

ABSTRACT

The research entitled, "Healthy Families under Lan Na Traditions: Lifestyles and Healthcare of the Youth", is a three-year project which was carried out during the fiscal year 2006-2008. It dealt with studying the people of three age groups: children, adults and elderly people in the Upper-North of Thailand. The fiscal year 2008 (third year of the project) was spent on studying the adults with emphasis on three objectives: 1) to study the lifestyles and healthcare of the Lan Na youth with holistic approach in line with Lan Na Thai traditions, 2) to build up folk wisdom on Lan Na Culture, conserve knowledge on the lifestyles and healthcare of the Lan Na youth, and propagate it more widely, and 3) to provide the concerned with the study/comparison of the Lan Na lifestyles and herbal remedy in the past in order for them to apply the aforesaid knowledge to the present living for solving social and family problems.

Data collection for this research was made possible through purposively structured interview which was held with the early and learned people who are still living a traditional life in the eight provinces of Northern Thailand: Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, Lampang, Phayao, Phrae, Nan and Mae Hong Son. In addition, the Lan Na old documents (palm leaf manuscripts-traditional papers books) and others were also used in the study.

Results of the research showed that the Lan Na youth in the past lived a simple, contented life; they established themselves in admonitions of the elderly persons and led wholeheartedly their lives according to Buddhist teachings and traditional beliefs, for which traditions and festivals were performed all the year round and for a period of the life. And they were mostly engaged in agriculture which had been transmitted down to the present since their ancestors. Consequently, most of them spent their lives outdoors in the paddy field and forest more than in the town. The male was the leader and principal labor of the family with indispensable responsibility. The Lan Na young men usually preferred to have their body tattooed, and were ordained for the sake of education because those who had been ordained were socially recognized, especially by the girl's parents more than those who had not, while the Lan Na girls were taught not to expose themselves to the opposite sex and to learn to be a good housewife. Traditionally, the Lan Na boys and girls have been given freedom to lead their lives, especially in selecting their partners as seen from the tradition of courtship, giving an opportunity to boys and girls to acquaint themselves with one another. However, they were in the eye of the elderly and strictly followed traditional practices. And, if an unacceptable behavior was committed by the boy, the latter had to be responsible for such breach by offering a set of propitiations begging pardon from ancestral spirits "Siaphi".



The Lan Na boys and girls have holistically taken care of their health, both physical and mental, beginning from food intakes mostly consisting of herbal vegetables which, at the same time, functioned as food for body and as medical remedy for the sick. When people got sick, they usually went to see local medical practitioner or traditional doctor using herbal medication. The healing practice firstly depends on herbs which were prepared by grinding a particular herb on a piece of stone and with water to extract its medicinal action for the patient to drink. Nearly every family possessed such medicine to the extent that it was called a family common remedy in Lan Na. Besides, magical spells and rituals were used in conjunction with medication in order to rouse morale and courage of the patient for rapid healing efficacy.

It will be seen that the Lan Na boys and girls lived a simple, natural life amidst peace, fairness, safety, and physical and mental happiness in accordance with individual status in such a way that it could be called that this is a healthy family under Lan Na traditions.

