



LIVING TRADITIONS

Newsletter of the Thai Healing Alliance International - Volume 10, 2010

THAI members around the world continue to promote standards for nuad boran

By Bob Haddad, RTT

Thai Healing Alliance began in 2006, with only a handful of members who were based mostly in the USA. In the planning of the organization, important contributions and advisory help were offered by James Peckham, Pierce Salguero, Al Turner, Martin Misenheimer, the late Asokananda, Richard Gold, Coocky Tassanee, Max Scheurmeier and others. Now in its fifth year of service, Thai Healing Alliance International is known and accepted for promoting international standards for the practice and study of traditional Thai massage and Thai healing arts.

Attempting to unify Thai massage therapists around the world under shared standards is not an easy task. Some countries, states and provinces impose regulations on anyone who treats another person therapeutically, even if the modality is energy-based. Other regions have no regulations at all on any type of massage, bodywork or energy work. These differences do little to help Thai massage attain the recognition it deserves as unique and effective healing modality. That is why THAI's goals and proposed standards are so important today.

THAI now has members in 35 countries around the world, including Thailand, where important schools and teachers help to promote the study and practice requirements of Registered Thai Therapist (RTT). The THAI online archives contain the largest collection of articles, essays and research about traditional Thai healing arts. The client referral service connects clients to Thai therapists around the world, and the online course list allows teachers and schools to post workshops and courses on Thai massage.

Although approximately 70% of THAI members live and practice in North America, THAI has recently welcomed new members from Romania, The Netherlands, Scotland, France, Norway, India, Mexico, Italy, Poland, Australia, Brazil, Cyprus, The Czech Republic, Russia and the Philippines.

A new online registration system for Basic Members was launched in 2009 which allows new and renewing Basic Members to make a donation of their choice each year as their member dues. The new donation-based (*dana*)

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system has resulted in an increase of Basic Members around the world, and has reduced administrative tasks by THAI volunteer staff.

More changes may be forthcoming in order to further reduce administrative tasks and enable THAI members to update their own profiles, renew their memberships online, and print their own membership certificates and cards.

In the meantime, the organization, as well as the general membership of THAI, continue to promote basic standards for the practice of traditional Thai massage around the world.

One Week with Pichest Boonthumme

By Michelle Tupko

Ajahn Pichest is always smiling... except when he pretends to hit you on the head with his Buddhist cane. "Pok Pok!" Well, even then, he's smiling. I am writing this during my first week of study with Pichest, and there's so much to say it's difficult to condense into one entry. I'll start with some basics. Pichest lives in Hang Dong, which is south of Chiang Mai, so studying with him every morning is an adventure of its own. The first time you go, you might be lucky enough, as we were, to have a piece of paper with some directions on it, that go something like this: "Take the yellow songthaew; look at your watch when you start the journey; thirteen minutes later, after you pass the second of two pedestrian bridges, start looking for a big field; when you pass the building at the end of the big field, ring the buzzer." The first morning was filled with the great excitement of buying offerings (lotus blossoms, fruit, incense and candles) for Pichest's altar. The energetic and confusing Chiang Mai market, filled with sweets, curries, dried squid on sticks, people, motorbikes, other colorful things, is the point of departure from Chiang Mai. Across the street is where the yellow pick up trucks (songthaews) leave for Hang Dong. Once aboard, we stare eagerly and frantically out the window, discussing the "directions," causing the good-humored Thai people riding with us to smile a lot. Pichest's classroom is in the middle of a suburban neighborhood in Hang Dong, and it sits right alongside a rice field.



Ajahn Pichest Boonthumme at work

It feels like the countryside compared to Chiang Mai. The room where we practice has a very large shrine area. It occupies about one third of the total area of the room. There are three sections – one part for teachers and family, one part for the Buddha and the *dhamma*, and one part, a free-standing white house in the corner that I still don't understand.

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Janice Vitavec, ardent promoter of *jap sen* Thai massage in the West

The following are excerpts from a longer interview by Bob Haddad with Janice Vitavec. Mama Lek and Khun Jack will be teaching again in California in September, 2010. For more information, contact www.spiritwinds.net

How many times have you brought Lek to California? Since when?

I have brought Lek to California, and we have co-taught here at Spirit Winds 5 times prior to this 2008 Special Event. The first year was 2002. Lek and Jack will be teaching

What gave you the idea to bring Jack this time?

I asked Jack to come this year mainly because he has been developing his teaching skills and his own techniques based on Lek's work to an Advanced level. It was Jack's first time travelling outside of Thailand (except to Laos a couple of months ago). Lek was having some health issues over the last couple of years and so has gone into retirement more so than before. The last couple of trips here, Lek was also in "retirement" in Thailand, but she was strong and she thrived so much on teaching and by doing her work in sessions. It boosted her energy levels and she worked really hard. We would often co-teach the trainings. On the last trip it just became too much for her and her health became a very serious concern.

Having built her strength back, we decided that we would have her and Jack come together. Jack and I could do the hard work and Lek could be free to be "the queen and the goddess" and to walk around telling people what to do, ha ha.

*Why is *jap sen* (as opposed to straight northern style) important to you in your personal practice and teaching? What would you describe as the particular attributes and benefits of nerve touch work?*

Nerve Touch style as developed by Lek Chaiya is a unique approach to Thai Bodywork, and different than northern style. It is unique in the way that it focuses each technique on the tendons and nerves, more than the muscles. It is very therapeutic for joint function and mobility, as the tendons are where muscles attach to bones and where muscles can be tightest.

There is also a "twanging" or thumb rolling into the sen lines and over the ridges of muscle. This creates a deeper release from blockages in energy flow and a resonating affect through large or dense muscles, tendons and nerves. The intention of Lek's style is a very focused approach to relieve uncomfortable, painful and even debilitating conditions (as can be seen especially with her work with paralysis). It is specific and deep.



Janice Vitavec, RTT

When did you first study Thai massage? Was Chongkol Setthakorn your first teacher, or Lek Chaiya? Have you studied with any other influential Thai massage teacher?

My first trip to Thailand was in 1997, I stayed in Thailand for over 6 months the first time. I studied with Chongkol first at ITM and took the "Teacher training courses" for 8 weeks, then later went to live with a Thai friend on the outskirts of Chaing Mai away from the tourist areas and that is when I met Lek. I lived one block away from her clinic. I started to learn with her by working (that is studying) while she worked on Thai clients that came into her clinic each day. She worked on a wide range of conditions, and this is when I started to see and to understand how intuition and therapy really work in Thai massage. It was invaluable and a very precious time to me. I have continued to study most astutely with Lek one-to-one over the past 12 years and by teaching together with her when she comes to California.

I am always building new skills and expanding on my learning and teaching by continuing to study in Thailand every year. I returned to ITM and repeated all of the courses again to polish my materials for my own classes in Levels 1-4 which are a "sister program" to ITM. I have also studied at the Old Medicine Hospital a few times and have some great material from an interview with Achan Sintorn which I will be distributing soon.

I like to learn by receiving too...aahhh...I go for Thai bodywork sessions almost every day when I go to Thailand and I like to go all over the country to do that, travel and get Thai massage, a wonderful way to learn!

How long have you been practicing and teaching in Nevada City?

I have been practicing Thai massage in Nevada City since I moved here in 1998, and I started my school, Spirit Winds School of Thai Massage in 1999.

What were the high points of the recent workshops with Lek and Jack in California?

So many people came to take the workshops. Lek and Jack were really well received and were loved throughout their entire time here - I am really pleased about that. I also think it was a great confidence-builder for Jack in his teaching abilities, and a wonderful stepping stone towards more international teaching for him in the future. Of course it was a blessing to have Lek come again after her illness, and such an honor to be with her.

Other highlights were our Grand Opening of our new Thai Therapeutic Spa called "Jindana" meaning "vision or dream of the future with heartfelt purpose". Having Lek there was very special to me and substantiated the foundation that we are building at the spa. Another highlight was the dinner/dance that we had at the end of the trainings and watching Jack learn salsa dancing!

Which other activities do you coordinate for Spirit Winds?

International training retreats in Bali, Canada, and Costa Rica. I provide an annual self development and Thai bodywork workshop at Sierra Hotsprings each year called "Dare to Dream". I also teach at spas providing training for staff. I host and study with Maori healers from New Zealand.

Tell us about Jindana, and why you started it.

"Jindana" is the name that was given to me personally years ago by Thai friends in Thailand. I have been dreaming about a Thai Spa for years, and I took a leap of faith and signed a lease before I even had the team of therapists together. With the number of years that I have been teaching, I was able to select advanced and skilled Thai massage therapists who have trained with me and also in Thailand. We are now co-creating our vision of an authentic and community healing space together. I am very grateful.



Jack demonstrates on a student in California.

One Week with Pichest, *continued*

Near this house is a large sculpture, a boat covered in gold leaf. I understand this even less. Construction is being carried out right next to the classroom - a new spirit house. The builders work incredibly fast - the day we arrived, Monday, there was only a very basic frame, but by Wednesday it was almost finished.

Each day is structured in basically the same way, with some variations and improvisations - it's like jazz. We sit around either inside or outside of the classroom from about 9:00 to 9:30 a.m. Sometimes, Pichest talks to people. He usually smokes cigarettes. Sometimes he talks in a more formal way to all those in the room, and sometimes just to one or two students or to an individual student. He has certain subjects he likes to talk about, and I'm still collecting them. In general, these talks center around keeping the five precepts of Buddhism, honoring one's mother and father, not thinking too much, not thinking at all, 7/11 stores as an analogy for all that's gone wrong in our contemporary society, the illusion of the body, the certainty of death, and other related subjects. Recently, he said if trying to be a Thai massage therapist makes you too worried, or makes you think too much, you should become someone who sells boxes, because that is a job without stress, and anyway, everyone always needs boxes, all kinds of boxes, including the one you find yourself in when you "stop life."

Then we pray. We pray what I consider to be a rather formal Buddhist set of prayers, including a recitation of a vow to observe the 5 Precepts (as Pichest says "no killing, no lying, no sex, no stealing, no whiskey.") We recite some of the prayers together, and Pichest says a fair amount of the prayers himself. We pray to all three areas of the shrine. We say the Om Namo to Jivaka somewhere in the middle. After the prayers, Pichest often gives a dharma talk. He elaborates on the same subjects mentioned above, with variations, and sometimes directs much of his speaking to a particular student. When he does this, I think it's an example of what would be called "transmission" in Buddhism...the teaching he's giving is heard by all, but the inner energy of the teaching is for someone in particular. I think, in fact, that this direct transmission is a very important part of his bodywork, as well as one of the ways he works as a teacher. Then, somehow arising from this talk, he chooses someone and starts talking about what's going on in their body. He will often suddenly go over to someone and say "see, block here," and point to some part of them. He'll elaborate, and sometimes do some work on this part. Oftentimes, he'll say to us, "Feel.

Sense. Where is the block?" And then he'll sit in the corner for a while smoking a cigarette, and talking about the way their block is affecting their body from across the room. Sometimes, he'll have another student work on the body that's being observed and sensed. This all happens in a very organic and fluid way. Sometimes there are questions, sometimes if you ask a very "thinking" question, you get threatened with a hit on the head (in a playful way), sometimes you get a demonstration of something really interesting, sometimes you get no response at all.



Pichest teaches entirely in the moment, and absolutely refuses to commit himself to any answer that would make the *particular* situation, the *particular* body in front of him, into an example of things in general. He works only with what is there to work with, and refuses almost all conceptualizing and abstraction. This can be totally and utterly maddening, but it also forces us to look very closely at who is actually lying in front of us, and to give up the belief that we can work from our ideas about what someone needs. This is hard work, but, as Pichest always says, laughing "for you, hard; for me, easy."

After the morning session we have lunch. Often, Pichest's wife kindly cooks delicious vegetarian food. Other times, we go to the little food stand down the road. There, we drink *cha nom* - thai iced tea with sweet condensed milk - or *cha manao* - thai iced tea with lime. Sometimes, we go and get the *cha nom* even when we eat at Pichest's. The heat makes us crave it. And, besides, it is served in plastic bags, and that is just delightful. It's also funny, because when you need to put aside your tea, you can't, because it's in a plastic bag! Maybe you hang it on a hook, as we once saw Pichest do. After lunch, or whenever you consider lunch to be over, you come inside and work with someone. This, like the rest of the day, happens organically. No one decides when lunch is over, or who should work with whom, or in what way. Often, some people are working, some are watching, some are sleeping. Usually, within an hour after lunch, everyone is working with someone. At times, Pichest receives massage from one of the students, and then he will often show them

new things and work on them for a while. Other times, he will circulate around the room making adjustments and offering advice. Other times, Pichest may even close his eyes and rest. In Pichest's class, one finds oneself looking to the other students as well as to Pichest for answers, ways to work, and experience. This is one of my favorite aspects of his way of teaching. The room is a mix of beginning, intermediate and advanced students, and so a lot of knowledge is exchanged in a variety of directions.

Pichest's son On also helps in class some days, and gives us some wonderful adjustments. Both Pichest and On give very hands-on adjustments. If you can't understand something, like how to use your knee pressure in the right way, they will take your hand and put it under their knee so that you can feel how the pressure feels to the recipient. I like this "feeling way" of learning very much - it's very direct, and like so much that Pichest does, it avoids over-conceptualizing. At around 4 pm, or a bit later if Pichest is napping, we pray again, this time just a short invocation to the Buddha, and the Om Namo. Then we leave to go home. Sometimes, Pichest sits around outside and talks with us. This is the way the days have been for me this week, with a few notable exceptions of Pichest treating local people during our class time.

(continued next page...)



Photos: (Cover) Pichest with students;
(This page, column 2) Pichest's altar;
(Above) Pichest demonstrates a graceful move in prone position.

Pichest, *continued...*

A man named Nigel came on Wednesday to receive a massage from Pichest. I didn't know that Pichest still gave sessions, but now I believe that he gives them when they are really necessary. My understanding is that he has been seeing Nigel for close to one year. Nigel is an American living in Chiang Mai, and he suffers from Parkinson's. Nigel received his massage in the main room, with all the students watching, some taking photos. Pichest had one of his students do some bloodstops on Nigel in side lying position, but other than that, he did all of the work himself. A student who has been studying with Pichest for many months told us that he sometimes has the more advanced students begin Nigel's massage and then he takes over at some point in the session. I was glad to have this chance to watch him work. He doesn't talk or explain much while he's working, but being able to follow the thread of his thought – I mean, his non-thinking – is really amazing. Pichest is truly a master of finding the simplest, most direct and most effective way to work at any moment in any position, and he works with astounding fluidity.

On Friday, a former student of Pichest, a Thai woman, came into the classroom with an older Indian man who had polio as a child. Six months ago, against the advice of his doctors, he underwent surgery to have his achilles tendon lengthened. His leg was still very stiff and swollen, and was causing him a lot of pain. He was hoping Pichest could look into his situation. Pichest sat down and gave the exact same diagnosis as the doctor had given. The most surprising thing that Pichest said was that the man should definitely not receive Thai massage, because the pressure would be too intense and could worsen his condition.

Instead, he recommended oil massage. He went to the back of the room where there was a big tub of dark, herbed sesame oil. One of his students brought him various containers, bowls and cups, to put the oil in, but none of them were the right one. Pichest apparently wanted an earthenware container for the oil. Finally, after 10 minutes of looking for the right container, he brought the oil over to the man, and showed one of the students how to give a kind of slapping massage to the man's leg, meant to stimulate the blood flow in the leg. He also recommended to the man many, many times that he should stop drinking whiskey and that he should ride a bicycle to reduce his big belly. Pichest usually smiled when he said these things.

One week with Pichest is both a long time and a short time to be in his presence. The most impressive thing in my head after this first week is how he teaches so directly based on the bodies and the energies of the students in the room. The familiar structure of curriculum, plan, and review that marks most classes of all subjects are totally absent from his way of teaching. He teaches from the situation as it is in the present moment. There is no doubt at all that one is indeed in that very situation. This, I am realizing more and more, is the essence of meditation itself. I once mentioned to Pichest that he should teach meditation in his classroom if he's going to talk about it so much, but now I realize that he is already doing this. Today, at the end of class, just before closing prayers, he suddenly stood up, went to the window and called for us to come and look at the light. When we crowded around, he opened his bottle of water and poured some into the cup made by the veins of a large leaf outside. Then he held the beautiful and simple water droplet up to the light. "Like that," he said. "Just like that."

Thai massage on the floor, not on a massage table

By: James Peckham, M.A., RTT

There are important reasons for practicing Thai massage on a mat on the floor, and not on a table. Working in the traditional way, on the floor, we fully honor Thai massage as a powerful, comprehensive, versatile, and all-encompassing healing art that helps our clients, while also caring for our own bodies. Authentic Thai massage represents a radically different approach to western massage and bodywork. I believe it should not be practiced simply as a series of stretches incorporated into a table massage.

Respect for the tradition and for our Thai teachers

All of the Thai massage instructors and practitioners I have met in Thailand practice only on a floor mat. That is enough reason for me, right there. Speaking for people from the United States, our reputation around the world could be improved by showing humility and genuine respect for the Thai culture and its ancient healing traditions. We would be wise to humbly remain in "beginner's mind" for many years of study and practice before we make claims such as "Blending East and West." Besides, Thailand has been blending East and West for thousands of years already. Strategically located on the Silk Road, Thailand has participated for centuries in a continual flow of information and materials. Ideas, religions, healing knowledge, medicines, spices, fabrics, art, handicrafts, and natural resources have flowed along this route from India, China, and even the Middle East. There is a reason that Thai massage has evolved into what it is now, and we would be wise to respect that, and to fully understand it in our hearts. It is our privilege to embody the essence of the Thai spirit through loving kindness, compassion, respect, humility, mindfulness, selfless service of others, and an authentic practice of traditional Thai massage.



Better body mechanics

Practitioners use better body mechanics on the floor rather than on a table. When we practice Thai massage on a mat, and we work at the same height from the floor as our client, so it is much easier to work from our center, and to use leverage, body weight and gravity.

More space

Would you practice yoga on a table? Of course not. Thai massage requires just as much space as for yoga, even more when you take the practitioner into account. On a floor mat, we can move more freely and use the broad scope of Thai massage positions, techniques and stretches to more thoroughly meet our clients' needs. There are many important Thai moves that simply cannot be executed on a table, or that may be dangerous or distracting. On a table, therapists remain standing most of the time, and this severely restricts the scope and fluidity of Thai massage that we can practice, and our work can become more static and contrived. Although we put our clients in some yoga postures in Thai massage, we practitioners are moving in more of a Tai Chi manner, and we need plenty of space for graceful and unrestricted movement. There is an important aspect of Thai massage that resembles dance or moving meditation. We need to have enough space as possible to freely move around our client's body as we work.

Wide variety of techniques and positions

Part of the power and versatility of Thai massage is the ability to work on our clients in more body positions than are possible on a table: supine, both side positions, prone, and sitting. Sitting position is virtually impossible to do on a table, and is at best very limited. There is not enough room to properly do back bends, spinal twists, and traction moves for which sitting position is best suited.

Maximum use of feet and knees

We can use feet and knees far more effectively on a mat than on a table. Experienced Thai massage practitioners use feet and knees extensively during the course of a session, and it is virtually impossible to use feet and knees on a table, even with bars or ropes hanging from the ceiling. Sometimes we use feet and knees for leverage, and sometimes for downward,



broad pressure on large muscles. In side position, for example, I stand up to knee-press a client's gluteal muscles in the hip. On a table, there is simply not enough room. In side position, I often knee-press tibialis anterior, peroneus longus, and lateral quadriceps muscles, and I work their erector spinae muscles as well. Neither of these moves can be done on a table. A common Thai technique is to foot-press around a client's scapula in side position, which in my opinion is the best way to work around their shoulder blades. Once again, this fabulous move is not possible to execute on a table.

Better promotion for Thai Massage

First-time Thai massage clients deserve to have a wonderful experience, a session that is representative of nuad boran's holistic power and versatility. Two things can prevent people from receiving a true taste of Thai massage: 1) practitioners who lack experience or have not studied enough authentic Thai massage with qualified teachers; and 2) massage on a table that is presented as "Thai."

To address the first situation, we are fortunate to have the Thai Healing Alliance International (THAI), the only true professional association for Thai massage, which proposes several levels of expertise. Now the general public can choose to receive Thai massage only from THAI-approved practitioners, and have a better chance of experiencing authentic Thai massage. Likewise, if spas and massage schools only hire instructors and practitioners that are approved by THAI, they would be more likely to have a higher quality of instruction and to produce better Thai massage practitioners. These factors, in turn, will afford the general public a better chance of experiencing a great first Thai session.

Regarding massage on a table being marketed as "Thai," more education and awareness are needed. The word "Thai" has marketing power because many people seem to associate "Thai" with something exotic, tropical, and exciting. However I believe that anyone who cares about the long-term growth and profitability of



authentic Thai massage will avoid using the word "Thai" for any type of bodywork that is not done on the floor in traditional style. Personally, I associate "Thai" with excellence and powerful versatility in bodywork. Table massage that claims to be "Thai" is so watered-down and stripped of its versatility and power that it ends up being a variation on the theme of Swedish massage, which does a great disservice to authentic Thai massage. Since Thai massage is relatively new in North America and Europe, it is of extreme importance that people's first experience with Thai Massage be one of good quality, so that people say, "Wow! That's amazing!" When massage clients receive their first regular massage on a table, and it is not satisfactory, they usually know enough to try again with another massage therapist. If a client's first Thai Massage is less than wonderful however, they do not have a strong point of reference for how it should feel. They are unlikely to know that they need to try again with a more competent Thai massage practitioner. Since the general massage public is becoming more knowledgeable and sophisticated all the time, most clients are very willing to lie on a mat to try Thai massage, and they will quickly recognize the extraordinary benefits of this work in its proper setting.

Everything is better on a mat

There is absolutely nothing that I do on a table that I cannot do better on a mat on the floor. So why bother? In my opinion, there is nothing to be gained by performing Thai massage on a table. Since 1996, I have incorporated Thai massage into over 6000 hours of table massage. Adapting Thai massage techniques to the table has vastly improved my work beyond what I learned in massage school, but I would never call it "Thai massage." And deep in my heart, I know that what I do on floor mat is far superior to anything I can do on a table.



My Ongoing Journey with Nuad Boran - By TJ Martin

In February, 2009, my journey with *nuad boran* took me from my home in North Carolina to Minneapolis. As I stepped off the plane and walked through the jet bridge, I watched my breath blow clouds of steam into the cold winter air. Minneapolis greeted me with freshly fallen snow and temperatures hovering around zero. Clearly I wasn't in the sunny south anymore, but the bright sunshine and my excitement about the upcoming workshop kept my spirits warm. I had received a partial scholarship from THAI to further my Thai massage training, and I was very excited.

Riding the light rail into the city gave me some time to reflect on the previous year. The training I was about to participate in ran from February 19th – 22nd, exactly one year since my introduction to this practice. On the same weekend of the previous year, curious but knowing next to nothing about it, I attended an introductory workshop given by Bob Haddad at a local yoga studio in North Carolina. In just a few hours I moved from almost complete ignorance about the practice to a certainty that I wanted to delve deeply into this work. I continued to study with Bob, and to receive regular Thai massage from him, which was transformational. With his guidance, I began to develop a foundation for the practice. Like any beginner, I focused at first on the mechanics and techniques themselves, and I often felt clumsy and confused. It seemed that each position and movement was a unique experience, and each body that I practiced on brought about an unpredictable nuance. But Bob is a very patient and perceptive teacher, and I soon realized that there is so much more to learn than technicalities. I began to understand the energy body, how to develop and follow my intuition, how to practice from my *hara*, and from my heart.



Bob Haddad working on me



Tanya Sowards, me, and my host Marnie See

Tanya Sowards was my teacher in Minneapolis, and during her workshop I added to the foundation I developed with Bob, first as my personal Thai therapist and later as my teacher. A beautiful part of my experience with Tanya was beginning each day's study by gathering before a puja table (altar) that the group had created to spend a few moments honoring the ancient lineage of the practice. With Tanya's skillful teaching, I added more positions to my repertoire, and further developed an understanding of the energy body, its role in this work, and how to incorporate healing energy techniques, always with metta.

In November of 2009, my continuing journey in Thai massage took me across the ocean to the motherland, where I studied at Sunshine Massage School and at Baan Hom Samunphrai - both schools are members of THAI. After several days of recovery from jet lag, I arrived at Sunshine to begin a two-week Beginner's Course along with 8 other students. The school is in a beautiful building, constructed with traditional Thai architecture and infused with an energy that immediately makes one happy to have arrived there. Dot Po was our teacher, a native of Thailand. She taught from the depth of her extensive knowledge of Nuad Boran, and demonstrated positions with the grace of one who had studied and performed traditional Thai dancing for many years. I quickly began to experience a disintegration of everything I had learned to that point, but over the days that followed, I began to integrate the new learning with the old. By the end of the two weeks, I felt that I was beginning to practice with a broader and richer base of knowledge.

After finishing the course at the Sunshine Massage School, I went to Baan Hom Samunphrai for private study with Homprang Chaleekanha. Homprang, who grew up in a small village in northwestern Thailand is credentialed by the Thai Ministry of Public Health in several areas, including Thai Massage, Herbal Pharmacology, and as a Traditional Midwife and Doctor of Traditional Medicine. With Homprang's guidance I felt that I touched the heart of the practice of Nuad Boran in a way that I had not yet done. Homprang led me through three days of intensive study and it seemed that through her, several generations of practitioners poured their wisdom into me. I began to see and understand more clearly what distinguishes the practice of Nuad Boran from any other.



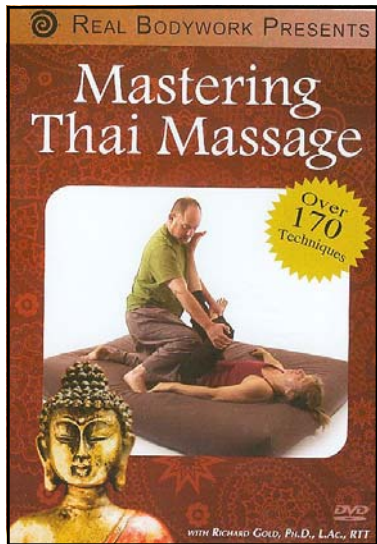
Dot applying a gold leaf blessing to my forehead

I'm grateful for the opportunities I've had to study with Bob and Tanya, and with my wonderful Thailand teachers. Their passion for this practice is a continuing inspiration. My teachers have refined my understanding of what elevates Thai massage beyond the mere application of properly placed arms, legs, feet and hands. Beyond all that, important as all that is, Nuad Boran is a practice of metta, a practice of the heart.



MEMBER NEWS

New DVD by Richard Gold



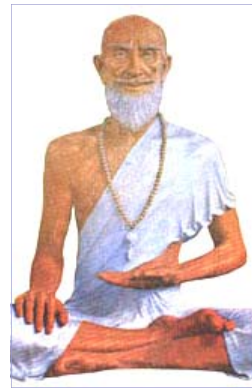
earliest practitioners of traditional Thai massage in North America.

The sequence and techniques used are classic ITM / Old Medicine style. Each technique is clearly demonstrated from several camera angles showing good alignment and body mechanics. The routines are divided into prone, supine, side and seated positions, and Dr. Gold narrates simultaneously as he works on his client, offering guidance and explaining variations of the techniques he demonstrates. At many points in the program, close-up camera shots are inset as windows on the main screen, allowing the viewer to see the fine details and making it easier to follow along.

THAI Instructor and Advisory Council member Richard Gold has released a new DVD on traditional Thai massage, available through www.realbodywork.com.

The DVD is very well produced, and is over three hours in length. This is the newest of a series of books and videos by Dr. Gold, who is one of the

A thick, soft futon is used in the video instead of a more suitable, harder mat, but the video flows well, and it is shot against a completely white background, which allows the practitioner and receiver to stand out clearly on a TV screen or computer monitor. This is an excellent introductory video on the topic of nuad boran.



JIVAKA'S CORNER

When word of the Buddha and his teachings first began to spread throughout the East, Jivaka's reputation as a famed surgeon and healer also spread. Accounts of Jivaka Kumarabhacca may now be found throughout all regions where Buddhism is practiced.

The Indian (Pali), Tibetan and Chinese versions of the sacred Buddhist books have slight differences, but all tell the story of the baby who was abandoned by his mother, raised by the King, and who went on to study medicine with the greatest medicine teacher of the day, Atreya. In the advanced stages of Jivaka's training, Atreya taught him a special technique to open the skull. Jivaka eventually left the company of Atreya and journeyed to the city Bhadrakata in Vidarbha, where he studied the textbook called "The Sounds of All Beings" (probably a textbook related with the healing practice of mantras).

Below: From Illustrations in the Blue Beryl Treatise of Sangye Gyamtso 1653-1705. A small portion of the first thangka of the Blue Beryl shows Bodhisattvas and pious attendants of the Buddha. Jivaka Kumarabhacca is the third person, at right.



Thai Culture Spotlight : Northern Hill Tribe People

The words "hill tribe" refer to ethnic minorities living in the mountainous northern regions of Thailand. Each tribal group has its own language, customs, native dress and spiritual beliefs. Most hill tribe people migrated to Thailand from Burma, China, Tibet and Laos over the past 200-300 years. There are believed to be over twenty different ethnic groups numbering over half a million people in Thailand today. Of these, the six dominant tribes are Yao, Karen, Akha, Lahu, Hmong and Lisu. Though in the past, many tribal groups cultivated opium for resale, government-sponsored initiatives have provided funding and education to empower the people to grow other crops such as beans, coffee, vegetables and flowers. These same education programs encourage the hill tribe people to abstain from slash-and-burn agriculture, which over extended periods of time, causes serious damage to hardwood forests.

Each tribe and village have their own preferences for style and design of houses. For the most part, houses are built based on two basic designs: either on the ground with a beaten earth floor, or elevated off the ground on stilts. Materials commonly used are bamboo poles, split bamboo and planks of wood, natural rope and thatch for the roof, such as fronds of palm leaves. In current-day Thailand, contact and trade between tribal village people and city dwellers are frequent. The younger generation often migrate to the cities in search of education, jobs and long-term careers. Some of them return back to the villages to live and work, but many of them remain in the mainstream of Thai culture, and return to the village only occasionally to visit family and friends.

Tourists to northern Thailand will often see many tribal people selling their handmade products and souvenirs. These days, most of them speak enough English to use in their trade, and some speak other Western languages as well.



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MEMBER NEWS

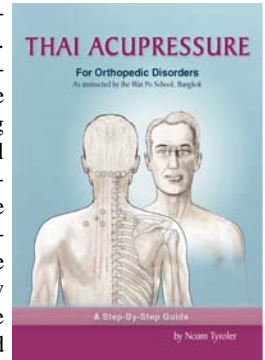
New book by Noam Tyroler

An excellent book by Noam Tyroler, a THAI Instructor based in Israel, has begun to circulate in the Thai massage world community. This book offers valuable information about Thai acupressure which is not readily available nor often taught by teachers and schools around the world. *Thai Acupressure for Orthopedic Disorders* is an oversized, hard-cover book, and it is available through the author at www.thaiacu.com. Though the book is expensive, the author offers a 25% discount to all THAI members. To receive the discount, contact the author at noam@thaiacu.com.

The book is extremely well laid-out, and contains 351 pages in medium-sized print - so there is a lot of information here. Mr. Tyroler's research and study, primarily at Wat Po, Bangkok, over a period of several years, led to the presentation of the only widely available book on Thai acupressure in the English language.

Excellent illustrations by J.R. Worsley are integrated into the book, describing in great detail specific acupressure points for the entire body. Treatment routines are clear to follow because of the illustrations and charts, as well as hundreds of photographs of the author engaged in traditional Thai massage and Thai acupressure techniques. Of particular interest are the lists of contraindications and "red flags" for each of the treatment modules, as well as assessment protocols for determining each condition.

This is a wonderful reference book for the professional Thai therapist, and it deserves a place in every serious student's collection.



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Mama Lek Chaiya, matriarch of the Nerve Touch style, dances with Janice Vitavec at the party held for the Thai massage workshops held in California in 2009.

Inside you'll find great information on traditional Thai massage