

Mama Nit Chaimongkon, 1932-2015

Nit Chaimongkon, known as Mama Nit, was born in 1932 in Sukhothai. Nit had an early interest in traditional healing, and she eventually moved to Chiang Mai, where she developed a practice and learning center. Along with Mama Lek Chaiya, who passed away in 2014, Mama Nit was one of the most prominent matriarchs of Thai massage and Thai herbal healing for close to 50 years. Shortly before the stroke that began her eventual decline, she was asked how she was able to practice Thai massage for so long. She replied that it was important to practice with good body mechanics. A therapist should be comfortable, and pressure should not be held for too long, so the energy can flow properly. She said therapists should avoid working with muscular tension, and should never strain when applying acupressure or compression. Mama Nit also felt that respect for teachers (wai khru) was important to protect against bad energy. In addition to Shivago Kormarpaj (or Mor Shiwok as he is sometimes known), she also honored Somdet Phra Sri Suriyothai, the historical Queen of Ayutthaya who died in battle against the Burmese in 1548, while defending her husband the King.



Members of Thai Healing Alliance may remember that some of her students began a fund-raising campaign to help pay for her daily needs. In the last two years before her death, a small group, mostly composed of Russians, were regularly visiting Mama Nit when they were in Chiang Mai. Most had never studied with her, yet their selfless efforts and goodwill kept Nit cheerful and grateful. The money that was raised was put to good use, and helped help her with weekly dialysis, medical supplies and food. THAI founder Bob Haddad and Anne Golla visited with her in February, 2015, and Mama Nit couldn't resist working the lines and points on Bob's hands and arms (photo left).

The world of Thai massage has lost a great therapist and teacher. Thank you, Mama Nit, for your love and guidance.

Text and photos by Bob Haddad, RTT