

Charles F. Keyes, Field Notebooks, Thailand

October 1 through October 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 September 1963. This document is followed by notes written in Mahasarakham province in November 1963.

Bangkok

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Bān Nōng Tūn, Mahasarakham

October 3, 1963

Today (3 October) is *wan 'ōk phansa*. We arrived about noon in the village. Apparently there had been a special thambun ceremony this morning (though the day is also *wan phra*). The *khôm fai* competition which had been scheduled for today in BNT has been cancelled, apparently, according to Nuan, partially because of the wishes of Mr. Bunthiang, the headmaster. We attended the contest in Ban Mī where there were some 40 plus contestants competing at the school grounds. A committee composed of the headmaster (of B. Mī), the headman and several other male villagers, judged the entrees on their beauty, their ability to rise at a certain speed, in a certain way and to a certain height. Awards (monetary) were made by the head monk of the village to the first three winners.

Similar competitions were held at B. Khôk Nôi where many BNT'ers went, and other places. Other events which are associated with the end of lent are major boat contests on the Lam Chi at Kosumphisai, Thā Tum, and other villages along the river (this event was actually to be held on Children's Day—7th October). Also, *hian thian* — procession of candles around a *bōt* — were held at such places as Wat Thanya in MK. These events afford young girls and boys an opportunity to get together for a good time, and such *bāw-saw* relations on this occasion were pointed out by Māē Hôm. The local swains and damsels were really dressed to a T in local styles.

On the day of the end of lent, villagers from a village near the "Friendship School" came to *thôt khāw sān* at BNT. However, the priests here had already gone to B. Khôk Nôi. This didn't

deter the visitors who presented the rice to their own priests and then went off also to B. Khôk Nôi. I asked Nuan if any of the priests had left the monkhood since lent was now over. She said that maybe some would when *Thôt kathin* was over. In keeping with the generally festive nature of the occasion, there was a *môlammū* performance held in Ban Khwaw on the 4th.

An Old Man's Knowledge of the Outside World

Mr. Cāēk ("Fa" Hō) came over two days ago and we got to discussing Laos. He showed amazing awareness of events and personages in Laos though he didn't recall the names and events quite accurately. For example, he said "Souvanna Phoummi" for Souvanna Phoumma and he didn't quite recall Souvannavong's name, though he did know that he was Souvanna Phoumma's brother. He also knew of the name of the King of Laos and retold the tale of Kong Lāē.

I tried to ask him if people in the Northeast considered the King of Laos on a par with the King of Thailand, but the question didn't make much sense to him, though he replied that the King of Thailand had visited the northeast. He kept reiterating that northeasterners are "Lao" and share in the language and customs of the people of Laos. However, he indicated that he understood that northeasterners were "Thai citizens" (*chāt Thai*) but seemed unsure about whether Laotians were as well. He said that living in Laos would be difficult because people were always shooting at one another.

We got discussing *thôt kathin* and especially the one which will be sponsored by Bunthin Atthakṇ the high Department of Education official, in Ban Khwao. He displayed a remarkable knowledge of the Atthakṇ family — giving the names of at least three brothers—Bunthin, Bunchana, and Bunthiang— and one sister—Thôngmuan [N.B. Not certain whether Thôngmuan male or female and think perhaps first MP from Maha Sarakham—see notes on Politics in N.E. C.F. Keyes 11/10/64], He knew that the first two brothers are both high government officials in Bangkok, but he didn't say in what capacity. He knew that these people are descendents of the old *caw müang* of Mahasarakham and that their father had been "governor" (*khāluang*). He says that the one sister lives in Khon Kaen. He also knows that Bunchuai is Lord Mayor of Maha Sarakham and was formerly an MP [Bunchuai ran for MP in 1957 but was defeated].

He is also aware that the P.M. (Sarit) comes from Mukdahan and Sakon Nakhon. He readily agreed to the idea that northeasterners are smarter and cleverer than Thai people from other regions.

Nôi

Nôi says that he has had his hair "permed". Apparently, he has sold his radio—for 2300—the same price he paid for it. He convinced the buyer that he was really getting a bargain — a ฿350 radio for ฿300. Mr. Ngao was impressed by his business astuteness. However, with the money which he got for the radio, he plans to use it towards buying another radio for ฿340!

Thôt Kathin

From the end of lent (15th day of the waxing of the moon in the 11th month) until the 15th day of the waxing of the moon in the 12th month, the village religious life is dominated by the *thôt kathin* ceremony which occurs in the various wats of the area. We will be involved in at least three of these ceremonies:

- 5 October Ban Khwaw *Thôt Kathin* in BNT
- 19 October BNT in B. Dōn Māk Yā
- 25 October Bunthin Atthakon T.K. in Ban Khwaw

1. Meaning of *Thôt Kathin*

In the N.E., at least in this part of the N.E., the *thôt kathin* would seem to be one of the most important religious ceremonies in the yearly calendar. In contrast to the North where the ceremony seems to be held only sporadically (Kingshill, p. 207 and de Young, p. 138) and in the central plains where the elaborateness of the ceremony makes the cost prohibitive to yearly observance (Kaufman, p. 186), it seems that N.E. villagers hold the ceremony in nearly every wat every year.

Thôt kathin (ทอดกฐิน) can be translated as "the laying down of the robes of the monk".

Wells gives a translation-definition: "to lay down on a wooden frame on which to cut cloth."

(Wells, Thai Buddhism, p. 105). In essence, the *sine qua non* of the *kathin* ceremony is to present

new sets of robes to one or more monks in a wat. This giving of robes always takes place after the end of lent in the month period above defined. Wells states that "the giving of robes at this time has special significance; in effect it rewards the monks for having spent well the sober Vassa season, and it equips them for new attire just when they are free to journey on pilgrimages." (*op. cit.*, p. 105) The monks having been restricted to their home wat during lent.

Though the giving of a set of robes to at least the head monk of a wat is essential for the ceremony, other things—particularly those things which go into the "essential monk's kit" may also be deemed necessary. Some people from Ban Khwaw said that the giving of a monk's water filter, a Buddha statue (called a *chat* -- ฉัตร [actually umbrella], etc. were said to be necessary.

Nonetheless, the robes are the things and other gifts such as these described above, personal articles for the priests (which may range from rubber sandals to the toilet paper we saw last year at Kanchanaburi), or things to be used solely in the wat are included as frosting on the cake. What makes up these offerings, however, must also be partially limited by tradition as the items included in the ceremony at BNT differed markedly from the things we saw given last year at Kanchanaburi.

Wells describes two types of *kathin* ceremony: the *cula kathin* (จุล - from Pali, "small") and the *mahā kathin*. The former is the common one; the latter is one "in which the thread is spun, the cloth woven, and then made into the robes and dyed all in one day." (Wells, p. 107.) This latter type is not much practiced ("too time consuming") today. People in the village also recognize these two types.

2. Preparations

A *thôt kathin* ceremony can only be held at a single wat once during the season and all observers agreed that the villagers of one village must not be the sponsors in their own wat. The reason given for this is that they would not make as much merit if they did it in their own village. Whatever the reason may be, this practice has certain implications in the social life of the village concerned. For one it sets up a donor-recipient relationship between villages. It would seem to me that such a relationship requires reciprocal action at some later date by the recipient village (a point that Wells makes) or else the one village will always remain in a recipient role *vis-a-vis* the donor village — a situation which seems more characteristic of the area in which I am working.

Thus, Ban Khwao is a donor vis-à-vis a poorer village/wat—i.e., BNT—but it is a recipient vis-à-vis an outside richer donor (i.e., Bunthin Atthakṇ). Neither BNT nor Ban Khwao could conceivably reciprocate. Similarly, BNT is a donor relative to a poorer village/wat — B. Dōn Māk Yā, which also could not reciprocate. Thus, the *thôt kathin* and to a lesser extent *thôt khaw sān* ceremonies establish a sort of social hierarchy according to the donor-recipient relationship. The principle would be something like this: a village always sponsors a *thôt kathin* ceremony in a village which is poorer than or equal to itself.

When the sponsors of a *thôt kathin* have chosen a wat (one that has not yet been chosen), they make their decision public. Thenceforth, no other sponsor can select the same village. Sometimes, when a wat has been selected, it will hoist a special "flag" which signifies that it has been spoken for. I have seen such flags in the area, but there was none in BNT.

3. Preparations on the Part of the Recipient Village

I can say nothing as to the preparations in the donor village as of yet, but I did observe this morning the preparations made on the part of the recipient village. During the morning, after the priests had breakfasted and after the drums had been sounded calling people to the wat, villagers were engaged in preparing food. Most of the major food was being made in the *kuthi* (one of the few times that food was prepared (communally)). Here some of the men were making a pork *kāēg* (this is the first time that I have seen pork used as a festival dish, but Mr. Ngao said that this was merely a function of the fact that pork was the cheapest meat available). Men are reportedly the best cooks when it comes to making festival food. The men were also making a pork *lāp*. The pig used in making these dishes had been sold by the headman at a cost of ₪200. I learned later that this money was raised by the wat committee by levying a ₪2 donation on every household. Women were busy making *somtān* also in the *kuthi*. At about 10:30, Nāi Sihā sounded the drum, and other people began showing up carrying various quantities of prepared rice to be used as well.

4. The Ceremony

At about 11 a.m. the guests from Ban Khwaw began arriving in lorries commandeered from the highway department station in B. Khwaw. All the priests from B. Khwaw, the leading

laymen (among whom was the official sponsor), some school teachers, and a large number of *bāw-sāw*. Altogether, I would say that there were around 100 people from B. Khwaw.

When they had gathered in the wat grounds, they began a procession around the *sala*. In this procession, led by a man striking a large cymbal, were other musical instruments, large gaily decorated brooms, one of which was used in "sweeping the grounds clean" by Nāi Sīhā, the collection of gifts, and a rope which was passed through the procession, with many people holding on to it ("in order that they might better make merit"). After circling the *sala* three times, the procession with the monks from B. Khwaw in the lead entered the *sala* where the monks took up their places on the raised dais and the people out on the floor.

The *sala* had been prepared before hand by the removing of the desks, the laying down of mats for the laity and mats and mattresses for the priests (both of which had been borrowed from various houses in the village). In between the people and the priests, in the middle of the room, were placed the gifts.

One thing that struck me in the initial stage was the division of the people from the two villages. The people from BNT tended to remain in the *kuthi* or on the grounds with the exception of a few leaders who looked after the needs and comforts of the visitors. This situation obtained throughout the days' events. After arriving in the *sala*, the visiting monks were fed, and in the *kuthi* the BNT monks were also fed (along with a monk from B. Dōn Dū who had come along to observe the proceedings). Then, the guests were fed.

After people had eaten, the actual presentation took place. So far as I could gather, the ceremony was quite similar to that which Kaufman (pp. 187-8) described for Bangkhwad. The "sponsor" in this case, I recognized to be one of the leading laymen of Ban Khwao. He lifted the main presentation of robes to be given to the "abbot" of BNT. He *khōsin* and then held out the robes and chanted the presentation words. Then the head priest took the robes, made the customary statement of saying that the robes should be used for anyone to which another of the BNT priests said (chanting) that they should be only for the head priest—a statement "seconded" by the response of *sāthu* (ສາທູ) from the other priests present. Then the head priest gave the precepts in the standard response form.

Then presentation of a collection of things including a *khan*, incense, underclothes, robes, pillows, umbrellas and rubber sandals were made to the other two priests from BNT. They faced each other and in turn made responses.

5. The Gifts

These formal presentations did not include all the gifts given to the monks and to the wat BNT. The other things which had been laid in the *sala* included a cupboard, a Buddha statue, a *chat* (ornamental awning for the Buddha statue), blankets, cloths (other than the ones presented), mats, mattresses, pillows, small pressure lantern, paper flower decorations, glutinous rice-steaming baskets, regular rice baskets, priest's bowl, huge tin of tobacco, spittoon, huge pumpkins, little china bowls, *bāisī*, small scythe, raw cotton, water scoops, western style pillows, Thai style pillows, ginger plants, tray, western umbrellas, *tôn dōk ngoēn* ("money tree") with one-baht notes, priest's water strainer, *maithāw lek* (ไม้เท้า เล็ก), decorated "brooms", etc. These were the things I could see, but there were more. I was unable to sort out which of these were gifts proper, which merely auspicious items, which necessary items of the ceremony.

6. Conclusion of the Ceremony

When the formal gifts had been presented, the priests gave the blessing (*hai phon*), and the ceremony was formally over. The gifts were then carried to the *khuti*. The priests from BNT then repaired to the *bōt* where they alone (without laymen who were not allowed), changed in front of the major Buddha image and then the ceremony was completely over.

7. Other Items

Prior to the beginning of the procession and after the ceremony was over, two circular fire rockets—called *bōng phu* (บั้งพญ) were set off. And after the ceremony a *khōm lom* was also released. This latter would have been sent off before the ceremony except that it was raining then. These were set off to let the *thewada* know that the ceremony was being held.

Just prior to the ceremony proper, the rope which had been passed through the procession was tied around the central pillars of the *sala* and attached to the cupboard which was serving as a makeshift altar.

The *cula kathin* in the local dialect of Isan is known as *kathin lāēn* (กฐินแล่น).

Bān Nōng Tūn

October 5, 1963

Customs Associated with *Wan 'ōk Phansa*

"Leaving of Lent" is an occasion for a variety of ceremonies and customs. In BNT (despite what we had been told before we went to Bangkok), very few of these were manifest. This is so probably for a variety of reasons: (1) no *ācān yai* in the wat; (2) no stimulating lay leadership — the headman had originally been persuaded to have a large festival, partially for our sakes, but he was eventually persuaded against it; (3) the small size of the village—other, larger villages were having much larger celebrations which draw people from this village. Another point seems to me to be relevant in this regard. If a ceremony is deemed "essential" to the well-being of the village or to part of the village (such as *bun pradap din* or *bun khāw sāk*), it will be held no matter the conditions which might predispose unfavorably against it. Thus for the "leaving of lent" activities, only the presentation of food to the priests and the merit-making, activities associated with *liang phra* were deemed essential. Everything else was considered, at least it seemed to me, to be superfluous trimming.

Probably the most important of these "trimmings" is the sending off of the *khōm fai* (โคมไฟ). Villagers made two which were entered in the contest at Ban Mi and three (one by Mr. Ngao and two by the priests) which were entered in the contest at Ban Khōk Nōi. In addition to these two contests on *Wan Ōk Phansā* itself, the skies have been filled both day and night with others that have been set off (though none from BNT). Mr. Ngao says that these *khōm fai* are set off for the purpose of *būchā* (บูชา, "to worship").

Bān Nōng Tūn

October 6, 1963

Trip of Villagers through N.E.

Last night while talking with Mr. Ngao, I discovered that during our absence a trip was planned and executed by the National government which enabled a representative from nearly every village in Amphoe Muang, M.K. (usually headman or *Kamnan*) plus the Community Development workers, the assistant *nāi amphoe*, etc. to tour parts of the N.E. The purpose of this

trip was to enable people to see development projects themselves elsewhere. There were four buses of people. The group even made it across to Laos on two occasions (unplanned part of trip). The government footed the bill.

Nāi Hōm (ໂສ່ມ), the brother of the headman, was the representative from BNT. I suppose that this was because the headman hasn't been feeling well. Several things apparently stuck in his mind : (1) seeing the P.M.'s house in Sakon Nakhon (it is actually in Mukdahan); (2) he didn't have to spend any money; (3) things are cheaper in Laos.

Nāi Hōm

Speaking of Mr. Hōm, he has bought a bicycle. He certainly is one of the "rising" people in the village, but then he has good credentials.

The Abbot of Bān Khwaw

The abbot of Bān Khwaw is officially known as the *'uphatchayāya* (ອຸປະຖາຍາຍະ), lit. "one who is empowered to ordain." Mr. Ngao says that a man must be in the monkhood at least 10 years before he can aspire to this rank. There is no one of this rank currently in T. Nōng Kung or T. Thā Tūm.

Child Discipline

Yesterday, we saw a child struck by its mother for spilling a newly purchased bottle of kerosene.

Mr. Hō and the Outside World

Yesterday in talking with Mr. Cāēk, he said that people in America must not grow rice because America is a more advanced country (equating rice growing with underdevelopment). This led to a discussion on the relative merits of Thailand and America. I said that a village in Thailand was a much better place to live because in America everyone is only concerned for himself whereas a village in Thailand, people are willing to help one another. He emphatically agreed with the statement that villagers are very willing to help one another.

Bān Nōng Tūn

October 7, 1963

A Legal Question

Yesterday morning I saw the son of Mr. Hōm taking his father's ducks out to the field. He returned about noon holding six dead (later seven) or nearly dead ducks in his hand. It seems that a dog belonging to Nai Som (who lives near the headman) had taken an especial dislike to these ducks. Mr. Ngao says that when an incident of this sort occurs, the owner of the dog must pay for the ducks (such has happened before). In this particular case, Nai Som has returned to Bangkok where he works one-half the year. Thus, his wife will be held responsible. Any dispute in the matter would be mediated by the headman.

Children's Day

Today is *wan dek*—"Children's Day"--and there were many functions recognizing this fact all over the country. Insofar as BNT were concerned, students from the village walked to Ban Khwaw village school where they were joined by students from all the schools in the tambon in a special ceremony. I didn't have the opportunity to observe what occurred. There was nothing in BNT proper.

Went to Maha Sarakham. (Notes added later.)

Bān Nōng Tūn

October 8, 1963

Inheritance Patterns among Thai-Lao Peasants of Northeastern Thailand

Most observers of village Thailand have commented on the fact that inheritance practices among Thai peasants are bilateral and basically equal for all children (Sharp, Kaufman, etc.). Some have commented that there seems to be differences between the C.P. Thai and the Thai-Lao people of North and Northeast Thailand (Kingshill, de Young, Long and Long), but have not pointed out what in fact these differences are. In general thus, the person reading the material of village Thailand comes away with the impression that inheritance is bilateral and equal, with some possible minor variations for the various regions of the country. What I wish to show is that not only are patterns for the Isan people not bilateral but that they are indicative of a tighter integration of social life. I have observed that the basic pattern in the area is a modified

matrilineal one rather than a bilateral one. I would suggest that such is the case not only for the Northeast of Thailand, but also for a greater portion of Laos and to a lesser extent for the North.

Bān Nông Tūn

October 10, 1963

In reading about house building customs in Kaufman (pp. 196-7), I was struck by the fact that in the Central Plain even this predominantly Brahman-animist ceremony has Buddhist overtones. This certainly isn't true in BNT where house building has no Buddhist overtones whatsoever.

It seems to me that the village and khums in BNT take over some of the functions of the household in a Central Plains villagē

Spirit house for whole village vs. one for each house

Thambun ceremony for khum vs. one for each separate house.

According to Notes and Queries, one could use the word "cult" to apply to the beliefs and ritual associated with *pūtā* in BNT.

Bān Nông Tūn, Bān Iat

October 11, 1963

Trip of Villagers from Amphoe Müang through the N.E.

Mr. Wichian told me a bit more about the government-sponsored trip which took villagers from the area around parts of the N.E. The trip was called what Mr. Wichian termed "Service Training for Village Leaders". Leaders were selected by the Community Development officers from the various villages. These may or may not have been headmen (but always included *kamnan*). Mr. Wichian had selected Nāi Hōm as being a village leader in BNT because of his "example" in raising ducks and other activities. He said he felt that Mr. Phon wouldn't mind because Mr. Hōm was his younger brother. The tour included Sakon Nakhon, Nakhon Phanom, That Phanom, Mukdahan, Ubon. The Lao city visited by some members of the tour was Suvannakhet not Vientiane. Mr. Wichian said that Mr. Hōm didn't go to Laos because he was afraid of the soldiers.

Thôt Kathin at Bān Iat

This morning I went to Bān Iat with Mr. Wichian where there was a *thôt kathin* sponsored by Mr. Narong, a teacher at Ban Sog Pluai who lives in Ban Khwaw. We arrived at 10

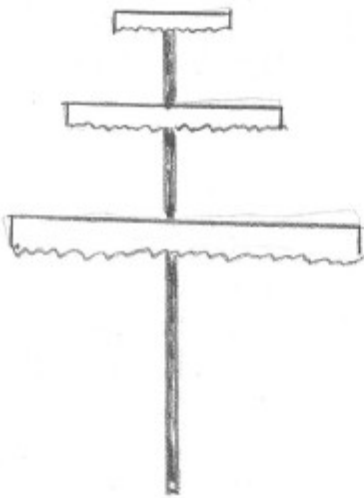
a.m. in the morning, but the people from Ban Khwao had already left for B. Iat and were seated in sala when we arrived there. Mr. Wichian explained that the ceremony can be held at any time on the day designated (he said that in town, one was held at 6:30 p.m.), but usually they are held just before or just after the monk's lunch hour. In this case, it was held before.

When we arrived, the ceremony had not yet begun, so Mr. Wichian, and the abbot of Ban Iat, Phra Mahā Non (พระมหานนท์) explained to me some of the things which are used in a *thôt kathin* ceremony:

1. Things carried in the procession

a. *chawētsat* (Thai, เฉวชัยตรีชัย - *ratchasap*), *sawētsat* (Lao)

These are poles with particular types of decorations which are used in royal processions and other processions as well.



b. *maikwāt* (ไม้กวาด), "brooms"

There is apparently no particular symbolism to the brooms other than they are used for signifying keeping the wat clean. Apparently, the ginger plants which I saw at BNT were also meant to be brooms.

2. Gifts

One gift which is special to the *thôt kathin* is the "lotus blossom". This consists of a priest's cloth, starched and folded in pleats and then attached to the end of a stick. In the middle is placed a betel seed and the result is a "lotus blossom." Most important of the gifts which must be presented to the monks—at least the head monks—are the '*atta borikhān* (อตุตบบริหาร)—the essential eight possessions of the priests.

The Ceremony

Because the wat at Ban Iat is much larger (currently seven priests with an old respected abbot), the ceremony was prettier and more decorative and somewhat more elaborate than the one at BNT. At the beginning of the ceremony, a bell was struck in the sala. Then, a rope was wound around the centre pillar of the sala. Mr. Wichian thought that this rope was used to protect the gifts from malevolent spirits entering in.

At the start, a respected layman (from B. Khwaw) "requested the precepts" and were then given by the abbot of Ban Iat. Then the same layman led the laity in presenting the things to the monks. A special chant and response by the laity was used in this presentation. When the chant was finished, the priests from Ban Iat formed a semi-circle around the abbot. Then followed what Mr. Wichian termed *sommut kathin* (สมมุถกฐิน) or '*uppalokathin* (อุปโหลกฐิน) in which two priests faced each other with fans placed in front of each other. The head monk then said that these robes and gifts which had been presented by the laity should be for any monk who had lived in the wat for three months. Then the first of the two priests asks, formally, "Who should receive this gift?" The second priest answers that the priest who has best lived by the precepts of the Buddha ought to receive the gifts—i.e., the abbot. To this the other monks from B. Iat responded with the word *satthu*—"that is good"[(McFarland gives the word *satthu* - สาธุ - "Be it so"; word the equivalent of *amen*).] This was the same scenario which I observed in BNT.

A smaller thread was then tied around the rest of the gifts. This made them into a single *bangsakun* — dedicated to Mr. Narong's (the sponsor) dead father.

The priests were then fed their noon meal. Then they gave the blessing (*hai phon*) followed by the *truat nām* which always appears in every service I have seen. This is a blessing

during which water is poured slowly on the ground in order to transfer merit to dead ancestors, other creatures, and in local belief to *nāng thoranī* (the Earth Spirit). This is called *yāt nām mai thān* in Lao.

The "lotus blossom" cloths were broken and the cloths were presented to the novices and priests from Ban Iat. Also distributed were incense, candles, etc. to individual priests.

Then everyone else was fed. When the feasting was finished, the abbot gave a short sermon, and the ceremony was over.

Physical Setting of Ceremony

As in BNT, the ceremony was held in the sala and the sala had been gaily decorated. The monks sat on a raised dais. Behind the head monk was a large Buddha statue which had a canopy over its head.

Miscellaneous Remarks

When a person sponsors a *kathin* ceremony, he will get help from his relatives and friends. This calling of people together to help in a *kathin* is called in Lao *mā hōm kāthin* (มาโหมกฐิน). The sponsor of a *Kathin* ceremony at EOT was Mr. Chayasin.

Legends of Ban Pradap Din and Bun Khāw Sāk

Today I had conversations with Mr. Wichian and then Phra Maha Non of B. Iat concerning the *Bun Pradap Din - Khaw Sāk* ceremonies. First Mr. W. said that at the time of *Khaw Sāk*, people always send rice and food to living relatives or to people who are particularly respected. Such things include *khāw sān*, sesame, coconuts, bananas, and other fruits. The person receiving these things will give something in return.

Phra Maha Non gave this story as the reason for the *pradap din* ceremony. It is believed that some people who die, their souls go to Hell (*Narok*). The Lord of the Underworld allows these people to return to earth on one day of the year to eat the food which their relatives prepare for them. This day is *pradap din*. The relatives prepare specially delectable foods—particularly sweets because they know that their relatives have very poor food in Hell most of the year.

The story of the origin of *khāw sāk* is based, according to Phra Maha Non, on the story of *kunlathidā* (กุนลธิดา). "It seems that there was a woman, who because she had had no children encouraged her husband to take a second wife (*mia nōi*) which he did. However, when the 2nd wife became pregnant, apparently the first wife had second thoughts, became jealous, and prepared medicine which caused the embryo child to die. She also on five occasions tried to kill the 2nd wife but was unsuccessful. The 2nd wife says that when she dies she hopes she will be a cat and the first wife will be a hen. Thus, when the hen has eggs, the cat will come and eat them. The 1st wife responds by saying that when she dies she hopes that she is a tiger and that the 2nd wife is a cow. Thus, when the cow has calves, the tiger will come and eat them. In actual fact when they do die, the 1st wife becomes a ghoulish and the second wife the people called *kunlathidā*. When these people have children the ghoulish tries to eat them. Once when the *kunlathidā* had a son in her own family and the ghoulish came to try to eat it, the Buddha was close by. So the *kunlathidā* goes to seek the Buddha's help in protecting her from the ghoulish. The Buddha says that they mustn't destroy one another and please stop and help one another. The *kunlathidā* says that the ghoulish should go stay in the forest which is called *tāhāēk* (ตَاهะเอ็ก). And when the rainy season starts, we shall come to the forest and give you food and ask if the rains are good or not. Thus, people came to ask *kunlathidā* each year if there would be good rains or not. When the *tāhāēk* says that the year will have much water, the people will plant in the lowlands, but if there is to be little rain, people will plant on the uplands. So the *kunlathidā* became very rich. All people think that we must ask the *tāhāēk* when planting. And this is the origin of the *khāw sāk* ceremony.

"When Buddhism came to Thailand, the story was changed so that the event became a merit-making ceremony." The abbot says that it is very difficult to change the customs of the people, so that when the attempt was made to change to give the food to the priests instead, the people still retained some food to give to the *tāhāēk*. Mr. W. had never heard this explanation before.

Leaving of the Monkhood

The leaving of the monkhood is called *suk* (สึก) or *sikkhawabot* (สิกขาวบต). Priests can leave when *wan 'ōk phansā* is over, but usually they wait until the *Bun Kathin* is over.

Khōm Fai, Khōm Lom

The abbot of Ban Khwaw thinks that the *khōm fai* and *khōm lom* are like the *lōikrathōng* in that they are probably Brahmanic ways for scaring away misfortune. Mr. Wichian (and others) believes that if there is any function, they are used for worshipping the *thēwadā*.

Miscellaneous on T. Khwaw

According to the *Kamnan* there are 15,400 people in the tambon and 8 schools. There are 75 people in the leprosy colony at Ban Han. [actually separate place called นิคมโรคเรื้อน (*nikhom rôk ruan*)].

Mahasarakham

October 12, 1963

(Notes added later.)

Met Economic *Attaché* from American Embassy.

Saw Football game between Maha Sarakham & Roi Et.

Bān Nōng Tūn

October 13, 1963

Marketing

Today I noticed that both bamboo walling and baled kenaf are transported by the owner taking the salable item by public bus/lorry to the market himself.

Fishing

Today, I went fishing with a group of men and boys (a solely male activity with the possible exception of a very young girl.) The fishing took place in the *lam huai*. The spots where fishing takes place is in still water, under shaded overhangings, and places where there are lots of bushes, roots, etc., extending into the river. The method of fishing is such: a single man will toss

a net (*thôt hāē*) (ทอดแห) which will spread over a certain area of the river and subsequently the river bed. This net is a large circular net woven of cotton or nylon with a heavy chain around the bottom. The chain causes the net to sink to the bottom and to keep any fish from escaping. When the net has rested on the bottom for a few minutes, the fisherman will dive under and inspect the netting to see if any fish have become entangled. If they have, he will disentangle them one by one, come up to the surface, break the fish's neck, and place it in a basket. (These baskets may be a variety of kinds—everything from ones that float to ones which rest on the bank. All usually had a lid which allow fish to be placed through it, but which make it impossible for any remaining live fish to escape.)

The thing that really struck me about fishing was a factor which is obvious, but still struck me -i.e., the earnestness and seriousness of these people when they fish. Here is no idle leisure sport. These people are looking for food. There is, admittedly, a bit of the sportsman in each net fisherman, in that he becomes excited over a large fish or in trying to keep fish from escaping. Nonetheless, the general feeling is one of systematic exploitation of this gift of nature.

Local Lottery

Mr. Ngao told me this evening that at the last lottery, somebody won (or should win) ฿ 9,000 from the local lottery run by Mr. Lā and Mr. Phonmā, who is a co-sponsor. Unfortunately, these sponsors don't have enough money together to pay off the amount of money. They are apparently trying to borrow from everyone but are meeting with little success. I asked what would happen if they didn't pay or refused to pay. Mr. Ngao said that they would probably be killed—at least that is what has happened in other cases. There certainly would be no appeal to the police in any case, because both buying and selling of local lottery are illegal.

Bān Nōng Tūn

October 14, 1963

Local Economy

Today, Mr. Bunthiang was talking about the availability of food in Ban Khwaw. It suddenly occurred to me that he must, in a way, face the same problem that we do in that he has no real source of food from his own resources. He says that there is no real problem because there are people who sell fish (and sometimes other meats) and vegetables every day. There is no

organized market; but if one knows which house to go to, one can buy these things. He says that all the surrounding villages come to sell in Ban Khwaw rather than in their own smaller villages (and thus less certain of market). I now understand why teachers tend to live in BK and commute. BK certainly has more of the characteristics of an urban center in the economic sense as well as in other ways.

Kenaf

This is the kenaf season. At the school the students have been preparing the kenaf which was grown on the school grounds. The kenaf is harvested, and then (there may be an intermediate stage) soaked in water with stones on top to keep it down. When it has soaked for a length of time, it is then hung up to dry and then rolled up in bales to be sold. The headman (and others confirm it) says that the price this year on kenaf is ฿1.80/kg. Mr. Ngao pointed out that this price is much lower than several years ago when the price was ฿4.00/kg.

Cloth Making and Dyeing

Mr. Ho was explaining to us a few things about cloth making and dyeing. The machine for spinning silk thread is called a *Phōng sāw* (?) in Thai and a *maj hôep*. Make dyes in the following way:

black	from the Tamarind tree
red	from <i>khē</i>
yellow	from cumin
green, blue	bought in market

Education

Today I acted as teacher for the 1st grade while the regular teachers were out working on the school's kenaf. I taught Thai language and arithmetic — subjects which weren't too difficult to teach and for which I had models in what Mr. BT had done and from the text which is being used for teaching language. The thing that impressed me was that though there are some bright kids, they are given very little opportunity to really fully develop due to lack of discipline, lack

of sufficient stimulus, and lack of interest on the part of the teachers (at least this is true of Mr. BT).

Bān Nōng Tūn

October 17, 1963

Mr. Ngao

Yesterday, Mr. Ngao bought some brightly coloured *phāsins* in Roi Et Market. These Burmese style *phāsins* with their bright colours and flowers he thought would particularly appeal this time of the year when people are going to *thôt kathin*. He paid ฿18/piece for them and is selling them for ฿20/piece. He certainly seems to have a low margin of profit on nearly everything he sells. He took a bunch of these *phāsins* over to Bān Nokkradok to sell also because he had too many to sell in BNT.

Village Meeting

This evening there was a meeting at the *môlam mu* stage in front of Mr. Phon's house. This meeting was announced (or rather called in to being) by the beating on a hollow wooden drum. This is the special signal for convening meetings. As the meeting was called at about 7:30-8:00, a time when most people are eating, it was a good hour later before the meeting was finally opened. Those who attended the meeting included males of all ages from very old down to quite young. There were no females at all present, and Mr. Ngao confirmed that women never participate in the meetings of the village. There wasn't really a very large group present about 25-30 people. Probably, people didn't consider it worthwhile coming from the further khums to attend a night meeting (though usually the meetings are held at night). Actually, it wouldn't be necessary for many people to attend a meeting such as this—mainly a series of announcements—as those who did attend would soon convey the message throughout the village.

Mr. Ngao came upon a scene that reminded me vividly of the sitting around a campfire in Boy Scout camp. There was a fire in the middle of the group and only one or two kerosene lamps as lighting. When we arrived, the group was carrying on a discussion of the motorcycle accident which had occurred in Bān Khwaw two days before. Soon after we arrived Mr. Phon, the only person standing—and he was standing in the middle of the group—opened the meeting by saying that he had some information to convey from the Nai Amphoe and from Mr. Wichian

(N.B. The role of the headman as a political broker between government and village. He produced two sheets or letters—one from the Nai Amphoe and one from Mr. Wichian. Mr. Hôm, the brother of the headman, was asked to read these letters which were written in Thai (I have noted the growing importance of Mr. Hôm in village leadership). As Mr. Hôm read the first letter from the Nai Amphoe, Mr. Phon gave a running commentary in Lao. I noticed also that Mr. Hôm read the Thai with a Lao accent and sometimes would stop to give a commentary in Lao himself. The letter included orders, invitations and announcements—some of which were as follows:

1. The road from the corner to BNT has several places which are covered with water (as we well know). The government "forbids" such water standing in the road (particularly now that the rainy season is over) and the villagers should proceed to remedy the situation.
2. Villagers are "forbidden" to dam up the *lam huai* for the purpose of catching fish because they may catch too many fish and there won't be any at future dates.
3. All boys 17 years of age must now be registered for the draft. I asked Mr. Phon about this, and he explained that boys must be registered at age 17, but they wouldn't be conscripted until age 20 or 21. In actual fact boys have never been drafted from BNT (or apparently from Maha Sarakham) because there have been enough to fill the ranks as is. The boy from here who recently went to the army was a volunteer. Mr. Ngao said that he couldn't understand why a small country like Thailand needed a draft anyway.
4. The cangwat agricultural officer has some few watermelon seeds which he will distribute free to the village.
5. On the 27th of October, Bunthin Attakorn, the Head of the Secondary Education Department of the Ministry of Education will sponsor a *thôt kathin* in B. Khwaw. BNT villagers are invited, attend and are encouraged to have a "procession" to B. Khwaw and to participate in the proceedings.

The announcement from Mr. Wichian was also on the topic of the participation of BNTers in the Ban Khwaw *thôt kathin* with more specific instructions on how BNT can participate.

The topic of BNT's *thôt kathin* in B. Don Mak Ya on the 30th of October was also discussed.

In actual fact the meeting consisted primarily of Mr. Phon and Mr. Hôm making announcements with only "asides" being made by others present. Occasionally, a query would come for further clarification and I elaborated on what events there would be in B. Khwaw and my comments were explained in Lao. Finally, when it was apparent that all the business was through, people began drifting away.

A Special *Bangsakun*

About 6:00 this evening, a drum was sounded in the wat and Mr. Ngao asked me if I knew what it meant. As I didn't, he explained that it was to call people to come present *bangsakun* for making merit for the dead. This practice apparently can occur on any *wan phra* which today was. In this case, there was one person who presented a *bangsakun* for dead relatives.

A Satellite

After dark we were called outside by a group of villagers who called our attention to a moving star in the sky. Much to my surprise, instead of magical-naturalistic explanation of this phenomenon, we were treated to a rather sophisticated explanation of the fact that this was a satellite and one villager asked whether it was Russian or American. Though Mr. Ngao knew more about it than the others (that there might be a man in it, and that it was now possible to send someone to the moon, and that the moon was uninhabited because there was no atmosphere), it was obvious that everyone present was at least vaguely aware of the fact that this was a man-made satellite.

Bān Nông Tūn

October 18, 1963

Age and Sex Roles

I saw some cotton being dried in the sun, which led me to enquire about the cotton process. Mr. Ngao said that the planting of cotton was man's work but anything connected with making of the cloth from the cotton (including ginning of the cotton) is women's business. There is some overlay here, however, as women may plant cotton and they also may take charge of drying it. This is rare, however. The same principle could be applied to the silk process, except that women play, often, a larger role in feeding and taking care of the silk worms. Cotton,

incidentally, is little grown in BNT but is usually purchased from the larger cotton-growing villages such as B. Yāng.

Centers of Social Intercourse

There are several "places" (in a social sense) where informal social intercourse takes place. For men, these are usually places of work. For example, the men will seek out a cool spot, which is shaded by a large tree, to work on making basketry, making fish nets, making bamboo walling. The *môlam* stages in both khum wat and KPH as well as the open space near the road in Khum yai are such loci of informal social gathering among men. Similarly the "plaza" framed by surrounding houses in KNKN is another. Men also work together in fishing, but in such cases the work is more intensive and the conversation inversely less. Women tend to gather informally in front of the store, but there doesn't seem to be the *raison d'être* for large gatherings of women as there is for men. Of course, women do tend to go out gathering herbs, plants, small animals, etc, in small groups. The membership of the informal male groupings is of course shifting. Nonetheless, there does seem to be a constantness in them in that the work groups are khum oriented. Thus, one is likely to find Mr. Saw, Mr. Phon, Mr. Di, Mr. Hō, Nin, and others from Khum wat at the *môlam* stage in front of Mr. Phon's house. Rarely, will men from other khums be there except as transients.

Mahasarakham, Bān Nōng Tūn

October 19-22, 1963

(Notes added later.)

19 Oct. 1963

To Mahasarakham

20 Oct

Mahasarakham

21 Oct.

MK

22 Oct.

MK. return to BNT

Ceremonies Connected with Thôt *Kathin*

Today, we have been able to attend parts of the *Kathin* ceremony in three different villages: B. Dôn Dū (บ.ดอนดู) in Tambon Khwaw, B. Thātum (บ.ท่าตุม) in Tambon Thātum, and B. Yāng (บ.ยาง) in Tambon Nōng Kung. Though, I am mixing the sequence in which we actually saw these events, I will describe the events in B. Yāng first, because in order of *kathin* activities, what occurred there precedes what we saw in the other two villages.

Kathin Activities in B. Yāng

The events which we observed in B. Yāng are the events which occur in a "donor" village. Tomorrow, B. Yāng will present its offerings to the priests at B. Nōng Duk in T. Nōng Kung. For "donor" villages *kathin* activities last two days. The first day consists of arranging the gifts in a conspicuous place and with fancy decorations, feasting and drinking, certain religious observances, and a "celebration" which in this area consists of *mōlammū*. The second day consists of feeding of one's own priests, more feasting, procession to "recipient" village, presentation of the *Kathin*, procession home, and perhaps more "celebration" in the evening.

There are two basic types of sponsorship of a *kathin* ceremony: "individual" or "social unit." The former type is one in which a single person, or at most a few individuals in the same family, will act as sponsor and will therefore supply most of the money required in purchasing the *kathin* gifts. Almost invariably, the meritorious act of an individual is not directed towards the making of merit for the sponsor but is done at least in the N.E. in order to make merit for some ancestor who has not been dead for too long a time. Such was the sponsorship in B. Yāng. The second type of sponsorship is by a "social unit"—in rural N.E. this usually is a whole village, but it may also be a company or organization from an urban center. In such cases the merit received is for the whole organization, company, or village—whatever the case may be.

What are the costs of sponsorship? From what I have seen, at least the following things require expenditure of money by the sponsor: (1) purchase of *kathin* gifts; (2) hiring of entertainment (usually *mōlam*) for the celebration; (3) renting of generator and other electrical equipment (lighting, gramophone-with records-etc.) for the celebration; (4) provision of special

food for the day. I estimate that the minimum cost of sponsoring a *môlam* is somewhere between ₪1,500-2,000, broken down as follows:

<i>Kathin</i> gifts	₪700-800
entertainment	₪400-600
electrical equipment	₪200
food	₪200-400
TOTAL	₪1,500-2,000

In villages, it would almost be impossible for a single individual to pay for everything. Thus, he usually calls on relatives, and to a lesser extent fellow villagers to help. People are willing to do so because they will make merit for themselves and will also be able to enjoy the entertainment and food.

We went to B. Yāng at about 5:00 in the afternoon. At that time, the collection of *kathin* offerings had been set up on display, the *môlam* stage erected (both of these things were set up in front of the house of the sponsor), the electrical equipment set up and records were being piped out over the P.A. system, some petty traders were present, and more and more people were beginning to mill around. The *kathin* gifts were placed under a makeshift roof which was gaily decorated with crepe paper, paper flowers, etc. The area with the gifts had been cordoned off in order to make the whole thing a *bangsakun*. The gifts themselves were placed on a decorated platform, under a decorated "roof" which looked like the "rooves" of caskets.

Under an extension of the larger roof of the temporary shelter were placed a "preaching" chair where a monk sits to give a "sermon" and tables with mattresses or mats for other priests and novices. At about 6 p.m. the P.A. system was set up and a visiting blind monk began to "preach" in a voice which reminded me very much of a Jewish cantor. While he was "preaching" the local priests and novices filed in. When the "preaching" was finished, a layman began the *suatmon* "service". During this, a thread was passed from the *Kathin* gifts to each priest who held this string. I believe that this has something to do with making of merit for the dead person.

The *kathin* in this case was dedicated to a dead parent of the sponsor. After the monks had finished, people either went to eat or else waited around for things to begin. We ate a supper

which consisted of beef cooked over a charcoal fire and *lāpwua*. There also was some drinking going on and a good number of drunks about as evidenced by one young alcoholic rubbing his hand down Jane's thigh.

I learned that the P.A. system and electrical equipment were rented for ₪190 at a village in T. Thātūm. The *môlam* troupe came from near Roi Et and cost ₪450.

The *môlam* performance didn't begin until about 9:00. In *môlam* performances, the story is portrayed by means of singing, talking and dancing--to the accompaniment of *khāēn* music (the *khāēn* player is on the stage) and cymbals and drum (off stage). The stage (at least the one this evening) included the following props: a painted backdrop showing a road with Thai temples, and camels paralleling the road, leading to some trees and mountains in background, overhead light (naked bulbs) and mike, a stool for the *khāēn* player, a bench for the main actors (both placed directly in front of the backdrop and under the mike and lights), two side red drapes to divide places for exits and entrances, and a green fluorescent foot light. The actors all had costuming.

At every *môlam* performance, the troupe will give a series of "plays" --it is not a continuous performance as in the case in Java. Thus, an evening of *môlam* will last from 8 or 9 in the evening until 3 or 4 in the morning.

In addition to their pay, a *môlam* troupe receives its food and a place to sleep (if necessary) at the expense of a village. Usually, village presentations have troupes that come from not too great of distances.

These "celebrations" are great attractions from villages in the area. I was really quite startled at the size of the crowd tonight. Of course, many young people come not only to see *môlam* which they enjoy very much, but also to go a courtin'. Several young blades from BNT said that they were *paithiaw sāw* or *māhāsaw*.

Bān Dōn Dū Thôt Kathin in B. Thātūm

In the morning we went to B. Dōn Dū in order to accompany villagers from that community to go *thôt_kathin* in B. Thātūm. We arrived in the village at what would be the stage of the morning-after the proceedings in B. Yāng. There had been a "celebration" with *môlam* the night before. And the *kathin* presents were still in their decorated temporary pavillion. The only

major difference was that B. Dōn Dū was under water and it was necessary to go from place to place by boat or by wading through water.

We went to the house of the sponsor (in this case an individual also). Inside the house were some more things of the *kathin*--the decorated brooms, bunting, and a decorated picture of the former headman and dead father of the sponsor--the ancestor for whom merit was being made. Though we came late, we were served the remnants of the breakfast feast--a pork phat.

The procession from B. Dōn Dū to B. Thātūm was one of the most colorful experiences we have had because between the two villages, the flood waters had come and it was necessary to go by boat. It was quite something to see these little boats (for about 8 people at most) which had been carved out of single logs and which were filled with priests in yellow robes and girls in their gayest apparel weaving in and out of the half submerged trees. On the way, the head priest of B. Dōn Dū would set off circular rockets called *talai*. These and large fire-cracker type things called *bōng pu* which are set off in the evening before the *kathin* ceremony (and which were set off at B. Yāng but I forgot to mention) are always associated with *Bun kathin*.

When we reached Thātūm, about an hour and a half's boat trip away, people and gifts were unloaded and assembled at the end of the village to process through the village. Along the way mats had been laid and small stands holding water were placed. These, Mr. Wichian who was along, explained were to make the going easier for the guests. I had not seen this (or at least not noticed) before. The procession around the wat included several elements which I have come to associate with *kathin* processions: the men using the ceremonial brooms to sweep the ground in front of the procession, the huge *dongson* type gong being struck, the rope passed through the center of the procession and the *khā* stalks.

After circling the *sāla* three times the procession entered the wat *sāla*. I tried to take note of all the gifts and various items which made up this *kathin*. The gifts I observed included umbrellas, *dōkbua* (ดอกบัว) --"lotus flowers" which are *pha sabong*¹ (ผ้าสะบง) made in the shape of lotus blossoms and placed at the end of strings attached to sticks to make a "flower," small tin set of betel containers, *khāw niaw* baskets; *khāw niaw* steaming baskets, sandals, set of

¹ *Pha: sabong* are the clothes used by priests as trousers.

monk's cloths called *traī ciwon* (ไตรจีวร)², Thai style pillows, Western style pillows, mats, cupboard (the main large item), teapot, "money tree" (ต้นดอกเงิน — *tôn dōk ngoen*) *mai thāw lek*, priest's fan, begging Bowl, priest's water filter, rice (uncooked), water scoops, small porcelain dishes, axe, narrow shovel, various vegetables and squashes.

There were also a number of things which were more decorative—i.e., pots of paper flowers, *makbeng* (มักเบ็ง) which look like *bāisī*, other things made of colored paper.

According to several people, and I have seen this written, there are two types of gifts made at *bun kathin*: (1) the *kathin* proper and (2) *boriwān* (บริวาร) which are the nonessential gifts. I am not certain as yet which constitutes the *kathin* proper. Some say it is the set of clothes called *traī ciwon*; Mr. Wichian says that it is the eight items necessary for a priest's personal possession. The old man at Thā tūm had another list: *sang khā* (สังคา), *ciwon* (จีวร), *sabong* (ผ้าสะบง), *tak kot 'ew* (ตักกคเอน), 'ang sa (อังสะ which is called ผ้าเบียง *phā biang* in Lao), *sat 'ok* (สักอก), *rom* (ร่ม), and *kyap* (เก็อบ). It is probably that originally the idea was the presenting of the cloth, and has now been expanded to include all the material possessions of the priest.

The formal presentation was as I have described before. Mr. Wichian pointed out that the early chant by a layman was to notify all the spirits (*thēwadā*) of the ceremony.

After the presentation and eating by the monks was finished, the sum of money on the money tree was announced, and two gifts from Dōn Dū of village shirts to the two *sārawat* (สารวัตร) (keepers of the wat) at B. Thā tūm were made. This last event was new to me, and Mr. W. was a little surprised that it hadn't occurred at BNT.

After the guests from Dōn Dū had eaten, they returned home and the ceremony was over.

² Includes ผ้าสะบง (*Pha: sabong*), ผ้าอังสะ (*Pha: ang sa*), สังคา (*sang kha:*) and in this case, ตักกคเอน (*tak kot 'e:w*).

Chulalongkorn Day

Today was Chulalongkorn's Day—a national holiday. The children from the school went to participate in events at B. Khwaw school. But other than this, there seemed little recognition of the fact that it was a national holiday. People were too concerned with local events.

Petty Merchants and the Art of Selling

At B. Yāng Mr. Ngao had set up a stall to sell things which he stocks at his shop. He was at B. Yang from about 12:00 noon to 3 the next morning during which he grossed over ฿200. He said that his year wasn't as good as last when he grossed ฿500. His biggest selling items were cigarettes and various types of *khanom* at a *salüing* each.

During the evening he had company of other petty traders—entirely food — from Bān Khwaw who lay out their wares on a mat and light it up with a small kerosene wick lamp. They were mainly selling pieces of sugar cane placed on a stick, cooked rice in bamboo (*khāw lam*) and the sort at a *salüing* an item. These petty food traders one finds at every celebration in any village.

I was very interested in the buying habits of the people who purchased from Mr. Ngao — particularly of children. Children would come up and often without speaking would lay down their *salüing* piece, point to a *khanom*, literally grab it from Mr. Ngao's hand, and immediately turn away. Never in the whole time I was there did I hear a person say thank you.

Children were often almost hostile and if they had received change, they would stare at it minutely to make sure that they had received the proper amount and hadn't been given a wooden nickel. I also noticed that adults would often take an item, enquire its price, put it in their pocket and then very reluctantly and slowly pull out their money. Occasionally I would see an adult, but never a child, who would genuinely seem pleased with a purchase. Generally, there seemed to be an attitude of brusqueness, of hostility toward the seller (but not towards Mr. Ngao as a person), and great moment made of giving up one's money. Such attitudes probably arise because of the paucity of money in villages. There are certainly other reasons as well.

Mr. Ngao as a salesman did very little pressuring of people to buy things. He didn't have to. He is well-known in Bān Yāng and people know what wares he had to sell. If they wanted to buy, they would come. He occasionally would try a little pressure—"buy two *khanoms* instead of

one and get the plastic sack they come in"—but it seemed quite ineffective and was really half-hearted on his part. Never with Thais (not so true of Chinese or Indians) have I observed the salesman yelling out his wares if he is in a stationary shop (they will if they are selling something like food on the street and are walking from neighborhood to neighborhood.) .

Sārawat at BNT

Mr. Ngao says that Nāi Sihā is the *sārawat* (สารวัตร)* for the whole of BNT (there is only one general one). There are also *sārawat* for each khum — e.g., Mr. Hō is the one for khum wat.

* [Lao/ *sālāwāt*]

Bān Nōng Tūn

October 24, 1963

Kathin

Mr. Ngao says that there are two types of *kathin*: *mahākathin*, sponsored by an individual, and *kathin_sāmakhī*, sponsored by a village or other social organization [there is, of course, also *cunla kathin*, but Mr. Ngao has never seen one in this area].

Interestingly, Mr. Ngao says that a person can sponsor a *kathin* in his own village wat, and though this is not usual practice, it is done. The sponsor of a *kathin* will choose a wat in which to sponsor a *kathin* very early on say March or April (Wat Bān Khwaw is already spoken for next year). The sponsor will write a letter declaring his intentions and then sneak up (or someone designated by the sponsor will) to deposit this letter at the recipient wat, "like a thief" in the dead of the night.

We were also discussing merit-making with Mr. Ngao and he said that sponsoring a *kathin* is the best way of making merit and the most merit is made by sponsoring a *kathin* as an individual. He said that the king who sponsors many *kathin* each year will probably be born as a king again because he has made so much merit in sponsoring *kathin*. Mr. Ngao wants to sponsor a *kathin* in memory of his dead grandmother.

Personal Adornment

The wearing of earrings is peculiar to small girls and older women. These earrings are for pierced ears.

Maharakham

October 26, 1963

(Notes added later.)

To Maharakham

Attended festivities connected with *thôt kathin* sponsored by Bunchana Attakōn.

Bān Khwaw

October 27, 1963

Kathin in Bān Khwaw

Today has been a *kathin* ceremony in Bān Khwaw sponsored by Bunchana Attakorn who is the head of T.T.E.C. now a department of the NEDB called *krom wí thēt sa kān*. Yesterday evening there were *ngān*'s in both B. Khwaw and in Sarakham at the *Sālāklāng*. We went to BK where we saw a *likē* — our first in Thailand. I won't give a full description of the events. See program for details of events. However, I will mention a few points which were particularly noteworthy.

This morning Jane took notes on the making of the food at B. Khwaw.

Mr. Wichian said that the wat at Ban Khwao has the name it does — *wat mai khun khwaw* (วัดใหม่ขุนเขาว) — because the headman of B.K. used to have the royal bureaucratic title of *khun* (ขุน) and was known as *khunkhwaw* (ขุนเขาว).

Bān Nōng Tūn

October 29, 1963

BNT Sponsors a *Bun Kathin*

Today and tomorrow are the days of *bun kathin* sponsored by BNT for B. Dōn Māk Yā. Activities in the BNT began early in the morning with the preparation of food. The following are the major activities of the day:

1. Special food

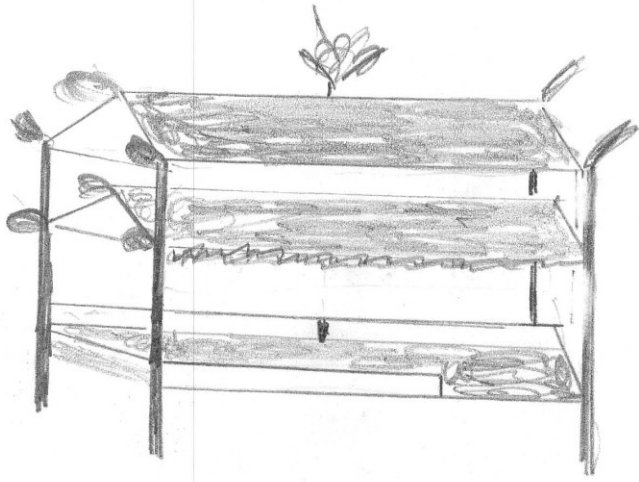
Actually, food making began several days ago with the buying of the white rice to make the special rice noodles which are called *khāw phūn* in Lao and *khanom cīn* in Thai. We actually helped in this process by providing the money for the rice for Mr. Ngao and extended family.

The rice is first taken and soaked for several days. Then, this soaked, uncooked rice was pounded (ตำ) in the hand rice mills. The now heavy, thick flour-paste was put away in socks. This morning, very early, the rice flour was rolled into huge balls, and placed in boiling water for about 10-15 minutes. Then, the now parboiled flour was taken and pounded again in the hand mills. It was then placed out on boards to be kneaded. As it was kneaded, hot boiling water was added in small quantities over a period of time. Finally, when a thick, but runny paste had been achieved, the flour was ready to make the noodles. There are two devices for making noodles. The first consists of a cloth in which a metal plate with holes has been sewn. The rice flour is then placed in this cloth, and the cloth is closed over it. As the cloth is squeezed, the flour-paste is forced through the holes and comes out in noodle shape to be dropped into boiling water. The second device works on the principle of a press. A device that looks a bit like a yoke with a hole in the middle is placed on poles over the boiling water. Into the hole is fitted the metal disc with the holes. After the rice flour has been placed in this hole, a "screw", which is a pole which has a piece of wood which exactly fits the hole in the center, is placed in the hole and two men apply pressure until all the paste has been turned into noodles. After the noodles have cooked for a few minutes, they are dipped out of the boiling water with a net and put into cold water. Then they are laid on trays and are ready to eat. With such a process, it is easy to understand why *khāw phūn* is only made on special occasions.

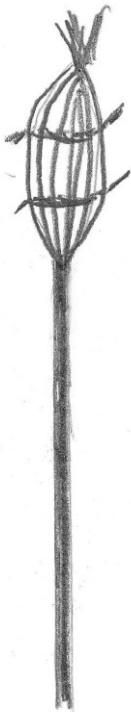
Other foods that were made included special *kāēngs* (fish, chicken) to go with the noodles, and *khāw tōm* as a *khanom*.

2. Making of the *hō kathin* and other things for procession

At the *kuthi* many people were involved during the day in making the *hō kathin*—the container for the *kathin* gifts and other things necessary for a *kathin* procession. The *hō kathin* was a large double roofed "box":



Also being made were the broom and the *cha wēt sat* which are used in the procession. For a picture of *cha wēt sat* see October 11, 1963. The brooms looked something like this:



3. The Gifts

Phra mahā seng had come out for the ceremony to supervise to see that things were being done properly. He particularly had taken charge of the arrangement of the gifts and donations

made by the people. He had written down on a sheet of paper each donor and what he had given. Such lists are made every time there is a *bun*. Later just before the *môlammū* in the evening, Mr. Bunthiang read these lists aloud over the P.A. system. Again, this reading aloud of the gifts is something which is always done. I asked Mr. BT where these lists are kept, and he said they are kept in the wat after a *bun* is over. The average monetary contribution seemed to be about ฿5.

Interestingly, Mr. BT himself gave ฿5 and Khun Buuphā, the young teacher gave ฿3.

Other gifts that were given included the following: priest's robes, priest's bag, towels (which we gave), sandals, candles (several sorts), forks, dishes, something in packets they might have been some sort of medicine, water scoops, umbrellas, water filler, knives, *mai thawlek*, paper flowers, a money tree, tree made of gold-coloured paper, etc. Some of these gifts were bought with the money donated by a comm. of Mr. Sōn, Mr. Hōm, and maybe others who went to R.E. Other of the gifts, like our towels, were personal donations of individuals.

4. Procession around village

In the afternoon after the *hō kathin* was finished, a procession was formed to take the *kathin* gifts around the village. The procession included the *kathin* gifts, the priests, the brooms and other decorated sticks, the drums, cymbals, and gong. This procession went to every *khum* to show off the *kathin*.

Also, during the afternoon, numerous *talai* were set off.

5. Evening Religion

The only really religious aspect of the day was the *suat mon* (led by *phra mahā seng*) at about 6:00. As I have seen in another village, this *suat mon* can be followed by a "sermon."

6. Entertainment

The real highlight of the day's activity was the *môlam* performance that was to be put on in the wat beginning at 9:00 p.m. A troupe from a village near R.E. had been hired for ฿260 (about as cheap as they could be obtained) and a P.A. system had also been hired.

Occasions such as this are ones during which many men get drunk. Mr. Ngao said that for some reason more people get drunk in BNT than in other villages on such occasions.

Drunkedness certainly showed her head in many places. Mr. Tāp and Mr. Chū kept getting up on the stage during the performance and speaking. I have also seen other people dance on the stage during the performance. Nin, who was completely out of it, got into a fight with someone from a neighboring village. This is one of the first fights I have ever witnessed in Thailand.

The *môlam* troupe was really a village troupe, but for what it lacked in ability, it made up for in spirit. I really wonder how such a performance can be put up with so much distraction in the audience.

There were the usual food sellers in the wat grounds though there were more than in B. Yang (probably because of easier accessibility).

Mr. Hō

Mr. Hō was around this morning as well as last night. He again was talking at great length about the Attakorn family. He demonstrates a very definite pride in this local family as the descendants of the old *caw müang*. The Attakorn family is the nearest approximation which Mahasarakham has to local aristocracy. Mr. Hō has followed the doings of the family with some interest—knowing that the daughter married a "Chinese" and went to live in Khon Kaen, and that Bunthin and Bunchana have both gone to Bangkok in high government posts. He knows that Buchana (whom he calls Bunchin) was a *lūk sit* of *phra ku chōi*, the abbot of wat BK. And he knows that Buchana sponsored the building of the new *bōt* in wat BK at a cost of over ฿20,000.

He says that most people in this area would know these facts about the Attakorn family. Certainly, it is not surprising that they would know more about this family than about appointed officials from Bangkok such as the governor. However, I wonder if the extensive knowledge which Mr. Hō and others in BNT have of this family is not in part a function of proximity to Mahasarakham and the special relationship of BK to this family.

For a man of 70 Mr. Hō has considerable knowledge about the world outside of BNT. He knows, for example, of the recent rice deal between Thailand and Laos, and commented that in BNT there is no one "lacking food" as there is in Laos.

He was also telling us about his earlier life again. He walked to Korat, following no roads, because there were none, and going through the forests. He was 18 or 19 when he made

this journey. He explained that there was no school in BNT at that time and wasn't any until two years after he got married.

B. Dōn Māk Ya

October 30, 1963

Kathin in B. Dōn in Māk Yā

This morning, the people at BNT went to *thôt kathin* at B. Dōn Māk Yā. The first thing that occurred this morning was the feeding of the priests in wat BNT. At this time the special foods which had been made the day before — the *khāw phūn*, the *khāw tōm*, and the various kinds of *kap khāw* were presented to the priests. After the *liang phra* there was *suat mon*.

When this was finished, people prepared for the *kathin* procession. The procession left about 9:30-10:00. Along the way *talai* were set off. When we reached B. Dōn Māk Ya we stopped at the entrance of the wat. Here something occurred that I hadn't seen before—the people crouched down while Nāi Sihā, the *Mōsuat*, "chanted" what I was told by Mr. Phon was necessary before entering the gate of the wat - I asked Mr. Ngao about this, and he answered that he had never seen or heard of it before.

When Mr. Sihā finished, we entered the wat. As this is a new wat with only a *kuthi*, a makeshift *sāla* had been set up by placing a white cloth wall around two sides of a rectangle formed by placing mats on the ground. At one end, in the corner of the white walls, a small "shrine" with a green glass Buddha and the mats for the monks had been placed. The procession from BNT circled the *kuthi* three times and then the "brooms" were taken and placed in the ground in order to complete the rectangle around the makeshift *kuthi*. Rope was strung from one broom to another in order to close in the *sālā*, with space for a "door" left at one end.

First the priests and then the people were fed. I must say that this was one time when the food really revolted me—being very dirty and heavily drenched in the fermented fish paste. Also, to indicate how poor this village is, the *khaw tōm* were made not only without coconut milk, but also without sugar.

The actual presentation was as I have described before, except that the priests from the recipient village were somewhat unprepared and *phra mahāseng* had to supervise the order of things. One interesting point is the order in which things were presented. First, there were three things consisting of a decorated cloth "roof" which is hung over an "altar", a *mai thaw lek* and a fan. Then the cloth items were presented, first the set of robes for the abbot and then the robes

and towels (and shoes and umbrellas) for the other priests (which we did). At the end, a white T-shirt was given to the local *sārawat*.

After the presentation was over, a *khōmlom* was set aloft, and then people returned home.

Kathin (miscellaneous)

According to Miss Buaphā there is a name for the last day of the *kathin* period — the last day of the month-long period in which *bunkathin* can be held. There will be a fair tomorrow night to celebrate the end of this period. Mr. Hō says that if a village has a *bunkathin*, it will not have a *bun pāphā* (the leaving of robes in the woods for a priest).

Phra mahā seng said that the flags which were used at the *kathin* ceremony in B. Khwaw — white flags with pictures of a crocodile, millipede, and a snake—were pictures of animals who had asked to be able to present *kathin* gifts as well to the monks (or to Buddha), but moved so slowly that they couldn't make it in time. Thus, they requested that these pictures be placed on flags and carried in the procession so that they would at least be present in spirit.

Nuan's Clothes-Making

Nuan is doing quite a business in making clothes. I noticed that in the past few weeks more and more "fancy" (as contrasted with village type) clothes are appearing in the village. It would seem to me that clothing is one area in which "rising expectations" are beginning to have an effect on traditional patterns. Because of cheap material and cheap labor, people can have much prettier clothes (in their eyes) made at not too large a cost and without the tremendous expenditure of energy required in the cloth-making process.

Mr. Ngao

Mr. Ngao is planning to build a new house for his mother-in-law, Mrs. Hōm, sometime in early part of next year.

He says he isn't really happy with his work because he doesn't make enough money.

Attitudes Towards Government

Some comments which I have heard recently are beginning to give me an idea of what the villagers' attitude towards government is. Mr. Hō said that the king is more important than the P.M. But this doesn't imply that the king has more "power" than the P.M. There is no doubt in villagers' minds where the real source of power is in the national government. Nonetheless, in his conception of the social universe of the state, the king is more necessary in villagers' eyes than is the P.M. P.M.'s come and go, but the king as a symbol remains.

Mr. Ngao and another fellow, looking at a Baht-note with a picture of King Ananda on it, said that they didn't know why he was assassinated. However, they both agreed that Pridi and his clique were responsible for the assassination (though Mr. Ngao reserved some doubts). Thus, of the three most important P.M.'s since the war, only the current one remains un-discredited in villagers' eyes. Pridi is alienated because of being responsible (at least in villagers' eyes) for that most reprehensible of acts—regicide. Phibun is thought to have been a "bad dictator" because of such things as his corvee labor policy during the war. Only Sarit as yet stands free of censure—partially because his work has been somewhat remote from the villagers. He on the other hand has the best opportunity for getting his case to the people because of the spread of radios and better communication.

Nonetheless, currently, the idea of the P.M. is of a person who possesses the highest powers which he can exercise in an arbitrary and personal way. There is nothing that villagers can do to influence or or restrain that power. Thus, if the power is exercised in a bad way, there is no use complaining, but one must be resigned and accept it. Of course, when an act like regicide occurs, it is expected that the system will do something—and did do something.

The idea of power being exercised from above, with little possibility of influence or restraint from below extends all the way down the system, e.g. the power of Kamnen Lôt of T. Nông Kung and the order of the Nāi Amphoe. The only way to have any influence on these higher powers is to "have a friend at court"—a patron who has "personal interest" (for one reason or another) in helping those of lower status. Thus, BNT would turn to Mr. Wichian for help. Also, they would expect the Attakorn family to be interested in helping Mahasarakham in general.

Fishing

Last evening I went on a special fishing expedition with Mr. Ngao and Muan. We went out to the fields where there was still fairly deep water. Through such fields (actually all fields) runs a little "path" between the rice. We walked quite a way out on this path and then Ngao and Muan began to string a net along this path. The net was propped up at intervals with sticks for a 100 m. It was fixed so that fish or fresh water crabs would get entangled in it. The net was left out overnight.

This morning when Muan went out to collect it, it was full of crabs but no fish.