

# THE GUIDELINES TO BRING THAI MEDICINE AND HERBS BASED ON LOCAL WISDOM AND TO DEVELOP THEM INTO CULTURAL HEALTH SUPPLEMENTARY PRODUCTS: A CASE STUDY OF U-THAI PRASIT CORPORATION, PRACHIN BURI PROVINCE

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**Abstract:** The study on “The Guidelines to Bring Thai Medicine and Herbs Based on Local Wisdom and to Develop them into Cultural Health Supplementary Products: A Case Study of U-Thai Prasit Corporation, PrachinBuri Province” is a qualitative research in which the interview research method was conducted with the 2 informants of the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation to whom the body of knowledge on Thai medicine and herbs being developed into cultural health supplementary products was handed down. The participative and non-participative observation methods were also utilized in order to collect data on types of medicines together with their respective attributions that were related with the marketing efforts. The research found that the 100 years old interconnection of knowledge on Thai medicine and traditional herbs from the 1<sup>st</sup> generation down to the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation was in response to the anthropological concepts on belief, indoctrination and superstition. The knowledge on Thai medicine and herbs in every legend must have a guru who was characterized as a hermit of a family. The knowledge of medicine must be carried on through the blood-line to prevent the misfortune in life. While the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation used and practiced their medicine as a folk medication, the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation has modified their knowledge and turned it into a business of cultural health supplementary products. They reorganized the conventional knowledge and adjusted it to comply with not the only the quality standards specified by Thai traditional medicine, Ministry of Public Health, but also with the market trends on the demand of health promotion products.

**Keywords:** Thai Medicine and Herbs, Local Wisdom, Cultural Health Supplementary.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In every society, there are many alternative ways of taking care of ones' health. The supernatural power, rites and rituals together with the use of medicine and local herbs in practice of folk medication are different according to the social perspectives and traditional culture. When the western concept of medication has been prevailed, the science of medication yields an empirical result and can be explained based on reasons, the conventional knowledge on medicine has been changed and modern medication has been greeted as having an absolute power of healing. [1] Thai society has been practicing local medication in which local medicine and herbs were used to cure various diseases as documented in the history. Although the western medication and the erection of hospital in 19<sup>th</sup> century were spread in many parts of Thailand, there were many remote areas in the country that still practiced folk medication by relying on local medicine and herbs.

PrachinBuri province is one of the provinces in the eastern part of Thailand. This province is also the prototype of Thai traditional medication, having Chao PhyaAbhaibhubejhr hospital as a leader that uses local medicine and herbs to cure various diseases as well as to promote and develop nonprescription drugs in accordance with the Institute of Thai Medication, Public Health Ministry. The body of knowledge concerning drugs and herbs in this premise is

therefore very crucial and related with the Thai local wisdom. Beside the knowledge accumulated at the hospital, there is also another important drug and herbs knowledge that has a relationship with the local history. This is the reason why this particular research is conducted.

The story of Thai medicine and herbs begins with Kun (the lowest conferred rank of Thai nobility, below Luang) U-Thai Prasit who was a royal doctor of Chao PhyaAbhaibhubejhr (Chum A-Pai Wong), the governor of Battambang precinct (is now in Cambodia) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a provincial governor or jaomeuang (in Thai), he had 22 wives and 44 sons and daughters. Kun U-Thai Prasit is an internist who looks after the well-being of the members of the governor's family and satellites for more than 40 years. When he moved into PrachinBuri province, he handed down all of the knowledge together with drugs and herbs information to his son, Mr. TheeraBoonpakdee and his daughter-in-law, Mrs. WinitBoonpakdee who were responsible to procure the inputs and to grind the medicine. After Kun U-Thai Prasit passed away, Mr. Theera has been practicing the local medication and has been licensed by the Public Health Ministry. He is being known as “MorLuk In (Mor means doctor).” From the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of Kun U-Thai Prasit to the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of Mr. Theera who has been practicing the local medication at his clinic in PrachinBuri province for 40 years, when Mr. Theera or MorLuk In died, all of

medicine and herbs knowledge now has been transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, Mr. Tawan and Mrs. ChaloeipornBoonpakdee. These two individuals have been inculcated with drugs and herbs knowledge through the family-line and also educated themselves with the rules and regulations as well as standards set by Thai Traditional Medicine Institution, Public Health Ministry. They modified the production process and distribution in response to the modern marketing mechanism. They established the medicine production factory called “U-Thai Prasit Corporation” in which the drugs and herbs knowledge of Kun U-Thai Prasit has been continued and prevailed. [2]The study of the connection between the various traditional contextual medicine and herbs knowledge based on indigenous wisdom and the development of these drugs by the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation to become cultural health supplementary products, with more than 100 varieties of medicines in 10 categories, is considered as a valuable conservation of Thai local wisdom in a form of health promotion products at the moment.

## II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

**2.1.** To study the connection of knowledge on Thai medicine and herbs based on local wisdom to become health supplementary products.

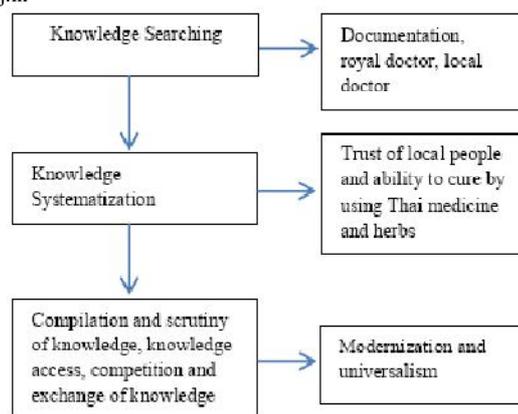
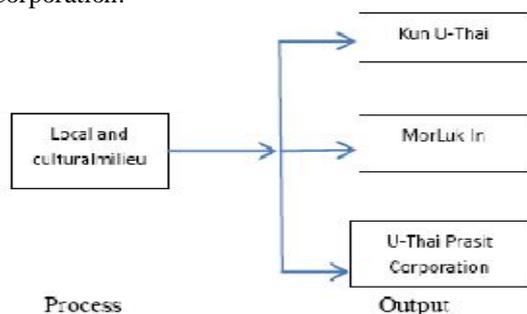
**2.2.** To study the modification of drugs and herbs business into the cultural health supplementary products.

## III. THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study on “The Guidelines to Bring Thai Medicine and Herbs Based on Local Wisdom and to Develop them into Cultural Health Supplementary Products: A Case Study of U-Thai Prasit Corporation, PrachinBuri Province” is a research that collects, analyzes and interprets data pertaining to the development of Thai local wisdom on drugs and herbs into the cultural health supplementary products in the area of PrachinBuri province.

## IV. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study of the local wisdom starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> generation up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of U-Thai Prasit Corporation.



## V. THE RELATED THEORIES

**5.1. Anthropological Theory:** Human existence in every society and race, illness is inevitable and considered as a common phenomenon in very life. By this reason, there is an emergence of a person who is capable of using medicine and herbs that are made from plants or weeds or other things available in the area to cure the diseases. The traditional local medication is witnessed in very society (KomatraChuengsatiansup, 2548).[3] Before the western medical science becomes popular as a systematic way of medication, each human race especially those who reside in a far and remote areas, man and nature are always inter-dependable. On top of that, the belief in superstition and folk inculcation are viewed as a way of medication and health preservation. [4]

**5.2. Innovation Theory:** The various innovations that can enhance a better quality of life and respond to the needs and want of consumers are well accepted by the people through the processes of self-study, the inter-connection between the old and new information, decision-making provocation, information assessment, social norms, open-mindedness for change, and integration of communication. If the innovation can generate income and is easy to use, this will affect the acceptance of the innovation (PrapapenSuwan, 2526: 110-111). [5]

## VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**6.1.** Documentary search from historical data and related documentation concerning PrachinBuri province.

**6.2.** Documentary search on medical production of U-Thai Prasit Corporation.

**6.3** Focus-group study with the relatives and concerned individuals about knowledge on medicine and herbs of MorLuk In.

**6.4.** In-depth interview with the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, Mr. Tawan and Mrs. ChaloeipornBoonpakdee.

- 6.5. Interview with drug producer and dispenser at U Thai Prasit Corporation and 20 of drugs buyers.
- 6.6. Data verification with the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation.
- 6.7. Data modification for national presentation.
- 6.8. Final publication.

## VII. RESEARCH FINDINGS

**7.1.** The connection of knowledge on Thai medicine and herbs based on local wisdom to become health supplementary products. Dated back 100 years ago in 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Kun U-Thai Prasit, the royal doctor of the Battambang and PrachinBuri governor (Chum A-Pai Wong), practiced his medication and healed nobility as well as commoners for 40 years. His descendent, Mr. Theera, had been helping him as an assistant, and at the same time, had a chance to learn by practice the arts of medication based on local wisdom of Kun U-Thai Prasit on Thai drugs and herbs. When Kun U-Thai Prasit passed away, Mr. Theera had been practicing his medication based on Kun U-Thai Prasit's body of knowledge on Thai drugs and herbs for another 40 years. In practicing his local medication, Mr. Theera, or being known as MorLuk In, had received a licensed medicine certification from the Ministry of Public Health and opened his clinic in PrachinBuri province. When Mr. Theera had been deceased, Mr.ThawanBoonpakdee, the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, has inherited the family medical business by having belief that there is a "hermit" who looks after the medication and it is a must that the family members to continue the operation. Mr. Thawan strongly believes that the spirits of Kun U-Thai Prasit and Mr. Theera are still watching over the family and wish the family well with good fortune. During the period of Kun U-Thai Prasit, there were 10 categories of medicine comprising of over 100 varieties of local drugs. The drugs and herbs have been promoted and publicized by the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation by MorLuk In. The raw materials for the drugs and herbs are collected from the forest and are baked, dried, and grinded to make medicines for swallow, application and sniff according to the kinds of illness in the tropical zone. Some are decoction medicines that are composed of many different types of plants and herbs. At the present, after 80 years have passed by, the raw materials obtained from the wild are very scarce due to the changing ecological environment. Moreover, the modern medication can cure many illnesses with much more effectiveness and efficiency. On this respect, the family of the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, together with the help from Public Health Ministry, have been trying for the last 15 years to study the science of Thai local medication and to adjust, modify, and develop the traditional local medication into the cultural health supplementary products. This effort is done in the name of U-Thai Prasit Corporation.

**7.2.** The modification of drugs and herbs business into the cultural health supplementary products. From

the data collection and the in-depth interviews, it reveals that the family of the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation has adjusted the business strategy and welcomed the innovation concept in order to operate the present medical business under the name of U-Thai Prasit Corporation.

**7.2.1.** The selling point is focused on the local wisdom of drugs and herbs knowledge that is adjusted and modified with the Thai traditional medication. The process has been accomplished by the owner of the business having educated and licensed as a legitimately producer and dispenser of Thai drugs and herbs.

**7.2.2.** The 10 categories of Thai drugs and herbs can be prescribed for male, female and children. The medicines that are used for digestive tract, and other medicine such as cough syrup, body tonic, heart tonic, and pain killers are called according to their attribution. For the cosmeceutical products, the names have been coined in accordance with the names of the particulars plants and/or herbs that are the major ingredients of the products. These newly developed products are very popular among the youngsters. In these 10 categories of drugs, the research discovered that, in the year 2015, the best-selling medical products were the 32 original products that used their original names since the period of MorLuk In. These products are medical products for males, females, children, and are categorized as body tonic, heart tonic, and pain-killers. These medical products of U-Thai Prasit Corporation are very popular and famous because:

**7.2.3.** The properties of the medicine concocted by Kun U-Thai Prasit who took good care of Chao PhyaAbhaibhubejhr's family in the past. There is a strong belief among local people that gentlemen and ladies alike were all in good health with beautiful complexion because of these ancient drugs. This is a folk-lore that has been passed on from one generation to the next in PrachinBuri province.

**7.2.4.** The value-appreciation in the attributions of the original Thai drugs and herbs to promote good health together with the modern marketing strategy concerning the package design, and the certification issued by responsible institutions all make the roducts in great demand for people living in the tropical zone.

**7.3.** The proliferation into the modernization and universality. At present, the Thai traditional medication has been using Thai drugs and herbs to promote health and has been practicing this medication at Chao PhyaAbhaibhubejhr hospital in PrachinBuri province. The hospital is famous and considered as a genuine prototype of Thai drugs and herbs restorer and developer. Besides, the standards, rules and regulations set by the Ministry of Public Health are important measures in order to regulate the Thai drugs and herbs business starting from the production, product quality, and distribution, to name just a few, to guarantee that the products will be safe

to all types of customers. The U-Thai Prasit Corporation has been using its networks to distribute the products to consumers at the community, provincial, regional and national levels. The company has also distributed its various products at the outskirts of Thailand and Cambodia. The selling method through the internet is another option undertaken by the company. The products can be distributed through the mail to remote areas where there is a lack of conventional drug stores. The company sees that an exchange of ideas among other business entrepreneurs on government policy and local administration will improve the drug business operation as a whole.

## DISCUSSION

The study on "The Guidelines to Bring Thai Medicine and Herbs Based on Local Wisdom and to Develop them into Cultural Health Supplementary Products: A Case Study of U-Thai Prasit Corporation, PrachinBuri Province" is in line with the anthropological, ecological and cultural concepts. The variety of plants and herbs in each specific area together with the traditional belief that is related with the co-existence of nature and man as portrayed in the work of KomatraChuengsatiansup.

The welcoming of innovation in which it can create added value on culture and economic perspectives. The administration, operation and data compilation on demand of each particular group of products that are related with age, occupation, income and lifestyle are very crucial factors in running the business. [6], [7], [8]

## CONCLUSION

The operation and the connection of body of knowledge on Thai drugs and herbs through the blood-line starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> generation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation are considered as an art of living life based on the anthropological concept and later are blended with the contemporary science of universality with the presence of an external regulator to monitor that the whole processes are up to the standard and the products are benign to life and health of the consumers. The restriction of tradition on WaiKru (paying respect to the teacher) or paying homage to the hermit in the belief that he is the beginner of all knowledge acquired is still practiced

by the owner of business who preserves the Buddhist precepts in the hope that his business will be prosper.

## SUGGESTION

The connection of body of knowledge on Thai medicine and herbs in the remedy of diseases and health rehabilitation are basic knowledge that should be empirically publicized in terms of the attribution and types of drugs available among people in the communities. There should be continuously intensive and systematic studies, trainings and searching attempts in order to identify local valuable objects in each particular area. The combination of the old and new body of knowledge will be the most invaluable heritage of the country.

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