

Thai Buddha Protection Tablets

from various sources; edited by Bob Haddad

Thai Buddha amulets (Thai: พระเครื่อง, pronounced *phrakhrueang*), are blessed protection items sometimes referred to as "votive tablets" in English. Worshippers may obtain an amulet and a blessing by a Thai Buddhist monk by a small donation of money or making offerings to a temple, or *wat*. After making a donation, a monk will sometimes offer an amulet as a gift. In some temples, amulets are made with the image of a special monk on the back side. These amulets help to fund that particular temple's activities. Clay and plaster tablets may be bought at temples and amulet markets throughout Thailand. When given or blessed by a monk, amulets are no longer considered a "gift", but rather a tool to enhance luck and happiness in different aspects of life. Thai people often use amulets to improve their marriage, wealth, health, love and personal relationships.



an assortment of plaster tablets



plaster tablets in plastic cases

It is a Thai tradition to place amulets under a stupa or other temple structure when it is being built. Most Thai Buddhists have at least one tablet or other type of Buddha amulet. It is common to see young or elderly people wear one or more amulets around the neck, or to keep them in their car or tuk-tuk in order to maintain a strong connection to the Buddha.

Plaster votive tablets are made using a stylized image of the Buddha, or an image of a patron saint or famous monk. Sometimes the Buddha appears on one side and a monk on the other side. Tablets vary in size, shape, and material. Buddha tablets are commonly made of plaster, metal, wood, or bone. They may include ash from burned incense, from powder made from old temple structures, or ground hair from a famous monk to add protective power. After the amulets are made, monks from the general area join together to meditate, chant, pray and bless the new batch of protective amulets. Most votive tablets are placed in protective cases made of metal and glass or plastic, and are worn on the neck with a chain or string. They may also be carried with a clip in a shirt pocket (close to the heart) and they may also be displayed on a personal altar. The price of an amulet depends on its appearance, its maker, its age, and its presumed magic protective powers.

Thai Buddhist tradition has the following rules regarding amulets and tablets:

- * Do not wear Buddhist amulets below the waist. Instead, wears them on the neck or carry them in a shirt pocket. above the waist.
- * Do not keep a Buddhist amulet (or any image of the Buddha) in a bedroom if you expect to engage in sex there.
- * Remove them when bathing.
- * Say a quiet prayer before you wear an amulet and also when you remove one from your body.