

Magical Amulets and Spells of Thailand

There are four types of magical amulets in Thai culture. The term to describe these amulets as a whole is *khawng-khlang*, which may be translated as 'sacred, potent objects.' The first type is the *khruang-rang*, which means material substances transformed into stone or copper. These amulets will protect people if they are held in the mouth or on the body. They include *khot*, which are stones found in nature such as stone eggs or meteoric ores and various types of seeds found in jack-fruit and tamarind plants. These amulets are used mostly by poor people, since they depend upon being found freely rather than having to be bought.



The second type is the *phra-khruang*, which are small statues or figurines of the Buddha which also protect the person or, if larger, a household. They may be cast from a mould or else be in the form of a votive tablet. These may be used to complete a vow – i.e. to thank the Buddha for a blessing – or else as a talisman carried around the neck.

The third type is the *khruang-pluk-sek*. *Pluk-sek* means 'to arouse the potency of a person or object by means of a spell or incantation' so a *khruang-pluk-sek* is a more powerful form of amulet. Most of the spells used are incantations based on ancient Sanskrit verses – Sanskrit is known as Pali in Thailand.

When the spells call for being written down, the Khmer (Cambodian) alphabet is used rather than Thai which is not considered to be suitable for magic. Khmer characters are believed to have runic qualities. The *takrut* is a long, hollow cylinder made from metal which has passed through many stages of magical arousal. They are worn around the neck either singly or together with a suitable number of other *takrut*, perhaps a total of three, five or seven. A *salika* (mynah bird) is a tiny *takrut* that can be kept between the teeth and will allow the user to become a very persuasive talker. Just as in Malayan cultures, there are various types of magical item in this class which can bestow various benefits on the user. Many of these items are derived from tantric beliefs and practices.

The fourth type is the *wan ya* – the use of certain plants and roots to create folk medicines to try to combat disease and the actions of *phi* – spirits. Many people, especially in rural villages where the level of education is often low, believe that illness and misfortunes of all sorts may be attributed to the actions of malevolent spirits. Fortunately, local shamans are able to combat these spirits with the aid of *wan ya*, which they can search for in the surrounding forests and mountains.

Every living thing has a spirit and sometimes inanimate objects such as cars may be brought to life through suitable magical spells and then they will be more likely to protect the people who use them.