Mr. Saw, doesn't know enough, according to Mr. Ngao, to be classified as a *mô*.

Leaving-of-Lent Ceremony

Mr. Ngao says that the headman has decided to have a *kôm fai* contest on the "leaving-of-lent" day. He thinks that there will be about 50 competitors. I think that this is being done partially for our sakes. Mr. Ngao was waxing quite eloquently on the beauty and largeness of this ceremony in Thātum.

Mr. Ngao - Personal

When we left the village last week, Nuan was very ill with "stomach pains". It turns out, on our return, that she has had a miscarriage (2nd month).

Clothing

We learned today that there are a variety of styles of *phāsin* amongst them being: (1) Chiangmai; (2) *phün müang*; (3) *phamā* (Burmese); (4) Lao; (5) *thai yai*; (6) Thai. The term used for style was *lāi* (หลาย).

There are three kinds of *phākhawmā*, distinguished by the size of the checks, - small, medium and large.

The cloth which one sees women wearing across the shoulder in the wat is called *phā sawiang bā* (ผ้าสวียงบ่า) in Thai and *phā biang bāi* (ผ้า เบียง บ้าย) in Lao. This cloth is two metres long. Usually it is white, but old women sometimes wear black. Since it is necessary to keep the white clean, it symbolizes a pure heart. One also sees silk ones of many colors.

Religion

I asked Mr. Ngao if Nāi Sīhā was the "lay leader" because I saw him usually leading the laity in chanting and in "requesting the precepts". Ngao said that anybody could be lay leader provided he knows the chants and doesn't "make mistakes". In actual fact deference is always paid to the senior male present and since Mr. Sīhā is probably the most knowledgeable with regard to religion (and is the head of the wat committee, I think), he would always take precedence over anyone else.

I asked Mr. Ngao about the wat committee. He couldn't remember who all were members, but told a bit about it. It is usually made up of older males who have had considerable religious experience (though not always because the headman is a member and he has never been priest or novice). Membership is apparently decided by the committee itself, and is not chosen by the whole village. Mr. Ngao said that he was rather surprised to find how inactive the committee in BNT is after coming from Nōng Khā where the committee often met once or twice a week.

Village Leadership

There is no name for the "village council". Membership is open to any male who wants to attend, and since the meetings are always for a specific reason (never for making general policy), those who are interested or concerned will be the ones who will attend.

I asked Mr. Ngao if Mr. Phon's son will succeed Mr. Phon as headman. Mr. Ngao said he didn't know but that there were many people in the village such as Mr. Sôn (KNKN), Mr. Chāi (the assistant headman), Mr. Sôm (brother of Mr. Phon from KNKN) who could be headman. He said that in Nông Khā the successive head men are usually not related.

Bān Nông Tūn

September 12, 1963

Night-Time Activities

Last night we saw a large number of men go by with the torches that look like mail boxes. These men were going to catch fish - a fairly normal practice at night time during the rainy season.

Education

I sometimes truly wonder how the students at the school ever learn anything at all. When I went to the school this morning, I found Mr. BT on his own. Khun Buaphā was in town taking some sort of exam, and Khun Beng had been delayed in arriving for some reason (she arrived later at about 12:00 noon). When I arrived, Mr. BT dismissed what few students there were left (some had gone to Bān Khwaw to get the big tar drums which would be turned into water storage tanks and some were already in search of fertilizer) to go collect fertilizer for the plants in the school plot and for the school's jute crop. I guess that Khun Beng was supervising the students bringing the drums from B.K. (these they pushed). Later Mr. BT went to work on the drums in trying to fix them up. And finally all went to work in the jute field. In other words no studying was done today.

I worked today on some educational records in the village which date back to the founding of the school. Some general points I got from these statistics were that 29 years ago, T. Khwaw was in *amphoē talāt* (อ. ตลาด) and BNT was village number 20 of T. Khwaw (this means that there were more villages in the tambon than there are now).

Legends Concerning the Northeast

Last night Mr. Ngao was telling some of the legends of the Northeast including the story of the origin of the *bông fai* ceremony. This in essence was the same story as Mr. Wichian had

told mē That a Prince Khǒm (พระยาขอม) had a very lovely daughter named ‘ai (นางไอ่). In order to choose between her suitors, he held a contest for surrounding princes to make *bông fai*, and whosoever went the highest would win her hand. He also mentioned in conjunction with this story that *phrayā: khôm* lived in a town in Sakon Nakhon and that princes from Chiang Hian (now B. Chiang Hian in T. Khwaw) and Myang Sī Khaew (now B. Sī Khaew in Roi-et) were cities from whence princes came to compete. This morning he pointed out this story was being told by some *môlam* players on the radio. Thus the legend exists in the *môlam* series.

Ngao says that a Mr. Sān who lives in B. Khwaw is particularly skilled in telling the legends of this area.

Bān Nôṅ Tūn **September 13, 1963**

Phithī Thôt Khāw Sān

During Lent BNT will go at nights to neighboring wats, and neighboring villages will come to wat BNT to participate in a ceremony called ทอดข้าวสาร *Thôt khāw sān* (lit. "to throw away - give - milled rice") or ทอดเทียน *Thôt thian* ("to throw away - give - candles"). (See August 31, 1963 for previous mention.)

Last night BNT villagers went to B. Dôn mayā (alternatively known as B. Nôi, B. Māk yā, etc.). We went about 8:30 - 9:00. The group was composed of the three priests (who always went on these events) and primarily teenagers and young people. Included in the group were Mr. Ngao, Nin, the sister of Bunyang, Bunsuk, the daughter of the headman, Nôi and others. The procession was quite colourful as we wandered across the fields (walking on the dykes) with two hurricane lanterns, Nin playing on the *khāēn*, someone else playing on a harmonica, and one boy striking a large bronze cymbal. This last instrument is a perfect replica of a Dong San drum. The priests said that it was pure gold (it is called a "gold drum" – กลองทอง - [did they perhaps mean *thong dāēng* - Jane], and that it cost B1300-1400. The most essential thing which was carried in the procession was a basket half filled with milled rice and with tobacco laid on top of the rice.

After walking through the field, wading across the "river" and climbing up a hill, we reached the village. Everyone was obviously asleep and "not a creature was stirring". We went to the wat, which is quite new and has only a *kuthī*. There some of the young men went and struck

the drum which is used to call villagers together. After a while a few people appeared, but they didn't mingle much with BNT villagers. Then a couple of drums, like elongated bongo drums, were brought out from this wat. With the drums being played, the cymbal being struck, the *khāēn* and harmonica being played, and everyone else keeping time to the music by clapping, we processed around the *kuthī* being led by the priests from BNT, four times. While we were doing this some villagers from B. Dôn mayā (บ.ดอนมะฮ้ำ) went up into the *kuthī*. The priests from BNT went to sit with the priests from that village. The group from BNT sat in front of the priests. While there were a few villagers from that village (the headman for one) sitting with us, most others were in an inner room watching through the doorway. The ceremony was obviously one between BNT villagers and the priests of the visited wat. There were incidentally two priests, - an older man and a young man.

A great deal of amused commotion and discussion followed. I later learned that either a young girl or older man was supposed to lead the presentation of the rice to the monks. However, there was no older man, and the young girls were too shy. Thus Mr. Ngao finally decided to lead. We started out by *krāp* three times. Then Mr. Ngao led us in a "I take refuge in ..." etc., following which flowers in a scoop were presented to the monks. Then some more discussion followed as Mr. Ngao didn't know the proper chant. Finally Bunsuk led the chant. Then Mr. Ngao lifted the basket of rice and tobacco and presented it to the monks. The monks from the visited wat then chanted a "thank you" during which water was poured through the crack in the floor as usual. When this chanting was over, people relaxed a bit and talked among themselves. Then someone requested that the head priest of the visited wat give a "sermon". He agreed and finally began delivering a "sermon" in a singing voice that was a cross between a cantor and a *môlam* singer.

The head monk here is very famous for being able to predict the lottery/ numbers. So someone asked him to figure out what would be the next number. He wrote on the floor, with chalk, several things - part words part numbers. It was a bit Delphic oraclish in that he didn't fully commit himself to one answer, more or less letting people draw their own conclusion from what he wrote.

Finally we *krāpped* again three times and returned home.

Today, in talking with Mr, Ngao about the meaning of the ceremony, he said that in olden times during the rainy season people used to do this ceremony because monks didn't have

enough rice. But now they just continue doing it because that is the custom. Candles can be presented to the monks as well as rice.

Headman's Illness

The headman was around today and said that he still has stomach pains. He said if they don't clear up soon, he will go to the hospital. From what I can gather, his trouble is part muscular because twice the pains have been set off by straining in pulling an ox on a tether. However, he also has diarrhea and is off his food.

Bān Nông Tūn

September 14, 1963

Thôt Khāw Sān

Today a group of young villagers from B. Dôn dū came to *thôt khāw sān* or *thôt thian* BNT. There were some variations on what I saw the other night other than the fact they came during the day. The villagers (from B.D.D.) processed around the *sālā wat* instead of around the *kuthī* as we had done at B. mayā (where there is no *sālā*). The group came about 11:00, and so the monks had to be fed first. The food was presented by women from BNT who prepared things in the *kuthī*. When the monks were finished, all the guests from both B.D.D. and BNT ate in the *kuthī*.

The presentation followed a different pattern in that the young girls did all the chanting. This chanting was quite unusual in its minor key (almost like Bulgarian music I have heard). When they reached the point of actually presenting the rice (also with tobacco and lighted candles attached to the baskets and some pretty little artificial flowers made by the villagers), they chanted something like this: "We give this food to you priests and hope that it will be useful to you. We hope that when it is cooked, the food will fill you". These girls also chanted, or rather sang, after the major presentation was over.

Mr. Ngao said that there were far fewer villagers from BDD this year than in past years. The BDD villagers all left in a group and none of them stayed to talk with BNT villagers.

The Pot Man

There is a man who comes through selling pots quite often (he comes from "the pot village") and we have got to know him. We were talking about the making of pots today with

him. He said only women make the pots, - the men aren't able to. A woman can make about 5-6 pots in a day. It struck me that one of the reasons that only the women make the pots is because of uxori-local residence. Only the women form the stable group through time to retain and pass on this skill.

He also has worked in Vientiane as both a construction worker and as a *samlor* driver. He says that as a construction worker he made 1,000 *kip* per month. He didn't like to be a *samlor* worker because it is too tiring and because he couldn't make as much money. He lived in Vientiane for 12 months.

Bān Nōng Tūn

September 16, 1963

For the last couple of days we have had a *farang* visitor in the village - Harry Rolnick. As a result my work has been rather disrupted.

Thôt Kathin

Last evening we heard the drums being sounded in the wat at about 8:30. This was to call a general village meeting to discuss where BNT will sponsor a *thôt kathin* ceremony.

Mahasarakham, Korat, Bangkok

September 17 – October 2, 1963

(Notes added later.)

17 September 1963 In Mahasarakham

18 Sept. 1963 In MK

20 Sept. Leave for Korat & Bangkok

21 Sept. Korat

22 Sept. Bangkok

23 Sept. Bangkok: Dinner with Francis Cripps

24 Sept. Bangkok: Lunch with Lucien & June Hanks

25 Sept. Bangkok.

26 Sept. Bangkok: Dinner with Tom Kursch & Peacocks at Wyatts

27 Sept. Bangkok: Dinner at Turners (Sheldon Turner, USOM Advisor)

28 Sept. Bangkok: Dinner with Brian Stevenson (friend of Primy's)

29 Sept. Bangkok: Lunch with Bill Klausner, Asia Foundation

30 Sept. Bangkok: London. Cornell Seminar

1 October Bangkok: London-Cornell Seminar

2 October Bangkok: London-Cornell Seminar

Contacted Miss Emily Jones Coordination Centre for Southeast Asian Studies