

ABOUT A LOVE PHILTRE.

KNOWN TO THE SIAMESE AS NAM MAN PRAI—SPIRIT OIL.

By Francis H. Giles.

In the "Koh Lak Tradition", which I publish in this Journal, it is stated that a Chinese Prince was given by his grandfather, living in the realm of the gods, a potent love philtre composed of wax, powder, and sandalwood oil. There can be no question that this love philtre is the Nam Man Prai (น้ำมันพราย), spirit oil, known to the Siamese. The ingredients for making this love philtre were revealed to Prince Muak by the spirit of an ancestor, and the philtre was used by Prince Muak to gain the love of Yom Doey, the beautiful daughter of Prince Mawng Lai. The use of this love philtre led to happenings of great historical importance, which are recorded in my paper "The Koh Lak Tradition." Love is a mysterious influence which attacks the human race, and as love may be gained by the use of a love philtre, it may interest the readers of this Journal to learn how this love potion is made. The details are somewhat gruesome. One of the first essentials is to obtain a fresh corpse and, if the corpse is that of a woman who died while pregnant, the love philtre will be very powerful. Bodies of persons male or female, who have died an unnatural death, can also be used, but the potion is less efficacious. The doctor who intends to obtain the spirit oil proceeds to the cemetery late at night accompanied by two assistants. He takes with him a knife, a cane on which talismanic figures or letters have been inscribed, cotton thread which has been subjected to magic incantations, eight pieces of cloth on which talismanic figures have been written, having magical powers, to be placed at the eight cardinal points of the compass as a protective measure, a candle known as "the Candle of Victory" (เทียนชัย) with a wick made of

nine twisted threads of cotton, a piece of bees-wax of the weight of one baht, as well as some consecrated water and grains of rice which have been subjected to magical incantations. Implements for digging up the corpse are also taken.

Before commencing the work of exhuming the corpse, it is necessary to place the consecrated thread round the area of the grave, and the eight pieces of cloth inscribed with talismanic figures have to be placed one at each of the eight cardinal points of the compass. The doctor sits within this magic circle and, placing himself in a spiritual trance, invokes the spirit of the dead person to come forth. The spirit, on thus being conjured up, comes out of the grave, standing before the doctor, in many cases having the height of a palm tree. The doctor, uttering certain incantations, exorcises the spirit that it may become reduced in size by throwing charmed grains of rice at the apparition. The spirit gradually loses its great stature, shrinks, and eventually sits before the doctor with bowed head. The spirit being now of normal size raises its arms and embraces the doctor. While the spirit sits in this posture, embracing the doctor, the latter lights the Candle of Victory and applies it to the forehead of the corpse in order to obtain the humours of the brain. Should, however, a sufficient quantity be not obtained, then the doctor applies the candle to the chin until the vessel is filled.

Having obtained a sufficient quantity of the oil secretions of the dead body, the doctor applies the Candle of Victory to the elbows of the corpse, which gradually loosens, its hold and disappears of its own volition.

Another method adopted for obtaining the fluid matter from a corpse is as follows:— The earth of the grave covering the upper portion of the corpse is removed so as to be able to undo the funeral wrappings that the corpse may rise to a sitting posture. A post is driven into the earth, to which the corpse while in this position is tied. The doctor then proceeds to drain off the liquid from the forehead or chin by applying a lighted candle. Should the corpse have a wax mask on its face, this must be taken off. A wax mask is very generally placed on the face of a corpse. If the spirit is a very powerful one, it will attempt to prevent the doctor from finding the head of the corpse. Wherever the doctor may dig, he meets or finds the feet of the corpse. In such cases it is necessary to dig out the whole corpse, but even then the spirit will fight to prevent the doctor

obtaining his desire. It sometimes happens that, when the spirit resists and it is necessary to expose the whole corpse, the spirit will drag the grave digger into the grave and hold him by the head. When the spirit behaves in this manner, the doctor takes a cane and beats the corpse until the spirit releases its hold on the digger, and he is able to escape from the grave. Sometimes the spirit is so determined to prevent the doctor carrying out the operation, that when the grave is uncovered, no corpse is found. It has disappeared. The doctor has then to compel the spirit to return by using certain necromantic incantations, and at the same time to sprinkle the area marked off by the consecrated thread and talismans with holy water and charmed grains of rice.

It is not necessary to boil or do anything with the fluid matter obtained from a corpse. The vessel into which the fluid is drained is closed and sealed with a piece of cloth on which talismanic signs have been inscribed. This vessel is then placed in a new earthen pot which is again sealed in the same manner.

The pot holding the spirit oil is kept in the house placed on an altar high above the heads of those living in the house. Food, that is a little rice and fish or meat, must be presented to the spirit twice a day. Should the doctor neglect to make these offerings of food, then he is asking for trouble, for the spirit which has become hungry will enter the body of the doctor and begin to eat his entrails. The hunger of a spirit must be satisfied like that of a mortal. It is for this reason that the ancients say: "หมอฉีตายเพราะผี, หมอขูดตายเพราะงู", that is "The spirit doctor dies by the hand of a spirit, the snake charmer by the poison of a snake."

This spirit fluid is of great potency and can be used for many purposes, that is, to create a feeling of love in the heart of one who is touched therewith, or to cause pains in the stomach, headache, or any other ills. The fluid can be mixed with food or water, and taken by the person treated, or it can be rubbed on the body or flicked by the finger on to the body, whichever is the easier to do, according to the circumstances in each particular case. Whatever the purpose of the user of this potion may be, there is a specific incantation. Should the love of any woman be obtained by using this philtre, trouble always follows, for the woman becomes ill, her arms and legs are affected and before long she dies. Should this love philtre be taken from a male corpse and applied to any one to attain any object what-

soever, it is difficult to exorcise or cast out the spirit from the person within whom it has entered. The doctor who may so attempt to cast the spirit out, sometimes finds it to be so obstinate and obdurate that it refuses to leave its fleshly home. It is not an uncommon occurrence for a spirit doctor to have to flee for his life when he encounters a spirit of this nature.

There is still another method of producing this potion. It is to take the wax mask from the corpse of a person who has died an unnatural death and then to obtain three skulls of persons who have also died in this manner. The skulls are used as the tripods on which the pot is placed for boiling the ingredients. The ingredients are the wax, some oil mixed with medicine, the component parts of which have not been divulged. This concoction is placed in a pot which is put on the three skulls and boiled by using three different kinds of wood as fuel. The pieces of firewood have to be charmed by having talismanic signs written on each piece. The spot at which the boiling takes place should be at a point where three roads meet, and the actual boiling place must be marked off by consecrated thread and talismanic charms placed at the eight cardinal points of the compass, to prevent the ingress of any interfering spirit. The spirit doctor, sitting in a posture of meditation, holds the Candle of Victory in his hands, clears his mind of all earthly attachments and infatuations, so as to be in touch with the spirit world. He recites certain incantations before the boiling pot. Should the spirit doctor be well versed in magic or the occult sciences, spirit apparitions in various forms will hover about the three skulls. It is then known that this potion will be efficacious, but it is not so potent as the spirit fluid obtained in the manner described above. When the concoction has been sufficiently boiled, it is poured into a dish covered and sealed with cloth or metal on which talismanic signs have been inscribed. This potion must be kept in a place high up and the spirit fed every day. It is used in the same manner as the spirit oil or fluid.