

My name is Elise Barnes. I am preparing to begin my senior year at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. I am majoring in Anthropology, with a minor in Biology.

This summer, thanks to the Scholarship's generous support, I was able to attend an archaeological field school in Thailand. We were excavating the site of Promtin Tai in central Thailand, focusing particularly on the historic and Iron Age components.

One of the goals of the project was to use skeletal remains to help reconstruct diet and health in the past. In order for this to be accomplished, we had to dig past the historic level, into the Iron Age. As Buddhism swept into Thailand during the early historic period, cremation became popular, leaving few skeletal remains.

In order to reach the Iron Age level at Promtin Tai, we had to be at least eight feet below the surface. Previous field seasons had gotten us close, and towards the end of our season we were just beginning to reach the Iron Age level. Unfortunately, we did not find any complete burials. We did, however, find the most isolated human bone fragments of any other season. In some ways, that was even more interesting to me because it gave us a chance to test our osteology knowledge. I learned how to identify key features on the bones to help distinguish the fragments and how to side it without the whole bone present.

In addition to the isolated human bone, we uncovered many large faunal bones. We really needed a comparative sample to help determine what we found. The one thing we could identify was a Javan rhino mandible. We also found a huge vertebra. The professors initially thought it belonged to an elephant, but it has been taken to the lab at Silpakorn University for testing. Several crocodile teeth were uncovered, some with holes drilled through them. We also found turtle shell with drill holes, a large amount of potsherds, some glass, stone, and ceramic beads, and slag left over from the smelting process.

One of the most exciting finds was a complete carinated pot. According to the professor from Silpakorn University, it is one of the only complete pots of that style ever found in Thailand. On one of the final days of excavation, we uncovered feet jutting out of the wall. We were able to expose them to about mid-tibiae, digging a little into the wall, before we had to stop.

The project was extremely rewarding, not only educationally, but culturally and socially as well. The field school was a collaborative effort, with undergraduate and graduate students from Eckerd College, North Carolina State University, and Silpakorn University in Bangkok. This gave me an opportunity to interact with Thai students who were helping with the excavation to learn more about their culture, as well as a chance to talk with graduate students from NCSU to discuss some future educational options.

On our off days, we had the opportunity to take some field trips. We stayed in Ayutthaya for two days, where I went on a riverboat tour to see various temple ruins. While there, we also went to Wat Phra Mahathat, a temple famous for a tree growing around the head of a Buddha statue. We also spent two nights in Khao Yai, where we took a tour of Khao Yai National Park. During our hike and night safari, I saw gibbons, macaques, a wild elephant, barking deer, and a porcupine.

I also took the three optional day-trips offered. The first field trip was to the archaeological site of Ban Pong Manao. When our professors realized that we were not going to find enough complete skeletons to study for our final osteology report, we went to another site to borrow three

skeletons. At the museum in Ban Pong Manao, we saw artifacts that were similar to the ones we were recovering from Promptin Tai.

On our second day-trip, we went to Khao Plara where we saw 3000-5000 year old rock art. In order to see the rock art, we had to make a strenuous hike to the top of a steep mountain. Despite the struggle, the well-preserved art was worth it.

For the third trip, we visited a temple located near a large bat cave. At dusk, the bats began pouring out of their cave. I thought my professor was exaggerating when he said they come by the millions, but once they started to exit the cave, it was like a river of blackness. They streamed out for at least forty-five minutes as we watched in awe.

The field school ended before I was ready. I wanted to keep excavating, finding more treasures unseen for 1500 years. It felt as if I had just arrived, and it was already coming to a close.

My trip to Thailand was one I will never forget. I am extremely grateful for your support. The money I received was used to pay for a large portion of my round-trip plane ticket to Thailand, which cost a total of \$1620.40. I met and worked with a great group of students and faculty. There is a huge difference between what can be taught in the classroom and what you can learn through hands-on application. Thank you again for helping fund this amazing opportunity. Words cannot fully express the joy I feel every time I think about my short trip to Thailand.