

THESIS TITLE : TRADITIONAL HEALING : A CASE STUDY OF MO- LAM PHI  
PHA, NONG YAI VILLAGE, AMPHE VAENG NOI, CHANGWAT  
KHON KAEN

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#### ABSTRACT

The purposes of this thesis are to study the roles of a traditional healer in healing and in other social functions, the healing process of a traditional healer, and the decision-making factors of patients who have chosen this traditional healing treatment. This research is a case study of a traditional healer or "Mo Lam Phi Pha" in a village of Khon Kaen province in Northeastern Thailand.

This study uses qualitative methods as its main methodology which requires that the researcher lives with the family of the selected "Mo Lam Phi Pha" to conduct indept-interviews and participant observations. In addition, this research uses a

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household survey and secondary data collection to provide background for the case study.

The research findings include that "Mo Lam Phi Pha" has her own system of healing practice by utilizing the folk belief in spirits as her main method. "Mo Lam Phi Pha" cures only illness which is believed to be caused by spirits. In the healing process, "Phi Pha" who is believed to be the Supreme Spirit is called to possess the body of a "Mo Lam" to conduct healing treatment for a patient. The healing ritual is conducted at a patient's home. Once the illness is cured, the initiation ritual will be performed for the patient to become a disciple of the "Mo Lam Phi Pha."

The healing process of "Mo Lam Phi Pha" is an integration of the use of traditional beliefs and rituals which have many symbolic meanings originating from local culture and modern medical treatment. Usually when a patient gets ill, he goes to see a modern medical doctor at a hospital. Simultaneously, with his traditional belief, he consults with a traditional healer whom he receives information from his social network for treatment.

The expected roles of "Mo Lam Phi Pha" by villagers are healing, maintaining folk tradition and morality, and providing suggestions for solving family problems of villagers. For an individual, "Mo Lam Phi Pha" provides an explanation and interpretation of his illness which reduces his anxiety and increases his encouragement and confidence in dealing with problems encountered in his daily life. For a society, the roles of "Mo Lam Phi Pha" are like a social mechanism which helps regulate people's behavior, provides a social order and solidarity within a community, transmits a cultural heritage, and is a health

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consultant of a community.

At present, even though the penetration of modernization into a village community has reduced the social roles of "Mo Lam Phi Pha," her healing role has been increased because "Mo Lam Phi Pha" is able to apply a holistic approach in her healing treatment.