

## DATA ON CONDITIONED POISON

( A Folklore Study )

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“Conditioned poison” is a translation of the Thai word *ya sang* ยาสั่ง meaning literally ordered or directed medicine, or in this particular instance it means poison which, if taken, will become operative only on certain conditions as ordered or directed in the prescribed formula. If anyone inadvertently eats or drinks anything in which there is such a poison, he will eventually die in a specific period of time or when partaking certain specific food as conditioned in the poison. I heard of this type of poison quite a long time ago in my boyhood days. It was supposed to be prevalent somewhere in outlying districts where rustic people lived. If a city or town dweller intended to make a trip to such localities, he would be forewarned by well-wishing persons to be careful about taking any food or drink as offered. By a mishap he might be poisoned with *ya sang* administered in the food or drink he was partaking. This was not done by the folk in the district to a sojourner through malice, but only to make a test of the potency of the *ya sang* prepared by the folk on a stranger. Normally the *ya sang* would be administered solely in vengeance to a person who had done an injurious wrong to the owner of the poison. Hence the formula of *ya sang* was well-guarded and known to a few persons only. If by chance the secret of the formula fell into unworthy hands and any misdeed was done, the owner of the secret would be held to have sinned implicitly as a party with the guilty one. If by necessity or otherwise the owner of the formula had to impart the secret to someone, he would demand the usual promise from the sharer of the secret not to utilize the poison in an unworthy cause or to divulge the secret to another person. Such was the information I had by hearsay about the poison *ya sang*.

In the year 1952, I made a holiday trip to Korat, a chief town in North-East Thailand some 250 kilometers from Bangkok. One morning I and other members of the party were in Pak Tong

Chai some 20 kilometers from Korat and a district well-known for its silk weaving industry. One of the party made a well-intentioned remark to me to be careful in taking food or drink in the district which had been known notoriously as a place where the poison *ya sang* was prevalent. No one could be sure whether a food or drink offered by the local people would not contain *ya sang*. At once my memory of the poison of my younger days was revived and aroused my curiosity. Here I was actually in the locality where the *ya sang* was known in practice. I began to seek more information on this famous or infamous poison. Fortunately the then Officer of Education of Korat Province,<sup>1</sup> who acted as our guide, knew something about the *ya sang*. Upon request he later on after the trip gave me a typescript copy of the formula in his possession.

He said in it that the word *ya sang* was peculiar to Korat Province for a certain type of poison which might be sub-divided into three sub-classes, namely:

(1) *Ya pit* (ยาพิษ) or "poison". It is made from certain poisonous plants of the genus of *wan* plants,<sup>2</sup> powdered and mixed with bones of a species of cobra called *hao fai* (เห่าไฟ=fire cobra).<sup>3</sup> Put a little amount of this mixed powder in spirituous liquor and whoever drinks it will suffer great pain and die within 4 to 5 hours if the right anti-dote against the poison is not administered in time.

(2) "Stomach-destroying poison" (ยาทำลายกระเพาะอาหาร) This sub-class of poison is prepared with a certain kind of poisonous *wan* plant which grows wild in a highland jungle. In fetching such a *wan* plant there is a complicated ritual process.<sup>4</sup> If it is desired that the victim should die after taking the poison when eating a specific food, usually, for example, the ground bone or dried smoked flesh of poultry to which the poisonous herb is added, the prepared poison

1. Nai Thawin Chanlawong, now Officer of Education of Uthaidhani.

2. See "Thai Charms and Amulets" IV *Wan Ya* by Phya Anuman Rajadhon.

3. "Fire Cobra" is believed to be a highly poisonous snake. While moving over the grass it leaves a scorched trace on the grass in its trail.

4. The formula does not give a detailed ritual process. Probably it is similar to the one given in my "Thai Charms and Amulets" for the three formulas for making a *nang kwak* charm.

will react fatally on the victim after a duration of time varying from 7 to 120 days and depending on the constitution of the victim, or to the age or potency of the poison. If the right antidote is not administered in time, the victim will die or become impaired in strength both physically and mentally throughout the rest of his life.

(3) "Intoxicating or fumigative poison (ยาเบื่อหรือขมหมา). The poison is also prepared from a certain *wan* plant. It is mixed with the food which the victim is partaking. The poison will react detrimentally against the victim, putting him in a state of morbid drowsiness or profound sleep within a specific time from one to 10 hours relative to the strength and the amount of the poison. Beyond this limit of time the poison will lose its effectiveness.

If the poison is meant as a fumigator, the skin of a kind of jungle toad called *chong-kroang* (จิ้งโคร่ง) is added to the poison. This species of toad is the size of a man's palm in circumference, its skin is rough and nodular, exuding a nauseate odor. It is to be found wild on the banks of mountain streams and has as its abode a hollow of a big tree in the highland jungle. Only the male species is required and dried over the fire, the person preparing it being careful to avoid inhaling the smoke during the process. Its dried skin is powdered and mixed with the *wan* poison. Sprinkle a certain amount of the mixed poison powder over a fire, and let the wind blows the poisoned smoke towards the victim or victims.

As noted above, these three sub-classes of *ya sang* are made of a certain kind of *wan* plant which has different names in various localities, but by a collective name it is called merely *wan ya sang* i.e. the conditioned poison *wan*. Only its root stalk is required; and it is to be uprooted when the plant is in bloom. There are two varieties of the root-stalk, white or reddish white in colour, the former one is better but rare. The leaves of the plant when in bloom are poisonous, harmful to the touch and give ulcerous pains. Most of the wild animals through instinctive experience avoid coming in contact with the plant in bloom.

The root-stalk after it has been powdered has a white, yellowish or reddish white colour. If a quantity is mixed with an alcoholic

drink, instead of impairing the quality of its taste, it will heighten its intoxicating strength. The poison will retain its poisonous strength for a period of up to sixty days, and beyond this limit it will lose its potency. It is to be kept, completely hidden, in a cool place; but generally the country folk keep it in a quill of a fowl. When in use the hollow under a finger nail is utilized as a carrier, and secretly dipped in a drink of any kind. The effect of the poison is instantaneous after it reaches the victim's stomach. He will "feel sour in his mouth" (เฟื่อง<sup>๒</sup>บ<sup>๓</sup>บ<sup>๔</sup>) due to hyperacidity in the stomach, there will be an abnormal flow of saliva in the mouth, nausea and swimming of the head, continued pain and weariness of the jaws with subsequent rigidity of the jaws' movements abnormal cold in the belly area, heavy sweating all over the body, vomiting with the characteristic smell of the *wan* plant, quick pulsating of the heart, and a feeling of weariness in all parts of the body, the leg joints becoming stiff and bearing the body's weight with difficulty when rising or standing. The victim will die soon after if no right remedy to counteract the poison is found in time. However there are certain precautions before taking any drink. Always keep the *wan* plant called *rang-chiüt* (รงจืด) handy about one<sup>1</sup> or use a piece of ivory dipped into a drink as a test to see whether it contains poison or not; or have a cup fashioned from ivory to hold the drink. (Perhaps the ivory functions as a neutralizer of poison). On the other hand, if a person shows a symptom of being poisoned as afore-mentioned there are three ways to counteract it, namely:

(a) To apply an emetic agent to the poisoned person in order to make him vomit.

(b) Have a root-stalk of the "*wan* counteracting the poison" (no specific name is given) rubbed with water on a hard material and then mixed with alcoholic spirit. Pour the liquid down the victim's throat.

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1. Wan Rangchüt is a kind of climbing plant to be found sometimes grown in certain houses in Bangkok. It is a well-known medicinal plant, as far as I know, for counteracting certain poisonous agencies. Probably it is the same plant *ventilago calyculata* (*Rhamnaceae*) given in McFarland's Thai-English Dictionary, Bangkok, 1941, under the word *rang-claang* p. 707. McFarland does not give the word *rang-chiüt* in his dictionary.

(c) If the victim suffer a rigidity of the jaws, have seven fresh field-crabs pounded and mixed with water. Pour the mixture forcibly down the victim's throat once only. The victim will revive instantly. Have a cup of boiled ash-pumpkin or white gourd<sup>1</sup> water given to the sufferer to drink, and he will be cured from the poisonous effects. The above information is meant for the poison in sub-class (1) "Ya-pit" only.

Now we come to the poison in sub-class(2), "Stomach-destroying poison". It is mixed either with solid food or drinks. The country folk call this sub-class of poison *ya-yen* (= cooling poison) or *ya ngu-liam* (= python poison). The victim inadvertently taking such poison will show a sign of the symptomatic effects after he has eaten certain kinds of food as tacitly specified in the poison. He will become giddy; there will be pains in the throat or on the back of the neck, flatulence in the stomach with a hard mass felt in the abdomen, continual high sensitivity of the teeth, abnormal falling of hair from the head, the nails from both hands; the feet stop growing and start shrinking gradually, there is yellowness of the eyes, white spots appear all over the nails of the hands and feet, the edges of the ear-lobes become red in colour and begin itching, and there is a feeling of weariness all over the body.

The antidote is the same as in sub-class (1). If in doubt whether one has been poisoned with the *ya-sang*, have a few drops of the sap of sweet potato poured into alcoholic spirit or drinking water and let the sufferer drink it. If he is really being poisoned with this sub-class (2) of *Ya-pit*, he will show a sign of high perturbation or will eructate with the smell of the *wan* poison. Rub some ivory with water and mix it with alcoholic spirit or lime juice. After drinking such an antidote twice or thrice, the victim will revive and finally be cured.

Sub-class (3), "Intoxicating or fumigative poison". The victim of this poison will have a symptom of becoming sleepy, feeling dazed before the eyes, giddy, with a headache and weariness all over the body. If it is known that one is being poisoned, the first aid is to

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1. *Benincasa cerifera* (Cucurbitaceae) - McFarland.

make the person vomit. Subsequently let him drink either boiled ash pumpkin<sup>1</sup> water, boiled *phak boong*<sup>2</sup> water, boiled sweet potato water, or certain specific *wan-ya* boiled. He will be cured. As this class of poison is not fatal, the victim will be in a stupor for a period of time, but will gradually become normal in self even if no antidote is used. The thing to do is simply to have plenty of rest.

Though all three of these sub-classes of poison as described are collectively called *ya sang* or conditioned poison, it is sub-class (2), the stomach-destroying poison only that is relevant to the subject I am writing about. I have translated the notes given to me in full, for the reason that it is more or less informative for the study of folk medicine.

Though *ya-sang* or conditioned poison is well-known, the people know it only in name; no one as yet can enlighten me with a satisfactory answer to verify the fact of the practice of this well-known kind of poison. As Korat is geographically the main gateway from lower Central Thailand to the North-Eastern part of the country, one naturally thinks the practice of conditioned poison must have prevailed in some localities of the latter area. A friend of mine<sup>3</sup> who was a *Nai Amphur* or district officer in Chaiyabhum, one of the North-East provinces adjoining Korat, wrote me in answer to my enquiry that during the past twenty-three years of his career as a police and district official in many localities<sup>4</sup> of the North-East Area he had never come across any case relating to conditioned poison. Only cases in connection with *yang nong* (upas tree poison) had come to him in his official capacity. He further states that the *ya-sang* or conditioned poison is to be found only as hearsay in Korat. The people there told him that the *ya-sang* is made from a kind of animal like a toad which has a skin the colour of a "newly-made earthen

1. *Benincasa cerifera* (Cucurbitaceae) — McFarland under the word <sup>๕</sup>พื้ p. 606.

2. *Ipomoea aquatica* (Convolvulaceae) — McFarland under the word <sup>๖</sup>พื้ p. 484.

3. Police Lt. Busya Chintana, now Deputy Governor of Udon Thani Province in the North-East Area.

4. In the provinces of Nakhon Panom, Khon Kaen, Nongkhai, Udon Thani, Chaiyabhum.

pot" (whitish-red). Its name is *Katang-fai* (กระท่างไฟ). It has very poisonous knobs on its skin. Have this *katang fai* dried and then pounded into powder. Secretly put a certain amount of the powder in a spirituous drink, and whoever partakes it will die within two or three hours after drinking it. This is an ordinary poison in the simple sense of the word, but there is another kind of poison named *ya-sang* or conditioned poison. It is made with a certain kind of plant like *wan petchahung* (ว่านเพชรหึง)<sup>1</sup> to be found on the mountains. This is mixed with poison from a certain kind of poisonous animal, and it has to pass through a magical process to arouse its potency by the use of a spell or incantation. If the poisoner wishes his victim to die conditionally when eating a certain kind of meat after a specific number of days or months, such a kind of meat is to be added to the poison. Have this poisonous mixture inserted into the mouth of a cobra (dead?), cut the cobra's throat and bury its head for the same number of days or months after which the poisoner desires his victim to die. The cobra's head is then dug up and pulverized into a powder. Secretly mix it with food or drink and its effect on the partaker of the food or drink is death if the victim eats certain meat as specified by the poison after a certain conditioned time period.

Further enquiry from another friend, who was then district officer of Aranyaprades,<sup>2</sup> a border district adjoining Cambodia, elicits the following facts:

The practice of *ya-sang* is to be found prevalent among the folk in nearly all parts of the country. In some places it is called *ya klom nang non* (ชาโคลมนางนอน = medicine to lull a maiden to sleep). Prominently it is to be found in certain parts of the provinces of Chantaburi and Prachinburi.<sup>3</sup>

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1. "A species of giant orchid (*Grammato phyllum speciosum*).” McFarland, Thai-English Dictionary.
  2. Nai Thiam Ajakul, now Deputy Director-General of the Department of Public Welfare.
  3. These two provinces adjoin Cambodia on their north-eastern and eastern frontier respectively. The localities where the practice of *ya-sang* is more frequently in the province of Chantaburi are:— Ban (Village) Sam phan ta (บ้านสามพันตา) in Krabinburi district; Ban Nong Yai (บ้านหนองใหญ่), Ban Chong Kum (บ้านช่องกุ่ม) and Sre Or (แซร้อ) in Watana district; and tambon (commune) Klong Nam Sai (ตำบลคลองน้ำใส) in Aranyapades district.

The ingredients of the *ya-sang* as practised by the folk are as follows:—

- (1) Bile from a pea-fowl.
- (2) *Ching-kroang* ( จิ้งโคร่ง ), a species of spider, smaller in size than the common spider but with longer legs. It is found in a hole in the forest or in a mountain cave. It moves slightly similar to common spiders when approached by man. (The word *ching-kroang* and the afore-said *chong-kroang* — a kind of jungle toad—have nearly identical pronunciation).
- (3) Bile from *mang-han* ( มิ่งหนาน ), a species of small caterpillar which gives a severe smarting pain if touched.
- (4) *Rang-hae fungus* ( เห็ดรังไห่ ) to be found wild on the ground with hangings like meshes of a net.<sup>1</sup>
- (5) Arsenic
- (6) Acid (in liquid form)

Have ingredients (Nos. (1) to (4)) roasted separately and then pulverized each into powder. Mix these with the other ingredients (No. 5 and 6) and store it in a glass bottle sealing it with a glass stopper. The poison cannot be wrapped with paper or cloth for it will corrode the wrapper. While preparing the mixture care must be taken not to be against the wind lest the poison will be borne along with the wind with harmful effect to a person nearby.

If it is desired that the intended victim should become sleepy and then die in his sleep through the effect of the said *ya-sang*, add roasted *lam-poang* seeds<sup>2</sup> and ganja.<sup>3</sup> The victim will become mad and subsequently die. The *ya-sang* can be used as a purgative by adding a certain amount of quick-silver. The victim will have a morbidly profuse discharge of blood from the intestines through the corrosion of the poison in the stomach.

The *ya-sang* can become a conditioned poison when the victim is eating a certain kind of food or fruit; in this case have such food

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1. A species of fungus having poisonous or intoxicating properties — McFarland's Thai — English Dictionary on word รังไห่ (*rang hae*).

2. *Datura bojeri* (*Solanaceae*) *stramonium* — McFarland.

3. *Cannabis Sativa* (*Urticaceae*) — McFarland.

or fruit roasted and mixed with the *ya-sang*. The person will die only after being poisoned when he eats such food or fruit as conditioned. The *ya-sang* can be secretly mixed with food or drink; preferably alcoholic drink which has an instantaneous effect.

The victim will be in a state of perturbation within 3 hours after having taken the *ya-sang* (with acid mixture) with burning pain in the throat and breast, suffering from a colicky pain and severe headache. If the *ya-sang* is mixed with quick-silver he will have an acute diarrhea, deteriorate in mentality, becoming lean with pale skin like someone with a chronic fever, and will vomit blood. This is the ordinary symptom of being poisoned with the "unconditioned" *ya-sang*. If the victim is being poisoned with the "conditioned" *ya-sang*, he will die after eating the conditioned food or drink within 24 hours. The effect of the poison shows a symptom of blood in the eyes and of urination also with blood.

To test whether a person is being poisoned with *ya-sang*, let the poisoned person eat a ripe water melon. If he is relieved from the symptom temporarily only, it is to be inferred that he has been poisoned with *ya-sang*. If in doubt let the sick person eat *taeng-ran* (แตงร้าน — a variety of large sized cucumber) or he should drink a mixture of *nam sao khao* (น้ำขาวข้าว washing water from rice before boiling) with a root of *mayom* (มะยม — star gooseberry tree) *mafuiang* (มะเฟือง — Carambola tree) rubbed with water. The above medicine is not a curative agent against the *ya-sang* but to relieve the patient temporarily only. If still in doubt have the leaves and roots of *chumhet khao khwai* (ชุมเห็ดขาว) <sup>1</sup> or ordinary *chumhet* boiled as a decoction and administer it to the patient. If he vomits or has a watery discharge from the bowels instantly after drinking it, it is a sign that he has actually been poisoned. A remedy counteract the poison is to be administered to the patient immediately.

There are many remedies counteracting the poison. Three of them as revealed with reluctance by the owner of the secret are as follows:

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1. *Cassia* spp. McFarland's Thai — English Dictionary gives names of many species of *chumhet* but not of above species.

## Remedy 1.

- (1) Root of *praang-fa* (โปรงฟ้า)<sup>1</sup>
- (2) *Ya nang daeng* (ยามางแดง)

Rub these with “washing water from rice before boiling” and then mix it with alcoholic spirit, or have these two materials boiled as a decoction.

## Remedy 2.

- (1) *Nguang chum* (วงชุม — probably a species of herb?)
- (2) *Hua eüang* (หัวเอียง — the bulb of a kind of orchid)
- (3) *Krachao Sida* (กระเช้าสีดา — a species of orchid with broad leaves hanging from its stalk. It is commonly to be found in various places both in a wild or domestic state.

These are to be boiled together for the patient to drink.

## Remedy 3.

- (1) Root of *notanong* (โหนดมะนง probably *lotanong* โดดมะนง—a kind of tree).
- (2) *Red Hang-lai* (หางไหลแดง).<sup>2</sup>
- (3) Root of *sihuat* (รากสีหวด—probably a kind of tree).

These are to be rubbed with “washing water from rice before boiling” with gratings of gold, silver and lead added. This will have a purgative effect instantly after drinking the mixture.

Method of examination to find whether a person is poisoned by the *ya-sang*.

Squeeze the finger nails of a person and see whether the blood runs to the bases of his nails. If, when releasing the pressure, the blood runs back slowly, it is a sign that the person has been poisoned by the *ya-sang*.

If the person dies his mouth will become swollen, the tongue, and also the body, will become black in colour with spots on the breast. And the belly will bulge out within 30 minutes after death.

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1. *Murraya Siamensis* (Rutaceae) — McFarland.  
 2. *Amarantus cruentas* (Amaranthaceae)—McFarland.

The writer further stated that he had the above information from a certain Buddhist head priest who exacted a promise from him that he on no account utilized the knowledge of *ya-sang* on living beings either man or animal. For a breach of promise the divulger of the secret would bear a burden of sin. The secret he gave was knowledge for knowledge's sake only. Psychologically this is the idea among the folk that they are not accomplices to any evil deeds done, therefore there is no sin on their heads for whatever secret knowledge is divulged by them.

In one of the papers read at the Conference of Psychiatrists of Thailand in Chiangmai in 1950<sup>1</sup> there is a topic on the *ya-sang*. The belief of the folk as to the nature of *ya-sang* with its symptoms affecting a poisoned person, as related in the paper, save in a few minor details, is fundamentally the same to what has already been described. It classifies the *ya-sang* into three categories, namely:

(1) *Ya-sang* relating to food. Particularly, it is called in accordance to the nature of the food or fruit which has been added as an ingredient in the *ya-sang*, such as *ya-sang-nua* (meat conditioned poison), *ya-sang nua khem* (salted meat conditioned poison), *ya-sang khuay* (banana conditioned poison) and so on.

(2) *Ya-sang wan* (conditioned poison relating to days of the week). A person will die after eating this class of poison within, say 5, 7 or 15, specific days.

(3) *ya-sang ayu* (conditioned poison relating to age). A person partaking this class of poison will suffer a lingering chronic illness, every now and then, throughout the span of his life.

The author says in his paper that he has tried to find out what kind of herbs and plants are used as the principle ingredients of the *ya-sang*, but failed to do so. Several people informed the author that when they wanted a *ya-sang* made they got the desired herbs or plants from jungle folk, or from people who lived far away from the general populace, such as the Karen tribes or the Negritos.

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1. เรื่องบรรยายในการประชุมจิตแพทย์แห่งประเทศไทย พ.ศ. ๒๔๙๓ ณ จังหวัดเชียงใหม่—โรงพิมพ์สวนปรุง เชียงใหม่ พ.ศ. ๒๔๙๔

Here are the ingredients and the process of manufacturing the *ya-sang* so far as the author has been able to find out.

(1) Certain kind of herbs or plants. (Informers would not give their secrets).

(2) Moss from a *bote* (Buddhist temple) or boundary stones of the *bote*.<sup>1</sup>

(3) Barks from various kinds of trees which spirits or genii inhabit such as *takien* tree,<sup>2</sup> *habok* tree.<sup>3</sup> Oblation has to be made to the genii of the tree before the bark can be stripped from the tree.

(4) Have the above ingredient, 1 to 3 boiled until all the water has evaporated to dryness and the substance becomes a powder.

There is a certain rite relating to the boiling of the ingredients. They are to be boiled in the precinct of a cemetery and have human skulls as supporters of the utensil over the fire-place. During boiling the operator has to recite certain *mantras* or incantations throughout the process.

If the right antidote is administered in time to a person who has been poisoned by the *ya-sang*, he may be cured. The remedy is called *ya-ton* (ยาถอน=*nullifying* medicine) which the owner keeps secret. If pressed, he will divulge the secret only by saying that it includes, unspecifically of course, certain kinds of medicinal herbs and plants as the main ingredients. There is also a special incantation to invoke the potency and to assert their effect of such herbs and plants ratifying their potency against the *ya-sang*.

The belief in the *ya-sang* is prevalent in the southern area (Upper Malay Peninsula) of Thailand up to the present day, dominating the mind of the folk, and in particular, among the pre-literate people inhabiting the fringe of forests and jungles. The *ya-sang* is very wide-spread in the Tapi River Valley in the province of Surat, and also in the provinces of Nakorn Sri Thamarat and Patalung.

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1. It is worth noting that moss from a *bote* or boundary stones of a *bote* is also used to counteract love philter.
  2. *Hopea odorata* (Diptero carpaceae—McFarland.)
  3. *Irvingia malayana* (Simarubaceae—McFarland.)

The author further states in his paper that he himself had been an eye-witness to one case and also knew someone who was a witness to another of persons who were supposed to have been afflicted with *ya-sang*.

Case 1.

A young villager strong and healthy, 22 years of age, was in love with a girl of another village. Before his death the young man had eaten boiled pumpkin at the girl's village. A few days later he ate some meat curry with rice in his own village, and had a convulsion with stiff jaws. He died instantly. The young man, before dying had confided to his friends that he was in love with a girl in another village and had eaten boiled pumpkin, there. The dead man's relatives suspected that the young man was poisoned by *ya-sang* which had been sprinkled either on the pumpkin or on coconut shreds (mixed with a little salt and sugar to be eaten with pumpkin as a sweet-meat). The man who told this story was known by the author for a number of years and the man's story was a *bona fide* one.

Case 2.

A man, an acquaintance of the author, living in the village *Kroot* (ตำบลกรุด) on the upper reaches of Tapi River, Surat Province, came to consult the author for a certain ailment. He had a swollen abdomen and could not be cured by folk medicine. The author failed in his diagnosis of the disease. The sick man went to Bangkok as a patient of a certain hospital, but later on came back as an incurable and entered a hospital at Nakorn Srithamarat. Again as an incurable he went back to his home and died there. The villagers believed that he had been poisoned with *ya-sang*, and there was some gossip to the effect that the man had been poisoned by a certain person of that village. The dead man was the headman there and had died through malice of one of the villagers. The author suspected that the man might have died of cirrhosis through the hardening of the liver. He might perhaps have taken something which was injurious to that organism. Probably he might have drunk a large amount of arrack or ardent spirit which is generally found in most

outlying villages in Thailand or he had actually been poisoned by *ya-sang*. No one really knew.

The author summed up his opinion on *ya-sang* by saying that it existed, but in the form of ordinary poison only. The strength of such poison is variable for the reason that it is made from certain poisonous herbs or trees which cannot be standardized by scientific measurements. The effect of the poison is, therefore, variable too. The victim of the poison may die instantly or have a lingering death. In many cases the effect of the poison is on the liver, an organ having a function to thwart and destroy poison. Some people may have a strong constitution and the amount of poison may be relatively small, or perhaps the poison is not up to the standard of strength, the poison is, therefore, harmless to the partaker. In such cases the poisoner may plead the excuse that the poison had lost its potency, or the intended victim had been very careful of his food or drink and had never taken such food or drink as conditioned by the poison. Perhaps when the poison as taken, becomes active in function a man dies merely by coincidence at the time when he has eaten certain food or drink. It is the word *sang* meaning to direct or command which has taken a strong hold on the country people who dread certain consequences, which, in reality, come from only an ordinary poison, nothing more nor less.

My subject on the *ya-sang* is still incomplete and what is written here is meant as data for further studies only.

