



# CREATE

Canterbury Research and Theses Environment

Canterbury Christ Church University's repository of research outputs

<http://create.canterbury.ac.uk>

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s. The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given e.g. Armer, C. (2014) Cult of the amulets in Southeast Asia: origin, function and transformation. M.A. thesis, Canterbury Christ Church University.

Contact: [create.library@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:create.library@canterbury.ac.uk)



**Cult of the Amulets in Southeast Asia: Origin, Function and  
Transformation**

**by**

**Clare Elizabeth Armer**

**Canterbury Christ Church University**

**Thesis submitted**

**for the Degree of MA by Research**

**2014**

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my great thanks to Professor Bee Scherer and Dr David Burton, my research supervisors, for their time, guidance and constructive suggestions throughout the course of this work. I would further like to thank Professor Scherer for providing me with invaluable resources from Thailand – both the amulets and amulet related literature were greatly useful to my research.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the department of Theology and Religious Studies at Canterbury Christ Church University for providing the necessary funding to attend the British Association for the Study of Religions Conference in Liverpool September 2013. This conference was beneficial due to the wealth of knowledge available as well as for the contacts and acquaintances that were made.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who helped support me throughout the course of this thesis, including the Canterbury Christ Church Graduate School, the library staff dealing with my many resource requests, and Angela Voss and everyone involved in the MA in Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred course, who allowed me to attend and participate in their first module.

## Abstract

The cult of amulets in Southeast Asia is a controversial point that has, due to the recent renewed interest in these objects, become a popular topic of discussion by Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. The use of amulets has to an extent always been contested in Southeast Asia and many other areas, with a divide consistently present between individuals, and, in the case of Southeast Asia, between the varying schools of Buddhist thought. Although there are examples of scriptures and texts such as the *Parittas* and *Jinapañjara Gārthā* supporting the use of amulets, or at least their apotropaic nature, these items are still not unanimously accepted across Southeast Asia, where certain movements and individuals reject the cult of the amulets, and often the cult of sacred objects as well.

Throughout this thesis I will explore the origins of amulets; the varying and often magical or supernatural functions that are so frequently attributed to them; and the transformation amulets have gone through, with particular reference to the current climate and material issues of contemporary Southeast Asia.

Amulets are reflective of the societies in which they are produced and they have the potential to be changed by societal events. This would appear to be true, given the spectrum of societies and designs amulets are found in; not to mention their vastly varied functions. Researching this topic I explored existing material on this subject, including journals, books, collector magazines, websites, and auction sites where appropriate. This information provided not only an understanding of the conflict and reasoning behind the cult of the amulets in Southeast Asia, but also of the online resources delivered an up-to-date experience of their popularity and the monetary value of amulets in contemporary Southeast Asian society. In concluding this thesis I hope to have provided an interesting insight into the issues and conflicts surrounding the cults of the amulets in Southeast Asia, with particular consideration given to the Buddhist Theravada tradition (the predominant religion of this area).

## Content

<b>Introduction</b>	3
<b>Chapter One: The Origins of Amulets</b>	8
Historical Amulets	8
Amulets, Buddhism and Southeast Asia	11
The Use of Amulets in Abrahamic Traditions	19
<b>Chapter Two: Function</b>	23
Basic Functions of Amulets	24
Images and Amulets in Southeast Asia	27
Magical and Supernatural Functions	31
<b>Chapter Three: Transformation</b>	38
The Effect and Faults of Mass Amulet Production	39
Amulets, Consumerism and Media	45
Amulets and Buddhism: Consumerism in relation to Buddhist Pra	50
<b>Conclusion</b>	55
<b>Bibliography</b>	57

## Introduction

This research will explore the origins of amulets; the functions of these objects in Southeast Asia focusing predominantly on Thai Buddhist amulets; and the transformation process amulets have undergone physically and socially in the last two millennia. The word “amulet” will be used to include the definitions and characteristics allocated to amulets (unless otherwise specified). This term will include items displaying characteristics including but not limited to: luck enhancement; protection and prosperity; wellbeing (on both a regular and spiritual level); long life; and guidance. Additionally, certain amulets are thought to have magical elements; however, this aspect must be approached with a level of caution, as will be explored in Chapter Two.

The word ‘amulet’ is primarily used to refer to an object that is carried upon a person or displayed in or on a home, business, vehicle, livestock, or personal property. Amulets are thought to possess “magical”<sup>1</sup> properties of an apotropaic nature that can be used to ward off negative incidents including disease, ill health, or an assault upon one’s self or family from an animal, spirit or human (Gaster, 1987:297). Equally, the word amulet is often used in reference to an item believed to bring good luck, a definition more frequently lent to a talisman. Whilst scholars including Gaster (1987) and Tambiah (1984) perceive amulets and talismans to be ‘two sides of the same coin’ (Gaster, 1987: 297), for scholars such as Nelson (2008) the difference between an amulet and talisman remains distinct: a talisman brings good luck and an amulet protects (Nelson, 2008:7).

Although an amulet may be believed to have an apotropaic nature, it may act simply as a reminder of a certain person, philosophy, set of teachings, or beliefs (Cadge, 2008:93). It may also indicate to others the personal beliefs, background, and religion or group association of an individual. Furthermore, they can act as a device to aid worship or devotion. For example, a Buddhist amulet depicting an image of the Buddha may be used to focus the mind in anticipation of meditational practices.

Amulets are present in a number of religions and traditions in which commonly repeated images can be found. Examples of these include the scarab beetle<sup>2</sup> and Eye of Horus<sup>3</sup> of Egypt and the

---

<sup>1</sup> The notion of magic in Religious Studies is a relatively contested one. As Neusner, Frerich and Flesher (1989:2-3) discuss, throughout history society has tried to distinguish between “true religion” and “magic”, with religion often being considered as positive and magic negative. In fact, according to McGuire (2008:33), recent attempts have been made by some reformists to try to eradicate magic from religious practice completely.

<sup>2</sup> The scarab beetle’s popularity is due to its connection with Khepri the Egyptian sun god (Roehrig, 2004:208).

Hand of Fatima<sup>4</sup> found in Judaism and Islam. Many of these amulets are awarded similar qualities to those found in the Buddhist tradition and Southeast Asia.

Physically, an amulet can be almost anything. They are most commonly found in the form of a pendant, coin, or small jewellery-sized item that can be easily attached or concealed. As amulets and their trade have become increasingly commercialised in the last century, the materials they are available in have become progressively varied and often more valuable, demonstrating the wealth of the owner (Richards and Burden, 2000: 39). The vast majority of amulets remain composed of stone, common metals, bone, wood and occasionally semi-precious stones or jewels. More recently, they have become widely available in more expensive and intricate designs and materials. Nevertheless, despite their increasing inclusion in modern consumerism, the core functions of amulets remain the same (Young, Neikerk, and Mogotlane, 2003:133). Although it is not uncommon to attribute the amount of strength or power to the amulet's material, as Dansilp and Freeman (2002:64) suggest, it is the sanctification process and the amount of respect shown to the amulet that grants protection to the owner or wearer. Essentially, if any item has been blessed or sanctified in the correct manner and by the appropriate person, it is thus considered to be an amulet by the owner. This concept raises the question that if the owner believes the amulet capable of such powers, then, is it necessary to have it consecrated? This depends entirely on the individual, since it could be argued that technically the item should not be considered an amulet, but the owner may still regard it as such.

Amulets can further consist of a segment of text, cloth or thread bearing a specific symbol, images of the Buddha or of the astounding Monk to whom it is linked. Further to this, they can consist of various religious deities and leaders, depending on the amulets' religious affiliation. As Tambiah (1984:196) states, amulets can likewise be found in the form of clay tablets, medallions, and various animal representations. Consequently, an amulet can take a number of forms and shapes, and is not limited to a singular form or material.

The difference between an amulet and a talisman is slight. However, the difference between an amulet and a relic is far more apparent. Relics are believed to be a part of the Buddha himself, or part of another highly auspicious monk or religious person. These objects usually take the form of a fragment of bone, tooth, hair or ash from the funeral pyre. As Strong (2004:8) explains, relics can

---

<sup>3</sup> The Eye of Horus is another popular Egyptian amulet also known as the *udjat* or *utchat* styled upon the falcon headed god Horus symbolising eternal restoration (Owusu, 2008:139).

<sup>4</sup> Fatima is considered to be the daughter or daughter-in-law of Mohammad depending on the source. The hand of Fatima is a common amulet of Israel and the Middle East and is known for its protective powers, particularly from the *djinn* (an evil spirit) (Walker, 2010:66).

actually be classified into three main categories: Bodily relics (such as those named above), contact relics (for example: utensils the Buddha may have used, such as his staff or clothing), and Dharma relics (texts embodying the Buddha). Bodily relics cause the most misunderstanding in relation to amulets, as these relics can be contained or concealed inside items including amulets. As Belting (1996:60) discusses, an amulet can act as a protective container for a relic, particularly a touch-sensitive relic. This combination of relic and amulet can significantly increase the power and importance of both items.

It becomes clear when exploring the boundaries and definition of amulets and talismans that neither has been accepted into Buddhism fully and without criticism. The late Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa (1906-93) a spiritual leader and scholar monk in Thailand (Essen, 2005:10), and his student Phra Phayom Kalyano (1950) from Wat Suan Kaew, perceive amulets as diverting attention away from the core teachings of Buddhism and encouraging materialist attachment (Scott, 2009:182). These are not the first or last people to have this opinion, and some scholars believe that Buddhism could once again flourish in Thailand if its people were to abandon the practice and use of such amuletic items, protective magic and superstitious ways (McDaniel, 2006:101). However, this idea can be somewhat misleading, as it suggests a decline or divergence from Buddhism in Thailand, which does not appear to be taking place. It further portrays Thai Buddhism as a victim of globalisation and modernisation, when in fact not all followers use amulets, and those which do are not necessarily suggesting that their practices are traditional or that they are diverting attention away from Buddhism. In fact, in various forms magic and supernatural powers have been present throughout the course of Buddhism.

Images of the Buddha, like amulets, have a supernatural grounding in Buddhism. There are extensive records of images displaying supernatural powers such as healing and communicating with people; of being self-moving; emitting lights or illuminating itself, or of unceremoniously appearing. None of these are considered rare for an image of the Buddha (Wenzel, 2011:274). It is for this reason that images of the Buddha are often considered to be amulets in their own right.

The power attributed to Buddha images, and to images on a broader spectrum, is one that has mesmerised both Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, and has been a topic of discussion for centuries. Freedburg (1989:1) adds that what people find intimidating about images are the emotions that surface when in the presence of them, particularly in the case of powerful images. These emotional responses, which in Freedburg's opinion are experienced by the majority, are considered too uncultured and primitive for modern society. Amulets are also repeatedly perceived

to fall under the Buddhist Modernist<sup>5</sup> impression of being primitive. It would appear that the concept of someone taking sincere comfort or solace from owning or wearing an amulet believed to have genuine supernatural or protective powers is simply absurd. However, what, then, should be thought if the amulet is understood not merely to possess powers, but to have use of the powers and communication with the being it depicts, be that the Buddha, an auspicious Monk or a Deity? As Swearer (2004) discusses, what is represented in the image or amulet is implicitly assimilated and needs to be fully present. Therefore, it could be argued that the item or image is not merely an exemplification of the person or Deity, but rather, it is or has ontological communication with that being. This idea causes a certain amount of conflict for some people. However, as Swearer further discusses, this relationship between image and reality has long been an issue of religious controversy, and whilst amulet and relic worship may once more be at the forefront of discussion by the Buddhist modernist movement, it is not the first time it has come under public and religious analysis.

Considering the information that has been discussed above, this thesis will be divided into three chapters. The focus of the first chapter is the origins of amulets. The use of amulets is not new to religious practice or everyday life; in fact, the use of amulets or apotropaic devices is present in most civilisations and countries throughout history. Amulets can be found in numerous forms and for a variety of purposes reflecting the societies, traditions and areas where they have been found. Although many of the functions remain similar, societal influences are apparent, and it is feasible that the use of amulets filtered into certain religions such as Buddhism rather than manifesting from within them, although this is a highly contested theory. After briefly discussing amulets in a number of non-Buddhist traditions and societies, the focus will return to the presence of amulets in Buddhism, exploring both the Theravāda and the Mahayāna traditions. In discussing the relationship between amulets and Buddhism, a number of scriptural texts will be considered. These include: the *Jinapañjara Gāthā*; the *Mahāpratisarā Dharaṇī*; and the *Parittas*. Having discussed the origins of Buddhism and amulets in Southeast Asia, I will then examine the position of amulets in various major traditions. This chapter will compare the physical components of amulets, their treatment, and the reflection of certain Abrahamic religions to amulets found in Buddhism.

Chapter Two is an in-depth investigation into the function of amulets in Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on Thailand and the current increase in the popularity of Thai Buddhist amulets. For many in Southeast Asia, amulets are believed to have supernatural qualities, usually of an

---

<sup>5</sup>Buddhist modernism (in one definition) is an attempt to ‘reform and modernize Buddhism’ (McMahan, 2012:13). McMahan further identifies Buddhist Modernism as trying to rationalise religion, with its followers trying to eliminate ritualistic or cosmological aspects of the practice whilst returning to the Buddha’s canonical teachings.

apotropaic nature. I will also argue that amulets act as a reminder of certain values or as a meditational device rather than as an item worn or carried for protection, thus displaying their adaptability. Irrespective of which function an amulet may have, it is clear that amulets both individualise and symbolise to others that they are part of a collective whole. Nevertheless, as Stengs (1998:57) points out, amulets are and have always been produced to fulfil a specific function regardless of what that function may be. Throughout this section a number of basic and common amulet functions will be discussed in relation to both Buddhist and non-Buddhist cultures. The relationship and parallels found in the treatment of Buddha images and amulets will also be explored, along with the magical and supernatural functions associated with them. I will further discuss the different natures of Buddhism, discussing whether amulets would have been originally used for more *Nibbānic* (elite monk) or *Kammatic* (lay people)<sup>6</sup> purposes, and how the identification of a third category, *Apotropaic* Buddhism, by scholars such as Spiro (1982: 140) has affected this idea.

The final chapter of this research will explore the transformation process amulets have undergone, including the impact social changes have had on them. I will look at the physical transformation of amulets, assessing factors such as the production process, the material used, and the person or topic of focus. It will also take into account the effect human development and modernization has had on amulets by means of the internet, advertising, and mass production. As Kitiarsa (2012:7) states, the effects modern mass media are having on religion and on religious paraphernalia are becoming increasingly evident. Whilst there are positive aspects, such as religious items being more readily available to the public, the mass media bring certain items under criticism for undermining essential Buddhist values and teachings, for and guiding people into immoral practices. The chapter will also raise the question of whether amulets are authentic or consecrated items. Throughout the course of this chapter many of the issues surrounding the mass production and transformation of amulets will be discussed. These will include the aspects listed above as well as their current role in consumer and material culture. In addition to these, I will also discuss some of the positive and negative aspects attributed to the way amulets have transformed and filtered into everyday life.

---

<sup>6</sup> *Nibbānic* or *Nibbāna* is the *Pali* word for *Nirvāna* originating in the original Buddhist cannon (Smith, 2011:475). Referring to the attainment of Nirvana, a transcendent state beyond suffering, desire, and rebirth, this is primarily the eventual objective of elite monks and the monastic class. *Kammatic* purposes or *Karma* is focused on rebirth and is therefore a concern of lay people. Spiro, (1982:97) however, identifies three kinds of Theravāda Buddhism, adding the category *Apotropaic* alongside *Nibannic* and *Kammatic* Buddhism. This point will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

# Chapter One

## The Origins of Amulets

Amulets are found in a variety of forms and for a number of purposes, often reflecting the traditions and areas where they have been found. For the purpose of this discussion, a variety of materials will be drawn upon, ranging from scholarly articles and books by authors such as Tambiah and Swearer to government published statistics. This chapter explores the origins of amulets, dividing them into three main: *Historical Amulets*; *Amulets, Buddhism and Southeast Asia*; and *The Use of Amulets in Abrahamic Traditions*.

*Historical Amulets* discusses the appearance and use of these items across a spectrum of traditions outside the focus area of Southeast Asia. I will assemble a historical overview of amulets, describing their presence in non-Buddhist traditions and areas. The relationship between amulets, ornaments, and jewellery will also be investigated, looking at their status as apotropaic devices.

The second section, *Amulets, Buddhism and Southeast Asia*, considers amulets in reference to the Theravāda and Mahayāna traditions. Exploring the origins of Buddhism in Southeast Asia, I will discuss the first appearances of the tradition. Certain statistics will also be considered, exploring the progression and percentage of Buddhist followers in particular areas of Southeast Asia. This section will further assess the relationship between amulets and Buddhism, and their varying roles. Finally, there will be a discussion of the scriptural writings *Jinapañjara Gārthā*; *Mahāpratisarā Dharaṇī*; and the *Parittas*.

The final section, *Amulets in Abrahamic Religions*, explores the role and use of amulets in the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions. Since amulets tend to reflect or develop characteristics associated with the tradition in which they are found, a comparison will be made between those found in Buddhism and those found in the Abrahamic religions. This analysis will be conducted by exploring each tradition individually, although aspects from others religions and traditions may be drawn upon for discussion. Although amulets are being considered in a number of forms and appearances throughout this thesis, scriptural amulets and protective texts provide the greatest level of comparison for this section and will therefore be a central aspect of the discussion.

### **Historical Amulets**

A belief in amulets was almost universal in the ancient world. They have been used by followers of almost every faith known to man (Varner, 2008:6). In particular the ancient Egyptians in placed a

great amount of importance on amulets, as did the Assyrians, Babylonians and Sumerians (Dunwich, 2001:79). Although the design and material amulets are composed of has developed, reflecting the preferences of the traditions they are from, some similarities can be found in their appearance and function.

Amulets were extremely popular with the Ancient Egyptians, as is evident from the vast collections of Egyptian antiquities (Nunn, 2002:110). Although predominantly displayed and carried in a comparable fashion to contemporary amulets, some are so large they could be considered a statue or sculpture.<sup>7</sup>As described by Kunz (1915, 320), early amulets commonly took the form of animals, usually those associated with strength or fertility, as well as non-anthropomorphic images. Popular Egyptian designs featured the scarab, the frog and the bull head, although numerous other examples can be found. Egyptian amulets were used by both genders; however, some 'reveal clear gender distinctions' (Bryan, 1997:70). The frog and female hippopotamus, for example, were favoured by women for their reproductive abilities.

Death was also a large concern of the Egyptians, as can be seen reflected in the large amount of amulets made specifically for use after death. Unlike the Buddhist belief in reincarnation, the Egyptians believed strongly in the afterlife, and thus many amulets were made to preserve and aid the body in its life beyond this one. For example, certain amulets were created with the sole purpose of restoring the sight to artificial eyes should the body's originals be unusable (Andrews, 1994:148).

The Assyrians and Babylonians also used amulets, although not to the same extent. As Hesse states (2007: 4), both the Assyrians and Babylonians commonly used cylinder seals as amulets, often carved into shapes or text and embedded with semi-precious and precious stones, not dissimilar to examples found in contemporary society. Other common amulet designs included a ring shape, clay cone, horse, and the face of the beneficial demon Pazuzu<sup>8</sup>. Amulets of Pazuzu were known to keep disease and sickness away, but more importantly, he was believed to hinder the female demon Lamashtu<sup>9</sup>, making Pazuzu a popular amulet amongst pregnant women and new mothers (Ford, 2011:233). Assyrian and Babylonian amulets also commonly appealed to the divine powers for

---

<sup>7</sup> A stone scarab balanced on a pedestal at Karnak is thought to be an example of an oversized amulet, weighing an estimated two tonnes.

<sup>8</sup> Pazuzu is a beneficial demon depicted by the ancient Assyrians as keeping disease bearing winds away and counteracting the evil of the female demon Lamashtu.

<sup>9</sup> Lamashtu or Lamaštu is a demon who steals newly born babies and those babies still in the womb.

virility, fecundity, and for the preservation of the family, traits still popular amongst present-day amulets.

Amulets usually reflect the tradition, religion, or sets of beliefs they are associated with. It is for this reason that, in Tambiah's view (1984:199), amulets have been commonly used to reinforce the virtues of the relevant traditions or teachings. This concept does not diminish the fact that they were held to have powerful properties, but rather that amulets can be perceived as having a dual function, making them more approachable and useful to a wider spectrum of people. On a simplistic level, many amulets are designed to be pleasing on an aesthetic level as well, as can be seen from the lavish materials and designs amulets often display. Therefore, it is feasible for an amulet to be considered a bodily adornment or piece of jewellery as well as an apotropaic device.

The first evidence of jewellery can be traced back to 98,000 B.C.E. in certain areas of Africa (Hesse, 2007, xvii). Although primitive in design, these strung beads, carved bone, shells and small stones are components that have and still do feature amongst amulet designs. Whilst many would connect the word "amulet" to the bronze, sculpted or detailed examples found in Buddhism and similar traditions, amulets can still be found in simplistic and natural forms as well.

The difference between the materials used and the cost of amulets vary substantially. However, this fact does not mean that the materials are chosen at random; as they can be selected for a quality or strength they are considered to possess. The materials and gemstones used in the design and production of amulets are often a key component in creating a powerful as well as personal amulet, although the environment does have an impact. While consulting different amulet manuals I realised how complicated the process of selecting materials can be, especially if planetary related gemstones and materials are to be taken into consideration, which for some societies is a requirement. An example of this tendency described by Farnell (2007:44) lists star signs and planets, relating them to materials for creating individual formulas. For example, Aries is connected to iron, the material of Mars, which is believed to increase physical strength and which can also be used for healing. The material selection process is not always complicated, and often a material is selected due to qualities such as its price, durability and availability.

Amulets have been present in a number of cultures and traditions for a significant amount of time. Although similarities can be found across cultures such as fertility amulets, which have been prominent amongst both historical and contemporary civilisations, many reflect the tradition and beliefs from the time and area in which they were created. An obvious example is the number of Egyptian amulets created for use after death. This tradition is not particularly common in contemporary amulets, particularly in those from the Buddhist tradition, who do not share the Egyptians' definition of, or belief in the afterlife. However, whilst the design and functions of amulets may have changed, their importance and connection to society has not.

## Amulets Buddhism and Southeast Asia

This section will focus on Thailand, since not only does it have the largest Buddhist population in Southeast Asia, but also because there is a significant volume of information available on this topic and area. I will discuss the background of Buddhism and amulets in Southeast Asia, along with the relationship and in place of amulets in Buddhism, and a number of Buddhist scriptures. These scriptures are the *Mahāpratisarā Dhāraṇī*, the *Jinapañjara Gāthā* and the *Paritta*. For the purpose of this discussion two translations of the *Jinapañjara Gāthā* have been used: one provided by McDaniel (2011:78-80) and a second sourced from Buddha Station<sup>10</sup>.

Buddhism has been prominent in Southeast Asia since around the third Century BCE. This prevalence is partially due to the attempts of King Aśoka and his descendants, who made a concerted effort to assist the spread of Buddhism (Hirakawa, 1998:95). Unlike Hinduism, Buddhism has a history of being a missionizing religion, although traveling merchants would have contributed to the spread of Buddhism in certain areas without it necessarily being a specific intent (Heidhues, 2000:67).

Currently, Theravāda Buddhism is the most dominant school of Buddhism in Southeast Asia, although Mahāyāna Buddhism can still be found as a minority religion. In Vietnam one can find a high Mahāyāna presence, usually in the form of Zen or Ch'ān Buddhism, which can be primarily attributed to the Chinese influence (Ooi, 2005:281) in this area. Theravāda Buddhism is thought to have reached Sri Lanka by the late third Century BCE; however, it did not spread widely across Southeast Asia until around the twelfth Century CE (Hazen, 2002:37). Whilst the accuracy of this date is often disputed due to the conflicting dates of various sources, what is certain is that by the twelfth Century CE Theravāda Buddhism was the predominant religion of Southeast Asia, displacing the Mahāyāna tradition that had previously dominated it. It is not always clear why the Mahāyāna tradition lost popularity in certain areas, although theories including it being supplanted by a Hindu revival and later the concerted spread of Islam are probable (Duiker & Spielvogul, 2007:196).

Southeast Asia is not Buddhist in its entirety, and whilst evidence of Buddhism is long-standing in this area, many of the world's major religions can be found in singular and integrated forms. As Heidhues (2000:62) points out, Hindu and Indian influences can be found amongst many of the traditions in Southeast Asian Culture. Furthermore, whilst other religions and cultures may have

---

<sup>10</sup> Buddha Station (2013). *Jinapanjara Gatha, The Victor's Cage*. Available:

<http://www.buddhastation.com/buddhist-music-videos/buddhism-mantra-chant/jinapanjara-gatha-the-victors-cage/>. Last accessed 19th Nov 2013.

had an impact upon Buddhism in Southeast Asia, they have contributed to, rather than displaced Buddhism and its ideologies as reflected in the number of dual tradition amulets available. This is just one opinion among many, and scholars such as Kitiarsa (2007) suggest that what is being witnessed here is actually a hybridisation of traditions. This is a notion worth considering, particularly when discussing amulets, their use and the level to which they have been accepted. Given the variety of traditions available in Southeast Asia, the appearance of religious hybridization should not be surprising, and can commonly be found in the fusion of the various different ideas and practices of many traditions rather than in being ‘a singular or unidirectional emergent cultural process’ (Taylor, 2008:38). This hybridisation of beliefs can be found particularly in Thailand, where religiosity and beliefs have undergone a subtle hybridisation over the last few decades, particularly in areas experiencing high levels of religious commodification and capitalism (Kitiarsa, 2007:461). Hybridisation is not necessarily a complex affair and can be witnessed in basic forms such as in an amulet displaying deities, ideas or literatures from two or more traditions (for example, Buddhism and Hinduism). This example of hybridisation also demonstrates the way amulets adapt and change along with the societies they are immersed in.

It is difficult to discuss amulets and Buddhism in Southeast Asia without taking into account other traditions such as Hinduism, which has co-existed alongside Buddhism for centuries. Most of Southeast Asia had converted to Buddhism or Hinduism by the first millennium and many ‘still adhere to Buddhist culture tinged with Hindu influences in the twenty-first century’ (Oii, 2005:573). However, even if one disagrees with the theory of hybridisation and chooses to ignore the history of co-existence between Buddhism, Hinduism and other traditions present in Southeast Asia, the fact remains that many traditions have shared roots, with factors such as the Buddha or Siddhartha Gautama being considered to be a member of the Hindu *Kshatriya* caste (Wallech<sup>11</sup>, 2013:88) causing parallels.

Similarities can often be found between Hindu and Buddhist amulets, usually in their appearance, function, or in the way they are treated. Hindu amulets can take the form of pendants and jewellery; they can be glass beads empowered by *mantrams*; and they can consist of natural materials such as roots; or as copper plates or charms engraved with scriptures, images and deities. These amulets are possessed by many Hindus who ‘believe themselves quite safe from all kinds of evil’ (Dubois, 2007:386) when under the protection of an amulet or apotropaic device. However, Hindu amulets, just like Buddhist amulets, must first be prepared correctly in order to be considered effective. This preparation is done in accordance with the religion or tradition the amulet is affiliated with. For Hindu amulets this means being prepared on a particular day; part of the day; or sometimes in accordance with a specific zodiac sign, all under the supervision of well-

---

<sup>11</sup> Wallech, Daryae, Hendricks, Negus, Wan and Bakken.

trained Brahmins (Dwivedi, 2010:156). The amulets then undergo a ceremony that subjects them to chanting, prayer, and charming in a similar fashion to the Buddhist consecration ceremonies, in order to create maximum protection for the owner.

There are many types of Hindu amulets and the *mantra* AUM is popular both in the preparation process of amulets as well as featuring on many of them (Gonzalez-Wippler, 2006:100). With the three letters representing the divine trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, the power of this chant when used as an amulet is believed to be capable of preventing continuous reincarnations, allowing the believer to pass beyond this realm. Interestingly, Hindu designs can also be used as or on amulets. A *yantra*, which is a geometrical design or diagram representing the universe, is one such example of a common amulet design (Buhnemann, 2003:119). However, while anyone can theoretically draw a *yantra*, it must be energised by a Mantra to be effective (Chawdhri, 1992:4). A *yantra* is usually drawn or engraved onto a durable material such as bronze, lead, silver or gold in order to withstand constant use and the *Puja*<sup>12</sup> which protects the owner or wearer.

A similarity in the materials used is clear amongst amulets in many traditions and religions. This likeness is often due to choice but can also be due to the availability and durability of materials. However, the similarities between the Hindu and Buddhist empowering process, the use of powerful mantras and scriptures, and the amulets prescribing to both traditions do seem to support the notion of shared roots and of a high level of hybridisation between Buddhism and Hinduism.

Hybridisation does not solely affect religious traditions; it can affect culture and religious items as well. However, of the numerous traditions available in Southeast Asia, Buddhism is the most popular, with Thailand having one of the highest Buddhist populations, followed closely by Myanmar. In recent statistics it was revealed that as many as 94.6 percent of the Thai population are Buddhist, of which the vast majority are Theravāda (CIA, 2013). Thus, in Southeast Asia, and in particular in Thailand, a separation between religion and culture is much harder to sustain, especially given that Thailand is one of the few countries which constitutionally stipulates that the King must be a Buddhist and an upholder of the faith (Kusalasaya, 1983:6). In fact, Turner (2011:xvi) even goes so far as to suggest that ‘hybrid religiosity can be interpreted as a form of religious popular culture’, under which amulets are frequently classified.

The element that separates an amulet from a piece of jewellery or a bodily adornment is that an amulet must first be consecrated. The consecration process is crucial, since it is only through this process that the item can be considered as possessing efficacy in the eyes of its faith. As Tambiah

---

<sup>12</sup> *Puja* is the act of showing reverence to a deity, spirit, or aspect of the divine through prayer, songs and rituals usually enabled by objects such as statues, images and in this occasion amulets (Smithsonian, 1997).

(1984:254-5) identifies, there are several ways in which this consecration can take place. Firstly, virtues and powers can be transferred to the new item from a historic pre-consecrated item, creating a form of lineage of power (some of which are considered to be very auspicious in their own right). A second way is to chant *Parittas* from the Buddha's first sermon and works by propitious or important monks, particularly those advancing on the path of liberation. Another way is for energy to be transferred by one or several monks participating in intense meditation, and finally, there is the opening eye ceremony, which is of particular importance for statues and images. Swearer (2003:15) expands this list to include a consecration ritual found in Thailand, which sees images, statues and amulets empowered through the re-enactment of the night the Buddha became enlightened.

The importance of consecrating certain items lies in the fact that the ceremony is considered to be the enlivening or awakening of the image, amulet or statue. Once it has taken place, the item is then considered to be a genuine living presence of the Buddha (Swearer, 2003:9) rather than a representation. In the story of the first anthropomorphic Buddha image, the image is described as rising to pay respect to the Buddha, later charging itself from his powers so as to sustain the tradition in the Buddha's absence, thus protecting and watching over the followers. In this way, the image can be perceived as a surrogate for the Buddha, continuing his work and teachings. Whilst most amulets are not considered as literally containing the essence of the Buddha, or important monks or saints, many people use them for their apotropaic characteristics, which are similar to the protection and guidance connected with Buddha images. It is interesting that the conflict surrounding the notion of a literal presence of the Buddha in certain images and statues can be also found in the Christian Eucharist where the level of literality is likewise contested (Bolens, 2012:69).

Amulets are a prominent feature of contemporary discussion in Southeast Asia, and they are often considered a part of popular culture, along with the people who both bless and feature in amulet designs. These individuals can usually be traced within the tradition. In Thailand, for example, there is a long-standing tradition of Forest Monk communities who would quite often be involved in the amulet consecration ceremony and, on occasion in the production process. Buddhist nuns, although far lesser in number than Monks, can also be connected to certain amulets, relics and objects of importance, thus influencing their popularity (Swearer, 1995:18). Sadly, the tradition of Forest Monks has decreased recently due to 'relentless modernisation and deforestation' (Tiyayanich, 1998:1). Despite this, there does remain a level of veneration held by most members of society for many of these Forest Monks and saints, as is reflected in the number of Buddhist amulets connected to or depicting images of them. As Tambiah (1984:3) discusses, in contemporary Thai society both the Forest Saints and its amulets are common subjects in popular Thai literature, included in magazines, books and newspapers. It becomes apparent throughout

these literatures that some of the amulets held in highest esteem are those blessed by or affiliated with certain famous Forest Saints of the modern day.

Although contemporary amulet markets reflect the current economic atmosphere, the presence of amulet cults is not new to Buddhism. In modern terms, the amulet cults can be traced to the reign of King Mongkut (1851-68CE), with its influences of use in ritual practice; however, its roots far precede that. This fact is evident from the discovery of small embossed clay votive tablets and *dhāranī* seals at Nālandā, Bodhgayā<sup>13</sup>, and other holy Buddhist sites in India. Clay votive tablets have also been found in Thailand in significant quantities dating from around the sixth to thirteenth Century CE. Whilst a substantial amount of evidence dates from this time, evidence of amulets can be found predating it.

Beyond the evidence discovered in the form of amuletic artefacts and carvings, Buddhist teachings and scriptures can also be considered. The Buddhist teaching of non-attachment, for example, can cause problems when discussing the acceptability of amulets and amulet use in Buddhism. As Swearer (2004:3) states, ‘the Buddha’s teaching about nonattachment falls victim to an obsessive preoccupation with sacred objects revered for their protective potency and economic value’. Referring to Theravāda Buddhism in particular, in his view, Buddhism at present is a compromised version full of magical expectations that are not in accordance with Theravāda teachings (Swearer, 2004: 27). To an extent, this can be seen as true, since the use of amulets and of Buddha images in Thailand is not entirely in keeping with certain Buddhist teachings. However, there remains no definitive ruling as to the acceptability of their use; and furthermore, it is not unheard of for Buddhists to be found conducting themselves in a manner quite different to that prescribed in the scriptures.

Despite this conflict, the importance and authority of Buddhist scriptures remains, although certain Buddhists and non-Buddhists reject the cult of the amulets, believing it to be inconsistent with Buddhist teachings (Sharf, 1999:76). In fact, several scriptures do mention and condone the use of amulets, regardless of criticisms of them conflicting with teachings such as non-attachment. As

---

<sup>13</sup>Nālandā is an ancient site commonly associated with Buddhism due to the excavated temples, its mention in the Pali cannon, and the belief that the Buddha visited Nālandā on a number of occasions. It is also known for its international school of learning, dating back to the sixth century BCE. Although it has only been partially excavated, a significant number of sculptures, seals, coins and potteries have been recovered from the site, featuring not only the Buddha and bodhisattvas but also Bajrajaha deities and Brahmanical images (Archaeological Survey of India:2009).

detailed quite extensively by Lewis (2000) in his book on Buddhist texts from Nepal<sup>14</sup>, the *Mahāpratisarā Dhāraṇī* is a scripture that features amulets. The *Mahāpratisarā Dhāraṇī* is an apotropaic scripture of the Mahāyāna -Vajrayana Buddhist School (Hidas, 2012: 24). Dating from around the first Century CE, the *Mahāpratisarā Dhāraṇī* became a part of the *Pancaraksa* collection of texts which is still in use in Nepal. Known for its protective nature, when recited, this text wards off evil or misfortune and in fact, *Dhāraṇī*, a Sanskrit word, literally means a spell or protective chant. Later examples of the *Mahāpratisarā Dhāraṇī* found printed on amulets and tablets from around the eighth Century CE show an image of the deity Mahāpratisarā<sup>15</sup> in the centre of the text. However, this is an often contested fact and in the opinion of Nadeau (2012:96-7), the iconography found on these later amulets bears no or little resemblance to the images prescribed in the incantation's original scripture.

The *Mahāpratisarā Dhāraṇī*, according to a translation provided by Lewis, will free an individual from harm cause by a series of supernatural beings. These include but are not limited to: benevolent spirits (*yakṣas*); malignant demons (*rākṣasas*); ghosts (*bhūta*); flesh-eating demons (*piśācas*); and witches. It will bring immunity to madness, epilepsy, and dangers posed by human beings. 'All one's sworn enemies will be reconciled. One will be immune from the dangers posed by poison, fire, weapons, water, wind, and so forth and will be immune from contagious diseases' (Lewis, 2000:134). Wearing this text will also provide a woman with a son if she so wishes, as well as bestowing a large amount of religious merit. It is sufficient to say that the *Mahāpratisarā Dhāraṇī* not only sanctions the use of itself as an amulet but is equally perceived to be capable of many of the apotropaic qualities present in numerous Buddhist amulets.

The *Jinapañjara Gāthā*, or *Phra gartha chinabanchon* in Thai, is a protective text that according to McDaniel (2011:77) is the most widely recognised and memorised Buddhist text in Thailand at present. Deemed a highly accessible text, the *Jinapañjara Gāthā* is used by people across the social spectrum, from farmers who use it as a part of folk tradition and rituals, to scholars attending and studying at elite monastic universities. It is so popular, particularly in central Thailand, that the *Jinapañjara Gāthā* can be found on a wide assortment of memorabilia including posters, cards, and small trinkets. It can also be found appearing and being chanted on TV, in films, and on the radio. Significant numbers of the Buddhist population (both monastic and lay) can recite verses if not the entirety of the *Jinapañjara Gāthā*. Interestingly, merit and apotropaic qualities can be gained

---

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, T (2000). *Popular Buddhist texts from Nepal: narratives and rituals of Newar Buddhism*. New York: State University of New York.

<sup>15</sup> The *Mahāpratisarā* is an eight armed bodhisattva pictured in the centre of some versions of the *Mahāpratisarā Dhāraṇī*, who, according to certain scholars such as Nadeau (2012:97) is not mentioned in Indian scripture or in later Indic texts that refer to the protective chant or spell.

through listening to a recital of the *Jinapañjara Gāthā*, even if the listener does not understand Pali, the language it is usually spoken in (McDaniel, 2011: 77).

The *Jinapañjara Gāthā* differs from the *Mahāpratisarā Dhāraṇī* in that it does not specify itself as being an amulet, despite the parallels in description and use. As previously mentioned, two translations have been used to explore the protective nature of this text. There are variants in the translated text, yet the protective essence is not lost. Comparing the last two verses, McDaniel's (2011:79) translates:

‘Verily, in the end I am completely well sheltered, well protected. Whatever [misfortune] arises is conquered by the power of the Jina. The horse of unworthy ones is conquered by the power of the Dhamma. Danger is conquered by the power of the Sangha. I move about freely in the armour of the Jina guarded by the power

In comparison to the same verse translation by Buddha Station (2013):

Indeed, thus am I well protected as all the distresses have been rid of by the Victorious One; so may whatever potential dangers there may be in the future, be eliminated by the power of the Dhamma and Sangha, and may the same power of the truth of Dhamma protect and guide me, so that I may live and thrive on the

Whilst variations in the translation are evident, the texts continuously return to the notion of protection, connecting it with the Dhamma and Sangha. The use of the words ‘Victorious One’ in the Buddha Station translation clearly refers to the Buddha. From this verse, it can be deduced that the text is either summoning the power of the three jewels or looking to them for protection. However, it is the use of the word ‘armour’ in McDaniel’s translation that seems particularly relevant, since it suggests a physical protection, similar to the apotropaic qualities associated with Buddhist amulets.

The *Paritta* in Pali or *Paritrana* in Sanskrit is another Buddhist scripture considered as protective. Consisting of 24 *Suttas*, the *Paritta* is believed to be predominantly made up of discourses delivered by the Buddha. Commonly referred to as the Book of Protection, the *Paritta* can be found being recited individually, in small increments, or in its entirety. This recitation can be done by an individual or as part of a collective or group ritual, ceremony or festival. It encourages protection, good luck and prosperity for those participating in and listening to the recital (Kalupahana, 2001:139).

Although originally meant as a handbook to guide a newly ordained novice (Thera, 1999), the *Paritta* is well known by people both lay and monastic, with even children being familiar with some of the more common *Suttas*. The popularity of certain texts can be, and often is, specific to a

country or region, with them frequently having their own *Paritta* collection. For example, Crosby's (2013:126-7) identifies the *Catubhāṇavāra* as being Sri Lanka's most popular book of Parittas, containing 29 rather than 24 *Suttas*.

The *Ratana Sutta*, or The Jewel Discourse, appears to be a consistently popular *Sutta* of the *Paritta* collection. Thought as having been delivered by the Buddha himself, it is believed that the *Ratana Sutta* was recited for the first time after the Buddha had attended the city of Vesali, which was being plagued by famine, malevolent spirits and disease. Upon the arrival of the Buddha, a heavy rain set in and washed the city clean. It was then that the Buddha delivered the *Ratana Sutta* to the Venerable Ananda with instructions to recite the discourse whilst touring the city with its inhabitants so as to exorcise the malevolent spirits and purify the city. Containing 17 verses, the *Ratana Sutta* is too long to include in its entirety but a sample verse is as follows:

O beings, listen closely. May you all radiate loving-kindness to those human beings who, by day and night, bring offerings to you (offer merit to you). Wherefore, protect them with diligence.

#### *Ratana Sutta*, Verse 2

Whilst the *Ratana Sutta* is a popular discourse, all of the *Suttas* in the *Paritta* can be considered as protective and beneficial to the reader or listener. Another example of the protective nature of these texts is a verse taken from a later discourse called the *Atanatiya Sutta*:

Happy One, this is the Atanata protection whereby both the monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen may live at ease, guarded, protected, and unharmed.

#### *Atanatiya Sutta*, Verse 47-48

These verses display the power that can be associated with a *Sutta* and further exemplify how powerful the collection can be considered when recited in full. During the recitation of the *Paritta*, personal items are placed in the centre of the recital area, in order to receive or absorb the *Parittas'* power and protection. These items can include water, string, and household or personal items, including amulets and images of the Buddha (Crosby, 2013:127). It is interesting that the *Paritta* can also be used for protection and healing in its own right as well as possessing the power to charge other items and amulets, a characteristic of a number of Buddhist scriptures.

Throughout this section I have discussed a number of topics in relation to Buddhist amulets, including the presence of hybridisation in Southeast Asia and the effect this has had on its amulets. Amulets are influenced greatly by the traditions and societies they are present in; this is reflected in

their designs, the ceremonies they are exposed to, and the powers they are capable of. Religious scriptures also significantly affect amulets and apotropaic devices, often sanctioning their use, outlining their properties and even being used as amulets themselves. This use is not unique to Buddhism, though elements do vary between traditions and societies. There are many ways that a tradition or religion can be seen to impact upon an amulet, yet the most obvious is the religion or tradition to which the amulet belongs. It is not a coincidence that the majority of amulets found and produced in Southeast Asia are affiliated with the Buddhist tradition, the predominant religion of Southeast Asia.

### **Amulets in Abrahamic Religions**

The primary focus area of this study is Southeast Asia and the Buddhist tradition. However, amulets make comparable appearances in many other religions, each reflecting the values and society from which they have come. As McMahan states ‘Southeast Asia is a region known for its religious and cultural diversity. It is home to Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist traditions that developed over the course of centuries.’ (McMahan, 2012:10) Therefore, to provide a balanced perspective, amulets will be considered in the following Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The use of amulets is widespread amongst many religions. As Rabbi Dennis (2007:10) discusses, the Jewish faith is no exception. In fact, in many respects, the criticisms amulets receive in Judaism are comparable to those currently voiced in Buddhism and other traditions. These criticisms revolve predominantly around the question of how genuine a part of religious tradition amulets are considered to be. This is a question commonly raised by Buddhist Modernists as well.

However, as Meilicke (2005:126) suggests, if amulets are only considered an element of popular Judaism, not Orthodox, then why have they been consistently present throughout the history of Judaism? The fact that many Jewish amulets are based upon, or reference extracts from the Hebrew Bible may be a contributing factor (Shwartz-Be’eri, 2003:171). In fact, the written word of God was considered so powerful in Judaism that many of the early amulets were created for non-Jewish clients as well (Bloom: 2007:177).

Exploring the scriptural sanctioning of amulets in Judaism, certain texts do reference them. They are mentioned in passing in Isaiah 3:18-20: ‘The lord will take away... the amulets’ (NRSV, 1995:634). However, from the context it is difficult to establish whether it is the amulet that is being condemned or its luxurious association with women. Whilst the sparse guideline as to the use and acceptability of amulets is not specific to Judaism, it does beg the question of whether or not they are scripturally acceptable. It is only through subjective interpretation that a viewpoint can be formed. An example discussed by Bohak (2008:373), suggests that because many of the amulets

were created by those of a rabbinic class, certain amulets, in this case written, were not entirely prohibited. This line of thought can likewise be extended to religions and traditions that share either a similar social hierarchy or have groups who traditionally deal with scriptures, such as Buddhism and Hinduism<sup>16</sup>.

Amulets are less commonly found and used in Christianity, particularly when compared to traditions such as Buddhism. One of the most common symbols related to Christianity is the cross or crucifix, yet as Paine (2004: 175) discusses, whether or not it can be considered an amulet is highly debatable. The council of Laodicea in the fourth Century CE, attempted to outlaw amulets with a threat of excommunication to those who made them. Later the council of Leptiner in 743CE issued a declaration stating that crosses and relics should be worn instead of amulets. These documents suggest that the Christian cross is not in fact an amulet.

Many early Christian amulets were in written form, similar to those found in Judaism. Meyer and Smith (1999) describe two examples of written amulets: one to protect and one to heal. The first example, a Papyrus amulet from the fifth to sixth Century CE, calls upon the angels, archangels and the power of the father and son to provide protection against a powerful headless entity. This item can be compared to the invitation of the deities which is repeated after each *Paritta Sutta* that calls upon the 'Buddhas, Pacceka Buddhas and all Arahants' (Thera, 1999) for protection. The second amulet addresses the Virgin Mary in order to 'heal her who wears this' (Meyer and Smith, 1999:48). Scriptures such as psalms and fragments taken from the New Testament Bible were likewise considered to be powerful when written and used as an amulet. There are also non scriptural Christian amulets such as saint medals which are believed to be apotropaic and remain in circulation in contemporary society. For example, St Christopher medallions are commonly given to encourage a safe journey to travellers (Varner, 2008:169). These small medallions, usually made of metal, are not entirely dissimilar in appearance to some of the smaller Buddhist amulets which are often related to a Buddhist Monk or Saint.

In a similar manner to Judaism and Christianity 'Orthodox Islam denies the efficacy of amulets and other magico-religious devices' (Silverman, 1991:19). However, the use of amulets has played a significant role in the Islamic belief system. As in Judaism, the most common Islamic amulets are scriptural, in this case calligraphic passages of the Qur'an<sup>17</sup> (Glassé, 2002:49). The last two

---

<sup>16</sup> Buddhist monks, for example, traditionally protect, produce and bless scriptures in a similar manner to Jewish Rabbis. In Hinduism one can consider the Brahmanic Hindu caste as traditionally fulfilling this role.

<sup>17</sup> Amuletic or magical rings are, at present, a popular variant of amulets amongst the Islamic tradition. Like an amuletic pendant, amulet rings in Islam and other traditions are commonly found

chapters Q113 and Q114 are often known as the ‘protection-seeking’ (Campo, 2009:40) verses. In a translation provided of Q114 by Nadimi (2011), one passage seeks refuge in God from ‘the evil of the One who whispers and recoils, who whispers in the hearts of mankind, of Jinn and mankind’ (Q114). It is evident that protection is being requested from a form of evil, be it human or spirit. Most commonly found condensed into a few selected words, this chapter aims to provide the owner with maximum protection, although it can be found inscribed or written in its entirety. Some of these inscriptions, often combined with a smaller message or symbol, double as seals and are believed to invoke God’s protection through this outward sign of trust (Siipestein & Sundelin, 2004:46).

Islamic amulets, like those in many religions, are described as being able to channel powers beyond them (Campo, 2009:40). These powers would predominantly be powers associated with Allah, angels, saints and, sometimes, *Jinnis*. Interestingly, Insoll (2003:30) suggests that amulets appear to have been used in Islam as a method of conversion. Buddhism has likewise used amulets to aid conversion, since the amulets could be easily adopted into other traditions and belief systems that were already in place without causing undue disturbance. Examples of this usage can be found in the hybridisation of amulets, where they are found displaying symbols or images from two traditions. In Southeast Asia, amulets exhibiting the Buddha on one side and Hindu God Ganesh on the other are not uncommon.

Scriptural amulets are evident in all three of the Abrahamic religions, each calling on the written word of their God or of significant religious figures for protection. Whilst the use and production of amulets is still ongoing in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, a level of interest equal to that witnessed in Buddhism is not apparent. There are however, strong parallels between the protection scriptures of Islam and Buddhism, and some examples of early Christian amulets are equally noteworthy, though are not as popular in contemporary society. It is apparent that whilst non-scriptural amulets do exist in the Abrahamic religions, the amulets containing the written word receive the least criticism, each emitting protection through the power of its own faith. The fact that visual representations of God are strictly forbidden in Islam (Ashrof, 2007: 169) and likewise discouraged in Judaism has doubtlessly also had an effect on this usage.

## **Conclusion**

A reoccurring theme throughout this chapter is the way amulets reflect the traditions and societies in which they are found. This topic has been discussed under the three headings: *Historical Amulets*; *Amulets, Buddhism and Southeast Asia*; and *Amulets in Abrahamic traditions*. Each

---

to contain or have inscriptions (Fund, 2012). These inscriptions usually appeal to God for protection and assistance.

section has discussed some interesting points, including the physical components and functions of ancient amulets; theories of hybridisation in contemporary Southeast Asian society; the way Buddhist scriptures discuss and often feature as amulets; and a number of parallels found between Buddhist amulets and those present in the Abrahamic traditions.

It is obvious that amulets have been an important part of society for an extensive period of time, and as the needs of society have evolved so have amulets. Consequentially, as societies embraced amulets, a partiality for certain types or designs became evident. For example, in the discussion of amulets in Abrahamic traditions, it became clear that scriptural amulets were particularly popular amongst Jewish and Islamic faiths. This preference could be due to a combination of factors. It could simply be chance, or it could be due to the immense power attributed to the written word of God combined with a shared reluctance to anthropomorphically represent Him. Buddhism and Hinduism do not share this last characteristic, and as a result, images of deities and the Buddha are frequent amongst amulets from these traditions. In fact, the hybridisation of traditions in Southeast Asia had an interesting effect on amulets, mainly evident in the appearance of dual-tradition amulets often pertaining to both Buddhism and Hinduism. However, scriptural amulets remain a steady feature amongst amulets in most traditions and religions.

Whilst the requirements of amulets have changed, there are functions that have been in existence as long as amulets have been in use, but this area will be discussed further in Chapter Two. One thing that has not changed, however, is the apotropaic nature of amulets; a quality all societies have embraced regardless of the form their amulets take.

## Chapter Two

### Function

The focus of this chapter is the function of amulets. By function, I refer to both what an amulet is considered as being able to do, such as providing protection, and how they function in society. Although some of the functions prescribed to amulets have been discussed in passing in Chapter One, this chapter explores the functions of amulets in greater depth and in specific relation to Southeast Asian Buddhism. Both contemporary and past amulet functions will be discussed including how the function is often reflective of the culture and society in which the amulet is found.

The first section, *Basic Functions of Amulets*, explores the most common uses of amulets. Given the vast quantities of amulets available a decision was made to limit discussion to some of the most commonly found functions. Those to be discussed include amulets for fertility, for the young or vulnerable, and for those involved in conflict and war. The materials used in amulet production can affect their function, as will be discussed in further detail. The problems that occur when trying to mix the material and the magical in both a religious and every-day aspect will be discussed as well. While the economic function of amulets has become increasingly important in Southeast Asia, this will be discussed primarily in Chapter Three, due to its relationship with the transformation of amulets.

The second section, *Images and Amulets in Southeast Asia*, discusses the relationship between Buddhist images and amulets, and the parallels that can be found in how they function. This is done through an exploration of the miraculous nature of images, including the ceremonies which allow them to be considered as alive. Finally, *Nibbānic* and *Kammatic* Buddhism will be discussed in relation to amulets and Buddha images, along with the *Apotropaic* Buddhism an additional category suggested by Spiro (1982).

The final section of this chapter, *Magical and Supernatural Functions*, focuses on the topic of magic and supernatural qualities in reference to the function of amulets and Buddhism. The relationship between magic, amulets and the supernatural will be explored, looking at the powers attributed to certain amulets and the effects that can be expected from owning one, along with their magical amuletic mantras and counterparts. Buddhist ideologies and beliefs will be also considered in relation to amulets and magic along with their perception in Southeast Asia. Curer-magicians, magical tattoos and Buddhist miracles will also be discussed in relation to amulets.

### **Basic Functions of Amulets**

The function of an amulet can vary as vastly as its appearance. Although many amulets may outwardly look like a piece of jewellery or body adornment, the difference lies in the apotropaic nature and function of an amulet. This nature and the function are key characteristics when choosing an amulet, and they are also the reason a person may wear numerous amulets at any one time, particularly in areas where amulets are of increased popularity. As Tambiah states, even beyond visible amulets 'Most wear several, not exposed but secreted inside the shirt or blouse' (Tambiah, 1984: 196). Furthermore, these amulets may come from a variety of traditions. While the apotropaic function of an amulet may seem pivotal, it does not mean that amulets are not ever treated in a similar manner to jewellery with people possessing them due to their aesthetically pleasing nature, or due to a personal or sentimental connection. In fact, many of these amulets may be carried as a form of national identity, both individualising a person and symbolising to others that they are part of a collective whole. This is particularly the case in Southeast Asia where there is a long-standing history of amulets and Buddhism.

Amulets and jewellery have been consistently popular possessions for men, women and children alike for a significant amount of time. In fact, belief in amulets is so wide-spread, that places, dwellings and livestock are often found placed under the protection of one or several amulets as well (Ebeling, 2010:105). Due to the many different functions required, there is a large range of different amulets to choose from. This variety is often reflected in the appearance of the amulet, making them easier to identify: for example, fertility amulets often have a phallic formation. These amulets are consistently popular in Thailand, where they are often consecrated by monks and can commonly be found worn around the waist of men (Gehman, 2005:263).

It is not the shape alone that needs to be considered when choosing an amulet, and as Budge (2011:96) describes, the colour of the material used can also reflect its function or nature. For example, green stones, such as emeralds or green jade, are often connected with the fertility of men, animals and abundant vegetation (Andrews, 1994:103). However, choosing an amulet based solely upon the material alone is unwise as the importance of the material used can vary vastly between societies or may not have been taken into consideration by the creator. An exception to this rule may be the non-carved raw crystal amulets associated with earlier practices, where the stone colour and its natural formation are of upmost importance. These natural crystal amulets are still in circulation, though they are not commonly associated with the Buddhist tradition.

There is more to the function of an amulet than material or colour. For certain amulets, particularly in areas where they are mass produced or where materials are not in abundance, the material or

colour may have little to no role in the function of an amulet, with materials being chosen simply due to availability (Shwartz-Be'eri, 2003:171). Whilst an amulet may be made from a rarer material, it does not necessarily follow that it will be considered more powerful, although it may be of a greater value on a monetary level. While previously the production of amulets included the use of commonly available semi-precious stones and metals, it is not uncommon to find contemporary amulets made of man-made materials such as bronze, pewter and even certain plastics (Hopkins, 2005:41). However, the latter tend to be aimed more predominantly at the tourist trade than to those who subscribe to the apotropaic nature of amulets. In Bangkok, for example, amulets deemed as genuine can still be found being produced and sold, but the mass produced amulets available in their thousands on street stalls are a far cry from those carefully selected, created and consecrated by someone of the correct tradition<sup>18</sup>, which in this case, due to the religious affiliation of the population of Bangkok, would most likely be a Buddhist monk or saint.

There are hundreds of types of amulets available in Southeast Asia alone, displaying ties to multiple traditions and purporting to carry out almost any function imaginable (McNaughton, 1993:58). Due to the increased urbanisation of modern life and to technological advances, the functions expected of amulets has significantly evolved in an attempt to meet the increasing and new expectations of people who want guidance and protection from progressively modern problems. An example of modern amulet use described by Tambiah (1984, 199) is that of a successful business man. This man explained that an amulet reminded him of certain virtues, such as being honest and practicing morality in business, giving him the confidence to conduct himself in the right manner both in business and in life. It is perhaps due to views such as this, that 'contrary to what one might expect, with the increasing dominance of Western rationalism and the influences of modern technology, the (amulet) cult has not weakened but has flourished' (Swearer, 2003:17). This continued relevance is due to many reasons, as will be discussed in further detail later in this thesis; however amulets' relationship with the improving economy is certainly a contributing factor.

Other amulet functions still commonly found in circulation include: protection from accidents and general misfortune; protection from theft of personal belongings and property; aversion of the evil eye; good fortune; safety during pregnancy and birth; healthy livestock; and health and wellbeing. In fact, there is little limit to the different types and functions of amulets (Speiser, 1999:311), and to an extent an amulets' function may be as unique as the individual it is intended for. However, certain amulet functions have been common throughout history, such as those used for protection,

---

<sup>18</sup> This topic is a particular focus of Chapter three, where I discuss many of the issues surrounding mass production of amulets, including the question of whether or not they have been consecrated and are therefore authentic.

particularly for the ill or vulnerable (McCormick and White, 2010:123). Women especially tend to fall into the category of vulnerable, especially when they are pregnant or when caring for a young child. The fact that these amulet functions continue to be popular reflects the ongoing concern for the vulnerable in most societies despite technological and medical advances.

Although amulets are evidently still in use today, both in rural and urbanised areas, some of the older, less common amulet functions are less prominent or desirable in current society. For many, the superstitious nature of certain amulets and some of their darker functions (such them being able to bring about death or misfortune to an undesirable person (Speiser, 1999:311)), are perceived to be unnecessary, if not far-fetched. Certain functions, especially those of a sinister nature, may also be considered as being in conflict with many Buddhist teachings and values. Not everyone would even agree with the term 'Buddhist amulet,' since the way amulets and images are used for their apotropaic qualities is often disputed. The Buddhadasa Bhikku, a late spiritual leader of Thailand, is an example of a person who criticised the use and worship of amulets and images, believing them to be tainted by the supernatural beliefs associated with them which drew focus away from their original use and meaning (Essen, 2005: 10). Despite this criticism, it is hard to deny the longstanding presence of amulets and miraculous imagery present in Buddhism.

In fact, many amuletic functions can be detected amongst what is now commonly considered the ordinary or mundane. For example, in places both inside and out of Southeast Asia, finding a bell placed above a shop door way may appear to be a sensible procedure used to announce the presence of a new customer, yet historically bells were found being placed above door ways to keep evil spirits from entering into someone's home or business (Steiger, 2010:130). Beyond amuletic functions filtering into the mundane, many amulets can also be thought of as helping to achieve it, a quality common amongst Thai and Buddhist amulets. Whilst it may seem a bizarre notion, the fact remains that amulets which can be considered very magical or miraculous in nature are frequently used to achieve the mundane, such as doing well in an interview or obtaining good grades at school. As Reader and Tanabe (1998:117) discuss, the way amulets are being used to bring about these practical benefits on a daily basis is causing a merging of the spiritual and material worlds which can be quite problematic despite it not being a new occurrence. It is possible, then, that elements of religious hybridisation between Buddhism and non-Buddhist traditions, found in Southeast Asia and other areas, can be seen as simplifying the problem of a person owning amulets from traditions separate to their own.

Throughout this section I have discussed a variety of different amulet functions, along with the effects certain materials can have on them. Although similar to jewellery, in that amulets may be aesthetically pleasing, they also have an apotropaic nature and function which tends to reflect the society where they are found. There are certain functions, such as those aimed as improved

fertility, that are present in a number of different societies, but there are also functions more specific to a certain society or tradition. For example, aside from an amulet's main function, the wearing of an unconcealed amulet in Thailand can often symbolise to others that the wearer is part of a collective whole.

### **Images and Amulets in Southeast Asia**

This section explores the relationship between Buddhist images and amulets. As has become clear, amulets are often associated with magical or miraculous powers and qualities and whilst they can be used for achieving the mundane, they can still be considered magical. Buddhist images, or images of the Buddha more specifically, are also attributed with these powers and qualities, and they often receive similar criticisms to Buddhist amulets. As well as being endowed with similar magical qualities, images are found participating in similar consecration ceremonies and appear to share many qualities with Buddhist amulets.

Images, including images of the Buddha and those connected to religious traditions, are frequently attributed as being powerful items. As Freedburg states, 'People are sexually aroused by pictures and sculptures, they break pictures and sculptures; they mutilate them, kiss them, cry before them, and go on journeys to them; they are calmed by them, stirred by them, and incited to revolt. They give thanks by means of them, expect to be elevated by them, and are moved to the highest levels of empathy and fear' (Freedburg, 1989:1). These varied responses to images can be found in most societies and traditions both modern and primitive including Africa, Asia, Europe and America. Whilst it is suggested that individuals may ignore the powerful response or connection they have to images, the response felt can be thought of as an unconscious reaction. In a similar manner, it could be suggested that the essence of protection associated with certain religious images and amulets is not always a conscious action, with the item communicating on a more subconscious level through habit or unfulfilled need. However, not everyone discounts the power of images which is particularly revered in Southeast Asia and certain Buddhist traditions.

Images of the Buddha, including non-anthropomorphic representations of him, are an important aspect of Buddhism. While both anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic images of the Buddha can be found, I will be referring to anthropomorphic representations when discussing images of the Buddha unless otherwise stated. In a similar manner to amulets, certain images of the Buddha are regarded as being capable of performing specific actions or miracles and to an extent can be thought of as living images (Swearer, 2004:24). These images, like amulets, are treated with a deep respect by most Buddhists, who can be found touching them, moving them, wearing them and even giving offerings to them (Tambiah, 1984: 196). Not all Buddhists condone the belief or use of living images, and while objections or hesitance to their use can be found, the use of images is not necessarily actively avoided. As Kieschnick describes, 'for most devotees, images were and are the

chief point of contact with Buddhism' (2003:55). Furthermore, many Mahayāna texts enthuse over the merit that can be accrued by those who make and worship Buddha images (Kieschnick, 2003: 73). Irrespective of this merit not all Buddhists may deem it appropriate to use and worship Buddha images due to a belief that they are incompatible with Buddhism and with a number of Buddhist teachings such as non-attachment. It is evident however, that both images and amulets are being used in both schools of Buddhism regardless.

Not all images are considered to be a living or physical presence of the Buddha and in a similar manner to the way Buddhist amulets must be prepared and consecrated to be effective, so must a Buddha image be. This consecration can be achieved through ritual (*buddhābhiseka*) and through the eye opening ceremony. These are usually held between October and May and interestingly, an image may partake in these rituals on multiple occasions if it is repaired or moved (Swearer, 2004:77). Although the exact details of consecration ceremonies vary depending upon the region or Buddhist school they are connected with, they customarily include four key elements: meditation, gifts to the *saṅgha*, chanting, and preaching. In northern Thailand, the ritual infusion of the *dhamma* into the image or statue both during the construction and consecration is also of great importance. Amulets likewise go through very similar consecration ceremonies, although what is being chanted can vary.

The significance of these living images does not lie solely in their miraculous abilities. The images are also of importance as 'the form or the image (*rūpakāya*) functions as a sign of the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha (*dhammakāya*)' (Swearer, 2004: 17). This is a prime example of the way amulets and images reflect the society they are from, since an image from a different tradition would not be expected to remind onlookers of Buddhist teachings, though they may reflect teachings from their own traditions.

However, images and statues of deities and saints performing miracles are not unique to Buddhism. As Davies (1998: 1) discusses, miraculous events are related to many religious images of different traditions, such as the account of a statue of the Hindu deity Ganeśa consuming the milk offerings presented to him during *pūjā* at a temple in Delhi. Conversely, in the case of Buddha images, by sponsoring, donating materials or aiding in the creation of a new Buddha image or sculpture, it was and still is believed that the individual can accrue favourable merit for these actions irrelevant of whether they are lay or monastic followers (Stratton, 2004: xix). These Buddha images, particularly in Northern Thailand, are not only reminders of the Buddha himself and his teachings, but are also objects of respect, whether they are miraculous in nature or not. An example of these images is the Emerald Buddha, or *Phra Kaeo Morakot*, as the figure is named, which is considered to be so powerful and apotropaic in nature that it has become known as one of the protectors or Palladia of Thailand (Sthapitanond and Mertens, 2012: 128). In fact, the Emerald Buddha, although

thought to be constructed of green jasper or jade, is believed to be so sacred that only the King is deemed important enough to change the Buddha's clothing in keeping with the seasons.

Although the Emerald Buddha has a rather extensive past, inhabiting multiple regions and countries throughout its existence, it has resided in Bangkok for nearly 250 years. For this reason, not only is the Emerald Buddha believed to be miraculous for its healing powers and for keeping disease and natural disasters at bay, but its presence has further been connected to the Chakri dynasty, which is currently the longest reigning dynasty in Thai history (Start-up Koan, 2014).

While many of the Buddha images and statues may be considered miraculous or magical, these miracles do not always manifest themselves in a positive way. Though there are incredible accounts of positive miracles taking place, such as extraordinary healings attributed to these powerful images, the results they produce can often be more negative than one might expect. In an example given by Granoff and Shinohara (2004: 203), a golden image of the Buddha (considered by some to of been produced by King Aśoka), was discovered near Jianye in the Wu Dynasty. As the ruler, Sun Hao, did not believe in the Buddha at that time, he had the image placed by the toilet. On the eighth day of the fourth month in mockery of the bathing the Buddha<sup>19</sup> ceremony, he urinated on the image. Shortly afterwards, he developed severe pain in his genital area, and only after he had earnestly apologised to the Buddha did the pain subside. This is not the only account of images acting in a very un-Buddha like way, as Kieschnick (2003: 68) states; images frequently punish those who mistreat them or their patrons. For example, an image kept at Shiling Monastery in China has been known to appear in the dreams of anyone who dares to steal its adorning banner, threatening them until they return it (Kieschnick, 2003: 68).

---

<sup>19</sup> The Bathing of the Buddha is a ceremony in which an image or images of the Buddha made from stone, gold or silver is bathed in a liquid that is often an infusion of fragrant herbs, spices and blessed waters. The infusion itself varies between traditions and regions. For example, in Japan, a sweet tea infusion made from a specific hydrangea flower is used. As Lopez explains: 'by offering incense, flowers, drink, and so forth to the Blessed One, and bathing his body, one can produce unlimited merit that will eventually lead to enlightenment' (Lopez, 2007: 60). Many benefits are associated with bathing the Buddha, including good merit; achieving quick enlightenment; good health; and longevity (IBPS Vancouver). The significance of the date is given to the fact that not only is it considered to be the Buddha's birthday, but as Granoff and Shinohara explain 'all the Buddhas of the ten directions are born on the eighth day of the fourth month, renounce the world on the eighth day of the fourth month, achieve enlightenment on the eighth day of the fourth month, and enter Nirvāṇa on the eighth day of the fourth month' (Granoff and Shinohara, 2004: 203-4).

Once the eyes of the image have been opened, it is believed not only to represent the Buddha but to be a direct line of communication with him. Quite simply, from the point of the eye opening ceremony the image is taken to be literally alive and present, although it is ultimately the belief of the follower that brings the image to life (Horton, 2007: 5). Miracles and magical qualities are likewise associated with images, although in Brown's (1998:26) opinion, miracles performed by the images are much more restricted than those associated with amulets (the appearance of light being one of the most common examples). Not everyone would necessarily agree with Brown, however. Davies (1998: 3) lists many more miracles as being commonly associated with images and statues found in Asia, including communicating with their devotees; moving limbs, walking and greeting people; sweating, crying or even bleeding as though human; and revealing themselves to holy persons when they have been lost or when they desire to be relocated.

There is a common belief that positive or beneficial merit can be accrued during the process of creating and consecrating an image or amulet by assisting or donating to the process, particularly if it is an image of the Buddha (Xing, 2005: 117). Merit in a Buddhist context is usually connected with notions of Karma, and through Karma, future rebirth or enlightenment. However, if the Buddhist is an advanced practitioner, it does raise the question of whether Buddha images and amulets can function in aiding a practitioner on the path to enlightenment or better rebirth. One of the main issues with this concept is the fact that the effects and consequences commonly associated with Buddha images and amulets are usually intended to affect present rather than future lives. Whilst true to an extent, it became clear that although the consequences are usually limited to present life, along with the effects of amulets, the accrued merit can affect subsequent lives as well (Berkwitz, 2006: 79).

There are two types of Buddhism: *Nibbānic* and *Kammatic*. However, Spiro (1982) suggests that there is in fact a third category; *Apotropaic* Buddhism, in which amulets and Buddha images seem to fit most accurately. *Apotropaic* Buddhism differs from *Nibbānic* and *Kammatic* Buddhism in that it is not a soteriological ideology concerned with Nirvāna and rebirth but instead dealing with the mundane, the present, or to put it simply, the problems and concerns people come into contact with on a daily or frequent basis. Whilst *Nibbānic* and *Kammatic* Buddhism focuses on rebirth and on reaching enlightenment, *Apotropaic* Buddhism instead focuses on invoking magical protection through practice and scriptures during their present life. Given that amulets and images of the Buddha can be found used to protect and enhance the current life of Buddhist practitioners (although many non-Buddhists also own and believe in the power of these items), it seems logical that amulets and Buddha images may fall primarily under the heading of *Apotropaic* Buddhism. This is particularly the case given the scriptural sanctioning and connections that can be found between amulets and certain Buddhist scriptures, as was discussed in the first chapter, and the

chanting and scriptural reciting that take place during image consecration and eye opening ceremonies.

However, when exploring the Buddhist tradition there are few clear cut categories, and whilst amulets and images can be perceived as fitting into the category *Apotropaic* Buddhism, that does not mean they have no qualities associated with *Nibbānic* or *Kammatic* Buddhism. For example, as mentioned earlier, helping in the creation of a new Buddha image either physically or through donations is believed to accrue merit for the persons involved. In Theravāda Buddhism, particularly in contemporary forms according to Spiro (1982: 93), merit both positive and negative is thought to greatly influence an individual's karma, affecting them in present life or in future lives. Given the connections found between Buddha images, amulets, merit, and karma, it is apparent that Buddha images and amulets can be considered as having *Kammatic* and *Nibbānic* traits as well despite more commonly being considered as Apotropaic in nature and function.

The relationship between images, amulets and how they function is fascinating and although there are variances in how exactly the images and amulets work, there are also a lot of similarities between them, particularly in their magical characteristics. While it not all Buddha images are thought of as being miraculous, and while, like amulets, they can be considered as incompatible with Buddhist teachings, both remain popular amongst Buddhist practitioners. It is interesting that the ability to gain merit is an element of the creation of Buddhist images, reflecting the society the image or indeed amulet is associated with, in this case Buddhism. Gaining positive merit is a substantial part of Buddhism, since it can cause positive changes to both present and future lives, although amulets are most commonly associated with the present.

### **Magical and Supernatural Functions**

The word 'magic' has been mentioned throughout this thesis and it is at this point that a definition becomes important. What is meant when speaking of magic is highly debated, but what can be said as a general consensus is that magic is an action performed by someone with the intention of bringing about change (Eliade: 1987: 5562). This action commonly manifests itself through the manipulation of objects such as amulets, the creation of potions, and verbal chanting or reciting of specific texts. These actions are usually performed by specific members of society such as magicians and members of a monastic society. This definition is quite different to that often given in the industrialised West, which portrays magic as superstitious and often as a clever form of trickery used for entertainment purposes.

Throughout history, most societies have displayed an interest or level of belief in the use of magic and magical practices, and this interest remains in certain societies. The very essence of amulets and their apotropaic nature is magical and reflects its continuing presence in Southeast Asia. Whilst

some such as Yun (2005:79) believe that magic is a supernatural, unlimited, unimaginable power that certain individuals can attain through deep concentration and meditational practices, others such as Thrower (1999:13) and Malinowski (2011:1) suggest that magic, in relation to religion, explains circumstances beyond human power. This belief would explain events such as droughts or a good/bad harvest that is thought to be the result of an agency or force beyond humans. That does not mean that it is an entirely uncontrollable force, since to an extent magic can be seen as functioning in a law-like fashion. Magic can be influenced by certain behaviour, resulting in either a positive or negative outcome, suggesting that there may be an element of control to something usually perceived as uncontrollable, for instance the weather (Thrower: 1999:13).

In Buddhist society, particularly in Tibet, magic can be considered an integral part of both lay and monastic society, affecting the mundane and the miraculous. However, miracles are not always thought of as magical in nature, and in fact some simply perceive them as an action or event that differs from the expected course, resulting in astonishment and wonder (Davies, 1998: 4). This belief is not universal, though, as it can equally be argued that for those with a viewpoint that includes miracles, they can be thought of as entirely expected, to an extent (Brown, 1998: 24).

Although the magic and supernatural powers associated with Buddhism and certain Buddhist practitioners is often quite miraculous in nature, it does not always manifest itself in extraordinary ways. As Yun (2005:78) explains, while the word magic may usually be connected with the mysterious or miraculous, magic can also be described as satisfying a human need for explanation or understanding. Amulets predominantly relate to the latter description since they are often relied upon to intervene and to protect from powers beyond human control. They are also used to influence the mundane, but their connection with the magical cannot be denied.

There are extensive descriptions recounting many of the unusual or particularly impressive accounts of magical abilities and supernatural powers found in Buddhism. In Tibetan Buddhism, Beyer (1978:246-5) describes the Eight Magical Attainments as adopted from an array of Hindu texts and transformed into the Eight Powers of the Lord. The original Eight Powers are as follows: to be able to become as tiny, light (levitate), large and heavy as one wishes; to be able to transport oneself anywhere; to fulfil all of one's wishes; to subjugate anything one wishes; and to dwell in the delight and power of the god. Once these powers were adopted into the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, they became the powers to attain: invincibility of the sword; to have dominion over the treasure of the underworld; the power of invisibility; the elixir of youth; the ability to change appearance; to walk in the sky (levitate); swiftness of foot; and magical eye ointment. Similarities can clearly be found between the two descriptions in the ability to alter appearance, levitate and become invisible or at least unnoticeable to one's enemies or surroundings, yet there are also significant differences. Traits such as being unnoticeable or camouflaged to one's enemies are

particularly sought after even in contemporary society and that is reflected in the function's continued popularity.

Certain additional collective magical attributes of Buddhism as described in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* cover a broader spectrum of powers, including: unexplained knowledge of the past and future; mind reading; celestial hearing; the ability to raise or cool one's core body temperature at will (generally used as a survival method); the ability to duplicate or transform oneself; and the previously mentioned art of invisibility (Wallis, 2002:102). Whilst most of these powers cannot be expected of all amulets or for all amulet owners, they do demonstrate the level of credence that is placed upon these powers being both genuine and possible. The Buddha is thought to have possessed many of these powers and supernormal knowledge, and as a consequence material forms of the Buddha such as amulets and living images are often met with similar expectations. However, not everyone agrees entirely with this idea, for example, Griffith suggests this kind of trait association is merely a way to place a 'maximally salvifically efficacious being' at the centre of Buddhism (Griffith, 1994:182).

There are four main types of protective magical amulets found in the Thai culture. While on the whole these amulets can be referred to as *khawng-khlang* (roughly translated as a sacred or potent object), they can also be divided into four categories (Jones, 2013:201-2). Firstly, the *khryang-rang*, a material substance such as stone that protects its owner when held in the mouth or against the body; the *phra-khruang*, a small figure or statue of the Buddha which can protect either an individual or household, depending on the size of the amulet or of the household; and the *khruang-pluk-sek*, which has the power to stimulate the potency of a person or object by means of a spell on incantation. A *khruang-pluk-sek* is held to be an incredibly powerful amulet, charged with ancient verses of a runic magical quality. The last amulet is a *wan ya*: this is a natural item such as a plant or root that is believed to combat disease and the misfortunes thought to be brought about by malevolent spirits.

The topic of magic in relation to Buddhism is not to be taken lightly. In the Han dynasty, missionary monks had a reputation of having psychic powers (much like the powers described above) which were gained through extensive meditation and were utilised by the authorities of the time. In fact, this belief was so widespread that certain monks were employed as political and military advisors (Harvey, 1990:150). One such monk was Ya Chao Tham, a member of the Champasak royal family in the late 1800's. While Ya Chao Tham was said to have magical powers of invisibility and invulnerability, according to McDaniels (2006:25), these were maintained through his possession of a powerful amulet rather than through his own efforts. It is not stated clearly whether or not these powers are believed to have been accrued solely from the amulet, or if they were gained through intense meditation and self-discipline with the amulet simply protecting

Ya Chao Tham and his powers. Nevertheless, it is this connection between monks and magic that has no doubt influenced the popularity of amulets connected with or displaying images of certain monks and their powers.

Evidence of powers, including psychic powers, is also found in Buddhist scriptures such as the Pali and Sanskrit canons. Although the Buddha appears reluctant to the use of psychic powers, stating that while useful, ‘such powers are irrelevant to the real goal of Buddhist practice’ (Young-Eisendrath & Miller, 2002:20), they are recorded in the Pali canon. There are also examples of the Buddha performing miracles such as ‘magical apparitions to convert a group of nonbelievers’ (Guy, 2014:217). In one example found in both canons, the Buddha plants the seed of a mango which he has just consumed only for it to instantly grow into a fruit-bearing tree. Examples such as this demonstrate how deeply ingrained magic can be considered in Buddhism, and why it should not be surprising to find such elements reflected in items such as amulets and living images.

However, the use and belief in magic is not specific to Buddhism, or indeed to any singular religion. As Golomb (1986:691) discusses, whilst curer-magicians may often identify themselves with a school of Buddhist thought, they may equally choose not to belong to any specific tradition. These practitioners, usually male<sup>20</sup>, are believed to have an array of powers which can include magically increasing their knowledge of astrology, clairvoyance, faith healing, massage, medicine, exorcism and sorcery. These powers are similar to those found in connection with some Buddhist schools, although being used by those not necessarily from a monastic background. Amongst these curer-magicians, three main strains can be identified: herbalists, folk psychotherapists, and supernaturalists or exorcists (Golomb, 1986:692). Interestingly, of the small number of practitioners willing to concentrate on the more Western doctrines, such as psychotherapy, many are usually Buddhist monks.

In fact, certain monks prove particularly popular amongst amulet dealers and spirit mediums, especially those believed to have knowledge and use of magic (*saiyasat*). This knowledge is especially popular in Thailand, especially amongst the *Thammayut* School (McDaniel, 2006:36) and it is due to this fact that it is not unusual to find curer-magicians claiming to be from areas associated with this school. Often found covered in protective tattoos and holding an array of powerful amulets, these magicians can be found claiming to be capable of many of the abilities listed above. While a level of scepticism would be expected over how they may have gained such

---

<sup>20</sup> Female practitioners are quite rare, particularly in the Buddhist Tradition. This is usually due to a lack of access to training and of them not being free to travel as extensively as men (Golomb, 1986: 696).

powers and abilities, the not infrequent appearances of these magicians in many of the popular amulet magazines seems to suggest they have a certain level of authenticity<sup>21</sup>.

While magic remains popular in Thailand, its presence in Southeast Asia is long-standing both in relation to amulets and to everyday life. As well as curer-magicians in mainland South East Asia, Buddhist monks are regarded as spiritual vehicles and are commonly found subscribing quite readily to certain notions of magic, particularly in respect to relics and their unexpected appearance (Tarling, 2000:286). Elements of magic can be found in Buddhism previous to its existence in Southeast Asia, while Buddhism was being spread through a missionary movement, attempts were made to meet the needs of non-Buddhist/potential converts through the integration of Buddhism with indigenous or pre-existing religions, resulting in a mixture of religious and magical beliefs (Bonewits, 1994:72).

Although it is assumed that supernatural beings did exist in early Buddhism, for many they were considered somewhat moot, since they had no impact upon the attainment of salvation (Malalgoda, 1976:24). As Buddhism developed, this belief in supernatural beings, supernormal powers and magic became more widespread in Buddhist society, with an interest being shown amongst both monastic and lay people. Despite the increasing belief that the acquisition of supernatural powers was possible through intense meditation and practice, only as few as one in one hundred thousand practitioners appeared capable of achieving such powers (Gokhale, 2005: 106). Furthermore, even through intense meditation only Buddhas, supremely enlightened beings, or people of an extremely high level in Yogic Practices would be able to gain such powers. This is perhaps a contributing factor to why amulets and other devices with magical elements have proved so popular when the probability of being able to gain such powers is so slight.

This text does raise the question of how necessary these powers are in Buddhism. Some Thai Buddhist reformers argue that these powers merely distract from the goal of Buddhism, since while magic and the existence of gods and supernatural beings may provide small benefits in the present life, only the Buddha's teachings can cure the suffering inflicted by a continuous worldly existence (Gombrich, 1999:29). It does not mean that these powers and their results are not or cannot be beneficial, but that their lack of effect on future lives and possible enlightenment is restricting. Nevertheless, events invoking certain powers continue. In Sri Lanka, Theravāda texts are chanted by monks to assure the protection of humans from supernatural harm (Blackburn, 1999:334).

---

<sup>21</sup> Amulet magazines are taken relatively seriously in Southeast Asia, with there being dozens of different magazines and catalogues aimed specifically at amulet collectors and dealers (Danslip and Freeman, 2002:64); not to mention the numerous internet sites that are dedicated purely to amulets such as: [www.sacredthaiamulets.com](http://www.sacredthaiamulets.com) and [www.oldamulet.com](http://www.oldamulet.com).

Protective or sacred tattoos or *sak yant* are often found adorning the bodies of monks, lay men and occasionally women in Southeast Asia and can be considered amuletic due to their protective nature. Frequently comprising of sacred Buddhist texts and images (Scheinfeld, 2007: 364), these tattoos have been used extensively by warriors, and continue to be popular in contemporary society. Warriors entrusted their body to Sak Yat for protection and referred to themselves as *Taharn Phee* meaning “ghost soldiers” as they believed these tattoos to grant not only protection but invisibility from enemies (Pistolessi, 2013: i). Commonly completed by monks with specially prepared ink, these tattoos protect the wearer in a way very similar to an amulet carried upon one’s person (Jones, 2013:202). To an extent, they can be considered as permanent amulets. As Wise (2009:70) explains, this belief in certain tattoos having protective qualities is very popular in Thailand and in similar areas in Southeast Asia. Amongst the *Karen* (a hillside tribe), members who have converted or taken on Buddhist values further believe these tattoos capable of freeing them from their ancestors’ spirits and expectations. However, these protective tattoos are not always visually permanent, since they can also be completed with oil instead of ink, bestowing protection upon the body without being visible.

Although initially the topic of magic may seem to be extraordinary, as Beyer (1978:23) and Brown (1998:13) discussed, magic can and often is a part of daily life that though not fully in our control can be affected through certain actions. Magic and powers of a supernatural nature have been present in Buddhism for a significant amount of time, and although some choose not to participate or acknowledge it, elements can still be found in contemporary society. Buddhist amulets and living images are an extension of this magical presence, achieving both the magical and the mundane. This belief reflects the fact that even though there have been vast changes in societies since Buddhism first became present in Southeast Asia, there is still a level of vulnerability present which magical items such as amulets work to protect.

## **Conclusion**

The focus of this chapter has been the function of amulets in Southeast Asia, concentrating specifically on those found in the Buddhist tradition. Throughout the chapter, three key points have been discussed in relation to the function of amulets: the *Basic Functions of Amulets; Images and Amulets in Southeast Asia*; and the *Magical and Supernatural Functions* of amulets. Although many elements have been discussed what has become clear throughout this section is that the function of an amulet can be as unique and varied as the design, owner or society where it is found.

The *Basic Functions of Amulets* are relatively self-explanatory, and while the societies in which amulets are found may have evolved, many of the core functions remain. These commonly occurring functions are not necessarily reflective of tradition per se, but rather they display the physical vulnerability of humans and their need of protection from something more powerful than

themselves. For example, fertility amulets and those created to protect the vulnerable remain popular because despite advances in science, knowledge, and medical treatment people still feel the need for protection. While amulets do reflect the society they are from, and while they adapt to meet new needs in certain areas and countries such as Thailand, the outward display of amulets, irrespective of its individual function, can be seen as a form of national identity or connection to an important person, saint or monk, and even region.

Certain similarities and parallels can be found between images of the Buddha, specifically living images, and Buddhist amulets. It is clear that whilst there are differences between the treatment and miracles associated with amulets and living images, there are equally a significant number of similarities, particularly in their consecration ceremonies. One significant similarity is the usually protective nature of both amulets and living images. It was also interesting to discover that although amulets and images affect present life, they are further capable of affecting future ones through the collection of merit associated with the creation of a new image or amulet. However, despite this effect, their primary affiliation does appear to be with Apotropaic Buddhism, although *Kammatic* and *Nibbānic* traits are clearly evident.

As for the more miraculous and magical aspects of amulets, and to an extent Buddhism, it became clear that even when used to achieve the mundane, amulets really are believed to be quite magical in nature. However, magic, miraculous events and supernatural happenings are not unique to amulets, with images and statues also displaying many of the powers commonly attributed to amulets. It was interesting, though perhaps not entirely unexpected, to understand how integrated magic and the supernatural appear to be in Southeast Asia and Buddhism with a large numbers of the population continuing to believe and subscribe to the power of amulets and images. From this conclusion, is it not surprising that amulets, images and other magical traits continue to be popular in contemporary society despite technological advances, as will be discussed further in Chapter three.

## Chapter Three

### Transformation

Amulets have changed in numerous ways throughout their existence and there are many factors which have contributed to this transformation, such as the availability of materials, personal preferences, and the needs and beliefs of the people and society the amulets are being provided for. There is, however, a more pressing factor for the transformation of amulets which can be found in the growing economic and material aspects of modern religion and spiritualism. As McMahan explains, ‘Modern Buddhist practices have intersected with global economic flows, social sentiments and the consumer value of an urban middle class to create a plethora of hybrid Buddhist communities’ (McMahan, 2012:22). This community can be witnessed particularly in the more urbanised areas of Southeast Asia, especially in cities such as Bangkok.

The first section of this chapter, *The Effect and Faults of Mass Amulet Production*, explores the effect mass production has had on the availability and authenticity of amulets in Southeast Asia. It is not surprising that the way amulets are designed and created has gone through a number of developments since their early appearances both inside and outside of Southeast Asia and Buddhism, but with the current consumer culture demanding more and within an increasingly quicker time frame, drastic change can be found amongst the production of amulets. While for many Buddhists and non-Buddhists in Southeast Asia the revival of amulets is welcomed either for spiritual or for material reasons, for others the process of mass producing amulets devalues them and brings in to question how authentic (if that word can be used) or fully functioning they are.

*Amulets, Consumerism and Media* focuses on the way consumerist culture has impacted upon society and the production and popularity of amulets in Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on Thailand. Although Southeast Asia is the primary focus, amulets will be discussed on a broader spectrum, discussing how availability through online shopping sites such as eBay and Amazon has made amulets readily available on a global scale and for competitive prices. Amulets can further be seen infiltrating several aspects of media which do not necessarily encourage the use and distribution of amulets, but may be unconsciously promoting or raising awareness of them. These media sources include advertising, documentaries or films, and even on occasion, music videos.

The final section, *Amulets and Buddhism: Consumerism in relation to Buddhist Practice* discusses the way amulets and the surrounding consumer culture can be viewed in accordance with a number of common Buddhist practices and beliefs. Theravāda Buddhism will be explored, looking at the way it has adapted to include many local beliefs, such as spirit interaction and amulet use. Amulets

and consumer culture will further be discussed in relation to the Buddhist teaching of non-attachment and right livelihood, as well as how it is possible to perceive tasks, such as creating an amulet, as a form of spiritual concentration and practice (if carried out in the right mind-set). Although much of what falls under the title of consumerism or materialism appears to be contrary to the Buddhist way of life, it is interesting to discuss the different ways Buddhists manage to engage with both.

### **The Effect and Faults of Mass Amulet Production**

There are two main categories of amulets: those which are hand-crafted or created in relatively small batches in accordance with traditional procedure and rituals, and those which are mass produced, usually found in cheaper and more readily available materials (Gray and Ridout, 2001: 125). Although the latter amulet type is the main focus of this chapter, both will be discussed throughout this and the other sections due to their mutual impact on society and on the amulet trade in Southeast Asia.

This section explores the mass production of amulets in Southeast Asia and the effect it is having on the value and perception of amulets in both a religious and non-religious sense. There are both positive and negative aspects to being able to produce amulets quickly and sometimes cheaply, but the main issue is the effect this is having on the value and perception of amulets beyond their materialistic worth.

As Carrette and King so simply phrase it; ‘from feng shui to holistic medicine, from aromatherapy candles to yoga weekends, from Christian mystics to New Age gurus, spirituality is big business’ (2005:1) and so are amulets. While there is a debate amongst scholars over the separation of spirituality and religion, what is clear is that both are being affected by consumerism<sup>22</sup>. This can be found in even the simplest of examples, such as amulets being available to purchase not just in public or through specific websites and forums dedicated to amulets, but online through outlets such as eBay and Amazon as well. Due to this increase in availability, spiritual and religious items and practices can be found being sold in unexpected ways with increasing numbers of people trying to make money from them.

The quantity of amulets available can be seen directly reflecting the level of production that can be currently found in Southeast Asia and in many other areas, and undeniably this production is quite vast. While amulets can still be found being sold by Buddhist temples and the immediate area around them (Scott, 2009: 181), they can also be found in many different stores, such as jewellery

---

<sup>22</sup> For the purpose of this chapter the word religious/religion includes spirituality unless otherwise stated due to the interchangeable nature of their definitions.

and antique shops, as well as in large markets which predominantly deal in amulets and similar religious items (Soontravanich, 2013: 182). Mass-produced amulets can be found in many of these outlets and it is often incredibly hard to tell if the amulet is handcrafted or mass-produced. Unfortunately, the issue of mass production raises two concerns in relation to the amulets: firstly, what effect mass production is having on the amulets; and secondly, what role religious official's play in their production. For the majority of amulets found in areas such as Thailand, this would be a Buddhist monk, some of who help in the physical creation of the amulets as well.

Addressing the first issue, the effect mass production is having on amulets, the problem is straightforward. First, from a purely aesthetically pleasing stance, the quality of the finished amulet and the materials used to create it are not necessarily of the best standard. Therefore, the finished amulet may be of a substandard quality to those created on a smaller scale, with more thoroughness and care. Then there is the detail that certain amulets, particularly the rare or more sought-after amulets, may contain a relic or ash from an important person who is connected to the design, figure on the amulet<sup>23</sup>, or area of its manufacturing, thus reflecting or containing elements of the area or society they are created or consecrated in. It would be very unusual for a mass produced amulet to contain a relic, and even if it supposedly did, there would be no way of proving it definitively. While this may not be an issue to some Buddhists, as Soontravanich (2013:183) discusses, others would disagree, and as a consequence there are full conventions and events held specifically for contesting or clarifying the authenticity of amulets.

Relics aside, there is also the fact that it is near impossible to tell if an amulet has been consecrated, and only if consecrated can the amulet technically be considered real or fully functioning, despite how the owner may perceive it Rester (11). However, as Tambiah (1984: 219) states, like any antique market, the amulet markets are flooded with fakes, and whilst experts can be found intently peering at them with magnifying glasses looking for the tell-tale markings or the deliberate imperfections certain amulets are believed to have, most people would not be able to tell if an amulet is real or not. Nevertheless, the authenticity of an amulet may not matter to the owner.

The second issue refers to the traditional production of amulets, meaning those that have been empowered and are not solely religious memorabilia. To begin with, if the amulets are being produced in large quantities and in relatively short time frames, then there is a level of doubt as to whether the amulets are undergoing the proper rituals and consecration to empower them (as was discussed in Chapter Two). Given the large amount of amulets being produced every year, even in Thailand alone, while they do not need to be individually blessed to be considered "genuine", they

---

<sup>23</sup> For example, there is a gold amulet on display in the British Museum that is thought to contain relics of the Buddha.

must still be blessed or consecrated. In theory this could be achieved by having a monk or monks tend to the amulets in large batches; but the problem lies in the fact that: the monks have many duties to carry out and may not physically have time to bless an infinite amount of amulets. Also certain amulets are connected and produced in specific areas (Kitiarsa, 2007: 126) and therefore there may not be enough monks available in the area or with enough time to deal with the quantity of amulets being produced. The monks may not want to consecrate the amulets, as many still disagree with the amulet culture; and finally, the producers, if targeting predominately tourist based customers, may not see the benefit in attending to this detail.

The involvement of religious officials leads to the further issue of monetary gain. If these amulets can only be considered consecrated blessed by the right religious figures, then it is unlikely that they would do so for free, and thus there is a problem of wealth. Buddhist monks are supposed to be unattached to wealth and the benefits that accompany it, yet in reality many of the monasteries found in Southeast Asia are both wealthy and usually socially influential institutions (Colemann, 2001: 224). Given the wealth that is often associated with the amulet trade, and, on a broader scale, with religious duties<sup>24</sup>, rituals, and ceremonies, it does seem to suggest an ongoing struggle between the Buddhist teachings of non-attachment to worldly possessions, and amulets, be it the amulets themselves or the money that accompanies the production and trade of them. In fact, the money made by certain monasteries and temples from selling amulets can be substantial. For example, the Luang Pho Khoon's monastery is believed to make an average of nearly 100,000 baht (1,800 GBP) on a weekday and up to 1,000,000 baht (18,000 GBP) on a weekend day from the sale of amulets alone (Hewison, 2002: 84). This does not take into account any donations or money that may be provided for the consecration or blessing of the amulets. Areas as well as monasteries have been affected by the renewed fascination in amulets. For example, in the province of Nakorn Si Thammarat a dramatic increase in economic activity has been connected to the mass production and distribution of Jatykam Ramathep<sup>25</sup> amulets, which are proving popular throughout most of

---

<sup>24</sup> Buddhist Monks have a number of different duties to attend to which can be time consuming. As well as their daily meditations, monks have numerous tasks of both a religious and a practical nature. These can include: teaching, recitations, and studying; handling monastery affairs such as maintenance and finances; performing rituals and ceremonies such as ordinations; dispelling evil or unwanted spirits; making offerings; acknowledging and abiding by seasonally appropriate dates and ceremonies e.g. the changing of the clothes, bathing of the Buddha, and the eye opening ceremonies that were described in Chapter Two (Silk, 2008: 22).

<sup>25</sup> Jatykam Ramathep is considered a guardian of an ancient Southern Thai kingdom. Although believed to be a relatively young amulet with the first being created by Major – General Phantarak Rajadej just over 20 years ago, the amulets became increasingly popular after they were distributed

Thailand (Scott, 2009: 181). However, an interesting point raised by Swearer (2004: 203) discusses the fact that due to reasons such as a decrease in people being ordained and religious festivals holding less importance in certain areas, Buddhist institutions are increasingly turning to other means such as amulet production and consecration to both sustain monasteries (through monetary gain) and to continue involvement in the community. So while a conflict can be found between religious officials, the monetary profit of amulets and the Buddhist teaching of non-attachment, there is a level of reasoning behind it.

There are both positive and negative aspects to the mass production of amulets. The economic improvement of the areas in Southeast Asia involved in amulet production is certainly a positive result. In figures quoted by Tosi (2001) from the Bangkok post in March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1999, he stated that ‘The amulet market is considered one of the biggest in Thailand, with sales in Bangkok alone worth more than 10 million baht a day.’ (222,222 US Dollars)’ (Tosi, 2001). If accurate, these are exceedingly high sales. In more recent information about the amulet trade in Thailand, figures suggest it being worth in excess of 100+ billion baht which is equivalent to more than 30 million US dollars per business year (Vern, 2012). It is clear that while the amount of profit made from amulet trade and production each year may vary, there is still a considerable profit being made overall, which doubtlessly affects the popularity of the amulets themselves, especially given their association with accruing and retaining wealth.

The increased production of amulets has had an impact on the economy of Thailand, reverberating throughout much of Southeast Asia (Scott, 2009: 91). Although the aim of amulets from a traditional standpoint is not to create mass wealth (at least for the manufacturers and, to a certain extent, traders) it cannot be denied that the current trade of amulets is producing a positive effect on the economy. The effect the mass production of amulets is having on society can be viewed as the items adapting their function to meet the changing requirements of contemporary living. As Turner (2011: 576) discusses, the initial mass production of amulets (or as he likes to call it mega amulets) may not have been created for economic reasons alone, or for personal wealth. The amulets were in fact often produced as a method of raising money, creating funding on a localised scale for things such as the re-building or repairing of an important building, statue or city pillar. The *Chatykham-Rammathep*<sup>26</sup> amulet is one example of this occurrence.

---

during Phantarak Rajadej’s funeral. As Phantarak Rajadej was considered as possessing magical powers, it was only a short time before accounts of magical occurrences and abilities became connected to the amulet (Scott, 2009: 181).

<sup>26</sup> The *Chatykham-Rammathep* amulet is from the region of Nakhon Si Thammarat in Thailand. Although when first publicised in a fundraising attempt to set up the city’s holy pillars the amulet

Many other reasons have also lead to amulets being produced in large quantities, some of which include: mass dispersion after the death of an important person (either inside or outside of the monastic community) such as Major – General Phantarak Rajadej (the creator of the Jatykam Ramathep amulet) (Scott, 2009:181) and Ajaan Khao Anaalayo (a famous forest monk) (Taylor, 1993:174); or to protect those who are in public services, such as the police force or the army. A good example of this use can be found in 2002, when, in celebration of the 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ministry of Defence, a batch of Luang Pho Thuat amulets were distributed to soldiers, police and government officials on the Thai border (Montesano and Jory, 2008: 293). These amulets can also be found being distributed on the birthday of an auspicious person or monk. It is interesting that despite the initial intentions of amulet-makers, the amulet market has shown impressive growth over the last decade, particularly in Southeast Asia, at a time when most countries and states have been suffering from economic recession.

Another positive aspect of the mass production of amulets includes the amulets being more readily available and often at a lower cost due to the quantity being manufactured. However, certain amulets remain difficult to obtain depending on the area the amulets are being sourced and on whether the item still being produced.

Materialistic aspects of Buddhism are not new, yet the rise in the popularity of amulets is drawing the attention of both people and of the media inside and outside of Southeast Asia. While the profit of the amulet trade is a contributing factor of their current popularity, attention is also being drawn by ‘the excessive trading, the prominent display, the miracle stories, and the crime caused by the economics of the trade’ (Fleming and Mann, 2014: 135). Unfortunately, crime is becoming a rather conspicuous feature of amulets. Even though many (particularly mass produced) amulets are not usually considered particularly valuable, there are many that are. This value is due not only to their material components, but also to the history, connections, powers, and miracles an amulet is associated with. For example, Montesano and Jory (2008: 292) discuss Luang Pho Thuat amulets as being some of the most valuable and sought after due to the monks’ legendary status and magical abilities.

---

proved unpopular, through marketing and the effort of sellers it soon became an incredibly popular amulet, particularly in 2006-7 with Turner describing it as ‘perhaps the most intensively marketized and promoted religious commodity in the History of Thai amulets’ (Turner, 2011: 577.) This is not surprising, given the estimated 80 million *Chatykhram-Rammathep* amulets that have been produced over the last 2 decades, although perhaps unexpected for the collectors and traders who originally referred to them as ‘an inconvenient free gift’ (Kitiarsa, 2012: 117).

Due to the value of certain amulets, it is not surprising that they draw negative attention as well. Even amulets made of relatively unimpressive materials such as clay<sup>27</sup> can be worth thousands of pounds and people have been known to assault or kill a person in order to gain possession of their amulet. One such example of amulet theft as relayed by Fleming and Mann (2014:135) describes an off duty police officer being charged with attempted murder and theft in 2001 for trying to shoot and steal a Buddhist amulet from a wealthy elderly man. Luckily, the trigger in the gun jammed and the man managed to escape unharmed with the miracle of his escape being attributed to the very amulet the thief was trying to steal. Amulets do not always function in such lifesaving ways, yet there is a significant number of accounts of certain amulets doing just that. For example, people profess to have been saved from house fires, being cured of diseases and ailments, or even having passed an important exam because of their amulet.

Indeed, it is often purported that it is the miraculous quality of an amulet that tempts a person to try and gain possession of it, although the materials used should be taken into account also. As is to be expected, with the amulet trade being so popular it is not just the production of amulets vis-à-vis speed and quantity that has developed but also the types and costs of amulets. While not all amulets are made of expensive or precious materials, some are or are at least adorned with them (London, 2009: 60). These embellishments make the amulets outwardly more like a piece of jewellery in appearance, potentially making them doubly attractive to prospective thieves.

There are both positive and negative aspects of amulets and their production. While the mass production of amulets appears to have had a positive effect on the local economies, the fact remains that the quality and authenticity of these amulets has in a way been negatively impacted upon. While it is good that the trade of amulets has boosted the surrounding economies, it is a shame that it has been done at the cost of hand-made consecrated amulets, which are far fewer in numbers. However, as Rester (11) highlighted, people do still view these mass produced amulets as real and working, and to an extent their power can be considered as imparted upon them by the owner.

---

<sup>27</sup> While clay is a relatively cheap material, it does not mean that amulets made of clay are not valuable. Beyond material worth, a clay amulet may be deemed as valuable due to its connections with a person or certain miracles or magical happening, but it is also worth noting that small relics can be concealed within them, or ashes from temple incense or from an auspicious person mixed into it. These additions would result in the clay amulet being infinitely more valuable and sought after (Danslip and Freeman, 2002: 64).

### **Amulets, Consumerism and Media**

Consumerism and the media have affected the trade and production of amulets in Southeast Asia. This aspect will be discussed beyond the focus area of Southeast Asia since amulets are being impacted on by consumerism beyond the confines of the research area. While the media and consumer culture are predominant factors in this impact, there are undoubtedly many other aspects of the media and consumer culture to be explored. These include increased travel, tourism and a Western fascination with Eastern traditions and all things spiritual. All of these will be discussed throughout this section.

Over the last few decades, the number of shops and markets has significantly increased in response to the demands of the tourist trade, particularly 'antique' shops selling a vast array of Buddha statues and amulets. Many items are genuinely old, yet even more have been broken, artificially scarred and aged to look like the rare specimens they are not (Tambiah: 1984:195). Many of these amulets are small replicas of national attractions and treasures which can be found in Thailand and throughout Southeast Asia, with numerous books and catalogues displaying and praising the positive impact that has been observed in the miniature amulets and replicas as well as in the larger original statues, images and monuments. This popularity should not be unexpected, given the supernatural powers and qualities often attributed to Buddhist and non-Buddhist treasures throughout Southeast Asia.

However, it is feasible to think that the recent elevation of material consumption in Southeast Asia can be considered as having roots beyond the tourist trade and economic reasons (Capra, 2002:10). Consumerism, in Capra's opinion, has origins found in a universal association between material possessions and manhood, particularly in patriarchal societies. In fact, there is an inbuilt and ancient association between possessions and wealth, and how masculine one may be perceived to be. There are other notions behind the reasoning for material consumption and Tambiah (1984) has another view which can be seen sharing certain attributes with Capra's. After observing the erratic and often intimidating behaviour displayed by local drivers and business-men while researching in Thailand, Tambiah stated that the 'Thai craze for and insatiable collection of protective amulets and other fetishes should be viewed in relation to their propensities and preoccupations with the exercise of power, in which violence shows its dark face. That it is men rather than women who obsessively collect amulets is in accord with the fact that it is they who predominantly participate in violent (or fierce) competition for coercive power' (Tambiah: 1984: 229). Like Capra (2002), Tambiah singled out men as being the predominant gender fuelling this materialistic culture of amulets, though there is no real reason to suggest that women are not also found participating even if men may have a more prominent role.

There have frequently been political and royal ties with amulets in terms of sponsorship and creation, but in recent years industrial and commercial interest has led to establishments such as banks also wanting to connect themselves with amulets and to an extent with the popularity surrounding them. The Bangkok Bank of Commerce is one example which, through an annual *Kathin*<sup>28</sup> to the Acharn Čūan's mountain hermitage, had 40,000 bronze amulets manufactured and sanctified with Acharn Čūan's head on one side of the amulets and the bank's insignia on the other. Although about 4,000 of these amulets remained with the Monks, the others were sold off or retained by the bank to be given to customers, to be used for advertisement, or to be auctioned or sold for charitable causes in the future (Tambiah, 1984: 278). It is clear that not only are amulets in Thailand considered to be powerful religious items but their importance is also felt amongst many corporate establishments. It is interesting to note that corporations such as the Bangkok Bank of Commerce not only recognise the importance and popularity of amulets with their customers, employees, and in society more generally, but that they also recognise their adaptability, potential new functions, and worth beyond religious practice.

The sponsorship of amulet production by high profile people or establishments is not uncommon. It is not always done for the benefit of the person or establishment, though, and in fact the production of amulets for the sake of fundraising, even if for a non-religious cause, is quite common in Southeast Asia. As Tambiah (1984: 263) explains, collaboration between forest-saint monks and secular patrons is not unusual. Lūang Pū Wāēn, a forest monk who sacralises some of the most famous amulets in recent times, has been known to not only support the use of amulets but also to work with certain state authorities in their production. For example, Lūang Pū Wāēn agreed to sacralise a batch of amulets whose profit was intended to pay for the construction of a shrine to King Narēsūan the Great to be placed at the entrance of the police headquarters. He also worked with the King of Thailand who sponsored the production of amulets with Lūang Pū Wāēn's head on one side and the royal crown on the other with the objective of raising 50 million baht (approx. 915,000 GBP) for the building of hospitals in certain Thai provinces. Even the Prime Minister was included as a chairman overlooking the venture. Political sponsorship of amulets and religious monuments is by no means a new occurrence in Thailand, and in fact examples can be found relatively far back such as King Līthia (Mahā Dhammarāja) from the Sukhodaya Period (13<sup>th</sup>-

---

<sup>28</sup> The *Kathin* or *Kathina* as it is in Pali is a festival held at the end of the South Asian rainy season where the Monks are presented with new robes before returning to their mendicant lifestyles (Kent & Chandler, 2008: 185). As Numrich (1999: 87) continues to point out, *Kathin* is one of the few primarily monastic ceremonies that laity play a key role in. This custom 'appears to have been well established in thirteenth-century Sukhothai, since the oldest of Thai inscriptions, the Rāma Khamhaeng inscription, describes it in detail' (Yoneo, 1986: 41).

15<sup>th</sup> century CE) who had a particular reputation for supporting and sponsoring Buddhist devotion and monuments in Northern Thailand (Tambiah, 1984: 210-11).

Certainly, the sponsoring and distribution of amulets by high profile people and corporations, irrespective of their reasons, has caused an increased interest in amulets. This interest has resulted in an increased tourist trade and in a whole wealth of new amulet shops and markets. Still, it is not amulet markets alone that have seen an increase in popularity and demand. Amulets have also been found filtering into the many different forms of media available both inside and outside of Southeast Asia, with the internet, magazines and books being but a few advertising and endorsing the use of amulets.

Many online sites can be found selling Buddhist amulets which claim to be from Thailand or other significant areas and which are connected with a certain auspicious person, temple or region. These sites consist of those which are amulet specific such as: [www.thaiamuletsales.com](http://www.thaiamuletsales.com), [www.realmulet.com](http://www.realmulet.com) and [www.oldamulet.com](http://www.oldamulet.com), as well as popular sites such as: [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) and [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) which are more generic in nature and sell a whole wealth of different items. Although much of the media coverage surrounding amulets is aimed at those in direct contact with the amulet markets and their popularity, many of them also cater to the intrigue of its Western participants. Many of these have become enthralled with amulets and Buddhism through their connection with the spiritual and often magical, these being facets which the West seem to find so fascinating.

Focusing on the website eBay in particular, many of the descriptions of amulets sold on this site can be found with the words such as 'genuine' or 'authentic' prominently displayed next to the image of the available item. However with prices starting as low as 0.57 GBP with free postage it does raise suspicion as to the item's authenticity. For example, a Thai amulet advertised on eBay under the heading 'GENUINE MEDALLION LP CHAI KRU WAT CHAI THARAWAT COLLECTIBLE COIN THAI AMULET OLD' (eBay, 2014), claims to be made from sacred material with a 100% genuine guarantee, yet it has an incredibly low starting price of only 0.57 GBP. Whilst not all amulets on this and similar sites can be found so cheaply, even more expensive amulets such as the 'Genuine authentic LP TIA JEK wat krokmatoom magical oil thai amulet'<sup>29</sup>, (eBay, 2014) priced as 9.95 GBP, appears questionably inexpensive to be the genuine. However, despite the fact that these prices may seem reasonable or even cheap from a western perspective, amulets of similar low values are available in Southeast Asia as well. In a collector's magazine called *Phra Phuthong* or *Phra Phutorn* depending on the translation while expensive

---

<sup>29</sup> An amulet advertised as being connected with a rare shrine and delivered in a container of magical oil to increase the amulet potency.

amulets<sup>30</sup> are also displayed, some start at the lower end of the price spectrum from around 200 Thai baht which is equivalent to around 3.60 GBP.

It is not just the amulets themselves that are popular in Southeast Asia. Alongside the vast amulet trade, large quantities of accompanying popular literature can be found. Examples include ‘cheap magazines, glossy illustrated editions for collectors, and weighty books for connoisseurs on how to recognise the genuine article and detect the fake’ (Tambiah, 1984: 197). Amulets and the miracles associated with them are further reoccurring and popular features in many newspapers and daily gossip columns. While some of these resources are clearly aimed more at collectors than at the everyday person, great interest can be found in all forms. Although the price and certain attributes such as the rarity of the amulet is a key focus of the more serious collector’s magazines, others can be found reporting stories of miraculous events that have happened to those in possession of certain amulets; for example, amulets protecting policemen while fighting bandits (Flemming and Mann, 2014:137). In fact, a prime example of the popularity of amulet magazines and literature can be found in relation to the Dhammakāya Temple in Thailand. This temple began publishing its own amulet magazine in April 1998, called the *Anuphap Phra Mahasiriratthath* (the Power or the Mahsiriratthath Amulet), which is published on a monthly basis and bears similarities to magazines found in the newsstands. This temple, however, chooses to distribute the magazine for free (Scott, 2009: 116). It is not unusual to find chants, sermons or extracts of texts in these magazines especially if they are linked to specific temples rather than being of a more mainstream nature. Some of these sermons can be found taken from the *Phra Dhammachyo* and *Phra Thattacheewo*, and lyrics are often taken from *Dhammakāya* chants, though these are just a few examples (Scott, 2009: 116).

Magazines, books and the internet are not the only sources of media that can be found discussing, selling or promoting amulets; they have also featured in comics, films and even the occasional music<sup>31</sup> video. It would seem that amulets have managed to filter into almost all aspects of life, both contemporary and traditional.

---

<sup>30</sup> This can be for many different reasons and whilst the material an amulet is made from may seem like an obvious reason, often the rarity and person with whom the amulet is connected can be just as important.

<sup>31</sup> Although a Western artist, a recent, albeit slightly controversial, example of this, is a music video by the artist Katy Perry for her song “Dark Horse”, released in February 2014, and which featured many symbols commonly used as amulets across the world, including the Eye of Horus and the Arabic word for God. It was the use of the latter which resulted in a mass of petitions to remove or edit the music video so as to avoid causing offence to Islamic communities, which was distinctly

An example of amulet use in films can be found in the popular Thai superhero film called *Mercury Man* by director Bhandit Thongdee in 2006, which is not to be confused with the *Mercury Man* comics by Charlton. In this film, a firefighter from Bangkok named Chan is transformed after being stabbed with an ancient Tibetan amulet, which resulted in giving him super strength and increased agility. Although not referring to amulets in a traditional sense, *Mercury Man* does refer to the transference of powers from amulet to man as is commonly attributed to amulets. The only difference is that instead of receiving the protection and increased strength and agility by wearing the amulet, it has been caused as a result of the skin being punctured by the powerful object instead.

As well as films such as *Mercury Man*, there have also been a number of books written around the use of amulets and their magical qualities. Many of these books can be found with relative ease even on sites like Amazon.com; such as ‘*The Thai amulet: A Lara McClintoch Archaeological Mystery*’ by Lyn Hamilton and ‘*Thai Horse*’ by William Deihl. In ‘*The Thai Amulet*’, three terracotta amulets appear when the main character is trying to find a missing antique dealer. Here the amulets act as a clue in the investigation to find out what happened to the missing man and why these amulets mysteriously disappeared from the shop when it happened. Unfortunately, finding a fictional amulet book by a Thai or Southeast Asian Author proved difficult. I suspect this may be due to the fact that amulets and the miracles and powers surrounding them are not considered to be fictional in Southeast Asia.

Consumerism and the different factors contributing to it have had a significant impact upon the production and popularity of amulets in Southeast Asia. It has also caused distinct changes in some amulets as their functions and appearances have adapted to their changing requirements (for example, through being produced for the use of corporate establishments). There are a number of reasons why amulets continue to be popular, but the tourist trade, high profile sponsors and the increase in amulet related memorabilia and media has had a very prominent effect. The internet, particularly in the last few years, has undoubtedly affected the increased popularity of amulets, allowing easy access not only to the amulets themselves but also to forums discussing their powers, rareness or worth and the miraculous events associated with them. However, the internet has not replaced the need for amulet markets and stalls and they continue to flourish surrounding many of the monuments and temples in Southeast Asia, which suggest greater levels of authenticity as well as adding to the personal experience of the buyer.

---

possible as the person wearing the Allah pendant originally burst into flames, destroying both the man and pendant. Although the pendant/amulet was not a main focus of the video, it was included nevertheless and this minor aspect of the video caused a considerable amount of upset (BBC, 2014).

### **Amulets and Buddhism: Consumerism in relation to Buddhist Practice**

Consumerism and material culture affect nearly all aspects of life both inside and outside the Buddhist tradition and Southeast Asia. Throughout this final section certain Buddhist teachings and practices will be discussed in relation to amulets and consumerism, including the way the two have often learnt to coincide. Although in previous chapters Buddhist sanctioning of amulets in Southeast Asia has been explored, this section will focus primarily on how they are perceived and the roles they play in everyday life.

Many societies including those in Southeast Asia have become obsessed with consumerism. They have become fixated with the acquisition of possessions and all things materialistic, including religious memorabilia, artefacts and amulets. This obsession is not surprising and many cultures have become increasingly orientated towards consumerist ways. An interesting theory on it provided by Hoare (2004:165-6) suggests that although the individual and different age groups may have different reasons explaining why people are drawn towards consumerism, usually one main reason can be identified. In Thailand, the primary reason is that consumerism is an act of modernity. It demonstrates 'that Thailand is economically, socially, and politically developed as a respected member of the global community' (Hoare, 2004:166) and that they are not "underdeveloped" or "third worldly", with consumerism, and by default amulets, acting as a way of breaking this perception. However, whilst this obsession with all things material is ever increasing, the reality is that most of the world's major religions proclaim salvation as being the real purpose of life, not the enjoyment of material goods (Stearns, 2006: 5). While amulets have purposes such as financially aiding a cause, if the material items and wealth result in a diversion from religious obligations and practice, then this is not permissible. Although many of the amulet markets are not directly in conflict with Buddhist practice in a physical sense, they can cause issues as to the Buddhist spiritual practice of non-attachment to belongings and wealth.

Nevertheless, had Theravāda Buddhism limited its commitments to reaching enlightenment and ending the cycle of rebirths alone, it probably would not have gained such popularity in Southeast Asia (Yoneo, 1986: 20). Instead Theravāda Buddhism can be found engaging with the everyday anxieties of people as well as having higher goals which not only make it more approachable to the lay community but also gives a place to common Thai beliefs, such as the existence and interaction of spirits, and magical devices for protection of the body and living space, which can include amulets. Although many ancient Buddhist scriptures such as the Jewel Discourse (Thomas, 1998:99) give evidence that the existence of gods and spirits has long had a level of acceptance in Buddhism, it is perhaps this acceptance of other beliefs such as apotropaic devices by Thai Buddhists and Buddhists in Southeast Asia that has allowed amulets to gain such popularity and demand, even if it has not fuelled the need. The transformation of the production of these amulets

is remarkable, and despite criticisms that they have lost their value through mass production, others such as Buddhadasa and Phra Prayudh would dispute whether amulets mass produced or otherwise, have a spiritual value to begin with. This debate demonstrates again that despite an amulet's connections or production style, the worth of an amulet is frequently dictated by the society or person to whom the amulet belongs.

Globalisation, according to Norberg-Hodge (2002:16), is a single economic system that is threatening to engulf the whole planet. With a primary concern of monetary transactions, globalisation compromises the non-material aspects of society such as family, meaningful work, and spiritual values. If this theory is to be applied to amulets and spiritual or religious material culture, it can be problematic. Not only does material culture compromise the more fundamental aspects of society but as is discussed in the four noble truths, the Buddha taught that human suffering arises from clinging to material objects and people. As is relayed by Capra (2002:13), the Dalai Lama explained that 'Material fulfilment – money, material goods, etc. - gives us satisfaction at the sensory level, but at the mental level, at the level of our imagination and desires, we need another kind of satisfaction which the physical level cannot provide'. Quite simply 'greed can never lead to satisfaction, individually or collectively' (Bauer, Metje & Kummel, 2012:25), so while materialism or consumerism may be enjoyable in the present moment, it cannot provide long time satisfaction.

Materialism can also be considered in relation to right livelihood, the fifth spoke of the traditional Buddhist Eightfold path. This conflict is due to the businesses involved in their creation and trade. Traditionally, Buddhist texts preach against certain professions because they violate the first precept by causing suffering or negative effects (Keown, 2005: 41), and although the mass production of amulets is not violating the first precept directly, it can be viewed as encouraging materialistic ways which, from a Buddhist perspective, can cause harm through attachment and greed. However, despite these issues, the fact remains that if the amulets are considered as real, sacralised and capable of possessing apotropaic qualities, then the amulets and people creating them can to a certain extent be thought of as benefiting lives, even if it is only through peace of mind and remembrance of the Buddhist teachings (Cadge, 2008: 93).

There are other positive aspects that can also be found in relation to material culture in Southeast Asia. Buddhism is very much based on the notion of finding the middle way, and while there are extremes of wealth associated with materialism, amulets, Buddha images, and statues are generally having a positive effect on the economy (Inoue, 2002:49). As a result, whilst Buddhism in theory prohibits materialistic indulgences, as the economic improvement suggests increased comfort for many rather than a few, it is to a degree permissible. Another view involves the Buddhist Monk Suzuki Shosan (1579-1655), who suggested that irrespective of what job or task a person is

carrying out, if they do so treating the work as if it were a spiritual practice then it can be considered as a path to enlightenment. That is to say, the mass production and sale of amulets can play a part in an individual's spiritual development if carried out with the right mind-set. Similarities can also be drawn between traditional amulet and image production, with notions of gaining good merit, and the transformed large scale amulet production found in contemporary society. If right intent and mindfulness are drawn upon throughout both processes, then it is still possible for the action to be beneficial to the individual and wider community. Nevertheless, while consumerism can be beneficial in certain ways, Buddhism teaches that on a deeper level consumerism simply cannot give satisfactory meaning to our lives or the lives of those around us (Watts and Loy, 2002:95).

Considering the notion of consumerism being unable to provide lasting satisfaction, simplicity, as Sivaraksa (2005) keeps referring to throughout his first chapter on *Conflict, Culture and Change*, is in his opinion the key to the Buddhist way of life. It is simplicity, not consumerisms, which leads to enlightenment. However, despite this fact, people everywhere, not just in Southeast Asia, are constantly being bombarded with information telling them that 'the global economy is the only future' (Sivaraksa, 2005: 36); that contrary to the Buddhist teachings, possessions and goods are everything; and that ultimate happiness can be found in never ending consumption alone. When discussing simplicity, he refers to not only the manner one chooses to live life or amount of possessions they own, but rather that there is an essence of detachment applied to possessions and the sensual feelings attached to them. Although having functional possessions is perfectly acceptable, it is those things acquired through greed alone that cause issues.

However, renouncing all belongings is not the solution. As the Buddha himself taught that the middle way is best, and the presence of lay Buddhism can be seen as recognition of this. Rejecting first his privileged and sheltered royal upbringing and, then, later severe asceticism, the Buddha found that there was a middle ground between extreme luxury and the severe self-discipline shown by wandering ascetics. The Buddha found that neither more nor less is better and that the key to a good life is successfully overcoming attachment to possessions and gain (Sivaraksa, 2005: 37). This notion of giving up attachment to one's worldly possessions is particularly difficult since even though non-attachment is a core Buddhist teaching, a side effect of consumerism has manifested itself in the way that people are identified by their belongings and visible wealth. They have adopted an "I buy or own therefore I am" attitude which is not beneficial to either physical or spiritual health.

As has become clear, not all Buddhists in Thailand and Southeast Asia are accepting of the use of amulets or of their current mass production and popularity. As Swearer states 'critics range from some Thammayut monks of the Ājān Man lineage whose observance of a strict meditation regime

is at odds with the magical ritualism of relic veneration to urban-based reformers who assault its blatant commercialism and seeming departure from authentic Buddhist teachings' (Swearer, 2003: 18). Phra Prayudh and Buddhadasa Bikkhu are two prominent Thai monks of the reform movement, though the reasons as to why varies between individuals. Like Tambiah (1984), Phra Prayudh does not reject the amulets and similar magical items because of what they are but instead finds fault with how they are being used, believing their only legitimate place is in aiding devotees to the dhamma rather than using them for a personal or materialistic gain. Buddhadasa, in a similar manner to Phra Prayudh sees the cult of sacred objects, including amulets, as opposed to the true dhamma, as it promotes, in his opinion, blind attachment, and these are only two examples.

The Santi Asoke movement, founded in the early 1970's in Thailand is another group who in particular dislike the cult of amulets and the path Practical Buddhism is currently travelling down. A far more controversial movement, Santi Asoke 'criticize many commonly accepted devotional practice; does not use Buddha images at its centres; and rejects the conventional Thai custom of wearing amulets' (Swearer, 2003: 22). The Asoke group's aim 'is not a Western ideal – to accumulate high levels of material comfort – but a Buddhist ideal – to release attachment to the material world and attain spiritual freedom. The fact that the seven Asoke communities have continued to thrive throughout the nation's economic troubles is a testament to the movement's success in raising the quality of life for ordinary people' (Essen, 2005: 1). While true to a certain extent, it is interesting that the Santi Asoke state that they are striving for a "Buddhist ideal", when they seem to be rejecting something that has been present in Buddhism for a substantial amount of time. Again, this perception would depend on the individual's definition of how "Buddhist" the amulet cult and even the cult of sacred objects is in nature.

There are many reasons why consumerism, materialism and amulets may not work alongside Buddhism in Southeast Asia, yet for many Buddhists they do. There are some Buddhist movements that make a particular effort to renounce practices like image worship and amulet use, such as the Santi Asoke movement, but not all forms and schools of Buddhism do. For example, Santi Asoke identify themselves as being Theravāda which is the predominant school of Buddhism found in Southeast Asia, yet amulet use can commonly be found in other areas of the Theravāda Tradition. Despite certain Buddhist beliefs and teachings, reformist movements, and amulets being considered a part of consumer and material society, amulets are what their owner and society dictates. As has been a recurring theme throughout this and previous chapters, amulets not only reflect the society they are a part of but also can be seen as adapting to meet its changing needs and circumstances. While, for many, mass produced amulets are an element of consumerism detached from traditional or consecrated amulets, to others they are merely adapting to meet the current needs of society. Therefore, there is no clear cut answer as to whether amulets are in keeping with

the Buddhist tradition when it comes to their use and production, especially in their increasingly materialistic form.

## **Conclusion**

The transformation of amulets from personal items affiliated with a certain society, religion or tradition, to being mass produced items considered part of consumer and material culture is clear. Not only does this transformation reflect the changing societies that amulets are in, but also the impact societal changes can have on amulets. Although for many people amulets may retain the same essence despite being produced in such large quantities, for others they have become overshadowed by the consumer culture they have become an integral part of. While amulets can and are still made individually and with great care, it has become increasingly difficult to tell the difference between a consecrated or sacralised amulet and one that is not. Although Tambiah (1984: 219) identifies certain marks that can often be found as signs of an amulet's authenticity, such as a finger print or deliberate imperfection, they can be incredibly hard to recognise and there is always the possibility that some of these tell-tale signs have been created through error.

There are both positive and negative aspects to be considered in relation to mass amulet production. However, what is most prominent is the positive impact that increased amulet sales and production has had on the economic situation in Southeast Asia at a time of financial uncertainty. Despite issues over authenticity and religious monetary gain, the amulets and their markets have thrived in a time of economic down fall as people continue to turn to them for protection. Although certain scholars such as Capra (2002:10) suggest material culture as having origins beyond the economic reasoning, factors such as increased tourist trade have also been significant factors in the increased popularity of amulets. Likewise, it is clear that the media has impacted upon the appeal of amulets and vice versa, with a whole wealth of magazines, comics, books (both fiction and non-fiction), films and even the occasional music video featuring them, if not being solely dedicated to them as is the case of collector magazines and amulet brochures.

Finally, it becomes clear that although not every Buddhist is accepting of amulets and the surrounding consumer material culture, and even though groups such as the Santi Asoke movement will continue to refute amulets, for many Buddhists it does not appear to be a choice between traditional beliefs, practice and contemporary society, but rather the task of finding a middle ground that works for the individual, incorporating important elements from all aspects of their life. If amulets are reflective of the societies they are in, and material and consumer culture is a part of that society, then so too are amulets, irrespective of what degree and whether or not they are Buddhist or Southeast Asian in origin.

## Conclusion

Throughout this thesis the cult of the amulets in Southeast Asia has been explored under the three chapters: Origin, Function, and Transformation. To begin with, this piece was to be an exploration of amulets and their role and function in societies, which it still is; however, what soon became clear was the reflective nature of amulets. Amulets reflect the society, tradition and culture they are a part of and it is this nature that had originally not been fully considered.

Although the origins of amulets are varied and not unique to Southeast Asia or to the Buddhist tradition, they are popular amongst both and they play an integral role in many people's lives, irrespective of the level to which they are accepted in society. Due to the primarily Buddhist population of Southeast Asia, particularly in areas such as Thailand, a significant number of the amulets produced and sold there are Buddhist in nature. This is not always the case, though, and apart from amulets belonging to traditions other than Buddhism, due to the hybridisation of certain societies in Southeast Asia it is not uncommon to find amulets affiliated with more than one tradition, reflecting the needs and integration present in the society where the amulet is found.

As well as adapting to meet the needs of a certain society or tradition, amulets are also used to individualise a person, yet they can likewise symbolise that they are part of a collective whole. While many people do choose to conceal their amulets, others wear them more outwardly, identifying themselves with a tradition, person or movement. This behaviour can include people wearing both Buddhist and non-Buddhist amulets. Although identification is not necessarily an original function of amulets, it demonstrates the way amulets reflect and transform to meet the changing needs of society.

The acceptability of amulets is another theme discussed throughout the thesis and while there are valid arguments both for and against the use of amulets, it is a very subjective matter, with the answer depending entirely on the individual. Amulets have gone through different phases of popularity in Southeast Asia and the Buddhist tradition. Despite fluctuation in popularity, they have had a constant enough presence to be mentioned in certain Buddhist scriptures, as was discussed in Chapter One, in reference to the *Jinapañjara Gārthā*, *Mahāpratisarā Dharaṇī* and the *Parittas*. These texts, along with a number of the core Buddhist principles, were explored in this thesis; however, there is no definitive answer for all variations of Buddhism. In fact, even the schools and individual Buddhist movements that do in theory reject aspects such as image worship and amulet use can be found using such items, making it more difficult to find a common perception of them.

In the second Chapter the focus was on the function of amulets, exploring both their magical and mundane purposes, which are often intertwined. Even the apotropaic nature of amulets can be

considered somewhat magical, though their acceptance into daily life suggests otherwise. Apart from the apotropaic nature of amulets, they have a number of other magical qualities which they share with living images and statues, such as emitting light and healing, as was discussed in Chapter Two. These powers are not present, however, until the amulet, image or statue has been through the appropriate ceremony. It is this ceremony that causes such issues in relation to mass-produced items as the majority of items will not have been consecrated, bringing their status into dispute. Irrespective of the technicalities which suggest that non-consecrated amulets, images and statues should not be magical or fully functioning, the owner may choose to believe differently and in many respects it is the owner's belief in the item and its abilities that defines it.

The final chapter of this thesis discussed the transformation of amulets in Southeast Asia. This transformation is very much a reflection of the changes in the societies surrounding the production and distribution of amulets. Not only do amulets reflect the societies they are from by adapting their designs and functions to meet societal needs and worries, but the amulets are also impacted upon by historical and societal changes. This impact includes manufacturing changes which have led to a dramatic increase in amulet production, triggering positive economic changes in Southeast Asia. The increasing use of the internet has also caused dramatic changes, not only to the amulets themselves, but to the way they are perceived, opening them up to online forums, shops, and information sites. Factors such as these have dramatically transformed amulets and their place in contemporary society, particularly in the last decade.

To summarise, amulets are reflective of the societies in which they are found and have the potential to be changed by societal events, as can be seen in the increased trade of mass produced amulets. While amulets are not fully accepted in Southeast Asia or in the Buddhist tradition, many people use them on a daily basis and their functions can be seen continuously adapting to reflect the current needs of society. Although used primarily for achieving the mundane, amulets are seen as magical in nature along with living images and statues, and despite them existing in an increasingly contemporary society, their popularity appears unwavering. For this reason, taking into consideration their adaptability and the fact that amulets have had a continuous presence in various societies including but also beyond the Buddhist tradition and Southeast Asia for several millennia, their sustained use and rising popularity seems set to continue.

## Bibliography

- Andrews, C (1994). *Amulets of Ancient Egypt*. London: British Museum Press.
- Ashrof, V A (2007). *Isla, and Gender Justice: Questions at the Interface*. Dehli: Kalpaz Publications.
- Bauer, E D, Metje, F S and Kummel, L J (2012). Social Media. In: Christoforatu, E *Teaching Right Livelihood Eine Handreichung für Lehrkräfte und Lehrerbildner. Mit englischsprachigen Unterrichtsmaterialien..* Germany: Kassel University Press GmbH. pp.17-31.
- Belting, H (1996). *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*. London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Berkwitz, S C (2006). *Buddhism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives*. Oxford: ABC-CLIO Ltd
- Beyer, S (1978), *The Cult of Tara: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Blackburn, A (1999). Magic in the Monastery: Textual Practice and Monastic Identity in Sri Lanka. *History of Religions*. 38(4) pp354-372.
- Bloom, M (2007). *Jewish Mysticism and Magic: An Anthropological Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Bohak, G (2008). *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bolens, G (2012). *The Style of Gestures: Embodiment and Cognition in Literary Narrative*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Bonewitz, E I (1994). *Real Magic: An Introductory Treatise on the Base Principles of Yellow Light*. Maine: Red wheel/weise.
- Brown, R.L. (1998). Expected Miracles: The Unsurprising Nature of Buddhist Images and Relics. In: Davis, R H *Images, Miracles and Authority in Asian Religious Traditions*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Bryan, B M (1997). *Mistress of the House, Mistress of Heaven: Women in Ancient Egypt*. New York: Hudson Hills Press Inc.
- Budge, A W (2011). *Amulets and Magic*. Oxon: Routledge.

- Buhemann, G (2003). *MA'n'Dalas and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions*. Leiden: Brill.
- Cadge, W (2008). *Heartwood: The First Generation of Theravada Buddhism in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Campo, J (2009). Amulets and Talismans. In: Campo, J *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New York: Facts on File Inc. pp.40-41.
- Capra, F (2002). Patriarchal Roots of Overconsumption. In: Badiner, A H *Mindfulness in the Marketplace: Compassionate Responses to Consumerism*. California: Parallax Press. pp 9-15.
- Carrette, J and King, R (2005). *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*. London: Routledge.
- Chawdhri, L R (1992). *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra and Tantra*. Slough: New Dawn Press
- Coleman, J W (2001) *The New Buddhism: The Western Transformation of An Ancient Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crosby, K (2013), *Theravada Buddhism: Continuity, Diversity and Identity*. Great Britain: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Danslip, T and Freeman, M (2002). *Things Thai*. Periplus Singapore: Editions/Berkeley Books Pte.
- Davies, R H (1998). *Images, Miracles and Authority in Asian Religious Traditions*. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Deihl, W (2012). *Thai Horse*. Beverly Hills: Story Merchant Books.
- Dennis, R G W (2007). *The Encyclopaedia of Jewish Myth, Magic and Mysticism*. USA: Llewellyn Publications.
- Dubois, A J A (2007). *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*. New York: COSIMO INC.
- Duiker, W and Spielvogel, J J (2007). *The Essential World History*. California: Cengage Learning, Inc.
- Dunwich, G. (2001). Amulets, Talismans, Charms, and Fetishes. In: Dunwich, G *Exploring Spellcraft: How to Create and Cast Effective Spells*. New Jersey: New Page books.
- Dwivedi, B (2010). *Hindu Traditions and Beliefs: A Scientific Validity*. New Dehli: Diamond Pocket Books.

- Ebeling, J R (2010). *Women's Lives in Biblical Times*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd.
- Eliade, M (1987). *Encyclopaedia of Religion*. New York: Macmillan. Eliade, M (1987). *Encyclopedia of Religion*. New York: Macmillan.
- Essen, J (2005). *"Right Development": The Santi Asoke Buddhist Reform Movement of Thailand*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Farnell, K (2007). *The Amulet Manual: A Guide to Understanding and Making Your Own Amulets*. Winchester: Orca Books.
- Flemming, B and Mann, R (2014). *Material Culture and Asian Religions: Text, Image, Object*. New York: Routledge.
- Ford, M (2011). *Mazkim Hul: Babylonian Magick*. Houston: Succubus Productions.
- Freedburg, D (1989). *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Gaster, T. (1987). Amulets and Talismans. In: Jones, L *Encyclopaedia of Religion*. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference.
- Gehman, R J (2005). *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective*. Kampala: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.
- Glassé, C. (2002). Amulets. In: Glassé, C *New encyclopaedia of Islam revised of the concise encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2nd ed. North America: Altamira Press. pp.49.
- Gokhale, B G (2005). *New light on Early Buddhism*. IN: Popular Prakashan Ltd.
- Golomb, M (1986). Rivalry and Diversity among Thai curer-magicians. *Social Science and Medicine*. 22(6) pp.691-697.
- Gombrich, R F (1996). *Buddhist Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon*. London: Kegan Paul.
- Gonzalez-Wippler, M (2006). *The Complete Book of Amulets and Talismans*. Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications.
- Granoff, P and Shinohara, K (2004). *Images in Asian Religions: Text and Contexts*. Toronto: UBC Press.
- Gray, P and Ridout, L (2001). *The Rough Guide to Thailand's Beaches and Islands*. London: Dorling Kindersley Ltd.

- Griffith, P J (1994). *On being Buddha: The classical doctrine of Buddhahood*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Guy, J (2014). *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu-Buddhist Sculpture of Early Southeast Asia*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art New York.
- Hamilton, L (2006). *The Thai amulet: A Lara McClintoch Archaeological Mystery*. New York: Berkley Publishing Corporation US.
- Harvey, P (1990). *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hazen, W (2002). *Inside Buddhism*. US: Miliken Pub. Co.
- Heidhues, M (2000). *Southeast Asia: A Concise History*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Hesse, R, W (2007). *Jewelry making through History: An encyclopaedia*. USA: Greenwood Press.
- Hewison, K (2002). *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation*. London: Taylor & Francis e-Lib.
- Hidas, G (2012). *Mahapratisara-Mahavidyarajni: The Great Amulet, Great Queen of Spells*. Dehli: Aditya Prakashan.
- Hirakawa, A (1998). *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Sakyamuni to Early Mahayana*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Hoare, T (2004). *Thailand: A Global Studies Handbook*. Oxford: ABC-CLIO Ltd.
- Hopkins, J (2005). *Thailand Confidential*. Singapore: Periplus Editions.
- Horton, S.J. (2007). *Living Buddhist statues in Early Medieval and Modern Japan*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Inoue, S (2002). A New Economics to Save the Earth: A Buddhist Perspective. In: Badiner, A H *Mindfulness in the Marketplace: Compassionate Responses to Consumerism*. California: Parallax Press. pp 49-59.
- Insoll, T (2003). *The archaeology of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Isiah 3:18-20. New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

- Jones, C (2013). Thai Magic Amulets and Sacred Tattoos. In: Haddad, B *Thai Massage & Thai Healing Arts: Practice, Culture and Spirituality*. Forres: Findhorn Press.
- Kalupahana, D J (2001). *Buddhist Thought and Ritual*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Kent, A and Chandler, D P (2008). *People of Virtue: Reconfiguring Religion, Power and Moral Order in Cambodia Today*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Keown, D (2005). *Buddhist Ethic: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University press.
- Kieschnick, J (2003). *The impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kitiarsa, P (2012). *Mediums, Monks, and Amulets*. England: University of Washington Press.
- Kitiarsa, P (2007). *Religious Commodification's in Asia: Marketing Gods*. Routledge: Taylor and Francis Ebooks.
- Kunz, G F. (1915). Amulets: Ancient, Medieval and Oriental. In: Kunz, G F *The Magic of Jewels and Charms*. London: Kessinger Publishing's Rare Reprints. pp.313-347.
- Kusalasaya, K (1983). *Buddhism in Thailand: Its Past and its present*. Sri Lanka: The Wheel Publication.
- Lewis, T (2000). *Popular Buddhist texts from Nepal: narratives and rituals of Newar Buddhism*. New York: State University of New York.
- London, E (2009). *Thailand Condensed: 2000 years of History and Culture*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International (Asia) Private Limited.
- Lopez, D S (2007). *Buddhism in Practice: Abridged Edition*. Oxfordshire: Princeton University.
- Malalgoda, K (1976). *Buddhism in Sinhalese society, 1750-1900: A study of Religious Revival and Change*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Malinowski, B (2011). *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays 1948*. USA: Kessinger Publishing.
- McCormick, C T and White K K (2010). *Folklore: An encyclopaedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.
- McDaniel, J. (2006). Buddhism in Thailand: Negotiating the Modern Age. In: Berkwitz, C. *Buddhism in world cultures: comparative perspectives*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Inc.

- McDaniel, J (2011). *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk: practicing Buddhism in modern Thailand*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- McGuire, M B (2008). *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.
- McMahan, D L (2012). *Buddhism in the Modern World*. Oxon: Routledge.
- McNaughton, P R (1993). *The Mande Blacksmiths: Knowledge, Power and Art in West Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Meilicke, C A (2005). *Jerome Rothenberg's Experimental Poetry and Jewish Tradition*. Cranbury: Lehigh University Press.
- Meyer, M W and Smith, R (1999). *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*. New Jersey: Princeton University.
- Montesano, M J and Jory, P (2008). *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Nadeau, R L (2012). *The Wiley – Blackwell Companion to Chinese Religions*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
- Nadimi, M N (2011). *Islam and peace*. USA: Xlibris Corporation.
- Nelson, F H (2008). *Talismans and Amulets*. New York: Sterling.
- Neusner, J Frerich, E S and Flesher P V M (1989). *Religion, Science and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Norberg-Hodge, H (2002). Buddhism in the Global Economy. In: Badiner, A H *Mindfulness in the Marketplace: Compassionate Responses to Consumerism*. California: Parallax Press. pp 15-29.
- Numrich, P D (1999). *Old Wisdom in New World: Americanization*. Chicago: University of Tennessee Press.
- Nunn, J F (2002). *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Ooi, K G (2005). *Southeast Asia: A Historical Encyclopaedia from Angkor Wat to Timor*. Oxford: ABC-CLIO Ltd.
- Owusu, H (2008). *Egyptian Symbols*. New York: Sterling Publishing Co Inc.

- Paine, S (2004). *Amulets: Sacred Charms of Power and protection*. Rochester: Inner Traditions.
- Pistolessi, A (2013). *Sak Yant Magical Tattoos*. England: Padplaces.
- Reader, I and Tanabe, G J (1998). *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and Common Religion of Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Richards, J and Burden, M (2000). *Order, Legitimacy, and wealth in Ancient States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Roehrig, C H (2004). *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Scheinfeld, N. (2007). Tattoos and Religion. *Clinics in Dermatology*. 25 (4), pp.362-366.
- Scott, R M (2009). *Nirvana for Sale? Buddhism, Wealth, and the Dhammakāya Temple in Contemporary Thailand*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Sharf, R H. (1999). On the Allure of Buddhist Relics. *Representations*. 66, pp.75-99
- Shwartz-Be'eri, O (2003). *The Jews of Kurdistan: Daily Life, Customs, Arts and Crafts*. Jerusalem: The Israel museum.
- Silk, J A (2008). *Managing Monks: Administrators and Administrative roles in Indian Buddhist Monasticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Silverman, R. (1991). Arabic Writing and the Occult. In: Fisher, C G *Brocade of the Pen. The Art of Islamic Writing*. Michigan: Michigan State University. pp.19-30.
- Sippestein, P A and Sundelin, L (2004). *Papyrology and the History of Early Islamic Egypt*. Leiden: Brill.
- Sivaraksa, S (2005). *Conflict, Culture, Change: Engaged Buddhism in a globalizing world*. Summerville: Wisdom Publications.
- Smith, D W. (2011). Nibbanic (or Pure) Consciousness and Beyond. *Philosophia*. 39. pp.475-91.
- Soontravanich, C. (2013). The Regionalization of Local Buddhist Saints: Amulets, Crime and Violence in Post-World War II Thai Society. *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*. 28 (2), pp.179-215.
- Speiser, F (1999). *Ethnology of Vanuata*. London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd.

- Spiro, M E (1882). *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Stearns, P N (2006). *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire*. London: Routledge.
- Steiger, B (2010). *Real Zombies, the Living Dead, and Creatures of the Apocalypse*. Canton: Visible Ink Press.
- Stengs, I. (1998). Collectable Amulets: The Triple Fetishes of Modern Thai Men. *Collecting*, 11 (1), pp.55-76.
- Sthapitanonda, N and Mertens, B (2012). *Architecture of Thailand: A Guide to Traditional and Contemporary Forms*. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet Pty Ltd.
- Stratton, C (2004). *Buddhist Sculpture of Northern Thailand*. Chicago: Serindia Publications Inc.
- Strong, J (2004). *Relics of the Buddha*. Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Swearer, D (1995). *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Swearer, D. (2003). Aniconism Versus Iconism in Thai Buddhism. In: Heine, S and Prebish, C *Buddhism in the Modern world: Adaptions of an Ancient Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp.9-25.
- Swearer, D (2004). *Becoming the Buddha: the ritual of image consecration in Thailand*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tambiah, S J (1984). *The Buddhist saints of the forest and the cult of amulets: a study in charisma, hagiography, sectarianism, and millennial Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tarling, N (2000). *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: From Early Times to C.1500* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, J (2008). *Buddhism and Postmodern Imagining in Thailand: The Religiosity of Urban Space*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Taylor, J L (1993). *Forest Monks and the Nation-State: An Anthropological and Historical Study in Northeastern Thailand*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

- Thomas, E J (1998). *Buddhist Scriptures: A Selection*. Delhi: Publishing.
- Thrower, J (1999). *Religion: The Classical Theories*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Tiyavanich, K (1997). *Forest recollections: Wandering monks in twentieth-century Thailand*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Turner, B S (2011). *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Varner, G R (2008). *The History and Use of Amulets, Charms and Talismans*. Morrisville: Lulu.com.
- Wallis, G (2002). *Mediating the Power of Buddhas: Ritual in the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Walker, J (2010). *Lonel Jordan*. US: Lonely Planet.
- Wallech, S Dargae, T Hendricks, C Negus, A L Wan, P P Bakken, G M (2013). *World History: A concise thematic Analysis*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Inc.
- Watts, J and Loy, D R (2002). The Religion of Consumption: A Buddhist Perspective. In: Badiner, A H *Mindfulness in the Marketplace: Compassionate Responses to Consumerism*. California: Parallax Press. pp 93-105.
- Wenzel, C. (2011). The image of the Buddha: Buddha Icons and Anionic Traditions in India and China. *Transcultural Studies*. 0(1), 263-305.
- Wise, N (2009). *Passport Thailand: Yours Pocket Guide to Thai Business, Customs and Ettiquette*. 3rd ed. California: World Trade Press.
- Xing, G (2005). *The Concept of the Buddha: Its Evolution from Early Buddhism to the Trikaya Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Yoneo, I (1986). *Sanga, State, and Society: Thai Buddhism in History*. Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press.
- Young-Eisendrath, P and Miller, M (2002). *The Psychology of Mature Spirituality: Integrity, Wisdom and Transcendence*. London: Routledge.
- Young, A and Neikerk, C F Van (2003). *Juta's Manual of Nursing*. Cape Town: Juta Academic.
- Yun, H (2005). *Opening the Mind's Eye: Clarity and Spaciousness in Buddhist Practice*. New York: Lantern Books US.

## Websites

Archaeological Survey of India (2009). *Excavated Remains at Nalanda*. Available:

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5407/>. Last accessed 30th March 2014.

BBC. (2014). *Katy Perry Dark Horse video 'portrays blasphemy'*. Available:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-26359917>. Last accessed 1st July 2014.

Buddha Station (2013). *Jinapanjara Gatha, The Victor's Cage*. Available:

<http://www.buddhastation.com/buddhist-music-videos/buddhism-mantra-chant/jinapanjara-gatha-the-victors-cage/>. Last accessed 19th Nov 2013.

CIA. (2013). *East and Southeast Asia: Thailand*. Available:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html>. Last accessed 3rd Dec 2013.

Ebay, (2014). *Genuine authentic LP TIA JEK wat krokmatoom magical oil thai amulet shrine rare*. Available: <http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/Genuine-authentic-LP-TIA-JEK-wat-krokmatoom-magical-oil-thai-amulet-shrine-rare->

[/201097945279?pt=Asian\\_Antiques&hash=item2ed25f20bf](http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/Genuine-authentic-LP-TIA-JEK-wat-krokmatoom-magical-oil-thai-amulet-shrine-rare-/201097945279?pt=Asian_Antiques&hash=item2ed25f20bf). Last accessed 4th June 2014. Thailand Amulets.

Ebay. (2014). *GENUINE MEDALLION LP CHAI KRU WAT CHAI THARAWAT COLLECTIBLE COIN THAI AMULET OLD*. Available:

[http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/GENUINE-MEDALLION-LP-CHAI-KRU-WAT-CHAI-THARAWAT-COLLECTIBLE-COIN-THAI-AMULET-OLD-/380916534306?pt=LH\\_DefaultDomain\\_0&hash=item58b0650c22](http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/GENUINE-MEDALLION-LP-CHAI-KRU-WAT-CHAI-THARAWAT-COLLECTIBLE-COIN-THAI-AMULET-OLD-/380916534306?pt=LH_DefaultDomain_0&hash=item58b0650c22). Last accessed 4th June 2014. Thailand.

Fund, R (2012). *Seal Ring with inscription*. Available: <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/12.224.6>. Last accessed 31st Jan 2014.

IBPS Vancouver (Unknown). *Buddha's Birthday - Bathing Buddha Dharma Service*. Available:

<http://dharma.fgs.org.tw/shrine/ibps-sweden/English/Buddhism1-3.htm>. Last accessed 29th April 2014.

Rester, A (Unknown). *Darshan, Television, and Media Theory in India*. Available at:

<http://aaronrester.net/writings/televisionRamayanpaperCCL.pdf>. Last accessed 12<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

Smithsonian Institution. (1997). *What is puja?* Available:  
<http://www.asia.si.edu/pujaonline/puja/background.html>. Last accessed 28th March 2014.

Start-up Koan. (2014). *The Jewel of the Chao Phraya*. Available:  
<http://startupkoan.com/tag/emerald-buddha/>. Last accessed 22nd April 2014.

Thera, P. (1999). *The Book of Protection: Paritta*. Available:  
<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/piyadassi/protection.html>. Last accessed 10th March 2014.

Tosi, K. (2001). *Amulets*. Available: <http://www.katswindow.net/posts/amulets/>. Last accessed 13th May 2014.

Vern. (2012). *Thai Amulet Market*. Available: <http://www.jhana8.com/buddhist-amulets/thai-amulet-market/>. Last accessed 13th May 2014.

#### Websites listed

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

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

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

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

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

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