

1 The Prominent Characteristics of Austroasiatic Traditional Folk 2 Doctors in the Lower Kong River Ethnography

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5 *Received: 13 December 2017 Accepted: 3 January 2018 Published: 15 January 2018*

6 **Abstract**

7 The purpose of this Ethnographic study is to study the characteristics of Austroasiatic
8 traditional folk doctors of the Kha Ethnography in The People's Republic of Laos. The target
9 study group consists of Austroasiatic traditional folk doctors in the lower Kong River
10 Ethnography (Kha Tribe) in The People's Republic of Laos. This study utilizes Qualitative
11 Research and relies on In-depth Interview. Thorough interviewing with Folk doctors, their
12 family, relatives and neighbours about their birth until present. Including topics about way of
13 life, economy, religion, changes and globalization to deduct information of the prominent
14 characteristics of Kha tribe group. Precise study group purpose sampling, 10 traditional Kha
15 doctors that live in Champasak Province, the People's Republic of Laos. The results of the
16 study indicates that the prominent characteristics of the traditional folk doctors in The
17 People's Republic of Laos still utilize local knowledge continuously while curing the people in
18 the community and have 13 good prominent characteristics that are fit to be traditional
19 doctors that people respect; 1. Merciful, 2. Sacrificing, involved in 3. Constant learning, 4.
20 Securing (defending) community forest, 5. Upholding rituals, possessing 6. Psychic powers, 7.
21 Transmitting herbal remedy knowledge, 8. Have influence within the community, through
22 achieving the 9. Respect and admiration of the people, 10. Self preservation through example,
23 11. Uphold the 5 Precepts of Buddhism.

25
26 **Index terms**— Keywords : characteristics, traditional folk doctors, austro - asiatic ethnic group
27 The results of the study indicates that the prominent characteristics of the traditional folk doctors in The
28 People's Republic of Laos still utilize local knowledge continuously while curing the people in the community and
29 have 13 good prominent characteristics that are fit to be traditional doctors that people respect; 1. merciful,
30 2. sacrificing, involved in 3. constant learning, 4. securing(defending) community forest, 5. upholding rituals,
31 possessing 6. psychic powers, 7. transmitting herbal remedy knowledge, 8. have influence within the community,
32 through achieving the 9. respect and admiration of the people, 10. self preservation through example, 11. uphold
33 the 5 precepts of Buddhism, 12. uphold promoting alms and prayer and utilizing superstition(black magic) to heal
34 the patients. Additionally they are recognized leaders in the community. They are examples in health. 13. They
35 conserve medical folk knowledge and care for the health of the people in the community.

36 Suggestions. The traditional folk doctors in The People's Republic of Laos should promote the knowledge and
37 characteristics of traditional folk doctors from the community area to the regional level in the lower Kong River
38 countries to firmly develop and sustain the traditional folk doctors knowledge for future generations.

3 II. THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

39 1 Keywords: characteristics, traditional folk doctors, austroasiatic ethnic group.

40 health issues and sickness from transmitted chronic diseases in the Austroasiatic ethnic group in the lower Kong river have a rising tendency every year and affecting the costs of health services to rise accordingly. Using traditional medicine and herbs developed in accordance to managing the health of the Austroasiatic ethnic group importantly

41 Author: e-mail: thittyawaddee6@gmail.com appropriate to the way of life, culture, traditions and beliefs.
42 Traditional medicine is considered a tradition of looking after health and sickness of the people in the Austroasiatic ethnic group. By using knowledge of healing by experience and exercise from traditional doctors that have expertise important from life and culture (SaowaneeKhulasomboon and co., 2007 : 11) Traditional folk Doctor is folk wisdom that has been with the Thai community for a long period of time. Traditional folk Doctor is collective knowledge from direct sources and formulas and is important for traditional medicine practice. Traditional folk doctors have various methods in practice such as Tree 1.root medicine doctors practice using herbal remedies.
52 2. Blowing Doctors use various blowing rituals. The more common ingredients are chewing lime and blowing, chewing garlic and blowing, chewing various leaves and blowing.

53 Blessed water Doctors use holy water to sprinkle over the areas that are unwell. 3.Tendon Doctors practice by using their thumb and index finger to press the sprained tendons or adjusting dislocated joints. 4. Monk Doctors are monks who have the ability to heal patients by sprinkling holy water and teaching chants before night sleep. Dance Worshipping the Spirits Doctor are mostly female practitioners who heal by performing ritual dancing accompanied by Lao reed mouthorgan. 5. Evil Doctor are sometimes called witch doctors from curing illness caused by ghosts and spirits. They are also called Blessing Doctors, Brahmin Doctors. 6. Midwife Doctor is responsible for overseeing childbirth and cleaning the infant.

61 Traditional folk doctors of the Austro-asiatic ethnic group in the lower Kong river are people who follow folk wisdom. They have suitable knowledge to care for health of their community and nearby regions. They emphasize traditional philosophy, knowledge, practices to maintain the health, cure diseases and sickness in accordance to traditions, culture and ways of life. Practices include usage of herbs, Thai spa massage , traditional cure for bones. Usage of Buddhist beliefs and rituals to maintain both personal body and mental health. Usage of Natural therapy obtained from collective, transmitted knowledge. Having observation, maintaining journals and study that has been passed on from one generation to the next. Extensive knowledge of thorough therapy is knowing the cause of the disease, knowledge of the disease, symptoms. Knowledge of medicine used to cure, their properties, methods to prepare them for use to determine the appropriate treatment for each disease.

70 The phenomenon that confirms the practice of traditional folk doctors is depicted on wall carvings in Bayon Sanctuary (1113 A.D -1150 A.D.) world heritage NakhonWat, Siem Reap, Cambodia. It is a depiction of the practice by traditional folk doctors of the Austroasiatic ethnic group (Kha Tribe) in the lower Mae Klong Basin as in Picture 1.

74 2 Source: (Thittyawaddee Intarangkul, Photograph, 2014, May 17)

75 Picture 1: Ancient traditional folk doctors with attendants and patients which show respect and faith in the traditional folk doctors of NakhonWat Temple, Siem Reap Province, Cambodia.

76 From Picture 1, shows traditional medical practice by traditional folk doctors. It is widely popular in both royal and common households. It has been passed on as a resource and folk wisdom by curing with philosophy, knowledge, and traditional practices that maintain care for health and cure diseases accordingly to traditions, rituals and way of life. The practices include the use of herbs, Thai spa massage, as well as for traditional cure for bones. Usage of Buddhism and rituals to maintain body health and mental health. Usage of Natural therapy obtained from collective, passed on knowledge.

84 In The People's Republic of Laos there is a Lao Theung Ethnic group in southern Laos such as KhaOi and KhaTu dwelling in large numbers in the Xe River basin and Bolaven Plateau in Pakse and Paksong, Champasak Province. The characteristics of Kha Tribe still strongly preserve beliefs, customs in way of life, culture and traditions. Especially the traditional folk doctors who have influence over mentality and how the family and community lead their life. Whether it may be beliefs towards a higher power, natural defining powers, rituals according to beliefs to create peace in their group, or looking after the health of the community such as taking care, cure of sickness of the people in the community. Traditional folk doctors are responsible for treating the sick even though we have made progress in medicine, have hospitals, clinical facilities that provide convenience more than before (ever). Traditional folk doctors are still many peoples choice of treatment. We might have heard the phrase "I went to see the doctor but never got any better but then I went to see a Traditional folk doctor and was cured immediately." The experience and practice of medicine of traditional folk doctors is a treasure of wisdom that has high value in studying.

96 3 II. The Purpose of this Study

97 To study the characteristics of traditional folk doctors of Kha tribe in The People's Republic of Laos.

98 4 III. The Results

99 The results find that the characteristics of traditional folk doctors of Kha tribe in The People's Republic of Laos
100 still use the knowledge passed on from their ancestors. They help in curing people in the community since the
101 past until the present time. The traditional folk doctors of the Kha tribe are respected in (by) the community.
102 A Traditional folk doctor has to have strong characteristics that are appropriate such as merciful, sacrifice,
103 continuous learning, protecting community forest, uphold rituals, have psychic powers, pass down herbal folk
104 knowledge, have influence over people in the community, are respected and revered, self preserve, uphold the 5
105 precepts and have mystical healing powers. Additionally good characteristics include leadership in community,
106 set the example of self health preservation (look after oneself), Conserve traditional medical folk wisdom and
107 care for community health as follows.

108 5 a) The Kindness

109 The Kindness of Traditional folk doctor is a characteristic that should set an example for the villagers of
110 persons concerned in caring for patients. They are friendly, wish well for others. Merciful without particularity.
111 Mercifulness comes from cultivating oneself in everyday life or being kind towards the next person and expanding
112 to others in a wider range. As the saying "Curing someone is like making good merits. Receive happiness from
113 curing someone because they trust and revere in me" (Sang Champeng, 2013, September 7). The of Traditional
114 folk doctor should be merciful. Make patients revere and respect. In accord with Doctor PhaiKhumathong says
115 with a happy expression "People who come were troubled. After helping them I felt proud." (PhaiKhumathong.
116 2013 September 21).

117 6 b) Sacrifice

118 Sacrifice is standard virtue of the of Traditional folk doctor. Sacrifice personal happiness for the community.
119 In according to an interview "Be able to help them from distress is satisfying enough. I don't think about the
120 money" (BieawKhumdeewai. 2013, June 22). Traditional folk doctors see that public benefits are important.
121 Influencing the community to be happy, generous towards one another.

122 7 c) Constant Learning

123 Constant Learning is essential for traditional folk doctors. To search for new knowledge, constantly keeping up
124 to date with the advancement of society and treatment of diseases. It is training oneself to always be skillful.
125 Learning skills come from observation. Observing the surroundings or object of study. The duties of traditional
126 folk doctors is up to the beliefs about health and affect health altering behaviour in preventing, curing, nursing
127 and restoring health of the villagers. "Nowadays people in the community have increased interest in massage.
128 They organize association (clubs) and have doctor Chatwan come teach without any expenses" (NoiThanepoon.
129 2012, May 26).

130 8 d) Protect Community Forest

131 To preserve and protect them for the next generation to insure long lasting benefits. Traditional folk doctors can
132 find medical herbs from within the community forest.

133 9 "I am a Traditional folk Doctor (Massage Doctor). I also have 134 a rice field. People come to me for massage almost every day. 135 Every day after I bathe and have breakfast if I don't go to 136 my rice field I go to the community Thai massage club. I 137 make massage cream (medicine) and compress herbal ball." 138 (NoiThanepoon. 2012, May 26).

139 10 e) Rituals

140 Performing rituals or attending rituals is training people to know order, train discipline. Will lead people to
141 uphold precepts. Rituals will better help the results of healing of traditional folk doctors. "Broken bones,
142 sprains, Hemorrhoids, Septicemia, Colon cancer, asthma, diabetes, healing broken bones we blow, use sesame
143 oil and reattach the bones with magic. Check symptoms to choose the most suitable medicine for the bone."
144 (Ken Thongsai. 2013 September 25). Traditional folk doctors use rituals in addition when curing patients to
145 help increase the rate of success. But rituals are based on supernatural superstition than can cure depending on
146 beliefs and faith of people in the community.

147 11 f) Psychic Powers

148 Have Psychic powers by strengthening the soul and Calm the soul to be tranquil state. Calmly analyze one's
149 emotions without being immersed in the effects of the emotion. Traditional folk doctors prefer to use rituals and
150 psychic powers to cure patients accompanying in tandem with the use of medicine and herbs."I am happy to learn
151 this practice. it is far to go see a doctor. they come to me instead. When i see them smile after they are healed,
152 I am happy." (NattakitSawadtong. 2013 September 25) and "Broken bones, sprains, Hemorrhoids, Septicemia,
153 Colon cancer, asthma, diabetes, healing broken bones which we have blown on, use sesame oil and reattach the
154 bones with magic. Check symptoms to choose the most suitable medicine for the bone." (Ken Thongsai. 2013
155 September 25) traditional folk doctors that utilize psychic powers accompanying with medical treatment are
156 usually those who are pure. They constantly strengthen their soul and psychic powers to positively increase the
157 success of healing. This is in according to the beliefs and faith of people in the community. These rely on contact
158 with supernatural powers such as powerful ghosts, holy entities etc.

159 12 g) Relaying knowledge of medical herbs

160 Passing down folk knowledge of traditional folk doctors is the passing on of collected knowledge from ancestors
161 to their successors or people who were chosen through extensive selection to become the bearer of folk medical
162 knowledge. To preserve folk knowledge of family and community onwards.

163 13 h) Influence over community behaviour

164 This is a main element of the traditional folk doctors towards activities continuously, by being example in life.
165 To promote good health in body, soul, emotion and in community. Having proper behavior and setting a good
166 example and having good results in healing others. traditional folk doctors are important in creating trust and
167 reverence of the people in the community. Whatever the traditional folk Doctor does or invite the people to
168 do, people will join. Traditional folk doctors have influence over the behaviour of the community whatever
169 the activity would be. Should support the traditional folk doctors to be leaders in healthcare such as bringing
170 traditional folk doctors to disseminate information and knowledge to leaders of the village to take care of their
171 own health needs.

172 14 i) Respect and Faith

173 Respect and Faith is a factor that the villagers have towards traditional folk doctors. Setting a good

174 15 j) Self Preservation

175 Self Preservation is preparing oneself for taking care of oneself health. Preparation of medical instruments and the
176 correct medicine. Including skills and basic knowledge in diagnosing their own sickness. Usually this preservation
177 includes rituals and beliefs, traditional Thai medicine, passed on medicine remedies. The strong beliefs and trust
178 in traditional medical doctors is a main factor in deciding behaviour of the people.

179 16 k) The Five Precepts

180 Traditional folk doctors will strictly uphold the five precepts in order to show respect to the teachers and to
181 help in successfully curing the patients. Upholding the five precepts is part of maintaining spirit (soul heart).
182 To be traditional folk doctor that is leader of community, he has to encourage the community to uphold the five
183 precepts for everyone to have basic care of their own health.

184 17 l) Alms and Pray

185 Traditional folk doctors should strictly uphold Alms, Precepts and Pray. They make the Traditional folk Doctor
186 have pure souls. Makes them think only positively. Refrain from being greedy. Makes those staying in the
187 community demonstrate generosity towards one another. Makes taking care of health of people in community
188 with generosity such as Traditional folk Doctor Don't emphasise on accumulating profits from healing. Even if
189 they get nothing in return, they will still help willingly.

190 18 m) Supernatural Power in Healing

191 Supernatural power in healing is the belief and trust that the patients exhibit towards traditional folk doctors.
192 Similar to treatment of that one would exhibit towards a relative. Some of the physical sickness can be cured
193 by changing one's mindset. A lot of knowledge of Traditional folk Doctor is intangible. While they are curing
194 patients, they continue to chant incantations. Authentic traditional folk doctors will focus on training their soul,
195 upholding Buddhist precepts, Maintain a strict routine. A lot of these doctors chant while collecting herbs.
196 When going into the forest to look for medical herbs they have to choose the timing, have special chants while
197 they do so. When they pick herbs, they pray to their teachers to help ensure the herbs will help in the healing
198 of patients. Traditional folk doctors utilize rituals to help heal and also make the patients have faith and be
199 encouraged during the treatment which stimulates faster healing.

200 The characteristics of traditional folk doctors of Kha tribe in The People's Republic of Laos show that
201 the traditional folk doctors still use folk knowledge in continuous treatment of the Health in the community.
202 Traditional folk doctors will uphold in righteousness. They are respected and revered. They will be depended
203 upon in every aspect in the community. They will have roles in the society as leaders of village traditions,
204 conserve resources. Example of self-reliance in the community. Set an example in developing one's own health,
205 such as maintaining proper eating habits, exercising, promotion of healthy behaviour etc. Other than setting
206 a good example for the community, traditional folk doctors have a role in preserving medical folk wisdom and
207 knowledge to continuously pass on from one generation to the next. To maintain medical folk knowledge to
208 continue to play an important role in overseeing health of the community. Even though in this present day the
209 villagers have increased options in maintaining their health, traditional folk doctors still play an important role
210 in overseeing health of community.

211 **19 IV. Conclusion**

212 The traditional folk doctors of the Kha tribe is an ethnic group that maintains good traditions since ageold
213 times. It is an ethnic group that is peace-loving and friendly. They have customs and traditions that are unique
214 to themselves. The Kha tribe traditional folk doctors also have medical folk knowledge in curing patients which
215 combine beliefs and faith in supernatural powers to encourage miraculous healing of sicknesses. Additionally
216 medical folk knowledge regarding curing can also act as a bridge connecting relationships of people in the
217 community to tighten and strengthen the structure of the community tribe and can withstand the impact from
218 the outside. The Kha ethnic group still upholds and strongly believes in the traditions and customs of their
219 tribe. They cooperate together in community activities. They demonstrate unity within the group. They help
220 one another, share with others, are harmonious and respect each other. The children respect and look up to their
221 elders. They maintain relationships in families and especially medical folk knowledge. They pass on the teachings
222 so that traditional folk doctors can acquire the methods and medicine recipes that have been passed down by
223 their ancestors and teachers. We can still see traditional folk Medical Doctors use folk medical knowledge in
224 curing patients in their community today. The traditional folk doctors have ideas and beliefs concerning the
225 source of the sickness and diseases and the method of curing the sick within the community that are seeking help.
226 The Traditional folk doctor's way of life strictly upholds the teachings of their mentor teachers and ancestors.
227 They adhere to the teachings of righteousness. They are examples that the people look up to and respect as
228 philosophers of the community. They are those who villagers rely on.

229 There are thirteen outstanding characteristics of the traditional folk doctors of the Kha ethnic group in
230 The People's Republic of Laos. They are merciful, willing to sacrifice, constantly learning, protecting and
231 maintaining the community forest, upholding rituals, exhibiting psychic powers, inheriting herbal folk wisdom,
232 having influence in the community, respected and revered, believers in self-preservation, upholders of the five
233 Buddhist precepts, those who practice giving alms and praying and have supernatural powers in healing. Overall
234 there are five distinct groups: 1) Other than the characteristics of being merciful, sacrificing, setting proper examples,
235 constantly learning about the use of herbs and medicine and assuring that the community forest is protected. 2)
236 Traditional folk doctors like to use rituals and psychic powers along with medicine or herbs in curing patients and
237 passing down folk knowledge. 3) The respect and reverence towards traditional folk doctors is basic behaviour
238 towards promoting health and helps the participants to learn self-medication. 4) Self-preservation along with
239 traditional folk practices such as the five precepts, and uphold the use of alms giving, upholding precepts and
240 prayer are the main important basic characteristics utilized for healing patients. 5) Using knowledge in the basic
241 level and deeper levels. Also the traditional folk Doctor heals by utilizing rituals or magic.

242 Additionally traditional folk doctors maintain their roles in society as leaders of community traditions and
243 customs, conserving resources. Promoting self reliance within the community. Setting an example in developing
244 self reliance in promoting healthy choices such as choice of proper foods, of maintaining regular exercise or other
245 health promoting efforts etc. Other than setting an example for the community, traditional folk doctors have a
246 duty to preserve medical folk knowledge from generation to generation. Maintaining the medical folk knowledge
247 of the traditional doctors will continue to remain important in curing sickness of people in the community even
248 though in the present day the villagers have many different options available in choosing health care. The
249 traditional folk doctors still have to have an important role in promoting communities health efforts. There
250 should be additional studies conducted on other ethnic groups in the sub-districts of the Kong river basin.

251 2. The study cannot factually explain the mystical powers that heal the patients. There should be new studies
252 conducted in various fields for it to become acceptable as a means of new age medical practice.



Figure 1: Suggestions 1 .

The Prominent Characteristics of Austroasiatic
Traditional Folk Doctors in the Lower Kong
River Ethnography

Dr. Thittayawadee Intarangkul
Abstract-

Figure 2:

253 [Thongsai] , Ken Thongsai .

254 [Khumathong] 69 Years Old village 8 Kam District Jompra Prefecture Surin Province, Interviewees, Phai
255 Khumathong .

256 [76 Years Old village 8 Kam District Jompra Prefecture] 76 Years Old village 8 Kam District Jompra Prefecture,
257 (Surin Province, Interviewees)

258 [Khumdeewai] Bieaw Khumdeewai . 70 Years Old. 8 village 11 Kam District Jompra Prefecture, (Surin Province,
259 Interviewees)

260 [Sawadtong] Nattakit Sawadtong . 72 Years Old village 8 Kam District Jompra Prefecture, (Surin Province,
261 Interviewees)

262 [Kulasomboon ()] *Status and Direction of research Folk knowledge of Health. Institute of That Folk Medicine,*
263 Saowanee Kulasomboon . 2007. (Publisher Veteran Welfare Institute)

264 [Thanepoon] Noi Thanepoon . 52 Years Old. 73 village 11 Kam District Jompra Prefecture, (Surin Province,
265 Interviewees)

266 [Theory, globalization and local wisdom Atchara Phanurat ()] ‘Theory, globalization and local wisdom’ *Atchara*
267 *Phanurat* 2014. Surindar Rajaphat University