

Paintings Depicting Beliefs from *Phrommachat* Texts in Wat Chi Pakhao, Bang Plama, Suphanburi

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ABSTRACT—The ceiling of the teaching hall at Wat Chi Pakhao, Bang Plama, Suphanburi Province is illustrated with paintings related to different methods of divination. These same methods appear in *Phrommachat*, a genre of popular manuals for foretelling the future and guiding important decisions in life. Nothing is known about the origins, dating, and authorship of the paintings, which appear to be unique. They demonstrate the local beliefs and artistic skills of a local community in Suphanburi.

Introduction

Wat Chi Pakhao is a Mahanikai temple built in 1882 in Tambon Takha, Bang Plama District, Suphanburi (Krom kan satsana, 2002: 156). The temple backs onto the Thachin River, an old transportation route. In the teaching hall (ศาลาการเปรียญ, *sala kan parian*), a wooden structure in the north of the compound inscribed with the year 1933, the ceiling has very distinctive paintings of methods of divination based on *Phrommachat* (พรหมชาติ) manuals quite unlike any *wat* paintings found elsewhere.



Figure 1. The teaching hall of Wat Chi Pakhao, Bang Plama, Suphanburi. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo.

Around the sides of this teaching hall, there are scenes from the life of the Buddha painted on wooden panels as friezes below the ceiling and between the pillars (Figure 1). The ceiling is divided into seven partitions, each around 3 x 6 meters, on the east-west axis, beginning from the pulpit in the west (Figure 2). Each partition is subdivided into nine to twelve small rectangles, most of which are painted with blue clouds on a white background in Chinese style, with a picture in a circle at the center, and an inscription detailing the name of the donor and the amount paid to the artists.

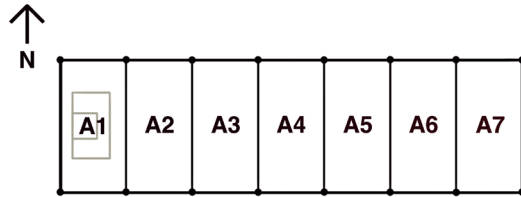


Figure 2. A diagram of the ceiling in the main pavilion of Wat Chi Pakhao

Table 1. Inscriptions by donors

	Inscription	Translation
1	นายปลอด นางพวน ผู้สร้าง ค่าเขียน ๑๓ บาท	Made by Nai Plot, Nang Phuan; artist fee, 13 baht
2	นายเชฐ นางเขียว นายก้ง นางก้อ ผู้สร้าง ค่าเขียน ๑๓ บาท	Made by Nai Chet, Nai Khieo, Nai Kong, Nai Ko; artist fee, 13 baht
3	นายอุบ นางบัว ผู้สร้าง ค่าเขียน ๑๓ บาท	Made by Nai Up Nang Bua; artist fee, 13 Baht
4	นายคร้า นางสาวเนียง ผู้สร้าง ค่าเขียน ๑๓ บาท	Made by Nai Khra, Nang Samniang; artist fee, 13 baht
5	พ่อพุด พ่อรีน แม่กลอง นายมี นางจิบ บุตรีชื่อจาย เป็นผู้สร้าง ค่าเขียน ๑๓ บาท	Made by Phu Phun, Pho Roen, Mae Klong, Nai Mi, Nang Jip, son named Jap; artist fee, 13 baht
6	แม่วาน แม่เจียน พ่อบุตร แม่จาย พ่อฟ่ง แม่ม้วย พ่อนวน แม่จวน สร้าง ค่าจ้างเขียน ๑๓ บาท	Made by Mae Wan, Mae Jian, Pho But Mae Jai, Pho Phung, Mae Mui, Mae Juan; artist fee, 13 baht
7	รวมญาติสร้าง ค่าเขียน ๑๓ บาท	Made by relatives together; artist fee, 13 baht

The ceiling paintings are mainly drawn from the *Phrommachat*, manuals of prediction based in part on ancient Indian astrology. These manuals, which have circulated since at least the early Bangkok period (1782 onwards), are used to predict personal fortunes and guide important decisions in various spheres of life such as marriage, home building, and rice farming. These manuals reflect beliefs in arcane forces which may have positive or negative effects depending on factors of space and time.

Printed versions of *Phrommachat* manuals were published for the first time by private publishers during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, Rama V (1868-1910). The number of copies sold was high. For example, Phanichsuphaphon Publishing sold 18,000 copies of a fourth edition, published in 1902, and 6,000 copies of the eleventh edition, released in 1939. These figures indicate the continued popularity of the manuals.

The information in *Phrommachat* manuals has become a part of daily practices, beliefs, and ways of life (Pattamaphon, 1996). At the present time, these manuals are published by several different publishers, and the information varies from volume to volume. A famous version of the manual was published in 1978 by Thep Sarikabut (1919–1993), a leading practitioner, collector and writer on astrology, divination, and the use of protective devices known as *saiyasat* (So Sima, 2023). Here we compare the illustrations at Wat Chi Pakhao with the details in this manual, hereafter called the Thep *Phrommachat*.

First partition: directions for travel

In the first partition (Figure 3), the central circle has a scene of Mekhala playing with her crystal ball, and each rectangle has a painting of an animal with an inscription in the form “Tuesday is *ratchasi* [a mythical lion]” (อีสาน วันอังคารราชสีห์).

This partition has advice on the fortunate and unfortunate directions for travel on each day of the week. The Thep *Phrommachat* manual identifies a certain animal as the “great ghost” and the *thit phi luang jon* (ทิศผีหลวงจร) the direction where that great ghost roams each day. At Wat Chi Pakhao, the eight panels in this partition portray an animal and direction for each day of the week. The eighth direction occupied by the god Rahu has no associated day.



Figure 3. The first partition, directions for travel. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo.

Table 2. The “great ghost” on the first partition

northwest horse Sunday	west pig Friday	southwest Rahu
north tiger Wednesday		south buffalo Thursday
northeast <i>rachasi</i> Tuesday	east ox Monday	southeast elephant Saturday

In the Thep *Phrommachat*, the great ghost and the unfortunate directions are slightly different: Sunday, great horse, northwest; Monday, *usupharat* (the bull vehicle of Siva), east; Tuesday, *rachasi*, northeast; Wednesday, tiger, north; Thursday, buffalo, south; Friday, deer, west; Saturday, elephant, southeast. (Thep et al., 1978: 625)



Figure 4. The second partition, *thaksa* prediction. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo.

Second partition: *thaksa* prediction

In second partition (Figure 4), the central circle has a scene of Ramasura throwing his axe, and the surrounding is divided into a 3 x 3 matrix. Each cell contains the painting of an animal, along with a compass direction, and a planet god: The full matrix is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: The *thaksa* diagram on the second partition

southwest Saturn <i>Naga</i>	southeast Mars Lion	west Jupiter Rat
east moon Tiger	south Mercury Dog	north Venus deer
south Mercury Dog	northwest Rahu Elephant	northeast sun <i>Garuda</i>

Thaksa is a method of prediction that uses a 3 x 3 matrix. It is believed that the *Khampi thaksa payakon* (คัมภีร์ทักษาพยากรณ์), an old manual still used widely in Thai astrology, was taken from the Mons and rewritten in the early Rattanakosin period (Methi, 2019: 1). Each cell is occupied by one of the heavenly bodies used in Thai

astrology, namely the sun, moon, five planets (Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn) and two imaginary planets (Rahu and Ketu); and also by eight *sat tua nam* (สัตว์ต่วนาม), symbolic animals associated with each of the planets. This manual differs from the arrangement at Wat Chi Pakhao only in having a goat in place of a deer (both are ruminants). For the purpose of prediction, each outer cell is also assigned to one of the eight aspects of life monitored in Thai astrology. The day-of-week of the person's birth determines where the first aspect (*boriwan*) is placed, then the other aspects are distributed in clockwise sequence following the order in Table 4 below. Figure 5 shows the diagrams for someone born on a Sunday and Monday respectively.

Table 4. *The eight aspects of life in thaksa prediction*

Aspect	Translation	Scope
บริวาร	<i>boriwan</i>	family members, people under your control and acquaintances
อายุ	<i>ayu</i>	health and illness
เดช	<i>det</i>	fame, prestige and career
ศรี	<i>si</i>	social status, money and fortune
มุละ	<i>mula</i>	heritage, home, lineage
อุตสาหะ	<i>utsaha</i>	diligence
มนตรี	<i>montri</i>	assistance from others, social influence
กาลกิณี	<i>kalakini</i>	obstacles, catastrophes and enemies

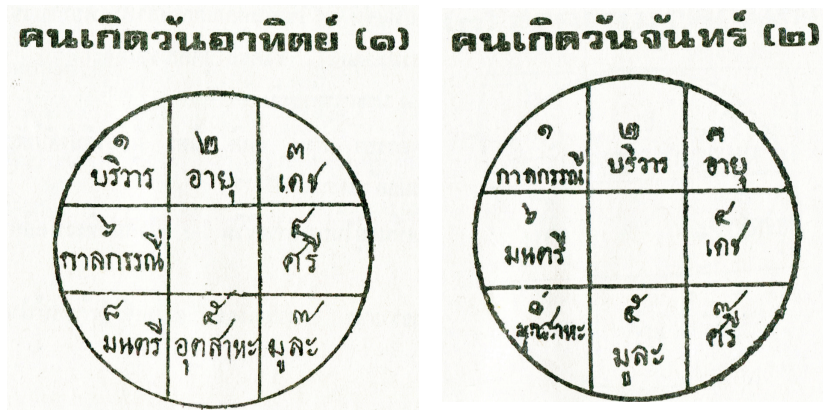


Figure 5. *thaksa payakon* from the *Thep Phrommachat* (Thep et al., 1978: 242–243)

In the left-hand diagram, for someone born on a Sunday, *boriwan* is placed in the top left cell, occupied by the Sun. Then moving clockwise: *ayu* with the Moon; *det* with Mars; *si* with Mercury; *mula* with Saturn; *utsaha* with Jupiter; *montri* with Rahu; and *kalakini* with Venus. In the right-hand diagram, for someone born on a Monday, all the aspects are shifted one cell further on clockwise (Thep et al., 1978: 243–244)

Third partition: gods ruling time



Figure 6. Third partition, gods ruling time. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo

In the third partition (Figure 6), each rectangle features a painting of a god riding on an animal figure with an inscription in the form “Sun ruling time for six years.” This partition illustrates *thewada sawoei ayu* (เทวดาเสวยอายุ), “gods ruling time”, a section of the Thep’s *Phrommachat* manual about using the *thaksa* method of prediction. The planet that first dominates the *ayu* aspect depends on the day of birth. Each planet dominates for a certain number of years in rotation (Table 5). For example, for someone born on a Sunday, the sun dominates their *ayu* aspect for six years, after which it is replaced by the moon for fifteen years, then Mars for eight years, and so on. If the fortune predicted by this combination of the aspect and planet is not good, the manual has suggestions on ritual methods to improve the fortune (Thep et al., 1978: 233).

Table 5. The succession of planets in *thaksa* prediction

Planet	Vehicle	Number of years
sun	<i>ratchasi</i>	6
moon	horse	15
Mars	ox	8
Mercury	elephant	17
Saturn	rat	10
Jupiter	goat	19
Rahu		12
Venus	deer	21

Table 6. *Vehicles in the third partition*

elephant “Mercury 17 years”	goat “Jupiter 19 years”	deer “Venus 21 years”
ox “Mars 8 years”		rat “Saturn 10 passed 10 years”
horse “moon 15 years”	<i>ratchasi</i> “the god rules <i>ayu</i> as the sun for 6 years”	Rahu “Rahu 12 years”

In the third partition at Wat Chi Pakhao, the central circle shows a god riding a *naga* with an inscription saying “Ketu 9 years”, and each of the surrounding rectangles has an illustration of a heavenly body with an inscription.

Fourth partition: Trinisinghe

Trinisinghe, meaning three lions, is a form of number magic that uses a square divided into twelve partitions. An old text provides instructions for writing numbers into this diagram inscribed on a slate tablet. The numbers are inserted in the diagram in four sequences: 3-7-5, 4-6-5, 1-9-5 and 2-8-5. The order is detailed in a mantra which is chanted while making the drawing.¹ The final result is the *lek utra trinisinghe* (เลขอัตราตรีนิสิงเห), the triple-lion number. The adept then wipes the slate to collect the “Trinisinghe dust.” (Sirot, 2018: 52).

In the Thep *Phrommachat*, the *Trinisinghe* appears as a *yantra* (ยันต์ เลขยันต์, *yan, lek yan*) (Figure 7), a genre of diagrams incorporating various powerful symbols (gods, animals, numbers, etc.), used primarily for protection. The Thep *Phrommachat* describes the usage of this *yantra* in inviting *phra phum*, the guardian of the earth, to take up residence in a shrine during ceremonies for building a house.

The fourth partition of the ceiling at Wat Chi Pakhao (Figure 8) is divided into twelve segments in a 3 x 4 matrix, as shown in Table 7.

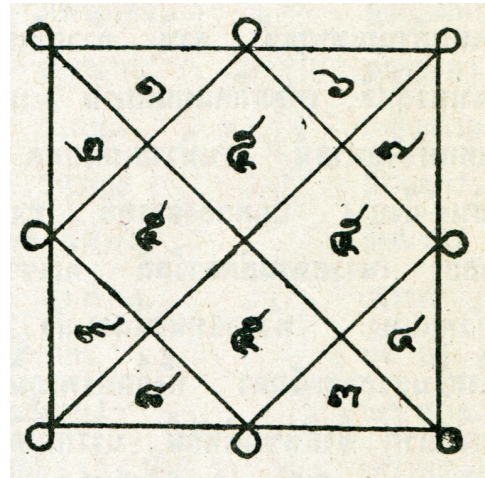


Figure 7. Trinisinghe yantra from the Thep *Phrommachat* (Thep et al., 1978: 374)

¹ “Trinisinghe ma a au 3 sattanage sahavipipasau 7 panchapetchaluyancheva 5 chattudeva namapata 4 chawatcharacha isavasusavai 6 panchaintaramevacha tinasanganku 5 ekayakchami 1 navadeva asangvisulopusapuka 9 panchaphrommasahadi sahachadatri 5 taveracha puttho 2 atthaarahanta sepsevasetaasw 8 panchaouttha namamihang namoputthaya 5” (Thep et al., 1979: 374)



Figure 8. Fourth partition: *Trinisinghe*. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo.

Table 7. The twelve segments in the fourth partition

<i>Inscription</i>	<i>Transcription</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Illustration</i>
ปัญจะพุทธา 5	<i>panjaphuttha 5</i>	5 Buddha	5 Buddha
ขอ อาชา 6	<i>cho acha 6</i>	6 horses	6 horses
เทวราชา 2	<i>thewaracha 2</i>	2 deities	2 votive deities facing each other
ปัญจะพรหมา 5	<i>panjaphromma 5</i>	5 Brahma	5 Brahma
สัตตะนาเค 7	<i>sattanakhe 7</i>	7 <i>naga</i>	7 entwined <i>naga</i>
เอกะยักขา 1	<i>ekayakkha 1</i>	1 <i>yaksa</i>	1 <i>yaksa</i> (ogre, Alavaka)
ปัญจะเพ็ชฌกัญญ 5	<i>panjapetchalukan 5</i>	5 Indra	5 votive deities with green bodies (Visnu)
อัฐระอะระหันตา 8	<i>attha-arahanta 8</i>	8 arahants	8 votive monks
จตุเทวา 4	<i>jatuthewa 4</i>	4 guardians	4 deities (guardians of the 4 directions)
ปัญจะอินทรา 5	<i>panja-inthara 5</i>	5 Indra	5 Indra holding long knives
นวะเทวา 9	<i>nawathewa 9</i>	9 deities	9 deities (the constellations)
ตรีนีสิงเห 3	<i>trinisinghe 3</i>	3 lions	3 lions



Figure 9. Fourth partition, detail, Trinisinghe 3. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo.

The Trinisinghe *yantra* has long been popular among both Mon and Thai as a device for warding off misfortune. After a birth, it was hung in front of the house to protect the infant from demons and illness. It was often engraved on a metal plate fixed to the main pillar of a house for protection against fire and other calamities (Sirot, 2018: 52). Phrakhru Baidika Samat Khanatiwaro, abbot of Wat Noi Luangpho Niam in Bang Plama district, an expert on *yantra*, explained that the Trinisinghe *yantra* was formerly used for protection in different ways, including being inscribed on the rim of medicine pots (interview, 2 April 2022)

Fifth partition: animal years

In the fifth partition (Figure 10), the center circle has the sun god on a chariot, and each rectangle features a painting of a figure riding on an animal, standing next to a tree, with three jars on the ground and an inscription. These represent the animal years in the calendar.



Figure 10. The fifth partition, animal years. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo.

Table 8. *Animal years in the fifth partition*

Wat Chi Pakhao, fifth partition			Phrommachat	
Image	Inscription	Translation	Element	Tree
A woman riding a pig and holding a lotus	12 ปีขุน มนุสส์ผู้หญิง กอบัวหลวง	12 year of the pig, a woman, a lotus	water	lotus, pennywort ²
A god riding a rat and holding a long knife	1 ปีชวดเทวดาผู้ชาย ต้นมะพลั่ว	1 year of the rat, a male god, a coconut tree	water	coconut, banana
A man raiding an ox and holding a stick	2 ปีฉลู มนุสส์ผู้ชาย ต้นตาล	2 year of the ox, a man, a sugar palm tree	earth	sugar-palm
A female ogre riding a tiger and holding a club	3 ปีชาน ยักษ์ผู้หญิง ต้นขนุน	3 year of the tiger, a female ogre, a jackfruit tree	wood	jackfruit, ³ rang
A woman riding a rabbit	4 ปีเถาะ มนุสส์ผู้หญิง ต้นจ๊ว	4 year of the rabbit, a woman, a bombax tree	wood	Nalikai coconut, bombax ⁴
A man riding a snake and holding a lotus	6 ปีมะเส็ง มนุสส์ผู้ชาย ต้นรัง	6 year of the snake, a man, a rang tree	fire	bamboo, sal ⁵
A female god riding a horse	7 ปีมะเมีย เทวดาผู้หญิง ต้นกล้วย	7 year of a horse, a female god, a banana tree	fire	sugar-palm
A female god riding a goat and holding a lotus	8 ปีมีแม เทวดาผู้หญิง ต้นทอง	8 year of the goat, a female god, a golden tree	gold	parichat, ⁶ bamboo
An ogre riding a monkey and holding a club	9 ปีวอก ผีเสื้อผู้ชาย ต้นขนุน	9 year of the monkey, a male ogre, a jackfruit tree	iron	jackfruit
An ogre riding a rooster and holding a weapon	10 ปีรกา ยักษ์ผู้ชาย ต้นยาง	10 year of the rooster, an ogre, a yang tree	iron	yang, ⁷ cotton tree ⁸
A woman riding a dog and holding a fan	11 ปีจอ ผีเสื้อผู้หญิง ต้นสำโรง	11 year of the dog, a female ogre, a samrong tree	earth	samrong, ⁹ lotus
A god riding a naga and holding a long knife	5 ปีมีโรง เทวดาผู้ชาย กอไผ่	5 year of the great snake, a male god, a bamboo	gold	bombax, bamboo ¹⁰

² บัวบก, *bua bok*, *Centella asiatica*³ ขนุนสำมะลอ, *khanun sammalo*, a variety of jackfruit.⁴ จ๊ว, *ngiu*, *Bombax ceiba*⁵ รัง, *rang*, *Shorea siamensis*⁶ ปาริชาติ, either a mythical wishing tree in Indra's heaven, or a coral tree, *Erythrina variegata*.⁷ ยาง, *yang*, *Dipterocarpus alatus*⁸ ฝ้ายเทศ, *fai thet*, *Gossypium barbadense*⁹ สำโรง, *samrong*, *Sterculia foetida*.¹⁰ กอไผ่



Figure 11. The naga in the fourth partition, detail. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo.

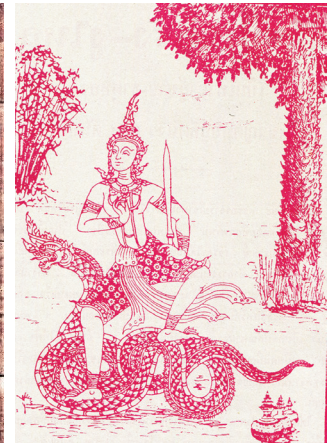


Figure 12. The naga in the Thep *Phrommachat* (Thep et al, 1978, n.p.)

For people born in each animal year, the *Phrommachat* specifies the animals, elements, and trees that will bring them good fortune, and has a prediction for those born on each day of the week. As seen in the table, the details in the Thep *Phrommachat* and the illustrations at Wat Chi Pakhao are largely similar with some small variations. The Thep *Phrommachat* has illustrations which are comparable to those at Wat Chi Pakhao (Figure 11, 12).

Sixth partition: guardians of the earth

The illustrations in the sixth partition show Krung Phali, a guardian god. At the center is an inscription stating: “the pictures in this partition are Krung Phali changing his appearance” (รูปภาพห้องนี้ กรุงพาลีแปลงกาย). (Figure 13, 14)



Figure 13. Sixth partition, guardians of the earth. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo.

In the Thep *Phrommachat*, there is a history of the Phra Phum (พระภูมิ), the guardians of the earth, who are worshipped in the ceremonies for building a house or other structure. An ogre named Mulakhani (มุลาคนี, *Mulākhāni*, *Mulagni*) was blessed by three gods and given fire eyes, but caused problems for both humans and gods, so Siva turned him into the ruler of a city named Phali. There he had a wife named Santhathuk who gave birth to nine sons, each of whom was assigned to protect certain places, as shown in Table 9 (Thep et al., 1978: 358–359).

Table 9. The sons of Krung Phali in the sixth partition

Son	Name	Protects
1st	Phra Chaimongkhon	houses and warehouses
2nd	Phra Nakonrat	forts, camps and stairs
3rd	Phra Tephon	shelters of elephants, horses and buffaloes
4th	Phra Chaisophan	rice warehouses
5th	Phra Khonthan	marriage halls
6th	Phra Thammahon	rice fields, plains, and wasteland
7th	Phra Waiyathat (wan)	temples
8th	Phra Thammikarat	gardens and plants
9th	Phra Thasathara	ponds, canals and rivers



Figure 14. Sixth partition, detail. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo.

The places are mainly relevant to an agricultural community. At the construction of a new house, a spirit house is built and ceremonies are held to invite the guardian spirits of the place to take up residence there and provide protection and good fortune to the residents. The Thep *Phrommachat* has elaborate details on this procedure including the timing of the ceremony, location of the shrine, materials used in its construction, equipment for the ceremony, the digging of the hole for the main post, instructions on composing *Trinisinghe* and other *yantra* to be placed in the house, and prayers for inviting the guardians and asking for their assistance. However, the Thep *Phrommachat* does not mention Phra Phum or Krung Phali changing their appearance according to the month.

Another text, *Phraphumi chaothi* (พระภูมิเจ้าที่), meaning “Phra Phum, lord of the place,” describes Phra Phum changing appearance according to the month as follows: 1st month, lord *naga* or *phra phai*, the wind god; 2nd, Rahu or Kala, god of death; 3rd, *asavamuk*, horse-faced god; 4th, chicken; 5th, elephant or Visnu; 6th, woman or *ratchasi*; 7th, swan; 8th, tiger; 9th, *garuda*; 10th, lion; 11th, white monkey or tiger; 12th, moon or lion. (Sutthilak, 1995: 50-52). In another book entitled *Lak kan pluk ban lae kan tang san tangtang* book (หลักการปลูกบ้านและการตั้งศาลต่าง ๆ), meaning “The principles for building a house and various spirit shrines”, the changes of Krung Phali are given as shown in Table 10. To invite Krung Phali to reside in the shrine, the offerings should be appropriate to his appearance in each month. (Phruetachan Viphutyoka and Phram Thao Mahesak, 2000: 119–120)

Table 10. *Appearances of Krung Phali in Lak kan pluk ban*

<i>Months</i>	<i>Appearance of Krung Phali</i>	<i>Offerings</i>
1 and 2	lord <i>naga</i>	Offer spicy raw meat and spicy fish.
3 and 4	<i>garuda</i>	Offer spicy raw meat and spicy fish.
5 and 6	ogre	Build a temporary shrine; offer spicy raw meat, rice, seven cups of liquor, nine candles
7 and 8	brahman	Offer <i>krayabuat</i> , any food except meat. ¹¹
9 and 10	<i>ratchasi</i>	Offer spicy raw meat and spicy fish.
11 and 12	elephant	Offer seven stems of two types of grass ¹² and <i>krayabuat</i> .

In the sixth partition of the ceiling at Wat Chi Pakhao, the center circle shows the moon god on a chariot, and each rectangle shows a different appearance of Krung Phali (Table 11). These do not correspond to those in the *Lak kan pluk ban lae kan tang san tangtang* book, but have the same principle of indicating what objects should be used in worship to suit the different appearances of Krung Phali in each month in order to promote auspiciousness for life.

¹¹ กระยาบวช, *kraya buat*.

¹² หญ้าแพรก, *ya phraek*, *Cynodon dactylon*, scutch grass, Bermuda grass; and หญ้าปล้อง, *ya plong*, *Hymenachne pseudointerrupta*

Table 11. *Appearances of Krung Phali in the sixth partition*

Month	Illustration	Inscription “Lord Krung Phali is...”	Translation
1st	monkey	วานร	wanon, monkey
2nd	white-robed hermit	ตาปะขาว	tapakhao, white-robed hermit
3rd	child with a topknot	เด็ก	dek, child
4th	green god holding a long knife	เทวราช	thewarat, devarāja
5th	ogre holding a club	ยักษ์	yak, yaksa, ogre
6th	naga	นาคี	nakhi, female naga
7th	rhinoceros	แรด	raet, rhinoceros
8th	crocodile	กุ่มผา	kumpha, mythical crocodile
9th	hermit	สิทธา	siddha, hermit, magician
10th	ogre	อสุรยักษ	asurayak, yaksa, ogre
11th	wichathon	วิชาธร	vijjadhara, “holder of knowledge,” a minor deity, sorcerer.
12th	noble man	พระยา	phraya (noble)



Figure 15. Seventh partition, divination for the year. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo.

Seventh partition: divination for the year

In the seventh partition at Wat Chi Pakhao (Figure 15, 16), there is an ogre at the center with an inscription “Twelve houses: men count from the stupa to the silver umbrella, women count from the stupa to the lord naga.” The surrounding twelve illustrations have a painting and a descriptive inscription as shown in Table 12.

Table 12. *The twelve houses in the seventh partition*

8 itinerant deity		7 golden umbrella	6 Rahu	5 golden <i>prasat</i>	
9 man in a cangue	10 male adept	ogre		4 royal pavillion	3 headless man
11 female adept		12 lord <i>naga</i>	1 stupa	2 silver umbrella	

In the Thep *Phrommachat*, there is a similar illustration with twelve items (Figure 17). This device is used for divining someone's fortune for that year. Starting at the stupa at center bottom, a man counts clockwise and a woman anti-clockwise for their age minus one. The symbols and the sequence differ between the Thep *Phrommachat* and the *wat* ceiling, but the principle is the same. The silver umbrella predicts great wealth in that year. The headless man predicts death from a sharp object, an accident, or at the hands of a powerful man. And so on (Thep et al. 1978: n.p.).



Figure 16. Seventh partition, detail, male adept at center.

Figure 17. Divination for the year from the Thep *Phrommachat* (Thep et al, 1978, n.p.)

Conclusion

The paintings on the ceiling of the teaching hall at Wat Chi Pakhao are strikingly different from the scenes from the Jataka tiles and the life of the Buddha that are the usual subjects of such paintings. There are similar paintings at nearby Wat Kaeo Takhianthong (Figure 18), but they were damaged by fire in 2011 and have been newly painted over. There is a similar painting of the Trinisinghe on the ceiling at Wat Pa Phai (วัดป่าไผ่) in Phoatham, Ratchaburi. Otherwise, the paintings at Wat Chi Pakhao appear to be unique. Their history is unknown. The abbot does not know when or why they were painted.

The 1986 survey of *wat* murals in Suphanburi province by the Fine Arts Department mentions Wat Chi Pakhao, but no survey report has been found. The paintings reflect beliefs in divination found in the *Phrommachat* manuals, and demonstrate the skill of local artists.



Figure 18. Painted ceiling at Wat Kaeo Takhianthong, Bang Plama. © Nuaon Khrouthongkhieo.

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Interview

Phrakhru baitika Samart Khanativaro; 2 April, 2022.

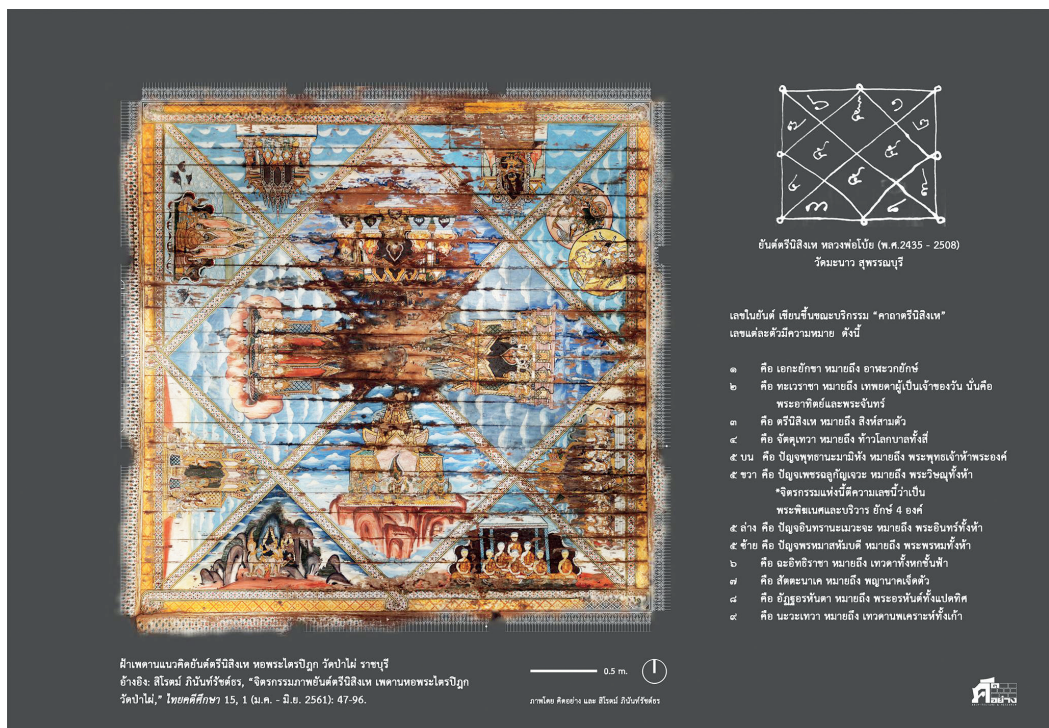


Figure 19. Paintings at Wat Pa Phai, Photharam; image from: “คิต้อย่าง” Facebook Fan Page https://www.facebook.com/Arch.kidyang/posts/4678915018816671/?locale=th_TH