



# LIVING TRADITIONS

Newsletter of the Thai Healing Alliance International - Volume 7, 2009

## Connecting through organizing - By Gabriel Azoulay, RTT

Since it first appeared in the West, yoga has evolved from an unfamiliar term to a household word evoking everything from images of relaxation to pretzel-like poses. As the practice has expanded and grown, one organization in particular has dedicated itself to informing the community at large about the benefits of yoga and has proven to be a unifying force in this ancient and diverse lifestyle. This organization is widely known today as the Yoga Alliance, a non-profit organization that supports yoga teachers and promotes the diversity and integrity of yoga. The Alliance's tasks run from maintaining a national registry of yoga instructors to helping differentiate yoga from aerobics. When yoga entered the fitness world and became one of the most popular group classes in gyms and athletic centers, there was a strong effort to make sure that yoga maintained its core principles and did not become simply another form of physical exercise.

Similarly, the Thai Healing Alliance International strives to do for traditional Thai massage what the Yoga Alliance has done for yoga. This non-partisan network of professionals engaged in the study and practice of *Nuad Boran* - also known as traditional Thai massage or Thai yoga massage - is adding a level of legitimacy to a practice that has only recently begun to enter the consciousness of Western yoga and bodywork devotees.

THAI endorses students, Registered Thai Therapists, teachers, and schools around the world that follow basic guidelines of study and practice. Lists of registered therapists, teachers, and approved courses are available to the general public, and the referral service connects students to teachers and clients to practitioners.

Like yoga, Thai massage, or 'yoga for lazy people' as it has been called by some, is an ancient, powerful form of healing. And much like yoga, Thai massage is a structural and energetic activity that balances mind, body, and spirit. *Nuad Boran* is designed to enhance the flow of energy in the body. The movements and manipulations are based on ancient practices, most of which have been shared via practice. For hundreds of years and still today, people in Thailand have received regular sessions to rebalance and increase their energy. They also practice traditional Thai massage at home with family members or friends. Thai yoga massage is not only effective and therapeutic for the receiver, but when practiced correctly, it serves as a combined yoga and meditation practice for the therapist. This practice allows the giver to improve his own physical energy flow and mental balance. Each movement is designed so that both parties become more balanced and at peace.

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With the help of THAI, the public is slowly learning about the amazing value and benefits of this ancient healing art. From improving range of motion, to decreasing the number of physical injuries to therapists, THAI seeks to support the activities of its members, and to help them expand and succeed. At the same time, the organization is constantly bridging the gap between traditional Thai wisdom and the detailed vocabulary of the West.

By choosing to become members of organizations such as THAI, we take an active step toward connection, thus putting into action the meaning of the word *yoga* - to connect.



## Thai Massage Beyond the Physical

By Robert Henderson

Bob Haddad's piece about Thai Massage on an amputee client (*Living Traditions Vol. 5, 2008*) brought up some very interesting points. First and foremost the article shows that as beings we are not limited to our physical bodies. Our levels of consciousness, awareness and feeling, albeit on a 'higher level', exist and extend way beyond the limitations symbolised by the collection of bones, organs, blood, and tissue in a bag of skin, which we call the body.

Secondly, it shows that to use Thai massage as a tool to treat another person on the level of the physical body only is to make a limited use of this healing art. Anyone who has ever received a massage from a true Thai Master such as Chaiyuth or Pichest will have experienced the incredible power of Thai massage, which lies beyond the physical, and the effect it has right across our spirit, mind, emotions, energy, and physical body.

The irony of using *nuad boran* as a purely physical application is that the more we learn about what we can do (in terms of techniques, anatomy & physiology, body mechanics etc.) the less we may be able to achieve with it, as each specialisation is nothing more than a fragment of the holistic order. Our higher level of consciousness is aware that we extend far beyond the physical. But the limitations we place on ourselves may cause deep conflicts which can eventually manifest as physical pain. This pain is not in some of us, it is in all of us. It is an inherited pain we received from our parents, which was passed onto them by their parents. Maybe you have felt it yourself.



Sen line rendering by Asokananda and Kam Thyee Chow.

# Thai Massage for Dancers

By Peter Wright



Traditional Thai massage therapy can help alleviate ‘snapping hip syndrome’ for young growing dancers who are training at their peak performance level. What is snapping hip syndrome? Snapping hip syndrome (*coxa saltans*) is first noticed by an audible snapping sound when you articulate the leg. This is a surprisingly common problem amongst ballet dancers and especially prominent in people who have just hit puberty or are going through a stage of rapid growth. This problem can come from many sources, but two of the main ones for dancers are:

## 1) Iliotibial Tract snapping

This is the most common snapping syndrome caused when the ‘IT band’ catches on the greater trochanter (the bony prominence over the outside of the hip joint) during extension of the leg. People with this type of condition, if untreated, could develop trochanteric bursitis from inflammation of the ‘bursa’, a fluid-filled sac that allows muscles to move smoothly over bone. Thai massage is excellent for lengthening this hard tendonous tract and its associated muscles — the *tensor fasciae latae* and *gluteus maximus*. This is done through gentle elbow pressure and passive stretching, where the client can be stretched further than they could on their own.

## 2) Iliopsoas snapping

The iliopsoas is a large hip flexor originating from the vertebrae of T12 to L5 and inserting on the *lesser trochanter*. Any snapping in this region is caused by the *iliopsoas* tendon catching over the *iliopectineal* line or the *iliofemoral* ligaments over the femoral head when the leg is extended from a flexed position, or adducted and externally rotated. This usually causes no pain but some dancers can find the sensation extremely distracting from their dance practice.

In the photo above, I demonstrate one of the many comfortable positions a Thai massage therapist can use to sink slowly into the *psaos* muscle, which lies deep under the intestines. It’s important to respond to feedback from the client’s leg in order to release the muscle that can often be holding spasm. I’ve performed Thai massage on ballet dancers who suffer from this problem, and I believe that young aspiring dancers seek a level of physical discipline that sometimes outreaches the capacity of their growing bodies. When this happens, imbalance occurs. During Thai massage the entire hip can be treated from all angles, allowing the dancer to feel rejuvenated after competitive practice. During Thai massage, people can relax into passive stretches, thereby encouraging muscles to reach their maximum length without injury. Dancers enjoy Thai treatments and often leave with more insight into the abilities of their own bodies.

Article and photo courtesy of Thai Massage Brighton. Used with permission.

## THAI HEALING IN ACTION - NOTES FROM THE MAT

I recently had an interesting experience while working with a client whom I’ve seen on a weekly basis for the past year. He’s a big, muscular guy, and I tend to work strongly with my knees and feet as he requires this sort of pressure. His left hip is substantially tighter than his right and at one point in the session, I had him in prone position with his left knee bent off to the side. I was working with my knee in his hip / buttock, especially his piriformis, which was particularly tight.

As I moved medially, I found a spot where I immediately got the feeling that I needed to stay and work. After about a minute of relaxing myself into him, he told me he was beginning to feel nauseous. I released the pressure and he lay there feeling sick for a few minutes. When we talked about it immediately afterwards, I suggested that he may have been having an emotional reaction. Sometimes early trauma is stored in the tissues of our body and when they are touched deeply, the trauma is brought back up through memory and physical reaction.

He looked at me surprised and said that as I worked there, he suddenly began to think about when he got bitten by a big dog at eight years old. It occurred to him as strange that these thoughts would suddenly come to him, since he hadn’t thought of this in ten or twenty years. He looked at me and said, “I guess there’s more to this stuff than meets the eye, isn’t there?” I smiled and secretly thanked Jivaka.

— Paul Fowler

Recently I had a session with a regular client of mine, whom I’ve seen every 4-5 weeks for the past few years. She usually holds tension in her hips, stomach and shoulders, but that day, in addition to the usual stress areas, she mentioned that her right side seemed blocked. Sure enough, we found some pockets of tension in her upper right torso. I continued to work in supine, and then worked a bit in side position to follow the flow of energy upward. It was a fairly normal session, with nice releases, for the first 90 minutes. Little did I know what was about to happen in the last few minutes of final supine position.

As I continued to dissipate the blockage I sensed in her right lower neck, I suddenly began to feel a sharp pain at the end of my jaw bone, directly below the medial end of my ear lobe. Almost immediately I sensed that this was sympathetic pain; that what I was feeling in my jaw was a signal that I should go there for my client. So I slowly released my pressure on her upper neck and positioned my third and fourth fingers directly on the spot on her jaw where I was feeling my own pain. Immediately, my client began to cough intensely. The pain in my jaw grew sharper, but as she continued to cough violently for about 15 seconds, I felt the pain ease in my jaw, she returned to stillness, and I finished the session, gazing occasionally at my Jivaka altar. After the session she felt light and relaxed, and in an e-mail follow up, she wrote that she believed the release in her jaw had its roots deep inside her belly. She said she was feeling open and spiritually grounded after that experience. My own jaw pain gradually disappeared after about three days.

— Bob Haddad

*Thai Massage Beyond the Physical, cont. from page 1*

As it is an inherited pain, its root lies just behind the navel and travels upwards until it comes out on the top of the left shoulder, on GB21, the 'Human Well', or "the Well from Hell" as I call it, because of the depth of pain this point holds. It is a very deep pain and is one of the most common shoulder complaint areas. I use this example simply to illustrate how believing that we exist only in a physical body causes deep pain, in this case the pain being a 'block' to a greater truth, that we are infinite beings. Apart from the belief that we exist in a human body, there is a staggering range of pains and discomforts whose roots lie beyond the physical: blaming other people for your own condition; doing things you don't really want to do (including eating when you're not hungry); not forgiving others; not forgiving yourself; being afraid of your true power and potential; guilt; the inherited pain of your parents' own childhoods; being judgmental, etc. These are all attitudes and behaviours that cause physical pain and sometimes deep chronic pain. And think for a moment, how many of our clients carry some or all of these attitudes?

Unless the therapist has a deep understanding of these pains, their roots and manifestations, and how you can best release them, physical technique massage may only have a limited effect. Inherited attitudes and behaviour patterns can cause pain beyond the physical. What about clients who have fallen victim to magic, spells, hexes, or possessions, or those who are being blocked by powerful, toxic energy chords? And believe me, if you have been hexed in the back of your heart chakra, no amount of side stretches, spinal twists or back work will release you of this pain, not unless the therapist has the proper understanding and ability to 'see'. My point is, there is a huge range of pains and ills whose roots lie beyond the physical and whose treatment similarly lies beyond the pure physical application of massage. My concern, which may be completely unfounded as I am a bit isolated from the Thai community, is the trend I see in taking a healing art - which is steeped in a culture of Buddhism, spirituality, spirit channeling and guiding, prayer and meditation - and stripping it of all or most of its spiritual roots while exporting wholesale the exercises and techniques only. There is nothing wrong with exercises and techniques when they are used and understood in their proper context, but to practice and teach Thai massage without a Buddha-Shivago foundation is to literally take the soul out of Thai massage. When the remaining generation of Thai masters is gone, who will be left to show the full potential of this healing art? Will there be anyone able to see the 'backpack' or 'heart opening' Pichest sees in his students? And if there is no one left to show us the full potential, what will be left of Thai Massage?

In many ways there is no comparison between what is called Thai massage in the west and what is traditional Thai healing in Thailand. Maybe there should be a forum to actually explain what we mean when we say the words Thai Massage. Reflect, for a moment, if you begin to think that Thai Massage is an ancient healing art practised since the time of the Buddha, and compare it to what you see all around you. Does today's Thai Massage aptly fit this description? If you are a Thai massage therapist reading this and thinking: "But I can't heal someone who has the spirit of their grandfather in their left shoulder, which is causing their shoulder to be stiff and cold", my question to you is: why not? You may answer: 'because nobody taught me' and my reply would be: exactly! Traditional Thai massage - in general as a healing art - has been broken into bits, and only bits are being taught in the commercialized world in the West and also in Thailand. This is not to say that we should not treat our clients on the physical level if they are feeling pain on the physical level. The object of this short article is to nudge and encourage all Thai massage professionals to try to see beyond the physical and to touch and help heal your client in the realms where Bob Haddad touched his amputee client. By seeing beyond the physical, we can develop our practice into a very powerful, healing art. If we are all created equal, what is stopping us from becoming sensitive, intuitive and powerful healers? Why shouldn't we develop our Thai massage practice into the healing art Chaiyuth, Pichest and other great masters have shown it to be?

## Thai Culture Spotlight : Songkran, the New Year & Water Festival

Songkran is the celebration of Thai traditional New Year, and an occasion for family reunions and celebrations. At this time, people from rural areas who work in the capital usually return home to celebrate the festival. Very often, the streets of Bangkok are empty during Songkran, but this is not the case in Chiang Mai. Although several days before and after are dedicated to relaxation, the actual holiday falls on April 13, when annual festivities are held throughout the kingdom. "Songkran" means to "move" or "change place" in Thai, as it is the day when the sun changes position in the zodiac. It is also known as the "Water Festival", as people believe that water is an agent for washing away bad luck.

This Thai traditional New Year begins with early morning merit-making, offering food to Buddhist monks and releasing caged birds to fly freely into the sky. During this auspicious occasion, many caged animals will also be set free. Praying to the ancestor spirits is also an important part of the day. People also show respect to elders by pouring scented water (*nap op Thai*) over the palms of their hands. Older people, in return, wish the youngsters good luck and prosperity.

In the afternoon, after performing a bathing rite for Buddha images and for the monks, all participants, young and old, playfully splash water all over each other. In Bangkok, the Buddha image "Buddhasihing" is brought out from the National Museum so people can sprinkle holy water at Sanam Luang, opposite the Grand Palace. The most talked-about regional celebration takes place in Chiang Mai, where Songkran is celebrated from April 13-15. During this period, people from all parts of the country flock there to enjoy the water festival, to watch the Miss Songkran contest, to view and participate in the beautiful parades, and to throw water on anyone you might happen to see in the streets.

- Adapted from *Essays on Thailand*, by Thanapol Chahchaidee. All Rights Reserved.



# Phussapa Thai Massage School, Bangkok

*An interview with Yoshinori Fujigaki, by Jill Roberts, RTT*

## **How were you first introduced to traditional Thai massage?**

I had been working in a machine tooling company for 29 years. I worked most of the time overseas as a proposal engineer to car manufacturers all over the world. I was assigned to come to Thailand to establish the company here after three years working in the USA. I worked very hard to perform my duties, but I needed some extra help to energize me. Then I found Thai massage. I was surprised that Thai massage was totally different from other (types of bodywork) I had received in other countries. The first time I received a Thai massage, I felt something very different from what I knew. I didn't know what it was. Now I know that it is not only physical bodywork; it is also mental and moral support. I began studying Thai traditional medicine while I was still an employee with the company, but after about six years, I decided to resign, and that is when I began to establish our school with my teacher, Mr. Serm Sak Srinate. I finally received a Thai massage teacher's license from the Thai ministry of Education after many negotiations and examinations with government officers. They told me "We don't need a foreign Thai massage teacher! Can you really teach?" You can imagine how hard it was for me, but I wanted very much to teach Thai massage. I think I am the only foreign Thai massage teacher registered with the Ministry of Education in Thailand.



*Teaching staff at Phussapa. Yoshinori is at top right.*

## **How did you and Mr. Srinate meet each other, and what is his professional background?**

We met at the Wat Sampraya traditional medical association where I was studying. He was a vice chairman there, and I often went to him for advice. During those consultations, I received his consent to become the principal of our school. He has a national license as a Thai traditional doctor, Traditional pharmacist & midwife. Thai massage is an indispensable part of being a traditional doctor in Thailand.

## **Please share the early history of Phussapa Thai Massage School.**

In the year 2000 there were no schools teaching Thai massage theory and practice to foreigners using foreign language materials. I had a hard time studying Thai massage because of the language barrier (I am Japanese). So in 2001, along with Mr. Srinate, I established a school so that foreign students, especially Japanese students, could study Thai massage without language problems. Phussapa was the fifth school to teach Thai traditional medicine or Thai massage under the recognition of Thai Ministry of Education in Bangkok. Now there are many more.

## **What does the word Phussapa mean in English and why did you choose this name for your school?**

Phussapa is actually *Phurussapa* in Thai. It means the month of May. We used this name because we opened the school in May, 2001.

## **What is the connection with students in Japan? How many of your students are Japanese, and how many are Western or Thai?**

95% of our graduates are Japanese and the rest are Western and Thai. Both theory and practice segments are conducted bilingually, in Japanese and English. The school is promoted by word-of-mouth through alumni in Japan, and by internet search engines and magazines.

## **The school is located in the Sukhumvit area of Bangkok, which is a popular destination for tourists. Can you describe the neighborhood? Which accommodations do you recommend for those staying near the school?**

Yes, we are located in a very popular neighborhood, with easy access by bus, skytrain, taxi, and tuk tuk. There are many hotels and guest houses nearby, and we make recommendations to our students based on their budget.

## **Tell us about the training and experience of your teachers: Where are they from? Where have they studied Thai massage; and for how many hours? How are they trained to teach at Phussapa? Are they multilingual?**

In addition to our principal who speaks Thai and a little English, the three main teachers are myself, Wootichai and Ladder. I studied *samunphrai* at Wat Sampraya for one year, and taught Thai massage & Thai foot massage teacher at Phussapa for seven years. Mr. Wootichai Sukserwet, is Thai and speaks a little English. He studied physiotherapy for athletes for one year, Chinese reflexology for one year, at Wat Pho for two years, and with Professor Sunan of Wat Sampraya. Ms. Ladder Thumsud is Thai, and speaks English and Japanese. She studied Thai massage at Pisit Thai massage school for one year, worked as a therapist for six years, and trained and taught at Phussapa for seven years.

## **Which style of Thai massage do you teach at Phussapa? What is the maximum number of students for one teacher?**

We are convinced that there is only one type of Thai massage. It's true that there is a special type of learning for stretching or working sen lines; however only one type of Thai massage comes from Thai traditional medicine. This is one of the basic truths our students learn in the beginners Thai massage course. One teacher works with a maximum of 5 students. We rarely accept more than 10 students in each course.

## **How are the courses designed, and who created the sequences that are taught at Phussapa?**

Most of our courses have been based on the *tamra* (old text book) of the Wat Sampraya Traditional Medical Association, and the techniques have been handed down orally from the Ayutthaya or Sukhothai period. I translated and edited them after long-term study and practice.

## **How many different courses and levels do you teach at Phussapa?**

Thai massage basic course, 30 hours; Thai massage middle grade course, 30 hours; Thai massage advanced course, 60 hours; Herbal compress *Samunphrai* course, 30 hrs; Thai treatment (Ayurvedic) course, 120 hours; Thai foot massage, 18 hours; Chinese reflexology, 30 hours; and *Ruesi Datton* basic course, 9 hours.

**Tell us about your herbal massage and Ayurvedic courses.**

Our principal Mr. Srinate is a Thai traditional doctor who is a famous *samunphrai* specialist in this country. He wrote a manuscript of *samunphrai* application in Thai and I added details and translated it into English and Japanese for our students. All of our courses are taught with theory and practice. The *samunphrai* course is very enjoyable and students practice herbal sauna, dry herbal ball, fresh herbal ball and post-partum treatment, with theory and practice. Regarding the Ayurvedic course, as you know many aspects of Thai culture were derived from India. Thai traditional doctors have regarded Thai traditional medicine as being influenced by Indian Ayurvedic medicine. They respect and use the name Ayurveda or Ayurvedic even though the original concepts were modified in Thailand. In this course we touch on diagnosis and *samunphrai* medical prescription a little bit, but not very much because it is not a medical training course.

**How do you feel about students who study in Thailand only for a few weeks and then return home to begin practicing Thai massage? How can new students understand the importance of further practice and study before beginning a professional practice?**

If we massage 100 different clients we may have to perform 100 different types of Thai massage. I always tell my students that they can study one or two styles of Thai massage here in our school. But then they have to learn more on their own through continued practice. Our clients are our greatest teachers – we must respect them."

**Is there anything else you would like to share with members of THAI?**

I am now in the process of writing an article about the history of educational facilities that teach Thai traditional medicine in Thailand. One common misconception is that Wat Pho is the oldest school to teach Thai massage in Thailand, but that is not true. The oldest educational facility to teach Thai traditional medicine is actually Wat Thephida's traditional medical association. Wat Sampraya traditional medical association was established in 1952, five years before the Wat Pho traditional school opened.

**What do you think about the Thai Healing Alliance? Is an international organization for Thai massage important in today's world?**

I think very highly of THAI's activities because we need a certain basic standard for Thai massage practitioners all over the world. Everybody knows it is difficult to standardize, but I hope THAI continues to establish accurate and reasonable standards that are recognized internationally.



*Exam room at Phussapa Thai Massage School*

## TIMELINESS & TIMELESSNESS

By Richard Gold Ph.D, L.Ac., RTT

The giving and receiving of Thai massage can create an experience of timelessness for both the recipient and practitioner. Indeed, this can be seen as one of the many valued therapeutic goals of the work. When the mind rests, and the incessant chatter of the mind ceases, a deeply therapeutic experience may be achieved. For the recipient, there is the possibility to experience their own body in entirely unique ways. At times, there may be an experience that the body is floating in water: buoyant, flexible, open, and less encumbered by gravity.

Many practitioners and recipients of traditional Thai massage are able to experience self-transcendence during sessions. This type of experience is often marked by a sense of self-forgetfulness. Both participants become fully absorbed in the experience. Specific place and time become unimportant. Personal concerns and issues fade out of awareness. Concentration is totally focused. Ego does not dominate the experience. When ego concerns are not dominating, then we are able to experience a sense of transpersonal identification. Transpersonal identification is a feeling of connectedness to everything – accompanied by a deep reverence for life. Along with these feelings of connectedness often comes an opening of one's intuition: an instinctive knowing without the conscious use of rational, mental processes.

The experience of self-transcendence is one of life's most wonderful blessings. Self-transcendence brings human beings closer to the source of our being on this wonderful planet Earth. Still, there are practical aspects to the application of this healing work that must always be considered. Although we seek to create an experience of timelessness, we are also working within the context of time constraints and time-based obligations. Practitioners are encouraged to develop a routine that they really enjoy giving. In addition, practitioners always want to find out from their clients what their personal needs and desires are from a session. Removing the guesswork of designing a session allows the therapist (especially a new practitioner) to simply focus on the work, moment to moment, being in the Now.

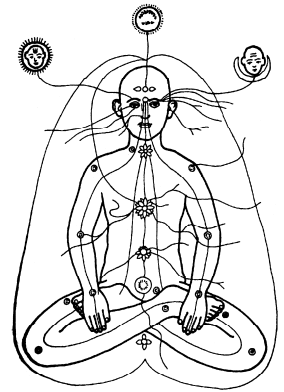
The timed routines that we establish should not be structures that confine us, but rather strong foundations that build confidence and empower us to be liberated and free. Once the practitioner becomes proficient and confident in their work, then the fixed routines we first learned become less important, and improvisation and intuition comes into play. Practitioners sometimes discover procedures they enjoy performing so much, that it is difficult to not include them in a session. In this case, these procedures may always be included. In addition, and depending on the needs of the client, each session may be modified to satisfy individual needs and desires. Finally, the practitioner must be aware of any health issues that the recipient might have. Any procedures that are contra-indicated for a particular condition must be avoided.

It is important to realize and remember that even though a Thai session is being given in a time-sensitive situation, the possibilities for timelessness and self-transcendence remain viable. Hold this as an intention in your heart and mind when you perform traditional Thai massage.

# Good Energy, Bad Energy. . . Who Knows?

By Paul Fowler, RTT

In the world of bodywork, we often talk about protecting ourselves from the “bad” energy of the person we are working on. But how often do we think about the “bad” energy we might give to someone else? And what is “bad” energy anyway? I have heard Pichet say, “Oh, tension. . . giving, giving.” By saying this, he is noting that the tension we hold in our own bodies while working may move from us into them. “Cannot relax”, he will say; meaning, since I as the giver am not relaxed, the receiver cannot relax either. For example, if I am pulling them back against my stationary foot, but I am holding tension in my foot, that tension moves into their body. When their body senses this tension, they cannot fully let go. They may be pulled in one direction, but they are holding back and not giving themselves fully to the pose. Our clients may contract muscles all over their body as they (usually subconsciously) resist the stretch. Those of us who practice yoga may more easily recognize this problem. Going deeply into a stretch while you are holding tension or not breathing correctly can make a pose unproductive, and it can also be a cause of injury. When this happens, it may create in the receiver, as Pichet would say, an “amazing (energy) block”, perhaps even in another part of the body. So, when we try to “force” things, we can sometimes cause more problems than we relieve. This is ironic. The more we want to help the person, and the more we want to “fix” them, the less we actually help them. Perhaps this is where our “doing” culture makes things more difficult.



When I began practicing in 1999, I was “doing” 90 percent of the time and “listening” only 10 percent. Now I think the healthiest practice is “doing” 10 percent and “listening” 90 percent. I once asked Pichet how he understands the problems in a person’s body so quickly and clearly, but he had no verbal answer. He just moved his body into lotus meditation posture. “Listening” was the unspoken answer. But how can we listen when our minds are filled with so much? Here are some examples that you might recognize: “Is my client enjoying this?” “Am I doing the right thing for him/her?” “What does he/she expect from me?” “When I’m in this position it hurts me a little, but it seems like this is what they need.” “I’m afraid to skip this position because they are expecting me to do it.” “This person had a Thai massage from someone else before. I wonder if he’ll like me as much as the other therapist.” “I can’t tell if he is enjoying this, maybe I should impress him with a dramatic position.” I admit it -- all of these thoughts have been in my head at one time or another. Most of the time, they pass through subconsciously, causing tension in my mind and body. Then, I may unknowingly transmit this tension to my client. But when I become conscious of these thoughts, recognize that they come from misunderstanding, and then enter into the present moment, only then I can relax and truly “listen” to what their body is asking for. So, perhaps the “bad” energy we are giving to someone else comes from our “monkey mind” -- our fears, our anxieties, the difficulties we face in recognizing our motivations and their potential consequences. We are never free of tension. Tension comes in layers. When we release one layer, we find another one below it. We see it in our clients all the time. We should never think that we are tension free. We should always be aware that we can let go more. So as we work, we should try to become aware of the tension we hold in each position, in each movement, and in each breath. It is only through awareness that we can let it go. We should be okay with it, recognize it constantly, and breathe into it. As we relax, “good” energy can move through us, and into the other person in a profound, healing way.

So how can we remedy this situation? One word: meditation. We talk about Buddhism as being the spiritual foundation of our practice, and the cornerstone of Buddhism is meditation. Through meditation we learn to recognize the tension in our mind and body. Through meditation we learn to release. Through meditation we learn right understanding, right thinking, right attitude, and right effort. We open to the truth of the moment.



## Mama Lek Chaiya and Khun Jack teach in the USA



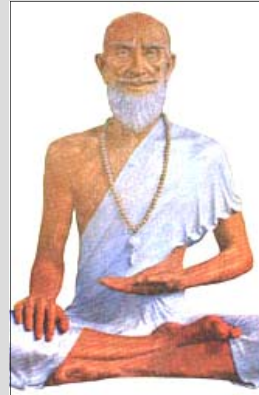
In September, 2008, the acclaimed master of *jap sen* style Thai massage, (Mama) Lek Chaiya, once again supervised workshops in California, USA. And this time, her son Khun Jack Chaiya Paenthai led a five day, 35 hour advanced course in “Nerve Touch” (*jap sen*) Thai massage. This was Khun Jack’s first opportunity to teach an entire workshop outside of Thailand.

Unlike mainstream versions of northern style Thai massage, *jap sen* uses the thumbs, elbows, forearms and feet to stimulate the *sen* lines by pressing into them and flicking or “strumming” over the tendons. The effect is very stimulating and this strumming technique is not often employed used in northern-style variations of *nuad boran*. Attending the three workshops were students, practitioners and teachers from all over the USA, Canada, and the Caribbean. Thai Healing Alliance hosted a party for each workshop group and presented Mama Lek and Jack with welcome gifts on behalf of all THAI members. For more information on Nerve Touch style Thai massage, see the Spirit Winds web site (California, USA) at [www.spiritwinds.net](http://www.spiritwinds.net) or the Nerve Touch web site (Chiang Mai) at [www.nervetouch.com](http://www.nervetouch.com).

## THAI welcomes new members

Kelly Harrison	Basic Member	Washington, USA
Brenda Haugstad	Basic Member	North Dakota, USA
Farren Assaly, RTT	Practitioner	Alberta, Canada
Kathleen Hickey	Basic Member	Colorado, USA
Paul Weitz	Basic Member	Illinois, USA
Manee Tihm Watson, RTT	Advanced Practitioner	California, USA
Hubertus de Kort, RTT	Advanced Practitioner	North Perth, Australia
Mary Kate May	Basic Member	New Jersey, USA
James Tate	Basic Member	Massachusetts, USA
NHPC	Associate Member	Canada
NAMASTA	Associate Member	USA / Canada
Helene Walravens	Basic Member	Surrey, U.K.
Kristina Clair	Basic Member	Minnesota, USA
Lisa Knutson, RTT	Practitioner	California, USA
Andrew Kmeta	Basic Member	New York, USA
ABMP	Associate Member	USA

*The above members joined THAI before July, 2008. Members who have joined after this date will be featured in the next issue of the Living Traditions newsletter.*



## JIVAKA'S CORNER

### Jivaka as a doctor and a holy man

When Jivaka was a young man, he set off for Takasilá (in current day Pakistan) without his father's knowledge, and studied medicine there for seven years. After his apprenticeship, his teacher gave him some money and sent him away, declaring him fit to practice medicine.

When he finally returned to Rájagaha, Prince Abhaya established him in his own residence. While there, he cured King Bimbisára of a troublesome fistula and received as reward all the ornaments of Bimbisára's five hundred wives. He was appointed physician to the king and the king's women and also to the fraternity of monks with the Buddha at its head. It may have been the preaching of the Jivaka Sutta which brought about Jívaka's conversion to the Buddha's teachings.

After Jívaka became a Sotápanna (first level of realization), he was anxious to visit the Buddha twice a day, and finding Veluvana too far away, he built a monastery in his own mango grove (*ambavana*) in Rájagaha, which he then donated to the Buddha and his monks.

Jívaka's fame as a physician brought him more work than he could cope with, but he never neglected his duties to the Sangha. Many people, afflicted with disease and unable to pay for treatment, joined the Order so that they might receive free medical care. On discovering that the Order was being taken advantage of in this way, he once asked the Buddha to set a restriction that men afflicted with certain diseases might be refused entry into the Order.

Jívaka was declared by the Buddha chief among his lay followers, and was referred to as *aggam puggalappasannánam* (loved by the people). Jivaka is included in a list of those who have been assured of the realization of deathlessness.

*Excerpted from Buddhist texts - edited by Bob Haddad*



*Practicing ruesi datton at Phussapa Thai Massage School, Bangkok.*

## European Thai Massage event on the island of Veli Iz, Croatia, in June, 2009

Plans are underway for the first THAI-sponsored event in Europe. The four-day gathering is open to all students, practitioners and teachers of traditional Thai massage, and will feature mini-workshops on various topics relevant to *nuad boran*, plus daily supervised practice. As with all THAI-sponsored events, you do not need to be a THAI member to attend. The place is a beach resort on the island of Iz, off the coast of Croatia, near the city of Zadar. So far, the planning committee is comprised of THAI members Danko Lara Radic (Serbia), Davor Haber (Croatia), Niciare Mann and Geoff Pritchatt (UK), Hans Lütz (Germany) and Bob Haddad (USA). It promises to be a great event for Thai massage in Europe, and to attract students and practitioners from all lineages. For more information on this event, and to get on an information e-mail list, contact Danko at [thaiarchives@gmail.com](mailto:thaiarchives@gmail.com)





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## Member Comments

I've applied for membership (in THAI) because so I can keep up with the latest news about Thai healing arts, as well as be supported by this network of practitioners. *Helene Walravens, Surrey, UK*

Nuad Boran has become part of my personal and professional life. I wish to continually refine my knowledge and technique. *Andrew Kmeta, New York, USA*

I am impressed with the information offered, and I would like to have the professional affiliation with a legitimate and recognizable organization. *Nicole Arel, Connecticut, USA*

I hope to have a connection that has standards in the traditional form of Thai work, as it is an art, and should be practiced and preserved in its truest form. *Nathalie de Meyenburg, Indiana, USA*

I would like to be part of a professional and international organization specifically for Thai massage. I researched (THAI) online and find the information useful. *Annette Caesar, Alberta, Canada*

I am interested in supporting the organization and...(using) the archival area for study and research. *Richard Willis, New Mexico, USA*

I believe (THAI) is playing an important role to promote and expand the knowledge and value of Nuad Boran. *Gabriel Azoulay, Arizona, USA*

I believe membership in a professional organization lends credibility to my work and supporting an organization, in turn, lends credibility to the field. *Elizabeth Zebold, Washington, USA*



### Thai Healing Alliance International

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*Inside you'll find great information on traditional Thai massage*