

## Part IV

### The Belief

#### The meaning of “belief”

The Royal Thai Dictionary B.E.2525 defines “belief” as “see”, “yield”, “sure”, “trust”

Chansri Nittayaruk concludes that “belief” no matter it causes from feeling, consideration or reasoning, it will display through physical or verbal. Belief is close related with culture, proverb, popular say and other community revelation.

Belief is the cause of some other community revelations; because when belief starts in the belief will follow such as the belief of sending sin to the ganger in the heaven. The candle festival then starting to perform.

Belief causes from the answer seeking of things they don't know. They guess and compare from their experience, from the told stories from other people. Very often, belief seems unreasonable but some believable; however, some are no reasons at all. As long as we cannot find good answer, we have to keep the “belief”

We may conclude that “belief” is the decision on something and could be divided into 2 ways.

1. The decision on “being” of something. For example, the belief on hell and heaven, ghost or gods.
2. The decision on “reasoning” of something. For example; if we do something to other, we will get something from others. For local people, “local belief” is the traditional belief that handed down generation from generation. Including all activities according to the culture.

The outstanding character of “local belief” is that the believers do not base on reasoning. This should not assume that “local belief” is unreasonable, but if you take deep analysis, you will find hidden

reasons. For example, “do not sit in the ladder walk way” ; the common sense is should not cause the accident of falling the lader when someone walk up and down.

Most the “belief” of Baan-Koke villagers is about ghosts in natural environment such as Phi-Sam, Phi-chana, Phi-Pang (Jungle spirit) and Phi-takien etc. It seems the belief on “chao-Poo-taa” (grand papa spirit) get most credit from local Baan-Koke people.

The belief of Baan-Koke villagers way be divided as follow:

1. The belief on “Cho-Poo-Taa” (Grand Papa Spirit)

“Grand Papa Spirit” is the belief handed down generation to generation. The Baan-Koke villagers believe that “Grand Papa Spirit” helps the villagers lead their happy lives. When the villagers are in trouble, they will invite Grand-Papa-Spirit to possess “Naang-Tiem”, the middle woman and ask her about the causes of the problem. Grand-Papa-Spirit, in possess of Naang-Tiem, will converse with the villagers about their life leading. The Spirit possessing will not perform on Wednesday because of the belief that the spirit will not eat food (rice) on Wednesday. The Grand-Papa-Spirit possession will conduct during Song-Kran festival.

The Grand-Papa-Spirit of each house is diffent from one another; however, you can invite grand-Papa Spirit you have great respect from other village to possess the spirit house in your new house.

In the past, the villagers put great belief on Grand-Papa-Spirit. For example any young man who is recruited to be a soldier will come to pay respect and ask for protection. He comes back safe and sound. However he must behave himself not doing any bad things unless he will get punishment, serious sickness or may die.

At present the belief declines due to the wide spreading of modern technology.

## 2. The belief on “House Spirit”

Before building the new house or after finishing building the house will invite god or spirit to take care of the house. Anyone who does not do so may get seriously sick or the family members will lack of happiness. Sometime the wander spirits will come to cause the problem in the house.

Usually the spirit house will be built near the front of the house and invite the god or spirit to stay in this spirit house. Everyday the house owner will bring flowers light joss stick and candle in respect of these spirits.

## 3. The belief of Female tree spirit (Ironwood spirit)

The ironwood spirit will protect the ironwood tree. If anyone offends the tree, the spirit will appear and do the tricks to that person. The old people told the story about someone happened to break the ironwood branch. The blood came out together with crying of pain.

According to the story told by “Uncle Jan” from Boo-Bier village. There was a man needed to build the house. He and his friends went into the jungle and found the very big ironwood tree. He and his friends spending 5 days, instead of 1 day, to cut it down, but the tree did not fall down, but the tree did not fall down. If kept turning around in spite of no nearby trees supporting it. The all abandoned the tree and left home; however, the tree fell down on 6<sup>th</sup> day. The man and his friends went back to the tree with an elephant to tow the log back to the village. The new house was finished at last, but all family members kept getting sick. So the man invited the exorcist to investigate the cause of the problem. The exorcist confirmed that the iron wood tree got a female spirit who got mad at their tree cutting, so she tried everything to cause the new house problem. The exorcist advised the man to do the new house warming, making merit donation to the ironwood’s spirit. He also apologized her for his innocent doing. After doing so, everything in the house got better, and everyone led the happy life.

Some old villagers also hold the story that some people went to cut down the ironwood in the jungle and let an elephant draw the log. The log was so heavy as the iron and did not move. That night the female spirit showed up, and they all fled away home.

#### 4. The belief on “Phi-Cham”

Phi-Cham is the ghost living at the mouth of the spring. Anyone seen by Phi-Cham will get sick, and the exorcist is needed to expel the ghost. If the ghost does not leave, the sick person must make special merit donating to the ghost.

Usually “Cham” will have water all year and keep all kinds of plants evergreen. So around “Cham” is like woods, and if there is “Phi-Cham”, it makes the area more horrible for all people.

#### 5. The belief of “Ghou” and “Phi-Ka”

Baan-Kok villagers call many kinds of ghost as ghou, and they believe that it comes from the south through all kinds of vehicles. When ghou possess anyone, that person will lose him/her self and turn to be fierce and destroying anything at hands. The exorcist is needed to expel the ghou. The exorcist may spell his mantra mixing with holy water or whip and hit or spring the holy water to the sick person. If the ghost does not leave, the exorcist will ask the ghou what does he/she need. The exorcist will ask villager to bring what the ghou needs. When it got what it needs, the ghou will leave. But before it leaves. The sick person will make the big vomit. Then he/she becomes him/her self. However he/she cannot remember anything.

If the sick person got married, the expelling is easy. The wife or husband of the sick person will bring him/her to the room for love making. The ghou will hurry leave the sick person for fear of the love making by his/her couple.

## 6. The belief on spirit warming of buffaloes

Buffaloes are animals with great gratitude to human. They help do the hard work in the fields and farms. Some of them, at the end of life, they have to scarify their hives as human food. Many people feel guilty to eat the meat of the buffaloes or oxen; instead they gave the ceremony of spirit warming to their grateful animals after hard working season.

Materials used in spirit warming of buffaloes are betel nuts, betel leaves and red and white cottons tying at their horns. The buffaloes owner is the performer of the ceremony. Sometime there may be more material such as boiled hen, liquer and tobacco according to the needs of the buffaloes' owner. However we use few buffaloes for farming; the spirit warming for buffaloes are rarely found now.

## 7. Spirit Warming of rice

The belief on spirit warming of rice has been done as a tradition for a long time. The ceremony will take place while the rice is brightly green in the big field. The land owner will make Bai-Si and get flowers, betel nuts, betel leaves from the temple and go to the rice field. The land owner will stick the "Pout" stick with three prongs on the rice field and put Bai-Si on the prong.

The farmers at Baan-Koke village believe that spirit wanming ceremony will help boost the rice spirit yielding more rice. If the land owners do not do so, the rice product is very bad, So you can see a lot of ceremonies like this at Baan-Koke villagers inspite of the expanding of modern technology.

## 8. The belief on Priest Holiday

This belief handed down generation to generation, and it is the identity of Baan-Koke village especially at Boh-Bier village. When it is the priest day, all villagers will stay home. All animals are also taking the rest and also no animal killings this day. Usually the villagers, Buddhists, will go to church, and some will stay the night to keep 8

precepts. The villagers also have firm belief that the ghosts will keep their precepts too. No bringing all kinds of materials into the house compound. Anyone who breaks the rules will get sick. On any villager who keeps working this day will face terrible things such as an elephant, a tiger. They may come toward him/her or leave some traces of their feet on the ground. The villagers believe that all of these traces made by wild ghosts who do not want anyone bothering them while keeping precepts.

#### 9. The belief on the groom stepping on “Pack” grass before entering the house on wedding ceremony

During the wedding ceremony, the groom procession moving to the bride’s house. The groom must step on the pile of “Pack” grass at the foot of the steps before going into the house. The child will wash the feet of the groom on the “Pack” grass. Baan-Koke villagers believe that “Pack” grass is the sign of good luck and the grass is very easily grown with fast growing and very tough. So it symbolized the prosperity of the young couple to lead a happy life after the marriage.

However this belief has been fading away and current young couple rarely does this performance because they mainly focusing on marry and joyful activities.

#### 10. The Belief on Samsara Cycle

Baan Koke villagers believe in Samsara Cycle (Birth and rebirth). They also believe in ghost and the dead person will be reborn among kins or relatives, or if he/she has not been reborn, he/she will hang around the relatives to help protect them from dangers. The dead person may contact the relatives through the dreams. The villagers believe that the dead person, after the cremation, will return to visit the close friends or relatives in various forms such as sounds, dreams, some animals such as the black dog. The contact will be in vivid vision, and the relatives will make merit for the dead and warn him/her not to worry about the living people.

Traditionally when there is a death in the village, the villagers will bring the dead person to be buried not cremated, by the exorcist who will hypnotize the dead person with mantra, the magic words. This will stop the ghost to wander around and cause the villagers to get fear.

The house of the dead person will be surrounded by holy thread, and the Buddhist monks will be invited to pray for prohibiting the ghost to return to visit his/her house.

The villagers will dress the dead person with torn clothes, but at Boh-Bier village, they will undress the dead person. This is done to warn the ghost that he/she has been dead.

However some villages, the villagers will put some clothes in the coffin with the dead for him/her to use in the spiritual world otherwise the dead will be in trouble of the dress. The couple of the dead person will signal the dead by putting the white flower showing that now the dead is in the other world which is not the same as he/she used to live.

### 11. The Belief on “Mantra”

In the old days, most people had personal mantra to help his/her doing. When someone got sick, the magic doctor was invited to do the treatment. They believed that the “magic words” or “mantra” was actually the real thing. This could be probed by someone got sick by black magic that some objects were found inside the body of the sick person. The only way to help the sick man is using white magic by the magic doctor.

The belief on “Wua-Dhanu” of “arrow-ox” was another example of magical belief. The person who had “Wua-Dhanu” to protect himself was adored by magic power. The villagers believe that if the top of the coconut tree in the village was broken or torn away, the “Wua Dhanu” had come to eat it at night.

The villagers also believed that the most powerful magician doctor could contact and call all kinds of ghosts to his meeting. The

stubborn ghosts would be punished, and this was confirmed by the magician doctor.

The villagers also believed in “seu-saming” or the “magician tiger” They believed that the tiger that killed many people could disguise to be humanlike. The story was told like this:

There was a hunter went to hunt in the forest, and he had to stay the night in the jungle. It happened to be the full moon night. While he was sitting on the shooting stand on the top of the tree, he saw a man coming under his tree yelling to him to come down and went back home because his wife was giving birth. And she badly needed him. At first the hunter intended to climb down, but he realized that his wife had very young pregnancy and impossible to give the child birth. So the hunter changed his mind by aiming the gun to that man and shot. The man fell down and turned to be a tiger. Next day the hunter led the villagers to the scene, and the dead tiger lying there.

#### 12. The belief on blocking the ridge on Songkran

In the old days, the villagers believed that they had to block the ridge on Songkran day to keep the water for rice growing. If anyone did not do, he/she will not have enough water for rice, and the rice harvesting will not much and good that year.

Another belief of the local people about Songkran day is that they must clean their houses and compounds well. It is like clean off the bad luck or evils off the houses.

#### 13. The belief on “Wan-Nao” of Songkran day

Baan-Koke villagers believe that there is “Wan-Nao” or “rotten day” during Songkran festival. They will not do anything on this day. If they do something it will turn bad such as growing plants; they will never grow well or may die. If they build the house on this day, they cannot live happily in this house. Some bad things will happen unexpectedly.

So Baan-Koke villagers will stay home on “Wan-Nao” drinking, eating among families and have fun. After the “rotten day” pass by, the routine jobs are resumed.

#### 14. The belief on “Ong-Oil” ghost

The old timers of Baan-Koke people believe in “Ong-Oil” ghost, but now they believe that this ghost has gone somewhere else. They said the “Ong-Oil” ghost will come and steal the fish in the bamboo fishtrap, they got in the waterway, at night. The traces left on the ground are the reversed footprints, heels before toes, around the fishtraps.

One bamboo fishtrap owner said that he used to hide and watch “Ong-Oil” ghosts came and stole his fish in the traps. He shot them with the crossbow, but the ghosts are quick enough to catch the arrows, and they used them as their hairpins. So he could not catch any of them.

The only thing that scares the villagers most is the ghosts way come to take out and eat their guts. So it the child keeps crying, the parents will lie them that if he/she does not stop crying, the “Ong-Oil” will come to take and eat the guts. If works; the child stops crying. Now only some groups of Baan-Koke villagers still believe in “Ong-Oil” ghosts

#### 15. The belief on “Wua-Pong” or “Wil Bull”

Baan-Koke villagers know “Wua-Pong” very well. They said that this “Wild Bull” used to live near northern Baan-Koke village, and the villagers were afraid of this “Wild Bull” because it hunt and eat people. This horrible animal lived in the nearby mountain which was called “Poo-Pong”. However “Wua-Pong” has disappeared for about 60 years. Nobody knows where this fierce bull moved to. The only thing left and the villagers can see now is “Poo-Pong”.

#### 16. The belief on choosing the main post of the house.

Usually when the people of BaanKoke will build the house, they must be very seriously select the house main post. They believe that if they get bad main post, the family members will lead bad life. Everything seems in bad situation such as sickness, grievance, bad luck etc. On the contrary, if they get good main post, call good things are happy go lucky among house members.

The headman of the house is the person who selects the wood in the forest to make the main post. They have some precautions and tips for wood(tree) selecting :

1. The child of the family must not cry when the father is leaving for the forest.
  2. The tree must have good shadow because of lots of leaves; you feel cool under the tree. Do not choose the less leaves tree; you do not feel cool under it.
  3. The tree must not have any dead branch and hanging there.
  4. The top of the tree must not divide into prong or fork.
  5. When the wind is blowing, the tree shows good moving and leaves shaking. If not, do not choose this tree.
  6. When cutting the tree down, let it fall to the front. Do not let it fall back to the cutter.
  7. While the tree is falling down, do not let it pull backward to the cutter.
  8. While the tree is falling down, it supposes not to destroy or making the other tree fall down too. It should fall directly to the ground.
  9. While cutting (sawing) the tree, it should not have some wind blowing out of it.
17. The belief on the Mermaid ghost

BaanKoke villagers have true believe in mermaid ghost which, they believe, has powerful mantra and can disguise to be anything.

There was a legend told by villagers that there was a young girl weaving the cloth at home while her father went to work in the

forest. A crab came out of the nearby swamp crawling straight to the poor girl and clamped its claw on her sarong. The girl looked at the crab and followed the crab to the swamp. There she was killed by the mermaid and lying dead in the swamp bed. When the father returned home found the dead body of the daughter. He knew exactly that the mermaid did this. It happened that he himself was a powerful magician. He started hunting the mermaid who was in great afraid of this man. She did every way to run away from him. Disguising him, diving into the grounds, flying into the air could not get away from this powerful man. At last she turned to be a big boulder. The man yelled at her; if you are a boulder, I can cut you apart; if you are a bana tree, I cannot cut you. The mermaid heard that and turned to be a bana tree. The man cut the bana tree into many parts until only the bones were left. The spirit of the dead mermaid was called "Na-Laeng". They got a song described the vultures, the crows and the putrid water at the same as follow:

"The vultures ate the corpse of the mermaid and relieve itself as high as half shin; The crows ate the mermaid corpse and release itself as high as knee ; The putrid water is as high on"

- The tales

At present some of the BaanKoke Villagers, especially the older ones, believe in this legend. Some even confirm that they really meet the mermaid ghost.

#### 18. The belief on "Rice in the barn filling"

After harvesting rice the villagers will keep the rice in the barn, but they have to select certain days to do the rice in the barn filling. By tradition they believe that on Tuesday and Wednesday are the best days to keep the rice in the barn. The other days the "ghosts" will eat the rice, so they lost rice in the barn.

After filling the barn with rice, the villagers will stick the "Kled-Lin" leaves on the paddy rice for the belief that the bunch of "Kled-

Lin” will help accumulate or add up more rice (next season). They also believe that the ghosts are afraid of “Kled-Lin” leaves.

The villagers also believe that the right days for rice keeping would yield more prosperity to the family. The first person who put rice into the barn is also chosen by snake sensing name because snakes never eat rice so he/she will not lose rice in the barn.

#### 19. The belief on “Chao-Poo or Chao-pho Boh Keu” Shrine

This shrine is at Boh-bier village, Boh-beu subdistrict, BaanKoke district. The villagers have deep believe in this shrine. After they got what they wish making to the shrine, they make great celebration to thank “Chao-Poo or Chao-Poh”.

The shrine got its name from the salt shortage in the village. The villagers dig the ground to get water, and the water was salty. They believe there was a ghost there, so they built the shrine for respect of the ghost and let the village headman take water to be proved, and it showed that it was the underground salt.

There were many super natural things from this shrine before the villagers. They will invite “Chao-Poh” or God father to possess the middle man. The villagers will ask many questions about crops growing for the coming season. The villagers will do and will not do according to what the God father says.

The villagers will set the day for “Chao-Poo” to possess the middle man. On that day they will not do their Jobs.

The materials used for “Chao-Poo” invitation are: the whole body of pig, hen, liquor, tobacco, betel nuts and betel leaves. After the ceremony the things used will be shared among villagers for breakfast on that day.

The same ceremony will be taken place again after harvesting season, but this time is for thank you God father for giving them good out products of growing crops.

The “Chao-Poo” or “Chao-Poh” Boh-Keu shrine is very much respected by all villagers. It is also the sacred place for villagers to keep their words when making a wish. When they get what they wish, they must offer what they said to the “God Father”. It shows their great responsibility, and the shrine is still there in BaanKoke village now.