

**COMPARISON OF TRADITIONAL INTRICATE
PAPER CUTTING TECHNIQUES OF SOUTHERN THAILAND:
TRADITIONAL AND MODERN STYLE ¹**

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Abstract

Intricate paper cutting techniques of Southern Thailand are a type of traditional craftsmanship, which is a valuable art form of the country. This knowledge has been inherited from one generation to the next. This study collected and compiled data regarding traditional intricate paper cutting, focusing on techniques from southern provinces, where their unique identities are retained. The data comprises history, paper characteristics, cutting techniques, patterns, instruments, designs, and practical purposes. Findings revealed the significant distinctions that artisans in Songkhla province use traditional style, whereas artisans in Nakhon Sri Thammarat province use modern style. It is noteworthy that some artisans still retain the ritual of master veneration. These rituals are performed only with disciples considered worthy of inheritance and skilled enough to make a living with this craft.

Keywords: Intricate paper cutting techniques; traditional craftsmanship; intangible cultural heritage; traditional style; modern style

¹ This article is a part of the Southern Thailand Intricate Paper Cutting Technique Research Project: Compiling and Collecting Data of Local Arts and Crafts as a part of Traditional Works of Art and Intellectual Cultural Heritage (Songkhla and Nakhon Sri Thammarat Provinces) (In Thai). The research project was funded by Department of Cultural Promotion, Ministry of Culture, Bangkok, Thailand.

Introduction

Folk wisdom is knowledge amassed by people since ancient times. The temple and the house were crucial elements, being community learning and resource centres and having importance in professions without requiring literacy. Folk wisdom emphasizes the conservation of traditional skills and craftsmanship via direct and indirect transmission of knowledge from senior members of the society to juniors (Nuntasuwan, 1985). The passed-on knowledge is in turn utilized in daily life to fulfill spiritual purposes (Tungcharoen, 1997).

Folk wisdom amassed from different experiences will be passed on as distinct cultures within local regions (Wasi, 1991). These cultures become knowledge bases that support learning, problem-solving, life management, and adaptation for survival. Thus, folk wisdom is an abstract concept that comprises thoughts, knowledge, beliefs, values, views, abilities, and intelligence (Thongdee, 1999).

There are three categories of relationships between folk wisdom and humanity: (1) local folk wisdom and humans; (2) local folk wisdom and natural surroundings; and (3) local folk wisdom and experiences. (Buason, 1996). Interestingly, wisdom is passed on according to the characteristics of the giver and recipient, and differs based on whether the recipient is a minor or an adult. The knowledge is passed on as concepts and usage; the former comprises beliefs, thoughts, understanding, and ideals, and the latter comprises customs, ritualistic traditions, and instrumental and symbolic objects. Objects that pertain to instruments and symbols include tangible inventions, such as artistic products and handicrafts, and symbolic intangible objects (Chansoon, 1991 and Nuankaew, 1997).

Thai folk wisdom is a collection of inherited and selected skills, abilities, and techniques pertaining to all fields of knowledge (Seesalab et al., 1999). Traditional intricate paper cutting technique is one such artistic heritage. Its uniqueness lies in cutting paper into Lai Thai patterns, such as mythical animals found in Thai literature or zodiac animals. These patterns are used to decorate venues and objects, and they are classified by use into two categories - auspicious events and funerals.

Traditional intricate paper cutting decorations add colour, create atmosphere, and announce an event to the public, such as a ceremony. The art form expresses a belief in angels and sacred objects; the decorations are made for angels to behold and acknowledge, and to bless the event's host with good fortune. Papers are cut into zodiac animals, attached to poles like flags, and hung with Mahot bunches, decorative objects similar to garlands. In funerals, Lai Thai patterns are used to decorate urns. They can be categorized into two types – an interlaced pattern, where all patterns are inter-connected, and a non-interlaced pattern, where each pattern is individually removed, leaving the background intact. Nonetheless, the technological influence of computer has been becoming the permanent part of intricate paper cutting process. Therefore, the lack of preservation and encouragement for conservation will subsequence in disappearance. To identify the important and uniqueness distinctions, the traditional and modern style comparisons are necessary. Without the study for the record, this knowledge management will disappear.

There are two provinces known for this art form - Songkhla and Nakhon Sri Thammarat. Songkhla Province uses the art form in its traditional ceremonies and festivals as decoration using traditional Thai patterns according to the specific ceremony or festival being held (Songkhla Cultural Office, 2008). Nakhon Sri Thammarat Province has an essential traditional ceremony that uses this technique to decorate various locations and buildings.

Study Site and Geographical Characteristics

This section describes the two provinces chosen as areas of study. The first province is Songkhla, which is situated on the Eastern coast of Thailand's lower southern region. Currently, it is inhabited by approximately 1.3 million people, who are mostly Buddhists. Songkhla is well-known for its ancient communities, cities, historical landmarks and artifacts, and its customs, traditions, local entertainments, and arts.

Songkhla province is a historic city, being once the centre of the "Chitu" (Red Soil) Kingdom. For seven centuries (AD 458-1257), this ancient kingdom experienced Indian influence from the Srivijaya kingdom as well as historical trade with Persian and Indian merchants. In subsequent centuries, the region saw multiple changes in governance until it was made a province in 1932.

Songkhla's current economy includes industry, agriculture, import-export, and fishing, and the main economic resources are rubber (and related industries) and processed seafood products (Sirirak, 2009).

Nakhon Sri Thammarat has held importance in the country's economy, society, politics, governance, and religion. The kingdom was founded in the seventh Buddhist century (AD 58-157, and reached its' height during the 17th to 19th Buddhist centuries (AD 1058-1357) during the Sri Thamma Sokaraj dynasty. The kingdom was a crucial trading station of the peninsula and is where, according to Buddhist beliefs and faith, the holy remains of Lord Buddha are located (Nakhon Sri Thammarat Office, 2009). At present, the province's main economic industries are rubber planting, palm cultivating, farming, fruit planting, coconut cultivation, fish mongering, and animal husbandry.

Data Collection and Methodology

This study is qualitative. The method used in data collection was anthropological. The initial process involved primary data collection, including active community observation by the researcher. Documents were consulted during data collection. In addition, members of studied communities were encouraged to contribute to the collection of field data. Narratives were also collected for studying historical data. Artisans were inquired about the process of inventing, engraving, carving, stamping, and gathering. Paper characteristics, materials, and stamping instruments were also studied. The researcher organized in-depth interviews with intricate paper cutting artisans, and then conducted a thorough study of the history, identity, methodology, instruments, patterns, paper characteristics, artistic customs, and other aspects. Voice recordings, photography, and videography of artisans in various actions were conducted. We also held small group discussions on the art, its' characteristics and prominent features, and the difficulty levels of paper cutting.

Subsequently, we analyzed the influences of religion, ethnicity, and beliefs, *et cetera*, on the pictures and patterns. In addition, the researcher held discussions with specific groups to test data validity, focusing on the knowledge sets that will be used to register the craft as world heritage. The assessment criteria for the works of art included the completeness of texture details, pattern identity and prominence, pattern designs and models, and the history of the intricate paper

cutting artisans. Pictures were shown in community group discussions. Narratives were presented with a focus on history, intricate paper cutting techniques, engraving methods, instruments, and patterns. Sources of data were disclosed to gurus, artisans, local art teachers, and members of the community for the purpose of correction and validation. Inaccurate data was corrected. After that, ethnographic meta-analysis was conducted on all primary source data acquired from temples, museums, schools, and the Southern Archive of Intricate Paper Cutting Artisans.

All collected data was entered into a database; recorded details included the date of collection, materials used in paper cutting, materials used in coffin decorations, types of paper, procedures of paper cutting, procedures of coffin decoration, types of patterns, and names of Lai Thai patterns. Other details regarding other customs and data collected from specific interviews were categorized according to artisan names and provinces for the purpose of controlling both completeness of data and data for research.

Research Findings and Discussion

Intricate paper cutting artisans of Songkhla and Nakhon Sri Thammarat share common ground in customs, art and beliefs because these provinces are adjacent to each other. These artisans still maintain their profession, unlike neighbouring provinces of Thailand's southern region, and so their working methods are unique. However, there are some differences between artisans from these two provinces. They can be classified into two categories-traditional style and modern style. Songkhla artisans are considered traditional as they focus on traditional Lai Thai patterns. Nakhon Sri Thammarat artisans are considered modern as they use modern techniques in cutting paper. The two styles are differentiated by the following criteria: pattern characteristic analyses, procedures in producing artwork, remarks from famous local artisans, inheritance, conservation, and changes in the future. Further discussion is continued below.

The Traditional Style of Intricate Paper Cutting Artwork in Songkhla Province

An important Thai custom is the Songkran festival, wherein tourists from Thailand and other countries (e.g., Malaysia and Singapore) participate in multitudes every year. Other crucial customs are the Buddha Pulling and Tak Baat Tewa festivals. Both festivals begin with adornment of the Chedi at the peak of Tung Kuan Hill. The Tak Baat Tewa ritual is conducted at the bottom of the hill. Boat processions of Buddha images from various temples are held in rivers. The last vital custom is the Wan Saat or Ching Pred festival, a merit-making ceremony to make offerings to deceased family members. These festivals use paper cutting artwork to decorate the venues beautifully. Decorations include Lai Thai patterns, mythical creatures, zodiac animals, and other patterns. The selection of patterns depends upon the festival and the province's traditions (Songkhla Cultural Office, 2008).

The Process of Producing Intricate Paper Cutting Artwork of Songkhla Artisans

The main material used in Songkhla paper cutting is gold and silver aluminium foil, which can be bought from market shops. Instruments used in intricate paper cutting include: (1) a tool for cutting the gold and silver aluminium foil, including chisels of various types and sizes; (2) an embossing apparatus to emboss the paper, including (a) double rounded small solid embossing iron rods and (b) a wooden embossing block. This wooden block is forbidden to use for any other purpose. According to Thai beliefs, people cannot walk over it and it must be burnt after usage, or the artisan will be struck with misfortunes; (3) a wooden rod to strike the embossing rods; (4) a hammer for chiseling patterns onto paper; (5) staples for stapling paper together; (6) a board for holding paper and making them straight and even; and (7) a measuring tape, pattern drafting pencils, rulers, cutting knives, scissors, hollow punchers, and glue or wet starch. In addition, the tools used for attaching Kanok Patterns (a type of Lai Thai) onto the coffin include rulers, measuring tape, nails, rope or strings, pencils, wet starch, a wet starch container, brushes for applying wet starch, and hand cloths.

Paper cutting and installing begins with designing the Kanok patterns to be used. After the model and designs are finished, gold and silver aluminium foil is prepared. The model is placed upon 20 to 50 pieces of gold and silver aluminium foil, which in turn are stapled to a wooden board. The next step is pattern engraving with the engraving rod (Mai Khiang). Then the staples are dismantled one side at a time. One sheet of paper is removed at a time and resealed more tightly, using a hammer to hit the staples. Then the chisel is used to engrave the curving parts of the model so the patterns are loosened from the paper. The engraved patterns are then attached to the coffin according to the artisan’s designs. Table 1 (below) depicts pattern designs by Songkhla artisans.

Table 1: Examples of Paper Cutting Patterns of Artisans from Songkhla Province







Pattern Name	Original Pattern	Male Artisan of Songkhla No: 1	Male Artisan of Songkhla No: 2	Male Artisan of Songkhla No: 3	Male Artisan of Songkhla No: 4	Male Artisan of Songkhla No: 5
Luk Fak Kaam Poo or Pra Jam Yaam Kaam Poo	 (Phetcharaphan, 2000)					
	Figure 1	Figure 2	Figure 3	Figure 4	Figure 5	Figure 6

Table 1 compares the original pattern (Figure 1) with the paper cutting patterns produced by artisans of Songkhla. The crab pincer patterns (Figure 2-6) closely resemble the original pattern in terms of line volume, shape, size, and the spacing of black and white colours. A few creative aspects can be observed in the Lai Thai patterns’ details, line volume, and spacing between black and white colours. However, the traditional patterns are still present and represented according to each artisan’s style.

Inheritance and Conservation of Traditional Intricate Paper Cutting Techniques in Songkhla Province

Research with current gurus on the inheritance of this art form revealed that most techniques were passed down within the family. Those who get first priority are children, grandchildren, and other relatives, and the art is typically passed down from father to son. A teacher veneration ritual is performed during the art inheritance, which pays respect to and shows gratitude towards the teachers. There is a sacred ceremony of indoctrination of art pupils, which represents the bestowing of knowledge from the teacher to the pupil (Khrob Khruu) and involves the passing on and introduction of art instruments and the ritual of indoctrination by hand (Khrob Mue). Paraphernalia of this bestowing ritual include flowers, betel nuts, candles and joss sticks.

The major factors contributing to the diminishing of this art are likely time and cost. In the past, intricate paper cutting artworks were popular in coffin decorations. Nowadays, funerals require less time because people prefer convenience and speed. Another reason is the high costs of the materials and artisan wages, which contributes to younger people devaluing the importance of intricate paper cutting artworks. Study informants believe that knowledge should be passed on and the art's values instilled in children of newer generations.

Change of Songkhla Traditional Intricate Paper Cutting Artworks

There has been a radical change in the art form from the past to present times in terms of materials, instruments, production time, and the numbers of artisan apprentices. For instance, the digging iron rod (Lek Khud) has been replaced by the foil chisel, increasing engraving speed from 20 to 100 sheets of aluminium foil at a time. Production speed has increased considerably. In the past, artwork took approximately four to five days to complete. Today, however, people prefer ready-made coffins. Intricate paper cutting designs are currently unpopular as they are complicated and require many days to make. The art materials and instruments are costly. Nowadays, businesses offering complete funeral packages also offer sticker decorations for coffins that resemble intricate paper cutting artwork but are faster to produce and cheaper to buy. Thus stickers are more popular than traditional intricate paper cutting artworks.

The Modern Style of Traditional Intricate Paper Cutting Artworks in Nakhon Sri Thammarat Province

The province of Nakhon Sri Thammarat still retains the cultural heritage of traditional paper cutting. The style follows the oldest customs dating back to the Tambalinga period before the 7th Buddhist era (AD 58-157). Artworks are influenced by Dvaravati style, as evidenced in hybrid styles of Buddhist and Hindu religious artworks (e.g., Buddha Sihinga image pavilion). This indicates that artworks of this area were influenced by the central region of Thailand, which has a style that blends local artistic customs with late Ayutthaya Era (AD 1350 - 1767) Phra Laak artistic customs. This can be observed in the festival of Laak Phra or Chak Phra, which is held at the end of the Buddhist Lent. Buddha images are held in dragging processions both on land and by water during this festival (Chumphengphan, 2001). The merit-making festival of the tenth lunar month (Saat Duean Sip) has roots from a Hindu festival called Peta Phlee.

The festival of offering fire is a merit-making ceremony aimed at giving warmth to monks who come to beg for alms on cold mornings, by lighting a fire at the temple patio and making desserts for the monks. This festival is usually celebrated in December or January. In Nakhon Sri Thammarat, intricate paper cutting artworks decorate venues and architectural landmarks accordingly (Kriangkraipheth, 1997). Local people and intricate paper cutting artisans both remark that this ceremony is a unique element of the community. This festival has historical roots dating back to the Ayutthaya period (AD 1350-1767), when members of the royal family named Mom Nen Yai and Mom Nen Noi sought refuge in Nakhon Sri Thammarat during the Second Loss of Ayutthaya City in AD 1767. The Ayutthaya Palace's artistic heritage of gold coffin making was brought along with the royal refugees.

Historically, the city of Nakhon Sri Thammarat was an ancient town granted autonomy under the patronage of the Nakhon Sri Thammarat dynasty. In AD 1771, King Taksin gathered an army to conquer the city. The ruler of Nakhon Sri Thammarat surrendered, but vassals and servants who refused to do so fled the city. Later on, a plague hit the town, claiming many lives. According to interviewed master artisans, skilled artisans then used the funerary urns of high-ranking royalty, which were adorned with gold Lai Thai patterns, as

models to make urns to contain the ashes of their deceased family members. The Lai Thai paper used to decorate the urns is made from eaglewood (Mai Kritsana). The coloured portions are traditionally dyed with tree bark in order to create colour contrasts as Lai Thai patterns. In the past, materials like eaglewood and bark colours were obtained locally. A century ago, gold foil from Austria was delivered to Bangkok via Sri Lanka. Skilled artisans used it to create Lai Thai patterns with colours of gold and silver, to decorate coffins. The gold coffin decorations originated from the use of high-ranking royalty coffin decorations as models for funerary adornments. The term *Long Thong* means gold coffin and it originates from this art form, which was passed down from artisans to their apprentices.

The Procedures of Producing and Installing Traditional Intricate Paper Cutting Artworks of Artisans in Nakhon Sri Thammarat






The first step is pattern design. Each artisan has his own unique concept. It is important that they do not duplicate traditional pattern design. The next step is pattern drafting on an engraving model. When drafting, artisans will normally fold the paper first. Some designs undergo preliminary folding prior to drafting, but some do not (Lai Sing varieties). Some Kanok patterns require horizontal folding of the paper.

After drafting, the artisan prepares the gold foil by placing the model on 11 or 12 foil pieces. The model and papers are put on an aligning board, using staples to immobilize them when cutting patterns. The next step is to engrave patterns, using an iron rod to knock on the model until the desired design is achieved - a vital step for making unique patterns. Then the staples are removed and the foils pulled off piece by piece. Next, the engraved foils are piled up and the papers are cut according to the engraved pattern using chisels until the patterns are completed. The finished product is decoratively glued onto coffins.

Traditionally, several rituals are performed before affixing the first pattern onto the coffin. Artisans will commemorate Khru Mo Nok and Khru Mo Lai, and will ask for forgiveness from the deceased. These rituals originate from master artists' beliefs and teachings. Some artisans must inscribe holy letters, create protective talismans, and recite spells before sticking the first piece of

gold foil onto the coffin. The cut gold foil must be properly kept in place. It is forbidden to play with or walk across the foil. Those who violate this custom may fall ill or suffer misfortune.

Table 2: Example of Lai Thai Patterns Produced by Artisans of Nakhon Sri Thammarat Province

Pattern Name	Original Pattern	Male Artisan of Nakhon Sri Thammarat No: 1	Male Artisan of Nakhon Sri Thammarat No: 2	Male Artisan of Nakhon Sri Thammarat No: 3	Male Artisan of Nakhon Sri Thammarat No: 4
Luk Fak Kaam Poo or Pra Jam Yaam Kaam Poo	 (Phetcharaphan, 2000)				
	Figure 1	Figure 7	Figure 8	Figure 9	Figure 10

We observed traditional intricate paper cutting artworks produced by artisans of Nakhon Sri Thammarat province and compared them to the traditional Lai Thai pattern (Table 2, above: Figure 1). It was found that creative aspects differed from the original pattern, such as in the Luk Fak Kaam Poo or Pra Jam Yaam Kaam Poo patterns shown in Table 2 (Figure 7 to 10). A notable characteristic is the delicateness of the Luk Fak Kaam Poo pattern. The artisans added details to the pattern shape and lines and there were differences in line volume and space within the pattern. The positive space within the pattern varies according to each artisan’s style. Analysis of these two pattern types revealed that artisans had different approaches to inventing patterns and determining line volumes.

Inheritance and Conservation of Traditional Intricate Paper Cutting Techniques in Nakhon Sri Thammarat Province

The majority of artisans are avid believers of the Khru Mo tradition. They follow customs strictly because this art form is complicated. Those who

wish to inherit it must possess concentration, tolerance, detail orientation, and subtleness. Intricate paper cutting techniques require a considerable amount of training time and the trainee needs to be fond of the art in order to persevere. Those worthy of inheritance must be the artisan's heirs and in close contact with them for extended periods of time.

Another aspect of the Khru Mo is a supernatural belief that heirs get hexed or have an encounter with the Khru Mo spirits. A typical symptom is that the heir becomes ill for no reason and treatments are ineffective. A supernatural cure is then invoked by taking an oath to inherit the art. Upon being healed, the heir must uphold their oath by inheriting intricate paper cutting techniques from his predecessor.

At present, the inheritance of this knowledge is still limited to family members. The art will be passed on to sons or nephews as first priority, and to interested relatives as second priority. It is believed that this art form must be passed down to blood relations and an artisan's children are deemed to be more talented than other people. Nonetheless, inheritors of this technique have dwindled considerably in number. Inheriting this art involves practical training. Heirs learn by first helping out the artisan as an apprentice, for the techniques of producing intricate paper cutting artwork for decorating coffins involve many steps. Apprentices begin with practice tasks to complete; this training lasts for two to three years before the apprentice is ready to work alone. When he is deemed ready to be an artisan, he undergoes the rituals of venerating master spirits, is indoctrinated by hand, and is introduced to the art patterns. Upon completing these rituals, the new artisan is ready to accept jobs. Most artisans accumulate experience in intricate paper cutting techniques for approximately two decades before taking apprentices. The norm is to only train one to two apprentices in a lifetime.

At present, intricate paper cutting artisans are determined to conserve this art by passing it down to their children. However, they are concerned about the lack of successors. The main cause is the lack of customers because coffin intricate paper cutting artworks require much time and expense to create, leading customers to purchase decorated coffins instead of more costly gold-decorated coffins. To have a gold-decorated coffin, an empty casket needs to be purchased

first before an artisan is contacted to decorate it. In recent times, the costs for an empty casket and decorations have been separated. The decorations' minimum cost is about 17,000 baht, rising up to 50,000 baht if more elaborate patterns are required.

Nevertheless, the intricate paper cutting techniques of current artisans have improved considerably. Artisans learnt to invent and apply creative patterns and materials are now varied and modernized. New colours such as red, blue, and green are added to decorations and glass is also used to adorn coffins. Artisans believe that decorations need to evolve in order to keep up with the latest trends. It is predicted that the designs and materials used will change and become even more varied in the future.

A Comparative Study of Traditional Artisans of Songkhla and Modern Artisans of Nakhon Sri Thammarat

Traditional intricate paper cutting artwork is a Thai artisan skill that branched off of “sculpturing craftsmanship,” which is one of the ten officially recognized Thai Traditional Crafts. This artwork is used for decorating and adorning venues such as palaces, preaching rostrums, pavilions, erected buildings of royal ceremonies, and objects used in festivals and cultural events. In Thailand's southern region, this art form can be found nowadays on Phanom Phra boats in the Chak Phra ceremony and is commonly found on the coffins of elderly people. This art form is popular among highly ranked people, the wealthy, and people who are highly respected in the community (Department of Cultural Promotion, Ministry of Culture, 2014).

However, this artwork can only be found as coffin decorations nowadays. Its decrease in popularity is due to stickers replacing intricate paper cuttings because stickers imitate intricate paper patterns very well while being cheaper and faster to produce. The foils used nowadays are mostly purchased from China, with some types bought from Austria. The major patterns are of the Luk Fak Kaam Poo or Pra Jam Yaam Kaam Poo type (Table 2), which are used in the decoration of coffins and the Chak Phra procession boats of the festival of the tenth lunar month (Saat Duean Sip). Intricate paper cutting artisans are concentrated in the Songkhla and Nakhon Sri Thammarat provinces, with

unique provincial pattern styles. In Songkhla, the Kanok coffin or gold Kanok coffin patterns are more conservative, being more similar to the original Lai Thai patterns. However, their Nakhon Sri Thammarat counterparts have a focus on creativity, being more expressive according to the artisan's identity.

Examples of this creativity can be found in the Lai Thai pattern designs and the method of mother of pearl inlay. These patterns are popularly utilized in the adornment of coffins belonging to respected or high status people and in temple festivals such as the Laak Phra or Chak Phra ceremony. These intricate Lai Thai patterns can easily be duplicated by making silkscreen prints to engrave them on stickers. This process enables the patterns to be quickly produced and used.

The art form's inheritance and teaching process is not systematically codified. There is no teaching in schools or instruction manuals. The transmission of knowledge is merely an oral explanation of the necessary implements and methods, frequently conducted through instructive practice. Therefore the knowledge obtained is not consistent. Inconsistency of teaching methods results in the failure to recognize, design, and decorate patterns correctly. Therefore, the researcher proposes that an instruction manual containing details of these techniques should be compiled in order to preserve patterns that have existed since 1249 to the present, influenced by Indian and Chinese artistic traditions (Paaknam, 1991).

It was found that the Lai Thai patterns used in traditional intricate paper cutting techniques of Southern Thailand artisans still resemble the original ones. Artisans of both Songkhla and Nakhon Sri Thammarat provinces use similar Lai Thai patterns, including the Pra Jam Yaam Kaam Poo, Khanaap, Bai Tren, and Krui Cheng patterns. That is to say the traditional basic Lai Thai patterns in the table number 3 are usually found in both provinces. However, there are also dissimilar patterns (e.g., Raya pattern, Rajawat pattern, Thao Lueay pattern, Sai Bua pattern, and Sai Rat pattern) that reflect the artisans' intentions to retain local uniqueness. Because it is the local identity, by compositing different things, especially in Nakhon Sri Thammarat province.

The patterns that differ between these two provinces result in the loss of original Lai Thai patterns. This loss is inevitable as knowledge of producing these patterns is passed down through memorization and shaping the patterns

according to predecessors. There is no manual and artisans rely on repeatedly producing patterns until they can remember how to produce them by heart. When the original pattern is memorized, the artisan can then alter the pattern according to his method of expression. This achievement is the artisan's identity.

Artisans of both provinces use similar techniques in engraving paper. The difference lies in how paper is used. Artisans of Songkhla attach the engraved foil paper onto background paper, whereas artisans of Nakhon Sri Thammarat use paper of various colours such as orange, pink, and green to insert between patterns and produce colourful shades. The techniques of decorating coffins are not identical on a general scale. The Songkhla artisans will use not more than three colours in coffin decoration, using entirely gold, entirely silver or gold and red colours. The Nakhon Sri Thammarat artisans use glittering colours such as yellowish green, orange, pink, and green.

Artisans of both provinces share identical religious beliefs, which have Buddhist roots and are therefore called the Thai-Phut custom. This custom has led artisans to use Lai Thai in producing intricate paper cutting artworks. The difference is in how colours are used to express their forms of art, as mentioned above. Intricate paper cutting artworks of Nakhon Sri Thammarat display conservative traits. Artisans of Nakhon Sri Thammarat aim to conserve these patterns, refusing to let them vanish or be duplicated. For instance, there are three peaks on the upper portion of the gold coffin that represent the three Buddhist elements of Anicca (Impermanence), Dukka (Suffering), and Anatta (Soulessness). Table 3 (below) compares the intricate paper cutting techniques of artisans in Songkhla and Nakhon Sri Thammarat provinces.

Table 3: A Comparison of Patterns, Processes, Materials, and Coffin Features between artisans of Songkhla and Nakhon Sri Thammarat

Details	Songkhla	Nakhon Sri Thammarat
Patterns	Artisans used original Lai Thai patterns.	Artisans added more details to the original Lai Thai patterns by engraving geometrical shapes like circles.

Table 3: (Continued)

Details	Songkhla	Nakhon Sri Thammarat
Patterns	Patterns have positive space, which are prominently engraved on coffins and there is more space on the coffin base.	Patterns have positive space, which are clearly presented on both the coffin body and coffin base.
	No glass is used in pattern spacing.	Glass is used in pattern spacing.
	Not many types of patterns are used and patterns do not repeat, but have different sizes.	More patterns are used in coffin decorations and major patterns occur repeatedly.
	Repeating patterns occur both horizontally and vertically.	Repeating patterns occur horizontally only.
	The centre of the coffin is usually decorated with Rajawat patterns.	The centre of the coffin is decorated with glass for inscribing the deceased's name.
Paper Cutting Process	The inlaying is done on a single spot. No additional colours are added in the selection of patterns and designing of interior patterns.	The inlaying is done on two or three parallel spots. The mother of pearl used are of different sizes: small, medium, and large. The sizes create lucidity in the selection of patterns.
	Technique: The background is created by coloured stickers.	Technique: Colours are inserted by using gold aluminium foil and glittering paper.

The similarities and differences of gold coffins designed by artisans of Songkhla and Nakhon Sri Thammarat are as follows: (1) The shapes of coffins are different. Songkhla coffins are superior in strength whereas Nakhon Sri Thammarat coffins have curves that resemble human waists and have thinner sides. The three peaks above the coffin are aligned similarly; (2) The Lai Thai patterns are applied with different methods. Songkhla artisans apply intricate paper cutting artwork onto the coffin directly, whereas Nakhon Sri Thammarat artisans insert multiple colours into the intricate paper cutting artwork before applying the patterns onto the coffin. Below are examples of intricate paper cutting artworks of Songkhla (Figure 11) and Nakhon Sri Thammarat artisans (Figure 12).

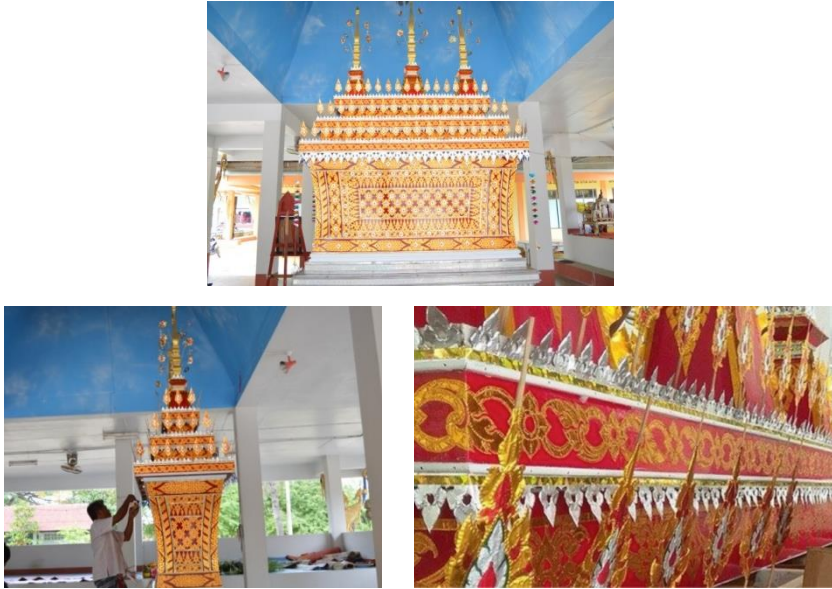


Figure 11: Intricate Paper Cutting Artwork Coffin Decoration by Male Artisan of Songkhla

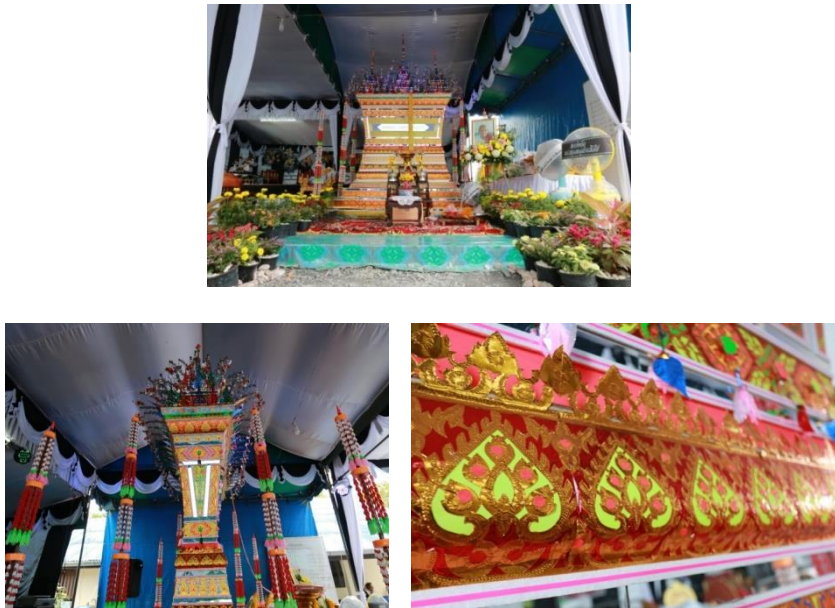


Figure 12: Intricate Paper Cutting Artwork Coffin Decoration by Male Artisan of Nakhon Sri Thammarat

Conclusion

The research demonstrated that there are factors pushing artworks like traditional intricate paper cutting techniques into obscurity, with fewer people knowing its existence and its popularity declining steadily from its former glory. The first factor is technology, which is convenient and economical. Fine works of art like intricate paper cuttings are at a disadvantage as they require time to complete and are costly. The second factor is the difficulty in inheriting the knowledge of intricate paper cutting. People in the community do not know much of this skill even though it is a unique art wherein each community has its own identity in its patterns. The reason that each pattern is uniquely customized lies in how each artisan learns and memorizes patterns. Upon mastering a pattern, the artisan can create new variations of the basic patterns learnt. An important element contributing to the difficulty of transmitting this artistic knowledge is the fact that the artisan cannot name patterns and recognize their origins. The artisan merely recognizes names of patterns through practical training. Names are given to patterns according to how the master teaches them to their apprentices and therefore are not always correct.

Nowadays, patterns are not created anew for each occasion. A model is drafted and duplicated with tracing paper or photocopied, depending on which method is more convenient, before the duplicated pattern is applied to artworks. Skill is acquired from frequency of training. This artistic skill was formerly learnt in temples. In ancient times, most artisans were monks and community elders. Currently, intricate paper cutting techniques are used only on coffins and are infrequently found. This artwork is exclusively reserved for important members of the family and therefore known only in limited circles. Successors of this art can be either male or female.

It is noteworthy that each artisan has his unique method of producing patterns. While the original Lai Thai pattern is still conserved, the differences lie in how the patterns are modified, such as through using lines, determining spaces, and curvatures of lines, and the inlaying of mother of pearl. Artisans of Songkhla employ the single inlaying method, whereas artisans of Nakhon Sri Thammarat employ the double or triple inlaying method. The conservative and modern styles of traditional intricate paper cutting differ in the following

aspects: (1) the drafting of Lai Thai patterns, (2) the volume of lines, (3) the distance between positive and negative spaces, (4) the method of inlaying the mother of pearl on intricate paper cuttings, and (5) coffin decorations.

From this research, the traditional intricate paper cutting techniques must be produced as a detailed guidebook and given to interested people to preserve these invaluable techniques. In addition, the Thai government should promote this Thai traditional craft and its importance to communities, such as through building Thai traditional craft community learning and resource centres in each province. They should manage this knowledge by establishing a learning center and creating courses for students to learn and practice, as well as making it a profession that needs conservation because it is a traditional folk wisdom of Thailand Southerners.

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