**## Tracing the history of early Ayutthaya Sculpture**

**### Chris Baker, Phongpaichit Pasuk, 2017, A history of Ayutthaya, Cambridge University Press**

The older Sukhothai kingdom that had its heyday in the late 14th century was a larger city in terms of its cultural impact. It had a line of warrior kings that raided and subjugated its neighbouring cities. (pg 36) The monk order from Sukhothai have some roots in Sri Lanka, this authenticity lent the order authority. (pg 37) These monks travelled north to Lan Na too. There are stories about the religious awakening brought about by returning monks form Sri Lanka. There was significant royal patronage of the monastic order. (pg 39). This religious zeal is seen with many bronze Buddha images in their distinctive style. There was an apparent change in royal aristocracy from warlord styled one to a Buddhist monarch. (pg 42)

Much of the Ayutthaya history in the 1300s come from their mercantile records with other countries. The Ayutthaya port city appears to have a strong relationship with the Ming dynasty. (pg 53)

It was dominantly a trading city port in this period. The history of the city in this period appears to have less to do in terms of Buddhist growth, thus hinting at a less prominent religious culture than Sukhothai in this period.

In order to find this unique southern style, we now look to the 14th century Ayutthaya with its founding king U Thong. It appears that the city due the mercantile history was culturally diverse. Much of the history we have today are from Chinese records, rulers were more likely to be merchants than warriors and wealth rather than lineage was the key to claiming power. There was limited interest in religious leadership. They have left little monuments behind, compared to the northern kingdoms. (pg 57-58) It is possible that the distinct style of the south are rare and creates difficulty in finding sufficient examples.

It appears that through their wealth and the intermarrying with the royal families brough the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya royalty closer together. (pg 62- 63) Thus from the 14th century onwards leading to possibly the stronger northern cultural tradition spreading to the southern kingdom. In the 16th Century, the northern nobles took over the city of Ayutthaya in a coup after the city was besieged by Pagan invaders in 1569. This supplanting of the mercantile southern nobility could mean that late Ayutthaya imagery would be significantly influenced by the Sukhothai style. (77-79) In 1530s, many new temples were built, and increase in the number of Buddha images made. The relics of this period appear to be more related the new kings instead of the monastic orders, so increasing the likelihood of northern styles preceding the previous U Thong style. (pg 80- 82)

(pg 82)

*>Sculpture reflected the rapprochement between Ayutthaya and Sukhothai. Representations of the Buddha in early Ayutthaya, often dubbed “U Thong style,” followed earlier Angkorian traditions. The face is square, mouth wide and thin- lipped, eyes seemingly lidless and almost browless, and the body often broad- shouldered and rather robust. Buddha images made at Sukhothaiin the same era, and sometimes copied in Ayutthaya workshops, had long oval faces, with a rather pointed chin, a narrow but full mouth, eyes lidded with a distinct brow, and a body slight and graceful, sometimes to the point of androgyny. Until the mid- fifteenth century, these two traditions remained distinct. 187 According to Woodward, however, in images produced around 1500 “the old dichotomy has been completely transcended. Here is a facial type that in its hauteur is intended to go beyond the old oval/square division and bear elements of both traditions.” 188 The characteristic images of the middle Ayutthaya era, such as the many seated images modelled on the Sihing Buddha, are a compromise between the robustness of the Angkorian type and the gracefulness of the Sukhothai tradition.*

These Ankorian traditions were likely refering to Dvaravati - Mon period sculptures

In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, Ayutthaya became much more like the inland cities with many monuments and increase religious, literary learning and craftmanship.

The Lanna state is culturally similar to Sukhothai Kingdom with warrior kings, with rich literary court culture. They often clashed with the Sukhothai kingdom and later the larger Ayutthaya kingdom. They appear to remain independent into the 17th Century.

In this brief overview, we see the cultural shifts in the northern and southern Thai kingdoms. The early U Thong style is rare and is hard to find. The later Ayutthayan is heavily influence by the Sukhothai styles. The early Ayutthaya are more linked Ankorian and Mon - Dvaravati designs. The limited sample size from this period poses a challenge in completing the training set.

**## Important Dates to the highlight the changes in the Northern or Southern nobles who dominate the court culture of Ayutthaya**

This is before the complete merger of the north and south kingdoms.

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- 1529 - 1547 King Chairacha from the Suphanbur-Sukhothai family staged a coup which killed the boy king.

- 1547 - 1549 A boy is installed on the throne to block the succession by the Suphanbar-Sukhothai clan, Led by consort Si Sudachan who attempts to purge the northern cities' governors, but there is a counter coup, by the Sukhothai Clan. Which further solidifies northern control of the court.

- 1569 After the Pagan sieges on the city of Ayutthaya, and the surrender to the Pagan king, the loss of the exile of the old Ayutthayan elite, The nobles of the Northern cities moved in in 1580s to supplant the supplant. This time it is the Sukhothai-Phitsanulok family.