

CHAPTER

2

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According to the sixty mural tablets at Wat Pho, the first eighteen tablets described the Sen Sib with pathways and therapeutic points to treat certain diseases and symptoms. These eighteen tablets prescribed Sen Sib and the Wind (*Lom*) that causes the ailments and the treatment points.

Some Sen Sib have the same points to treat the same symptoms. Some treat the similar symptoms or have similar names. The Foundation of Health and Development gathered the treatment points for symptoms on each Sen Sib and collated related symptoms to Sen Sib for easier access to study and beneficial to the practice of the Thai traditional medicine massage practitioners.⁸

The ancient Thais relied on elements of life (*Earth, Water, Fire, and Wind*) and life energy *Prana* with a belief that obstruction in Sen Sib pathway was the cause of most ailments. For symptoms caused by or related to Sen Sib,

several conditions involved time of day, type of food intake and wrong habits. When all or some of these causes occurred, the person developed blockage in one or more of Sen Sib.⁹

The symptoms would coincide with the Sen Sib that obstructed. The symptoms indicated here were from the documentation inscribed on the mural tablets mentioned above.

Sen Sib Massage Treatment

The simple way to apply Thai massage to alleviate the blockage according to the Sen Sib in the following chart is to massage the entire Sen Sib pathways. Applying massage learned in the last chapter of this book (The Foundation of Thai Massage) and additional course at the Thai Massage School of Chiang Mai (Enhancement Thai Massage: Level II) will cover all ten Sen Sib pathways. However, in general Thai massage learning, the practitioner can massage the entire body and that should provide the



Sen Sib painting with therapeutic points



Sen Sib mural tablets

recipient enough coverage of the Sen Sib pathways. This practice is sufficient to enhance *Prana* flow and promote wellbeing for the recipients as well.

For more pronounced symptoms affected by blockage on particular Sen Sib, the practitioner may wish to review the relations between the Sen and *Lom* conditions, then apply massage according to the treatment points. In depth study on massaging Sen Sib is required and it is not within the scope of this book.

Understanding Sen Sib and Bodily Organ

Evident of Sen Sib and the diseases by way of *Lom* obstruction in one or more Sen Sib pathways were shown in the mural tablets. Hence, the symptoms occurred and were likely to follow by symptoms and diseases. In all documents concerning Sen Sib, *Lom*, treatment points, massage pathways, the ancient teachers did not link Sen Sib to the organ. They never mentioned that this Sen or this treatment point was for liver, or heart, or spleen, or kid-

ney, or lung etc. Unlike Chinese meridian and acupuncture points represent bodily organs. When particular points were treated, the related organs were also affected.¹⁰

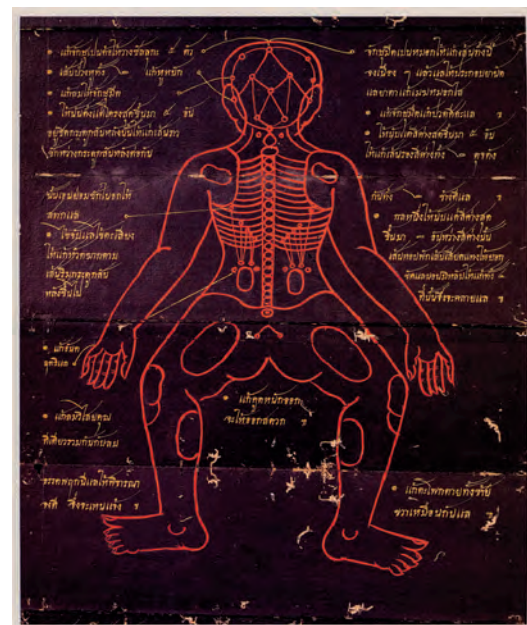
Lom and Sen Sib are the heart of the healing theory of Thai traditional medicine. The teaching concentrates on the passage and the flow of *Lom* in Sen Sib. *Lom* flows well in Sen Sib, then the person is well. On the other hand, when *Lom* does not flow well for whatever reason, obstruction occurs and illness happens.

Understanding Lom in the Thai Way

Lom in general meaning of Thai word is like air or wind. But in the sense of ancient healing, it means something like life force but not necessarily the same wind-life force. It appeared that the ancient teachers might discover that in certain Sen Sib, there were *Lom* with different characteristic which affected that Sen and thus produced illness. From their observation on various conditions and location of the body, they assigned the names of *Lom*. Therefore, some Sen had the same *Lom* and some had more than



Drawing showing Sen and Lom cause and treatment: Front



Drawing showing Sen and Lom cause and treatment: Rear



one *Lom*. The symptom of the same *Lom* was the same whether it was in another *Sen*. This was common when some blockage produced similar symptoms on different *Sen*.

The lists of *Lom* in the following chart are those found in the *Sen Sib* mural tablets and recorded in modern Thai language by the Foundation of Health and Development. But there are many more *Lom* which affect other parts of the body beside in *Sen Sib* pathways. They are evident in the remaining forty two mural tablets from the ancient era. These treatment points and prescription have been practiced by the ancient teachers and traditional medicine doctors ever since.

Sen Sib and Lom Treatment the Thai Way

Thai traditional medicine doctors, in attempt to treat the patients following *Sen Sib* and *Lom* symptoms related are still in practice though with less numbers. Modern scholars find this healing by direct massage on *Sen Sib* quite fascinating and motivating. Out of curiosity and genuine interest there are many ongoing studies and investigating trials on the subject.

There was the study on direct effect on *Sen Sib* massage to relieve neck stiffness to white-collar workers by graduate students and faculties at the College of Oriental Medicine and Physical Therapy Department, Rangsit University, faculty at the Faculty of Medicine, Thammasat University, Rangsit Center, and a Thai traditional medicine teacher specialized in *Sen Sib* massage on 40 people ages from 28-50 years old. The study was to measure the improvement on the pain and neck movement level of *Sen Sib* massage pre and post study. The participants received massage along *Sen Sib* that affected the neck movement and caused pain. The result

indicated impressive improvement: reduction of neck pain and neck stiffness and an increase in neck's mobility to participants' satisfaction.¹¹

Another study was on the examination, diagnosis and treatment to the patients according to Life Elements and *Sen Sib* Theory.

The project was conducted by the cooperation of the Foundation of Health and Development, Chao Phraya Abhaibhubej Hospital, College of Thai Traditional Medicine Phraya Abhaibhubej and Wangnumyen Hospital.¹² *Sen Sib* and element of life have been accepted as the major treatment methods of Thai traditional medicine. However, in the ancient available documents and mural tablets there was no record of how to apply them. The application on *Sen Sib* was a delicate one, assumed that the practice was transferred orally and by observing and doing. The related organizations nowadays saw the need of collating the knowledge from the remaining teachers and folk doctors to bring about the healing techniques for the new generation folk doctors and massage practitioners.

In an attempt to seek the standard of practice with *Sen Sib*, the project established the actual treatment by way of the actual trial practice from six experienced Thai massage teachers – folk doctors who are well accepted in the communities. The study based on the following criteria:

Diagnosis Guidelines of Illness and Condition According to Sen Sib Theory⁸

1. The practitioners' practice will base on *Sen Sib* tracing from Wat Pho and from King Rama II era and following the text of the Health and Development Foundation.⁹
2. The practitioners will rely on the three