

Jivaka and Thai Massage: Truth & Myth

Over 2,500 years ago, the town of Rajgir in northeast India was home to a doctor named Jivaka Komarabhaccha, Jivaka is often known in Thailand as Chiwok, and he is revered as the ancestral teacher of Thai medicine. According to Buddhist texts, Jivaka donated his land and property to the Buddha, and he built a monastery for the first order of monks. The photo to the right shows the excavated foundations on this piece of land, which is known in India as Jivaka Amravana.



COMMON MYTHS: It's important for serious students and practitioners of Thai massage to know and spread the truth about the connections between Jivaka and traditional Thai massage. Jivaka did not practice or "invent" Thai massage. He was an Ayurvedic doctor and a surgeon. He did not teach Thai massage to the first order of monks, and he almost certainly never traveled away from current day northern India and southern Pakistan. There is no historical evidence to prove when traditional Thai massage began to evolve, but Buddhist philosophy probably began to spread to current day Thailand hundreds of years after the Buddha's death.

Thai massage is not 2,500 years old, as many people write, say, or believe. We have no idea when the earliest forms of applied pressure and assisted stretching began to develop in Thailand, but it may have been no longer than hundreds (not thousands) of years ago. Nevertheless, traditional Thai medicine, of which massage is only one small part, has its roots in early Buddhist medicine, and those connections could reach back around 2,000 years.



Browse the the THAI Archives for more information about Jivaka. To view, print and download the chant (wai khru) associated with Thai medicine and Thai massage, click here: [Thai Massage Wai Khru](#)