

Abstract

The study of *Belief and Social Aspects in the Formation of Phutai Traditional House and Settlement* is one of research topic in the *Phutai community and Traditional House: Patterns and Cultural Ecology Concept of Living* research project, which includes 6 case studies of Phutai village in Mukdahan and Sakon Nakhon province. The main objective is to understand the relationship between Phutai traditional ways of living and their environments that can reflect on how people perceive their world through intellectual and physical ways. Phutai traditional house represents a solution of the symbolization process from the beginning to the final procedure. The tradition of beliefs influenced in the house form has continuously transmitted from generation to generation underlying social and custom functions.

Since most information on the Phutai beliefs have never been documented before, data collection for this study is resulting from the interview of Phutai informants in designated communities. The information indicates that Phutai population is continuing to pursue that beliefs have significant impacts and meanings to social norms and their lives. Among 6 case studies, it appears that Phutai houses and communities are physically different but the conceptual processes to symbolize their environments are similar. The results reveal the relations of beliefs and cultural pattern in living spaces through the symbolic use of their houses and ritual process, such as the use of auspicious objects for empowering lives, the measurement of the house owner's body using as a source to create a house proportion in order to mark the possessions of house, and moreover, their regard to the same spirit can reinforce an appropriate behavior by not disrespectful to others, which eventually transforming into an important foundation of social norms.

The study of beliefs in the formation of Phutai house and settlement manifests an importance of worldview and spiritual requirements those lying beyond physical needs. Currently, the national development plans have focus only on physical dimensions of the environment. Consequently, the results have affect people in the community whom adapt themselves in order to respond to changing contexts. Without a consideration of human dimensions, their impacts unquestionably cause negative influence to pattern of living culturally and socially.