



The Ban Chiang

Newsletter for the Friends of Ban Chiang

UpDATE

Preserving a UNESCO World Heritage Site Issue #4 Fall/Winter 1996-7

From the ~~Director~~ . . . artist?

As Joyce must devote all of her time and energy to writing and editing Volumes I and II of the Ban Chiang monograph series, she has asked me to write the opening statement for the newsletter. She is going into hibernation for at least the next year as this work requires her undivided attention.

Therefore my statement will be short so you can read the interesting articles in this issue of the newsletter. We have asked Stephen Young, who discovered the Ban Chiang site to write an article about the 30th anniversary of his now famous 'trip' over the kapok tree root. Also summer intern Julianna Lange writes about her experiences in the lab. In the next issue, look for Vince Pigott's story of how he became involved in Thai archaeology. ♦

Ardeth P. Abrams
Project Illustrator



Ban Chiang: Thirty Years Later

by Stephen Young

The village of Ban Chiang celebrated its new status as a UNESCO World Heritage site this past June 15th.

A conference in Udorn, a sound and light spectacular in the village, and banners throughout the provincial capital Udorn drew attention to the ancient civilization of Ban Chiang.

Since it was thirty years since I had stumbled over that root of a kapok tree and fell on top of the Ban Chiang site, I

was invited to attend all the events.

Most startling to me upon my return was the arrival of modern civilization in Ban Chiang. What helped begin Southeast Asia's march towards progress with the bronze age some 4000 years ago has once again become the site of the cutting edge of humankind's thrust for progress. Ban Chiang has cellular phones, pay phones, TV programs sent in from around the world by satellite, asphalt roads, traffic congestion, and refrigeration.

You don't see young boys herding water buffalo anymore. In fact, there are few water buffalo because motorized plows work the paddy fields. Soon small fields will be consolidated into larger plots for more efficient farming by fewer farmers.

One woman who greeted me in the village had just returned from taking her daughter to Georgetown University in Washington D. C. for college. Her other child works for Northwest Airlines and lives in my hometown of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Ban Chiang has become part of our world.

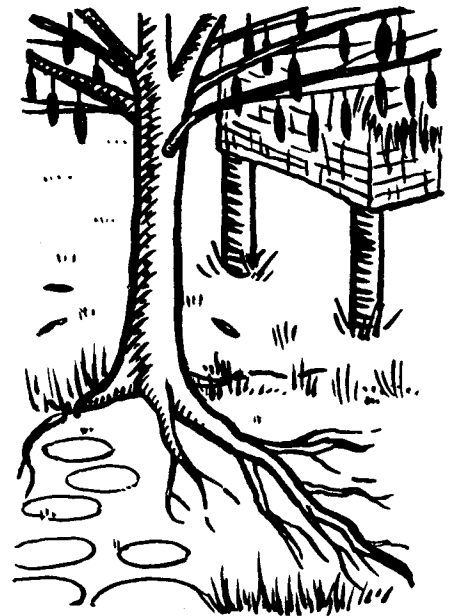
The seminar on Ban Chiang culture took place in a new hotel in Udorn. Some 100 Thai scholars and students from Bangkok and regional universities and museums attended. Most papers looked at the importance of Ban Chiang in world history. Most speakers pointed out the need for further research to learn more about the people who lived in Ban Chiang so long ago. Several scholars on the panel in which I participated called for greater cooperation among different institutions in taking studies of the Ban Chiang culture to a higher level of accuracy and sophistication.

My contribution was to describe my fall thirty years ago and how I brought samples of Ban Chiang wares to the attention of archaeology experts in

Bangkok. I also noted that ancient Ban Chiang wares could be taken as a metaphor for a Southeast Asian civilization which has been distinct from China and India, an authentic and independent part of the Asian experience over the millennia.

After the first day of the seminar, we headed out to the village. The sound and light spectacular in Ban Chiang village was rained out on its opening night.

We returned the next night for an open-air dinner on the lawn behind the museum. The wait for the show was worthwhile. In the field to the front of the museum along a service road, hundreds of metal folding chairs had been



placed on the wet grass. The show began with outlines of volcanoes spouting fireworks and with dinosaurs roaring. Then we had tableaux, lit up by fires and fireworks with dramatic music, of ancient Ban Chiang people making pots, melting bronze in ovens, and walk-

continued on next page

ing to a burial ceremony carrying lots of red-on-buff pots. Vignettes from Thai history on the arrival of the Thai people in the area followed. The discovery of ancient Ban Chiang was marked with the visit of their Majesties in 1972. My friends, with whom I had lived in 1966, were miffed that my sprawl on the ground by the kapok tree was not included in the show. I thought it would have made for some comic interlude.

Before the performance, my friends called to the MC to introduce me to the crowd. I spoke some rusty Thai to general approbation and was invited to sit up next to the Provincial Governor in the row of leather couches reserved for dignitaries.

The show was a hit with the people. However, the performance was short on facts and science to the chagrin of

some of the scholars in attendance, but the theater boosted interest in Ban Chiang and the Museum. The show then ended with a parade of all the participants, including girls and boys doing the ram wong dance with song, and the governor, pleased as punch, right in the center of the extravaganza.

The kapok tree which started it all is long gone. The winding little path where the tree was is now a three meter wide asphalt road. Wooden board houses on pillars have been replaced with brick and cement bungalows. Rice fields lie fallow as young people no longer want to be farmers. Jobs in Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Japan are more lucrative. Ban Chiang prospers from money sent home by its young. The Ban Chiang of old will remain in books and personal memories. ♦

Special discount offered to FOBCers visiting the village of Ban Chiang

Located in the village of Ban Chiang, the Lakeside Sunrise Guesthouse is a quiet and inexpensive alternative to staying in the loud city of Udon 55 kilometers away. The guesthouse is situated on a lake and designed to achieve coolness in a hot climate. It has six rooms available with a wide wooden veranda surrounding the house.

Let the proprietor, Alex, know you are a Friend of Ban Chiang and he will offer you a discount depending on the length of your stay. The guesthouse owner also reports a future cafe which will have various beverages including "real coffee".

Of course, there is plenty to do in the village of Ban Chiang. You can visit the museum as well as the excavation pit, shop for local handicrafts and textiles, eat in the nearby noodle or rice shops, or just relax and observe a true provincial Thai village in action! ♦

For information write:

Alex Ovenden
Lakeside Sunrise Guesthouse
153/2 Ban Chiang
Nonghan
Udonthani
THAILAND 41320



The Lakeside Sunrise Guesthouse

LABnotes:

♦In June 1996, at the 9th International Palynological Congress in Houston, Texas, **Daniel Penny** of Monash University in Australia presented pollen, and **Dr. Lisa Kealhofer** of William and Mary College presented phytoliths from the Lake Kumphawapi core taken in December 1993 by the Thailand Palaeoenvironment Project.

♦**Dr. Brian Vincent** from the University of Otago, New Zealand, visited the Ban Chiang Lab and gave a colloquium about his research on the famous pottery from Khok Phanom Di, Thailand. Afterwards, FOBCers had a Thai meal at the Lemon Grass Restaurant.

♦**Stephen Young**, discoverer of the site of Ban Chiang visited the lab in September. He was impressed with the amount of work completed since his last visit.

♦Look for the article about **Ban Chiang** and **Joyce White** in the University of Pennsylvania's *Almanac*, September 3, Vol. 43, No. 2. Copies can be found in the Ban Chiang Lab.

♦Ban Chiang Project intern **Julianna Lange** has left the lab to go to college at Penn State Berks Campus. We appreciate all of her hard work organizing the lab as well as her smiling face.

♦In August, **Joyce** and **Ardeth** took the site plans downtown to have reducing xeroxes made so that they may begin the laborious next step of labeling -- eventually leading to their publication in Volume I of the Ban Chiang monograph series. (After this momentous event, Joyce treated Ardeth and herself to ice cream cones!)

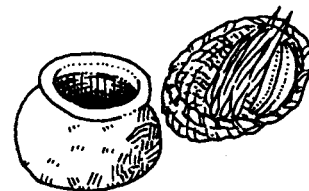
Recent Publication:

Joyce C. White and Vincent C. Pigott
1996 "From Community Craft to Regional Specialization: Intensification of Copper Production in Pre-State Thailand." In Craft Specialization and Social Evolution: In Memory of V. Gordon Childe. University Museum Monograph 93.

Don't Forget -- Renew Your Support of the Friends!

If you haven't renewed your support to the Friends of Ban Chiang during the past year, please do so with this newsletter. Your generous contributions are enabling the Project to pay for state of the art dating, petrographic analysis of ceramics, and dating and equipment for the Thailand Palaeoenvironment Project. Benefits of being a Friend are many, including receiving this newsletter. We want to keep you up to date on all the stories and news surrounding the Project and site. Internationally, faith in the Friends is being shown by contributions as well as special discounts.

So please renew today to ensure your future with the Friends! Thank you.
-A. A.



Buy that special someone a one-of-a-kind FOBC T-shirt for the Holidays this year (50/50 cotton-poly white shirt with large terra cotta FOBC logo on its front.) Specially priced at \$10.70 (tax included). Please make checks payable to THE TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA and send check and order form to the Ban Chiang Project.



Spread the word, renew your support -- every contribution is gratefully received!

-Levels of Giving

over \$1000	Bronze Caster
\$500-1000	Pottery Painter
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\$25-99	Stone Carver

-Send to:

Friends of Ban Chiang
University of Pennsylvania Museum
of Archaeology and Anthropology
33rd and Spruce Streets
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6324

Become a Friend of Ban Chiang!

Enclosed is my contribution of \$_____ payable to the TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

I would like to renew my contribution of \$_____ to support the Ban Chiang Project.

I would like more information about FOBC and the Ban Chiang Project.

I have changed my address. The following is my new address.

ORDER FORM:

Name: _____

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T-Shirt sizes Large or X-Large: _____

Total number of shirts (\$10.70 each, tax included): _____

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** Please send orders to the Friends of Ban Chiang at the University of Penn Museum address inside this newsletter. Thank you for your order!!



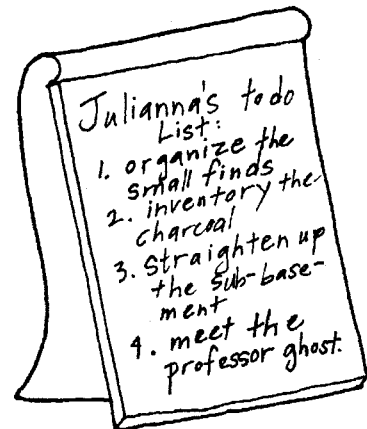
... and from our high school summer intern, Julianna ...

My summer internship with the Ban Chiang Project has been very exciting and educating. I never thought I would use those two words in the same sentence before I joined the Ban Chiang crew for the summer. I remember the first day I started to volunteer as a career study student from North Penn High School. I thought, "Wow! I didn't think I would actually get to touch an actual artifact." As it turns out, I got to touch the whole entire inventory of small finds and all the pots in the sub-basement! As soon as it got to be routine, I would find something else that fascinated me. For example, a fingerprint from a person that was part of a civilization that existed 5,000 years ago.

I learned a lot about archaeology behind the scenes. There are years of hard work that has to be done perfectly. Like Joyce says, "Archaeology is 10% excavation and 90% cataloguing, analysis, research, and writing." Which I have found to be very true.

I have had many fascinating and pleasurable experiences with Ban Chiang over the summer. One was my trip to the 'haunted' sub-basement. There I met other Museum people who claim to have seen and even conversed with the 'professor ghost'. Ardeth put "meet the professor" on my 'things to do' list for the summer! It is still there, and hopefully I will be able to cross that off my list someday. Probably the most enjoyable memory was taking a hiatus for lunch my last day. Ardeth and I ran up to the Mexican food cart and brought back some delicious bean burritos. We talked about everything, college, life, etc. We listened to Joyce's interesting yet gross stories of dung beetle larvae stir fry and Ardeth's stories about her fabulous puppy, Nikos. We had three different ages and perspectives, which made for some really intriguing conversation.

I will be a Freshman at Penn State Berks Campus this year and I am going to major in Archaeology. I will hopefully go for my Ph. D. in Mayantology in the years to come. ♦



Recycle ...

Please share this newsletter with a friend.

Julianna Lange
High School Summer Intern