

LOPBURI PERIOD B.E. 1500 -1800

MAP



HISTORY

Lopburi, historically known as "Lavo," held a prominent position in the annals of Thai history as one of its key cities. With a rich heritage dating back over 3,500 years to the Bronze Age, Lavo witnessed cultural transitions influenced by Indian art during the Dvaravati Period. This period marked the city's governance by the Khmer, exposing it to the artistic and cultural influences that prevailed until the 15th century, part of the Lopburi Period.

The dynamics changed during the establishment of the Ayutthaya Empire, leading to a decline in Lavo's significance. It was only during the reign of King Narai that Lavo experienced a resurgence. King Narai constructed a palace in Lavo and spent a considerable amount of time there. Following King Narai's era, Lavo faced abandonment until the 19th century when King Mongkut (Rama IV) issued a royal decree for its restoration, designating it as an inland city and renaming it "Lopburi."

The Lavo Kingdom, a political powerhouse in the Upper Chao Phraya valley, emerged in the 7th century, succeeding the Dvaravati civilization. Initially centered in Lavo, the capital later shifted to Ayodhya during the 11th century. Lavo played a pivotal role in the Dvaravati mandala-style state alongside Si Thep and Sema. Despite weather-induced migration diminishing the power of Si Thep and Sema, Lavo remained influential until succumbing to Khmer hegemony in the 10th to 11th centuries.

Founded by Phraya Kalavarnadishraj in 1011 BE, Lavo derived its name from the Hindu "Lavapura," translating to "city of Lavo," referring to the ancient South Asian city of Lavapuri (modern-day Lahore). The native Mon language dominated early Lavo, with

historical debates on whether it comprised solely of Mon ethnicity or included mixed Mon and Lawa people, the latter being Palaungic-speaking.

The migration of Tai peoples into the Chao Phraya valley is hypothesized to coincide with the Lavo Kingdom's existence. While Theravada Buddhism persisted as a major belief, Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism from the Khmer Empire left a substantial imprint.

ART

During the Lopburi Period, artistic expressions in Lopburi bear striking similarities to the Khmer and Tavaravadi periods, reminiscent of the grandeur of Angkor Wat. The enduring strength of rock, evidenced by the existing castles and Prangs, constructed with silalaeng bricks and sandstone, attests to the stability of the structures. Amulets from this era, crafted from fine sandy clay sourced from sacred places and metal alloys, predominantly lead and silver.



These amulets exhibit various seated and standing positions, each believed to confer virtue, ensuring safety from harm, stability, and protection against all dangers for the worshiper. The Lopburi style, characterized by its distinctive artistic flair, is particularly evident in Hindu or Buddhist art in Thailand with a pronounced Khmer influence, exemplified by structures like Prang Sam Yot.

BUDDHA REPRESENTATIONS

Buddha images often display a cranial protuberance in the form of three tiered lotus petals. A hair band is featured, and the hair of the Buddha can be straight like human hair. The head is often decorated with a diadem or face frame. Thick lips, a smiling face, prominent earlobes are featured.

A robe is draped diagonally with a straight edged mantle over the left shoulder, extending to the navel. Often the Buddha image is displayed on a lotus petal base. Seated Naga protected Buddha images in the meditation posture are common.

Sometimes the Naga protected Buddha appears with Royal ornaments, and has a more stern facial expression.



AMULET FAMILIES

Phra Ruang Family

Phra Ruang Yuen

Phra Ruang, positioned behind the cloth pattern at Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat in Lopburi Province, is renowned for its association with Lopburi's rich amulet heritage. These amulets, predominantly Buddha figures crafted from clay or occasionally bronze, reflect the artistic influence of the Khmer era in Lopburi, extending back to the Srivijaya period.



Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat, an ancient and expansive temple, now stands as an abandoned site undergoing preservation efforts by the Lopburi Historical Site Conservation Project. The temple, shrouded in historical significance, serves as a focal point for archaeological studies, given that its origins are believed to trace back to the 18th century during the reign of the Khmer Empire.

The temple's iconic large Phra Prang, constructed from laterite, serves as a testament to its antiquity, offering insight into its inception during the Khmer rule. Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat, beyond its historical importance, is the birthplace of numerous esteemed amulets, particularly the revered Phra Ruang standing behind the cloth pattern.

Phra Ruang, a standing Buddha prang exuding blessings in Khmer art style from the Bayon period, has become an iconic representation of Lopburi amulet craftsmanship. Discovered around 120 years ago in 1887, this Buddha image, now approximately 800 years old, is believed to have been constructed during the Khmer rule when Lopburi was known as Mueang Lawo.

Distinctive features of Phra Ruang include its imposing stature, raised right hand at chest level, left arm extended downwards, and a solemn yet fierce expression. Known by various names like "Phra Kru Muang Lawo," Phra Ruang is considered an Emperor amulet, crafted from red rust material, highly sought after for its protective virtues.

The temple's crypt, initially unearthed in 1887 and subsequently in 1912 and 1915, has yielded various prints of Phra Ruang Yuen behind the cloth pattern. The amulets, made of lead, red rust, and silver, are valued for their rarity and historical significance. In 1972, an additional discovery occurred at the former Mechanical Engineering School in the temple's vicinity.

Approximately 200 Phra Ruang Yuen amulets were found in this recent excavation. While similar to those from Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat, the rust on the Buddha image appears darker red, and the image is thinner. Despite the belief that they were created concurrently, they were stored separately in distinct locations.

Phra Ruang Yuen, particularly the large print measuring 2.2 cm in width and 7.7 cm in height, commands high rental prices, reaching into the hundreds of thousands or even millions for pristine and beautifully crafted pieces. The temple, with its historical and religious significance, holds a prominent place in the Khmer Brahmin religious ceremonies.

Phra Ruang Yuen, a masterpiece of Lopburi art, embodies qualities of invulnerability, kindness, and good fortune. In contemporary times, these amulets, especially when featured in Phra Yod Khun Phon's set made from rare metals, have achieved remarkable market value, comparable to Phra Ruang Lang Rang Puen of Muang Sawankhalok.



Phra Ruang Hu Yan

Phra Ruang Hu Yan, also known as the Long Earlobe Amulet from Wat Phra Si Rattan Mahathat in Lopburi province, Thailand, holds a revered status both in the past and present of Lopburi province. This rare and exquisite amulet showcases a beautiful and stunning Buddha image.



Crafted from "Shin Ngern," meaning "Mixed Metal Magical Material," this amulet is designed to withstand the test of time. Highly sought after by Thai people, it serves as an all-encompassing talisman for Life Protection, Love Attraction, and Luck Building.

The Phra Ruang Huyuan amulet, created in ancient times, features a design that blends Khmer and Lopburi Arts. Considered an old treasure of Lopburi Province in northern Thailand, this amulet possesses ancient magical power, bringing together luck and strength.



Originally known as Phra Ruang, meaning the wealthy or prosperity Buddha, it later earned the name Phra Huyuan due to its distinctive long ears. Consecrated over 700 years ago with Khmer influence, Phra Huyuan is believed to bestow wealth and attract love.

This amulet is particularly renowned for individuals engaged in trade or gambling, as it is believed to bring prosperity and success. Additionally, it holds the power to attract the affections of the desired person, akin to the legendary Phra Kun Pan.

Carrying the Phra Ruang Hu Yan Buddha Amulet is believed to usher in unexpected luck and success in various endeavors, ensuring prosperity and accomplishment in one's pursuits.

SINGLE AMULETS

Phra Yod Khun Pon

Buddhist art from the Lopburi period the original amulet "Yod Khun Phon" (not to be confused with Khun Paen)



First discovered around the year 1946-90 at Wat Kai, which has a history of It is a temple built in the early Ayutthaya period. It used to be very prosperous. Currently it is an abandoned temple. Only ruins remain with the base of the pagoda with a stucco shaped chicken all around making it called Wat Kai. This temple was raided several times by professional amulet diggers during that era, and many valuable amulets were recovered.



Phra Sangkajai



Is known as Phra Mahakaccayana and holds a significant place among the Arahants, being one of the Asiti Mahadisciples of Gautama Buddha. His name, Mahakaccayana, is derived from Pali (Mahakaccayana) and Sanskrit (Mahakatyayan). Revered as an Ettakka, he stands out for his unique method of explaining abbreviations in a distinctive manner.

Born into a brahmin family in the city of Ujjeni, Mahakaccayana immersed himself in the study of the Vedas, following the traditional path of brahmin families. Under the guidance of Asita Dabas of Mount Vindhya, who had foretold Prince Sittitha's future as an Emperor or Buddha,

Mahakaccayana became his disciple.

His transformative journey towards enlightenment took a pivotal turn when, along with seven companions, Mahakaccayana requested a sermon from the Buddha. It was during this discourse that he attained the Dhamma, reaching the exalted state of an Arahant. Inspired by this profound experience, Mahakaccayana sought ordination from the Buddha and dedicated himself to spreading Buddhism in the Avanti region, attracting a substantial following.

In the Mahayana sect, particularly referenced in the Lotus Sutra, Book No. 6, Mahakaccayana is highlighted in prophecies by the Buddha. The sutra predicts that individuals such as Phra Mahakaccayana, along with Phra Subhuti, Phra Maha Kassapa, and Phra Maha Moggallana (all esteemed Arahants), will attain enlightenment and eventually become Buddhas in the future. This prophecy underscores the enduring significance of Phra Mahakaccayana in Buddhist beliefs.



Phra Pang Maha Mirai

Somdej Phra Narai Camp is a military compound, an area that was home to numerous ancient temples, but over time, fell into disuse and was eventually abandoned. As construction work commenced, the ground was excavated, leading to the accidental discovery of numerous Buddha images, predominantly made of clay. These deities were collectively referred to as "Phra Kru Khai Somdej Phra Narai."



The amulets unearthed from this site predominantly showcase Lopburi art, including renowned prints such as Phra Pim, Phra Ruang Yuen, Hu Yan, and Sum Nakhon Kosa. The clay amulets from this crypt exhibit both fine and coarse textures, displaying robust craftsmanship. While many smaller amulets may be broken or damaged, the larger ones tend to be well-preserved.

The Buddha's virtues embodied in these amulets reflect the distinctive Lopburi style, offering protection from danger, invulnerability, and fostering a sense of well-being, tranquility, and happiness for those who possess them.

Phra Pim

A Phra Pim is a small sculpture in Buddhism created to commemorate the four significant places of worship associated with Lord Buddha's life – the places of his birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and nirvana. This practice is rooted in the belief that crafting Buddha images is a means of accumulating merit and extending the longevity of Buddhism. The creation of Buddha images, initially inspired by these sacred locations, has become a symbolic act of devotion.

As Buddhism spread to Southeast Asia from its origin in India, and with the emergence of various beliefs and sects within Buddhism, the motifs and styles of amulets evolved accordingly in different regions. The crafting of amulets became a widespread practice, reflecting the diverse expressions of Buddhist faith across Southeast Asia.



In the region of Lanna, terracotta Buddha amulets have been discovered, primarily in archaeological sites within the Mae Ping River Basin. These amulets, crafted from terracotta, are believed to date back to the late Hariphunchai period (early 19th Buddhist Century) and endured through the Lanna Kingdom period.

The presence of these artifacts not only highlights the local adoption of amulet-making traditions but also serves as a tangible link to the rich cultural and religious history of the Lanna region.



Phra Soom Nakorn Kosa

Amulets from Sampasew Temple are crafted entirely from soil, characterized by a predominantly rough texture. These amulets are representative of the Sukhothai-Lopburi art tradition and come in various molds, including:

1. Pim Soom Nakorn Kosa (Khmer Feather)
2. Pim Tamaprang (or Nang Samprasew)
3. Pim Phra Narai Song Yuen
4. Pim Soom Prang

The most favored mold among enthusiasts is the Pim Soom Nakorn Kosa, renowned for its representation of Lopburi art.



Phra Sum Pho Banlang

Various types of amulets grace the crypt of Phra Si Rattana Mahathat temple, often molded into palm-sized pieces, indicating their intended use for worship rather than personal adornment. These amulets are crafted from a range of materials, including silver alloy, red rust lead, clay, and bronze. The artistry predominantly reflects the Khmer era of Lopburi, with some pieces dating back to the Srivijaya period.



When fashioned for worship, these Buddha statues are believed to bring about a harmonious and joyful life. The majority of the Buddha statues adhere to the Mahayana religion, resulting in diverse depictions of Buddha in various poses. Among these, the most popular is the "Narayana with a gun" Buddha image, revered not only for its religious significance but also favored by individuals who choose to carry it with them.

The uniqueness and artistry of the amulet prints at Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat are widely acknowledged. Crafted with precision by Khmer artisans, these prints showcase splendor in every detail, including the castle arch, main arch, and Nakhon Kosa arch. Adjacent to these features are two disciples, sculpted in three-dimensional form, further enhancing the artistic excellence of the Buddha images at Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat.

Phra Luang Phor Mo

Phra Luang Pho Mor Krumhakan, situated in Lopburi Province, represents a distinctive style of Buddhist amulet deeply rooted in the Lopburi tradition. Named after the landowner, "Krumhakan," where it was unearthed, this amulet showcases the Lopburi

artistry influenced by Khmer craftsmanship. The artistic principles adhere to Mahayana Buddhism and Hindu Brahmin practices, particularly drawing inspiration from the Khmer models imported from Cambodia.



During the reign of the Khmer Empire over the Chao Phraya River Basin, Lopburi served as a viceroyalty city, establishing its capital. The excavation site of Phra Luang Pho Mor suggests an abandoned temple, characterized by numerous mounds, possibly remnants of ancient pagodas or stupas that have weathered over time. While no intact ancient structures remain visible, the orderly arrangement of bricks beneath the surface indicates the presence of old pagoda bases.

Phra Luang Phor Mor takes the form of a Buddha sculpture, a variation from the conventional depiction of Lord Buddha with a medicine pot placed in the palm of his hand. In this unique representation, Phra Luang Phor Mor cradles an anchor fruit in his hand. This amulet, a sizable and rare artifact, is crafted from aged clay, contributing to its substantial value and scarcity.

Phra Luang Por Chuk

"Luang Por Chuk," an esteemed ancient amulet from Lopburi Province, boasts a remarkable history spanning approximately 800 years. The Buddha's features are meticulously crafted, emanating an elegant and perfectly proportioned appearance.



What sets "Luang Por Chuk" apart is its distinct Buddhist art, deviating from other Lopburi amulets and resembling the Lankan style of Buddha. Archaeologists posit that the origin and evolution of Buddhist art in Lopburi were deeply influenced by the Lankan style, supported by historical evidence showcasing Siam's enduring religious connections with Lanka

throughout the ages.

Commencing around the 18th century, Hinayana Buddhism from the Lankan lineage permeated Thailand. Thai monks journeyed to Lanka to study Dhamma and Vinaya, while Ceylonese monks were invited to propagate Buddhism in Thailand, reaching regions from

Nakhon Si Thammarat to Lopburi. Historical records indicate the existence of two Lanka temples in Lopburi, namely Wat Lanka and Wat Sinhala, although no visible remnants remain today. The Lopburi Buddha statue's artistic expression has been notably influenced by Lanka, with "Luang Por Chuk" standing out as a direct embodiment of this influence. It is plausible that the amulet was constructed by a Ceylonese monk, likely one of the Aranyavas, known for their rigorous adherence to Dhamma-Vinaya and Vipassana.

"Luang Por Chuk" is commonly discovered in general crypts and pagodas in Lopburi, particularly at Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat. Mostly made of clay, these amulets exhibit a substantial size, with a base measuring approximately 3.5 cm in width and 6.5 cm in height—a half-sized Buddha image seated in meditation pose, right over left. The distinctive features of "Luang Por Chuk" include intricate details such as a "Juk" resembling large hair, a rounded face, clearly defined eyes, nose, and mouth, long ears extending to the chest, and a well-proportioned Angsaka.

Despite its initial lack of popularity upon discovery, "Luang Por Chuk" gained widespread acclaim as the Buddha's virtues became more apparent and were shared with others. Over time, it has become one of the most sought-after and revered amulets in Lopburi Province, capturing the admiration of both Buddhists and avid amulet collectors. The slightly larger appearance of the Buddha image does not diminish its popularity, with its unique and elegant characteristics contributing to its esteemed status.

DATA SOURCES

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