

EXPLORING THAI MASSAGE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF ICONOLOGY: FOCUSING ON THE ICONOGRAPHY OF WAT PHO

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ABSTRACT

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Received: 21 July 2020
Revised: 17 March 2021
Accepted: 19 March 2021
Published: 9 November 2021

Citation:
Chang, Y.-L. (2021). Exploring Thai massage from the viewpoint of iconology: focusing on the iconography of Wat Pho. *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies* 21(3): 505-517.

The importance of Wat Pho lies in preserving many unique images of traditional medicine which is dominated by Thai massage, that shows an important connection between images and Thai massage. The objective of this study is to explore the cultural context behind Thai massage through the iconography of Wat Pho including 60 stone inscriptions and 80 Ruesri Datton images. Thai massage contains valuable knowledge, which is usually preserved in literature, such as in manuscripts and stone inscriptions. In these sources, only a small part is presented in the iconography, recorded in 10 Sen lines and Ruesri Datton images, which has become the core of Thai massage, wherefore it is important to analyse the iconography. The research method of the study is qualitative, the research steps include literary reviews, analysis of the treatment stage of Thai massage, and the use of iconology theory to explore Thai cultural context by analysing the iconography of Wat Pho. The research result shows the iconography of Wat Pho reflects the structural relation formed by "Buddhism," the "King," and the "tradition of iconography," namely embodying Thai cultural context hidden in the iconography. The special finding among them is the concept of the tradition of iconography, as a cultural element, it is rarely mentioned in other studies. In a word, Thai massage not only represents a unique cultural meaning but becomes an important intangible cultural heritage in Thailand.

Keywords: Cultural context; Wat Pho; Thai massage; iconology

1. INTRODUCTION

"Nuad Thai", traditional Thai massage, inscribed in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on 12 December 2019, it is important local wisdom of Thailand (UNESCO, 2019). This study aims to explore the Thai cultural context behind the iconography of Wat Pho from the viewpoint of iconology. The iconography is important for Thai massage, but is rarely studied in related research. Thai massage is a branch of Thai Traditional Medicine, which includes Thai massage and Ruesri Datton. Before being inscribed in the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO, Thai massage has been included in the Thai Intangible Cultural Heritage List, taking on several roles as a form of traditional medicine, art, valuable local wisdom, and so forth (The Department of Cultural Promotion, 2011: 15). The key aspects of Thai traditional medicine are related to diseases and ancient literatures. In origin, Thai traditional medicine aims to cure diseases, which not only impact individual health but could destroy villages; for example,

Lefferts mentioned that the ancient city of Isan was evacuated due to cholera (Lefferts, 2002: 58). Furthermore, there is a very close relationship among Thai traditional medicine, manuscripts, palm-leaf manuscripts, and stone inscriptions. In the customs of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar, traditional medical knowledge is usually kept in the family, but it may also be recorded in manuscripts and stone inscriptions that can be found in several related databases, such as Database-Manuscripts of Western Thailand, The Inscriptions in Thailand Database, and The Digital Library of Lao Manuscripts (cf. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, n.d.a; Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, n.d.b; National Library of Laos, n.d.). These databases were established in the 1990s, and different systems have been designed to classify the texts collected from a variety of sources. What these databases have in common is the collection of traditional medical materials; in particular, the proportion of images in traditional medical manuscripts is higher by far than in non-medical manuscripts. These traditional medical data show that Thailand and Laos have transmitted medical knowledge through iconography for a long time. There is not only a relationship between traditional medicine, manuscripts, and stone inscriptions in Thailand and Laos, but images are also used as a carrier for preserving the skills of traditional medicine from generation to generation.

Among these data, the importance of Wat Pho lies in preserving a number of unique images of traditional medicine, which are dominated by Thai massage, recording the core medical knowledge of the ten Sen lines (energy lines) and Ruesri Datton. This is why it could be included in the Memory of the World list.¹ In general, Wat Pho conserves three kinds of modern iconography of Thai massage: stone inscriptions, statues, and manuscripts. The stone inscriptions are mainly set in the Thai massage pavilion (Figure 1), and 60 pieces (30 pairs) of *Sen-line* engravings are found on the walls of the pavilion. The statues come from a few Ruesri Datton statues in the temple, and manuscripts are stored in the library.

Before writing this article, the author presented a related paper exploring the medical knowledge and cultural meanings of Thai massage with the modern iconography of Wat Pho as the analysis materials (Chang, 2019). In the course of the research, the author began examining another related question: What is the cultural context of the massage iconography of Wat Pho? If people gaze at the iconography of Wat Pho from an iconological perspective, the deep meaning of the iconography would be discovered. Hence, the author continues to use the iconography of Wat Pho as the analysis texts, comprising 60 stone inscriptions in the Thai massage pavilion and 80 Ruesri Datton images (2015 [1838], a black book manuscript), to explore the Thai cultural context behind the texts.



Figure 1: 60 Stone Inscriptions in Thai Massage Pavilion, Wat Pho

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several possible origins of Thai traditional medicine, because Thai traditional medicine is not original; similar medical principles have Indian, Chinese, Khmer, Tai, and Western provenances (Salguero, 2016: 98-100). Mulholland mentioned that the basic ideas of ancient traditional medicine might have a common origin somewhere in the unknown past, but thus far there is no clear evidence of such a source. Ancient traditional medicine may have been transmitted from Europe to Asia, and in Asia through Islamic, Ayurvedic, and Chinese medicine, entering Thailand and flourishing there to the present day. Thai traditional

¹ On May 27, 2011, UNESCO registered 1,431 stone inscriptions of Wat Pho which were made in 1831-1841 as Memory of the World, including traditional medicine, Thai massage and Thai pharmacy knowledge. (cf. UNESCO, 2011; Office of Protection of Thai Traditional Medical Wisdom, 2014: 3; The Government Gazette, 2015).

medicine, to a large extent, derives from such concepts (Mulholland, 1979: 84). Salguero agrees with Mulholland and does not deny the relationship between Thai traditional medicine and Indian, Chinese, or other forms of ancient medicine. However, Salguero emphasizes that the inference that Thai medicine is interchangeable with Indian or Chinese medicine or other Asian traditions based on the view above is not correct, because it devalues the tradition and does a disservice to the history and cultural heritage of the Thai people (Salguero, 2016: 99). Simply put, Thai traditional medicine is a distinctive medical knowledge system that integrates Theravada Buddhism, Ayurveda, Yoga, Chinese, and other traditional medicines with their applicable concepts.

2.1 A brief history

The golden period of Thai traditional medicine can be found in the Chakri Dynasty, which created rich related materials. Prior to the Chakri Dynasty, a significant portion of literature about Thai traditional medicine was lost and Thai medical knowledge had not yet been systematically ordered. The first Siamese medical treatises that were recorded might be traced back to the Sukhothai Dynasty, although related inscriptions are few. The earliest record of Thai traditional medicine appeared in the Sukhothai period in a note recording a massage² (Office of Protection of Thai Traditional Medical Wisdom, 2014: 7). Prior to this, there might already have been hospital institutions in the area. According to the evidence of stone inscriptions unearthed from Surin Province in northeastern Thailand, a Khmer king, Jayavarman VII (1181-1215 A.D.), was recorded as building 102 hospitals, called Arogayasan/Arogayasala, throughout his kingdom, including in the Khmer-held region that today lies in northeastern Thailand (cf. Kaewkhlay, n.d.: 9; Pattaramoon, 2012: 1-2; Salguero, 2016: 3; Yamdate, 2015: 173). These indicate that massage therapy was already in use during the Sukhothai Dynasty.

Thai massage was still popular among royal and ordinary people in the Ayutthaya Dynasty. The following two texts record the social phenomenon. First, during the reign of King Trailokanat (1448-1488), royal law stipulated the identity and position of people engaged in Thai massage.

In the Buddhist Era 1998 (1455 A.D.), in the medical department for example, people were assigned to jobs according to their different feudal identities, such as working in medicine, herbal medicine, pediatrics, or massage departments. Among them, there is a supervisor whose power came from his feudal status (Picheansoonthon, 2012: 277).

For another, La Loubère visited Siam for several months in 1687 and recorded the use of Thai massage at that time.

When any person is sick at Siam, he begins with causing his whole body to be moulded by one that is skillful here in, who gets upon the body of the sick person, and tramples him under his feet. This likewise reported that great belly's women do thus cause themselves to be trodden under foot by a child, to procure themselves to be delivered with less pain (La Loubère, 1693: 63).

Regrettably, abundant ancient materials were later destroyed during an invasion by the Burmese army, resulting in the burning of documents on traditional medicine, including those on Thai massage. The revival of Thai massage stalled until the Chakri Dynasty, whose kings provided support to the revival of Thai massage.

During the Chakri Dynasty, the golden age of Thai traditional medicine, Thai medical knowledge began to be systematically integrated and established. The development of Thai traditional medicine is closely related to the Thai kings. In general, King Rama I laid the foundation for traditional medicine, and King Rama III carried it forward. King Rama IV and King Rama V followed in the footsteps of their predecessors and introduced Western medicine to Siam during their reigns. Later, King Rama VI supported modernization and Western medicine, which meant that traditional medicine was no longer exclusively supported and gradually declined. Traditional medicine gained attention once again during the reign of King Rama IX.

In order to improve the health of the people, King Rama I ordered the reconstruction of Wat Pho in 1789, which was then appointed the center of medical work, established the Department of Pharmacy, and began the engraving of medical prescriptions on the walls for people to use. Furthermore, the king gave an order for the construction of Ruesri Datton statues, which are akin to gymnastic postures that can help exercise the body and eliminate pain. These statues, however, were eventually ruined due to the non-durable materials used in them. King Rama II continued to collect medical literature from various places. Many medical textbooks were composed and the essences of the contents were extracted, finally being engraved on 30 square centimeters of marble. The marbles were placed in Wat Ratcha Orasaram Ratchaworawihan in 1821, and later most were moved to Wat Pho (cf. Picheansoonthon, 2012: 280; Salguero, 2016: 8; Sapcharoen, 2010: 10).

² Please refer to the inscriptions of Wat Pa Mamuang in Sukhothai Province (Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, n.d.c. The Inscription of Wat Pa Mamuang (Khmer Language)).

King Rama III is the king who had the deepest influence on the development of Thai traditional medicine. After he ascended to the throne, he had Wat Pho repaired and the temple facilities expanded in 1832. The goal was to create an educational institution at Wat Pho for people at all levels of society, akin to a university today. Since printing was not widespread in the reign of King Rama III, in order to help more people learn traditional medical knowledge, the king appointed professionals in the medical field as editors to compile medical textbooks and engraved the essence of the textbooks on marble slabs, which were then embedded in the walls of the pavilions of Wat Pho for the public to read and use. It is for this reason that Wat Pho is called a "Library in Stone." Additionally, King Rama III imitated King Rama I's practice and reconstructed metal Ruesri Datton statues, which had eighty postures to show a yogi in different positions with descriptions on how to perform the exercises and their benefits (Figure 2). Later, several statues were damaged and some were stolen; only the 24 remaining statues have been restored and are now situated in Wat Pho. Ruesri Datton is also illustrated in manuscripts; *The Iconography and Poems of Ruesri Datton*, a black book manuscript from 1838, is the earliest and most complete picture book of Ruesri Datton images (cf. Chaithavuthi and Muangsiri, 2007: 32; Picheansoonthon, 2012: 281; Salguero, 2016: 11-13; Sapcharoen, 2010: 10-11).



Figure 2: Ruesri Datton Statues, Wat Pho

King Rama IV, a king who showed great interest in Western civilizations, allowed Western doctors to practice and created an era in which Thai traditional medicine and modern medicine coexisted. King Rama V loved Thai massage and continued to develop and establish the Thai medical knowledge system during his reign, especially in the compilation of medical textbooks. The subsequent king, King Rama VI (1910-1925 A.D.), was concerned with modernization and the growing faith in Western medicine, which led to the forced closure of The Royal Traditional Medicine Department along with the discontinuation of the teaching of traditional medicine to medical students. With the good fortune of Western medicine, traditional medicine slowly declined (cf. Chaithavuthi and Muangsiri, 2007: 31-33; Mulholland, 1979: 83; Salguero, 2016: 16-17).

Thai traditional medicine was again afforded the opportunity to flourish during the reign of King Rama IX, who changed the name "ancient traditional medicine" to "Thai traditional medicine," regarded Thai traditional medicine as a kind of local wisdom, and established the disciplinary system of traditional Thai medical. Since the mid-1980s, the Thai government faced the importance of protecting tradition and embarked on legislation to protect and promote Thai traditional medicine. For example, in 1999, the king approved the Protection and Thai Traditional Medicine Wisdom Act and established the Institute of Thai Traditional Medicine. Alongside this, the Development of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine was established under the Ministry of Public Health in 2002. In 2015, the Draft of Intangible Cultural Heritage Act was amended to include "Traditional Medicine" as a new protection project. At present, Thai massage and Ruesri Datton have both been included in The Intangible Cultural Heritage Project of Thailand. Thus, Thai traditional medicine became not only an alternative medicine, but also an important form of intangible cultural heritage in connection with globalization (cf. Picheansoonthon, 2012: 284; The Department of Cultural Promotion, 2015; The Development of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine, 2012).

2.2 Related research

Prior to the turn of the millennium in 2000, in addition to the aforementioned historical materials, important research on Thai traditional medicine was based on Western literature. Local research has gradually increased every year after 2000 because of the emphasis on cultural heritage and academic development in Thailand. Although the current topics of research are very wide, there is little literature exploring the

relationship between Thai massage and its iconography, which is the research highlighted by this article.

In the 1970s and 80s, relevant research focused on the introduction of Thai traditional medicine. After 1990, knowledge on pathology and herbology began to be examined, classified, and organized. Several important scholars in this endeavor include Jean Mulholland, Somchintana Ratarasarn, and Scott Bamber. In order to help readers fully understand Thai traditional medicine, Mulholland (1979) and Ratarasarn (1989) clearly and concisely wrote an overview of “Thai Traditional Medicine.” Mulholland in particular explained traditional medical terminology in Thai which is helpful for readers in order to understand the meanings of the texts. Mulholland conducted another important introduction to diseases in women and children (Mulholland, 1987; Mulholland, 1988; Mulholland, 1989), which is usually difficult for foreigners to understand, but it was made easier by Mulholland. Other related studies are, for example, Bamber’s study of diseases and traditional Thai healing (Bamber, 1987; Bamber, 1998), and Viggo Brun and Trond Schumacher’s study analyzing the history of herbal medicine in manuscripts of Northern Thailand (Brun and Schumacher, 1994). Salguero is a new figure whose studies have appeared since 2000. He has many impressive studies (2005, 2011, 2016), including the Thai massage issue. However, it should be noted that Salguero is not familiar with the Thai language, and therefore his studies do not discuss important Thai literature written over a millennium that have played important roles in the development of research on Thai traditional medicine.

The rise of local research of Thai Massage has been subject to cultural policies on the one hand, and on the other hand, to the cross-disciplinary development of traditional medicine. In term of cultural policies, the stone inscriptions of Wat Pho were registered as a Memory of the World; “Thai Massage” and “Ruesri Dattton” were included in The Intangible Cultural Heritage Project, which both are influenced by cultural policies of protecting and promoting culture. Moreover, in order to root down traditional culture, king Rama IX ordered a redaction of the section of the *Thai Youth Encyclopedia* on the topic of Thai traditional medicine, written by Picheansoonthon, which briefly describes the history, classification, principles, and application of Thai traditional medicine (Picheansoonthon, 2012). Alongside this, in line with government policies, Thailand’s Ministry of Public Health also published three books primarily on the stone inscriptions of Wat Pho in 2014. The first volume, titled *Thai Massage*, contains the iconography of 60 stone inscriptions in the pavilion of Wat Pho. The second volume is concerned with children’s diseases recorded on the stone inscriptions of Wat Pho. The third volume is a miscellaneous book that records various disease names, prescriptions, herbal properties, and so forth (Office of Protection of Thai Traditional Medical Wisdom, 2014: 3). In turn, in terms of cross-disciplinary research, the Ministry of Culture of Thailand amended the Draft of Intangible Cultural Heritage Act to include “Traditional Medicine” as a new protection project in 2015, which demonstrates that Thai traditional medicine has succeeded in becoming a cross-disciplinary subject with dual values as alternative medicine and intangible cultural heritage. Both the cultural policy and cross-disciplinary development have driven local research. The relevant research has continued to be produced, but important research is still based on the above official literature.

In summary, Thai traditional medicine has its own research trends and problems. The trend is to combine intangible cultural heritage and to pursue cross-disciplinary research; the problem is the lack of iconographical research. As mentioned above, “images” are often an important component of Thai traditional medical textbooks, since they help to spread medical knowledge more effectively, especially that of Thai massage, which involves pressing points of the body, something that is more suitable for image instruction. However, in the previously cited literature, it is rare to find Thai massage research concerning the iconography, which is the research gap this study attempts to bridge. Consequently, this article uses the iconography of Wat Pho as the texts to explore the Thai cultural context behind the iconography, pursuing cross-disciplinary research while also filling the current research gap.

2.3 Tradition of iconography

Tradition of iconography is a way of visual thinking and understanding. The creator uses the concept of imageries to simplify and spread information, usually of a complicated theory, through different media (gold, stone, wood, paper, etc.) and types (painting, sculpture, architecture, etc.). Relevant evidence about the tradition of iconography of Thailand is displayed in ancient relics such as cave paintings, Buddhist temple murals, and manuscripts and palm-leaf manuscripts, which have been important ways for Thais to present ideas and spread education since ancient times. For example, people drew pictures as a way of explaining the Dhamma (Buddhist teachings), and it has been popular in Siam since the Sukhothai or early Ayutthaya period (Phra Thepwisutthimethi, 2006: 2). The tradition of using images or similar artworks to spread Buddhist teachings or hard knowledge have existed in Thailand for a long time because they could be understood easily and allowed the communicator to accumulate merit in doing so. This is why King Rama III ordered an iconography of Thai massage to be made, as evidenced from a historical document from 1836:

The King gave the command to his kinsman Prince Goemamün... to assemble craftsmen... to cast statues of the Eighty Experts displaying the posture exercises. When the statues were finished and painted in color, they were set up in the proper sequence around [Wat Pho], accompanied by inscriptions on the walls giving the name of each one of them and their technique of curing ailments. All of this was done so as to be useful to people of every rank like a donation of medicine. Thus, has His Majesty increased the store of His merits, and made His fame to shine until heaven and earth come to an end (Griswold, 1965, as cited in Salguero, 2016: 12).

In this paper, “tradition of iconography” is not a proper noun or a theory, but a concept rarely mentioned; however, the author uses it to explain the content of the paper. In fact, while many people understand the wealth of image assets exist in Thailand, people do not specially talk about it.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STEPS

The research method of this paper is qualitative research, which involved field research and used the iconography of Wat Pho as the analysis texts, including 60 stone inscriptions in the Thai massage pavilion and 80 Ruesri Datton images to discuss the Thai cultural context behind the iconography. The research steps are as follows:

1. Elaborate the brief history and related research of Thai massage on literature review and advance a concept of “Tradition of iconography” to explain the cultural context behind the iconography of Wat Pho.
2. Divide the treatment stage of Thai massage into three steps: OGP Steps.
3. Apply iconology theory to the explanation of the Thai cultural context embedded in the iconography.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The principles of Thai massage

The principles of Thai Massage can be studied from the iconography found at Wat Pho, which can help people study medical knowledge through images. For the relevant instructions of the stone inscriptions of Wat Pho and the images of Ruesri Datton, please refer to Tables 1 and 2. As this part has been interpreted in another paper (Chang, 2019), the principles of Thai massage are only briefly described here. Taking 60 stone inscriptions of Wat Pho as an example, the main principle of Thai Massage contained in the stone inscriptions is to balance the body and mind by pressing and stretching the body’s energy lines to clear the wind inside the energy line.

According to Table 1, of the 30 groups of iconography at Wat Pho, the first 9 groups introduce the names and locations of 10 energy lines, and the tenth group describes the three major types of diseases caused by energy line disorders, namely, relapse, flabbiness, and disability, all of which are caused by imbalances in the four elements, fire, water, wind, and earth. Groups 11-30 are based on the four elements and describe the positions of the energy lines to address a variety of disease symptoms. It can be seen from Table 1 that the energy lines, the wind, pressure points, and the four elements are the principles of Thai massage and are mutually interdependent. The human body is covered with energy lines, and the wind runs inside the energy lines. The more smoothly the wind runs, the healthier the body becomes. Conversely, if the wind is blocked, it will cause diseases; in this situation, if people press the correct pressure points, this can help improve the situation. In addition, the four elements, earth, water, fire, and wind, are general rules of the universe, which not only show the structure of the human body, but also demonstrate the causes of diseases. According to the four elements, the human body can be divided into 42 parts (cf. Salguero, 2016: 43; Mulholland, 1979: 90-95; Tangtrongchitr, n.d.: 5-8). The four elements can be upset as a result of climate change, food intake, emotional or psychological factors, etc. Once the four elements are not coordinated, they will incur *dosha* (literally “defects”), making the person sick. According to the principles of Thai massage, the element, season, age, time, and environment are regarded as the five major causes of diseases, which are related to the four elements of the human body; if the four elements are out of balance, people will get sick (cf. Mulholland, 1979: 85; Picheansoonthon, 2012: 287-288).

Table 1: The List of 60 Stone Inscriptions in the Thai Massage Pavilion, Wat Pho

No.	Body position	Thai Language	Image Caption
1	front	บอกตำแหน่งเส้นประธานทั้ง๑๐	Ten energy lines
	back	บอกเส้นประธานทั้ง๑๐	Ten energy lines
2	front	บอกเส้นอิทา ฝ่ายซ้าย	Itha line on the left side of the body
	back	บอกเส้นอิทา ฝ่ายซ้าย	Itha line on the left side of the body
3	front	บอกเส้นปิงกลา ฝ่ายขวา	Pingkala line on the right side of the body
	back	บอกเส้นปิงกลา ฝ่ายขวา	Pingkala line on the right side of the body
4	front	บอกเส้นสุมนา ฝ่ายกลาง	Sumana line in the center of the body
	back	บอกเส้นสุมนา ฝ่ายกลาง	Sumana line in the center of the body
5	front	บอกเส้นกาละทรี	Kalatharee line
	back	บอกเส้นกาละทรี	Kalatharee line
6	front	บอกเส้นหัตถังศรี ฝ่ายซ้าย และเส้นทาวรี ฝ่ายขวา	Hadsarangrsri line on the left side of the body and Thawaree line on the right side of the body
	back	บอกเส้นหัตถังศรี ฝ่ายซ้าย และเส้นทาวรี ฝ่ายขวา	Hadsarangrsri line on the left side of the body and Thawaree line on the right side of the body
7	front	บอกเส้นจันทภูสัง ฝ่ายซ้าย และเส้นรุชา ฝ่ายขวา	Junthaphusunk line on the left side of the body and Rucham line on the right side of the body
	back	บอกเส้นจันทภูสัง ฝ่ายซ้าย และเส้นรุชา ฝ่ายขวา	Junthaphusunk line on the left side of the body and Rucham line on the right side of the body
8	front	บอกเส้นสุขุมัง	Sukhumang line
	back	บอกเส้นสุขุมัง	Sukhumang line
9	front	บอกเส้นสิจินี	Sikinee line
	back	บอกเส้นสิจินี	Sikinee line
10	front	บอกกำเนิดเส้นในกองสมุฏฐาน กำริบ หย่อน พิการ	Cure diseases caused by the imbalance of energy lines: relapse, flabby, and disability
	back	บอกเส้นฝ่ายหลังเอวระสมุฏฐาน กำริบ หย่อน พิการ	Cure diseases caused by the imbalance of energy lines: relapse, flabby, and disability
11	front	บอกกำเนิดที่ตั้งพระธาตุสมุฏฐาน	Cure diseases caused by menstrual issues
	back	บอกกำเนิดที่ตั้งพระธาตุสมุฏฐาน ฝ่ายหลัง	Cure back pain caused by menstrual issues
12	front	บอกกำเนิดอะสุริยธาตุเกิดในกองธาตุไฟพิบัติ	Cure diseases caused by an imbalance of the fire element
	back	บอกกำเนิดอะสุริยธาตุเกิดในกองธาตุไฟพิบัติ	Cure diseases caused by an imbalance of the fire element
13	front	บอกกำเนิดอะสุริยธาตุเกิดในกองธาตุน้ำพิบัติ	Cure diseases caused by an imbalance of the water element
	back	บอกกำเนิดอะสุริยธาตุเกิดในกองธาตุน้ำพิบัติ	Cure diseases caused by an imbalance of the water element
14	front	บอกกำเนิดอะสุริยธาตุเกิดในกองอากาศพิบัติ	Cure diseases caused by an imbalance of the wind element
	back	บอกกำเนิดอะสุริยธาตุเกิดในกองอากาศพิบัติ	Cure diseases caused by an imbalance of the wind element
15	front	บอกกำเนิดอะสุริยธาตุเกิดในกองธาตุดินพิบัติ	Cure diseases caused by an imbalance of the earth element
	back	บอกกำเนิดอะสุริยธาตุเกิดในกองธาตุดินพิบัติ	Cure diseases caused by an imbalance of the earth element
16	front	บอกที่เก็บในกองสมุคโธ ประชุมในสมุฏฐาน	A compilation and introduction on curing diseases caused by an imbalance of the fire element
	back	บอกที่เก็บในกองสมุคโธ ประชุมในสมุฏฐาน	A compilation and introduction on curing diseases caused by an imbalance of the fire element
17	front	บอกที่เก็บในกองวิสมะคโธ ประชุมในกองวาตะโรค	Cure wind (the vital energy and blood) diseases caused by an imbalance of the fire element
	back	บอกที่เก็บในกองวิสมะคโธ ประชุมในกองวาตะโรค	Cure wind (the vital energy and blood) diseases caused by an imbalance of the fire element
18	front	บอกที่เก็บในกองกะคิยะคโธ ประชุมในสรรพพิศ	Cure various toxic diseases caused by an imbalance of the fire element
	back	บอกที่เก็บในกองกะคิยะคโธ ประชุมในสรรพพิศ	Cure various toxic diseases caused by an imbalance of the fire element
19	front	บอกที่เก็บในกองมันทะคโธ ประชุมในกองสมหะ	Cure phlegm caused by an imbalance of the fire element
	back	บอกที่เก็บมันทะวงษ์ ประชุมในกองสมหะ	Cure phlegm caused by genetic diseases
20	front	บอกที่เก็บในกองสมะอาโป ประชุมในสมุฏฐาน	A compilation and introduction on curing diseases caused by an imbalance of the water element
	back	บอกที่เก็บในกองสมะอาโป ประชุมในสมุฏฐาน	A compilation and introduction on curing diseases caused by an imbalance of the water element
21	front	บอกที่เก็บในกองวิสมะอาโป ประชุมในกองวาตะโรค	Cure wind (the vital energy and blood) diseases caused by an imbalance of the water element
	back	บอกที่เก็บในกองวิสมะอาโป ประชุมในกองวาตะโรค	Cure wind (the vital energy and blood) diseases caused by an imbalance of the water element
22	front	บอกที่เก็บในกองกะคิยะอาโป ประชุมในกองสรรพพิศ	Cure various toxic diseases caused by an imbalance of the water element
	back	บอกที่เก็บในกองกะคิยะอาโป ประชุมในกองสรรพพิศ	Cure various toxic diseases caused by an imbalance of the water element

Table 1: The List of 60 Stone Inscriptions in the Thai Massage Pavilion, Wat Pho (Continued)

No.	Body position	Thai Language	Image Caption
23	front	บอกที่แก้มในกองมันตะอาโป ประชุมในกองเสมหะ	Cure phlegm caused by an imbalance of the water element
	back	บอกที่แก้มในกองมันตะอาโป ประชุมในกองเสมหะ	Cure phlegm caused by an imbalance of the water element
24	front	บอกที่แก้มในกองลมระวายเป็น ประชุมในสมุฏฐาน	A compilation and introduction on curing diseases caused by an imbalance of the wind element
	back	บอกที่แก้มในกองลมระวายเป็น ประชุมในสมุฏฐาน	A compilation and introduction on curing diseases caused by an imbalance of the wind element
25	front	บอกที่แก้มในกองวิสมระวายเป็น เกิดแต่ระวายเป็นตะจึก	Cure diseases caused by an imbalance of the wind element
	back	บอกที่แก้มในกองวิสมระวายเป็น ประชุมในกองจวาค	Cure wind (the vital energy and blood) diseases caused by an imbalance of the wind element
26	front	บอกที่แก้มในกองระคิกะวายเป็น เกิดในกองเพร้าวาด	Cure the vital energy and blood diseases caused by an imbalance of the wind element
	back	บอกที่แก้มในกองระคิกะวายเป็น ประชุมในกองสรรพพิษ	Cure various toxic diseases caused by an imbalance of the wind element
27	front	บอกที่หน้าประคิฐะมันตะวายเป็น เกิดแต่พะหิวาคะสันนิบาต	Cure a combined disease caused by an imbalance of the wind element
	back	บอกที่แก้มในกองมันตะวายเป็น ประชุมในกองเสมหะ	Cure phlegm caused by an imbalance of the wind element
28	front	บอกที่แก้มในกองสมะปัดวี เกิดแต่ระนันทะจิกะหวัด	Cure diseases caused by an imbalance of the earth element
	back	บอกที่แก้มในกองสมะปัดวี เกิดแต่ระนันทะจิกะหวัด	Cure diseases caused by an imbalance of the earth element
29	front	บอกที่แก้มในกองวิสมะปัดวี เกิดแต่กองศรีภูวาค	Cure wind (the vital energy and blood) diseases caused by an imbalance of the earth element
	back	บอกที่แก้มในกองวิสมะปัดวี เกิดแต่กองศรีภูวาค	Cure wind (the vital energy and blood) diseases caused by an imbalance of the earth element
30	front	บอกที่แก้มในกองระคิกะปัดวี เกิดแต่กองอำมะพฤกษ์	Cure palsy caused by an imbalance of the earth element
	back	บอกที่แก้มในกองระคิกะปัดวี เกิดแต่กองอำมะพฤกษ์	Cure palsy caused by an imbalance of the earth element

Source: Office of Protection of Thai Traditional Medical Wisdom, 2014: 1-180; Tangtrongchitr, n.d.: 1-60.

In addition, Ruesri Datton, the foundation of traditional Thai massage, is similar to Indian Yoga, having a total of 80 postures, focusing on breathing, stretching, and meditation. Stretching and adjusting one's breathing reduces personal nervousness and muscle tension, keeps the wind inside the body running smoothly, helps eliminate irritability, prevents disease, and prolongs life (Picheansoonthon, 2012: 305-306; Sapcharoen, 2010: 12). As shown in Table 2, there are 80 images of Ruesri Datton handed down from ancient times that can treat a total of 74 illnesses (The Monastic Group of Wat Pho, 2015: 7-9). Since the main function of Ruesri Datton is health care, The Development of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine has compiled the 80 Ruesri Datton postures into "15 Sets of basic movements of Thai exercise" to encourage people to learn them (Sapcharoen, 2010: 13-14).

In a word, the vivid iconography of Ruesri Datton emphasizes how to maintain the health of the body through self-massage and stretching (Figure 3). As far as 60 stone inscriptions of Wat Pho and Ruesri Datton manuscript are concerned, the essence of both is to maintain the body's energy balance in order that the four elements of the body can be coordinated.

**Figure 3:** An Image of Ruesri Datton Manuscript (Treatment of Dyspeptic Discomfort)

Source: The Monastic Group of Wat Pho, 2015: 66

Table 2: The List of 80 Images of Ruesri Datton

No.	Treatable Symptoms		No.	Treatable Symptoms		No.	Treatable Symptoms	
1	Relief of bodily discomfort	แก้เก็ช	2	Relief of back pain caused by leg discomfort	แก้เอวขัดขาขัด	3	Relief of chest and waist discomfort	แก้ลมในอกในเอว
4	Relief of waist discomfort	แก้ขัดเอว	5	Relief of tension and headaches	แก้ลงปวดศีรษะ	6	Relief of plantar pain	แก้ส้นเท้า
7	Relief of abdominal pain and ankle joint pain	แก้ปวดท้องแก้ข้อเข่า	8	Relief of throat sputum	แก้สมหะในลำคอ	9	Relief of arm pain with limited movement	แก้ลมในแขน
10	Relief of scapula and shoulder discomfort	แก้สะบักหน้าจม	11	Against generalized weakness	แก้ลมทั่วสรรพางค์	12	Relief of ankylosis of the knee	แก้เข่าตาย
13	Relief of leg and neck pain	แก้ขัดขาแก้ขัดคอ	14	Against chest discomfort	แก้แน่นหน้าอก	15	Against nausea and vertigo	แก้ลมเวียนศีรษะ
16	Relief of knee sprains	แก้เข่าแก้ขา	17	Relief of chest trouble causing coughs and asthma	แก้โรครอกอก	18	Relief of hand and foot muscle cramps	แก้ตะคริวมือแก้ตะคริวเท้า
19	Relief of muscle cramps	แก้ลมตะคริว	20	Against generalized weakness	แก้ลมทั่วสรรพางค์	21	Relief of chest pains in the cardiac region caused by gaseous distension	แก้เสียดอก
22	Treatment of convulsion	แก้ลมชักทรมานลมเข้าลมขาลมหน้าอก	23	Relief of knee sprains	แก้เข่าขัด	24	For longevity	ดำรงอายุขัย
25	Relief of migraines	แก้ลมปะกิ่ง	26	Relief of hip and lower back discomfort	แก้ตะโพกสลักเพชร	27	Treatment of paralysis and numbness caused by convulsion of the hands and feet	แก้ลมชักปากเบี้ยวลมลิ้นตายลมเท้าเหน็บลมมือเหน็บ
28	Relief of knee discomfort	แก้เข่าขัด	29	Treatment of dysuria	แก้ลมในลำไส้	30	Treatment of arms and feet	แก้มือแก้เท้า
31	Relief of chest compression	แก้กร้อนแก้บิดกลาง	32	Relief of hemiparesis	แก้ลมอัมพฤกษ์	33	Relief of plantar discomfort	แก้ลมส้นเท้า
34	Relief of waist trouble	แก้เอว	35	Relief of foot trouble	แก้ลมในขา	36	Anti-dizziness	แก้เวียนศีรษะ
37	Relief of tongue trouble and lockjaw	แก้ลิ้นกระด้าง	38	Relief of chest compression	แก้ถ่วงในทรวง	39	Relief of shoulder and hip trouble	แก้ไหล่แก้ตะโพก
40	Relief of body chills and fainting	แก้หนาวเย็นใจสวingsวาย	41	Relief of shoulder and leg stiffness	แก้ไหล่ขา	42	Relief of chest compression	แก้กร้อนบิดกลาง
43	Relief of shoulder and neck stiffness	แก้คอตืดแก้ไหล่ขัด	44	Relief of shoulder and neck discomfort	แก้คอแก้ไหล่	45	Relief of scrotal swelling	แก้ลมอั้นจาวาด
46	Treatment of dyspeptic discomfort	แก้เสียดข้าง	47	Relief of giddiness	แก้วิงเวียน	48	Treatment of tetanic convulsion	แก้ลมหมาบาทะชัก
49	Relief of arm discomfort	แก้แขนขัด	50	Relief of waist discomfort	แก้ลมบิดกลางลมในเอว	51	Relief of leg discomfort and numbness	แก้ลมในเท้า
52	Relief of neck pain	แก้ลมในคอ	53	Relief of leg discomfort	แก้ลมขา	54	Relief of testis pain and dysuria	แก้ลมลำไส้จลุมอั้นชะ
55	Relief of wrist trouble	แก้ลมข้อมือ	56	Relief of chest compression	แก้ลมอก	57	Relief of drowsiness and unconsciousness	แก้สันทมนานุกระจับ
58	Relief of foot pain	แก้เท้าขัด	59	Against generalized weakness	แก้สันทมนานุกระจับ	60	Relief of hip and shoulder discomfort	แก้ไหล่ขัดตะโพกขัด
61	Relief of abdominal pain	แก้ลมเอว	62	Relief of scrotal swelling induced by hernias	แก้ลมถ่วง	63	Relief of hand and foot discomfort	แก้ลมมือลมเท้า
64	Relief of shoulder discomfort	แก้สลักไหล่	65	Relief of hemorrhoid pain	แก้ลมริดสีดวง	66	Relief of chest oppression	แก้แน่นหน้าอก
67	Relief of distension of the abdomen	แก้ถ่วง	68	Relief of abdominal pain due to excess gas in the stomach	แก้ลมจุกเสียด	69	Relief of leg discomfort	แก้ขา
70	Relief of distension of the abdomen and scrotal swelling	แก้ถ่วง	71	Relief of abdominal pain and scapular discomfort	แก้ปวดท้องสะบักจม	72	Relief of chest oppression	แก้ลมในอก

Table 2: The List of 80 Images of Ruesri Datton (Continued)

No.	Treatable Symptoms	No.	Treatable Symptoms	No.	Treatable Symptoms
73	Relief of hip and thigh discomfort	แก้ตะโพก คั้น ขาขัดหาย	74	Relief of foot numbness	แก้เท้าเหน็บ
76	Relief of choking due to abdominal causes	แก้จุก	77	Relief of pain in the shoulders, abdomen, and chest	แก้ไหล่ แก้ท้อง แก้อก
79	Relief of leg discomfort	แก้ขัดแข้ง ขัดขา	80	Relief of chest discomfort	แก้เส้นสลัก ทรวง

Source: The Monastic Group of Wat Pho, 2015: 21-100; Tangtrongchitr, n.d.: 64-143.

4.2 The application of Thai massage: OGP steps

According to the foregoing, the essence of the principle of Thai massage is to maintain the body's energy balance. Thus, the method of relieving pain is to restore the balance of the four elements within the human body as soon as possible. The author divides the treatment stage of Thai massage into three steps, namely, "observation," "generalization," and "practice," called the "OGP steps." The first step is "observation," in which the therapist examines the physical condition of the client and asks about the client's disease history. The second step is "generalization," in which a therapist follows the principles of Thai massage to find the cause of the disease. The third step is "practice." Once the cause has been confirmed, the right antidote to cure the disease can be applied.

As mentioned in Table 1, each stone inscription recorded the name, position, pressure point, and function of the energy line convenient for a therapist to use. As far as the OGP steps are concerned, a therapist first observes the condition of the four elements inside the client's body and then determines which one the disease belongs to. When the cause has been found, the therapist can practice Thai massage. For example, no. 19 in Table 1 is a pair of massage engravings for curing phlegm caused by an imbalance of the fire element or genetic diseases (Figure 4). A therapist can massage a client according to the stone inscription in order to make the wind inside the client's body run smoothly. When the four elements of the client's body return to balance, they will naturally return to health.



Figure 4: Massage Engravings for Curing Phlegm Caused by an Imbalance of the Energy, Wat Pho

4.3 Thai cultural context behind the iconography of Wat Pho

The iconography of Wat Pho is representative of the Thai cultural context. It is not an exaggeration to say that these images are a microcosm of Thai art history, since they are closely linked to Thailand's history. Bovornkitti commented that Thai art is influenced by two factors, "Buddhism" and the "King," for these two elements are the historical context of Thailand (Bovornkitti, 2005: 358). Similar to Bovornkitti (2005), Krairiksh (2008) and Woodward (2005) have also found a common cognition to Thai art history. However, Bovornkitti has focused less on the "tradition of iconography," which has been an important way of educating Thais and presenting their ideas since ancient times. It can be seen that the role of "iconography" in Thai art history is not only that of artwork, but also that of a method of educating civilians. The Thai kings have educated the masses through images, and accordingly, the connotation of Thai art history, in addition to the aforementioned "Buddhism" and "King," should include the "tradition of iconography," since they bear a

structural relationship with one another. Buddhism provides the concept of cosmology, the king dominates the secular world, and the tradition of iconography takes on the role of enlightenment.

The structural relationships formed by “Buddhism,” the “King,” and the “tradition of iconography” are more clearly seen in Panofsky’s iconographic theory. Panofsky regards visual symbols as cultural symbols and explores the essence of thought behind iconography through the three levels of “pre-iconographical description,” “iconographical analysis,” and “iconological interpretation.” The author applied Panofsky’s methodology to this study, replacing Panofsky’s theoretical terminology—primary subject matter, secondary subject matter, and intrinsic meaning—with the three steps of observation, generalization, and practice (OGP steps). In Table 3, the contextual relationship behind the iconography of Thai massage is described in three parts: the “object of interpretation,” the “act of interpretation,” and the “equipment for interpretation.”

As Table 3 indicates, the OGP steps present a set of ideas for gazing at the iconography of Wat Pho, helping the viewer understand the principle of Thai massage, leading them from a shallow to a deep understanding. First, in terms of the “observation” step, the iconography of Wat Pho related to diseases and medical subjects does not have complex shapes; people view it through visual experiences. The idea behind the iconography is connected to the “tradition of iconography,” as images can guide learning. King Rama III could not have made the iconography of Thai massage to educate the people without the key element of the “tradition of iconography”; thus, the key element of this step is the “tradition of iconography.” Second, the “generalization” step links the principles and data analysis of the iconography of Wat Pho. Therefore, the description of images and the positions of energy lines and pressure points on the iconography could be seen further, depending on the support of Thailand’s kings, with the rise and fall of the development of Thai massage being closely related to Thailand’s kings. The iconography of Wat Pho would not be listed in the Memory of the World without the support of Thailand’s kings in making the iconography; hence the key element of this step is “the king.” Third, in terms of the “practice” step, the therapist finds the right antidote to cure diseases to restore the balance of the four elements within the client’s body, a practice that represents Buddhist doctrine. For this, the key element of this step is undoubtedly “Buddhism.” This step has the meaning of donating the treatment to clients. At the metaphysical level, while a therapist treats someone, meaning practicing the process of Vipassana by meditating on the skin, flesh, tendons, and bones of the human body, the process connects the universe and individuals through the four elements. The goal of a therapist is to help his client restore the body’s energy balance, which is much like the behavior of donating treatments.

Overall, the wonderful iconography of Wat Pho is interlocked by the OGP steps, which represent the principle of Thai massage and reflect the structural relation formed by “Buddhism,” the “King,” and the “tradition of iconography” behind the iconography. Put another way, it could be considered as a kind of epitome of Thai art history. “Buddhism,” the “King,” and the “tradition of iconography” influenced the development of the iconography of Wat Pho, which contains medical knowledge and Buddhist teachings and was created due to the support of the kings and the creativity of many unknown artists. This study led to the conclusion that the massage iconography of Wat Pho reflects the cultural structural relation formed by “Buddhism,” the “King,” and the “tradition of iconography.” The iconography of Wat Pho not only reflects the Thai cultural context and the value of art history of Thailand but also constitutes a unique intangible cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation.

Table 3: The Analysis of the Iconography of Wat Pho

Treatment steps of Thai massage	Panofsky’s theoretical terminology	Act of Interpretation	Equipment for Interpretation	Explanation	Key element
Observation	Primary subject matter	The iconography of Thai massage	Practical experience	The iconography related to diseases	Tradition of iconography
Generalization	Secondary subject matter	The principle of Thai massage	Knowledge of literary sources	Generalize the principle of Thai massage	King
Practice	Intrinsic meaning	Buddhist doctrine	Synthetic intuition	Keep the body’s energy in balance	Buddhism

Source: Panofsky (1955: 40-41)

5. CONCLUSION

Thai massage is one part of Thai traditional medicine. Extensive valuable knowledge of Thai massage is contained in ancient literature, such as in manuscripts and stone inscriptions. In these sources, only a small part is presented in the iconography. The importance of Wat Pho lies in preserving many unique images of

traditional medicine, which is dominated by Thai massage, showing an important connection between images and Thai massage. This study uses the iconography recorded on stone inscriptions and manuscripts of Wat Pho as the analysed object to explore the Thai cultural context behind the texts. The research finding is that the iconography of Wat Pho reflects the structural relation formed by “Buddhism,” the “King,” and the “tradition of iconography,” which embodies the Thai cultural context embedded in the iconography. In conclusion, the Thai massage iconography of Wat Pho represents the Thai cultural context and constitutes an important intangible cultural heritage of Thailand.

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