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The Ban Chiang UpDATE

Newsletter for the Friends of Ban Chiang

*Preserving a **UNESCO** World Heritage Site Issue #19 Spring 2012*

From the Director

by Joyce C. White

Year of Monographs

*Changing the conversations about **Ban Chiang***

A scholarly monograph presents, in long form, an original thesis or set of arguments with complete original data, and (if effective) it expands the frontiers of knowledge in a particular field, lays important groundwork for many years of future scholarship, and raises the bar for scholarly standards in new publications about the topic.

In a sense, then, a good monograph "changes the conversation" when it presents an analysis that helps scholars take a fresh look at previous assumptions.

This year is a "Year of Monographs" for the Ban Chiang Project, as we focus our resources on creating two new monographs that we hope will change the conversations about Ban Chiang metals and pottery, critical assemblages that are fundamental building blocks to understanding Ban Chiang and its people.

Our plan for 2012 is to finish the Metals manuscript and submit it for peer review by year-end, with an expected publication date in 2014. The Ceramics manuscript is in process and we anticipate a publication date in about 2017.

The Ban Chiang Skeleton book, the first volume in the Ban Chiang Monograph series, has already set the bar high for the new monographs. Its analysis of Ban Chiang skeletal data continues to be cited in new scholarly publications about, for example, demography and health status in prehistoric Asian societies.

Our in-depth analyses of Ban Chiang metals and ceramics are yielding equally rich opportunities for new scholarly conversations. Ancient technologies are often analyzed in isolation from the societies that actually made and used the products; we aim to greatly expand that view of technology in these two new monographs. We are especially excited about applying modern scientific methodologies and the latest theoretical tools to show how Ban Chiang society formed the social networks of their day by making, using, and trading metals and pottery.

There's a bonus in using this approach that combines science and social theory: it sparks much more meaningful "new" conversations about Ban Chiang, versus the "old". Some of the new conversations we are pursuing:

METALS

Old conversation: Metal artifacts are interesting only when they are associated with wealthy complex societies. (Metals in simpler societies are primitive, therefore boring and unimportant.)

New conversation: Studies of metal artifacts found in simpler non-urban societies like Ban Chiang are creating the latest breakthroughs in understanding complex technologies in prehistoric times.

Old conversation: Ban Chiang bronze technology must have come from China, and therefore

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BAN CHIANG, A PREHISTORIC VILLAGE SITE IN NORTHEAST THAILAND II: THE METAL REMAINS IN REGIONAL CONTEXT

Cover image for the Metals Monograph.

F•O•B•C•

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penn.museum/banchiang and *penn.museum/sites/mmap*

is a "hand-me-down" technology that is of interest only to local archaeologists.

New conversation: Details of how Ban Chiang metals were made show their closest relationship is to pan-Eurasian, non-Chinese metals. Therefore discussions of Ban Chiang metals are relevant to the "big-picture" understanding of continent-wide (Eurasian) social interaction in the second millennium B.C.

CERAMICS

Old conversation: Typology (categorizing pots by their shape, style, and decoration) is the archaeologist's ultimate goal in understanding pottery.

New conversation: Typology is only the beginning of a proper study of pottery's place in the social fabric of an ancient society.

Old conversation: Variation in pottery decoration is the main focus, i.e., Ban Chiang pottery is pretty and therefore it's interesting.

New conversation: When studied with modern methodologies, Ban Chiang pots yield a wealth of information on everything from daily life to funerary ritual. A full study of how Ban Chiang pots were made, used, and traded can tell us many things about the ancient economy and society, such as the role of women in economic networks, or how technical knowledge moved from one geographic area to another.

By starting these richer conversations about Ban Chiang, we challenge the old paradigm that only the oldest or biggest or grandest archaeological phenomena are interesting topics, presumably because they represent technologies and social structures that led to "modern" society. The "New Paradigm" for archaeologists is that every society is interesting in its own right and can contribute to understanding the development of humanity in the fullest, most global sense.

A final note: In the world of trade-book publishing, success is measured by high volume, profits, and a large readership. Not so the scholarly monograph, which is deemed a success when it has high impact on the conversations of scholars and (eventually) when the new knowledge trickles down to the public to become the new conventional wisdom about the topic. A "big hit" monograph might see 200-600 volumes sold to a smallish group of libraries and scholars. A monograph requires highly trained specialists to write, edit, and illustrate it, and almost always needs financial subsidies to complete. Even if digital publication is a part of the dissemination of a monograph, it does not replace hard copy for the purposes of providing a permanent record of the scholarship.

We are fortunate to have come this far on the Ban Chiang Metals and Ceramics Monographs with funding from the Henry Luce Foundation, the University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum, and many angelic donors including our Friends of Ban Chiang. We have a great team in place with Dr. Elizabeth Hamilton, Ban Chiang metallurgist and IT person; Ardeth Abrams, Ban Chiang illustrator and graphics guru; and Dr. Marie-Claude Boileau, ceramicist. But their salaries are "soft." Elizabeth and Ardeth are funded almost solely by Friends of Ban Chiang.

The Ban Chiang Project is entering a vulnerable period. Penn Museum is undergoing a change in Directors in 2012. Will the Ban Chiang Project survive to complete our work? **WE NEED YOUR HELP TO DO THIS!** You can 'vote' for us by contributing any amount to the Friends of Ban Chiang, where your donation goes primarily to support our publication program. Our goal is to raise $40K by July 1st to help keep Elizabeth and Ardeth employed and working on the monographs. Please make your tax-deductible donation today!❖

Dr. Marie-Claude Boileau teaching in the new ceramics lab. Photo by Beth Van Horn.

"If these pots could talk..."

by Marie-Claude Boileau

After a successful year working as the ceramicist for the Ban Chiang Project during "The Year of Ceramics" and teaching two graduate courses at the Penn Museum, my contract was extended a second academic year through June 2012. Again I am working on the Ban Chiang ceramics as well as teaching.

A big part of my job is to finish the analysis of the Ban Chiang ceramics. More specifically, I'm writing several chapters for the Ceramics Monograph and working on a journal article that is co-authored with Joyce.

As I work, in essence I'm trying to understand what the Ban Chiang pots have to 'say' about who made them, how they were shaped and decorated, and where they were produced. By analyzing pots found together in a burial site, I can look at the raw materials used and the forming, finishing, and firing practices, to identify production and consumption patterns at specific moments in the prehistory of Ban Chiang. Using the resources of the Museum's new Ceramics Lab and modern analytical techniques to do this lets the Ban Chiang pots tell us much more than in past studies.

A fascinating aspect of the Ban Chiang ceramics is the high degree of variability that we see. Studying variation gives us a better chance to gain knowledge about the localized Ban Chiang social networks of learning, making and exchanging pots. For example, analysis of 24 pots found together in one particular burial shows the coexistence of different potting communities in Ban Chiang, made evident by the presence of a variety of different forming, finishing, and firing techniques used for ceramics within this single burial. From just this evidence, we are then able to see that Ban Chiang residents used pots made by a variety of locally-based producers.

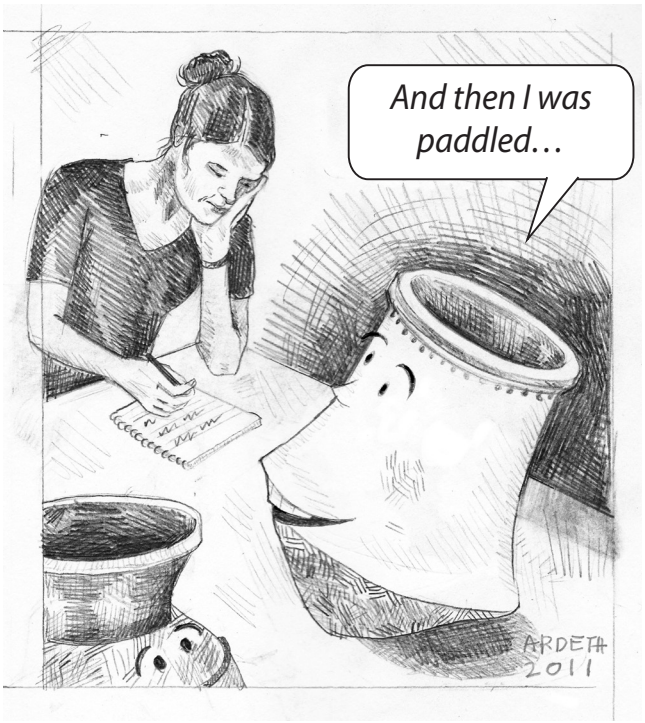

Image used for the lecture "If these pots could talk..." delivered on September 21st, 2011. Drawing by Ardeth Anderson Abrams.

We can also move our focus up from village level to look at Ban Chiang's regional interaction: the presence of a non-local pot in the same burial—identified as "non-local" by petrographic analysis—attests to networks of interaction between settlements located some distance away from each other.

As I work toward these scholarly publications, I've also had opportunities to help the Ban Chiang pots speak to other audiences.

This spring I'm teaching a new Penn Museum course "Archaeology and Science" that introduces Penn undergraduates to the discipline of science-based archaeology. So far, students have had the chance to see first-hand what Ban Chiang ceramics and metals look like under polarizing and reflected-light microscopes in the Lab, and they've learned quite a lot about what Ban Chiang artifacts can (and can't) tell us when modern analytical methods are used.

Ban Chiang pots also got a chance to 'speak' to 16 Philadelphia high-schoolers taking interdisciplinary courses in ceramics. In January I gave a talk for them about using scientific methodology to learn about ancient ceramics, using Ban Chiang as a case study. *See "In the Lab" for details.*

So my year has been very busy and most productive in helping these Ban Chiang pots 'talk'.❖

Conference report

Emergence of Bronze Age Societies: A Global Perspective

by Victor Mair
with materials provided
by Lukas Nickel

Victor Mair, Penn Professor of Chinese Language and Literature, spoke on behalf of the Ban Chiang Metals Project at the conference *Emergence of Bronze Age Societies: A Global Perspective*, held in Baoji, Shaanxi Province, China, from November 8-11, 2011. The conference was organized by the International Centre for Chinese Heritage and Archaeology (ICCHA), a cooperation

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Victor Mair at the conference *Emergence of Bronze Age Societies: A Global Perspective*, held in Baoji, Shaanxi Province, China.

between the School of Archaeology and Museology, Peking University, and the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. The conference was supported by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, the Cultural Relics Bureau of Shaanxi Province, the People's Government of Baoji, Qatar Foundation, and several other institutions.

The conference aimed at assessing Bronze Ages in various parts of the world in a comparative way. Over four days speakers from ten countries presented 35 papers on early bronze from China, southern Nigeria, Spain, Scandinavia, Japan, Korea, South America, Thailand, and northeast Asia. Leading international scholars, such as Li Boqian, Evgenij Chernykh, Izumi Shimada, Mei Jianjun, and Vincent Pigott, addressed topics ranging from the role of non-settled societies in the transmission of bronze technology across Eurasia to regional variation in how bronze artifacts were produced.

Victor Mair's presentation on the well-known article by Joyce White and Elizabeth Hamilton, entitled "The transmission of early bronze technology to Thailand: new perspectives", *Journal of World Prehistory*, 22 (2009), pp. 357-397, led to a lively discussion of routes of transmission from western Eurasia to East Asia and Southeast Asia. The problems and opportunities concerning dating that have resulted from recent discoveries in south China and Central Asia were also addressed. In general, participants at the conference were open-minded about the likelihood of long-distance transmission but are waiting for more excavated evidence about exact routes and precise dates.

The conference was a great success, and a follow-up meeting entitled "International Forum on Ancient Bronze Smelting and Casting Industries in East Asia" is planned for late August-early September, 2012 in Anyang, China. Judging from the conference in Baoji, this next international forum on ancient bronze metallurgy in East Asia will indeed view things from a wider perspective. It is hoped that Penn will be represented, especially by White and/or Hamilton, since they have been instrumental in reorienting the way the development of bronze technology in East Asia and Southeast Asia are viewed.❖

Chet Gorman, Ban Chiang's Wild Ginger Man

by Ardeth Anderson Abrams

In April of 2011, I attended a talk at the Penn Museum where movies of the Ban Chiang Project's first director, Chester Gorman, were part of the speaker's PowerPoint presentation. As I watched the grainy images of Chester (a. k. a. Chet) Gorman excavating at Ban Chiang, I thought about people in the audience who knew Chet. I wondered, was this the first time since his death that they had seen him "animated"? It can be an interesting experience observing a moving image of someone who has been gone so long—alive again, even if it is only an image on a screen.

Thirty years have passed since Chet died. He is unmistakable in his photographs, with his blazing red beard, his florid Hawaiian shirts, and his big cigar cocked at a jaunty angle, the image of a pioneering and romantic archaeologist. Shortly after Chet's death in 1981, his co-director Pisit Charoenwongsa (Fine Arts Department of Thailand) described him as "…larger than life. A man of immense charisma, energy, charm, and humor, he formed lasting friendships with incredible ease. He was at home under any circumstances, from a bamboo shelter in the jungle to a Philadelphia cocktail party."

Chet was born in Oakland, California. He grew up on his parent's dairy farm in Elk Grove, California. His undergraduate degree in Anthropology came from Sacramento State College in 1961 and his Ph.D. from the University of Hawai'i under the guidance of Dr. Wilhelm Solheim. Chet was sent to Thailand by Solheim for the first time in 1963-4. During this time, Chet discovered the site of Non Nok Tha. In 1965-6, Chet was in Thailand for his doctoral research but his focus shifted from the plains to the Thai hills along the Burmese border where he found Spirit Cave *(see map)*. The professionalism and sensitivity with which Chet conducted the Spirit Cave excavation earned him international renown among archaeologists as well as respect from the

Thai archaeological community. His ability to speak Thai also won him friends there; he was fluent enough to give public lectures and participate in debates in Thailand. He also gave interviews to Thai reporters in their own language.

In early 1973, during a break in the excavations of Spirit Cave, Chet made a contact that would prove to be a major turning point in his career. Fro Rainey, then director of the Penn Museum, recruited him to be the Museum's representative for a large-scale investigation at the site of Ban Chiang in northern northeast Thailand.

Many aspects of the excavations at Ban Chiang were cutting edge for the time. As described in the *Ban Chiang UpDATE* article "Archaeocomputing," by long-time Museum volunteer John Hastings, "Back in 1973, Chet had tremendous foresight regarding the role that computers would be playing in archaeological research. He designed the excavation and artifact recording system from the beginning to be computerized, one of the first excavations probably in the world with this objective. The bag log and small find log numbering and recording systems were very computer-friendly. Moreover, Chet had all the materials recovered from the dig lent to the University Museum for analysis so that detailed measurements and observations could be systematically recorded and preserved in computer databases. In those days the data were fed into a mainframe computer on IBM punch cards and recorded on rolls of magnetic tape, and the programming was also done with punch cards."

Dr. Joyce White, Director of the Ban Chiang Project since 1981, recalls that when she was a first year graduate student at Penn, she walked into Chet's office to declare her intention to become a Southeast Asian archaeologist, and to ask Chet to be her advisor. The response he gave is hard to believe 37 years later. "I don't want any female graduate students," was his answer. But she persevered and became one of Chet's few students. In Joyce's words, "Chet's students were more apprentices than advisees. Our education consisted less of being lectured at in a classroom, and more of the opportunity not only to observe, but to participate in the life of a scholar. We were instructed in how to be professional archaeologists."

Joyce's travels in Thailand would overlap with Chet twice during her time as his student. Once during the summer of 1978 and again the following year in October, he visited Joyce during

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Top: A map of Thailand showing sites discovered and/or excavated by Chester Gorman. **Bottom:** The late Director of the Ban Chiang Project, Dr. Chester Gorman (right) and Co-director Pisit Charoenwongsa (left) enjoying cigars (date of photograph unknown).

her two-year stay in the village of Ban Chiang. He was there as Joyce's advisor in her Ph.D. studies (she was investigating how local people identified and used native plants) as well as a font of practical advice, such as where she could take his Land Rover for service in the provincial capital of Udorn.

I personally never met Chet; I began my time here as a work-study student in 1990. My first assignment was to draw the pots of Ban Chiang. Although he was gone, Chet's memory was kept alive here at the lab with stories and anecdotes told by those who knew him well. Joyce White, John Hastings, and various other visitors (including some ex-girlfriends) had many vivid descriptions of Chet's personality. If Chet became the subject of a conversation, it was sure to lead to a colorful story.

One such story involved Chet, a woman named Carobel, and a distinctively shaped Ban Chiang pot. It ends in a way that could only be Chet. In 1977, Chet was giving a talk to a Ceramics Society in Hong Kong where he was showing slides of Ban Chiang pottery. As he was going through all the different pottery types—a beaker, a globular cord-marked, a white carinated—he came upon a particular pot in the slideshow which hadn't been assigned a name yet. A woman named Carobel, whom he had met briefly before, inquired from the audience, "Chet, what's the name of that pot?" To which Chet responded, "Why, it's a Carobel pot." And the woman asked, "Oh! Why is it a Carobel pot?" To which Chet replied, "Because it has a nice round bottom just like Carobel." Chet recounted the story to Joyce when he returned to Philadelphia. Years later in 1982 when Joyce was writing the catalogue for the Smithsonian's traveling exhibition "Ban Chiang: Discovery of a Lost Bronze Age", she had to give a name to the pot, which appears on page 69. Not knowing the spelling of Carobel's name, Joyce termed it a "Carabel Type" pot. Years later in the 1990s, Joyce met Carobel (for the first time) and a mutual friend for lunch in Manhattan and the story was retold. Far from being offended by Chet's comment, Carobel thought it was one of the highlights of her life and she wanted the story to be told at her funeral.

Chet's life ended tragically on June 7th, 1981 when he died after a long bout with melanoma.

At a tribute to Chet shortly after his death, Pisit Charoenwongsa said, "The tragedy of his death was that all this was cut short. But he did at least leave behind him a solid body of academic achievement, the respect and admiration of the Thai people, and a legacy of memories in the minds of his hundreds of friends that will not disappear. It was a life to be proud of. Chet never talked about an epitaph, but one he would have liked is based on J. P. Donleavy's character, one of Chet's favorites: 'God's mercy on the wild Ginger Man.' "❖

Above: Chet relaxing on payday. **Right:** A page in the book, *Ban Chiang: Discovery of a Lost Bronze Age* by Joyce White, showing the description of a "Carabel Type" pot.

45. **Pot** Middle Period
ca. 400–300 B.C.
ceramic
h: 36.5 cm; d: 39.2 cm
Burial 12 Pot B, BCES 1010

This distinctive pot, referred to as a carabel type, is one of four nearly identical vessels from the grave of a one-year-old child. In addition, three nearly identical carinated pots were also reconstructed with a rim type matching the carabel ware. In contrast to the preceding scatter burials, for which apparently no grave was dug, the orientation of the sherds over this burial indicated that the body had been interred in a grave several centimeters deep (fig. 29).

The latest of the Middle Period types, the carabel pots are unique to this particular grave, and the four vessels are so similar in size and construction that they were almost certainly made by a single potter, possibly using a single mold. Although the walls are still thin, the rather heavy rim and solid red paint suggest a trend toward the more substantial pottery of the Late Period. The paddled cord imprints on the base are also noticeably coarser than preceding styles.

The abundance of this young child's grave goods is striking and suggests that the child was given a burial comparable to an adult. This might indicate that social status was inherited, and that the Ban Chiang society of this period may have had a class structure.

LAB notes

Publications

Joyce White and Elizabeth Hamilton
2011乔伊斯怀特：《东南亚青铜器起源新论》，《南方民族考古》第七辑，北京：科学出版社，2011年。(The Transmission of Early Bronze Technology to Southeast Asia: New Perspectives, in Chinese). *Southern Ethnology and Archaeology*. Volume VII. Beijing: Science Press.

Joyce White
2011 Emergence of Cultural Diversity in Mainland Southeast Asia: A View from Prehistory. In *Dynamics of Human Diversity: The Case of Mainland Southeast Asia*. N. J. Enfield, ed. Pacific Linguistics 627. Pacific Linguistics, Canberra. Pp. 9-46.

Conferences

❖ **Victor Mair**, Penn Professor of Chinese Language and Literature, spoke on behalf of the Ban Chiang Metals Project at the conference *Emergence of Bronze Age Societies: A Global Perspective*, held in Baoji, Shaanxi Province, China, from Nov. 8-11, 2011. *Read his article on page three.*

In the Lab

❖ **Ardeth** filmed and edited an interview with **Joyce** for the Luce Program. It is available for viewing on the Ban Chiang website (*penn.museum/banchiang*) under Videos/Slideshows.

❖ **Dr. Graeme Barker**, Disney Professor of Archaeology and Director of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research at Cambridge University, visited the Penn Museum on Nov. 18th to give a talk on climate crises in human history. We invited him to our lab to show the progress of the Metals and Ceramics Monographs.

❖ **Marie-Claude** and **Joyce**, gave the talk in the Penn Museum Scholars Series, "If these pots could talk..." on Sept. 21st, to share new findings of unexpected technological diversity of the Ban Chiang ceramics.

Community Engagement

❖On January 26th, **Marie-Claude Boileau** gave a talk to sixteen 11th and 12th grade students taking Advanced Ceramics, and Art, Archaeology, and Chemistry at **William Penn Charter School**, using Ban Chiang as the case study to highlight how scientific techniques can be used to study ancient ceramics. The lecture was followed by a visit to the **Museum's Ceramics Lab**, where students examined ceramic thin sections under microscopes. Teachers Ruth McGee and Sandy Portnoy wrote post-visit that their students especially appreciated being able to use the lab since it "…certainly broadened their knowledge of ceramics and their appreciation of how science can help to provide additional information about this important medium." Students rounded out their interdisciplinary field trip with visits to the **LRSM (Laboratory of Research on the Structure of Matter)** at Penn and The Clay Studio.

Other News

❖ **Chureekamol (Soi) Onsuwan Eyre** & her husband, **Pete Eyre** became parents to a baby boy, Atticus (Adi) Norman, born April 13, 2011. *Congratulations, Soi and Pete!*

From Left to Right: Elizabeth Hamilton, Graeme Barker, Marie-Claude Boileau, and Joyce White. Photo by Ardeth Anderson Abrams.

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New Faces in the Ban Chiang Lab

Kelsey Halliday Johnson is the Ceramics Collection Manager for the Ban Chiang Project. She is taking detailed photos that reveal how Ban Chiang pots were formed, what inclusions are found in the clay, and the skill of the individual potter. These photos will be used in the Ban Chiang Ceramics Monograph. Kelsey is a second year interdisciplinary M. F. A. (Masters of Fine Arts) candidate at Penn Design pursuing a certificate in Landscape Studies. She is an instructor in the Undergrad Fine Arts Dept., teaching Intro. to Photography. She received her B.A. from Princeton University in Art and Archaeology with a certificate in European Cultural Studies. Kelsey has specialized experience managing large photographic databases and would like to continue teaching and working in museums in the future.

Top: BCES Burial 31 Pot B 1990. Kelsey has carefully lit this pot to show elements of how it was made. The photo clearly shows the coil joins, cordmarking, and pinches along the rim.

Bottom: BCES 2762 Pot A. A close-up of a fresh break from a pot, which can give information on how the pot was fired and the type of inclusions added to the clay.

Bailey Benson is an intern with the Ban Chiang Project. She is calculating pot volumes for the upcoming Ceramics Monograph. Bailey graduated with honors from the University of Michigan with a B.A. in Classical Archaeology, Anthropology, and History of Art. During her junior year she studied abroad at the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies in Rome. Bailey is interested in Roman urbanism and city planning in Asia Minor and North Africa. She has worked in a ceramics lab as well as in a cast and mold production lab.

Ryan Zahalka is a freshman in Penn's College of Arts and Sciences. He is the current bibliographer for the online Southeast Asian Bibliographic Database. Ryan is undecided as to which major he would like to pursue. His interests include enjoying the West Virginia countryside, baking, playing soccer, and writing.

Lizz Chiarelli was our summer 2011 work-study student. She took over Jenny McAuley's duties as the Ceramics Collection Manager for the Ban Chiang Project so we could gear up for the "Year of Monographs". She was a third year Landscape Architecture graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania. Lizz has worked past summers with her archaeologist father on his projects at a West Indies sugar plantation. She worked in his archaeology lab cleaning and cataloguing artifacts as well as doing data entry.

Cora Arney volunteered for the Ban Chiang Project in Summer 2011. Her primary focus was on digitally photographing the Ban Chiang pottery. Cora is a student at Northern Kentucky University where Dr. Judy Voelker (Friend of Ban Chiang) is her professor and referred her to the Ban Chiang Project. She is an Art History/Anthropology double major and would eventually like to have a career working in a museum.

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