



LIVING TRADITIONS

Newsletter of the Thai Healing Alliance International - Volume 3, 2006

THAI Moves Forward

During its inaugural year, THAI experienced steady growth among members, and the organization now represents practitioners, instructors and affiliate schools in ten countries around the world. Practitioners are using the title of RTT to add validity to their practice, and Instructors around the world are displaying the THAI logo on the certificates that they award to their students.

In 2006, THAI implemented several new services for its members: an advertising incentive program; public web listings of Registered Thai Therapists (RTTs), Instructors and Schools; web lists of approved courses and workshops; and a web link exchange program. In 2007, THAI will launch a scholarship and financial aid program for financially-challenged members, and a liability insurance program for RTTs living in the USA who are not licensed (western) massage therapists. Also

in 2007, membership will be based on a two-year term. The fee for the two-year period is approximately 20% less than two consecutive years at the 2006 rate.

THAI member profile - at a glance -

90% of members have used the THAI archives for research and investigation



74% of members consider their membership in THAI to be "important" or "very important" for their professional interests



18% consider that their membership in THAI is "essential" for their career



73% of qualifying members use their title of RTT on a regular basis



19% always use RTT after their names

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Thanks to the comments and feedback supplied via a member survey, THAI is making changes so we may serve our members more efficiently. It is clear that THAI members want to be connected to each other and to a professional organization that represents traditional *nuad boran* and Thai healing traditions. By working together in a truly non-partisan environment, we will bring more dignity to the traditional healing arts of Thailand, and we will lend more validity to our own professional practice.



Seated arterial compression with client in side position.
Photo courtesy Tanya Boigenzahn.

Arterial Compression in Yoga and Thai Massage

By Andrew Assalian and Dr. Coleen Murphy

While attending a Bikram yoga class and performing the wind releasing pose (*pavanamukta-asana*) the instructor encouraged the class to hug their knees and bring them as close to the shoulders as possible while compressing the thigh against the chest. He explained that we were trying to stop blood flow into the leg, known in Bikram yoga as the tourniquet effect. Why do we want to do that? After all, isn't yoga about increasing blood flow, warming the body with increased circulation and hyper-oxygenating our tissues? And, by the way, what kind of wind are we trying to release here anyway?

Stopping the blood flow into the limbs is a yogic practice that dates back over 2,500 years. As practitioners of traditional Thai Massage, we routinely stop the blood flow into the limbs by compressing the major arteries that feed the legs and arms. Nuad boran (traditional Thai massage) has its roots in the Ayurvedic medicine of ancient India, and the practice of stopping the blood may have once

been performed on monks in ancient times who sat for many hours in meditation. As you may have experienced, legs tend to "fall asleep" in meditation, and this is due to a slowing of blood flow into the limbs. The physicians who tended to the Buddha and the *sangha* probably utilized a method to help restore and enhance blood flow to the legs of these marathon meditators. This technique, called "stopping the blood," is still practiced today by practitioners of traditional Thai massage and some forms of yoga.

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During a Thai massage session, a skilled practitioner may apply direct pressure with their palms, feet, elbows or knees to the femoral artery, located in the groin, or to the axillary artery, located at the armpit, to slow the blood flow into the legs and arms respectively. The length of compression varies, usually 15-45 seconds, and should be done only on healthy individuals and never on anyone with heart disease, high blood pressure or varicose veins. In yoga, many poses offer some degree of compression of these vital arteries. Bikram includes in his series *pavanamuktasana* as well as *shalabhasana* (locust posture), which is a strong compressor of the axillary artery.



Ajahn Pichest Boonthumme performing a seated femoral compression using his forearm. *Photo courtesy Al Turner II.*

Stopping the blood is a misnomer; it is really the practice of slowing the blood flow through the limb's primary artery and routing it to deeper, less frequently used arteries. The benefits of stopping the blood, whether done as part of a Thai massage treatment or a yoga practice, are numerous. By encouraging the body to build strength in secondary arteries, the body builds a stronger circulatory system. We can liken this to taking a back road when driving home on the freeway and meeting with heavy traffic. There are many ways to reach our final destination; we just have to learn alternate routes in case one of them is blocked. Can we strengthen an artery in this manner? Absolutely! Blood vessels contain muscles that help to pump and move the blood. The muscular layer of an artery is the second of three layers that make up an artery known as the media layer.

Another benefit to stopping the blood is one of detoxification and re-circulation of stagnant blood. Although arterial blood flow decreases during a blood stop, venous return continues unimpeded. The suction of venous blood back towards the heart increases in the vessels of the limbs which are affected by the blood stop. Stagnant blood, which would ordinarily pool at the far ends of the

limbs, is returned back into circulation. When the pressure on the artery is released, a rush of fresh oxygenated blood courses through the arteries, capillaries and veins, further removing stagnant blood and toxins that accumulate on the walls of the blood vessels.

In the Thai language, stopping the blood is translated as "opening the wind". The concept of wind here is likened to the *vata dosha* in Ayurvedic medicine which is responsible for the physical movement of the body. Stopping the blood, and other aspects of Thai massage such as assisted stretching, focus on releasing the stagnant "wind" in the body.

Andrew Assalian, CMT and Dr. Coleen Murphy, ND, direct Natural Medicine Works, a San Francisco-area practice offering naturopathic medicine and bodywork treatments.



JIVAKA KUMARBHACCHA

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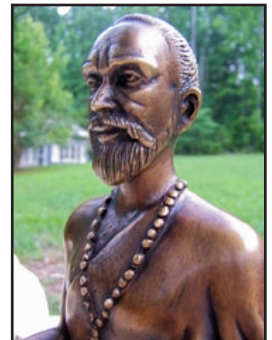
\$129 USD + shipping

Finally, a custom designed bronze statue of the founding father Jivaka (Dr. Shivago). This beautiful piece of art was commissioned by THAI and handcrafted by artisans in a Thailand bronze foundry. It was especially designed for use in Thai healing arts, and is available only through the Thai Healing Alliance.

The statue is available in a shiny silver finish or in a matte bronze finish. The details are extremely well executed, and it measures approximately 8 inches high by 6 inches wide.

Statues of Jivaka are hard to find, and most are poorly made in plastic, resin or wood. This is a limited edition 100% bronze statue weighing over two pounds. Buy one today for your altar or place of practice. And remember, since THAI is a non-profit organization, your purchase is tax-deductible.

**TO ORDER CONTACT:
info@thaihealingalliance.com**



FACE DETAIL



SIDE VIEW

Variation blood stops using feet & knees

By Asokananda

You can use your foot to stop the blood in the arm. Place your foot with the instep on the upper arm close to the armpit. Make sure to slowly increase the pressure. Don't overdo it. Hold for up to 30 seconds. Slowly release. Do one arm after the other.

An alternative to stopping the blood flow to the legs with the hands is doing it with the foot. Be very careful as it is difficult in the beginning to get a good feeling for the amount of pressure needed and it is easy to overdo it, causing unnecessary pain. Do one leg at a time, not both legs together. Place your foot below the groin. Leave a few centimeters of space between the groin and the spot where you place your foot to avoid pressing on the glands. The inside of the instep is pointing towards the groin (see photo). Shift your weight to your foot.



Get your patient's feedback to help you to find out when to stop increasing the pressure. Hold for up to 50 seconds and release the pressure slowly.

Another option you have is to stop the blood with the knees. Place both of your knees below the groin on the upper part of the thigh (see photo).



Shift your weight towards the knees. This version can be helpful if you work on people with big muscular legs. It is not recommended for skinny patients as it might be rather uncomfortable or even painful.

****Never do blood stops on anybody with high blood pressure or with a heart condition.**

The above information was excerpted with permission from "Thai Traditional Massage for Advanced Practitioners" by Asokananda, DK Books, 1996.



THAI welcomes the following new members

Amanda Braun	Basic Member	Portland, Oregon
Sarah Bainbridge, RTT	Practitioner	Totnes, England
Catherine Barnes-Holt, RTT	Adv. Practitioner	London, England U.K
Tanya Boigenzahn, RTT	Instructor	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Charles Breger, RTT	Instructor	Savignies, France
Briana Caldwell, RTT	Practitioner	Nevada City, California
Erin Crawley-Woods, RTT	Practitioner	Santa Fe, New Mexico
Jessica Dollarhide	Basic Member	Panorama City, California
Dr. Bob's Thai Trip	Assoc. Member	Hoffman Estates, Illinois
Valarie Dunlevy, RTT	Practitioner	Lost Creek, West Virginia
Emily Farmer	Basic Member	Valdosta, Georgia
Melanie Foust	Basic Member	Redmond, Washington
Paul Fowler, RTT	Instructor	Chicago, Illinois
Amy Goetz	Basic Member	Seattle, Washington
Rose Griscom, RTT	Instructor	Marmora, New Jersey
Institute of Thai Massage	Institution	Marmora, New Jersey
Institute of Thai Massage Belgrade	Institution	Belgrade, Serbia
Jim Kosglow/Health Systems	Assoc. Member	Carbondale, Colorado
Sally Legg, RTT	Practitioner	Axminster, England
Marolyn Lemming	Basic Member	Loveland, Colorado
Susan Lorenz, RTT	Practitioner	Delta, Colorado
Jon Mandeville, RTT	Adv. Practitioner	Gallatin, Tennessee
Aaron Martin	Basic Member	Bognor Regis, England
Ralf Marzen, RTT	Instructor	Saarbruecken, Germany
Elizabeth Normand, RTT	Practitioner	Portland, Oregon
Kristin Nuttall, RTT	Adv. Practitioner	Whistler, BC, Canada
Hillary Olsen, RTT	Practitioner	Denver, Colorado
Francine Petit, RTT	Adv. Practitioner	Nelson, BC, Canada
Danko Lara Radic, RTT	Instructor	Belgrade, Serbia
Jill Roberts, RTT	Practitioner	Milton, Delaware
Anne Marie Rodriguez, RTT	Practitioner	Cambridge, MA
Jane Rossetter	Basic Member	London, England
Melissa Rye	Basic Member	Memphis, Tennessee
Rhonda Shute	Basic Member	LaFayette, New York
Carl Stewart	Basic Member	Rockledge, Florida
The Mango Grove, LLC	Assoc. Member	Harrisville, Rhode Island

Members who have joined THAI after September, 2006 will be featured in the next issue of the Living Traditions newsletter.

Interview with Asokananda

By Bob Haddad

The following is the third segment of an interview carried out with Asokananda on Feb 12, 2004 at Asokananda's home in Chiang Mai. Tragically, Asokananda passed away on June 27, 2005. We have lost a great teacher and friend. This is the final excerpt of the original transcription to appear in the THAI newsletter.

How important is Thai Yoga massage to one's spirituality?

I don't think they can be separated, because Thai Massage was brought to Thailand in conjunction with Buddhism. Historically, Thai Massage was taught alongside the teachings of the Buddha and remained closely connected to Buddhist tradition and also to meditation. The approach was that massage was an act of lovingkindness and mindfulness applied to another person. The spirit of Thai Massage is essentially a Buddhist spirit and to take it out of that context is to remove the heart of the process. If a massage is not practiced with lovingkindness and mindfulness, a certain quality can be missing from the end result. For me it's essential that the teaching of Thai Massage also incorporate the teaching of meditation and yoga. To make one point clear that often appears as somewhat of a misunderstanding, Buddhist monks were not the ones responsible for teaching of massage in Thailand. It was the Ayurvedic doctors who arrived with the monks and in the same Buddhist spirit worked in the region to spread Ayurvedic medical knowledge. Buddhist monasteries were the first places where massage was carried out in Thailand, so there was a very close link between traditional Thai massage and Buddhist spirituality and principles. As far as is known, the first emigrations of Indian Ayurvedic practitioners and Buddhist monks began a few hundred years after the Buddha's death, around 300 BC.

Tell me a little bit about sen line blockages. How does energy healing take place?

Any kind of influence that we go through in our lives, whether emotional or physical, leaves an imprint on all the levels of energy manifestation that make up a human being. So it's important to understand how we view a human being from the Thai Massage perspective, as a compilation of five different bodies. These five manifestations of energies interact with each other. They're not layers on top of one other, but rather individual manifestations of energy. The one we most directly relate to is the physical body, the second is the pranic (energy) body, the next is our memory or subconscious body, the fourth is our intuitive body and the fifth is our link to cosmic energy flow. Each of these are different manifestations are so closely linked to each other that any disturbance on any level can become apparent on another level. If, for example, we go through emotional turmoil we may end up with physical problems. Or if we are involved in a car crash and break a leg, then this may have effects on the emotional or energy levels. In Thai Massage, our main tool is the individual's prana or energy body that we follow with the sen lines. We try to balance out any disturbance that exists on this energetic level and in doing so we influence disturbances on other levels too. If a physical problem is causing a disturbance in the energy flow, our work can have a balancing effect on both the physical and energy levels, as well as any or all of the other levels.

Can intuitive sensitivity be taught?

Only to a certain extent. You can teach people how to develop their sensitivity but intuition has to come by playing with the energy lines and feeling the energy. Ultimately it comes from one's intuition and most people have the ability to tap into it. Some people are naturals, they're right there from the first moment and can hone in on the energy flow. Others may look on in confusion and not understand what the heck we're talking about.

How do you guide your students in this regard?

I try to give very precise feedback on whether they are actually on the energy lines or not and ask them to feel the difference. It's important to try to develop a sense for how different it feels to actually be working on a line. After some time the sensing ability usually develops quite well.

Traditionally we begin and end a session in supine position., working from the feet upward.. There are those who deviate from this structure. What's your opinion on this?



Asokananda relaxing during a teaching visit to Croatia, 2003.
Photo courtesy Udruga Kua Sunca. All Rights Reserved.

My preference is to begin and end lying on the back. The final touch in Thai Massage is to bring major energy streams together at the forehead and the crown of the head, and then to balance the energy from there. This can also be done in the sitting position, and I'm not dogmatic about people having to lie down at the end, but the final work on the head is an important aspect of Thai Massage, and my preference is to do this while the patient is in supine position.

Is there a major release at the top of the head?

Yes, but this is actually happening throughout the whole workout, not just at the end. We release tension throughout the whole body during the entire massage. There's an energy exchange between the masseur and the patient happening all the time. Whenever we touch, we tap into the patient's energy. That's why it's also very important that the therapist take care of himself, making sure he protects himself properly before the session and cleans out his energy system afterward.

In addition to meditation and yoga, what can practitioners do to prepare for and unwind from a session?

I usually recommend an exercise to create an energy shield to protect oneself before you work, such as prana eggs*, and then to do an exercise after the workout like kaya kriya*, where you release tension very strongly from the body. Especially when we know we have a patient under duress, I'd recommend doing prana eggs before you start, and then take a shower or do a salt water cleanse, and perform kaya kriya after the patient has left.

Editor's notes:

* "prana eggs" and "kaya kriya" are helpful pre and post exercises that all Thai therapists should know. They are available online in the THAI member archives for research and study.

Asokananda was a vital influence for many of the most active Thai therapists and teachers today. Asokananda was extremely supportive of the formation of the Thai Healing Alliance. He provided important feedback in the initial stages of its formation, and had agreed to be involved with THAI on the Advisory Council before his tragic passing. Today, his legacy is carried on through his many students and personally-trained teachers around the world; those members of the Sunshine Network. In Thailand, his teachings and personal style of nuad boran is taught at Sunshine Massage School in Chiang Mai, and at the Lahu village training center located past Doi Saket, about an hour's ride from Chiang Mai. For more information on Asokananda and his THAI-affiliated approved teachers and schools, see the THAI web site members' section. To read testimonials from his students and friends, or to add your own comment, visit www.honouringasokananda.com.

THAI HEALING IN ACTION

I need three inches

When I worked at a health club, a young man came in and announced to me, "I need three more inches!"

I cleared my throat and I asked him jokingly what type of massage he was expecting. He laughed, and explained that he was applying to be a police officer, and that he had passed every section of the very rigorous physical exam except for one.

"The sit and reach flexibility test," he said, "when I'm sitting on the floor with my legs in front of me, I must be able to reach my fingers past my feet, but my hamstrings are just too tight. Can you help me?"

After 45 minutes of Thai stretches for the legs and hips, he went to take his test and passed.

Don't tell my wife

A married couple has come to me for table massage every two weeks, one after the other. The wife always arrives first, then she returns home to the children, and then her husband comes for his massage. One day the husband said to me, "Let's do one of those Thai massages you've been talking about. I am very curious." We proceeded with a full body Thai treatment.

Two weeks later his wife came for her session and demanded, "What did you do to my husband?" At first I thought to myself, "Oh no, I must have pulled a muscle somewhere. I was afraid the adductor stretch was too deep." But then she elaborated: "Usually when he comes home from his massage, he takes off his shoes, opens a beer, puts his feet up and he relaxes for the rest of the day. But after your Thai massage, he came home, cleaned the garage, trimmed the rose bushes and then he mowed the lawn! From now on, don't ask him what kind of massage he wants – just give him Thai."

Now, when he decides to receive a Thai massage, he makes me promise to never tell his wife.
– Kay Rynerson, Seattle, Washington

THAIYOGABODYWORK



2007 Training Schedule in Minneapolis, MN, USA

Level 1: 30 Hour Practitioner Training
March 1-4 or August 2-5

Level 2: 30 Hour Practitioner Training
May 3-6 or October 18-21

Level 3: 30 Hour Practitioner Training
April 12-15

Grow your skills as a healer, and integrate the ancient art of healing energy work from the Thai and Yoga perspectives.

Tanya Boigenzahn, RTT, RYT, CHTP, is recognized as an Instructor by THAI.

www.thaiyogabodywork.com

Got Lom?

By Eric Spivack

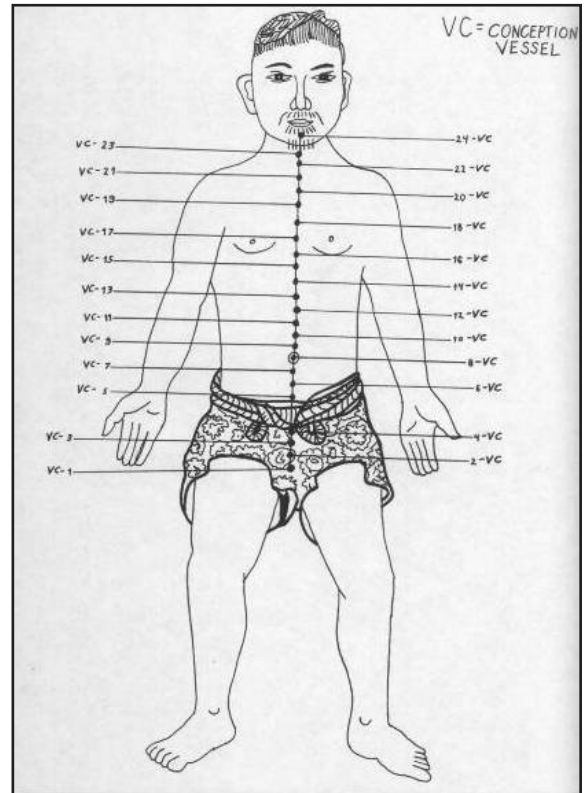
In the last issue of Living Traditions, I wrote about the similarities and differences between Thai Yoga Massage and Acupuncture, both of which are energetic systems helpful in treating various conditions. I also wrote about how some Thai sen lines compared with Chinese meridians.

In this issue, I'd like to delve a little deeper into the Chinese theories of Qi and Yin/Yang and see how they compare with the Thai concept of lom, which means wind or breath.

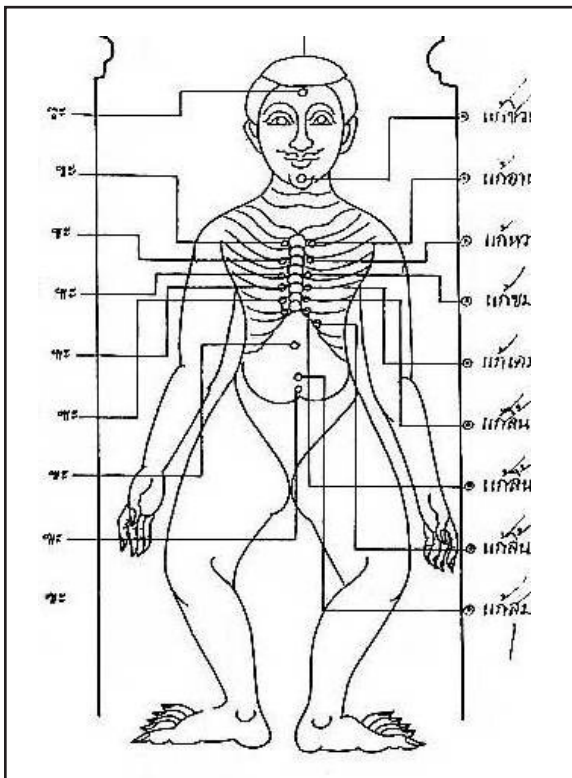
Qi, lom, prana, ki, breath, and spirit are different words with the same meaning: They all refer to "life force", the energy that gives us life. If you've ever had the opportunity to be in the presence of a cadaver, I'm sure you've noticed that the physical remains are a mere shell of that which once housed the person's qi or lom.

The Thai word sin means 'to end, finish or stop'. Interestingly, when one combines sin and lom, the meaning becomes "to stop

breathing" or "to pass away". Without that vital energy, we are dead or "sin lom". An important concept in acupuncture and Chinese medicine is that of yin and yang, which are complementary and opposite forms of energy.



Chinese rendering of ren mai, with treatment points on upper anterior body. Photo courtesy Eric Spivack.



Thai diagram showing treatment points on anterior body, largely inclusive of sen sumana. Photo courtesy David Bliss.

In order for one to exist, so must the other. For example, we cannot know the feeling of joy unless we have experienced sadness, and vice versa. In general, yin qualities include things which are cool, dark, damp, quiet, passive and female. Yin also represents the anterior and medial surfaces of the body. On the other hand, yang represents yin's complementary opposite: hot, light, dry, loud, active, male, as well as, the posterior and lateral surfaces of the body. Each living creature, including ourselves, possesses both yin and yang characteristics.

When a client seeks a practitioner for pain relief in Chinese medicine, we think of their body as experiencing some degree of imbalance in their yin and yang energies. There may be too little or too much of one of these energies in a particular area. Similarly in Thai medicine we can think of a person's discomfort as a result of an imbalance in one of four different Thai elements: lom/wind (breath and circulation); naam/water (blood and bodily fluids); din/earth (solids such as bone, muscle, tendons and ligaments); and fai/fire (digestion and metabolism). By palming and stretching our clients, we are helping to release energetic blockages, to enhance their breathing, and to increase their life force. As a result, our clients (and we ourselves) feel better after a session. The energies are more balanced, and pain is diminished.

Eric Spivack teaches Thai Yoga massage and has an integrative massage and acupuncture practice in Seattle, WA.

Brillo del Sol spreads Thai massage in Argentina

In July, 2006, THAI Director Bob Haddad was invited to teach existing Thai massage students of Centro Brillo del Sol in Buenos Aires. Brillo del Sol (Sunshine Center) has recently become the first THAI Approved Institution on the South American continent, and Egle Puca is the first THAI Instructor in Argentina. Here are some excerpts from a THAI interview with the school's Director, Miguel Angel Nogueira.



South American Thai massage practitioners pose for a group photo after class in Brillo del Sol, Buenos Aires. *Photo by Bob Haddad.*

When was Brillo del Sol established as a center of Thai massage teaching in Argentina, and what are its goals?

Centro Brillo del Sol began teaching in Argentina in March of 2001, without knowing what would eventually become of our efforts. Up until then, Egle had been working as an assistant teacher of Zen Shiatsu in another school, but because of certain circumstances, it became impossible to continue teaching there. One night we were talking about the future, and I asked her "if teaching is so important to you, why don't you open your own school?"

At first this seemed an almost impossible challenge, but since we had some organizational experience, we were able to resolve all of the problems that we encountered along the way, and in only fifteen days, the school opened its doors to our first students. In the beginning we had only one small group of Zen Shiatsu students, but little by little, the number of participants began to grow, and we began to think about offering basic courses in Nuad Boran. Egle had learned basic Thai massage and was very interested to continue her studies. In Argentina however, advanced studies of the modality were not readily available. In 2002, we tried our best to create a comprehensive program of study of Nuad Boran that would include everything that we could learn about theory, diagnosis and energy flow, as well as traditional therapeutic practice. As a guideline, we only had the previous experience of Egle as a therapist, student and teacher of other Eastern therapies, but we tried our best to teach what we knew to those who wished to learn. Later, in 2003, we began to teach basic Thai massage weekend courses to other cities in Argentina. We are hoping in the future to spread Thai massage to our neighbors in Chile and Uruguay.

When the school began, were there already people who were practicing Nuad Boran in Buenos Aires? How and when did Egle learn the basic techniques of Thai massage?

As far as we know, there were only two people who knew anything about basic Thai massage before we opened our school. In 1998 Egle studied with one of them, Valerie Gaillard, who had trained at the Old Medicine Hospital in Chiang Mai. Afterwards, Egle was so interested to learn more, she began to track down anyone who had ever taken a course in Thailand, and would ask them to come to the school so they could work on each other and share ideas. These people, among them Susana Neer and Nicolette Vajt, enriched Egle's understanding

of traditional Thai massage, since they had studied at Wat Po, and had learned in a different style. Naturally, during this whole period, we spent as much time as possible researching through books, videos and materials on Thai massage that we were collecting from various sources. And in this past year, we were lucky to come into personal contact with Bob Haddad from THAI, and his help and guidance has been invaluable for our growth and deeper understanding of Nuad Boran.

At this time, how many students have studied Thai massage at Centro Brillo del Sol?

Since we began the school, 40 students have completed the entire curriculum. At the present time, an additional 60 students are studying basic Thai massage courses in Buenos Aires and other major cities in Argentina. In total since we first began our work, about 150 people have had some sort of learning experience in Nuad Boran through Brillo del Sol.



Students recite the Om Namoh before class. *Photo by M. A. Nogueira.*

Tell us something about the school's philosophies of teaching and learning.

Regarding the teaching of Thai massage, we try to work from a traditional perspective. We recognize that this is energy work and that the postures and techniques are simply tools that help to balance the receiver on physical, emotional, mental and spiritual planes. Egle places emphasis on sensitivity and energetic perception with her students, so they might learn to identify and adequately address energy blockages. She integrates daily exercises in Tai Chi Chuan or Chi Kung so that students understand how to use their bodies and body weight, and she makes students aware of the importance of good ergonomics. Finally, the school tries to create an atmosphere of respect, right action, discipline, compassion, and connection with the client in accordance with the Thai tradition.

What are your hopes for the future?

To keep learning, practicing and improving. And to continue to learn more about traditional Thai massage, so that we can contribute to teaching and spreading of this healing art in Argentina and in the rest of Latin America.

Why did you decide to get involved with THAI? How do you think THAI can be of help to you?

We believe that THAI's goal of establishing standards of practice among all schools, teachers and practitioners is important and necessary. It helps us all to maintain, transmit and respect the traditional format of Thai massage, especially in these days when there seem to be many teachers who aren't dealing with its traditional nature. Here in Argentina, we wish to be members in good standing of THAI, and we promise all of our support and enthusiasm so that THAI may continue to grow into the future.

LETTERS TO THAI

The following are a few recent letters of interest sent to THAI. We have reproduced them here, along with THAI's responses in italics.

MALPRACTICE AND NOMENCLATURE ISSUES

Dear THAI,

I'm not yet a member of your organization, but a colleague of mine in Richmond, VA (USA) is being sued for malpractice due to offering Thai massage in the city without a state license. She hasn't been using the term "therapy" in any of her materials to not violate the state requirement for massage practitioners, and we've just now found out through reading the city code that even the word "massage" itself is a reserved word.

Knowing that this (has been going on in other states) for quite a while now, do you have any advice on how to handle this situation? She practices Thai massage and Reiki, and no other form of bodywork... so is there anything that may help such as defining it as energy work, assisted yoga, etc?

We're both currently in Thailand right now and have no idea how to proceed, and won't be back in the US until the last day or two of this month. Does anyone have any insight? Any help will be very much appreciated.

With metta,
M.G., Washington DC

Dear M.G.,

As you know, the practice of nuad phaen boran (traditional Thai massage) is currently unregulated in most countries around the world, and is subject to local and regional ordinances in the United States, Canada, and several other countries. Some U.S. states prohibit the use of certain words to describe our beloved healing art. We are aware that the state of Virginia prohibits use of the word "therapy" but we were not aware that individual cities within a state could further regulate the use of additional words. In North Carolina, for example, the words "massage" and "bodywork" are prohibited, but "therapy" is not.

Notwithstanding the basis of the malpractice suit, or any eventual outcome, traditional Thai massage is an energy-based healing system. It is not a physical healing system, though the body is used as a tool in order to bring about changes to the internal energy system. Many states in the USA exempt energy-based healing systems from

their therapeutic Massage Board regulations. There is substantial evidence and written documentation to support nuad phaen boran as an energy-based healing system. Individuals and local groups could be doing a better job of speaking out for nuad boran in this way. Polarity therapy and shiatsu are other energy-based healing modalities which require touch. Many states and provinces have clauses in their statutes that exempt energy-based healing techniques from the regulations of western table massage, but each US state and Canadian province lays claim to its own interpretation of what is, and what is not acceptable.

Until and unless local and national groups of traditional Thai therapists band together to form lobbying groups, it's fair to say that traditional Thai massage will continue to be misrepresented, misunderstood and unfairly regulated by those who do not practice it. It seems to be a very messy situation that will not go away any time soon. It is one of the reasons why there is a need for an organization such as THAI. Another important thing that Thai therapists can do is to begin referring to their work by its true name, nuad boran.

Without knowing any of the details surrounding this case, I'd suggest that your colleague hire a very strong-willed attorney who can point to the fact that Thai therapy is energy-based. In the meantime, try to define a non-infringing description for those residents of Virginia who are not western massage therapists, but who wish to practice traditional Thai healing within regional legal parameters. THAI practitioner members may use the title "Registered Thai Therapist." For the most part, this title does not infringe on local laws and ordinances.

STATE REGULATIONS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE, USA

Hello THAI,

My name is J. R., and I just found out about your organization. I practice Thai (yoga/bodywork/massage) and I live in New Hampshire where, as in some other states, one must currently be a licensed massage therapist (LMT) to practice Thai massage. Accordingly, I have been prohibited from practicing Thai in this state. (I am a professional-level yoga teacher, but not an LMT.)

There is currently a movement to amend the NH massage laws so as to carve out exemptions from the LMT requirements for certain practices (e.g., Rolfing, reflexology, shiatsu, Asian Bodywork). Massachusetts recently went through a similar legislative process to loosen the requirements for these "alternative" practices. So far, no one is representing the interest of Thai practitioners. I am writing to find out if your organization is taking, or desires to take, an active interest in this legislative process. I would appreciate your support, in NH, in getting Thai practice out from under the control of the NH Massage Board and the current massage laws, and I imagine it would be advantageous for THAI to have a well-written amendment in our state.

Many thanks for your good work.

Peace & Health,
J. R., New Hampshire

Dear J. R.,

The situation you describe is unfortunately all too common in the West. THAI is a 501c6 non-profit organization, and so we can, in fact, legally lobby for such causes. At this point, the organization is still young. We are trying to make a contribution to the world of Thai healing and gathering momentum for the work that lies ahead.

So while THAI is not able to become involved as a litigating partner with your colleagues in NH, we would be delighted to offer as much support as possible in order to contribute to the amendment required to make the practice of traditional Thai massage legal for those who are not LMTs (Licensed Massage Therapists). THAI can contribute written, archival, documented support of the fact that traditional Thai massage, when practiced under traditional parameters, is clearly an energy-based form of healing, and so like shiatsu, reiki, polarity therapy, etc, it should be exempt for Massage Board regulations.

We would welcome your direct help to raise awareness of ways in which THAI can lend support to the movement in NH to exempt nuad boran from unjust western Massage Board regulations. We are willing to work with your group to establish a stronger identity and autonomy for the safe and legal practice of nuad boran in New Hampshire.

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QUALIFYING STUDY FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THAI

I have questions if my studies qualify for membership. I want to collaborate with THAI, but I have been told that Lotus Palm in Canada is not recognised by the Thai Healing Alliance. I am wondering why. I have studied Thai Massage for three years in Chicago with Open Secrets and then I studied with Lotus Palm and I am now teaching for them. Would my credentials be recognized by THAI? I would like to be part of THAI ... please let me know.

Thank you, M

Hello M,
THAI is an international organization based on voluntary membership. Although many of the most important teachers and schools dealing in traditional Thai healing have already become part of THAI, Lotus Palm has not yet done so. We have invited them, and we asked Kam Thye Chow to serve an honorary post on the THAI Advisory Committee last year. We certainly welcome their participation with all the other teachers and schools around the world that have become members of THAI.

In addition to setting standards of study and practice, THAI's rules for membership require study with at least one THAI Approved teacher or school. In that case, all credit hours from other teachers become valid for membership in THAI. But if you have studied only with Lotus Palm and / or only with another teacher who is not a member of THAI, then none of your credit hours can count toward membership in THAI. One way to get around this is to study any length of time with an Approved THAI Provider, even a weekend course. After completing the new THAI approved coursework, all of your previous study hours with other teachers can count toward your membership.

I'm not sure if you live in the USA or in Canada, but we invite you to participate in one of the upcoming workshops given by recognized THAI teachers. This would be the easiest way to have all your Lotus Palm and other study hours count toward your membership in THAI, and it would be a good learning opportunity too, since our members practice in all different styles including both northern and southern styles, and well as Thai herbal studies. A list of these workshops appears on the THAI web site.



Jivaka Kaumara-Bhrtya of Rajgir

JIVAKA'S CORNER

The story is approximately 2,500 years old, and takes place in Taksasila (current day Pakistan), a famous center of learning at that time. That is

where a young boy of sixteen had come from far away (current day Rajgir, Bihar, India) to study with a world-renowned physician named Atreya. Young Jivaka stayed there for seven years studying traditional medicine.

Before Jivaka's training was complete, his teacher told him to take a spade and to travel approximately 14 kilometers around the area of Taksasila and to bring back any plant which did not possess medicinal properties. The student spent many days examining the plants of the entire region as directed by his teacher, but he could not find a single one which was devoid of curative properties. When he returned, he reported this finding to his teacher. Satisfied with the answer, the teacher said to him: "You have done your learning well. Now go home and start your practice." The teacher gave him some money for his traveling expenses, and sent him on his way.

Jivaka was the most famous physician of Gautama Buddha's time. Much of what we know about him is from canonical texts. His patients included the Buddha, monks, royalty, rich merchants and common people. Jivaka also came to be called Komarabhadra, meaning the one brought up by the prince. This word may also have derived from kaumara bhrtya, one of the eight branches of Ayurveda.

The word "kaumara-bhrtya" may be loosely translated as "expert in children's diseases", and Jivaka is known by that name in some ancient Indian texts. In Thailand, where he is revered as the father of traditional medicine, Jivaka's first name is often pronounced Shivaga or Shivago. His second name is often pronounced Kormapaj, Gomarapaj and Gomalapato.



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Bangkok, Thailand

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Stop the Blood or Open the Gates?

By Tim Holt

Most experienced therapists and instructors of Traditional Thai Massage include the inguinal and axillary circulatory restriction in their treatments. This clears stagnation of energy (lom) in the large gates of the pelvis and the small gates of the shoulder / neck area. From a western perspective, it helps the body to clear toxins and bring nutrient rich blood to areas that are receiving bodywork. It is presented in Thailand as “stop the blood”. This use of the English phrase “stop the blood” is really a negative and inaccurate frame for such a positively healing treatment. I have no historical data on when this English phrase was employed, but this is what I originally learned at the Old Medicine Hospital in 1988. Many other teachers in the Chiang Mai area also use this phrase, and it is spreading worldwide. I believe the original Thai intention of this technique would be better served by using a more positive name.

We are temporarily restricting the flow to the extremities, but the intention and effect is to open the gates, move energy, flush tissues and distribute nutrients and oxygen. In essence we are increasing the blood flow to those areas. We are not really “stopping” blood flow. We are encouraging it to go deeper and find new pathways. We are also slowing the heart rate and providing a deep relaxation for the client. It is similar to the use of ice on injuries in western sports massage. Ice creates retrostasis, and blood retreats from the cold stimulus. Once the cold stimulus is removed, there is a surge of circulation back into the affected area, flushing metabolic debris and bringing nutrition to the area. Blood flow is restricted, but healing occurs when the tissues are engorged by fresh blood.

Nuad Thai Massage

Advanced Thai Massage Workshop


Fulda, Germany
2-6 June, 2007

Join Hans Lütz in a 5 day advanced training in traditional *nuad boran* in beautiful Fulda, Germany. This course will focus on stretches which activate specific energy lines, and sen line therapies for specific health conditions. Precise knowledge of the running of the sen lines bring us to a higher level of understanding of our art.

For course details and information on nuad boran in Germany, see www.hans-lutz.de and follow the link to “Course Information in English.”

www.hans-lutz.de

Hans Lütz is certified as an instructor by Asokananda and the Sunshine Network.





The classic downward dog version of a femoral artery compression.
Photo courtesy Tim Holt.

When I present the “stop the blood” technique in my classes, I normally get a few raised eyebrows and encounter some mild fear about this treatment. I sense that the fear is a reaction to the words themselves, not the technique. If you stop the blood flow to healthy tissue, it will die! This is the mental image students often have when this is initially presented, so I no longer use this phrase. I teach the Old Medicine style as well as Pichest’s techniques, but I introduce them as opening the energetic large gates of the pelvis and the small gates of the shoulders. I present this as a circulatory flush from a western perspective.



Bent-knee variation.
Photo courtesy Sunshine Massage School.

This is an open request to the international community of Thai therapists and instructors to reframe these valuable traditional techniques with a more positive and accurate introduction and title. Om Namoh!

Tim Holt directs the East West Massage School in Sebastopol, California, and teaches courses in traditional Thai massage and western massage therapy.

French Ad Campaign Offensive to Thai massage

By Junnon Mérioux

THAI became aware of a demeaning advertising campaign in France because a THAI member, Ms. Junnon Merigoux, wrote us saying she was offended, and that she wished to do something to shed light on the problem.

THAI has already sent written complaints to the customer service divisions of Unilever Corporation in France and in the USA. If you are offended by the sexual connotations of this ad campaign and the direct reference to Thai massage for commercial purposes, we ask you to boycott all Axe products, and to send written letters and e-mails expressing your opinions and your decision to not buy Axe Shower Gel. What follows is Junnon's account of the Axe Shower Gel ad campaign. - Editor

Sawasdee ka from France,

I live in France where, as in most of the world, football (soccer) is the most important sport. During the recent world cup frenzy, my husband bought copies of a French sport magazine called France Football, which is widely circulated throughout the region. One day as we were looking through the large glossy magazine, we came across an advertisement for a shower gel called Axe. This awful advertisement featured images of Barbie-like dolls (a white male and a dark-



Caption reads: "New Axe Thai Massage Shower Gel. Position To Thai Massage #157, The Resting Crab."

skinned Asian female) engaged in sexual poses, and suggesting that these were poses and positions of traditional Thai massage.

I thought to myself "C'est pas possible!" (It's not possible), but unfortunately it is sadly true. In France, the massage industry is years behind other countries with regard to standards and professional practice, and unfortunately, this kind of insensitive publicity is able to circulate freely. My husband bought the magazine every two weeks, and I don't know how many variations of the ad were published, but obviously it was an entire campaign built around shameless exploitation of sex through Thai massage in order to sell their products. Here was our beloved Thai massage, a healing tradition with an intimate link to ancient Buddhist teachings and traditional medicine, being exploited to sell shower gel. These ads may never have been allowed to be published in other countries, but the situation is awful here. Those of us who study and practice traditional Thai healing are taught to chant "Om Namoh Shivago" as a link to the respectful chain of connection with ancient traditions. Nuad Boran connects us to thousands of years of traditional healing, all the way into the 21st century.

When I first saw the ads, I became angry, but then I became very sad. I felt that something should be done about this. Thai massage should never be associated with commercial exploitation through sexuality. So I wrote to THAI, and we began the investigation into the Axe company and its parent company, Unilever. I learned that most of Axe's marketing revolves around sexual connotations, and that in various parts of the world, some of their TV commercials have been banned. These ads need to be stopped immediately, and those of us who love and honor Thai massage should speak out, and do whatever we can do to make our voice known.

In accordance with vipassana teachings, instead of trying to change others, we need to change ourselves and our communities to better promote and propagate the traditional Thai massage we love and respect so much. We could begin to use the words "Nuad Boran" more often when referring to Thai massage on our business cards, brochures, websites, etc. Why couldn't we begin to eliminate the words "Thai massage" and replace them with "Nuad Boran?" It seems a natural and plausible way of beginning to change the general public's idea of "massage", and associating it with our ancient healing art, which is not like western massage at all. If all practitioners of "Thai massage" started calling it "nuad boran", and offering an explanation of our ancient healing art, we would be contributing to positive reinforcement of



Another version of the offensive ad campaign. This one reads: "Position #93, The Parade Of Serpents".

tradition. It might take several years for the term to become widely known in the west, but if schools, teachers and governing bodies in Thailand also stop referring to it as "Thai massage", the corrected identity would spread even more quickly throughout the world.

In the short term, we can address this situation with AXE shower gel by sending our comments and letters and e-mails to the addresses below. (And we hope you will do so). But long term change requires ongoing education and the increased use of the words "nuad boran" to identify our healing art. I hope to hear many students and teachers' insights on this topic. We need some "spiritual activism" here!

Send your comments and voice your disapproval to both e-mail addresses below:

comments.Axe@unilever.com
(USA)
Service.Plus@Unilever.com
(France)

Or, write to:

UNILEVER FRANCE
Service Consommateur
7 rue Emmy Noether
93484 St. Ouen Cedex FRANCE

Unilever Consumer Services
Advertising Department
800 Sylvan Avenue
Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632



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Membership Office:

P.O. Box 16247, Chapel Hill, NC 27516 USA

For membership information, please visit:
www.thaihealingalliance.com

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Living Traditions, Vol. III

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LETTERS & COMMENTARY

I like the idea of networking in the Thai massage community and setting some realistic standards for the practice. - *Ralf Marzen, Germany*

I have chosen to apply for membership in THAI in order to set myself apart as a serious practitioner; one committed to pursuing excellence in the field. - *Amanda Braun, Oregon, USA*

I have joined THAI to help to uplift traditional Thai massage and the name of Nuad Boran. - *Charles Breger, France*

I am joining THAI because of my belief in the organization and also in order to promote my business. - *Dr. Bob's Thai Trip, USA*

Hopefully, someday soon, clients can be confident that when they see the THAI logo, they have chosen a practitioner who has dedicated the time and energy to provide the best that they can offer. - *Rhonda Shute, New York, USA*

It is very important to belong to a professional organization that will maintain high standards...and help protect the true spirit of Thai massage. - *Valarie Dunlevy, West Virginia, USA*

I'm joining THAI in order to make connections with other qualified practitioners and teachers. - *Jane Rossetter, England*

I believe in maintaining the integrity and authenticity of nuad Thai, and I wish to support an organization that strongly advocates this philosophy. - *Susan Lorenz, Colorado, USA*

Thank you, I received the membership packet. You guys are fast! Very professional! I cannot wait to access the web site. - *Junnon Merigoux, France*

I wish to belong to an organization which takes pride in preserving the history, culture and art of Thai healing. - *Shawn Jimenez, California*

I see THAI as a grounding and motivating step in my journey as a bodyworker and an important resource as I embark on my own practice. - *Erin Crawley-Woods, New Mexico, USA*

I want to be part of a group that has integrity and a strong vision, and I believe THAI has those things. This organization has the spirit that I am looking for. - *Paul Fowler, Chicago, USA*



Thai Healing Alliance International
P.O. Box 16247, Chapel Hill, NC 27516 USA

THAI needs your help

Even a few hours a month will help

Membership Committee
Writers & Archives Coordinators
Public Relations & Publicity
Fund Raising Coordinators

If you have experience or interest in any of the above areas, please contact:
info@thaihealingalliance.com

See a complete list of volunteer positions at:
www.thaihealingalliance.com/volunteer/htm

Inside you'll find great information on traditional Thai massage