

THE LOCAL WISDOM OF BRU IN USING TRADITIONAL HERBAL PLANTS
IN MUKDAHAN PROVINCE

Abstract

The main point of strategies for development of the country is human-centered and having each community rely on itself. Northeast Thailand consists of many different ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has interesting local wisdoms in various aspects which should be applied to local development. For the significant reasons mentioned, it has been used as an issue of study entitled **THE LOCAL WISDOM OF BRU IN USING TRADITIONAL HERBAL PLANTS IN MUKDAHAN PROVINCE**. The study purports to investigate local wisdom in using local herbal medicines for health care; to examine names, categories and sources of medicinal herbs; and to examine symptoms of ailments or diseases that are treated with local herbal medicines. This is a qualitative research study in Bru people in Mukdahan province.

The study results are as follows:

The original source of Bru people is in the Loai People's Democratic Republic. They immigrated to Mukdahan during 1883-1887. In that period there were five principal families. In the traditional way of life of the Bru people, they collected forest products and hunted wild animals for their subsistence, and they used herbal medicines for health care. Later, when the communities were more developed, forests and sources of herbal medicines were destroyed. The new generation of Bru lack knowledge of local medicinal herbs because of no transference of wisdom concerning folk herbal medicines.

At present, most Bru people are still in poverty. New diseases occur such as AIDS, cancers, hearth diseases and others due to risk-of-disease behavior, dangerous food consumption, polluted environment, and health decession according to human life expectancy.

Now there are about 5 Bru doctors of herbal medicines who are well known and acceptably professional. These doctors have knowledge and proficiency in healing diseases and serious illnesses. Additionally, Bru people in general are capable of healing their family members and minor ailments with folk herbal medicines.

There are two main types of medicinal herbs: herbs as ordinary house medicines and herbs for treatment of serious or severe illnesses. In preparing methods, the methods commonly used are: boiling, rubbing on a small stone piece, soaking in water, and grinding into powder and mixing with honey then making into small balls. These herbal medicines are used to treat severe illnesses and not severe illnesses. Medicinal herbs include plants, animals and minerals with over 300 types. For the results of using medicinal herbs and herbal medicines, the following have been found. Bru people are very satisfied. Medicinal herbs are necessary for people to live their lives. They are food, medicines, auspicious plants, decorative trees and give pleasant shade. The use of herbal medicines can create better relationships among people. At present, some health care has not had modern medicines which can replace so well as herbal medicines.

Sources of medicinal herbs are on private land, in community forests, in foothill forests or hill forests. However, the quantity of medicinal herbs has become smaller due to forest deforestation problems. Forests for villagers' ritual

performance will not be destroyed, for example, cemetery, *pa don pu ta* (forests for spirits of villagers' ancestors to reside according to the traditional belief), grave yards, monastery forests. These lands can be used as areas for community medicinal herbs conservation. If medicinal herbs do not exist, knowledge of local wisdom concerning medicinal herbs will disappear. The transference of local wisdom about medicinal herbs should be a herbal education approach. A village public herbal park should be established in every village. And there should be research studies in commercial herbs. These things will support the community to be strong and able to rely on itself.