

# บทวิเคราะห์คำทำนายเชียมซีในบริบทสังคมไทย

## An Analysis of Kau Cim Prophecies in the Thai Context

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### บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยครั้งนี้เพื่อวิเคราะห์คำทำนายเชียมซีในบริบทสังคมไทยเพื่อทราบว่าวิถีไทยใช้ภาพพจน์ในคำทำนาย เชียมซีอย่างไร คำทำนายในชุดเชียมซีมีกี่ประเภทและสะท้อนความเชื่อในวัฒนธรรมไทยอย่างไร และชุดคำทำนายเชียมซีมีคุณค่า ต่อบุคคลและสังคมไทยอย่างไร โดยรวบรวมชุดคำทำนายเชียมซีจากวัดในประเทศไทยจำนวนแปดแห่งเพื่อจัดประเภทคำทำนาย และวิเคราะห์แก่นสาระของคำทำนายแต่ละประเภทเพื่อเข้าใจความเชื่อที่แฝงอยู่ในตัวบทแต่ละประเภท จากการวิเคราะห์ตัวบทคำทำนายเชียมซี ผู้วิจัยพบว่าวิถีไทยมีการใช้ภาพลักษณ์คืออุปมา และการอ้างอิงวรรณกรรมไทยมากที่สุดในการเขียนคำทำนายเชียมซี และคำทำนายเชียมซีถูกแบ่งออกเป็นสามประเภท คือ คำทำนายที่ดี คำทำนายที่ตีปานกลาง และคำทำนายที่ไม่ดี โดยเมื่อวิเคราะห์แก่นสาระของทำนายแล้ว พบว่าคำทำนายถูกแบ่งเป็นสี่ประเภทหลัก คือ คำทำนายเรื่องลูก ญาติบุตรหลาน คดีความ คำทำนายเรื่องเงิน คำสั่งสอนทางพระพุทธศาสนา และคำสอนเรื่องวัฒนธรรมขนบธรรมเนียมไทย ผู้วิจัยพบว่าคำทำนายเรื่องเงิน และคำสั่งสอนทางพระพุทธศาสนาเป็นแก่นสาระที่พบมากที่สุด ผลการวิจัยยังพบว่าเชียมซีถือเป็นการเสี่ยงทายที่มีความสำคัญ

ทางวัฒนธรรม เนื่องจากเชียมซีสะท้อนถึงความเชื่อของคนไทยในการเสี่ยงทายอนาคต  
ถือเป็นหนทางสร้างความมั่นคงมั่นใจ และเป็นที่พึ่งทางใจ

**คำสำคัญ:** เชียมซี, การเสี่ยงทายในประเทศไทย, การวิเคราะห์ตัวบท, อุดมการณ์ใน  
ประเทศไทย

### Abstract

The objective of the paper is to analyze Kau Cim prophecies as cultural texts in the Thai context. There are three research questions in the study. 1) How do Thai poets use figures of speech in Kau Cim prophecies? 2) What are the categories of Kau Cim prophecies and how do they reflect Thai cultural beliefs? And, 3) What are the values of Kau Cim prophecies? Prophecies collected from eight Buddhist temples and shrines in Thailand are categorized and thematically analyzed. It is found that the prophecies are divided into four categories: 1) birth delivery, relatives and lawsuits, 2) money, 3) Buddhist teachings, and 4) Thai customs and rites. Money and Buddhist teachings are the two most frequently recurring themes. Regarding the values of Kau Cim prophecies, they offer predictions, provide a sense of security and are a source of psychological relief.

**Keywords:** Kau Cim, Thai prophecy, Textual analysis, Thai ideology

## Introduction

### Background: Kau Cim

'Kau Cim' is a fortune telling exercise which originated in China and is practiced in temples and shrines in Thailand. There are different titles to call it, namely *Chinese fortune sticks* or *Chi-chi sticks* in Western countries and *Siam See* in Thailand. The origin of Kau Cim is *Yi Ching* or *The Book of Changes*, the work of Chinese philosophy which is the foundation of Chinese culture. Also, *Yi Ching* is a traditional source of predicting the future via 8 and 64 trigrams. For the Chinese, divination is a ritual which is importantly performed in religious venues, namely temples and shrines. *Zhan Bu* or divination embodies the cultural values of the Chinese to cope with all issues in one's life no matter whether it is work, romance, family or health.

Many philosophers and interpreters agree on the complexity of a Yi Ching prophecy due to a number of reasons; firstly, a prophecy is metaphorically written using the symbolism of natural elements to signify a state of continual transition in life. They include heaven, earth, thunder, water, swamp, mountain, fire and wind. Secondly, a prophecy does not foretell a specific aspect in life, which leads to multiple interpretations of the text. Last but not least, as a Chinese character can be defined differently according to the context, a Yi Ching prophecy is highly contextual. Without the help of a knowledgeable interpreter, a prophecy would be too complex for the public to understand the rich meanings of the text. All of these reasons explain why Yi Ching was later adapted to the practice of Kau Cim which is more convenient and contributes more readable predictions.

Kau Cim as an original Chinese cultural exercise set root in Thailand in 1573 in the first Chinese Kyan Yin Shrine in Pattani province. During this historical period, Chinese people who escaped from the starvation and

suppression of mainland China settled in Thailand and started spreading their culture. Sirirak (2006) agrees that Chinese boat people as a new group of immigrants expressed their cultural identity through Chinese food, language, rituals of giving provision to ancestral spirits, religious belief and the practice of Kau Cim in Chinese temples. Currently, Chinese diasporas in Thailand account for nearly eight million people which is the third highest population group after Singapore and Malaysia (Matichon, 2012). Undoubtedly, Chinese cultures have been vastly spreading in the kingdom and quickly assimilating with Thai cultures. Besides its presence in Thailand and Chinese-populated countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam, Kau Cim is exercised in Burma, Laos and Cambodia as well. The present exercise of Kau Cim in various countries poses a question on the significance of the practice and the prophecies per se.

Unlike other types of fortune telling, a person can exercise Kau Cim alone and the tools and process are simple enough. The tools needed to exercise the prophecy are a red bamboo Cim bucket, Kau Cim sticks, Jiaobei blocks (two wooden blocks) and prophecies in numerical orders. The practice starts with a person making a wish in front of a Buddha image and asking a question to an oracle. Next, the person shakes a Cim bucket until a stick protrudes and drops on the floor. Then Jiaobei blocks are tossed. If the blocks show the flat and round sides facing up, the prophecy is a divine answer. However, tossing the blocks is not popular in Thailand as it is fairly time-consuming. If the blocks show two round sides or two flat sides, he/she has to start from the beginning. This step is thus omitted in many temples in Thailand. Lastly, the oracle which is written in a numerical order is collected. In Thailand, a set of prophecies comprises between 26 and 36 numbers. Apart from its convenience, Kau Cim costs a very little amount of money in the form of a

donation to temples or shrines. The amount of money a person donates is variable and depends on his/her willingness. In the past, people paid only 1 baht while 20 baht is observable in present days. The fee for Kau Cim is considered a lot cheaper than other forms of fortune telling which can incur a charge of at least 200 baht per session. Moreover, the majority of people are willing to pay for Kau Cim as they could make merit by donating money to temples.

In terms of research findings on Kau Cim practitioners, Chakrit (1996) found that women practice Kau Cim more than men, people of different age groups practice it but the younger generation tend to be involved slightly more as they wish to learn about their love life and study. Next, the research shows that when people have a higher educational background, they practice Kau Cim less. Last but not least, single people are inclined to have their futures told more than married ones as it is possible that the former group feels higher uncertainty in their lives than the latter group.

### **Thai belief system and Kau Cim role in the Thai Context**

The importance of fortune telling is different in each culture. Westerners label it as a superstition and the act of fortune telling was banned in the past in the West. Historically, there was an implementation of a US law to monitor Gypsies by requiring them to register with the police upon entering a state and make it illegal to be a fortune teller without a license (Oprea, 2007). These are some examples of the outlawed and unacceptable status of fortune telling which is claimed to be scientifically unproven. On the contrary, the act of fortune telling in Eastern cultures including Thailand portrays cultural values of accepting the practice as a part of one's life. Accordingly, the Thai belief system and the role of Kau Cim are illustrated here to contribute better understanding of its existence in Thailand.

Apinya, Suoneth, and Phraracha (2011) agree that the Thai belief system comprises Buddhism and the beliefs in supernatural power, ancestral spirit and deities. They are a set of beliefs which are inseparable in Thai communities and are expressed through different rituals. Before the introduction of Buddhism in Thailand, historically called 'Suvannabhumi', Thai people performed rites to worship spiritual power in order to ask for rain, rice fertility and ward off evil in sick children. The belief in a supernatural relieved fear and life uncertainty and was absolutely crucial in those days when medical knowledge and technology did not exist in a locality (Sanit, 1996). Given the fact that Buddhism is the religion practiced by 95 percent of the Thai population, the supernatural power beliefs are not on the wane. Instead, Buddhism and belief in deities coexist and represent Thai culture. This demonstrates that when Thai culture is not opposed to beliefs surrounding unseen spirits, the existence of different types of fortune telling including Kau Cim is more understandable in the Thai context.

Chuang (2011) asserts that divination is a ritual practiced in many different cultures. This is true in Thai culture as Kau Cim is performed as a religious rite and as a cultural representation of the religious life in traditional and current Thai society. Thanks to the influence from the original Chinese Kau Cim, Thai Kau Cim is the only type of divination appearing in temples and shrines. Moreover, Kau Cim prophecy is different from other prediction texts because it does not only foretell but also teaches Buddhist precepts. Discussing the role of Thai temples here would contribute to making the importance of the texts clearer.

Temples are ultimately important as they are the center of the Thai mentality to create harmony in social, political and economic units. A role of the temple is to teach both Buddhist concepts and social norms to people to be

virtuous and have preferable behaviors in communities. To put it another way, a temple functions as a behavior shaper and social reformer in Thai communities. Religious rituals, namely praying to the Buddha image, giving alms or listening to monks' preaching, are used to teach people. The crucial function of Thai temples sheds light on the role of Kau Cim as a ritual rite and a tool of the temple to improve people's behaviors and minds. Furthermore, temples are venues where people can rest their minds and relieve stress and frustration in their lives. Traditional beliefs support people with troubled minds to visit temples to perform rites as everything would get better. Despite the fact that the actual outcome of the rites cannot be realistically and scientifically evaluated, they successfully brighten laypeople's minds. Kaewchaiya, Kiangkrai, Phothisan, and Purisuttamo (2011) contend that the religious ritual acts as a life encouragement. In a similar vein, the precision of Kau Cim might not be due to the faithfulness of the question yet the prophecy works its way to make people feel better.

It is concluded in this section that Kau Cim which is a practice of divination is more culturally meaningful than the fortune telling practice in the West. Furthermore, Kau Cim successfully negotiates itself in Thai temples as a religious ritual due to 1) the traditional Thai belief system comprising Buddhism and supernatural power, 2) the influence of the original Chinese Kau Cim and 3) its function in temples in predicting the future and teaching people.

### Kau Cim poetic writing

As a literary text, Kau Cim prophecies are written in a unique pattern by Thai poets. They are written in verse with a narrative style and give predictions on different aspects in life including money, romance, health, debt and debtors, son and daughter, lost items, lawsuit, and relatives. Thai Kau Cim prophecies



are different from those of Chinese and Western Kau Cim. Chinese prophecies are written in verse as are those in Thai; however, Yi Ching's predictions do not focus on any aspects of life as it is the interpreters' or readers' responsibility to provide an interpretation on their own. A prophecy might mean a better career to a person but a smooth relationship to another. At the same time, western prophecies are written in prose and a short sentence is normally observed.

Kau Cim prophecies were first translated by Pleun Saesong in a Kalayanamit temple during King Rama V's reign. There are also other versions of prophecies which were created during that time and are being used currently. Thai poets selected a Thai octameter poem, a traditional poem in Thai literature, to tailor the prophecies. A poem comprises four lines. Four Octameter poems totaling sixteen lines is the norm for a prophecy. Nonetheless, poems consisting of fourteen and fifteen lines are also minimally noticed. In terms of the structure, a text begins with the number of the prophecy which is used in a fixed pattern. For example, 'ใบที่หนึ่งว่า.....' (The first prophecy says...), and 'ใบที่สิบว่า....' (the tenth prophecy says....), while prophecies and teachings are listed in the middle of the text. Lastly, the prophecy ends with the traditional Thai 'เออย' (eoy), which means the end (Chakrit, 1996).

As Kau Cim prophecies are cultural texts produced to serve temple goers, the texts must be adequately communicative through language use so that all readers understand the messages on the first read. Despite some traditional words used in the text, it is easy to understand with simple words. The use of octameter poems creates a poetic beauty with rhymes and also enhances the communicative objective of the text through its sound. For language availability, Thai and Chinese are used in the text. However, modern published versions include English as a third language. Each language in the text functions differently. Thai is used to convey messages to Thai readers while

English is a translation added to provide predictions for foreigners who cannot understand Thai but wish to have their future told. English is used as a means to attract tourists to temples. This reflects the modern view on temples as tourist destinations. As Chinese is not used in Thailand, the Chinese verse cannot fulfill a communicative role yet illustrates the evidence of the originality of the practice. Furthermore, it creates a visual impact to readers as a sacred rite.

It is noticed that the texts which historically belong to Chinese culture have been created by people from the dominating Thai culture to serve the need of Thais to know the unknown. The texts later became cultural identity which is exclusive to Thai culture.

## Methodology

In his paper, Urpo (2002) critiques the methodology of textual analysis in literary studies that the methodology is a text-centered analysis and it ignores the study of cultural 'context' in which text is created. This lends weight to the argument that a text cannot contribute all meanings to the readers if there is a lack of interaction between readers and texts. To put it another way, an analysis of any text on its own is not sufficient if the necessarily contextual nature of reading is overlooked. Given the fact that the significance of Kau Cim prophecies per se cannot be perfectly manifested, the study of the texts and the Thai context is chosen to create more meanings to this textual analysis and to strengthen the texts as Thai cultural texts.

In this study, the researcher researched temples that are the most frequented in Bangkok and then collected eight sets of Kau Cim prophecies totaling 273 prophecies to examine the frequency of occurrence in different prophetic themes. Next, content analysis was employed to categorize the prophecies in different themes and to locate underlying ideologies in the Thai

context. Lastly, findings from content analysis along with secondary research on Kau Cim are studied to investigate the values of the text to a Thai and to Thai society.

## Findings

### The use of figures of speech

Besides certain characteristics of Thai Kau Cim prophecies which are mentioned previously, the use of figures of speech is prevalent in the texts to display the poetic beauty in literary works by Thai poets in conveying ideas beyond what the images literally describe. Simile and allusion are two figures of speech which are predominantly used in the prophecies.

Simile is used in the prophecies to describe a life that resembles something. Due to the nature of prediction that consists of both good and bad fortune-telling, readers can understand the meaning of negative and positive predictions via simile. Simile is used to create lyrics which are beautiful when being read out, yet it is an appropriate means to communicate with readers of all knowledge levels. In the text, humans, animals, plants or inanimate objects are frequently used to represent a life. The indicators of simile are the following words which can be defined as being similar in meaning: เหมือน (meun), ดัง (dang), ดัง (dang), ดุจ (dood), เปรียบ (preab), เป็น (pen), เปรียบเหมือน (preab-meun), เปรียบดัง (preab-dang) and เสมือน (sa-meun) (Chakrit, 1996).

Unlike the Western simile which demonstrates a direct equation such as 'tall as a crane', or 'The Roman road runs straight and bare as the pale parting-line in hair', Thai simile is more of a parallel to a state, an action or a transition of a compared thing. Examples of this case are 'a life is similar to a starving tiger that is lost in town' and 'a life resembles a fruitful tree which is complimented by everyone' or 'a life is like a sailor who is sailing against strong

wind'. This reflects the communicative style of Thai text which is indirect, circular and descriptive when being compared to those of Western cultures.

By and large, simile is employed by equating a life to a state of humans, plants and animals to mark the rise and decline in one's life. Noticeably, things that are employed in simile are closely connected with Thai daily life and the agricultural occupation of traditional Thais.

(a) A life is compared to a vagabond, a poor or a disabled person (e.g. deaf) to predict the hardship or the happiness in life.

*ดังคนจรเดินป่าพนาลัย ลัดวิถีทางในพนาวา*

*Your life is like a vagabond who is tumbling in the wild.*

*ดังคนจนต้องพบประสบทอง ที่ไคร้รำหมองสูญหมดสดฤดี*

*Your life resembles a poor man who has discovered gold.*

(b) A life is compared to a state of a plant, a tree or a flower.

*ใบที่สองต้องกันเหมือนจันทน์ฉาย เปรียบกับต้นพฤษีครวราที่ตาย แล้วกลับกลาย  
ได้เป็นเหมือนเช่นเดิม*

*Your life is like a tree that nearly dies but is now flourishing again.*

*เปรียบเหมือนต้นพฤษีขามธนาทอง รากแก้วต้องขาดไปอยู่ไม่ทน*

*Your life is similar to a plant without roots.*

(c) A life is equal to an animal.

Various animals are used in Thai simile such as chicken, bird, fish, horse, buffalo, lion, dragon, snake, tiger, swan, crow and dog. Most of them are seen in daily life such as the buffalo which is the most important animal for the agricultural occupation by helping farmers sow rice seeds. However, the use of swan and dragon is influenced by Chinese Kau Cim signifying the glory and the power of these animals, respectively. Thais poets use animals' characteristics to foretell a reader's future. For example, tiger, lion, dragon, horse and swan

are powerful animals in Thai beliefs used to foretell a positive prediction while buffalo, crow and dog are inferior in power and are mentioned to suggest a negative prophecy. Poets sometimes match high-power and low-power animals in the same context to describe how life is transitioning to better or worse. In this case, a tiger and a dog, a horse and a buffalo, and a swan and a crow are placed together in a prophecy.

ใบที่สี่ไซ้ไร่เหมือนไกลคู่ มิได้รู้ยามพบประสบสอง เหมือนลูกไก่ฝูงเดียวเที่ยว  
คณอง ตัวหนึ่งต้องจากไปเสียไกลครัน

*The number 4 says you will be separated from your love like a lost pullet.*

เหมือนลูกนกสอนบินเที่ยวผินผ่น ถูกลมหันพัดตกไ้อ้อกเอ๋ย

*Your life is like a bird that is hit by a strong wind.*

(d) Failure in prophetic communication

A sampling of prophecies at Kuan Yin temple in Bangkok shows unsuccessful use of simile to communicate with Thai readers. The failure occurs as the prophecies are directly translated from Chinese texts which are highly contextual. As Kau Cim prophecies are cultural texts, it is difficult for Thai readers who do not share the Chinese culture to interpret the text.

ตัวเราเหมือนแม่ทัพทำศึกได้ชัยชนะมีผู้ยกย่องสรรเสริญทั่วไป

*You are like an army leader who is praised by all citizens.*

ที่สี่สิบหีบเทียบเปรียบอำมาตย์ มีอำนาจรบปราบปรามให้ราบเสี้ยน

*You resemble a victor who conquers all enemies.*

Chinese Kau Cim frequently compares a life to an army leader, an emperor or a host which reflects the history of warfare, colonization and a culture of hosting guests. Given the fact that it contributes rich meanings in Chinese culture, the prophecies are not pragmatically useful for Thais as

readers cannot fully achieve understanding of the texts' meaning without an interpreter.

Apart from simile, allusion is used in Kau Cim forecasting to infer to a character in Thai literature such as Vessadon, Thai Ramayana and Khun Chang Khun Pan. Allusions are used in Kau Cim to narrate a certain part in a traditional literature in order to give the negative or positive prophecy.

Vessadon is a literary work narrating the tenth birth of the Buddha. Vessadon is renowned for his merit giving while Thai Ramayana is influenced by an ancient Sanskrit epic in India and Nepal which King Rama II adapted and simplified into Thai literature narrating the fight between Rama and Thodsakan. Last but not least, Khun Chang Khun Pan is a literature produced in King Rama II's reign about a love triangle among Khun Chang, Khun Pan and Wanthong. It is based on a true story accounted for in the Supanburi province of Thailand. All literatures are poetically and culturally significant and they are listed as compulsory literature in the national educational curriculum for all students in Thailand. As allusions involve the understandings that people share culturally, it is highly possible that readers from other cultures would not understand the texts.

ตามตำราว่าได้เมื่อพระราเมศร์ ได้ดวงเนตรสืบตามาสถาน ตั้งแต่มีสุขไม่ทุกข์  
นาน ที่คิดการหามิตรสมคิดเคย

*Your sadness will be away as when **Rama** brings **Sida** back to the kingdom.*

เหตุจะมารุมโรคให้โคกคัลย์เหมือนนิภากหมอดูคู่กุมภันท์ ทศกัณท์ขับส่งจาก  
ลงกา

*You will face bad fortune like **Pipek** who is ejected out of town by **Thodsakan**.*

All of these examples are accounts of a specific part in different Thai literatures. The first and second derive from Thai Ramayana. The former suggests a happy ending when Rama brings back his wife, Sida, who was kidnapped by Thodsakan. The latter narrates the ejection of Pipek, Thodsakan's subordinate and a city oracle, who foretold that he will lose Sida soon. The third text narrates a part when Vessandon who is not materialistically focused decides to give away everything he has to the poor. Last but not least, the prophecy recounts the story of Khun Pan, a tactful soldier, who has won a war.

Allusions reveal the poets' wisdom in creating mesmerizing poetic beauty as they capture the traditional narration in poems. Furthermore, readers can experience the pastoral illustrations of bygone Thailand which was idyllic and pure. By reading the prophecies, younger generations can perceive the atmosphere of the old days which they cannot experience now.

### Content analysis

After investigating the writing pattern and figures of speech of Kau Cim, it is worthwhile to analyze the text content to understand the underlying ideologies in the text. Content analysis is the chosen method, in which eight sets of prophecies totaling 273 texts from eight temples and shrines in Thailand are categorized into three prophecy types and nine themes. Primary data are collected from eight Indian Buddhist and Chinese Buddhist temples and shrines to affirm the text coverage. They include Kalayanamit temple, Bovornivet temple, Phrachetupon temple, Panan Choeng temple, City Pillar shrine, Poh Teck Tung shrine, Kuan Yin shrine and Shiang Kong shrine. The analysis looks into the frequency of occurrence of good, neutral and bad prophecies. Later, money and teaching which are two of the most recurring prophetic themes are explored.

*Prophecy types: Good, Neutral, Bad*

From the primary texts categorization, Kau Cim prophecy is set into three types of fortune telling — good, neutral and bad. Good telling suggests positive or excellent predictions in all aspects in life. However, when one or two aspects in life are neutrally foretold, this falls into the neutral category. Lastly, bad telling predicts only the negative shades in life. Noticeably, solutions or ways-out to bad prophecies are normally given to Kau Cim practitioners (Chakrit, 1996). See *Table 1*.

**Table 1:** Frequency of occurrence among good, neutral and bad Kau Cim prophecies.

	Good	Neutral	Bad	Total
Quantity	100	85	88	273
Percentage (%)	36.63	31.13	32.23	100

It is shown in Table 1 that the good prophecies are calculated at 36.63% frequency, neutral predictions at 31.31% and bad telling at 32.23%. The data can be interpreted in different terms. Initially, good telling outnumbered bad telling. The figures demonstrate the higher possibility of a person to get good fortune rather than bad ones. Furthermore, the percentage total of good and neutral prophecies (67.76%) is double that of bad prediction. Thus, the texts are able to respond to a person's wish to listen to good news. In the meantime, the texts always provide solutions to bad comings in negative prophecies. Accordingly, Kau Cim prophecies act as a practice providing mental relief or therapy rather than a let-down to Kau Cim readers to some extent. This is incongruent with the role of Kau Cim as a religious ritual to comfort the temples goers. Merging a Western belief into a superstitious exercise of fortune telling, Kau Cim is proven to be a practice that works successfully with people's minds.



*Thematic analysis*

Regarding the Kau Cim tradition in Thailand, a total of nine themes are foretold in a set of Kau Cim prophecies entailing money, romance, health, debt and debtors, son and daughter (birth delivery), lost items, lawsuit, relatives and teaching. Teaching is considered a theme because it is a prevalent feature that is unique in the text. It is thus worthwhile to take it into account in the analysis. In a single prophecy, four to seven themes are generally covered. As a cultural product, apparent themes in Kau Cim are found culturally related to Thai societies. Illustrating the point, it is not questionable that money and romance are two universal appeals inherent in all types of fortune telling. In congruence with fortune cookie prophecies in US culture, the largest number of prophecies in fortune cookies involve money and romance (Jing & Yoshitake, 2008). However, in Thai cultures, prophecies on issues other rather than money and romantic encounters are found. Given these facts, this part begins with a brief investigation on the themes of birth delivery, relatives and lawsuit to show the cultural ideologies embedded in the texts. Later, money and teaching are thoroughly examined as they are the three most recurring themes in Kau Cim prophecies.

*Analysis of prophecies on birth delivery, relatives and lawsuit**(a) Prophecies on birth delivery*

To begin, birth delivery is crucial in Thai traditional society. As Thai families are extended, the role of women in the past was to give birth to new members of the family in order to assure a prolonged bloodline. Consequently, pregnancy or child expectation is a traditional ideology where women are socially expected to be fertile. Interestingly, the gender of an expected baby is different between Chinese Buddhist and Indian Buddhist prophecies. While

Indian Buddhist texts predict that a female or male would be delivered, Chinese Buddhist texts only state a male baby would be born. The finding demonstrates the Chinese belief that baby girls are less preferable than boys as the girls are expected to get married and become a wife and a mother of a different family, whereas boys could preserve the original bloodline. The evidence of a patriarchal society and sexist ideology are clearly reflected through the child delivery prophecies.

แม่นกามบุตรในท้องอย่าหมองหม่น บอกยุคแล้วหญิงจริงเจียวเอ๋ย

*You will deliver a female baby.*

แม่นอยากมีบุตรรักตระหนกจิต ไม่ปกปิดบอกได้ว่าไม่สม

*If you are expecting a baby, it is not a proper timing.*

#### (b) Prophecies on relatives

In terms of the prophecies on relatives, Kau Cim oracles reflect a collectivistic social pattern in Thailand. While western cultures emphasize individualism and independence, Thais are interdependent and mutually supportive. To put it another way, Thai cultures value socializing among family members and friends, as staying in groups is a social member's safety zone. The culture of valuing social harmony is well expressed in the theme of prophecy (Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, 1990). A positive prediction normally foretells that separated cousins or comrades would be reunited whereas the negative telling predicts that the reader would not meet his/her relatives soon. As Thai cultures become increasingly Westernized with technology assimilation, younger generations tend to adopt more of an individualistic culture by being more independent and confident. Nonetheless, Kau Cim is a valuable source to investigate traditional ways of living.

ถามหาญาติลูกหนี้หนี้พักตรา ขอยาวว่าจะได้พบประสบัติ

*You will meet your cousins and debtors soon.*

ถามถึงที่ไปมาจะหาใคร ก็ไม่สมอารมณ์หมายเหมือนใจจิต

*You will not meet your cousins as you wish.*

### (c) Prophecies on lawsuit

Lastly, lawsuit is another issue that is mentioned in prophecies. The inclusion expresses the concern of people in the past about having a lawsuit and going to court. Historically, the justice system was transformed in Rama V's reign in mixed patterns between Thai and Indian cultures (Vayu, 2012). This new transformation in Thailand worried Thai citizens who had to go to court if a lawsuit was filed. On top of the unfamiliarity with the newly adapted justice system and the characteristics of Thais who tended to avoid conflict, attending the court became a serious issue. It is clearly seen that Kau Cim texts which were translated in the same historical period captured the Thais' fearful sentiment regarding a lawsuit.

แม้เป็นความก็จะชนะเขา ความของเราเป็นต่อในข้อหา

*If you go to court, you will win the case.*

ถ้าเป็นความเราต้องแพ้แยบยุบยัน รีบขยันทางเหคิดเร่หนี

*Be careful if you go to the court as you might lose the case.*

### *Analysis of prophecies on money*

It is an accepted notion that people wish to have money in life or be rich. Kau Cim prophecies reflect this universal ideology through the predictions on money. Agreeing with Chakrit (1996), money prophecies are found to be the most frequently recurring theme. Thus, it is constructive to look into the ideologies implicit in the texts.

Thailand is a Buddhist country and Buddhism shapes Thai culture. Supporting Kaewchaiya et al. (2011), culture is the pattern of lives of people in each community. It is collected and practiced from generation to generation in forms of practice, belief and manmade items. Inarguably, Buddhism is one of the essential beliefs apart from the belief in supernatural power. In other words, these sets of beliefs form the core of Thai culture. Given the fact that Thailand is a Buddhist-oriented culture, a contradictory ideology is shown in Kau Cim prophecies. Buddhism teaches people to put aside money because it leads to unhappiness and greed, yet people's wish to have their future told on monetary issues tends to supersede Buddhist Dhamma. To be clear, Buddhism teaches laypeople on the *8 truths of life* or *8 Rokatham* to point out the uncertainty in life — when money comes, it certainly goes. However, it is interesting to note that the predominant prediction of Kau Cim is about money. After looking into the primary data, the theme of monetary prophecy can be grouped into two sub-themes: money as a means of survival and easy money.

(a) Money as a means of survival

Monetary prophecies are a manifestation of the concern that is shared by Thais about money. In this sense, money reflects the psychology of low income people who do not view money not as a means of success but a means of survival. These people have to struggle and endure hardship in daily life to cover expenditures and support their families. In Thai culture, people use a popular phrase ‘หาเช้ากินค่ำ’ (*ha chao kin kam*), which means earning money to survive each day, to describe suppressed, uneducated people who do labor-oriented jobs. In a way, Kau Cim effectively functions as an emotion soother to lighten stress in lives or motivate prophecy readers to work harder for a better future. On the contrary, a prophecy might be perceived as a momentary escape from real life or a false hope.

In a broader aspect, the texts reflect the traditional Thai hierarchic society which passes over from generation to generation and has become Thai culture. People who are anxious about money are not those in the top of the social hierarchy but those in the lower status. In the past, a civil servant was more financially secure than a slave. Furthermore, education was also a major factor to set up people in a higher position with higher power than those who were uneducated. It is shown that Kau Cim texts on money for survival work better on the underprivileged (the poor) than the privileged (the rich). Accordingly, a gap between these two groups in the society is reflected in the texts per se.

Kau Cim does not only reflect the old ideologies but also explicitly illustrates the current problems in Thailand, the first of which is the inequality in Thai societies. Thai culture is divided into the privileged and underprivileged using money as a main criterion. While a group of people in urban areas are millionaires or even billionaires, 5.8 million people who are living in rural localities are categorized as 'poor' through the measure of the poverty line determined to be a monthly income of 1,579 baht (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2012). Secondly, it portrays hardship in daily life. Money has become the most important and serious issue in the present Thai context of capitalism due to many factors, which include rising cost of living, more competitive environment, and higher unemployment rate. Consequently, stress and pressure in life stem from monetary matters. This sub-theme of predictions does not discourage readers to work less or feel unfortunate about their lives but encourages them to continue working hard for a better future. In other words, it underlies a 'not giving up' and 'fighting' ideology in the current Thai context. However, it is significant that this view on money does not contradict Buddhist Karma which believes in action, intention and consequences.

ถามหาลากนี้ไขว้ก็ได้ยาก ต้องลำบากทุกขร้อนจนผ่นผ้น จึงได้ัฐพอหล่อเลี้ยง  
กายา ที่ได้มากินหมดไม่อดตาย

*You have to struggle to relieve your burden and you will earn sufficient  
money for survival.*

เรื่องลาภผลไม่ยากได้มากมี งานทวีเหนี่ยวยากตรากตรำเอ๋ย”

*You will earn much money through hard work.*

#### (b) Money as easy money

Kau Cim prophecies present the other sub-theme in viewing money as easy money or what is earned without any effort through easier means such as inheritance or lottery. Messages go beyond viewing money as a basic means of survival but a wish to get money without action or working. Additionally, it is also implied by the notion of easy money that a happy life can be brought about by money alone. The texts present the Thai sentiment about risk-taking in lottery or gambling as it is usual to observe Thais praying for supernatural power to win the games. Yet, this contributes to a negative outlook on life when people really believe that praying, wishing and waiting are what they would need to do to gain money.

ถามถึงลาภว่าดีวิจิทยาย อุปถัมภ์มากมายอยู่ใกล้เอ๋ย

*Your patron will bring you money.*

ถามหาลากไบนี่ว่าดีนัก ท่านว่าจักสมจิตคิดประสงค์

*You will get money as you wish.*

It is crucial to mention here that the belief in easy money contrasts with Buddhist teaching because in Buddhism money is seen as a mere illusion leading to unhappiness in an earthly life. This point is particularly relevant to the criticism of Buddhadasa Bhikku, a monk and Buddhist philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who states the problem of the materialistic consumption culture in

Thailand. He defines materialism in the Thai context as “a perspective of a world that strives after sensory happiness. As consumers in Thai society, many Buddhists have set life goals about eating, fulfilling desires, and honor, making their lifestyles like a competition and acting selfishly much of the time” (Phrakhruphaowanasamathikhun, Uthai, & Suchitra, 2011, p. 3). The contradicting views on money lead to different definitions of happiness. While materialism says money can be used to buy happiness, Buddhism believes that happiness only derives from living life moderately and giving. It can be understood that Thai ideology in materialism is directly influenced by Western materialism and the penetration of large communication tools such as the Internet, print media or television. In easing the problem of materialism which is viewed as a disease of modern Thai culture, Buddhadasa Bhikku believes that Buddhist ‘prudence’ which refers to sufficient and moderate consumption is the solution. Notably, while Kau Cim celebrates money, Buddhism does not take money into account in living a peaceful life (Phrakhruphaowanasamathikhun et al., 2011).

### *Analysis of prophecies on Buddhist teaching*

It is valuable to analyze teaching in Kau Cim as it is a unique feature of the texts and it is the second most frequently repeating theme after money. Unlike other types of fortune telling, Buddhist teaching is normally included in the texts to teach readers about Buddhist concepts. Apinya et al. (2011) support that Buddhist concepts are disseminated through three means, monk’s instructions, demonstration and literary works. Despite Kau Cim texts not being seriously religious, Kau Cim underlies the Buddhist Karma concept that a reader would have good things in life if he commits good deeds or he would earn more money if he works hard. In one way, the prophecy helps Buddhists

become virtuous and elevate their inner minds to a more peaceful state. In another way, the texts indirectly shape the behaviors of temple goers by teaching the norms. It seems that the prophecies work on the psychology of readers by making them believe that they are reading about their actual future reality. Instead, teachings are being directed to them in an indirect way. Illustrating the point, if people are taught in a straightforward manner, they would naturally reject moral lessons. On the contrary, the text provides the notion that if prophecy readers follow the teachings, the positive predictions would come true and the bad ones would not occur. It must be noted that a personal belief about Kau Cim can either increase or decrease the value of the text. This means the more a person believes in prophecy, the more the inclination he will apply the teachings to his real life.

Before the analysis on teaching, it is crucial to illustrate the coexistence of Kau Cim as a fortune-telling phenomenon and Buddhism in the Thai context despite their contradictory nature. Fundamentally, the aim of Buddhist philosophies is to reach Buddhist Enlightenment (Bohdi). Practicing Buddhist Dhamma is the only means to achieve nirvana, the spiritual realm that is free from human feeling, birth, and death, where an ultimate communication through transcendental messages occurs. The pure concept of Buddhism deals mainly with spirituality and how a human being who is being polluted with afflictions can develop his mind like the enlightened Buddha in nirvana (Ishii, 2007). In contrast, the ideology in fortune telling focuses on the worldly realm of human lives. A prophecy normally reveals the ways how a man can live a happy life in this world without mentioning the advanced Dhamma way to enlightenment. The belief in supernatural power is also closely related to the divination practice. Although they are conceptually dissimilar, they smoothly synchronize in Thai societies. According to Anuman Ratchathon, Thai belief



culture mixes traditional beliefs in spirit and Buddhism. While Buddhism teaches people to think consciously and use reasons, faith in supernatural powers is a long-rooted belief providing emotional certainty to social members. Finally, conscious and rational thinking in Buddhism and the belief in supernatural powers are inseparable in practicality (Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, 1990). This validates the existence of Kau Cim prophecies in the Thai Buddhist context.

Turning to an analysis of the teaching theme in the texts, Buddhist teachings apparent in Kau Cim prophecies involve consciousness, contemplation, perseverance, Buddhist Karma, suffering abandon, merit-making, harmony, sources of vanity (greed, anger, infatuation), wisdom, respect and the three truths of life. In the following analysis, consciousness, Karma and making merit are explored as they are the most frequently mentioned teachings.

Firstly, the prophecies frequently direct people to be conscious, to be careful of what other people would do, and to not rush as mistakes would occur when people do not think consciously. Interestingly, poets add teaching of consciousness to the texts in an entertaining and easily understandable way when the concept is applied in daily life scenarios such as consciousness in work and romance. An important function of the texts is that they awake laypeople who are desperate and bombarded with life problems to realize the truth of the ups and downs of life.

ตั้งสติอบรมถึงผลลัพท์ อย่าก่อกมลกลับจับจذبทักงา ขึ้นร้อนรนผลร้ายจะมีมา  
*If you are not well aware, you will encounter troubles.*

ถามถึงผู้คู่เคียงจะเรียงพักรตร์ อย่าได้ฝักใฝ่เห็นเป็นแก่นสาร มีแต่ร้ายร้อน  
 ทำให้รำคาญ สงบกายยังสติตริตระองเอย  
*Be conscious in selecting a lover.*

Secondly, teaching Karma and merit-making are investigated. Buddhist Karma is one's intention or motivation while doing an action. In other words, it is actions which can be accumulated in the past or in this life and will pay off in the future. The effect of Karma is inevitable. In addition, it is believed to be a moral law in the universe that determines a person's rebirth. Good Karma would lead to good rebirth and bad Karma would lead to a bad rebirth (Van Esterik, 2012). Yet, the concept of Karma is criticized as there is no scientific evidence to prove that actions in the past would manifest themselves in the present, either positively or negatively, for doers. The belief in past life is considered superstitious in some cultures as well. Disagreeing, Buddhist Karma is coherent with the law of cause and effect to a certain degree. It shows that every cause has its consequence and they are constantly conjoined. Above all, Buddhist Karma underlies the core ideology of Thais of 'what goes around comes around'. The prophecies stress teaching Karma by pointing to the readers that they would experience happiness in their lives if they commit positive Karma through good words, good actions and good mind.

เห็นดีแท้แล้วจงทำกรรมที่งาม จะสมความคิดไว้ได้สบาย เร่งรัดตัวกลัวผิดคิด  
ให้มาก สงบปากกายใจให้เหลือหลาย

*Commit only positive karma and you will be successful.*

อันกรรมดีที่ท่านทำมาแล้ว จะช่วยแผ้วเปิดทางสว่างไสว จงจุดรูปเทียนบูชา  
รัตนตรัย ทุกสิ่งได้สมหวังตั้งใจเอย

*You will be given light from the good deeds that you have done.*

Lastly, merit-making is a common teaching in the prophecies and this is an aspect of traditional Thai culture. It is perceptible in Thailand to observe people giving alms to monks or donating money at temples. In Buddhism, giving is the source of happiness and the production of positive karma. Buddhists believe that if people wish to reborn as a human and pursue the

status of nirvana, they have to give alms to monks who have religious merit. The Thai value of giving for a better life is clearly reflected in Kau Cim prophecies.

รู้รักษาตัวรอดยออดจริงแท้ จงเฝ้าแต่สร้างกุศลผลบุญเอย  
*You are smart. Continue making merit to help others.*

เริ่มหมดทุกข์สุขจริงยิ่งกว่าเคย อย่าละเลยสร้างกุศลผลบุญเอย  
*When you are happy, do not stop making merit.*

#### *Analysis of prophecies on teaching Thai customs and rites*

In contrast to the previous assumption that the texts merely comprise Buddhist teachings, Kau Cim prophecies record traditional Thai customs and religious rites in the teachings. There are two prevalent messages in this type of teaching; firstly, the ideology in respecting and following the words of seniors, and secondly, the belief in Buddhist rites to have good things come and ward off bad luck.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) state that there are three time orientations across a culture which are past, present and future. In contrast with the US as a future-oriented culture which cherishes individualism, Thailand is regarded as a past-oriented culture where people value traditions and learn from their histories. This explains the importance of traditional customs and the necessity for younger generations to abide by the teachings of older generations who are more experienced.

จงจำจดให้มั่นเป็นแก่นสาร ผู้ใหญ่อาบนำร้อนมาก่อนกาล ถือโบราณไว้บ้าง  
 ก็ยังดี

Remember that adults are more experienced. Listen to their words.

อย่าดำเนินเดินหน้าท่านว่าร้าย เราต้องหมายตามหลังระวังหนี

Do not lead; Follow the words of the older generation.

Teachings on traditional rites are also noticed in the prophecies. They act as guidance for text readers to perform religious rites to bring good luck and destroy bad luck. This type of text is minimally observed and normally written in negative prophecies. As mentioned in the initial part of the analysis, Kau Cim is another religious ritual to assuage worshippers' worries and frustration. Thus, it always provides a way-out as a guide for people to perform rites at a temple such as praying in front of the Buddha image, sticking on gold flakes. To conclude, Kau Cim prophecies are crucial cultural texts which preserve well the cultural ideologies in Thailand in terms of customs and rites.

บุญให้ทำน้ำให้กรวดหมั่นสวดมนต์ ที่ร้อนรนจะได้เบาบรรเทาเออ

Pour water to the spirit and your sadness will be relieved.

จงแก้ไขเร่งทำตามพิธี ตามประทีปจุดอยู่ที่บูชา น้ำมันหาเติมใส่ให้เรืองสี  
จะสะเดาะเคราะห์ร้ายหายเป็นดี

Light a candle and fill oil at the temple as your trouble will be away.

### Kau Cim Prophecy Values

Despite their apparent triviality, Kau Cim prophecies are one of the significant literary texts in Thailand due to various reasons. First, they are a cultural production which is beautifully and uniquely created in the Thai context. Second, Thai cultures and ideologies are clearly demonstrated after reading the prophecies. Last but not least, it is believed that the texts yield value to people in Thai culture. Consequently, the last part of the analysis explores the values of Kau Cim prophecies on personal and social bases.

## a) Future prediction

As the nature of all men is to yearn to know the future, the main function of fortune telling is predicting the future, especially for those who have problems or experience uncertainty. This normally occurs when a person has an unsolved problem that they do not want to share with anyone, and a Kau Cim prophecy can be one source of answers. Predictions go smoothly with the Thai sentiment of yearning to know the unknown. Furthermore, as Thailand is a collectivistic culture, Thais are inclined to have less confidence in making decisions by themselves in issues related to love, marriage, birth of child, examination or prosperity. Yet, it is possible for people who have strong belief in fortune telling to confront negative consequences when they wholeheartedly rely on future predictions. For example, it is reported of a number of believers in Thailand who are addicted to fortune telling that they follow all fortune tellers' instructions without using any personal judgment. Consequently, fortune tellers have cheated them out of valuables, money or property. Furthermore, a believer might lose all of his money in a lottery after he is predicted by Kau Cim that he would gain easy money, or a woman might break up with her lover when she is foretold that he is not the right one. These cases show possible damaging results of fortune telling, including Kau Cim, for practitioners who hold strong beliefs in it.

As Kau Cim prophecies are cultural texts created to serve endless flows of Thai temple goers, their precision in predicting the future is in question. Kau Cim's lack of precision leads to overgeneralization in the notion of fortune telling. The texts assume that every person is similar despite the fact that Thais are all different in nature. Another reason for text imprecision is that a prophecy mentions many aspects in life in general ways. People tend to believe that a prophecy is correct even if only one predicted issue actually occurs in real life.

Lastly, it is a truth of life to experience a rise and a fall, happiness and sadness, and good health and sickness. Logically thinking, a prophecy does not predict the future but states a fact of human life. Thus, the notion of the precision of a prediction in a Kau Cim prophecy loses its ground.

b) Obtaining sense of security/preventive measures

Fortune telling was created to respond to people's universal feeling of fear as people naturally feel uncertain about the future and the unknown (Laurence C. Smith, 2009). Kau Cim prophecies provide a sense of security if a positive outcome is predicted. For a negative telling, it serves as a warning message to readers to be careful and take preventive measures. A main frequently-occurring feature in bad prophecies is they provide solutions for practitioners regardless of whether they are following Buddhist precepts or praying to deities. Thus, Kau Cim per se is a source of mental relief for people who have troubled lives. On sharing my personal experience as a Buddhist who enjoys going to temples, I normally practice Kau Cim after I light incense sticks and a candle and pray in front of a Buddha image. After completing the religious rituals at the temple, I practice Kau Cim. Personally, I do not wholeheartedly believe in prophecies, yet I do admit that it helps me feel better to some extent. I once requested the answer from an oracle lot on my entrance examination result and it turned out that I had a positive prediction. Given the fact that the actual exam result had not yet been released, I felt more confident that my application for admittance to Chulalongkorn University would be approved. Simply speaking, it seems to me that Kau Cim has the power in making me feel better about the issues that worry me.

Apart from the value of the text in providing a secure feeling to a person, Chuang (2011) adds that Kau Cim prophecies also function as self-fulfilling prophecies, or predictions that cause themselves to become true. As individual belief and behavior are closely linked, the belief in prophecies can either depress or motivate a lay person. For instance, a positive telling might encourage a man to work industriously hoping that his future will be brighter as it is foretold. Yet, another man might be discouraged by a negative telling and not work at his best. On the surface, Kau Cim prophecies as self-fulfilling seem to be precise. However, the truth is it is the person's belief which activates the behavior to function either fruitfully or fruitlessly.

c) A source of psychological relief

Fortune telling exists in both Eastern and Western cultures. They are similar in the way that their main function is to predict a person's future by means of divination. Astrology, the major divination practice in the West, is a belief system of horoscopes used to explain a person's personality and future by basing them on the celestial cycle as divine communication signs. Other historical methods commonly used are tasseography (reading tea leaves), cartomancy (card reading), tarot reading, crystallo-mancy (crystal reading) and chiromancy (palmistry). Fortune telling in the West is traditionally related to the Roma people who are called 'gypsies.' It is interesting to look into the different terms Westerners use to call a fortune teller. Instead of using the direct 'fortune teller', people of this profession call themselves and prefer being called 'psychics', 'mentalists', or 'soothsayers'. These terms suggest their inferior social status and struggle in Western societies. To avoid being otherized by the majority, new terms are used to provide more positive connotations to fortune tellers. On a different side of the world, 'I-Ching' or 'the Book of Changes' is a

traditional method of divination in Eastern cultures, while other forms of fortune telling are fairly similar between the East and the West.

Given the facts that the methods of divination art are quite the same in the West and the East, the practice in Eastern cultures is more acceptable and less arguable. As supernatural power and spirit beliefs are culturally embedded in Eastern communities, the popularity of divination can be noticed by an end-less spread of fortune tellers in different spots in Thailand. For instance, Tha Prachan is reported by CNN as the biggest fortune teller plaza in Thailand where Thais especially women flock to have their future told. Regarding Kau Cim, predicting the future is performed historically and currently as a ritual in temples and shrines. Yet, fortune telling or astrology is less acceptable in the West due to cultural patterns that favor individualistic and independent behavior and thinking. Moreover, the practice is criticized by scientists that it cannot be validated using the scientific method.

Given perception differences towards fortune telling, the value of fortune telling in providing psychological relief is coherent in Western and Eastern understandings. Chuang (2011) and Marlene (2006) concede that fortune telling can be compared to dream analysis in which personal psyche and subconsciousness are revealed. It can be said that fortune telling is a medium for fortune tellers to diagnose the emotional illness of listeners. Accordingly, fortune tellers or psychics perform a similar role as psychologists in the West. In short, they give psychological counseling to a patient to relieve mental disease which can cause physical illnesses in many cases.

Although Kau Cim is a type of fortune telling, the exercise cannot fulfill the psychological counseling function because of a lack of communication between a fortune teller and a listener during the practice. Nonetheless, it serves a therapeutic role in assuaging to some degree the anxiety and depression of



a person who casts a lot. To put it another way, Kau Cim prophecies are a psychological relief for people who take part in the rite.

### *Values of Kau Cim prophecy to Thai society*

Formerly, the contribution of Kau Cim prophecies in the Thai context was as a behavior-shaping tool. As a temple was historically set as a school for Thais where Dhamma and social customs were taught, it was and continues to be the most important social unit in imposing social norms. Leveraging the important role of temples, Kau Cim in a way acts as a religious and social tool in shaping a person's behavior in Thai communities through its presence in temples. Nonetheless, there is speculation on the decreasing value of the texts when younger generations rarely visit temples. Latterly, congruent with Chuang (2011), the prophecies stimulate social interaction among family members, friends and colleagues. Culturally, Thai people prefer chatting to acting or working. It is very common to observe Thai coworkers and friends group and chat in daily life. Kau Cim prophecies, especially issues dealing with romance, can initiate discussion particularly among women who are inclined to know more about their love life.

### **Conclusion**

It is worthwhile after all to note that Kau Cim is a cultural production in Thailand which is distinguishable and different from similar texts of other cultures. The significance of Kau Cim prophecies as cultural texts is elaborated on to conclude this analysis.

From the textual analysis, it is concluded that Kau Cim prophecies are regarded as literary works, a cultural heritage which should be preserved for poetic enjoyment, future study or research. Although it is a subordinate type of

text rather than a pure Buddhist-oriented one, people can learn more about Thais through this phenomenon. The text can be further studied in different aspects, namely the discourse movement of the text in the past and present or the comparison between Western and Eastern Kau Cim prophecies. More importantly, the prophecies are a cultural production which is unique in the Thai context and has been recreated for Thais who share the same culture. However, the more the text is culturally oriented, the more the original Chinese culture underlying the highly contextual text fades. Last but not least, Kau Cim has surprisingly become a ritual that is regularly practiced by people from various religions and ethnicities. This means a Thai of Chinese origin who frequents a Chinese temple would undergo a similar ritual as a traditional Thai who shakes a cylinder in a Thai temple. Interestingly, Kau Cim is also used in Mahamariamman Hindu Temple in the Silom area of Bangkok. The Kau Cim exercise here suggests the multiculturalism aspect of Hinduism, Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism in a single location. Also, people from all social and financial backgrounds can practice Kau Cim. This portrays a sense of equality in a broad cultural picture where both the poor and the rich can participate in the same divination activity.

In conclusion, the paper has investigated Kau Cim prophecies as cultural texts in the Thai context. The analysis has answered how Kau Cim serves as a religious ritual in the temples to foretell the future. Next, the writing pattern and the use of figures of speech have been illustrated to pinpoint how the text is created for Thais who share the same cultural knowledge. After that, the thematic analysis of money, Thai customs and Buddhist teachings have been looked into to identify the underlying ideologies in the texts. Lastly, the value of Kau Cim prophecies to a Kau Cim practitioner and Thai society has been manifested.

## Biography

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