

ABSTRACT

The research entitled, “Healthy Families under Lan Na Traditions: Lifestyle and Healthcare”, is a three-year study project. It was conducted in the fiscal year 2549-2551, and studied the people of three age groups, that is, the young, the middle and the elderly in the Upper North of Thailand. As for the fiscal year 2550 (the second year of the project) it studied the young with three objectives: 1) to study lifestyle and healthcare of Lan Na children under Lan Na traditions, 2) to create the fund of knowledge on Lan Na studies, preserving and disseminating far and wide the knowledge on lifestyle and healthcare of the Lan Na children, and 3) to provide relevant data for those who are concerned with studying and comparing the lifestyle and Lan Na traditional medicine in the past. And such traditional medicine would be applicable for modern life and for the problem about children and families.

Data collection for the study is made possible through purposively structured interview held with 59 sampling subjects. They comprised the elderly and the learned persons who still have the Lan Na traditional lifestyle in rural areas of the eight northern provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, Lampang, Phayao, Phrae, Nan and Mae Hong Son. Besides, the Lan Na manuscripts (palm leaf and handmade paper) and other relevant documents are also used for the study.

The research results show that the Lan Na children in the past lived a simple life among prevalent nature. Their families were happy: parents, children and relatives were bound by family ties and kept close to each other. Children respected the elderly people and upheld their admonitions, which taught them to be grateful, to be diligent, to be responsible, and to hold fast to Buddhism and traditional beliefs and practices. Women had not to expose themselves to men for carnal love. Additionally, they had to know household chores. Men had to be interested in acquiring knowledge, and had to get ordination and study Buddhism in order to pay back an obligation to their parents and to be able to lead a household life in the future. In terms of healthcare when they got sick, the children would get a remedy from local medical practitioner (native traditional doctor) according to the manuscript on medicinal herbs and magical spells, including rituals performed so as to propitiate the sacred beings or spirits they respected since early times. It is believed that such beings caused sickness to children. When compared the children in the old days to the children of nowadays, the former were good and honest, and caused no troubles to families and society as the children of today did, even though they had far less knowledge and education.