

# Preface

Most Thai massage books available today are instruction manuals based on sequences, designed to teach students how to execute techniques that may be performed during a Thai massage. Printed materials all around the world and on the Internet may present volumes of information, but one cannot learn how to execute techniques, how to breathe and move organically, how to sense energy blockages, or how to effectively and holistically offer a Thai healing session by simply reading a book.

This book is different. There are no proposed sequences, and only a few detailed notes about specific Thai massage techniques appear in these pages. Rather than focusing on techniques and sequences, this anthology reflects the authors' cumulative experience in the world of traditional Thai healing arts. It suggests ways to refine and deepen personal and professional practice, and it offers a wealth of previously unavailable information on aspects of Thai culture and spirituality, and on the history and evolution of the powerful healing modality known today as traditional Thai massage.

Much of the information presented in this compendium has never before been available in print, but it is by no means exhaustive. For example, the book contains an essay on Thai element theory but not about the taste system used in Thai medicine. There is an article on *tok sen* (a folk healing tradition that uses a wooden hammer and chisel) but nothing about *yam khang*, another Lanna tradition that uses fire and hot oil as the vehicle for healing. The reason for these omissions is simple. Traditional healing arts in Thailand are so varied, and the actual practice of nuad boran is so deep, that it would be difficult and unrealistic to attempt to present everything in one book.

In writing, compiling, and editing the essays that comprise this book, I've tried to present Thai massage as a unique healing art that comes from, and exists within, a framework of Thai traditional medicine, and as something that is also deeply connected to Thai Buddhist spirituality and Thai culture.

## Content

The book is divided into several sections, each containing entries by different authors of varying length:

**Section 1 (*Introduction*)** This section presents general information on the evolution, concepts, theory, myths, historical facts, and intent of traditional Thai massage.

**Section 2 (*Mastery of Practice*)** offers specific information about developing, refining, and maintaining a healthy Thai massage practice. It includes essays on breath and body mechanics, acupressure concepts and techniques, ways to use your feet creatively, herbal compress therapy, self-protection techniques, body language, and information about sen lines and Thai element theory.

**Section 3 (*Spiritual and Cultural Connections*)** presents articles on traditional Thai healers, magic and spirituality in Thai society, Jivaka Kumarabhacca, Buddhist influence in Thai massage, the reusi tradition, and accessory modalities such as *tok sen* (hammering therapy) and *reusi dat ton* (Thai hermit stretching exercises).

**Section 4 (*Thai Therapists Speak*)** features articles and accounts by individual Thai therapists and teachers around the world who offer unique perspectives on their study, experiences, and work in traditional Thai massage and Thai healing arts.

The final section features a glossary, a bibliography, photo and illustration credits, biographies of the contributing writers, and an index.

Throughout the book, I have used italics the first time each non-English word appears in a given essay. Afterward, those words remain in plain type for the rest of that essay. Please refer to the glossary as necessary when reading this book.

Never before has such wide-ranging and extensive information about Thai healing arts been compiled and presented in print. I feel honored to be offering this information, along with the contributions of my colleagues, as traditional Thai massage continues to touch and transform the lives of many more people around the world.

— *Bob Haddad*

# Contents

## Preface

viii

## One: Introduction

1. **Practice, Culture, and Spirituality: Introduction** Bob Haddad 3  
*(Author's comments and introduction to the book)*
2. **Traditional Thai Massage: An Overview** Kira Balaskas 15  
*(General information about the history and practice of the work)*
3. **Common Myths Associated with Thai Massage** C. Pierce Salguero 25  
*(Essay dispels common myths and misperceptions about traditional Thai massage)*

## Two: Mastery of Practice

4. **The Care and Feeding of Your Thai Massage Practice** Bob Haddad 35  
*(Tips for client care, self-maintenance, and sustenance in the practice.)*
5. **Thai Acupressure and the Wat Po Treatment Protocols** Noam Tyroler 62  
*(An overview of the Wat Po system of acupressure)*
6. **Introduction to Thai Element Theory** Nephyr Jacobsen 75  
*(Explains how elements are used in traditional Thai medicine)*
7. **The Sen Sip: Understanding Sen Lines** Felicity Joy 84  
*(General introduction to the ten major energy lines worked in Thai massage)*
8. **Using Your Feet in Thai Yoga Massage** Ralf Marzen 88  
*(Techniques and concepts for integrating more foot work in the practice)*
9. **Pregnancy and Thai Massage** Bob Haddad 95  
*(How to work with pregnant clients: what to do, and what to avoid doing)*
10. **Considering Body Language** Bob Haddad 104  
*(Client assessment and treatment concepts based on awareness of body language)*
11. **Breath and Body Mechanics in Nuad Boran** Bob Haddad 115  
*(How to use breath, body weight and posture effectively during a session)*
12. **Luk Pra Kob: The Art of Thai Herbal Compress Therapy** Bob Haddad 128  
*(Using herbal compresses effectively in Thai massage practice)*
13. **Self-Protection Techniques for the Thai Therapist** Bob Haddad 151  
*(Exercises and concepts for grounding, protection and detoxification)*

## Three: Spiritual and Cultural Connections

14. **The Art of Tok Sen** Joel Sheposh 169  
*(Introduction to northern Thailand hammering therapy)*
15. **Memorial for Chaiyuth** Bence Ganti 176  
*(The last days in the life of Ajahn Chaiyuth Priyasith)*
16. **The Vinaya Pitaka: Stories about Jivaka Kumarabaccha** Bob Haddad 187  
*(A modern translation of ancient stories about the ancestral teacher of Thai massage)*
17. **Thai Magic Amulets and Sacred Tattoos** Chris Jones 201  
*(General information on the use of amulets and tattoos for spiritual protection)*

18.	<b>Introduction to Reusi Dat Ton</b> Enrico Corsi	206
	<i>(Overview of the art of Thai self-stretching)</i>	
19.	<b>The Great Doctor of Northern India: Jivaka Kaumara-Bhrtiya</b> Gunakar Muley	212
	<i>(More information about the father of Thai traditional medicine)</i>	
20.	<b>The Reusi of Thailand</b> Tevijjo Yogi	216
	<i>(Introduction to the Thai spiritual seekers known as reusi)</i>	
21.	<b>Traditional Healers of Northern Thailand</b> Greg Lawrence	222
	<i>(Overview of the different types of northern Thai traditional healers)</i>	
22.	<b>Om Namó ...What? – The Thai Massage Wai Khru</b> Bob Haddad	226
	<i>(The true story and meaning of the Thai massage mantra, with a new, accurate translation)</i>	
<b>Four: Thai Therapists Speak</b>		
23.	<b>Diabetes and Thai Massage: No Contraindication</b> Karen Ufer	241
	<i>(Experiences on the mat with a diabetic client)</i>	
24.	<b>Acupuncture and Thai Massage: Same-Same but Different</b> Eric Spivack	245
	<i>(Differences and similarities)</i>	
25.	<b>One Week with Pichest Boonthumme</b> <i>(Study and learning experiences)</i> Michelle Tupko	248
26.	<b>Integrating General Acupressure into Traditional Thai Massage</b> Michael Reed Gach	252
	<i>(Concepts, ways and techniques to use more acupressure in Thai massage)</i>	
27.	<b>“Stop the Blood” or “Open the Gates”?</b> <i>(Essay on “blood stops”)</i> Tim Holt	263
28.	<b>Exploring Energy in Thai Massage</b> Robert Henderson	265
	<i>(Energy concepts that come into play during Thai massage)</i>	
29.	<b>Thai Massage for Multiple Sclerosis Patients</b> <i>(Specialized essay)</i> Goran Milovanov	273
30.	<b>Notes from the Mat</b> <i>(Accounts of sessions by therapists and clients)</i> various contributors	277
31.	<b>Pilgrimage to Rajgir</b> <i>(The town where Jivaka and the Buddha lived and interacted)</i> Bob Haddad	283
32.	<b>Compassion and Ethics in Thai Massage</b> <i>(Specialized essay)</i> Emily Canibano	290
33.	<b>Interview with Asokananda</b> <i>(Personal interview)</i> Bob Haddad	293
34.	<b>Understanding Clients in Nuad Boran</b> <i>(Specialized essay)</i> Danko Lara Radic	301
35.	<b>Standing Thai Massage on its Head</b> <i>(Specialized essay)</i> Paul Fowler	306
36.	<b>Thai Massage on an Amputee Client</b> <i>(Specialized essay)</i> Bob Haddad	308
37.	<b>Thai Massage beyond the Physical</b> <i>(Specialized essay)</i> Robert Henderson	311
	Glossary	313
	Selected Bibliography	316
	Photo and Illustration Credits	318
	Author and Contributing Writers	320
	Index	324