

EDITORIAL

WILHELM G. SOLHEIM II

THIS VOLUME, our twenty-fifth, appears thirty years after the first volume, not the best of records for a journal that is supposed to appear yearly. Considering that this volume is dated 1982–1983, it is four years behind schedule (more on this below). This issue is dedicated to the memory of Chester (Chet) Gorman, my first Ph.D. student. I would like to say a bit about him after thanking Donn Bayard for being the guest editor of this issue.

I first heard from Chet the year I was teaching in the Anthropology Department at Florida State University, in 1960. In November he wrote that he would like to enroll at Florida State to study the prehistoric archaeology of Southeast Asia with me. Only a week before I had received an invitation to join the Department of Anthropology at the University of Hawaii and I replied to Chet that I would be happy to have him join me, but in Hawaii rather than Florida.

We both arrived in Honolulu in early August 1961 to take part in the 10th Pacific Science Congress (see Vol. V, No. 2 of *AP*). That first year Chet seemed like a relatively normal, American graduate student. He had a beautiful young wife and a baby boy, but his strong motivation to become an archaeologist specializing in the prehistory of Southeast Asia was a bit unusual. The average “American Boy” image began to disappear after he and his wife separated, but that is well covered here (see Bayard and Charoenwongsa, this issue) and elsewhere (White 1985).

Chet was a great storyteller, telling his stories in a very low key, as if a bit embarrassed to talk about himself. His stories about meeting a wild elephant going the opposite direction on a narrow trail, and another time coming face to face (literally) with a king cobra for over a minute, were dramatic, even in his quiet, relaxed account. My favorite story, however, was not so dramatic. This took place in the fall of 1963 when he was surveying southwest of Korat, the first season of our field program in northeastern Thailand. He was in a remote area that he had reached on elephant back. In Thailand, in the countryside, a stranger is almost constantly surrounded by an audience, most of them staring unblinkingly. This is true particularly for a *farang* (foreigner). Chet had finally grown tired of this and he told of sitting by his campfire after supper with the usual sea of faces focusing on him. Someone handed him a bunch of bananas. He took one, after carefully looking all of them over, slowly peeled it all the way, casually threw the naked banana over his shoulder and ate the skin. He received the desired audience reaction. At this point in telling Chet’s charming grin would appear.

For his Ph.D. thesis Chet proposed to test Carl Sauer’s hypothesis of early agriculture in Southeast Asia by finding a Hoabinhian site in northwestern Thai-

land and then making a small excavation in the site. After almost giving up hope of finding a Hoabinhian site, he was led to Spirit Cave in Maehongson Province, near the Thai-Burma border. There he found what he had been looking for.

After his return to Hawaii he sent two charcoal samples from Spirit Cave to the Gakashuin laboratory in Tokyo for ^{14}C dating. In the meantime I was away on my first sabbatical leave. With no dates returned from Japan and the drudgery of laboratory analysis taking its toll, Chet lost most of his momentum, except for his study of Thai. I returned to Hawaii for only a day before proceeding on to Tokyo for the Eighth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in September 1968. While in Tokyo I called the lab at Gakashuin University to find out what had happened with the charcoal samples. Luckily the director of the lab was there. He was surprised at my question, as he said he had sent the list of dates to Chet early the previous spring. While he went to locate them I reviewed Chet's and my estimates for these dates of around 3000 B.C., or perhaps as early for the deeper sample as 4000 B.C. You can imagine my feeling when I heard "8,550 \pm 200 and 9,180 \pm 360 B.P.," even after it was repeated twice. I called my former wife and asked her to phone Chet right away and give him these dates. I heard on my return to Hawaii that she had called, had a long visit with him on the phone, and just as she was saying goodbye remembered to tell him the dates. Imagine his feelings. His life turned around at that instant. His momentum many-fold regained, he didn't slow down appreciably until cancer hit him.

I quote from a letter he wrote to me dated 25 February 1980, the year before he died:

Well I really appreciated your letter of the Christmas season: I had intended on sending out something of the sort myself, but unfortunately I was in the hospital here getting a malignant cancer cut out of my back. I now understand the feeling of the cancer patient; having looked at death, and having doctors tell me that I might live 3 months, or the rest of a more natural life. I have re-evaluated some of my old positions. Some of the things I wanted to do and have not, *really* bothered me: also some of the things I have had to do and not wanted to do also bothered me. Let me just say that my dedication to SEAsian archaeology was one of the strongest positive things in my reflections. . . .

A few months after his death, noted with major obituaries in *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *New York Times* (with many inaccuracies), the *London Times* (the best and longest newspaper obituary), and many other papers, a letter to the editor of one of the Honolulu papers complained that the University of Hawaii had done nothing for the local papers in his memory. I was happy that finally, in November 1985, we were able to bring the exhibit "Ban Chiang: A Lost Bronze Age," that he had planned on his and Pisit Charoenwongsa's excavation, to open at Hawaii Loa College. It had a second run in January at a major gallery in downtown Honolulu. The exhibit and Chet both received very good local television, radio, newspaper, and magazine coverage. The exhibit, sponsored by the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, The Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition Service and The National Museum Division, Department of Fine Arts, Thailand, appeared widely in the United States and after leaving Hawaii was shown at the National Museum in Singapore. It then returned to Thailand as a permanent exhibit in its own museum in Ban Chiang, northeastern Thailand.

Should you happen to compare this issue closely with the previous issue of *Asian Perspectives* you may notice that there have been some changes. A new type design has been created for us by Ken Miyamoto. Along with somewhat narrower margins we are getting more on a page and so save some money. With a new president of the University of Hawaii, in the university budget going to the state legislature there is an increase in funding for the journals published by the University of Hawaii Press. We should be able to start catching up on our publication schedule. Volume XXV (2) has been edited and is with the typesetter. We are working on Volume XXVI, a partial proceedings of the 11th Congress of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association, held in the Philippines in January and February 1985, plus the index of Volumes I-XXV. The index has been completed except for inclusion of Vol. XXV. Volume XXVII (1) is underway, this being the special Indonesia issue which is being edited by R. P. Soejono and funded in full by a grant from the Nusantara Jaya Foundation in Jakarta, thanks to the good offices of Anthony F. Granucci.

REFERENCES

BAYARD, DONN, and PISIT CHAROENWONGSA

1982-83 Chet Gorman: An appreciation. *AP* 25(1):1-12.

WHITE, JOHN W.

1985 The man who turned archaeology upside down. *East-West Photo Journal* 6(1):33-39, 58-59.