

A MEDICAL RETROSPECT OF THAILAND.*

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When the growth of an idea, or the perfection of a science, is traced backwards in time, a point is often reached when the development leaves the track of formal science and enters the wide and often ill-charted territory of the general achievement of man. For this reason, a balanced and just appreciation of the history of a science can be attained only when a complete and critical survey of its earliest origins is available; and this is always a matter of considerable difficulty. In the case of such a science as medicine, we know much about its history, but we do not know all about its development in the different parts of the world.

Originally I had the idea to speak about "Old Medicine in Thailand"; but as there are so many unsurmountable difficulties regarding the translation of Old Pali and Sanskrit words and regarding the description of old herbs, old medicine, etc., I had to give up this idea. I would like to state here that I am very deeply indebted to the President of our Society, His Highness Prince Dhani Nivat, whom I consulted about this matter, and he advised me to give a medical retrospect of Thailand, which is the purpose of the present paper.

Overwhelmed by the feeling that in all sufferings one of the last incredibilities becomes manifest, the original prelogic thinking of man has always and everywhere attributed sicknesses to the sphere of action of an invisible world of ghosts: there is the demon of pains in the ear with enormous ears, the demon of the nose with a great big nose, the fearful and awful demon of venereal diseases, the malicious ghost-worm which bores in the teeth, etc. There are several ghosts which threaten people during the night and the most fearful of them, according to legend, is the ghost of that woman who died while giving birth to a child, because she

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had been cursed, and this ghost's appearance is regarded as very bad. Therefore it happens even nowadays that people do not like to sleep in houses other than their own because they *Klua Phi*, i. e. they are afraid of ghosts. For this very reason a small light is kept burning the whole night in their bed-rooms.

Certainly there exists, already since the earliest cultures, besides the belief in demons and fetishes, a knowledge of the pharmacological effect of certain plants, herbs and barks, a knowledge which the animals have inherited by instinct and experience; we all know for instance that dogs, when their stomach or intestines are not in order, eat grass for digestion or for vomiting. But these pharmacological effects are also inseparably connected with sorcery, and only in connection with the corresponding magic-formulae and under quite fixed magic-ceremonies can the infusion or concoction develop the right and good curing-effect. By and by the belief in demons has partly been changed into a religious worship.

Medicine has grown out of and is deeply rooted in superstition. This fact is fundamental. Superstition in its turn is traced back to a close allegiance with folk-lore or the so-called folk-medicine. Man is enormously impressed and his soul very definitely moulded by his natural environment. The mind of primitive man could set up no inhibiting barriers to environmental influences, and as a consequence tended to converge inevitably to the thought that all phenomena—including health, disease and death—were dependent upon mystic forces: spirits, angels, gods, devils and witches. Such is the universal tendency of all primitive peoples, those of prehistoric time as well as those of today. In general, it may be said with assurance that savage man reacted to the idea of disease in a very definite way. First, the savage construed the natural as the supernatural—as many of us still do. Rain, storm, thunder, lightning, volcanic eruptions, quakes and tidal waves were to the savage mind indubitable evidence of offended gods, devils, demons or malevolent spirits. Disease was of course the unwelcome omen of the displeasure of these offended forces. Second, he capitalized the idea of sorcery and believed that disease might be induced by a human enemy "possessed" by supernatural powers. Third, he looked upon disease as a result of the intervention of the will of the offended spirits of the dead. On account of this confusion of thought, primitive people regarded disease as an entity quite separate from the body and its functions; an entity to be treated, in accordance with the cause, by prayers, offerings, religious ceremonies, diet or certain medicinal

herbs. Demons were to be frightened off by the wearing of grim and fearful masks, or by ungodly noises of the drum and tom-tom. Charmed stones, amulets, mystic dances and songs, and even the drinking of his own blood, were resources adopted in order to sway the mind of the patient through suggestion. Baths, poultices, plasters, inunctions, cathartics, enemas and emetics were all used in a fashion no less empirical than the practice of the dance or incantation. From the earliest times, numbers were endowed with malignant or sacred influence. It was not for nothing that there were three Fates and three Furies, nine Muses, twelve signs of the zodiac, seven days of the week, twelve hours around the clock and so on. Three handfuls of earth are always dropped on the coffin. Such folk remedies as the one for ague, "eat fasting, seven sage leaves for seven mornings," are common enough. As the mind of man became more critical, beliefs as mystical as this one in numbers began to take on rational form. Hippocrates, for example, established the theory of critical days, a doctrine which we moderns subscribe to in our study of special diseases, such as pneumonia, malaria and typhoid.

The physicians, the so-called medicine men who carried out the medical and surgical cures, were recruited from magicians, who were supposed to have acquired their knowledge through supernatural contacts with spirits and demons; these men were distinguished by their dress and their manners, and they laid great stress on their powers to interpret dreams. Gradually, however, their knowledge and skill began to disseminate among the laity and medical practice, became an exoteric rather than an esoteric art, finally losing its magical attributes.

But we cannot be allowed to think that ancient sorcery in medicine is forgotten nowadays by any means, and I shall give here two examples. Some time ago a man came to see me to be cured from gonorrhoea; I examined the secreta microscopically, and found them to be positive and I gave my medical advice to his wife, who at that time, was my cook. She told me that the medicaments would be too expensive, but that she had at home an old book and she would like to look in it. And the next day, she brought several things with her: a radish (*Hua phakat*), a banana blossom (*Hua pli kluei*), 7 *yot phakbung*, 7 *yot tamlung*, 1 *ton thien* and a little bit of salt. The radish had to be cut into two pieces, the upper part had to be thrown away together with one half of the banana-blossom, which had to be cut from top to bottom; this had to be accompanied by a special prayer. The remaining two halves and the

above-mentioned herbs were then cut into small pieces, put into a mortar together with the salt and a liquor-glass of water added. After all the juice had been pressed out, it was put into a cup, and then I was informed that this cup with the content had to be put into the moonlight. I dared to ask what would happen if there should be no moonlight or if it should rain, and I got the prompt answer that then the cup could be put inside the house and the effect would be absolutely the same. The chief point however was that the cup had to be put beside the bed of the patient and if he should awake during the night or in the morning, he had to drink the whole content of the cup, to lie down immediately again, but not to speak a word either before drinking or afterwards! So far I was somewhat doubtful regarding the effect, but when I saw that man four days later, there was no more secretion at all, and the small quantity which I could press out with great difficulty, proved to be negative under the microscope; a new examination again 12 days later showed the same good result!

The second example I would like to give is the following: About four months ago I passed Suriwongse Road one afternoon about five o'clock and outside a small wooden hut I saw some pieces of firewood burning. A woman was swinging a heavily crying child, and pressed her hands on its swollen belly. The swinging went seven times in one direction and then seven times in the opposite direction in a circle. The woman was saying a prayer in a singing tone, and by and by she brought the child closer to the fire. The child began to be more and more quiet and after about 5-10 minutes passed two winds; the belly then was not swollen any more and mother and child were smiling. The mother with the child in her arms went three times around the fire singing and jumping and then spat into the fire which was afterwards extinguished with water. By chance a Thai gentleman, whom I know very well, came along and at my request asked that woman why she had done all this. She explained that the child had eaten something in the morning and afterwards got its belly terribly swollen; she knew this treatment from her grand-mother; she had not given any medicine before to the child, who was two years of age.

The German poet Friedrich von Schiller wrote in his famous poem *Die Glocke* (The Bell): "Wohltaetig ist des Feuers Macht, wenn sie der Mensch bezahmt, bewacht" (The power of fire is beneficent, if and when people are taming and watching it). We are acquainted with the newest and latest acquisitions of medicine and chemistry, and sometimes smile

when we hear about such things, but we must admit that in former times sicknesses existed and people were cured, because if all human beings had died, no vestige of mankind would now remain; or if people had not been cured, we would all be sick nowadays!

The first man, the *pithecanthropus erectus*, the Neandertal-man, the ape-man of Java, the cave-man (troglodyte) of the remotest antiquity have been sick, have suffered from chronic rheumatism, from decay of the jaw-bones, from caries, head-aches, convulsions and numberless other diseases: this can be proved by the findings of skeletons and skulls of the paleolithic as well as of the neolithic times; findings which are millions of years old. The German Egyptologist, Georg Ebers (1873-1898), deciphered some very old Egyptian hieroglyphics (*papyrus Ebers*) thus furnishing us with valuable information of the state of medical culture of the Egyptians, as early as the sixteenth century before Christ, and possibly earlier. The policy of Louis XIV, as we know very well from history, was divided into a period before and after his fistula; and the colics from which Napoleon also suffered very often and very much had a great influence on the success of his battles: all these facts prove not only the suffering, but, we may be absolutely certain, also something by which a relief and cure was obtained.

I could speak about all these things for hours and hours, but I cannot swerve too much from my subject. I would like to thank Major E. Seidenfaden, who, by lending me the book *Proceedings of the Third Congress of Prehistorians of the Far East, Singapore, 1938*, has helped me enormously with two papers published there, and especially with the marvellous photo-reproductions of skulls and jaw-bones. Perhaps I may be allowed to cite only a few words from Mr. A. Keir's speech, who, at the time of that Congress, was acting-director of education: "It is a truism that in order to understand the present and plan the future, it is necessary to study the past!" It may be accepted as true, that the marvellous superstructure of modern medicine rests on foundations laid in the primitive past.

I have already mentioned two examples of old Thai medical treatment and I would like to go more into details, but within the limits of a short paper I can give only some features, but through these you will get better acquainted with them and you will understand things, which sometimes provoke an incredulous smile. We all know about massage, and those of us who come from abroad or those who have been abroad,

know the Swedish massage. This kind of massage is quite different from the Thai massage, which goes along the nerves and veins, to eliminate the *lom* (wind). This form of massage is practised by old Thai men, or more especially women, *Mo nuat* (doctor of massage), as they are called. They really massage nerves and veins, pull hands and feet, arms and legs until joints crack, but without any pain! A special mention must be made of their ability to cure headache by massage, which really disappears after about ten minutes. These are not mere stories at all; these are facts, the benefit of which I have myself felt often!

Medicine was already mentioned in the *Ramakirti* (*Ramakien*), the Thai version of the *Ramayana*, where we read that after the birth of Hanuman, Isvara created for Bali a monkey, named Jambuban, who became well-versed in medicine (according to the original, Jambuban was the son of Brahma). In Buddha's time, as it is mentioned in some old scriptures, there existed already a surgeon, by name Jivaka Komarabhacca, who operated on a man who suffered from some sickness in his head; the head was opened and the man was cured. Buddha's disciples, when they were sent out by their master, once asked him what they could do against the snakes they might meet on their way, Buddha answered that kindness would keep the snakes away from them; it is not difficult to understand that the "snakes" are the enemies of Buddha and his religion.

If we want to find the best sources, and origins for a medical retrospect of Thailand, we have to go through the inscriptions on the walls of the two pavilions dedicated to medical science at Wat Phra Jetubon (Wat Pho); these inscriptions form "the medical library of this University in stone," as the President of our Society has named them (*cf. JSS XXVI, 2. The Inscriptions of Wat Phra Jetubon*). In 1831 King Rama III, on one of his visits to this Wat, noticed that edifices there were beginning to crumble and therefore ordered a general restoration of the whole monastery; presenting in addition considerable stretches of land to the west of the main precinct out of his own privy purse. The restoration was financed and personally supervised by His Majesty. Among the innovations of this restoration was a number of stone-inscriptions, containing texts of perhaps most of the then known branches of arts and sciences. Medical science came in for a fair share of space-allotment, occupying two pavilions behind the main chapel, as well as a number of statuaries, in explanation of which were also placed inscriptions on small slabs. These

slabs are now incomplete, but fortunately their texts have been preserved elsewhere and the whole series have been published in the Thai language. It is also stated in a record that medicinal plants were also gathered and planted in the surrounding courts as far as possible. By the restoration of this monastery, King Rama III indeed deserved to be given the honour of having been a patron of sciences, arts and learning. Like many other Oriental patrons in the same field he surrounded himself with scientists, artists, poets, and literary men, whose names are also recorded in the inscriptions.

Besides the medical inscriptions in the two pavilions, there are furthermore several inscriptions in the chapel at the back of the eastern *Vihara*, and they speak about the ten stages of decay of the dead body, for instance :

1) *Uddhumataka*, meaning a dead body in gaseous condition, looking as if pumped up with air, thereby becoming most repulsive to look upon ;

2) *Vinilaka*, meaning a dead body, over which a state of putrefaction has set in, parts are black, red and white ; etc. etc.

Turning again to the two pavilions where the bulk of the medical inscriptions are, it should be mentioned first of all that the chief physician to His Majesty the King, by name of Phya Bamroe Rajabaedya, was the author of these inscriptions. They are still in their positions, though just a few have been lost. A great number have been published in the book entitled *Collection of the Inscriptions on the Walls of the two Pavilions dedicated to Medical Science in Wat Pho*, published in B. E. 2472 by the Royal Institute. It must be mentioned that originally it was Khun Bavorn Vannakit who wanted to collect these inscriptions, whose very good qualities and very good memory were admired by His Royal Highness Prince Damrong. Khun Bavorn's sickness prevented him from doing so, and when he died in 2476 his wife obtained permission to publish this book, to which an introduction, a biography and a photograph of Khun Bavorn were added. As already mentioned before, not all the inscriptions have been published. Every inscription, as a rule, commences under each heading by giving a diagnosis of the symptoms and then prescribes the cure. They have been based, it is explained in one inscription, on an earlier treatise bearing a Pali name, the *Samutthāna-vinichaya*. When the inscriptions were collected by Phya Bamroe, he was ordered by His Majesty the King to collect only the best prescriptions, to be inscribed on

the walls for the enlightenment of the public. It is said that every doctor who gave a prescription, had to swear that the prescriptions he gave were genuine and that he had only good results with these prescriptions. Besides the inscriptions, there are also several series of pictures indicating the different points for massage and indicating the anatomy of the different organs, and in addition coloured pictures personifying the *Phi* of the different months: January, for instance, has a male devil, and it is said that this devil personifies a boil. March has a female devil and it is said that bad people get a big furuncle during that month. Not all these pictures have been preserved, many having been obliterated by the hand of time. Among the subjects treated are the following:

Diseases during pregnancy.

Diseases of childhood, under which heading are detailed theories regarding the she-devils presiding over children's diseases in accordance with the days of the week on which a child is born; (for this, is cited the authority of the *Siddhisārasamgraha*).

Origins of diseases; *internal*: phlegm, bile, gas and an aggregate of them; *external*: heat, matter, gas and liquid. (For this information an old treatise called *Samutthāna-vinicchaya* is cited).

Seasonal ailments, fevers, plague, blood-diseases, menstruation, urinary diseases, sexual diseases, boils, leprosy, skin-diseases, malignant growths, and diseases of the eye.

The book in question which the President was kind enough to lend me has many difficulties for the translator. First of all it contains many Pali and Sanskrit words and furthermore many old Thai words which cannot be translated into English. The book begins with the textbook of *Achan Piem*, who was a priest at Wat Ratchaburana (Wat Lieb), and this textbook contains the doctrines and prescriptions given to his disciples, who later passed them on to the old Thai doctors, who at that time had not our modern education, of course.

These doctrines are given in the book as an introduction for those who like to study old Thai medicine, and the doctrines are about race, birth, place of birth, season, date, age, unwholesome food, diseases, various kinds of medicines: altogether nine chapters of medicines as for instance adstringents, gall, intoxicating medicines, medicines free from poison, sweet-smelling, grease, etc. *Achan Piem* starts with *Battavithat* (the upper part of the body), and he gives 20 different points: hair, nails, teeth,

bones, skin, heart, lungs, kidneys, intestines, etc. Then comes *Apo*, namely 12 kinds of water: *di*—gall, *semha*—phlegm, *hu'a*—sweat, *nong*—serum, *nam ta*—tears, *lued*—blood, *mankon*—fat or grease, *manleo*—slime, *yeau*—urine, *namlai*—saliva, *nammug*—nose secretion, *kai nai ko*—bone fat. The next chapter is entitled *Tejo*, namely the four kinds of fire; then comes *Vayo*, six kinds of air; then *Samutthan*, 14 kinds of the course of diseases; then *Phra-thaet-thi-yu*, 8 different kinds of living-places; then *Bēdu*, three seasons: *kimhan*—summer, *vasan*—spring, *heman*—winter. After this we read about sickness and high fever at different ages. If fever occurs between 1-15 years, it comes in the morning and is due to slime, from 15-30 years at noon and due to blood, from 30-80 years in the afternoon and due to *lom* (wind) and during the night it is due to gall and slime. The textbook of *Achan Piem* closes with *Nam-krasai-ya-tangtang*, namely the different kinds of diluents, such as syrup or water.

Now we come to the contents of the book itself, *i e.* to the inscriptions on the walls. It starts with *Ya-kampa-raksā* a medicine for prenatal care or attention. It might be interesting to note that in old Thai medicine, the medicines for pregnant women and for childbirth, and then for the children, represent a large and important part. According to the old historical medical theory set down in the inscriptions, a child is born under the influence of certain malignant spirits, seven she-devils who have individual jurisdiction over the seven respective days of the week. Besides prescribing medicine for each ailment, therefore, these inscriptions make a point of prescribing also incantations, in which the she-devils are offered food and drink and cajoled as well as threatened to keep away from the child. In one passage, it is said that the first three days of its life the child "may be yours, but on attaining its fourth day it becomes a human child and so keep away." This is of course addressed to the she-devil. This is also perhaps the reason why people very often celebrate with certain rites (non-Buddhistic, however), the completion of the first three days of a child's life. We find a picture of *Ma-Sue*, the guardian goddess of infants and, as mentioned already, every day has a special goddess or she-devil, which can give sickness to the child born on the day of their activity.

On the first wall there are the prescriptions for the offerings to the appropriate she-devil to avoid any sickness falling on the child; regarding the offerings, one must arrange a tray containing fruits, food, drink,

flowers, joss sticks, candles, and dolls made out of mud. While worshipping, a special prayer is said and then the dolls have to be smashed into pieces. It appears clear that the smashing of the dolls has the meaning that the dolls have already got the sicknesses instead of the living child, and so the dolls are dying for the child, who by this act is saved.

I may be allowed to swerve for a minute from describing the inscriptions and to say something about midwifery of the old days. The midwife, one of the oldest functionaries, was a recognized figure among primitive peoples. I quote here some words from the book *Siamese Midwifery in the Old Days*, written by the late Khun Ying Damrong, and published sometime in 1931.

"Midwifery of the old days was usually practised by elderly women, who had borne many children. Their past experiences were considered to be sufficient to make them experts to help other women under similar circumstances. Unlike other branches of medicine, practically no texts or manuscripts were followed, most of the midwives themselves being illiterate. All the obstetrical methods practised, were passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. These consisted principally in charms, talismans, and incantations against evil spirits, some herbal medicines for the puerperium, and sleeping on the so-called "fire-bed." Prenatal cares from our point of view, with all the modern therapy, were unheard of in those days. However, the pregnant women were told to avoid looking at unsightly things, apparently believing in maternal impressions. When labour approached, many things had to be in preparation: the first thing obtained was a plain wooden bed about two feet in length, raised to the same height with that of a fire-place: usually not more than one foot. This was the "fire-bed" on which the woman had to lie, literally roasted, for about three weeks following delivery. A special type of hard wood was cut at certain lengths and kept in piles, enough to keep the fire going for the whole puerperal period. The room that was intended to be the lying-in-room, was surrounded by a sacred cord on which were hung some written talismans, so that the patient might feel safe from all evil influences. As soon as labour pains started, the midwife was called in; the household then became a very busy place, with all the relatives gathering around full of excitement and expectations for the coming little baby. The woman was now told to strain herself by pulling on some special devices, while the midwife made pressure on the abdomen. The latter having no knowledge of the position of the

child or the physiology of childbirth, her sole purpose was to make it come out. If, after a long while the child was still undelivered, the labour proving difficult, many curious things were then done, such as opening all the doors and windows and all locks and keys of the house so that no obstructions remained in these openings in the coming out of the child etc. etc."

Coming back to the inscriptions, it is very interesting to read about the sicknesses of children during the different months of the year. If any sickness falls on a child during the fifteen days of the waxing moon (the first half of the lunar month) the child will die. If the sickness occurs from 16th to 30th day of the lunar month, the child can be cured. The different months have their different sicknesses, different cures and also different offerings.

The book starts with the fifth month, *i. e.* April, when children might have high fever, stomach troubles and flatulency. The child can be cured by taking some earth from the cemetery and moulding into a certain shape, on which the name of the planet Mars has to be written. The offerings have to consist of fish, meat, joss-sticks, candles, small flags, parasol, smelling articles and the whole must be fanned with dub-grass. A special prayer has to be said eight times and then all the things have to be thrown towards the east.

In May, when high fever, cold feet and hands, flatulency, yellow eyes and stiffness of the back are prevalent, earth from the living place of white ants, mixed with powder, then formed into a certain shape with the name of the male Friday God written on it is prepared. The offerings are fish, meat, liquor, joss-sticks and candles fanned with the leaves of the *Mayom* or Star gooseberry; after having said the special prayer, which of course is a different one for each month, 21 times, all the offerings have to be thrown towards the south-east. During the ceremony, people are not allowed to look back.

In June, during fever, the child contorts its body and has cramps in the hands and opens its eyes wide, powder formed into a certain shape with the name of the planet Mercury on it, has to be taken and the offerings consist of fish, meat, liquor, joss-sticks, candles, flags, parasol, smelling articles together with clothing, fanned with the leaves of pink flowers; the prayer has to be said seven times and then the offerings have to be thrown away towards the south, and when going, people must not look back.

In July, while having fever, the mouth and throat of the child are sore, the child cannot take any food and always shows its teeth. Earth from under the water, from under the tree and from under the stairs have to be brought, and from this a shape has to be formed with the name of the moon written on it. The offerings are the same as in June, but they have to be fanned with leaves of a herbaceous shrub. The prayer must be said fifteen times and all the things have to be thrown towards a big tree in the south-east.

In August, while having fever, the child feels cold, shivers and has cramps in hands and feet. The cure consists of taking earth from under the stairs of three different landing-places, and together with powder, a shape has to be formed with the name of the sun; again the same offerings are made, and in addition three handfuls of grass to be tied with the *ipomea aquatica* (*phak-bung*), the prayer must be said six times and the things are to be thrown towards the west.

In September, while having fever, the body is very hot and always shuddering. Take earth from the field and mud from a barn, make it into a certain shape and write on it the name of the planet Mercury. The offerings are fish, meat, coconut-milk, to be fanned with bottle-gourd leaves (*nam-tao*); the prayer must be said seventeen times, and while going towards a big tree, the offerings have to be put on a branch of it towards the east, and the offering person must not turn back.

In October, the fever comes from the breast and arm-pits, and the children touch their breasts with their hands and cry; they make a very serious impression as if they were going to die very soon. Earth from under the sacred fig-tree and from the well has to be taken, formed into a certain shape with the name of the Friday-God on it; the offerings are fish and seven helpings of rice (each helping is about one teaspoonfull), which have to be formed into seven different lumps: one black, one red, one white, one yellow, one green, one orange and one pink. All this has to be fanned with the dull edge of a knife, the prayer has to be said twenty-one times and the offerings are to be thrown towards the north. Then the offering person has to take the leaves of aquatic vegetables with medicinal properties: sesame seed, some grass, boa's gall; these altogether have to be grounded and then applied to the child.

In November, during fever, the child is numb and unconscious; take sacred lotus and grind it together with a kind of lily (*satabud*) in

equal parts, this powder must then be formed into a certain shape with the name of the planet Mars on it. The offerings are flowers, coconut-milk, to be fanned with the leaves of pigeon pea and the leaves of the neem-tree, the prayer is said eight times while going towards a big tree in the north-east and the offerings have to be put on the tree.

In December, during fever, the child has pains all over the body, the hair standing up and causing eruptions on the skin, and the child shudders all the time and cries without tears. Earth from under a deciduous tree has to be taken and mixed with the flower of glutinous rice, then a shape is formed with the name of Brihaspati (The God of Thursday) the corresponding deity of Jupiter which latter however is the etymological equivalent of the Vedic Dyaus Pitār. The offerings are flowers, peas, sesame seed, milk, butter, joss-sticks, candles, soft and hard coconut to be fanned with dub-grass; the prayer is said nineteen times and then the things are thrown towards the east.

In January, during fever, the child has severe pains in the throat, it is crying with open mouth and cannot swallow anything. Earth from under the banana-tree is to be formed into a certain shape with the name of the planet Saturn. The offerings are fish and meat which are mixed together and formed into ten lumps, with one handful of grass, to be fanned with mayom leaves, the prayer is said ten times and then the offerings have to be thrown towards the south-east.

In February, during fever, there are severe stomach troubles, so that the child cannot breathe, and makes a very serious impression as if it might die very quickly. Earth from under a bridge, formed into a certain shape with the name of Rahu is prepared (Rahu is one of the tutelary deities) the offerings are vegetables, food, flowers, joss-sticks, candles to be fanned with herbaceous leaves, the prayer is said twelve times while walking towards a big tree in the south and then throw all the offerings in the same direction; after this take a loufa (a kind of sponge), a camphor plant, a kind of tobacco plant, to be grounded together into powder and this powder has to be blown into the rectum of the child to provoke the winds.

In March, during fever, the eyes are yellow, the fingers cramped together and the child cannot move at all. Earth from under the bedroom, formed into a shape with the name of Brihaspati, the Thursday God. The offerings are coconut-milk, food which does not contain

ed by itching. Then there is *Kuttarad*, a specific tropical skin-disease characterized by small red spots that develop into tubercles.

After the skin-diseases, the inscriptions mention eighteen kinds of chronic diseases, *Ridsiduang*, caused from brain, eyes, nose, mouth, tongue, throat, spine, heart, chest, ribs, chronic diseases in the suprapubic region, in the urinary channels, in the intestines, etc.

The last chapter of the book contains descriptions of the eighteen kinds of eye-diseases, as for instance, iritis, conjunctivitis, trachoma, hordeolum, etc.

As I said in the beginning, the book is not complete, because it was impossible to publish all the inscriptions, and another difficulty was that some of the inscriptions have been lost. Therefore we find a note at the end of the book to the effect that other ailments on the inscriptions which have not been included are the fifty-six kinds of *lom* (fainting, etc.), *Klon*, diseases of the scrotum, tubercular diseases, dropsy and materia medica.

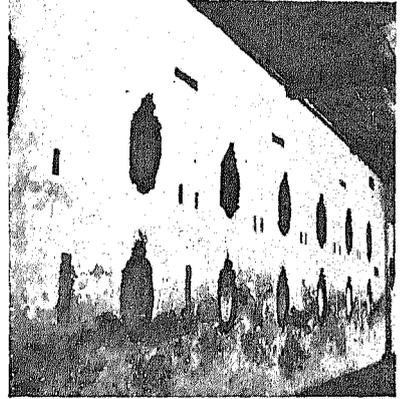
These inscriptions in the two pavilions dedicated to medicine and surgery in Wat Pho are the living evidence of the way in which the old Thai medical men learnt and taught about sicknesses from their appearances, symptoms and origins. It cannot be denied that the kind of treatment seems nowadays somewhat strange. But it was not only the thought that the medicines or offerings really gave the curing effect; it was first of all the belief and faith that helped the most!—With full right we say in German: "Glaube macht selig und versetzt Berge" (Faith gives happiness and bliss and can remove even mountains). Faith was not important, only in olden times, even nowadays the physician needs it, because it is a very important aid to the most modern therapy in all branches of medical science; this is the point where our modern medical practice in Thailand can learn from the medical antiquity of this country.

I have tried to give a medical retrospect especially from the inscriptions in Wat Pho, which have been translated into English here for the first time, and I hope to have contributed, at least in a small way, to the researches about old and ancient happenings in Thailand.



1. Ancient Thai Massage as practised by the *Mo'-nat*.

In this picture the masseur is putting his right foot on the patient's left hip, and while doing so, he pulls the patient's right leg.



2. Inscriptions on the wall of the first of the two pavilions dedicated to medical science in Wat Pho (Wat Phra Jetubon).

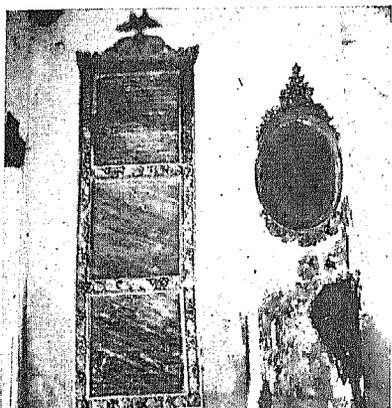
The slabs indicate the name of the devil below the slab. Some of these coloured pictures have disappeared due to weather influences.



3. The patient has a head-ache, is feeling unwell and, on account of startling vomiting, he is bowing forward slightly. His eyes are closed because he is feeling tired and ill.



4. This statuary shows pains in the neck (stiffneck). With his left hand the patient presses the right leg and the left fore-leg is bent upward. With his right hand the patient presses his head backward. The angles of the mouth are drawn down as a sign of heavy pains. The face shows not only the pains, but also the wish to overcome them quickly.



5. Inscription at the entrance of the second of the two pavilions dedicated to medical science. This inscription tells about pregnancy and child-birth.



6. This statuary shows pains in the left shoulder and in the corresponding muscles and nerves. The face is expressing the patient's anger about these pains, which might detain him from work.



7. This statuary shows pains in the lower part of the neck; also expressions in the face showing pain and anger;



8. This patient shows that he has a tooth-ache, the upper parts of his hands are pressed on the lower jaw-bone and at the same time he is massaging his mandibular-nerve from both sides; this nerve is innervating the lower jaw-bone.

For further medical pictures of Wat Pho (Wat Phra Jetubon) please refer to *JSS*, Vol. XXVI Pt. 2. *The Inscriptions of Wat Phra Jetubon* by H. H. Prince Dhani Nivat.