

ABSTRACT

“Thiang Na” is a Thai word which refers to shelters built in the rice field for the exclusive use necessitated by the rice farming. Since the beginning of the rice farming season, through the different processes of the germination, the transplantation, the planting out and the harvest, farmers resort to this shelter called “Thiang Na” to protect themselves from the heat of the sun and the rain. They also perform such other activities as cooking, sleeping and rearing children for no grown up people stay away from the work in the rice field. Out of the farming period, “Thiang Na” is used as a rest shelter. We can see that “Thiang Na” is quite a versatile shelter. It is usually roughly built just for the purpose of having a roof to protect people from the sun and the rain. Inside this shelter, we usually see a large space with or without a small platform for sitting or lying down. This platform should house at most 1-3 people. If the shelter is built far from the house and it is difficult to walk to and from it in the same day, then all the children also have to go to stay under the shelter. Therefore the farmers have to bring along with them many more tools and equipment. In this case the shelter is more elaborate to satisfy the supplementary needs.

The need to spend the nights. (*Leading to the appearance of a bedroom*).

The need to cook food. (*Leading to the appearance of a rough kitchen*).

The need for animal rearing. (*Leading to the appearance of a chicken pen underneath*)

The need for vegetables. (*Leading to the appearance of vegetable gardens in the proximity*).

Eventually the simple “Thiang Na” has evolved into what we call “Kratop” or cottage. We can also call this more elaborate shelter a “Reun Yao” or a family house.

Some agriculturists do not have a rice field and some of them go to work in orchards or plantations after the rice farming season. For instance they go to work in the manioc plantations, the castor bean plantations and corn plantations, etc. Farmers usually knock up a shelter called “Thiang Rai”, (*Or “Thiang Hai” in the dialect*), to satisfy the needs in a similar way.

According to the E-san dictionary (by Dr.Preecha PINTHONG) we can read the following definition :

“Thiang” : Shelters built for people to make it possible for them to guard the crops. When a shelter is built in the rice field we usually call it a Thiang Na and if it is in a plantation we call it a Thiang Rai. ”

The definition does not include the description of the shelter. This present research is aimed at showing different forms of “Thiang Na” which vary according to the usage in the different regions in the North-East Thailand. Therefore this research is expected to help preserve knowledge on ancient forms of “Thiang Na” for the future generations who may not see them in the rice field any more.

As long as the people in Isan still on rice farming, “Thiang Na” will continue to exist in the North East of Thailand.