



LIVING TRADITIONS

Newsletter of the Thai Healing Alliance International • Volume 1, 2006

THAI HEALING ALLIANCE IS BORN

Welcome to the premiere issue of the semi-annual THAI newsletter. This newsletter is intended for circulation among all members of the Thai Healing Alliance International, and also to the extended community of practitioners of Nuad Thai (Nuad Boran, Thai massage, and Thai yoga massage) and related Thai healing arts

Concept

Thai Healing Alliance International (THAI) is an international network of students, practitioners, teachers and institutions engaged in the study and practice of traditional Thai healing arts. THAI unites practitioners of Nuad Thai (Thai massage, Thai yoga therapy, etc.) and Thai herbal traditions, and elevates and dignifies these traditions through standardized levels of achievement and study.

Thai Healing Alliance is a non-profit 501c6 organization based on voluntary membership, and does not claim to regulate or control the practice of Nuad Thai. By setting minimum requirements for each level of expertise, however, THAI is setting a new standard of practice – a barometer by which to gauge serious practitioners and teachers of traditional Thai healing arts.

Practitioner members receive the title of RTT which, when used after their name, designates their professional status as a Registered Thai Therapist. Other benefits include membership certificate, semi-annual newsletter, client & student referral service, advertising opportunities, sponsored events, and access to the THAI online database and archives. These are just a few reasons why all serious students, practitioners and teachers of traditional Thai massage should become affiliated with the Thai Healing Alliance.

Membership & Benefits

First and foremost, THAI serves its members. All members have access to a members-only section of the THAI web site containing:

- * A complete database listing of all members for research and networking
- * Reciprocal links to members' web sites
- * Archived articles of interest and current research on Thai traditions
- * Updated listings of regional events
- * A bulletin board or forum on issues relevant to traditional Thai massage

All members may advertise their services and products in print and on the THAI web site. Those members who own or

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operate web sites agree to exchange links with THAI, and to display the THAI logo on their site. Practitioner and Instructor members display their annual certificate in their place of practice and use the THAI logo on certificates they award to their students. Last but not least, all members agree to abide by the Thai Healing Alliance Code of Ethics, and to comply with the regulations and guidelines set forth by the Organization.

Become involved

We need your help, and we want you to have a voice in this new alliance. THAI is endorsed by outstanding practitioners, teachers and schools around the world. When you join THAI, you become part of a new standard in traditional Thai massage, and you make a statement about the professional integrity of your practice. Please make a commitment to join with us today. Together, we can make a difference in the world of traditional Thai healing arts.

For membership information, visit: www.ThaiHealingAlliance.com and to volunteer your time, make a donation or ask questions, write to: info@thaihealingalliance.com

A few of the Executive Council members of THAI: (from left to right) Martin Misenhimer, Al Turner, Beth Misenhimer, Bob Haddad.



TRADITION WITH A TWIST

By Sara Avant Stover

Like most of the best things in my life, Thailand and Thai Yoga Bodywork arrived as surprises.

On a May afternoon in 1999, I sat with a friend and a few cappuccinos at a Hungarian pastry shop in New York City's Upper West Side. I was a senior at Barnard College at the time, catching up with a former high school teacher who was in the neighborhood. That fall he would be heading to Chiang Mai, Thailand to serve as headmaster of an international boarding school. He told me that one of his teachers had unexpectedly backed out. Knowing my thirst for travel and that my graduation was imminent, before the last sip of coffee he had offered me the newly vacant teaching position. "I don't mean to rush you," he concluded, "but I need to know your decision within forty-eight hours."

As an African Studies major, the only things I associated with Thailand at the time were rice fields and elephants. Clearly I had some research to do. A visit to the travel section of the Barnes and Noble on 86th street led me to the Lonely Planet guide. Turning to the chapter on Chiang Mai, I learned that it was a city in the country's mountainous north, it had a yoga studio – and, best of all – I could get a two hour massage for a mere \$6. With that, I closed the book, and that evening I accepted the job. It was no mistake; this decision led me to an unexpected love affair with Thailand and its healing art, traditional Thai massage.

Upon arriving in Chiang Mai for the first time, I caught onto a few things very quickly: Thailand's cuisine is mind-boggling delicious; everyone seemed to be smiling; and Thai massage is ubiquitous. Within my first 72 hours as an expatriate, I experienced Thai massage for the first time. Having only received Swedish and deep tissue massages, I didn't quite know what to expect but as I am never one to decline an adventure, I succumbed willingly. What ensued were two glorious hours of lying on a floor mat in a borrowed cotton tank top and pants and being pressed, rocked, twisted and stretched into the most ingenious of shapes and possibilities. I left feeling much like I do after practicing yoga: grounded and bright. Amazing! I was hooked – and puzzled, I left wondering, "What was that?!" I soon learned that traditional Thai Massage (known as nuad boran in northern Thailand) began to evolve in Thailand

approximately 2,200 years ago. In its earliest stages of development, this healing art thrived in Buddhist temples, where lay people would come for healing. It also spread to rural villages where children treated their elders at the end of a long day working in the fields.

Traditional Thai massage is a fusion of multi-cultural healing disciplines such as yoga, Ayurveda, Buddhist meditation, and traditional Thai medicine. From this fusion arises interactive bodywork that combines deep tissue compression, acupressure and reflexology, energy line work, toning of internal organs, energy balancing, range-of-motion exercises, and assisted Hatha yoga postures.

Thanks to an initial handful of pioneers, Thai massage began to be known in the West about twenty years ago, and today it assumes the names of "Thai Yoga Massage," "Thai Yoga Therapy," "Traditional Thai Massage," and "Thai Yoga Bodywork." An early student and teacher, Jonas Westring, serves as the director of Thai Yoga Healing Arts/Shantaya and leads workshops and trainings around the world. Westring, a yoga teacher and a physical therapist, spent much of his life traveling and studying in Asia, and he considers Thai massage to be the perfect container for melding Eastern and Western perspectives. "It's a great medium to introduce people to yoga and also to maintain my own practice", he says.

Colleen Potter-Burton wakes up each morning at 4:30 or 5:00 a.m. and works eight to nine hours a day as a physical therapy assistant in Mattawan, Michigan. But she still finds time for her Thai Bodywork practice in the evenings. "When you're going back to diaphragmatic breathing and connecting your breath to the receiver's, by the end of giving a two hour session I feel really wonderful!"

Maggie Hopson is a physical therapist, yoga instructor, and co-owner of High Desert Physical Therapy and Sports Rehabilitation in Winslow, Arizona. Traditional Thai therapy, she says, has "added a new dimension to how I approach rehabbing patients. In the past I would work on individual joints, but now I look at people more holistically." Patients with injuries such as a torn ACL – and even those with more severe movement disorders like as Parkinson's disease,

rheumatoid arthritis and lupus – benefit from Hopson's integrated approach. "These people feel great afterwards," she gushes, "Other patients in the clinic see this and say, 'Why aren't you doing that to me?'"

But Hopson knows that applying advanced body manipulation techniques to injured individuals can be tricky business. While her studies with some Thai massage teachers have concerned Hopson due to their lack of emphasis on anatomy, Hopson believes that safety should come first. "You need to keep a clear mind so you can sense resistance in the tissues and joints."

On a larger scale, safety is a real issue as Thai massage's popularity soars higher today than ever before. With so many newcomers and novices now beginning to practice, there is concern about maintaining the integrity of the traditional form. A new non-profit organization, the Thai Healing Alliance International (THAI), is responding at least in part to these concerns. THAI aims to build more cohesiveness amongst practitioners and bring about minimum levels of standardization. There are five advancing levels of membership in THAI, and entry level membership requires a minimum of 30 training hours and evidence of an ongoing practice.

With ancient techniques, new standards for practice, and rapid growth, the irresistible magic of Thai massage lives on after thousands of years. And what keeps veterans like Westring going back for more? He concurs with the masses when he states simply: "It feels good."

Sara Avant Stover is a freelance writer, yoga instructor, and Thai Yoga practitioner. She divides her time living between Massachusetts and Thailand.



STUDYING WITH PICHEST BOONTHUME (PICHET)

By James Peckham

Always learning, always unlearning

When I first studied with Pichet in 1999, I had been practicing Thai massage professionally for three years and had studied with two different teachers. I knew by the second day that Pichet was the teacher I wanted to study with. I also realized I would have to start learning all over again. That first time, I studied with him for six weeks, to unlearn what I had learned before, and to feel confident with his style and begin to incorporate his guiding principles into my practice. Each time I return to study with him, I have to start over again in some way, because he is always changing things slightly, and I always have more to learn. He may even change what he teaches from one day to the next.

Beginner's mind is best

Prior experience in Thai massage is just as likely to be a liability as an asset. There may be some value in knowing some techniques and moves, but there may be just as much to unlearn, because of differences in styles among teachers. Pichet is emphatic about using our bodies properly and effortlessly, and about "sensing," which means tuning in to the person receiving, knowing how much pressure to use where, what is connected to what, and when to use certain stretches and omit others. Other teachers may talk about the same concepts, but Pichet demonstrates them more thoroughly and consistently than anyone else I have met. His skills in body reading and palpation are unmatched, and he is amazing at quickly assessing a person's needs and designing a treatment that is right for that person in that moment. Therefore, the actual moves, techniques and sequences are secondary, and of value only to the extent that they support the fundamental principles of clear energy, sensitivity, mindfulness, good body mechanics, flow and economy of movement. Consequently, a student with previous Thai massage experience would be wise to have a beginner's mind while studying with Pichet. A little bit of humility, and willingness to start all over again, will go a long way.

Class size and structure

Pichet's classes, as all classes in Thailand, tend to be more full during peak tourist season, which is November through March. During the hot season, April through June, or the rainy season, July through October, there may be fewer students. Something that sets Pichet's classes aside from others is the relative lack of structure. Other Thai massage schools and teachers try to cater to western comfort zones by sticking to a syllabus, so you know exactly what material will be taught in a given week or ten-day period. Even though there is less structure in Pichet's classes, I always learn exactly what I need to learn, as long as I am patient and trusting. There may be diversions, sidetracks and order changes, but somehow it all works out at the end of the day. There are no levels in Pichet's classes. In the same class, there may be people who teach Thai massage, advanced students and people who have no background at all in any type of body therapy. It all works, and all the more so when students accept it all as being perfect.

Making Arrangements

It is a good idea to call Pichet at the end of the week before you plan to begin studying with him. Good times to call are Monday - Friday 8:00 - 9:00 AM and 4:30 - 8:00 PM, Thailand time. Mornings are best since he is almost always home prior to beginning class. If you are a new student, introduce yourself, perhaps mention a recommendation, and kindly ask if he will allow you to study with him beginning the following Monday. Classes are Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. His classroom is located in the village of Hang Dong, about a 20-minute bus ride from the center of Chiang Mai. Especially if you are a new student, I recommend that you ask, if you may visit his class the week before you plan to start studying with him. Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays are preferable, as by then the class has started to settle in and to run smoothly enough to permit a visitor. Opening prayers are usually around 9:15 - 9:30 AM, followed by discourse.

James Peckham has been practicing and studying traditional Thai massage since 1996, and returns to Thailand regularly to continue his studies with Pichet Boonthumme.



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Chaiyuth Priyasith, one of the great masters of traditional Thai massage, passed away on January 31st, 2004.

Chaiyuth died while dancing surrounded by a group of his students and friends. His profound understanding of the flow of energy through the sen lines was an inspiration for many longstanding practitioners of Nuad Thai.

In 1984 Chaiyuth began working at the (Shivagakormapaj) Old Medicine Hospital in Chiang Mai. Along with Pichet Boonthumme, he was one of the main therapists there for several years, responsible for teaching some of the earliest *farang* pursuing serious, ongoing study of Nuad Thai. One such student was Asokananda Harald Brust.

Chaiyuth left the Old Medicine Hospital in '87, and began to teach and practice privately, which he did until his death. With Chaiyuth, we have lost a deeply spiritual teacher. His spirit and influence live on among his friends and students around the world.

EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH ASOKANANDA

by *Bob Haddad*

The following are excerpts from an extensive interview with Asokananda by Bob Haddad, Director of THAI. The interview was carried out 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 first of several excerpts from the original transcription to be printed in the THAI newsletter.

What was your first experience with Thai Yoga Massage?

My first experience with Thai Yoga Massage was watching my two teachers practice at the Old Medicine Hospital (Chiang Mai, Thailand). I had no previous experience with Thai Massage before that, but I'd been studying a type of massage as part of my yoga training. The yoga tradition I follow contains a type of yoga massage that is not as evolved, but retains some remnants of what finally developed into Thai Massage. I knew a bit about yogic massage, but I had no clue that it was brought from India into Thailand where it then developed over thousands of years. My introduction to that was quite interesting. I was teaching yoga to a friend on the beach at Ko Samet and two Dutch people came over and asked if they could join our morning yoga session. They were the ones who first told me about Thai Massage, back in 1986.

Were you already living in Thailand at that time?

No, I was primarily doing meditation in Burma and had spent quite a bit of time in Sri Lanka and India, and I would occasionally visit Thailand. I had met an old meditation student of mine in Burma at my teacher's monastery and I was doing this yoga session with him at the beach. I had absolutely no idea that serious Yoga Massage was practiced in Thailand. It was virtually unknown back in the mid 80s. Even in Thailand few people knew about it and there were practically no schools where you could learn it. The Dutch people told me that there were still two places where one could learn Thai Massage, and that one was at Wat Po in Bangkok and the other was at the Old Medicine Hospital in Chiang Mai. I didn't really want to spend much time in Bangkok so on my next trip to Chiang Mai, I went to have a look at what they were doing at the Old Medicine Hospital. Back then there were no regularly structured classes; it was simply ongoing study. I think for the first half year there were only 2 or 3 students in the school. Anyway, I saw these two teachers working there, and what they were doing was amazing. I knew immediately that I wanted to learn it, so I asked them and they said I could start right away. And that was my introduction to Thai Massage.

How was Thai Massage thought of at that time in Thailand?

Thai Massage was virtually unknown at that time. Very few people were interested in learning the art, but shortly afterward, about three years later, Thai Massage began to establish a name for itself and more and more people arrived in Thailand hoping to study it. Attendance at the massage hospital grew from the handful of people I began with to a group of between 40 and 50 students by 1989 when I left. Interest in Thai Massage had exploded.

Do you owe that to any particular phenomenon?

Well I think it was a combination of things. On one hand this was a time when alternative medical practices began to gain popularity and acceptance all over the world, and consequently people began to be interested in traditional Thai Massage. Also within Thailand, this was a period when a group of Thai intellectuals began to question their country's complete dependence on Western medicine. Thai Ayurveda and Thai Massage had been pretty much pushed aside since the 1930s when Western medicine began to gain prominence. Also, in the mid-80s, the Thai Massage Revival project was started by the government, and more emphasis was placed on reviving what was still left of traditional Thai Massage. It was a time of change and within 4 or 5 years the whole situation with Thai Massage was completely transformed. When I first started, no one was interested in Thai Massage, neither Thai nationals nor foreigners, yet four or five years later, there was considerable interest within Thai society as well as from the outside world.

Tell me about your teachers and about your initial length of study. My teachers were Pichest Boonthumme and Chaiyuth Priyasith and...

Were they both teaching simultaneously at Old Medicine Hospital?

Well nobody was really teaching there actually, they were both working there, practicing there as therapists. The teaching consisted of being around them, observing them, working with them and getting feedback from them.

So the Old Medicine Hospital was functioning as a therapeutic center where people in the area would be attended to, as it was in the Buddhist Wat tradition?

Yes, it was a place where people with health issues would go and receive serious treatments and the main therapists were Chaiyuth and Pichest at that time. They both started there in the mid-eighties and worked together for a period of two or three years. Chaiyuth left sometime in '87 as far as I remember and Pichest stayed on until the early 90s.

Tell me something about the presence of Ayurveda in the practice of Thai Yoga Massage.

Thai Yoga Massage IS Ayurveda, it's part of Thai Ayurveda and anyone here in Thailand who is engaged in serious Thai Massage sees it that way because that's the history of its development. Medical knowledge from India began to arrive in the Mon kingdoms of what is now northern Thailand between 200 and 300 BC. As the Mon rulers established contact with India, Theravada Buddhist monks and Ayurvedic practitioners began traveling to this region to teach a healing practice that contained both Ayurvedic principles and massage. So Ayurveda and traditional massage was originally taught as one concept. Ayurvedic practice in Thailand developed into what is now known as Thai Ayurveda, which is quite different in theory and practice from Indian Ayurveda, and the massage element developed into what is now known as Thai Yoga Massage. It was always one based on one tradition, but with different branches of the same medical practice.

To what extent have the original elements of Indian Ayurveda been lost or changed in current day Thai practice?

Well for example, in the actual practice of Thai Ayurveda the *doshas* do not play a significant role. The major source of diagnosis and of treatment protocol in Thai Ayurveda is based on tastes, which is not the case in Indian Ayurveda where *dosha* analysis plays a much more significant role. In Indian Ayurvedic medicine there are eight tastes, but in Thai Ayurveda there are ten. So it's quite difficult for an outside observer to understand Thai Ayurveda because it's based on a theoretical background containing many Indian principles which are rarely used in actual practice. Thais are not particularly concerned with those elements. They pay respect to the source, but they work within their own tradition. That's the way it has developed over the past two thousand years.

Does Thai massage reflect any indigenous Southeast Asian healing practices?

Nobody has any idea about this. There must have been some native healing tradition in Thailand, but there are no known sources of information about this.

To what extent does Thai Massage reflect ancient Chinese healing practices?

I think the Chinese influence in Thai Yoga Massage is completely overrated in much of the current literature on Thai medicine and in Thai Massage. I often smile when I read articles on Thai Massage where the Thai energy system is compared with the Chinese meridian system, arguing that it is more or less the same thing. There are even books that claim that the Thai Massage *sen* system is the same as the Chinese meridian system, and they then conclude that practitioners should utilize the Chinese meridians when engaging in Thai Massage. I believe this is not a good way to look at the Thai healing tradition because upon serious investigation one will see that the Thai tradition is clearly derived from the Indian *prana nadi* system and from Ayurvedic medicine. Chinese medicine and the Chinese meridian system had little influence on the actual practice of Thai Ayurveda and traditional Thai Massage until much later on. It's also historically easy to understand this because the first Thais were refugees driven out of China by the Han Dynasty, so the idea that these people would happily embrace the Chinese system and incorporate it into their own practice is somewhat unlikely. Only in the past 200-300 years have an increasing number of Chinese traders brought Chinese medical knowledge and herbal products to Thailand. Currently in Thailand, Chinese medical treatment has become more prevalent, but still, I think there is very little mixing of the two healing arts. Chinese practitioners in Thailand are still quite separate from Thai Ayurvedic practitioners, and there is a clear distinction between Thai Ayurvedic practitioners and Chinese doctors in Thailand who practice Chinese medicine. ☺



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THE EGG LADY OF LAMPANG

In February of 2004, while studying Thai massage with Pichest Boonthumme in Hang Dong, I accompanied my colleagues and teacher on a field trip to visit the "Egg Lady." I knew she was a well-known spiritual healer who lived in a small village near Lampang, about an hour from Chiang Mai, but I had no idea what I was about to witness. What I experienced that afternoon opened my limited belief system to incorporate spiritual healing and black magic far beyond what I have ever known.

We each had to bring her two duck eggs, which we purchased at a local market. We offered these eggs, along with other offerings of incense, fruit and some money. One by one we were called up and "cleaned" in various ways with the eggs. As she rubbed the eggs over my body, she instantly diagnosed my recent problems with mercury poisoning. (I had recently undergone extensive removal of mercury fillings from my teeth, which had extreme side effects of full body rash, memory loss, fatigue and migraines, all common symptoms of lead poisoning). The Egg Lady told me I had poison in my body... then she rubbed the eggs firmly and cracked them. To my amazement, there was sand in my eggs.

The eggs of the others contained nails, string, screws, and other objects. She attributed most problems to our having been the recipients of magic spells while traveling in Thailand. She said many of the hill tribe people and others cast spells readily and without caution or discretion. In fact there was only one student in the group whose egg contained a normal yolk. That student was told that she was clean, and that she had no health problems.

I am so sorry to hear of her recent passing. The "egg lady" was very helpful to me at a time of need, and I pray that her spirit travels in peace.

~ D'vorah Swarzman has been studying traditional Thai massage with Pichest Boonthumme for many years. She maintains a practice in Oregon, and teaches in the northwest region of the United States.

VALENTINE'S DAY TSUNAMI PROJECT

Photo and story by:
Pierce Salguero

Earlier this year, children in schools across America were asked to make Valentine's Day cards for children in Southern Thailand who were affected by the tsunami. This project received world-wide support and generated an immeasurable amount of compassion among the youth in our local communities. My wife and I were able to personally deliver many of these valentines in a recent trip to several schools in the Khao Lak area in Phang-Nga Province. The result of this initiative was an overwhelming success and left an impression of friendship and hope on the children of southern Thailand.

For several years, our organization has been involved in building bridges between Southeast Asia and the West, but we had never before carried out relief efforts for the needy. Our organization focuses on educational programs and academic research of traditional Thai medicine. We are also involved in charitable activities of benefit to the Thai people, in gratitude for the knowledge they have shared with us, and for the profound effect this has had on our lives.

When the tsunami hit, we wanted to respond to what was clearly one of the worst disasters in recorded history. Soon after the disaster, organizations such as the Red Cross, UNICEF, etc., discouraged donations of food and clothing, and instead petitioned for cash in order to fund the delivery of goods already in stock. However, once immediate needs of survival had been met, the focus of relief efforts changed. We felt that the psychological well being of the children in these devastated areas also needed to be addressed. According to UNICEF, 35% of those who died as a result of the tsunami were children, and over 1.5 million child survivors were displaced from their homes. This is a staggering number of newly-orphaned and newly-homeless children who are now struggling to understand and come to terms with their new reality. With this in mind, we asked American children to send Valentine's Day cards, draw pictures, make collages and other art projects to express their solidarity and support for the Thai children affected by this



disaster. We collected close to ten thousand Valentine's cards from schools across the US and from countries as far away as Japan.

On Valentine's Day, 2005, we traveled to the most heavily-affected areas of southern Thailand and delivered cards to several schools in the Khao Lak area in Phang-Nga Province. We met with representatives from the Mirror Foundation, a Thai-owned non-profit, who introduced us to a Thai English teacher in the affected villages. She accompanied us into the schools and served as our translator as we distributed the Valentine's cards to the children.

As a result of this effort, we were able to make direct, personal contact with thousands of Thai orphans at a very limited cost. Thanks to all of our volunteers who organized the card-writing and passed the information along to friends, and all those who contributed financially or with time, this project was a phenomenal success. 🙏

(Article reprinted from Jivaka.)

Pierce Salguero is the Director of Tao Mountain, a non-profit organization dedicated to research and education in traditional Thai massage, herbal medicine, folk healing, and Theravada Buddhism.

ADVERTISE WITH THAI

Place a print ad in the THAI newsletter or a web-based ad on www.ThaiHealingAlliance.com. Since THAI is a non-profit organization, all contributions are tax-deductible. For ad rates and dimensions, contact: info@thaihealingalliance.com

Tips for a Successful Thai Massage Treatment

By Richard Gold

Precautions and safe methodology

- Always strive to work in a concentrated and meditative state of mind, remaining focused, and fully present in each moment, with each breath.
- Prior to the application of any therapy, always discuss with your client their current state of health, past health issues and their goals for the session. Encourage the client to provide feedback at any time during the session if any procedure is too deep or painful.
- Try to work very slowly, remaining acutely aware of the client's condition and physical and emotional acceptance of your work.
- Always strive to work utilizing proper body mechanics. This will help ensure that you are applying the techniques properly and will limit wear and tear on your own body.
- Never press down directly onto bones or joints. Techniques with circular movement, i.e. palm, finger, or thumb circles may be used over these areas.
- When the thumb is utilized for direct downward pressure, the ball of the thumb is used, not the tip.
- Deep abdominal massage is never given if your client has recently eaten.
- Cleanliness and personal hygiene are vitally important. Because the Thai massage practitioner utilizes their feet in their work, the feet must always be clean. The treatment environment must be clean and conducive to relaxation and healing. Thai Massage involves close physical proximity of the client and practitioner's bodies: therefore, cleanliness of both participants is important.
- Before a session begins, always take a moment to quiet your mind, focus your breathing, and give thanks for the opportunity to serve another human being.

Some specific contra-indications

- Do not treat clients who are very ill or in a highly weakened state, and avoid treatment if your client has a high fever.
- Clients with cancer or other life-threatening illnesses can be treated for symptomatic relief and general well being, but not with the intention or claim of curing the illness.
- Clients with osteoporosis should be treated with great caution and very gently, with no deep pressure.
- Clients who bruise easily or who take blood-thinning medication should be treated in the same way.
- For those who have had spinal surgery or are experiencing pain along the spine, all stretches in the prone position where the legs are raised should be avoided.
- Pregnant clients are treated with great caution and with no deep pressure on the lower abdomen and low back. Blood stops should be eliminated, and most of the work should be done in side position.
- Traditional Thai blood-stop procedures are eliminated in treating clients with a history of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and vascular problems.
- Take extra caution with clients who have varicose veins, fractures, wounds, bruises, joint inflammation and skin lesions.

~ Rick Gold is the President of IPSB, and is a founding member of Pacific College of Oriental Medicine. He has studied and practiced traditional Thai massage since 1988.

JIVAKA'S



CORNER

Jivaka Komárabhacca was the most famous physician of Gautama Buddha's time (563-483 BC), and is revered as the founding father of traditional Thai massage. He was the son of Sálavati, a courtesan of Rájagaha. Directly after giving birth, his mother placed the child in a basket and put it on a garbage heap. Later that day, Prince Abhaya, son of King Bimbisara, passed by and noticed the baby. When he asked nearby people about the baby, they said "jivati" (he is alive), and therefore the child was called Jivaka. The name Komárabhacca may have resulted from the fact that he was rescued and brought up by the Prince (Kumárena Posápito). It has also been suggested that Komárabhacca meant master of the Kaumárabhrtya science (the treatment of infants, or pediatrics).

Because of his devotion to the ways of the Buddha, Jivaka eventually had a monastery built close to his house, in his mango grove. After construction ended, the Buddha and his disciples were invited to the premises, and the monastery itself was formally donated to the Buddha and his monastic order (*sangha*). After the blessing ceremony of the new monastery, Jivaka is said to have attained the first level of sainthood (*sotapanna*).

It is with sadness and deep reflection that we pass on news about an important teacher and friend, Asokananda, who passed away on Friday, June 24 after a terrible four month struggle against pancreatic cancer. Asokananda Harald Brust was cremated on Monday, 27 June 2005, at 1 p.m. at Wat Paphaeng, Chiang Mai, Thailand. He was 50 years old.

He gave so much in his short lifetime. For those who only knew him through his seminal writings, the first books and energy line charts on traditional Thai massage written in any language other than Thai, he was an important inspiration and a strong source of reference. For those of us who knew him personally and studied with him, his depth of character, openness, gentleness, loyalty, compassion and love were consuming, contagious and inspirational.

Asokananda was very supportive of the concept of the Thai Healing Alliance. He regularly gave his feedback on important issues during the early stages of development, and he had agreed to be on the THAI Advisory Council before he became sick. Here are words from his closest friends and students in Chiang Mai on the day of his death: "We will be eternally grateful for his being, and for the knowledge and love that he shared with us. His loving kindness was so strong in life; we know it will continue to shine on us wherever he is and wherever he goes. Through each massage we give, and every student we teach, we will always be thankful for what he allowed us to discover and share."



Photo of Asokananda by Bob Haddad



Executive Council

Executive Director, Bob Haddad
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Letters & Commentary

I think you have laid a good foundation for an organization with serious standards for Thai massage. I wish you and the people involved with THAI all the best. – *Asokananda, Thai massage teacher, author and founder of the Sunshine Network.*

I admire this work. Always remember that we all depend on you. – *Souri Sisavath, Thai massage therapist.*

I fully support this effort and the compassionate and open intention with which you are guiding this endeavor. – *Erin Crawley-Woods, dancer, Thai therapist*

It's encouraging to know that this alliance will help to protect the traditional art of Thai massage. – *Christine Macarian, Thai massage therapist*

Good job ! I totally support the idea of Nuad Boran and all of traditional Thai medicine having its own international identity. – *Richard Gold, Acupuncturist, Thai massage teacher and author*

I support this endeavor. Good luck. – *Yoram Amiram, Chiropractor, Thai massage therapist*

A very necessary move towards uniting, educating and providing accessibility to the Thai healing community. – *Naomi Brisman, personal trainer, Thai yoga practitioner*

THAI will bring us together and make us stronger, and in the long run spread knowledge of Thai healing that will benefit us all. – *Ingrid Kullberg-Bendz, Thai massage practitioner*

I am very excited that the Thai Healing Alliance will be the much-needed catalyst for Thai traditions. The energy is gathering and THAI will provide direction and an open heart to allow the world to explore ancient Thai traditions. – *Michele Kilcer, Certified massage therapist*

VOLUNTEER TO WORK WITH THAI

Make history with us! Be part of the first non-partisan international organization for the practice of traditional Thai massage and Thai healing traditions. Volunteer positions offer great opportunities to network with other bodywork and healing professionals, and to grow your practice. THAI needs help with membership, graphic design, advertising and promotion.

To learn more, contact info@thaihealingalliance.com
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Thai Healing Alliance International

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