

CLARITY GUIDES

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HISTORY · STYLES · THE SPIRITUAL TOUCH

MASSAGE

*History, styles & the spiritual touch:
from the Yellow Emperor and Wat Pho
to the treatment room today*



Published by Clarity Guides · Cover: hermit (ruesi) statues showing a stretching posture, Wat Pho, Bangkok. Photo: Welcome to Thailand, CCo

Preview – full guide coming soon – goclarity.uk

ABOUT THIS GUIDE



Every culture on Earth has found its own way to soothe the body with the hands. Some made it medicine, some made it a ritual of the bathhouse, and some made it a spiritual practice of kindness.

This guide follows massage from the oldest written records in China, India and Egypt, through the bathhouses of Rome and Istanbul, the temples of Bangkok and the healers of Hawaii, to the Swedish gymnasium and the modern treatment room. It then describes 26 styles you are likely to see offered in the UK.

Part Three looks at the **spiritual side of touch**: the Buddhist loving-kindness at the heart of Thai massage, the energy lines of Thai, Chinese and Indian tradition, the Hawaiian idea of *aloha*, and touch as ritual and presence. Part Four covers what the science says, safety, how to find a qualified therapist in the UK, and simple massage to try at home.

♦ HOW TO READ THE LABELS

Massage history is full of lovely stories that are repeated as fact. To keep things clear, we label claims like this:

RECORD	Supported by historical documents, archaeology or published research.
LEGEND	A traditional story, belief or popular claim that cannot be checked, or that the evidence does not support. Legends can still be meaningful.
MODERN	A recent practice or idea (mostly from the last 100 years), whatever its marketing says about its age.

Education only, not medical advice. Nothing in this guide is a treatment or cure for any condition. If you have a health condition or are pregnant, read the safety chapter and speak to your GP first.

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CHINA: ANMO, TUI NA & THE YELLOW EMPEROR

China has one of the longest unbroken written traditions of massage in the world, running from medical manuscripts buried in a tomb in 168 BCE to the hospital departments of today.

★ THE INNER CANON OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR

RECORD The *Huangdi Neijing* (Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor) is the founding classic of Chinese medicine. It is written as conversations between the legendary Yellow Emperor and his ministers, but historians date its compilation to roughly the 2nd to 1st century BCE, drawing on older material. In the *Suwen* (“Basic Questions”) part, chapter 12 says that people of the low, damp central plains tended to suffer from weakness, cold and stiffness, and were treated with *daoyin* (guided stretching and breathing) and *anqiao*, an early word for massage.

LEGEND The Yellow Emperor himself, said to have reigned around 2600 BCE, is a figure of legend. The book was not written by him.

RECORD Even older physical evidence comes from the Mawangdui tombs in Hunan, sealed in 168 BCE. Among the silk manuscripts was the *Daoyin tu*, a painted chart of figures doing healing exercises, and medical recipes that include rubbing and pressing.



The Yellow Emperor, a legendary founder of Chinese medicine, in a Ming-dynasty woodcut. Wellcome Collection, CC BY 4.0.