

THE MALAYSIAN PHILATELIST



PEMUNGUT SETEM MALAYSIA

THE JOURNAL OF PHILATELIC SOCIETY MALAYSIA

VOL. 1

KDN.PP 913/93/22

2022



PATRON: HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE SULTAN OF SELANGOR DARUL EHSAN

THE LEGEND OF THE THAI TOAD KING

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On 4th April 2018, Thailand Post issued a four-value stamp series of face value Baht (฿) 3 each (SG 3841–3844), under the release 'Sky Rocket Festival' (Figure 1). The festival is held annually at Ban Kut Wa, Kalasin Province, Thailand. Images shown in the stamps include an associated cultural parade, a decorated sky rocket cart, preparations for the launch and the sky rocket launch itself.



Figure 1: 'Sky Rocket Festival' stamps (SG 3841–3844)

The stamps were designed by Pisit Prasitthanadon, and engraved by lithography. The perforations for the stamps are 13 (Thailand Post number TH-1145). Postal cancellations from 19 post offices in the country were pictorial in nature (Figure 2), six of them depicting a toad.

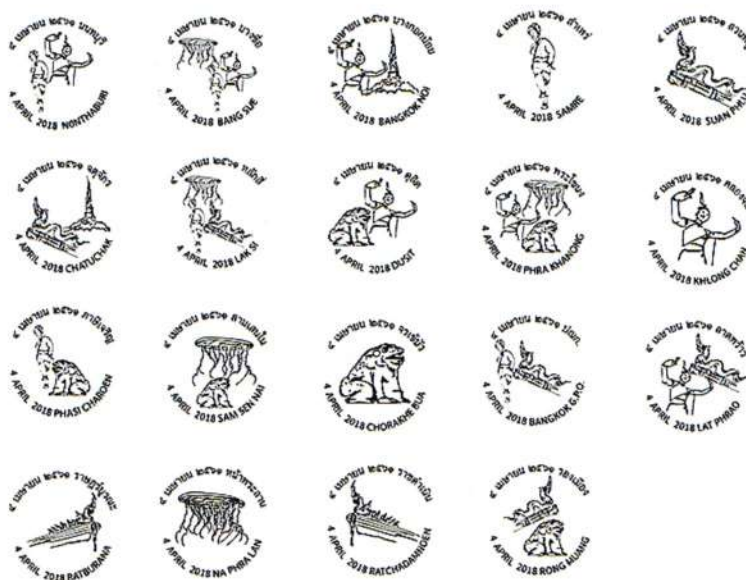


Figure 2: Pictorial cancellations of the 'Sky Rocket Festival' release from 4th April 2018 from Thai post offices

A close-up of the cancellation obtained from the Thai Philatelic Museum, Sam Sen Nai, Phaya Thai District, by the authors, is shown below (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Close-up of cancellation of the 'Sky Rocket Festival' release from the Thai Philatelic Museum, Sam Sen Nai, Phaya Thai District, Bangkok, Thailand

The Sky Rocket Festival (ประเพณีบุญบังไฟ, transliterated as 'Prapheni Bun Bang Fai') is a merit-making ceremony, traditionally practiced by the ethnic Lao people of the Isan region of north-eastern Thailand and Laos. Celebrations include musical and dance performances, culminating on the third day in the firing of home-made rockets.

In an early incarnation, Lord Buddha was the King of Toads ('Phaya Khan Khak'), and married to Udon Khuruthawip; his popularity drawing residents away from Phaya Thaen, the King of the Sky. An angry Phaya Thaen withheld rains from the earth for seven years, seven months and seven days. Acting against the advice of the Toad King, Phaya Naga, the King of the Naga, declared war on Phaya Thaen, and lost.

Persuaded by Phaya Naga to assume command, King Toad enlisted the aid of termites to build mounds reaching the heavens, and scorpions, centipedes and hornets to attack Phaya Thaen. The war ended with Phaya Thaen suing for peace. Naga rockets fired at the end of the dry season serve as a reminder to him of his treaty made to Lord Buddhisatta, Phaya Khan Khak, the King of the Toads.

Acknowledgements

The first author thanks the Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, for support of his research.

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