



## CHAPTER

# 11

### *Thai Local Wisdom Healing*

*“Faith is the substance of things hoped for,  
the evidence of things not seen.”*

*— Hebrews 11:1.*

## Chapter 11

# Thai Local Wisdom Healing

### Yu Fai; Yam Khang; Tok Sen; Herbal Ball; Herbal Spa

Knowledge to maintain health, combat ailments, heal diseases, and handle physical and mental problems occurred in daily lives have been an inseparable part of human being since the dawn of time. Thais are no exception, but in their own way—the Thai Way.

Thai massage, as mentioned in this book is one branch of the Thai traditional medicine. However, in the Thai massage itself, there are other kinds of healing stemmed from the art to help and heal people locally and regionally. Thus, the term “local wisdom” is widely known in the health care field.

The knowledge or the wisdom has mostly seen from villagers using what they learned from their ancestors and/or adapted from their own finding. Similar to Thai massage and Thai traditional medicine, the transfer of this collected wisdom came by way of memory, oral teaching, the elders observing, and undergoing trials on their own.

#### The Lanna Thai Local Wisdom Healing Revival Project<sup>70</sup>

In 2004, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, under the support and guidance from the Thai Health and Development Foundation and the Thai Gov-

ernment published the finding from the revival research. The project was set out to gather, collate, and revive the local wisdom healing treatments and prescriptions from the local northern Thai traditional medicine doctors known as “Mor Muang”. The treatments aimed for the peasants far and near in the northern part of Thailand. The term “Lanna” is normally referred to the northern region from the ancient era.

The revival project formed a team of ten Mor Muangs from five major provinces of Thailand and four research scholars in the field of Thai traditional medicine. The team was headed by Assistant Professor Dr. Yingyong Toaprasert, the Dean of the College of Thai Traditional Medicine at that time and Dr. Kanyanud Toaprasert who is the present dean (year 2016).

The research was conducted over the period of three years and concluded in 2004 by way of study, discussion, investigation of the manuscripts’ application and review of the outcome from the huge amount of data gathered from many Mor Muang around the region. The ancient sermons and prescriptions were mostly written on the palm leaves and Sa paper. There were around 1,400 manuscripts including nearly 700 ancient medicinal manuscripts. The research



team organized the knowledge data into four texts for better data management.<sup>70</sup>

The first one covers theory, belief, and wisdom on human body and mind, the understanding of diseases and sickness, the diagnosis and how to handle them.

The second source of information is on prevention, health maintenance, healing by way of physical management and occupational therapy in cooperation with herbal medicine. This section of healing applies directly to people.

The third source is the healing with herbal food and herbs for medicines. The study contains records of properties and healing application, both on local food and herbs. The study reviewed over 500 types of herbs but the research team agreed upon the lists and the properties of about 450 herbs. This important study included standards setting for the practice and the preparation of herbal medicine, to ensure that the practice would be more acceptable in the modern era.

The fourth and the last text branched into the realm of belief and faith. People in the villages live with nature and their lives are one with the earth, the water, the air and all the seen and unseen elements around them. The use of ceremony in healing is a way of life similar to other ceremonies in the modern world. The practices applied from birth to the time of departing the body. It is like a touch of spirit upon the mind, energizes it with the energy from within.<sup>70</sup>

For the benefit of the readers, the authors would like to present some of the more common practices with details and their application.



## **Postnatal Care for New Mother or ‘Yu Fai’ in Thai**

Today, Yu Fai tradition is still practiced by women in Thai rural areas. This is a recent phenomenon with the renewed interest in Thai traditional medicine as a natural alternative rather than using modern western-based medicine. New generation mothers are beginning to use an adapted version of Yu Fai to suit their modern way of living.

The right time to receive Yu Fai care in normal labor women is 7 days after delivery and 30-45 days after giving birth by cesarean section surgery. The period of Yu Fai care should be no less than 7 days, with maximum benefits obtained after 15 days.

In accordance with traditional post-natal practices, the mother and her newborn have to remain inside the room for one month. This practice is called “Yu Fai” (heat therapy). During this month, Thai mothers receive herbal therapies which include Thai massage using herbal compresses known in Thai as “Luuk Prakop”, abdominal salt pot herbal compress “Tab Mor Klua”, heating the vaginal area by sitting over a herbal hot charcoal smoked seat “Nang Tharn”, and entering a herbal sauna.

During the past decade, after gaining strong support from the government and the public trust, Thai traditional medicine has pushed for implementation of Thai local wisdom to improve people’s health and wellbeing. The movements are from the Health and Services Community Hospitals throughout the country. The hospitals apply the local wisdom on post-natal care for the new mothers. Several research studies were conducted in these hospitals to prove the effectiveness and to enable the hospitals to improve post labour care and request more funding from the government.<sup>62</sup>