



# Self-Massage and Joint Mobilization of Traditional Thai Yoga



## “Reusi Dat Ton” Part 1 HANDBOOK

by David Wells



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"Self-Massage and Joint Mobilization of Traditional Thai Yoga: Reusi Dat Ton Part 1 Handbook"  
by David Wells

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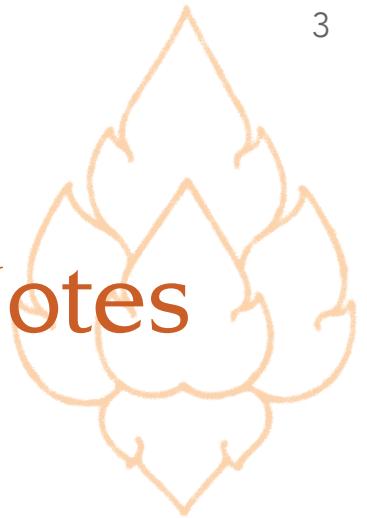
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# Author's Notes



Thanks to the following people who helped make these Handbooks possible: my *Reusi Dat Ton Models*: Sarah Carl, Laura Covington, Julia Henry, Deborah Hodges, Matthew Holton, Satya Larrea, Jack Maxwell, Randi Morrison, and Erin Wright; to Linley Eathorne, Jill & Grace Harman, and Sherian Thomas for photography and special assistance; to Elaine Esquibel for editing; to Dusnee Mathison for translation; to Oscar de Cárdenas for graphic design; to Sarah Carl, Romina Correa, Jessica Dafni, Oscar de Cárdenas, Enrique Dianti, James Galusha, James Hooker, Laura Iwasetschko, Nephyr Jacobsen, Ulric Legouest, Sunny Nilchavee, Fabian Novellino, Kristin Nuttall, Gregory Oed, Pierce Salguero, Mr. Shirpurkar, Delfina Sommerville, Hemali Thakkar, Dustin Williams, and Jennifer Vanderburg for advice, and to Danko Lara Radic, Caitlin Ryan, Reusi Prasanga Samavajra, and Heath Reed for Charts, Illustrations, and Photos.

Special Thanks to my teachers and their teachers: Dr. Ajahn Prasong Sompetch, "Grandfather" in Chiang Mai, Reusi Tevijjo, and the late Ajahn Pisit Benjamongkonware for having the Wisdom to learn, preserve, and pass on the wonderful Tradition of *Reusi Dat Ton* which was nearly lost to our modern world.

Finally an extra special Thanks to my primary teacher, Reusi Tevijjo, for generously sharing with me the mysteries of this rare gem. In truth, these books are as much his as they are mine.

This Handbook "Self Massage and Joint Mobilization of Traditional Thai Yoga: Reusi Dat Ton Part 1" is the first in a series of Handbooks which will cover the full range of practices of "Reusi Dat Ton" or Traditional Thai Yoga. Future volumes will include "Basic Exercises and Breathing of Traditional Thai Yoga: Reusi Dat Ton Part 2" and "The Complete Guide to Traditional Thai Yoga: Reusi Dat Ton Part 3".

The techniques, ideas, and suggestions in this book are not intended as a substitute for proper medical advice. Consult your physician or health care professional before beginning this or any new exercise program, particularly if you are pregnant or nursing, if you are elderly, or if you have any chronic or recurring physical conditions. Any application of the techniques, ideas, and suggestions is at the reader's sole discretion and risk.

— David Wells



# Forward

*"It brings me much happiness to see these books finally ready to be shared with the world. David has spent many years traveling throughout Asia seeking teachers who would share with him the ancient tradition of Reusi Dat Ton. This information is incredibly difficult to find. What little Reusi Dat Ton information that has previously been accessible to the general public – both in Asia and the West – has been largely superficial and inconsistent. Through much effort and dedication, David has successfully created a thorough guide to the Reusi Dat Ton practices that honors their ancient roots and adheres to the traditional methods through which they have been preserved for hundreds of years.*

*My teachers have long spoken of the importance of preserving the knowledge of their lineage and of doing so in the most traditional methods possible. As modern society rockets ahead, so many traditional practices have been scattered or lost, disappearing as the last lineage holders pass on. Preserving practices such as Reusi Dat Ton is more important than ever as we near the tipping point where we risk losing these traditions forever. For this reason, I have been very happy to support David on this project and share with him what little knowledge I have from my own Reusi Dat Ton studies and practices.*

*David's efforts have resulted in a rich resource for this little known and often misunderstood tradition. These books will benefit many who have long sought to learn more about these practices as well as those who are yet to discover them. It is my hope that by sharing this information, David has opened the door for greater understanding and exploration of Reusi Dat Ton and the greater traditions from which it came."*

— Reusi Tevijjo, Chiang Mai, Thailand

# Introduction



## Reusi Dat Ton: The Thai Hermit's Exercises

Reusi Dat Ton is a little known aspect of traditional Thai healing and culture. It consists of breathing exercises, self-massage, dynamic exercises, poses, mantras, visualization, and meditation.

"Reusi" in Thai, from the Sanskrit *Rishi*, is an Ascetic Yogi or Hermit. "Dat" means to stretch, adjust, or train. "Ton" is a classifier used for a Reusi and also means oneself. So "Reusi Dat Ton" means the Hermit's or Yogi's self-stretching or self-adjusting exercises. Reusis were also known as "Jatila," "Yogi," and "Chee Prai." The Reusis were custodians and practitioners of various ancient arts and sciences such as: tantra, yoga, natural medicine, alchemy, music, mathematics, astrology, palmistry, etc. They have counterparts in many ancient cultures such as: the Siddhas of India, the Yogis of Nepal and Tibet, the Immortals of China, the Vijjadharas of Burma, and the Cambodian Eysey (from the Pali word for Reusi, *Isii*)



Indian Siddha



Tibetan Yogi



Cambodian Eysey



Thai Reusi

There are different Reusi traditions within Thailand. There is a Southern Thai/Malay Tradition, a Northeastern Thai/Lao Tradition, a Central Thai/Khmer Tradition, and a Northern Thai/Burmese/Tibetan Tradition. In Thailand, there are Reusis as far South as Kanchanaburi Province who follow the Northern Thai/Burmese/Tibetan Reusi Tradition.

A typical Reusi Dat Ton program would begin with breathing exercises and self-massage, followed by dynamic exercises and poses (some of which involve self acupressure), and finish with visualization, mantras, and meditation. The exercises and poses of Reusi Dat Ton range from simple stretches that almost anyone could do to very advanced poses which could take many years to master.

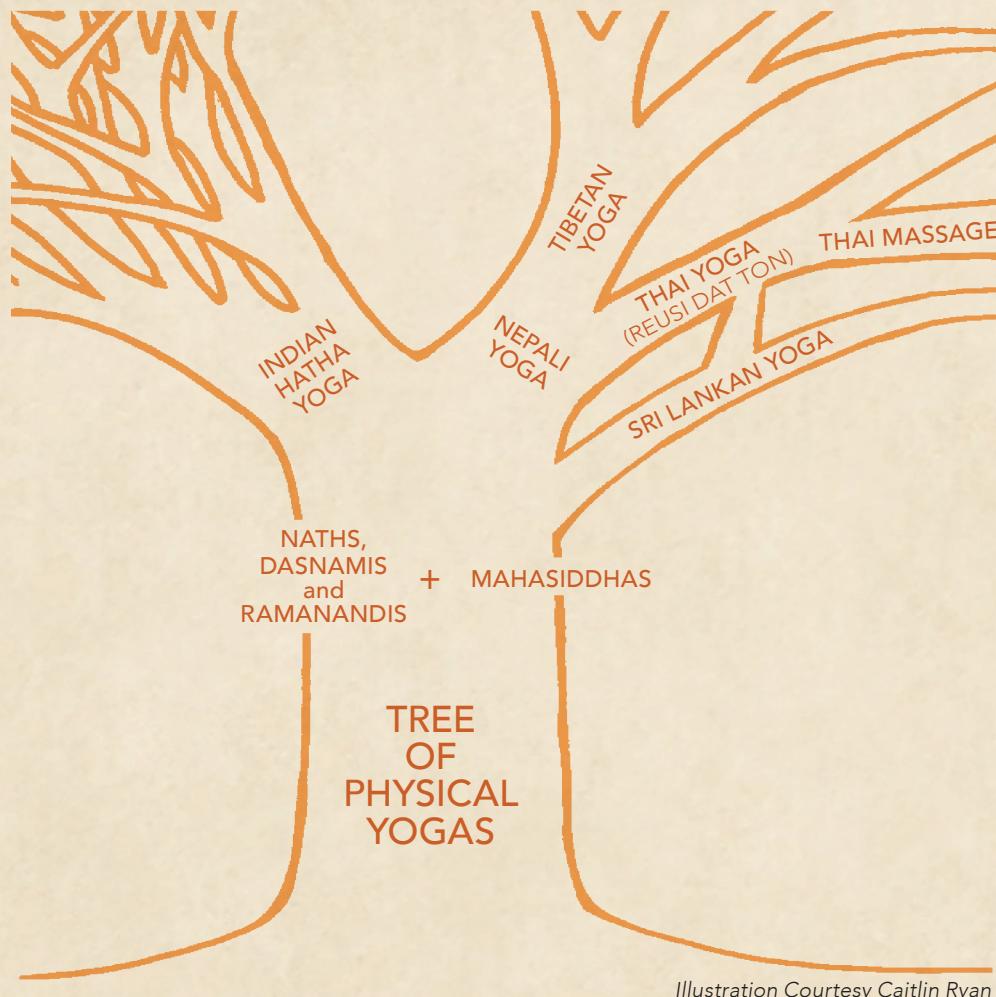


Illustration Courtesy Caitlin Ryan

*“Yoga is not a single tradition, but a family of self-cultivation traditions that are widespread across India, Tibet, and Southeast Asia. They typically involve a tantric view of the relationship between body, mind, and spirit being managed through “energies” (usually understood as winds), and they typically involve a combination of meditation, breathing exercises, and physical postures to manage these “energies”. With this definition of yoga, then one can simply say that “Reusi Dat Ton” is a Thai form of yoga.”* – Pierce Salguero PhD.

## The Tree of Physical Yogas

Imagine for a moment, a “Tree of Physical Yogas” with its different branches representing the different Yoga traditions that have developed over the centuries. Today the most well known branch is that of Indian Hatha Yoga with its numerous smaller branches representing the many different modern styles which were developed out of the Traditional Medieval India Hatha Yoga of the Nath Yogis, Dasnami Naga Samnyasis and Ramanandi Tyagis. Other lesser-known but equally important branches of the Yoga Tree include Tibetan Yoga and its various forms such as: Yantra Yoga, Kum Nye, Tsa Lung, Lu Jong, Tumo, etc. There is also the Thai Yoga or “Reusi Dat Ton” Branch and the tradition of Thai Traditional Massage that was developed out of “Reusi Dat Ton.” Other cultures also had their own unique systems of Yoga practices, including Nepal and Sri Lanka, whose traditions also influenced the Thai.

Some of the Reusi Dat Ton techniques are similar to, or nearly identical to, some techniques in various Tibetan Yoga Systems particularly, “Yantra Yoga,” “Kum Nye”, and the Tibetan Yoga Frescoes from the

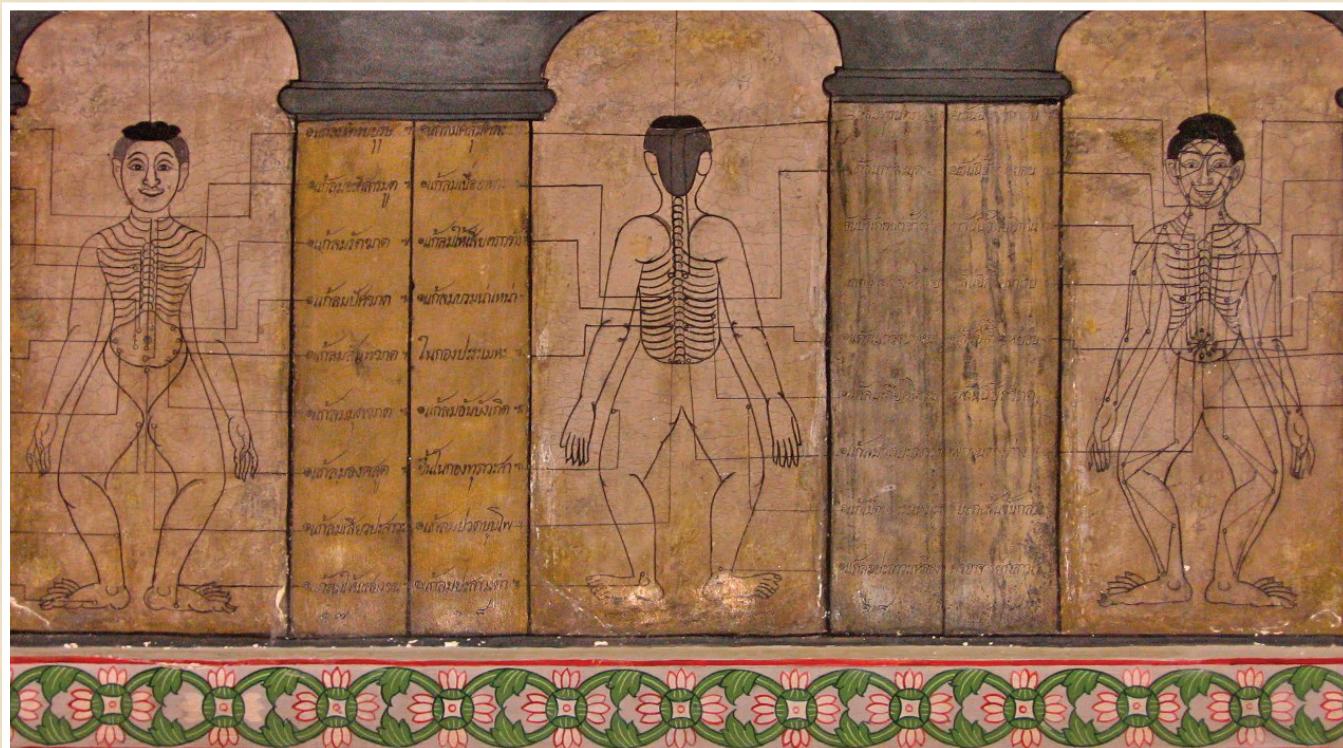
Lukhang Temple behind the Potala Palace in Lhasa Tibet. (See Norbu, Tulku, and Baker) For example: some of the self massage techniques, exercises, poses, neuromuscular locks (bandhas in Sanskrit), breathing patterns, ratios, visualizations, and the way in which male and female practitioners would practice the same technique differently are almost identical. It is possible that Reusi Dat Ton and some of the Tibetan Yoga Systems are derived from a common source, which Rishis brought with them as they moved down the Himalayan foothills into Southeast Asia.

## Foundations of Traditional Thai Massage

According to the Reusi Tevijo:

*“The foundation and key to Traditional Thai massage is Reusi Dat Ton. Ancient Reusis, through their own experimentation and experience, developed their understanding of the various bodies (physical, energetic, psychic, etc). They discovered the postures, channels, points, the winds, and wind gates within themselves. Later it was realized that these techniques could be adapted and applied to others for their healing benefit, which is how Thai massage was developed. So, in order to really understand Thai massage, as a practitioner, one should have a foundation in Reusi Dat Ton and be able to experience it within oneself and then apply it to others. It is not only the roots of Thai massage but it also unlocks the method for treating oneself and maintaining one’s own health.”*

It is also interesting to note that there are many close similarities between certain Thai massage techniques. Reusi Dat Ton exercises and some of the Indian Hatha Yoga therapeutic warming up exercises (the Pawanmuktasana or wind liberating and energy freeing techniques). There is even an advanced Hatha Yoga pose, Poorna Matsyendrasana, which compresses the femoral artery and produces the same effect as “opening the wind gate” in Thai massage. (Saraswati)



Traditional Thai Massage Charts at Wat Po, Bangkok



Engraved Medical Tablets



Wat Po

## Reusi Dat Ton in Traditional Art

In 1767, invading Burmese armies destroyed the old Thai capital of Ayutthaya. Soon after his coronation in 1782, the Thai King Rama I established a new capital in what is today Bangkok. He initiated a project to revive the Thai culture after the disaster of Ayutthaya. An old temple Wat Potharam, (popularly known as "Wat Po"), was chosen to become the site of a new Royal temple and formally renamed Wat Phra Chetuphon. Beginning in 1789, a renovation and expansion project was begun on the temple. King Rama I also initiated a program to restore and preserve all branches of ancient Thai arts and sciences including: medicine, astrology, religion, and literature. As part of this project, medical texts from across the kingdom were collected and brought to be stored at Wat Po. The King also ordered the creation of a set of clay Reusi statues depicting various Reusi Dat Ton techniques.

This restoration project was continued by the Kings Rama II and Rama III. As part of this work, scholars compiled important texts on various ancient arts and sciences and created authoritative textbooks for each of these fields. In 1832, a project to etch the medical texts into marble tablets was begun. Medical theories regarding the origin and treatment of disease, massage charts, and over 1000 herbal formulas were all recorded on the marble tablets. Gardens of medicinal herbs were also planted on the temple grounds. Thus, Wat Po was to become "a seat of learning for all classes of people in all walks of life" which would "expound all branches of traditional knowledge both religious and secular", and serve as "an open university" of traditional Thai culture with a "library of stone". (Griswold, 319-321)

By 1836, the clay Reusi Dat Ton statues created by order of King Rama I had deteriorated. To replace these, King Rama III commissioned the creation of 80 new Reusi Dat Ton statues. Each statue depicted a different Reusi performing a specific Reusi Dat Ton technique. For each statue there was a corresponding marble tablet upon which was etched a poem describing the technique and its curative effect. These poems were composed by various important personalities of the day. Princes, monks, government officials, physicians, poets, and even the King himself contributed verses. The original plan was to cast the statues with an alloy of zinc and tin, but unfortunately only the more perishable material stucco was used. The statues were then painted and housed in special pavilions. Over the years most of the original statues have been lost or destroyed. Today only about 20 remain and these are displayed upon two small "Hermit's Mountains" near the Southern entrance of Wat Po. The marble tablets have been separated from their corresponding statues and are now stored in the pavilion Sala Rai.



Reusi Dat Ton  
Statues at Wat Po



"Hermit's Mountain" Wat Po

## Textual Sources of Reusi Dat Ton

We may never know what, if any, ancient texts on Reusi Dat Ton may have existed and were lost when the invading Burmese armies destroyed the old Thai capital of Ayutthaya in 1767. Today, the closest thing to an original source text on Reusi Dat Ton is an 1838 manuscript commissioned by Rama III entitled *The Book of Eighty Rishis Performing Posture Exercises to Cure Various Ailments*. Like other manuscripts of the time, this text was printed on accordion like folded black paper, known in Thai as "Khoi". This text, popularly known as the *Samut Thai Kao* features line drawings of the 80 Wat Po Reusi Dat Ton statues along with their accompanying poems. In the introduction, it states that Reusi Dat Ton is a "...system of posture exercises invented by experts to cure ailments and make them vanish away". (Griswold, 321) This text is housed in the National Library in Bangkok. There are also other editions of this text housed in museums and private collections as well.

The *Samut Thai Kao* follows an old tradition also found in ancient Indian, Nepali, and Tibetan Yoga manuscripts that list 80 to 84 different techniques. The *Samut Thai Kao* is, however, only a partial collection of all the various Reusi Dat Ton techniques. A 1958 Wat Po publication, *The Book of Medicine*, includes a section on Reusi Dat Ton. While it contains verses based upon the poems at Wat Po, many of the accompanying illustrations depict completely different techniques. There are also a few modern day Reusis such as Reusi Prasanga Samavajra who continue the ancient tradition of recopying by hand old Reusi Dat Ton manuscripts which have been passed down over the centuries through their lineage.

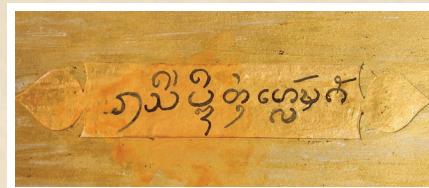
In the Southern Thai town of Songkhla, on the temple grounds of Wat Machimawat, is a pavilion known as the "Sala Reusi Dat Ton".



Reusis from Prasat Phnom Rung,  
Buriram



Traditional Thai Manuscript



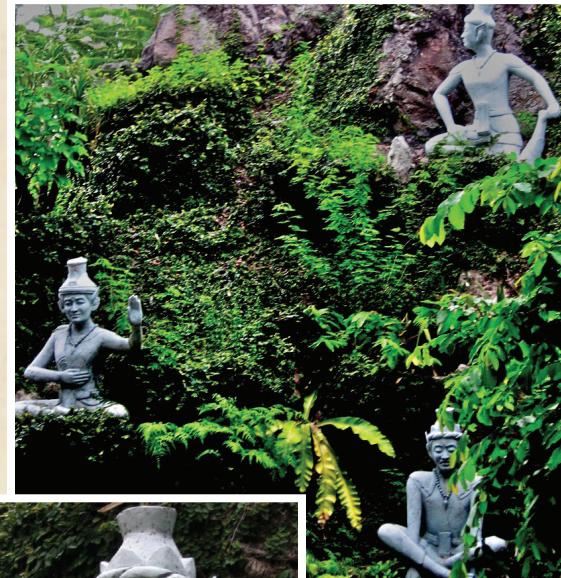
Rare "Reusi Dat Ton" text hand  
copied by Reusi Prasanga Samavajra

## The Benefits of Reusi Dat Ton

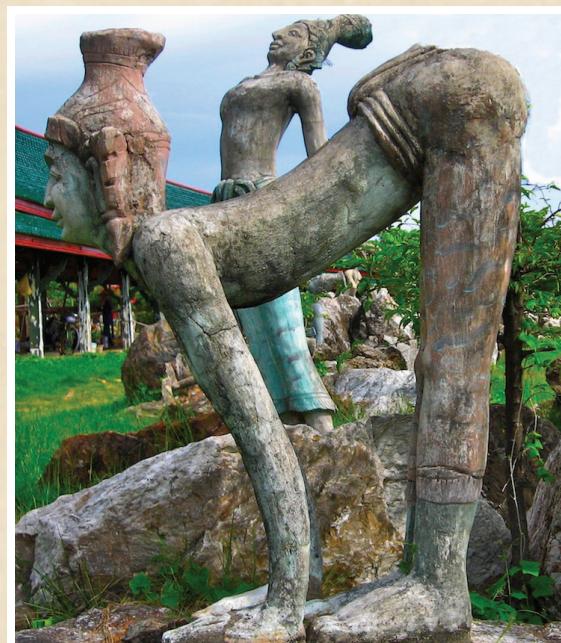
In both the *Samut Thai Kao* and *The Book of Medicine*, the texts not only describe the techniques, but also ascribe a therapeutic benefit to each pose or exercise. Some poems describe specific ailments while others use a mix of Sanskrit, Pali, and Traditional Thai Medical terminology.

Some of the ailments mentioned include: abdominal discomfort and pain, arm discomfort, back pain, bleeding, blurred vision, chest congestion, chest discomfort and pain, chin trouble, chronic disease, chronic muscular discomfort, congestion, convulsions, dizziness and vertigo, dyspepsia, facial paralysis, fainting, foot cramps, pain and numbness, gas pain, generalized weakness, generalized sharp pain, headache and migraine, hand discomfort, cramps and numbness, heel and ankle joint pain, hemorrhoids, hip joint problems, joint pain, knee pain and weakness, lack of alertness, leg discomfort, pain and weakness, lockjaw, low back pain, lumbar pain, muscular cramps and stiffness, nasal bleeding, nausea, neck pain, numbness, pelvic pain, penis and urethra problems, scrotal distention, secretion in throat, shoulder and scapula discomfort and pain, stiff neck, thigh discomfort, throat problems, tongue trouble, uvula spasm, vertigo, waist trouble, wrist trouble, vomiting, and waist discomfort.

Some of the Ayurvedic disorders described in the texts include: Wata (Vata in Sanskrit) in the head causing problems in meditation, severe Wata disease, Wata in the hands and feet, Wata in the head, nose, and shoulder, Wata in the thigh, Wata in the scrotum, Wata in the urethra, Wata causing knee, leg, and chest spasms, Wata causing blurred vision, Sannipat (a very serious and difficult to treat condition due to the simultaneous imbalance of Water, Fire, and Wind Elements which may also involve a toxic fever) an excess of Water Dhatu (mucous), and "Wind" in the stomach. Other benefits



"Hermit's Mountain" at The Thai Ministry of Public Health

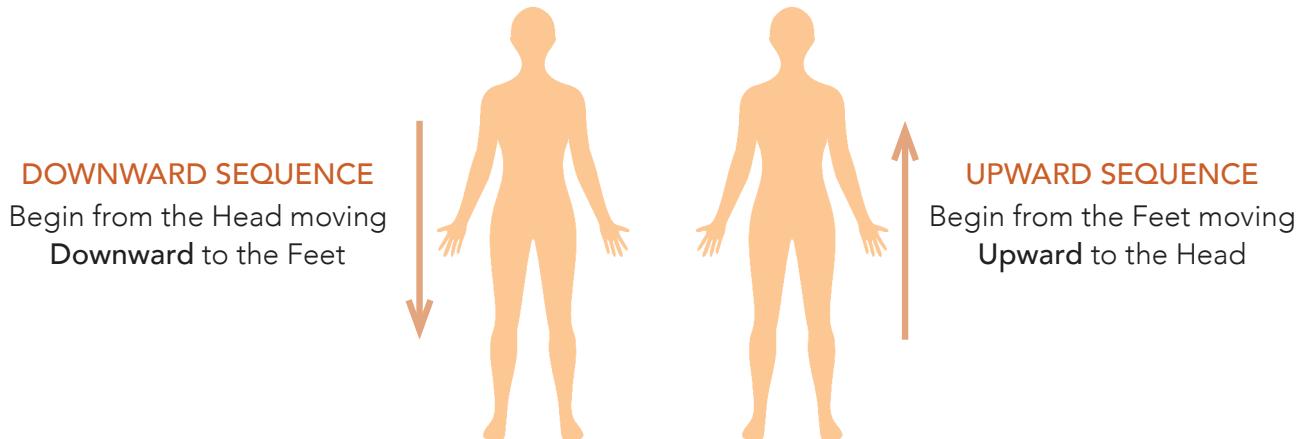


Reusi Statue at Ancient City

# Self Massage



If time is short and one is unable to do the Full Body Self Massage, one could just do the Head & Neck and then massage any specific problem areas. One can also do self-massage between exercises as needed.

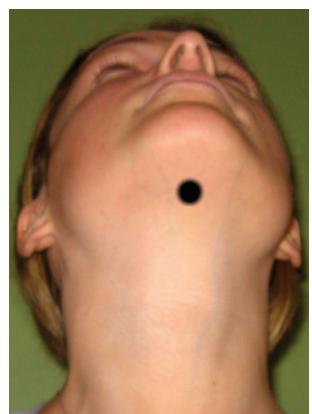
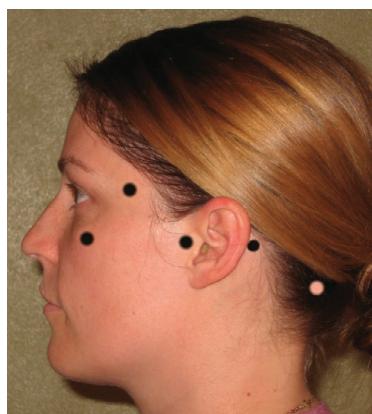
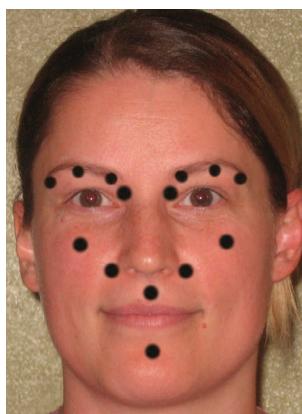


The Self Massage sequence presented here is for the **Downward** sequence.  
For the **Upward** sequence, simply start at the end of the chapter and work backwards.

Always remember: **DO NOT HURT YOURSELF!**

If you find that a technique is uncomfortable or painful, skip it and move on to another technique.  
Everyone is different and not every technique will be appropriate for everyone.

## Points used in head massage



## Neck 2



1. Fingers Interlocked  
Palm Heels Press  
Side and Back of Neck



2. Thumbs Press Side and Back of Neck



## Neck 3



Fingers Glide from Center of Neck Outward



Wat Machimawat  
Songkhla, Thailand

## Neck 4

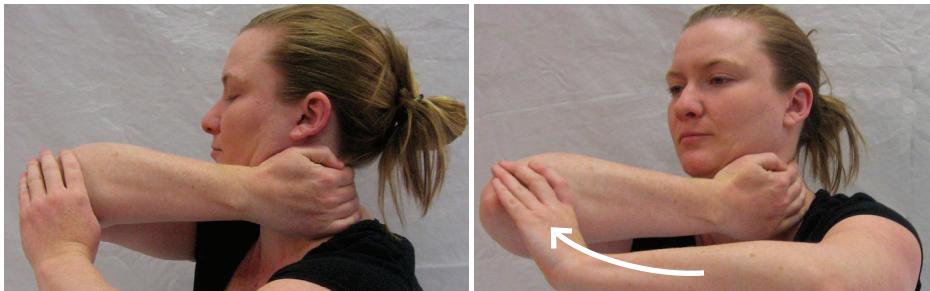


Alternating Fingers Pull from Center Outward



Traditional Thai Yoga “Reusi Dat Ton”

## Neck 5



Right Fingers Grab Left Side of Neck,  
Left Hand Pushes Right Elbow to Right as Fingers Press into Neck  
(Repeat on Other Side)

## Pressing the Occiput



Left Hand to Forehead, Right Thumb to Occiput  
Tilt Head Back as Thumb Presses In

Occiput – Below Skull,  
Outside Perispinal,  
Inside Trapezius &  
Sterno Cleido Mastoid



Wat Machimawat  
Songkhla, Thailand

## Shoulders 1

“For Shoulder Discomfort” Samut Thai Kao (Reusi Dat Ton Manuscript) Circa 1838AD



1. Left Hand Grabs  
Upper Back



2. Right Hand Pushes Left Elbow Down as Left Fingers  
Glide Up Along Upper Back and onto Shoulder  
(Repeat on Other Side)



## Lower Leg (Back)

---



**1.** Palm Heel or Thumbs Pressing Along the Back of Lower Leg

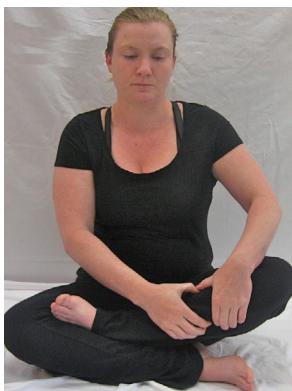


**2.** In Mermaid Pose, Palm Heel Pressing Along Back of Lower Leg

**3.** With Knee Up, Thumbs Pressing Along Back of Lower Leg

## Lower Leg (Front)

---



**1.** Fingers Pressing Along Front of Lower Leg

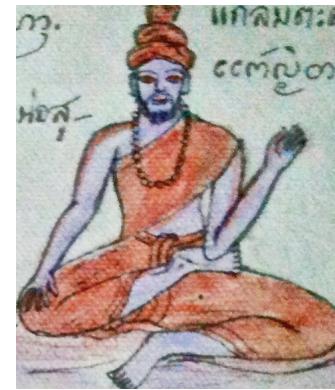
**2.** Fingers Interlocked, Palm Heels Pressing Along Lower Leg



## Feet 1



Elbow and Forearm Pressing Sole of Foot



"For Cramps"  
From a rare "Reusi Dat Ton"  
text hand copied by Reusi  
Prasanga Samavajra

## Feet 2



1. Thumb to Sole of Foot



2. Two Thumbs to Sole of Foot

## Feet 3



Fingers to Sole of Foot as Palm Heels  
or Thumbs Press Instep





# Joint Mobilization

## “Shaking the Joints”

*“Reusi Dat Ton exercises help to clear the wind pathways of obstructions and balance the breathwinds. They correct any sort of imbalance in the structure, open the joints, make the tissues more malleable, and open the channels, helping to calm and manage the wind.”*

– Reusi Tevijo

Clears stagnant Wind from the Joints, Improves Range of Motion and Circulation, Increases Lubrication (Synovial Fluid) in the Joints.

### EACH MOVEMENT A MINIMUM OF 21 TIMES.

Over time and with practice, one can gradually build up to more 50, 108... for Therapeutic Purposes. These sequences can be done either sitting or standing.

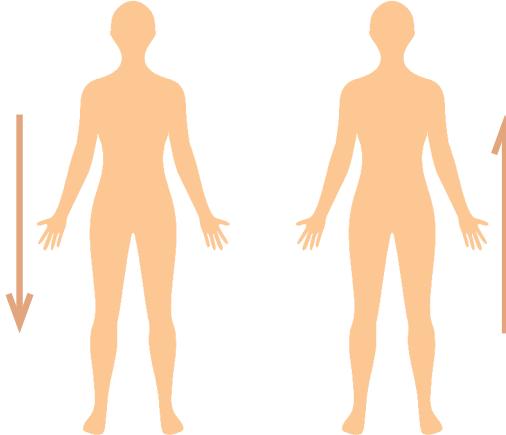


### UPPER BODY

Begin from **Center**  
**Moving Outward**  
*Shoulders out to Fingers*

### DOWNWARD SEQUENCE

Begin with Upper Body moving **Downward** to Hips continuing down Legs to Toes



### UPWARD SEQUENCE

Begin with Toes moving **Upward** to Hips, continuing Up to Upper Body

Always remember: **DO NOT HURT YOURSELF!**

If you find that a technique is uncomfortable or painful, skip it and move on to another technique. Everyone is different and not every technique will be appropriate for everyone.



## Seated Joint Mobilization

The Seated Joint Mobilization sequence presented here is for the **Upward** sequence. For the **Downward** sequence, simply start at the end of this section and work backwards.

### Toes



1. Spread Toes Upward



2. Curl Toes Downward



### Ankles



1. Feet Upward



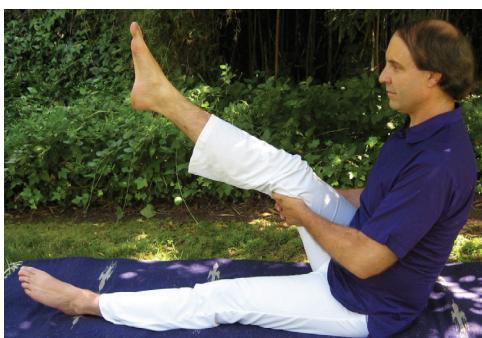
2. Feet Downward



### Knees



1. Bend Leg – Full Flexion



2. Straighten Leg – Full Extension

(Repeat on Other Leg)



## Shoulders 1



1. Relax



2. Shoulders Up



3. Relax &amp; Drop



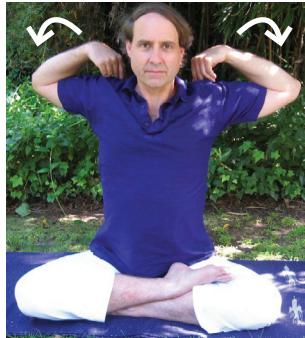
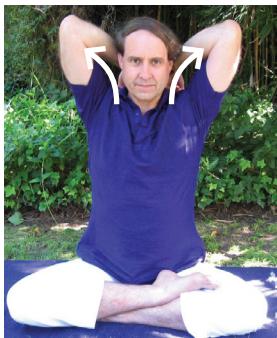
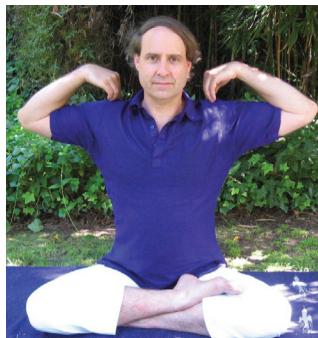
These Exercises  
may also be  
done Kneeling

## Shoulders 2



Circling Each Shoulder Opposite the Other ("Kayak Like")  
(Then Reverse, Circling in Opposite Directions)

## Shoulders 3



Finger Tips to Shoulder Joints, Circle Elbows Out at Sides  
(Circle Opposite Direction)





# Learn how to reduce joint pain and stiffness and muscle aches and pains naturally with this fully illustrated, step-by-step guide to the Self Massage and Joint Mobilization Techniques of Traditional Thai Yoga “Reusi Dat Ton”, the traditional holistic self-care system of Thailand.

These gentle low-impact techniques will help you to:

- Reduce joint pain and stiffness naturally
- Ease muscle aches and pains
- Improve flexibility and range of motion
- Reduce neck, shoulder, back, hip, and knee pain
- Improve circulation
- Increase your energy and vitality
- Reduce stress
- Increase your mobility and pain-free movement during your daily activities
- Save money by learning how to give yourself a “full body Thai style massage”
- Improve your massage skills by learning the system which is the origin of “traditional Thai massage”
- Deepen your yoga knowledge and practice by studying this little known yoga tradition from Thailand

This thorough guide stays true to its traditional roots, serving as a rich resource to yoga students, massage therapists, and all people who want to improve their health and vitality.

**David Wells, E-RYT500, CAS,** works in an Integrated Pain Management Clinic helping people to manage and reduce their chronic pain naturally. He served three years in Peace Corps Thailand and received Thai Massage and Thai Yoga “Reusi Dat Ton” certifications from The Wat Po School of Thai Traditional Massage in Bangkok and

The Thai Massage School of Chiang Mai under the authorization of The Thai Ministry of Education. He also studied with the Reusi Tevijjo and the late Ajan Posit Benjamongkonware in Thailand. He also travels conducting workshops.



[www.wellsyoga.com](http://www.wellsyoga.com)

*“Thai Yoga ‘Reusi Dat Ton’ offers healing practices that are as close to magic as I’ve ever gotten! They are simple exercises, postures, and other tools that bring energy, relieve joint pain, sore muscles, and back pain while improving both flexibility and range of motion. This gorgeous book reveals for the first time both the lore and wisdom of these ancient practices.”* – Carol Sullivan, PhD, E-RYT

*“I have been doing the Thai Yoga Joint Mobilization exercises almost daily for 6 months now. My balance and strength have improved immensely. It helps relieve the morning stiffness that comes with aging. I am so glad to have all of this information at my fingertips as I get older.”* – Jo Jensen, LMT

*“I have incorporated many of these Thai Yoga techniques into my personal Yoga practice. It helps to alleviate the physical wear and tear of my job and the pain and stiffness I experience in my legs after a long day of work on my feet. I have noticed improved posture and a significant reduction in my overall back and neck pain. I feel calm, clear, and more energized after even just a short session. It’s a great way to start your day or recharge during your break!”* – Anne Hanson

*“Thai Yoga Joint Mobilization is part of my personal daily practice and something I recommend to all my clients for keeping joints open and in full function. It can be practiced standing or seated, making it accessible to people at any level of health.”* – Jill Strong-Harman LMT, Founder/Director Yin Thai Somatics

*“Thai Yoga has done more to free me from pain than anything else I’ve ever tried. For most of my adult life I endured crippling back, neck, and joint pain due to several injuries. Now after a year and a half of twice daily practice of the joint mobilization exercises, I have virtually no pain and every muscle feels energized. I have gone from almost disabled to fully functional and can work and play like I did when I was a young man. I am self-sufficient and master of my physical health for the first time in my adult life. It has literally given me my life back!”* – James Galusha

A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to the Siddha Mandala Charitable Foundation.