

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*

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