



FIELD REPORT

To all our Volunteers,

First, let me thank you all for your participation this field season. As I am sure you are aware we could not run this project without you!

It has been another successful season with many new and illuminating finds. It all began at the very end of November when I arrived in Bangkok and left it to Mon to get things underway while I and much of the research team spent a week at the (once every four years) Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association Conference in Hanoi. Kate Domett and I chaired a session on Mun River archaeology with a major focus on Ban Non Wat. For those of you who have been coming to Ban Non Wat for some time, Charles Higham presented in the session along with Nancy Tayles and Sian Halcrow (amongst others) - so the old team and the new team came together in a well attended session that re-emphasised the importance of Ban Non Wat in understanding the prehistory of Southeast Asia. Earthwatch and its Volunteers were mentioned frequently!

We returned to Phimai on the evening of December 6th and immediately began getting ready for the first team on December 9th: a rather more hectic schedule than usual. However, all went well in the end due, in most part, to the experienced and well-oiled team on the ground at Ban Non Wat. **It has to be emphasised that as the season progressed the sheer number of returning volunteers added to the 'well-oiled' nature of the project!**

Over the season we had several main objectives to achieve and made some great finds as well. These included:

1. Completing a huge amount of sorting, cleaning, photography and database entry of previously excavated materials.

After excavation, this really is the most important work on any archaeological project. We very much appreciate the dedication to a purpose and the patience of all those volunteers who worked on this - this includes pretty much all of you, whether it was pottery sorting or cleaning animal bones, it was all vital work. Huge progress was made on this which was a key aim for this season successfully achieved.

2. Completing excavations at T, U, V, W 200 and the related I, J, K 500 water channels.

This was the third of three planned excavation seasons so it was important to complete already investigated areas as well as to open up new ones. Many of you worked excavating post-holes and the myriad of small features in the area under Belinda's (and her many co-supervisors)

direction. Excavations here proceeded relatively slowly due to the complexity of the site and it was great to finally see natural clays at the base. It is becoming clear that we did find the edge of the site during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages and further analysis of the finds will be crucial to understanding what was going on here. Of course, we kept talking about the Iron Age water channel that was found here in previous seasons and we were fantastically lucky to strike this same feature (or something similar) approximately 80 metres to the North where Peter and Tip were in charge. Identifying Iron Age non-moat water control structures is a major addition to our understanding of the site. Of course it raises more questions than it answers and we are already planning a considerable geophysics (ground-penetrating radar and other such devices) project for January 2011 in order to try to trace the course of this feature.

3. The Northern edge of the Neolithic in N96?

As this very deep hole got deeper fewer volunteers participated in its excavation, however, there were a number of great contributors right down to the last team. It is worth noting that we really do not know what we will find until we dig (otherwise, why would we do it?). With this in mind it may still come as somewhat of a surprise to learn that we eventually uncovered nine graves dating to the Bronze Age at the base of this square in addition to the three late Iron Age interments we located at the very top (three graves were uncovered in Peter & Tip's area as well as three at the base of Belinda's - again I think a surprise to most of you?). While much analysis remains to be done it does seem that the 12 metres between the initial N100 and N96 represents the edge of the living area during the Neolithic period.

4. The excavation (and mapping) of Ban Salao

A major aim of the current project is to continue to put Ban Non Wat in its local and regional context. A major step this season was the test excavation at Ban Salao under the direction of Hayden and Kwan. The smaller 'away' team consistently included a core group of volunteers who Hayden put to work very efficiently. The major result here was that only Iron Age (and later) levels were identified. This has huge importance in regard to our current models for how the landscape was used and how this changed over time. As always, 'more work is required.' As for the mapping of the mound, well, that was an event and all those involved will have... memories... of the process. In the end all was well and we all got to know the village very well indeed!

5. Community engagement

Another developing aspect of our project is the continuing emphasis on community engagement. This is really something that has happened outside of the excavation project and in the best tradition of such things is very much a locally 'owned' development. Through the involvement of the National Research Council of Thailand and the Fine Arts Department in association with the local Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University, local government at a variety of levels and the people of Ban Non Wat itself, a community learning centre has been developed with funding for a larger building in process. Volunteers have been fantastically supportive and patient during open days for local school teachers and interested professionals from across the country and with the frequent visits by school children and their teachers. So, it has all been very busy and successful. As I have already noted this was the third in a planned three-season excavation project. We will still be there this December and January however! At this stage plans are still fluid - we may do some limited excavation. We will be completing some long overdue site survey work (driving and walking across the landscape) as well as a huge amount of field laboratory projects. Some of these will be based at Ban Non Wat

and some in Phimai. We look forward to your participation again. Over a longer time-frame we do plan a new project with greater emphasis on new sites and new finds - but, more about that in due course.

For now, I just want to thank you all again for your participation, patience and hard work. It really is very, very much appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. Chang", is positioned above a thin, light blue horizontal line.

Nigel Chang



SECTION ONE

Project Title: Origins of Angkor

Principal Investigators: Dr Nigel Chang; Dr Kate Domett; Prof. Bill Boyd

Research Area: Ban Non Wat and the wider Upper Mun River Catchment, western Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Northeast Thailand (15 °16' 04.16" N, 102°16' 36.03" E)

Protected area status: Archaeological site listed with the Fine Arts Department of Thailand and subject to Thai Legislative protection

Date field report completed: 18 Mar 2010

Period covered by this report: From 1 Dec. 2009 to 28 Feb. 2010

Top Highlight from the Past Field Season

It was a very exciting season of work for many reasons, however, the find that seemed to capture most people's attention was the discovery, excavation and initial analysis of the (about) 2000 year old dog burial (nicknamed 'Samson'), pictured below (fig 1). This beautifully preserved dog skeleton was interred very much as he would have lain in life, with his right forefoot curled around a ceramic dish and his head upright and resting on his left forefoot. At this early stage of analysis he seems to have been a relatively large dog, perhaps German Shepherd sized, and, actually, we have no idea whether it is a 'he' or a 'she'...

This is actually the second well preserved dog burial from the site with the first uncovered in January 2004 from similar Iron Age levels. A third small puppy was discovered in January 2009, curled up in a foetal position under the Neolithic midden in square G104. It was not accompanied by any grave goods, but it does seem to have been clearly placed in a grave. It seems that this tradition of dog burials may have continued throughout the prehistoric occupation of Ban Non Wat and maybe we need to be thinking about dogs as hunting companions at the site?



Figure 1: 'Samson', the (probably) Iron Age burial of a large dog complete with pottery dishes. Uncovered in Belinda Duke's W200 excavation unit it was removed by Allison Isepy and Kate Domett for detailed analysis by Allison. (copyright: Nigel Chang)

Non-technical Overview of Results

This last excavation season at Ban Non Wat (and around) is the third of the current research project. It is also the tenth season of work at Ban Non Wat and the fourteenth season of the all-embracing *Origins of Angkor* Project. This season, significant progress was made on understanding more about life across Ban Non Wat through the completion of new excavation units. In particular, it is clear that the often talked about moats are only one aspect of what may have been a much more sophisticated water management system during the Iron Age (about 2500-1500 years ago). The new site of Ban Salao was also investigated offering greater insight into the wider community (at least in the Iron Age). Community engagement was also important this season with much work done around our project by all levels of the local and district community to establish a Community Learning Centre. We see a bright future for the project that we hope will continue to be based at Ban Non Wat with the addition of further 'away team' projects across the region. Our aim is to continue to understand life at Ban Non Wat, over the last 4000 years, within its broader social and environmental context.

Background

This most recent 2009-10 excavation season (team shown below in Fig 2) was the 10th excavation season at Ban Non Wat and the 13th excavation season under the *Origins of Angkor* Earthwatch banner (there has also been one more 'laboratory season' making 14 in all that EW volunteers have participated in). Over this period the original team and the current team between them have undertaken excavations at six different sites in the region. These include (in order of first excavation): Ban Lum Khao, Non Muang Kao, Noen U-Loke, Ban Non Wat, Prasat Hin Phimai and (just this season) Ban Salao. Over the last decade the clear emphasis has been on Ban Non Wat, however, this should not overshadow the fact that the sustained campaign across a number of sites has given us an unparalleled opportunity to investigate a wider

prehistoric community than ever before possible in Thailand - if not in Southeast Asia as a whole.



Figure 2: January 2010 Research Team (c) Nigel Chang

Across these six sites excavations have uncovered evidence of the first Neolithic (pre-metal farmers) that appear to have established themselves in the region about 4000 years ago (Ban Non Wat). The initial metal ages - which may now include a specific 'Copper Age' (Chalcolithic) prior to a fully developed 'Bronze Age' (Ban Lum Khao & Ban Non Wat), the appearance and development of the Iron Age (Noen U-Loke, Ban Non Wat & Ban Salao) and the final - in prehistoric terms anyway - shift to state society (Prasat Hin Phimai) have also been documented throughout the sites. Returning to the beginning of this sequence, Higham even suggests that some of the early flexed burials (where humans are positioned on their sides with the knees flexed and tucked under the chin) at Ban Non Wat represent even earlier 'Hunter-gatherer' occupants of Ban Non Wat.

Presented in this way we can outline a fantastic developmental sequence that allows us to compare the shift from small farming villages to state society in Southeast Asia against similar developments worldwide. There is a danger here, however, of viewing this as a somewhat necessary or predetermined sequence and that all we are looking for are specific elements that simply flavour the experience in Southeast Asia; an experience of change that was, by implication, essentially the same worldwide. Over the last three years the current project has aimed to shift the emphasis subtly to try to understand more about how people lived in different places at different times in the study area and how they interacted with their environment. The idea is to reconstruct lives and eco-systems (that included humans) without seeing each period or site as simply a stop on a road to state society. Rather each community was one faced with immediate pressures and decisions to be made about their existence there and then. This is not necessarily an easy thing to do and we still end up talking in terms of Neolithic and Bronze Age (for example) which simplifies the issues and somewhat loses the local, individual and actual characteristics of any one place and time.

Another subtle (if rather glib) difference in emphasis of the new compared to the original project is that we are moving away from areas in which we are confident of finding lots of burials towards areas where we think we will find different evidence. We are (and here is the glib bit) at

least as interested in how people lived as we are in how they died in prehistoric Southeast Asia. The practical outcome of all this is that at Ban Non Wat we are excavating at a range of locations across the site, in order to understand how people used the whole of the site and, finally, we have excavated one new site (we hope the first of many) chosen due to the different environmental zone it seems to occupy.

Results

Over the 2009/10 excavation season on the *Origins of Angkor* Earthwatch project we had several main objectives to achieve. We are very happy with the amount of progress we made on all of these. They included:

1. Completing a huge amount of sorting, cleaning, photography and database entry of previously excavated materials.

After excavation, this really is the most important work on any archaeological project. We very much appreciate the dedication to a purpose and the patience of all those volunteers who worked on this - this includes pretty much everyone, whether it was pottery sorting or cleaning animal bones, it was all vital work. The sorting and recording of pottery was probably the biggest job with a small backlog from the end of the preceding season that was accounted for in short order. Another major area of work was updating the database that seems to take up a huge amount of our time. This includes all the individually identified artefacts as well as a record of every excavation context (whether it be a 'general' 10cm spit across an excavation unit, a posthole or a human burial).

In addition, and as a by-product of not finding a lot of burials early in the season, the recording and initial analysis of all of the human skeletons recovered in earlier seasons was completed by Kate Domett and her team. This was a fantastic advance on where we hoped to be by the end of this season.

2. Completing excavations at T, U, V, W 200 and the related I, J, K 500 water channels.

One reason why we have emphasised the laboratory work (point 1 above) is because this was the third of three planned excavation seasons. We very keen to keep up to date at this stage. In terms of excavation it was also important to complete the uncompleted T-W200 area of excavations (as well as to open some new areas). Excavations here proceeded relatively slowly due to the complexity of the site and it was great to finally see natural clays at the base. It is becoming clear that we did find the edge of the site during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages and further analysis of the finds will be crucial to understanding what was going on here. The question now is how these potential 'edges' might have been related to the distinct Iron Age water channel that ran on a north-south axis across the T & U200 portions of the excavated area.

We were fantastically lucky to strike this same feature (or something similar) approximately 80 metres to the North in the I, J & K500 excavation units. Identifying Iron Age non-moat water control structures is a major addition to our understanding of the site. Of course it raises more questions than it answers and we are already planning a considerable geophysics (ground-penetrating radar and other such devices) project for January 2011 in order to try to trace the course of this feature. We hope, of course, that this will help us to discover what this feature was built to do? Belinda Duke's honours dissertation (completed October 2009) provided some ideas including a facility for trapping and controlling wet season rainfall striking the mound and

also stressing how such a feature may have been important in defining boundaries within the community at Ban Non Wat. However, much work still needs to be done here.

The I, J & K500 excavation units recorded only Iron Age deposits with nothing suggesting occupation during the earlier Bronze Age or Neolithic. We are confident that these units are beyond the Northeast edge of the site during these earlier periods.

3. The Northern edge of the Neolithic in N96?

Locating site boundaries has become somewhat of a focus at Ban Non Wat and following the very deep excavation at N100 (carried out over the last two field seasons) it was decided to move a short distance (12 metres) north in order to test whether what we thought might be an edge to the Neolithic occupation was in fact that. This new excavation unit, N96, extended to almost five metres below the surface and included many well defined layers and working floors split almost evenly between upper Iron Age deposits and the lower Bronze Age. Significantly, few burials were located until the very base of the site was reached and these included a range of early Bronze Age interments accompanied by characteristic pottery vessels but with few other grave goods. Both children and adults were interred here.

In terms of our initial aims it is important to note that while some Neolithic pottery sherds were recovered there is little evidence of the dense midden found in N100. Tentatively then we are tempted to conclude that the 12 metres between the N100 and N96 represents the edge of the living area during the Neolithic period.

4. The excavation (and mapping) of Ban Salao

Our most significant achievement this season in terms of logistics and simply breaking new ground was clearly the survey and excavation at the new site Ban Salao (Fig 3). Ban Salao is located approximately 7 km to the north of Ban Non Wat and in a drier and higher environmental zone. The major result here was that only Iron Age (and later) levels were identified. This has huge importance in regard to our current models for how the landscape was used and how this changed over time. Briefly, it has been suggested that early occupation was on the floodplain with the upland areas only intensively occupied from the Iron Age onwards (which this excavation seems to support). As always, 'more work is required' and we would love to return for another excavation season closer to the highest point of the mound to confirm the apparent lack of Bronze Age or Iron Age occupation. This may have to wait, however, as we also wish to undertake similar exploratory excavations at a range of sites in the region.



Figure 3: Volunteer and staff member surveying Ban Salao site (c) Nigel Chang

5. Community engagement

Another developing aspect of our project is the continuing emphasis on community engagement. This is really something that has happened outside of the excavation project and in the best tradition of such things is very much a locally 'owned' development. Through the involvement of the National Research Council of Thailand and the Fine Arts Department in association with the local Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University, local government at a variety of levels and the people of Ban Non Wat itself a community learning centre has been developed (fig 4) with funding for a larger building in process. This is an outcome, in part, of a well established series of community engagement and publicity efforts over the last decade as well as the huge amount of work done by the local community itself.



Figure 4: The current version of the Community Learning Centre at Ban Non Wat. This was established in September 2009 with plans for a new building to be established during 2010. (Copyright: Nigel Chang)

Conclusion and the Next Steps

As the third of our planned three excavation seasons we are very happy to have tied up several loose ends and to have begun our programme of work beyond Ban Non Wat. This, however, is not the end of the project! We will be back at Ban Non Wat and Phimai this coming season (December 2010-February 2011) in order to complete our sorting and initial analysis of the materials thus far recovered. We will also be undertaking some of the survey work that we have only partially completed alongside the excavation work. This will involve visiting and filling out record forms for a range of potential excavation sites. We plan to include interviews with local people as well as a range of other information in the resultant database.

This survey, along with our excavation work, will inform our plans for a new field project that we hope will begin as early as January 2012 when (at least at this stage) we hope to continue to sample across the site of Ban Non Wat to address the many questions we still have about the site and to run further, new, excavations across the local region in order to better understand the wider community and how it, and its environment, changed and interacted over the last 4000 years.

Acknowledgements

The people of Ban Non Wat, The Non Sung District and Phonsongkhram Sub-District local government, Nakhon Ratchasima Rajhabhat University, Professor Charles Higham, Dr Rachanie Thosarat, Earthwatch Institute, James Cook University, Kasetsart University, The Fine Arts Department of Thailand, National Research Council of Thailand

SECTION 2: TECHNICAL RESULTS

REPORTING ON RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objective 1

The project will undertake further excavation at Ban Non Wat, of a series of 4x4m test squares across the mound over the next two field seasons (2009/10 & 2010/11). This is to map the extent of the mound and its development and identify occupation areas, water control areas, and determine the extent of the cemetery to complement previous large scale excavation of, predominantly, a single area.

Progress towards/against Objective

We are very happy with our progress on this objective. We have completed our transect from East to West across the (roughly) middle of the site. This allows us, along with earlier excavations, to begin a map of the site at different times in the past. Our initial impressions are that both the Neolithic and Bronze Age appear to cover a larger area of the current mound than we might have otherwise supposed. It is, however, clear that the site did expand significantly during the Iron Age. The nature of this expansion does seem to be somewhat more complicated

than initial ideas and we are confident that further excavations (in association with some geophysics investigations) will be required to understand this process more clearly.

Surprisingly, cemetery activity seems to extend across much of the current mound so ideas that the initial excavations (the first seven seasons of work at Ban Non Wat) had located a specific cemetery area appear not to be well founded. Instead, cemetery and occupation/working areas appear to be intermingled across the site.

Finally, one of our new excavation units this season has confirmed that significant water control structures were established during the Iron Age at the site. This structure (or set of structures?) is quite different in form - and we think function - to the obvious moats that surround the mound. Next season we will trial some geophysics techniques to attempt to follow this/these features in order to understand what they might have been used for.

Objective 2

Part of the team will begin to map the wider area of the upper Mun River Valley. This will involve developing a GIS base map, looking for new prehistoric sites and identifying the location of resources such as salt as well as collecting and referring to available printed and digital data.

Progress towards/against Objective

Again, limited progress has been made on this objective. Despite this we are happy with the current direction and look forward to a lot of progress being made over the next 12-14 months. Part of our team (including some volunteers) observed contemporary salt making in the local region and have developed an initial map, within the Pongsongkhram sub-district, of production areas and current distribution of salt. Dr. James Moloney (James Cook University) has worked with local authorities to access and develop the current GIS resources available and is supervising current student projects looking at the data.

Over two small campaigns early and mid-2009 we visited and identified a number of sites in different environmental zones that we are interested in, resulting in the recent excavation at the village of Ban Salao.

Objective 3

More focused site surveying of the catchment and its environs, within identified variable environmental zones will be carried out, for example in the lower foothills above the flood plain, with the specific aim of locating new sites for excavation.

Progress towards/against Objective

As noted above, site survey has been somewhat de-emphasised relative to ongoing excavation projects. We have conducted a number of small campaigns that have produced good results and the inclusion of Dr. James Moloney in our team is paying dividends in this respect. Again, as noted above, we have already identified and excavated one new site (Ban Salao).

Through 2010 we will be refining our site survey procedures and recording form and will be planning for a major focus on site survey through the 2010/11 field season.

Objective 4

Further site survey work to be carried out during the wet season (May-August) is planned in order to understand how seasonal change affects resources, sites and the wider environment throughout the study area. This will be a baseline study from which inferences about past conditions may be made.

Progress towards/against Objective

Progress was made on this in 2009 (resulting in the selection of the site of Ban Salao) and a further small programme is planned for July 2010.

Objective 5

Continue the ongoing analysis of artefacts and human skeletal remains, along with the complete set of recovered materials (including faunal and archaeo-botanical evidence).

Progress towards/against Objective

We are very happy with the huge progress made on this objective over the last season. A lot of people contributed to this in many, many ways. We still have a lot of work to do, but, given the general rule of thumb that 10 times the amount of time spent on excavation will usually be spent on analysis we feel we are somewhat ahead of the game.

Initial pottery sorting and analysis, faunal material and the photography and cleaning of much of the artefactual material have all have been completed. Kate Domett and her team have made great strides on intermediate and some final analysis of human remains from the first two seasons of the current project.

As well as site survey, this will continue to be a major focus of the 2010/11 season.

Objective 6

Two objectives that are funding dependent:

- Beginning as soon as possible, and depending on funds and personnel, 4x4m test pits at up to five new sites will be excavated each field season. Changing resource use and the dates of the first occupation of different environmental zones are specific questions that will be addressed. Over time, more distant and increasingly differentiated sites will be examined including those near to resources such as marble and basalt stone in the upper reaches of the Mun River Valley.
- Should funds allow, we will begin to develop a map of strontium isotope ratio variation across the study area. This provides background data that will allow us to assess the level of migration between sites in the past

Progress towards/against Objective

We were unsuccessful in our additional funding application to support this plan to its greatest extent. However, we have made significant progress through the identification and excavation of the site of Ban Salao (a site not previously noted on any other surveys as far as we are aware). Current collaborations with a UK based team of researchers interested in pig and dog domestication may allow us to expand on this project over the next two years. We are also reapplying for funds to support the full extent of the aims listed under this objective.

PARTNERSHIPS

Our partnership with the Fine Arts Department of Thailand is key in allowing access to work in the country initially and in providing valuable experience and advice that keeps our project up to date with current work across the country. We work and interact both with the central research office in Bangkok and with the regional office based in Phimai. Of course, Dr. Amphan Kijngam as co-director of the project is also a senior official within the Fine Arts Department

Another co-director of the Project, Dr. Worrachai Wiriyaromp, is a senior academic at Kasetsart University in Bangkok. As well as a major contributor to the field programme his efforts behind the scenes and in community engagement are invaluable. The project is very much in his debt and we are fortunate that his Kasetsart University is so generous in allowing him and his colleagues to work with us for such long periods of time.

While not a formal partnership at this stage we have been much supported by the Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University (NRRU) who have developed a social and community development project alongside our archaeological project. This has increased general knowledge about what we are doing and thus increased interest and willingness to allow our work to go ahead. In particular the NRRU have sponsored and hosted major national workshops on the project (along with the National Research Council of Thailand) as well as seminars for local school teachers to help develop teaching materials around archaeology and local cultural heritage. We look forward to a more formal partnership in future years.

Finally, our ongoing partnership with the local community at Ban Non Wat and the sub-district Tambon Pongsongkhram local government officials (the latter especially over the last two years) cannot be overstressed in importance. Initially fostered under the leadership of Charles Higham and Rachanie Thosarat we look forward to many years of close association to come.

DISSEMINATION

Printed:

Duke, Belinda (2009). This is not a Moat. Unpublished BA Honours dissertation. Townsville: James Cook University.

Colbert, Alana (2009). Bioarchaeology at Ban Non Wat. Unpublished BA Honours dissertation. Townsville: James Cook University.

The National Research Council has produced a full colour, bound, booklet on an earlier 3-day seminar and workshop held during the 2008-9 field season (21-23 January 2009). This seminar

bought together archaeologists, heritage professionals at various levels of Thai government and representatives of the local communities.

Visual:

The community learning centre at Ban Non Wat, developed by the NRRU, is fully populated with educational posters, a diorama of excavation in action, and a TV on which a Thai National Research Council documentary on Ban Non Wat can be viewed.

Digital:

<http://www.originsofangkor.org/>

<http://www.nonwat.com> (developed and hosted by Nakhon Ratchasima Rajhabhat University - Thai language)

Mass Media:

We were interviewed during open day/workshops by local and national tv and radio. These were broadcast.

Meetings and conferences:

Chang and Domett chaired a session at the 19th Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association Congress held Nov. 29th-Dec. 5th, 2009 at the Vietnam Academy of Sciences, Hanoi, Vietnam.

Session title: The Mun River, Northeast Thailand: Backwater or Highway? Papers by Chang et al, Higham, Haumann, Boer-Mah, Tayles & Halcrow, Duke, Yankowski and Cawte & Bongsasilp all concentrated on Ban Non Wat.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

We have not been directly responsible for these sorts of measures, however, we have contributed to projects organized by the Nakhon Ratchasima Rajhabhat University (NRRU) and by the local Tambon Phonsongkhram district government.

These include:

A single day workshop with local school teachers to allow them to include details of the project in their curricula. We gave lectures on the project followed by a guided tour around the site. The NRRU representatives then introduced them to the community learning centre. Teachers regularly bring their students to visit the site.

A two day workshop sponsored by NRRU where heritage officials and university lecturers from across the country were invited. We lectured, conducted the guided tour and NRRU representatives introduced the community learning centre. This was followed by visits to larger state run museums and the historical park in Phimai. Central to this meeting was further negotiations on the possible establishment of a larger community learning centre or museum at Ban Non Wat.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO LOCAL, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONVENTIONS, AGENDAS, POLICIES, MANAGEMENT PLANS

We remain part of an ongoing conversation about the desirability and the practical functions of local museums or community learning centers in Thailand.

LONG TERM IMPACT OF PROJECT

Cultural heritage enhanced, restored or maintained

Our work is predominantly with tangible cultural heritage in the form of excavated artefacts and other evidence of life in the past. We continued with our excavation work this season along with significant work on the initial analysis of materials from recent seasons of excavation. In combination with workshops and an open-site policy general information is relayed to the local population wherever possible. Following analysis our materials will be deposited with the Fine Arts Department where some will be displayed in the local branch of the National Museum (at their discretion).

At the same time, our continuing project has attracted the interest of the Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University who are interested in both community development (in terms of advancing education & opportunities for local people) and in recording aspects of intangible heritage (all aspects of village life) that are quickly changing and/or disappearing. An interesting example here was the development by the dance lecturer at NRRU of a new dance, in traditional style, about traditional salt production in the area. This is still a common dry season activity.

Anything Else?

There are a lot of interesting things developing in the local community centered around the ongoing project at Ban Non Wat (in particular the development of the community learning centre and current plans for a bigger building). In general our aim is to assist and to provide information or expertise wherever possible, while developments are negotiated and managed locally. There are (as always) competing interests and policies between central government agencies, local government at provincial and district levels, local educational bodies and local communities.