



# INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN ARCHAEOLOGY (ISEAA) NEWSLETTER

Issue 4 Fall/Winter 2017

## *ISEAA Celebrates*

### *Monograph Submission!*

Wow, this past year has been amazing! In October, our team handed over the final files to Museum Publications for the Ban Chiang metals monograph, which will be published in 4 separate sub-volumes. This brings years of work to closure. Dr. Elizabeth Hamilton and I found ourselves singing during our morning commutes with the joy not only of completion, but also from the wonderful Foreword written by James Muhly, who recognized our hard work over many years. Next steps will be editorial review, copy editing, reviewing page proofs, layout, and hopefully the first volume in hand by next September. The next three volumes should come out in succession shortly thereafter.

I also made a lengthy trip to Asia that included work for an Asian Development Bank Project that is building infrastructure to enhance access to Lao tourist sites including archaeological locations, being a tour lecturer for an Archaeological Institute of America cruise on the lower Mekong River, and a survey on the Ou River in Luang Prabang (see article on page 2).

Over the summer, while Elizabeth, Ardeth Anderson, Janice Barrabee and I furiously responded to requests from peers for changes in the monograph, we also had interns working on the ethnobotanical collection I made in the Ban Chiang region from 1978-1981 (see article by Antonia Love on page 3).

In the meantime, conferences were attended, new work-study students hired,

visitors were received, and longtime volunteer Beth Van Horn was awarded Penn Museum Volunteer of the Year. Yes, a full and rewarding year. By the next newsletter we expect to have hard copy of the first sub-volume of the metals monograph, and we also hope to have some new developments in Laos to report on.

But please be assured, ISEAA cannot exist without your support. Your continued financial contributions remain crucial for our operations. We need YOUR donations to maintain and strengthen ISEAA's basic operations. Contributions of any amount are gratefully received! Please send your check or donate online today!

Joyce C. White, Ph.D.

Executive Director

Institute for Southeast Asian Archaeology

## *Beth Van Horn*

*Penn Museum's Volunteer  
of the Year 2017*

Penn Museum's 2017 Volunteer of the Year Award recognized Beth Van Horn, a longtime volunteer for the Ban Chiang and Middle Mekong Archaeological Projects (MMAP). Beth has driven our public outreach efforts over the past 13 years (since 2004).

Beth came to Laos with MMAP three times and undertook several public information efforts. Her 2005 blog from the

field <https://penn.museum/sites/mmap/blogs/march-2005> was a masterful combination of humor and cross-cultural archaeological education. She has done three bilingual photo exhibitions, two of which were mounted in the National Museum in Vientiane. In Laos, she also gave workshops on exhibition development and public communication, and was designated "Nurse Beth" when medical attention was needed.

Working closely with Ardeth Anderson, and consulting with team members Elizabeth Hamilton, Marie-Claude Boileau, and others, she wrote and designed the content for the overhaul of the Ban Chiang website <http://iseaarchaeology.org/the-ban-chiang-project/>. It was Beth who dragged me (Joyce White/ISEAA) kick-



Beth Van Horn, Penn Museum Volunteer Luncheon, April 3, 2017. Photo by Tom Stanley.

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ing and screaming into Facebook, and the ISEAA Facebook page has now become the ISEAA's most effective outreach medium. To do all this she used her background in marketing and product development from her career in Verizon to help us translate academic ideas and findings into engaging content. Thanks so much, Beth, for all you have done for ISEAA, MMAP, and the Ban Chiang Project. We and Southeast Asian archaeology generally are indebted to you for making our work accessible to multiple audiences.

## A Brief Report

### *On the 2016-2017 Field Survey in Northern Laos*

A special grant from the Henry Luce Foundation of \$5,000 and field funds from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of \$2,000 supported the Institute for Southeast Asian Archaeology's (ISEAA) fieldwork for the Middle Mekong Archaeological Project in Laos in late 2016-early 2017. Dr. Joyce White

conducted a short reconnaissance site survey in one unexamined portion of the MMAP study area in Luang Prabang Province with a small Lao team.

The season's objective was to investigate a portion of the Ou tributary to the Mekong River in the vicinity of a cave site, Tham Doun Mai, with pre-existing MMAP palaeoclimate data. Fifteen sites were recorded in seven days and added to the MMAP site database. MMAP has now documented 100 archaeological sites on the left bank drainage basin of the Mekong in Luang Prabang Province. Many of these sites were recorded during field seasons funded by the previous major Luce grant to the University of Pennsylvania for the objective of strengthening its program for Southeast Asian Archaeology.

The purpose of MMAP research in Luang Prabang is to investigate the area as a cross-roads location on the Mekong, where numerous waterways originating in different parts to the west, north, and east come together near Luang Prabang city. When White visited the area in 2001 for 2½ days, she saw evidence for more than 10,000 years of continuous occupation from the stone age to the present.

Since that first exploratory visit, White has developed an ongoing research and capacity-building program with Lao collaborators in the Department of Heritage and other components of the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism including the National Museum. In addition to surveys, four cave sites have been test excavated.

At the signing of the 1-year MOU for this last season, the Lao Heritage Department asked White to apply for a 5-year MOU next time. They indicated they are very pleased with White's work, and asked her to extend MMAP research and training programs to other parts of Laos.



MMAP 2016-17. Above: The MMAP survey team practices recording a site with a NOMAD handheld computer. Below: MMAP Survey team from left to right: Souliya Bounxaythip, Joyce White, Khamsouk Souksome, local guide, Bounheuang Bouasisengpaseuth, Kongkeo Phanasy, and Norseng Sayvongdouane.

## IT'S MORE *than* JUST PLANTS *and* PAPER

*by Antonia Love*

When I received a Penn Museum summer internship, I was ecstatic to be back at the Museum. I had interned in the Archives last summer and had just been accepted to come back, this time to work on a project with the Museum's Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials (CAAM) and ISEAA. I had a vague idea of what the project was from the description I received in my email, but I did not know much more beyond that I would be working with Thai plants that would be used for research.

When I started my training with Dr. Chantel White, the CAAM archaeobotanist at the Museum, I finally began to understand what my project for the summer would be. I would be helping to curate plant specimens that Dr. Joyce White collected from the Ban Chiang region of Thailand between 1978 and 1981 for her PhD project. She was hoping to see how agriculture had evolved over history to give us the crops and farming techniques that are found in the area today. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, she was not able to finish the project the exact way she had planned, and for the last three plus decades, over 1,000 pressed and dried specimens have sat in a large shipping crate in her office. Research has been done on some parts of the collection, but the majority of the plants have been untouched.

Dr. Chantel taught me how to mount the plants on herbarium paper and we discussed what should be included in the digital spreadsheet of information. I was so nervous about mounting the plants, especially because I had never done anything like it before. It seemed every plant I did, I had at least three questions about before I would even touch it. However, the more I did, the more confident I became with the work I was doing.

About three weeks into my internship,

I learned that I would be training another intern, Tracie, who was joining me since this project was pretty much under my management for the summer. All the nerves I thought I was getting over suddenly came back. The day before Tracie was to start, I went over all the notes I had from my training so that I was giving Tracie as much information as I could. I also wrote four pages of very specific questions to ask Dr. Chantel because she was leaving to do fieldwork in Greece and Jordan. I wanted to be as prepared as possible for any issues that might come up because there would be no one at the Museum that I could turn to for questions relating to the mounting of the plant specimens.

But all my worrying was for nothing. When Tracie started, she was hesitant about handling the plants and instead decided to work on typing Dr. Joyce's field logs into our spreadsheet. She slowly began working with me mounting the botanical specimens, and built up her patience and confidence. We created near-identical work spaces and worked with (to us) surprising efficiency. By the end of our work this summer, we had mounted over 100 botanical specimens!

Tracie and I had one issue though: how to describe what we were doing to other people. Whenever I talked to my friends about our internships, I could never find the right words to describe my



Above: A botanical sample being mounted. Below: from left to right: Tracie Dinh, Antonia Love, and Claire Elliot working in room 167 of the Museum this past summer on the Ban Chiang Ethnobotanical Project.

project. What would I say? “I glue plants to paper.” That doesn’t sound professional and certainly doesn’t communicate the importance of the collection I was working on. It took me more than half the summer to develop an elevator-pitch that properly described this project as an important step in the management of this collection, rather than the craft project I had been projecting it to be. I was helping to curate the Ban Chiang Ethnobotanical Collection, and in doing so, helping to preserve plant material for future study and research.

In addition to caring for the pressed botanical specimens, I created a numerical code that each finished plant is labelled with, and organized the specimens so that they are easier to find. Tracie created a copy of the field log that could be given to Claire Elliot, a recent Penn graduate, to translate the Thai information and names. And together, we created a spreadsheet with detailed sections so that the data from the original notes could be separated and organized, and more accurate information about each specimen could be entered.

Despite our hard work this summer, the project is in an early stage and hundreds more plant specimens will require processing. One of the steps that needs to be taken is to figure out how best to care for this collection. Dr. Jordan Teisher, the collections manager of the herbarium at the Drexel University’s Academy of Natural Sciences, was kind enough to show Dr. Joyce and me around the Academy’s botanical collection and give us information and tips about the proper curation of such collections.

In the future, the mounted specimens could be examined by botanists, agronomists, and anthropologists to explore the biodiversity of the area surrounding Ban Chiang. Preserving this plant material could also lead to new research on DNA and botanical identification, since many of these species are local crops that are not widely grown. This collection is more than just a bunch of plants

and paper; it is a trove of untapped ethnobotanical information and research potential.

## Thailand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs

### *Visits the Ban Chiang Project and CAAM*

High level visitors from Thailand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited The Ban Chiang Project at the Penn Museum on October 5th to explore future collaboration between Penn and ISEAA with the Ban Chiang National Museum.

Dr. Joyce escorted the group around to different parts of the Museum where activities are taking place using the Ban Chiang collection, beginning with our lab. In the subbasement where most of the collections are stored, Dr. Marie-Claude Boileau entranced the group with her knowledge and observations on the Ban Chiang pottery. They also visited a special classroom in the Mainwaring Wing where a CAAM class on digital archaeol-

ogy, taught by CAAM instructor Dr. Peter Cobb, is digitizing selected artifacts. Dr. Elizabeth Hamilton showed the Thai visitors our several databases that we hope to find the funds and expertise to someday post online, for the benefit of all persons interested in Thai archaeology.

The group also visited Dr. Chantel White’s office and lab where they viewed examples from the Ban Chiang ethnobotanical collection that Joyce compiled from 1978-1981. Dr. Chantel, the CAAM archaeobotanist, supervised her students and Penn Museum summer interns in the curation of examples from the Ban Chiang ethnobotanical collection, by mounting samples on herbarium paper. This collection was intended as a comprehensive comparative collection for archaeobotanists working in Thailand. Dr. Chantel also brought the group to CAAM’s multi-purpose room where she supervises Penn students studying ancient plant remains that archaeologists have recovered from their excavations. The visitors greatly enjoyed seeing behind-the-scenes at Penn Museum and a chance to view what archaeologists actually do to study and document the past.



Dr. Chantel White; Phisek Panupat, Counselor, Royal Thai Embassy, Washington D.C.; Nantana Sivakua, Director General of American and South Pacific Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok; Boonyarit Vichianpuntu, Minister-counselor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok; and Dr. Joyce White view specimens from the Ban Chiang ethnobotanical collection in the Museum’s CAAM offices. Photo by Tom Stanley.

## Farewell to Chloe

*Our Bibliographer for the  
Past Four Years!*

*by Chloe Kaczvinsky*

I first meet Drs. Hamilton and White as a nervous freshman in my first semester of college. I was wearing a suit and button down for an interview in an office where I quickly learned (much to my enjoyment over the next four years) that wouldn't be necessary. While no one can really explain the creepy awesomeness of reporting to work by traveling down unlit museum hallways that sometimes contained human skulls just sitting on trolleys waiting to be taken to their final destination, how to ignore the perfect horror movie setting was actually one of the least valuable skills I gained.

Some of the more minor things I learned are (in order): all about Byzantium churches (the exhibit hall I walked through for the first three years I worked with ISEAA), the interesting history of magical artifacts (the exhibit for the last year I worked with them), the geography of Southeast Asia, and more about metals than I could possibly convey.

I also learned about grants, archaeology funding, the issue of cultural and natural resource management in Southeast Asia, and that the answer is always pot sherds (every single time the answer is pot sherds). Somewhat less facetiously, I had the opportunity to watch an office full of women do any variety of cool, professional jobs and see just how many opportunities there could be, which was something that had a profound impact on me that I will never be able to properly verbalize.

While my interests drifted away from anthropology and archaeology in my freshman year, I stayed with ISEAA for my entire undergraduate career. Why? It could have been the impressive mentors I found who took the time to advise, instruct, and occasionally entertain with recollections of their own times as under-

graduates and the struggles of figuring out what next. It might have been the chances I had to learn so much about a field that lay distinctively outside of my own and that every once in a while, I could bring that knowledge to other classes and fields. Or really, it could have been that I just actually enjoyed the time I spent at my little computer terminal buried in dictionaries and references. Or maybe, just maybe, it was all three.



### Lab NOTES

❖ Three TAP (Thailand Archaeometallurgy Project) members Vince Pigott, Judy Voelker, and Andy Weiss visited Penn Museum in March to review TAP samples and discuss data.

❖ Vince, Andy, and Joyce presented at the Society for American Archaeology meetings in Vancouver, March 29-April 2, 2017. Southeast and East Asian archaeology was prominent at the meetings with topics ranging from archaeobotany to heterarchy to climate change.

❖ Oli Pryce visited ISEAA and the Penn Museum in May to collect dozens of metal and glass samples from our four sites (Ban Chiang, Ban Tong, Don Klang, and Ban Phak Top) for the next phase of his lead isotope work on Southeast Asian assemblages.

❖ Cyler Conrad visited the BC labs in August to look at our archive of field records from Chet Gorman's work in northwest Thailand. He also discovered parts of a long missing collection. Bags from "Site 19", aka Spirit Cave, were found in some boxes that had been sent to Joyce by Miriam Stark some years ago.

❖ A version of Joyce White's keynote address for the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists meeting in Dublin in 2012 was published in the *Journal for Indo-Pacific Archaeology*. "Changing Paradigms in Southeast Asian Archaeology" can be retrieved at <https://journals.lib.washington.edu/index.php/JIPA/article/view/15024>.

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## New Faces at ISEAA



**Sophie Spalding** (left) is a sophomore in Penn's College of Arts and Sciences and a work-study student with ISEAA, specifically as a bibliographer for the Southeast Asian Bibliographic Database. Sophie comes from Phoenix, Arizona, but has developed a great love for the city of Philadelphia. Although she entered her freshman year with a desire to study astrophysics, she has since discovered an interest in anthropology, and now intends to pursue an Anthro major with a concentration in archaeology. Her academic interests include the archaeology of ceramics and botanical remains, as well as subjects such as linguistics, fine arts, and the French language. Outside of school, she likes to read, bake, paint, and take walks through Philadelphia.

**Anna Pugsley** (right) is a freshman in Penn's College of Arts and Sciences and a work-study student with ISEAA as a bibliographer for the Southeast Asian Archaeology Bibliographic Database. She plans to study political science, linguistics, international relations, and the Arabic language. She also wishes to pursue more academic research during and beyond her time at Penn. Anna was born and raised in West Philadelphia and attended Central High School where she undertook year-long research projects and presented her findings at the end of the year. During her free time, Anna is involved in community activism. She also enjoys long walks and cooking her family's traditional Korean and Malay recipes.



**Katie Lagarde** is a first year graduate student in Drexel University's Museum Leadership graduate program. She is a volunteer data specialist with ISEAA's Ban Chiang Project. She plans to pursue a career in museums as either a registrar or archivist and hopes to work in an anthropology or science museum. Her proudest accomplishment has been working as a HOPE Crew member with the National Trust for Historic Preservation in preserving the African House at Melrose Plantation, an official National Treasure located in Louisiana. Katie is from the New Orleans area in Louisiana and in her free time enjoys traveling, reading, and learning new things.



**Tracie Dinh** is a high school senior at Sacred Heart Academy of Bryn Mawr, and is very active in her school community. She is a member of Student Council, editor of the *Chez Nous* literary magazine, a senior retreat leader, and a member of various other clubs and sports teams. Tracie was a summer intern on the Ban Chiang Ethnobotanical Project where she mounted specimens for later study. She also digitized the original ethnobotanical notes that go along with each plant. She is currently applying to colleges and is hoping to major in marketing, business, and/or public relations. She is also interested in studying English, anthropology, and world history.



**Antonia Love** will be entering her 4th and final year of undergraduate study at the University of St. Andrews this fall. She is majoring in Modern History, with a focus on British and Italian history, with a minor in Biology. Antonia was also a summer intern working on the Ban Chiang Ethnobotanical Project, see article on page 3. She helped organize, mount, and curate the modern plant specimens collected by Dr. Joyce White between 1978 and 1981. She is interested in archaeology, physical anthropology, and the scientific analysis of artifacts, and hopes to pursue a museum career in the future.