



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Tracing Evolution, Cultural Significance, and Impact of Modernization on Hastilinga Funeral Art

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Jul 6, 2024	<p>This research investigates the evolution, cultural significance, and impact of modernization on Hastilinga funeral art in Northeast Thailand (Isaan region). Rooted in ancient Hindu-Buddhist cosmology, Hastilinga funeral art blends spiritual, social, and artistic elements that have evolved over centuries. The study traces the art form's transformation from its historical origins, reflecting its integration of Lao and Thai artistic styles, to its contemporary manifestations, illustrating how it continues to serve both ritualistic and societal purposes. This study documents how Hastilinga art, once characterized by simple symbolic representations, has evolved into complex, intricate designs reflecting broader socio-religious changes. It highlights the art's role in honoring the deceased, reinforcing community cohesion, and transmitting cultural knowledge. The research emphasizes how traditional practices, including the craftsmanship of elaborate structures like pavilions and towers, remain integral to funeral rituals, even as they adapt to modern influences. Modernization and globalization have introduced new materials, techniques, and cultural elements, leading to a hybridization of artistic styles. This has impacted the authenticity and cultural significance of Hastilinga art, as traditional methods and materials are increasingly supplemented or replaced by contemporary innovations. While these changes can enrich the art form, they also challenge the preservation of its original cultural values. The study also highlights the importance of community-led preservation efforts, including educational programs and cultural festivals, in maintaining the art form's relevance. By analyzing the interplay between traditional practices and modern adaptations, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of Hastilinga funeral art's resilience and its ongoing significance in the evolving landscape of the art in the Issan region.</p>
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### INTRODUCTION

Hastilinga funeral art, with its deep historical roots and rich cultural symbolism, represents a unique facet of ritualistic practices in Northeastern Thailand. Originating from ancient traditions, this art form has evolved significantly, reflecting changes in societal values, religious beliefs, and artistic expressions (Chirapravati, 2009; Revire, 2022; Teekalee, et al., 2022; Peleggi, 2013; Hackley & Hackley, 2015; McDaniel, 2014). Understanding Hastilinga funeral art is essential for grasping the broader cultural and historical narratives of the communities that practice it. This art not only serves as a medium for honoring the deceased but also encapsulates the spiritual and social ethos of its creators. This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of how Hastilinga funeral art has transformed from its historical origins to its contemporary forms. It explored the art's enduring

cultural significance and examined the impact of modernization on its traditional practices and expressions. By documenting these changes, the study will contribute to a broader understanding of how cultural artifacts adapt to evolving societal contexts. To contextualize this investigation, the following literature review will explore existing research on Hastilinga funeral art, focusing on its historical development, cultural symbolism, and modernization effects. Key findings from previous studies are highlighted, gaps in the current literature will be identified, and the review will set the stage for a comprehensive analysis of the art form's evolution and its ongoing relevance in a modernizing world.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Funeral art holds immense significance across both traditional and contemporary societies, garnering substantial scholarly attention globally. Research has explored various facets of funerary art within different cultural frameworks. For instance, Adjei (2010) examines the correlation between art and funerals in Kumasi, Ghana, while Asante et al. (2013) emphasize the historical and cultural importance of Asante burial art in south-central Ghana. Yeboah et al. (2017) investigate how traditional Asante funerals influence domestic tourism. Baan et al. (2022) explore burial traditions among the Torajan of Indonesia. Langer (2007) provides a detailed study of Buddhist death ceremonies in Sri Lanka. These studies demonstrate the profound integration of funerary art within cultural customs and traditions, functioning as a vehicle for the expression, conservation, and transmission of cultural values. Additionally, they suggest that the impact of funerary art extends beyond the ceremonies themselves, influencing areas such as tourism and local economics. The research encompasses a wide range of cultural contexts, including Ghana, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, highlighting the distinct ways in which art and ritual intersect in many communities.

Multiple studies offer insights into conventional funeral customs, their cultural backgrounds, and the interplay of diverse cultural and religious aspects in burial rituals. Additionally, they examine how contemporary influences like artistic expression, contemporary visual elements, and global events like the COVID-19 pandemic shape conventional customs. For instance, in Nigeria, Oripeloye (2016) explores funeral performance aesthetics in O. ka Akoko, Ondo State, and Ejikeme (2020) explores traditional Igbo burial practices. Marak and Sharma (2023) analyze how Garos funeral rites reflect cultural assimilation amid Christian influences, while Nweke (2023) examines the interplay between Christianity and indigenous Igbo spiritualities. Aluede and Ikhidero (2024) study the syncretism between Itolimin and Christian burial practices in Esanland. Ukim (2020) investigates the impact of traditional African art on contemporary practices through Ibibio funerary art. Ikwuemesi and Onwuegbuna (2018) explore the intersection of visuality and performance in Igbo funerals, and Ugwu and Nwankwo (2020) address modern funeral rites during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dewi et al. (2020) explore how funeral practices have undergone substantial changes as a result of industrialization. This growth has altered the visual aspects of funeral practices, mirroring shifts in societal and cultural influences. The studies conducted by Hallam and Hockey (2020), Francis et al. (2020), Walter (2017), Runkel (2023), Dollimore (2013), Maddrell (2016), and Kyle (2012) propose that the examination of death rituals offers useful perspectives for cross-cultural research, demonstrating the interdependence of death ceremonies with art, culture, social organization, and spirituality. Zaluchu (2023) argues that incorporating death rites into social relations entails the use of symbolic components and the establishment of social hierarchy, underscoring the connection between tradition and social unity in contemporary settings. Prakash et al. (2021) demonstrate how changes in death-related rituals represent different adjustments made by imitating, substituting, and altering certain ritual components and participants. Furthermore, it reveals the rising social stratification within the Nadar community and its correlation with changes in death-related rites. This examination explores the practical ways in which Nadars employ ritual acts to symbolically communicate and achieve their desires for increasing their social standing through these ritualistic performances. Overall, these studies demonstrate that funeral rituals, although based on tradition,

are flexible and adjust to wider social and cultural shifts. They highlight the significance of these rituals in comprehending cultural identity, social structure, and the interaction between tradition and modernity.

Funeral rites in Thailand play an important role in the Theravada Buddhist tradition and serve significant social purposes. In Chirapravati's (2013) analysis, the author examines the portrayal of death rituals in Rāmāyaṇa murals to gain a deeper understanding of their socio-cultural and spiritual characteristics. Rappa (2011) provides an in-depth analysis of current Thai funeral practices, drawing on both local and foreign research. In the realm of Buddhist art, crematoria have traditionally had influence over the formation of national identity while simultaneously mirroring societal hierarchies. In his study, Chua (2018) examines the utilization of artistic representations of Meru, which are symbolic cosmic structures, to bring together different social groups while still upholding hierarchical divisions. Jackson's (2021) research focuses on the interconnectedness between emerging money cults, amulets with ritualistic powers, and the practice of professional spirit mediumship. Baumann (2022) discussed the concept of ambiguity in relation to Thailand's phi and the process of epistemological decolonization in Thai studies. Hall (2015) examines the impact of the visual arts in Northern Thai Buddhist funerals on postmortem rituals and ideas about life and death. These visual arts are characterized by their brilliant colors and symbolic motifs. These artistic creations serve as more than just decorative elements; they effectively convey important concepts of impermanence and virtue. Hall (2016) provides additional insights into the significance of the three-tail flag utilized in Buddhist funerals. This flag serves as a representation of Buddhist ideals and signifies the process of cosmic rejuvenation. Lastly, Hall (2021) explores the detailed architecture and symbolic importance of cremation structures. The research emphasizes its worth and visual appeal in the context of Northern Thai Buddhist customs.

Northeastern Thailand practices Hastilinga, a lesser-known form of Buddhist funeral art. In the local area, Hastilinga funeral art highlights the specific Buddhist practices and beliefs surrounding death and the afterlife. It incorporates distinctive symbolic images and elaborate motifs that are exclusive to the region. Hastilinga, unlike other well-known kinds of Buddhist funeral art, offers valuable insights into the diverse regional practices of Buddhism and plays a significant role in safeguarding cultural heritage. Researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how regional Buddhist perspectives have impacted artistic representations and funeral customs by examining Hastilinga.

Hastilinga funeral art is a significant aspect of Buddhist funerals in northeastern Thailand, as it encompasses visual depictions. Although their recognition beyond this cultural framework is limited, the name "Hastilinga" refers to distinct creative motifs and activities closely linked to these funerals. This art form serves as a means of representing the passage from life to the afterlife, incorporating elaborate patterns that convey the local beliefs around death and reincarnation (Hall, 2015). Thai Buddhism, specifically the Theravada tradition, focuses on attaining enlightenment via individual endeavor and adherence to monastic rules (Clark, 2020; Morris, 2013).

Studying Hastilinga funeral art is essential for understanding its significance in regional Buddhist rituals and its impact on cultural preservation. This artistic medium offers significant perspectives on how local communities navigate the experience of mourning, pay tribute to the departed, and pursue spiritual guidance. Through the process of documenting and studying Hastilinga, we contribute to the preservation of this cultural heritage and gain a deeper understanding of the creative variations present in Buddhist traditions. Examining Hastilinga provides insight into social hierarchies and communal principles in Northeastern Thailand, emphasizing the role of art as a conduit for shared recollection and cultural identity.

Although the study of Hastilinga funeral art has explored its historical progression and cultural importance, additional research is necessary to comprehensively understand its growth and the impact of modernization. This literature review consolidates significant contributions to

comprehending the artistic and cultural aspects of Hastilinga. Buddhist art commonly depicts Hastilinga, a fictional bird species. The artist's perception may influence how they portray it. The social, cultural, and artistic significance of Hastilinga funeral art makes it a worthwhile subject for research. For example, Wulembu and Hastilinga are compared in Theravada Buddhism and Brahminism-Hinduism (Meesang & Intongpan, 2022). Music is studied in Prasat Nok Hastilinga cremations (Mokhasak, 2021). Hastilinga bird-shaped coffins are studied in Lanna society (Jenjai, 2021). The literature review of Hastilinga funeral art emphasizes its historical, cultural, and artistic importance, while also emphasizing areas where its development and modernization are lacking. This review proposes the utilization of qualitative research methodologies to fill these gaps, as described in the subsequent section.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This qualitative study employs a combination of documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews to explore the evolution, cultural significance, and impact of modernization on Hastilinga funeral art in the Isaan region of Northeast Thailand. These methods are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the art form by examining historical records and engaging with contemporary practitioners and community members.

The documentary analysis involved reviewing a range of sources, including historical texts, scholarly articles, archival records, and visual documentation such as photographs and videos of traditional funeral ceremonies. Key sources included ethnographic studies, government and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) reports on cultural preservation, and publications by local historians. Documents were collected from libraries, archives, and online databases, with a focus on changes in artistic styles, materials, and cultural significance. Systematic review and thematic extraction were employed to identify patterns and trends in the evolution of Hastilinga funeral art.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four groups of participants: local artisans, community elders and ritual experts, cultural practitioners and preservationists, and community residents. Participants were recruited through local cultural organizations and community centers, with additional informants reached via snowball sampling. Interviews, conducted in-person or via video conferencing, were audio-recorded (with consent) and transcribed. Thematic analysis was used to code and categorize responses, focusing on themes related to the evolution of Hastilinga art, its cultural significance, and the impact of modernization.

Combining documentary analysis and interviews provided a multi-dimensional understanding of Hastilinga funeral art. The documentary analysis offered historical context, while interviews provided contemporary perspectives and personal experiences. This methodological approach enabled a comprehensive exploration of the art form's evolution, cultural significance, and responses to modernization.

Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were addressed throughout the research process. Efforts were made to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected, and potential biases were carefully considered and mitigated.

## RESULTS

### The Evolution of Hastilinga Funeral Art

The Hastilinga funeral art, which has its origins in ancient ceremonies, represents the convergence of mythology and cultural customs in the Northeast Thai (Isaan) region. Hindu-Buddhist cosmology uses the Sanskrit term "Hastilinga" to describe legendary creatures. This notion has a significant impact on the symbolic portrayal of death and the afterlife in art. This art style has undergone a transformation from its ancient origins, mirroring changes in society's ideals and artistic methods throughout history.

Hastilinga art plays a significant role in Northeast Thailand, namely within the Thai-Lao ethnic communities. It serves to pay tribute to the deceased and is also a vital component of cultural identity and shared memory. Laos' art traveled to Thailand during the Lan Chang Kingdom era, influenced by both migration and regional exchanges. The art movement introduced the art form to the Isaan region, where it combined with local customs, resulting in a distinctive amalgamation of Lao and Thai artistic styles. The art form progressed from basic symbolic depictions to sophisticated and elaborate motifs, reflecting wider socio-religious transformations. Figure 1 illustrates that the close geographical vicinity of Isaan and the Lan Chang Kingdom allowed for cultural contacts that enhanced the creative traditions of both regions.



**Fig. 1 Map of Isaan**

**Figure 1** depicts Isaan's geographical representation. The map illustrates the geographical proximity between Isaan and the Lan Chang Kingdom, currently known as the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) or Laos. Geographically, Isaan and the kingdom are in proximity, located on opposite sides of the Mekong River. Isaan encompasses the northeastern region of Thailand, whereas the kingdom held dominion over the territory situated east of the Mekong River. The proximity of these locations allowed for regular engagement and cultural exchange that spanned several centuries. The kingdom, which thrived from the 14th to 18th centuries, held great cultural and political influence in present-day Laos. It played a significant role in regional politics and culture, exerting influence on nearby territories, such as present-day Isaan.

Historically, the kingdom impacted a wider cultural and political domain that included the area known as Isaan. Both cultures partake in analogous festivals featuring identical rites, dances, and music, showcasing their interconnected cultural traditions. Isaan and Lan Chang mostly adhere to Theravada Buddhism, which has greatly influenced their spiritual and cultural existence. The collective religious customs include ceremonies, celebrations, and sacred structure design, all of which demonstrate a shared religious legacy. Both locations exhibit a prevalence of traditional spiritual beliefs, such as animism and ancestor worship. These activities frequently intersect and enhance Buddhist traditions, suggesting a common cultural and spiritual foundation. The physical and cultural connections between Northeast Thailand (Isaan) and Lan Chang in Laos are apparent due to their close geographical proximity, shared natural characteristics, and interconnected historical and cultural traditions. The ties between these places demonstrate a complex network of

interaction and influence that has significantly influenced both areas' cultural landscapes. This emphasizes their shared heritage and continuous cultural interchange. The Mekong River served as a conduit for historical trade routes, enabling the interchange of products, ideas, and cultural practices between the regions of Isaan and Lan Chang. This interaction facilitated the merging and enhancement of cultural customs in both areas. Furthermore, historical migrations and settlement patterns have facilitated population exchange between Isaan and Lan Chang, leading to the assimilation of their cultural practices and customs.

Historical and social changes led to the adoption of Hastilinga funeral art in Thailand, a culturally and artistically significant practice that originated in Laos. It has evolved into its current form in northeast Thailand's Isaan region. The migration began during the Lan Chang Kingdom era, when Laos' political and cultural influence expanded into the northeastern region of Thailand. Due to political turmoil, such as the downfall of the Lan Chang Kingdom and subsequent migrations, the Lao people migrated to Thailand by crossing the Mekong River, and they brought along their valuable artistic customs. The unique cultural and environmental factors of the region shaped the incorporation of Hastilinga funeral art in Thailand, resulting in the amalgamation of indigenous artistic techniques and materials while upholding the fundamental aspects of Lao tradition. Figure 2 depicts a classic Hastilinga funeral scene from the Lan Chang Kingdom, which is now part of Laos. This picture serves to visually represent the traditional practices of Hastilinga funeral art, showcasing the elaborate rituals and artistic components that are essential to this cultural heritage.



**Fig. 2 A traditional funeral scene from the Lan Chang Kingdom, showcasing the Hastilinga culture**

**Figure 2** depicts a traditional funeral scene in the Hastilinga culture. The Lan Chang Kingdom's funeral art, which thrived from the 14th to the 18th centuries in present-day Laos and northeastern Thailand, is a unique kind of ceremonial art that combines Hindu-Buddhist symbolism with local creative customs. During the Lan Chang Kingdom, Hastilinga funeral art underwent development by incorporating elements from Hindu and Buddhist traditions. This adaptation involved incorporating local creative practices to accurately represent the cosmological and spiritual beliefs prevalent during that period. During this era, there was a significant interchange of creative and theological concepts, which had a profound impact on the evolution of Hastilinga art. The legacy of this art style continues to influence contemporary activities in northeastern Thailand and Laos. The funeral art of the Lan Chang Kingdom in Hastilinga serves as evidence of the complex combination of mythological



symbolism, local craftsmanship, and spiritual tradition that defined the cultural and religious aspects of the region.

Hastilinga art frequently integrates elements derived from Hindu-Buddhist mythology, encompassing legendary animals and holy symbols. These features symbolize spiritual notions such as the soul's journey, safeguarding the deceased, and the transition to the afterlife. As a tribute to the deceased, the artwork showcases intricate patterns and ornate constructions like pavilions and ceremonial towers. Intricate carvings and paintings embellish the structures, depicting both regional creative forms and religious symbolism. The art form demonstrates an amalgamation of indigenous customs with influences from the wider Southeast Asian area. During the Lan Chang period, there was a notable cultural interchange with nearby regions, leading to the development of a distinctive artistic style that incorporates Lao, Thai, and wider Hindu-Buddhist influences. Artists often employ traditional materials such as wood, stone, and fabrics, incorporating centuries-old skills into their work. The craftsmanship exemplifies the artist's expertise as well as the symbolic significance of the art in burial ceremonies. Hastilinga art is of paramount importance in funeral rituals, as it serves to direct the departed individual through the realm beyond death and offer safeguarding and spiritual aid. It plays a crucial role in the ceremonial environment, improving the effectiveness of the ritual and strengthening the community's bond with their spiritual convictions.

Over time, nearby Thai villages adopted and accepted the art form, gradually transforming it to incorporate a blend of Lao and Thai cultural influences. Presently, the funeral art of Hastilinga in Northeast Thailand persists in reflecting its Lao heritage while showcasing a distinctive amalgamation of local creative traditions and cultural manifestations. The funeral art of Hastilinga maintains its contemporary relevance and adaption within Northeast Thai culture by combining traditional elements with modern aesthetics, as shown in Figure 3.



**Fig 3. Hastilinga funeral art in contemporary Northeast Thailand**

Figure 3 depicts Hastilinga's funeral art in modern-day Northeast Thailand. Hastilinga funeral art is characterized by its dynamic and progressive nature, as it combines traditional customs with contemporary elements. The local community's indigenous Buddhist and animist beliefs intricately connect this art style, serving as a manifestation of the area's abundant cultural legacy. In the present day, Hastilinga funeral art combines traditional aspects, such as detailed carvings and symbolic themes, with contemporary methods and materials. Contemporary artists employ metalwork,

modern technology, and other inventive materials in addition to conventional wood and textiles to produce visually captivating and long-lasting artworks. The artwork consistently incorporates conventional motifs, such as legendary creatures and religious iconography, that symbolize protection for the deceased and serve as a spiritual guide for the soul's passage to the hereafter.

Despite the evolution of artistic styles, the symbols continue to play a crucial role in the spiritual meaning of the art. Contemporary Hastilinga's art encompasses a diverse array of forms and techniques that are a fusion of local artistic customs and worldwide inspirations. The intricate architecture and pavilions used during funerals, embellished with a combination of traditional and contemporary design features, showcase diversity. Local communities and cultural groups are diligently recording customary practices and restoring traditional craftsmanship to safeguard Hastilinga art. Workshops, cultural festivals, and educational programs are essential for educating new craftspeople and involving younger generations, therefore guaranteeing the preservation of this traditional heritage (Praewa T., personal communication, April 2022; Kanya W., personal communication, March 2022). Contemporary Hastilinga art draws upon worldwide influences to incorporate new aesthetics and techniques while simultaneously prioritizing the preservation of its traditional relevance. Achieving a harmonious equilibrium between innovation and cultural preservation is a significant problem and priority for contemporary practitioners (Somchai P., personal communication, February 2022; Chinda R., personal communication, July 2022).

This progression demonstrates how to integrate contemporary design elements into traditional Hastilinga structures while preserving their cultural and symbolic importance. According to a local artist named Somchai K., our approach to Hastilinga art has undoubtedly developed throughout time. While we still respect traditional motifs, we have incorporated contemporary materials such as metal and digital graphics to keep the art form current and vibrant (Somchai K., personal communication, March 2022). Narin S., a cultural practitioner, emphasized that the incorporation of traditional and contemporary elements in Hastilinga art mirrors the wider cultural changes occurring in our community. "It enables us to safeguard our cultural legacy while simultaneously embracing novel artistic manifestations" (Narin S., personal communication, June 2022). These alterations demonstrate the ongoing ability of Hastilinga art to adjust, maintaining a delicate equilibrium between historical importance and contemporary creativity.

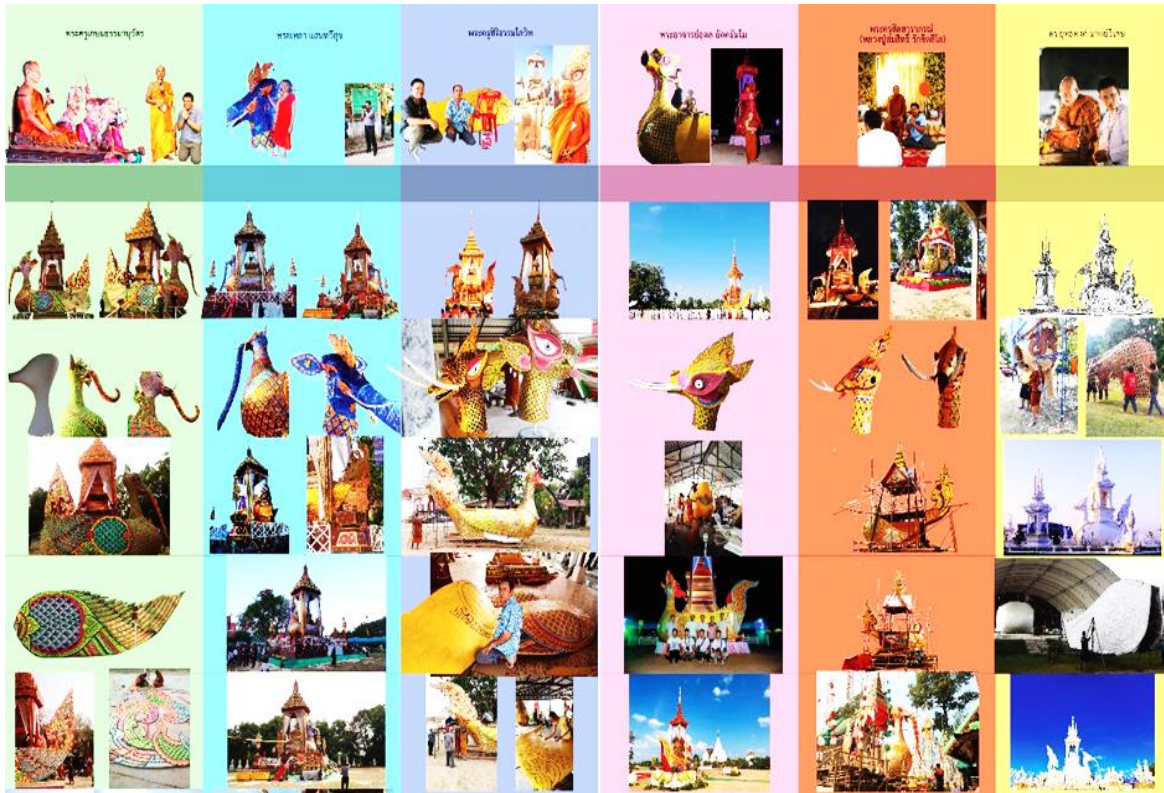
### **The Cultural Significance of Hastilinga Funeral Art**

Hastilinga funeral art has a significant impact on community solidarity and the safeguarding of culture in Thailand. These ceremonial art forms play a crucial role in funeral rituals and function as a means of strengthening communal identity and conveying cultural knowledge. The creation of intricate pavilions and towers, embellished with symbolic themes and vivid hues, enables the ceremonial passage of the soul and promotes communal cohesion.

The interviews demonstrate that creating Hastilinga frameworks for funerals not only allows for collective storytelling, but also strengthens social connections. According to one source, creating a Hastilinga structure for a respected elder's funeral provided an opportunity for community members to exchange narratives and enhance their understanding of how art contributes to the preservation of traditional customs. Hastilinga art showcases the region's cultural heritage by using elaborate patterns and symbolic elements such as legendary animals, religious themes, and symbols denoting the protection of the departed. These elements embody the indigenous beliefs regarding the existence of life after death and the perpetual nature of life beyond it. According to artist Prasit T., each Hastilinga piece holds profound symbolism and is more than just decorative. The legendary animals and religious symbols we employ intimately link our views on the guidance and protection of the soul in the afterlife (Prasit T., personal communication, March 2022).



The craftsmanship involved in creating Hastilinga art involves skilled artisans who use traditional techniques passed down through generations. Cultural expert Khunying L. asserts that our techniques have their roots in centuries-old traditions. We use methods that our ancestors perfected, ensuring that each piece not only reflects our art but also our heritage (Khunying L., personal communication, April 2022). Figure 4 illustrates the diverse artistic styles within contemporary Hastilinga art, showcasing variations in design and technique.



**Fig. 4 The diverse artistic styles within contemporary Hastilinga art**

Figure 4 illustrates the various artistic forms found in current Hastilinga art in Northeast Thailand (Isaan). A wide range of artistic styles distinguish the art of contemporary Hastilinga, demonstrating the simultaneous conservation of ancient practices and the incorporation of contemporary influences. This variation is evident in a variety of critical dimensions. Contemporary Hastilinga's art still incorporates traditional elements such as legendary beings, religious emblems, and intricate sculptures. However, modern techniques like metalworking, digital printing, and mixed media have led to innovative interpretations of these traditional symbols. While traditional materials like wood, stone, and linen continue to be important, modern craftsmen also utilize materials like metals, acrylics, and synthetic fabrics. By utilizing novel materials, it is possible to achieve enhanced longevity and a wider spectrum of creative possibilities. Artisans are combining various materials using conventional methods, which leads to the creation of distinctive and long-lasting pieces. The design of funeral art structures, such as pavilions and ceremonial towers, exhibits a diverse array of styles, ranging from intricately ornate traditional designs to more abstract contemporary forms. These architectural constructions frequently combine elaborate traditional carvings with modern design elements, showcasing both the ongoing tradition and the evolution of creative techniques. There is a significant divergence in color schemes and aesthetic methodologies.

Contemporary Hastilinga painters deviate from the conventional style by exploring novel color schemes and finishes, departing from the brilliant and symbolic hues typically associated with the

art form. This experimentation can provide dramatic juxtapositions and pioneering visual techniques that maintain adherence to conventional iconography (Chinda R., personal communication, March 2023; Praewa T., personal communication, April 2022). Contemporary Hastilinga's art showcases a fusion of indigenous cultural aspects and outside artistic influences. This entails adapting global design elements and themes to align with the unique cultural customs and practices of Hastilinga. We delicately manage the global impact while preserving cultural integrity (Somchai P., personal communication, February 2022).

During burial rituals, contemporary Hastilinga art frequently fulfills both utilitarian and ornamental functions. Modern pieces of art, initially designed for ceremonial purposes, can also function as displays or public exhibitions, expanding their significance both within and beyond the community. According to contemporary artist Amara S., "Although we include modern elements, the fundamental techniques and styles remain traditional." The current range of variations serves as evidence of our continuous commitment to traditional workmanship while also adapting to changes throughout time" (Amara S., personal communication, January 2023).

Contemporary Hastilinga art combines ancient traditions with new techniques, such as metalwork and digital art. These advancements enable artists to combine conventional motifs with contemporary aesthetics, showcasing changing cultural values and worldwide influences. As a result, Hastilinga funeral art continues to adapt, preserving its traditional importance while adopting modern artistic forms.

In conclusion, Hastilinga funeral art remains an essential manifestation of cultural heritage, providing a deep way to pay tribute to ancestors and preserve community bonds through its symbolic and artistic traditions.

### **The Impact of Modernization**

The funeral art of Hastilinga has undergone a tremendous transformation due to modernization, globalization, and technological improvements. This has resulted in a blending of many styles and techniques. Contemporary substances and methodologies are gradually augmenting or substituting traditional approaches like manually sculpted wood and organic colorants. The emergence of synthetic materials and current tools has facilitated the merging of old and modern artistic components. The process of hybridization can occasionally weaken the art's original cultural importance.

The influence of globalization on Hastilinga art is evident through the incorporation of various cultural components and artistic techniques. Although these influences have the potential to enhance the art form, they also pose a threat to the preservation of unique local traditions. According to cultural researcher Somchai P., globalization has introduced new materials and techniques that can provide a novel viewpoint on Hastilinga art. Nevertheless, there is a legitimate concern that these external influences may weaken or diminish our ancient traditions and symbols, as expressed by Somchai P. in a personal communication in July 2024. The incorporation of foreign components can pose a threat to the maintenance of indigenous customs, a concern shared by local artist Aranya N., who stated, "It requires a delicate equilibrium." Although incorporating new inspirations can enhance the vibrancy and relevance of our art, it is crucial to use caution to maintain the fundamental aspects that constitute Hastilinga.

Globalization is impacting both the visual qualities of Hastilinga art and the related ceremonial customs, resulting in a dynamic interaction between traditional and contemporary elements. Kanya W., a cultural practitioner, agrees with this perspective and states that the aesthetics of Hastilinga art have undeniably transformed in accordance with worldwide trends. However, the difficulty lies in incorporating these modifications while preserving the fundamental nature of our customary rituals and beliefs" (Kanya W., personal communication, June 2024).

Despite these difficulties, efforts to conserve Hastilinga art are still ongoing. Cultural groups and local communities are actively involved in the process of recording historic traditions, revitalizing artisanal processes, and advocating for cultural education. According to Chinda R., the director of the local cultural organization, our goal is to record the complex procedures involved in Hastilinga art and guarantee the transmission of ancient methods to future generations. The objective is to maintain the fundamental nature of this art form while accommodating modern requirements" (Chinda R., personal communication, July 2024).

These initiatives strive to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between the conservation of cultural assets and the needs and expectations of the present day. Local artisan Praewa T. emphasized the significance of these endeavors, asserting, "By means of workshops and community events, we are not merely imparting new skills but also fostering a sense of pride and comprehension of our cultural heritage among younger generations" (Praewa T., personal communication, August 2024). Community-driven initiatives, such as seminars and cultural festivals, play a vital role in educating and involving younger generations, as well as training aspiring artisans. Noppon K., a community activist, states that our cultural events have a dual purpose of exhibiting Hastilinga art and providing education to the public, with the additional aim of motivating young individuals to carry on these traditions. The objective is to establish a dynamic cultural legacy that adapts while maintaining its traditional foundation" (Noppon K., personal communication, June 2024).

Interview findings indicate that although modernization brings about the use of new materials and techniques, communities try to maintain the genuineness and spiritual importance of Hastilinga art. Proficient craftsmen and cultural specialists are crucial in this procedure, ensuring the preservation of traditional workmanship while also allowing for modern adjustments. Implementing educational programs and organizing cultural events are crucial for preserving Hastilinga art in the face of shifting social norms and economic constraints.

To summarize, although modernization poses obstacles to the art of funeral in Hastilinga, it also provides opportunity for adaptation and rejuvenation. The art form showcases its ability to adapt to contemporary influences while maintaining its fundamental traditional features, guaranteeing its ongoing significance in the changing cultural environment of Northeast Thailand.

## **DISCUSSION**

The conclusion of the comparative research on Hastilinga funeral art in Northeast Thailand highlights both similarities and differences with findings from other international studies on funerary art and traditions. The literature review provides a comprehensive range of studies on funeral art and rituals in various cultures, emphasizing recurring themes of cultural conservation, artistic manifestation, and adjustment to contemporary pressures.

The previous study constantly highlighted the significance of funerary art in safeguarding cultural heritage. For instance, studies on Asante burial art (Adjei, 2010; Asante et al., 2013) and Torajan burial traditions (Baan et al., 2022) demonstrate the role of funeral art in reflecting and preserving cultural values and behaviors. Similarly, the Hastilinga funeral art, as emphasized in the conclusion, has a vital function in conserving cultural identity and fostering unity in Northeast Thailand. Both Hastilinga art and other cultural burial customs utilize artwork to pay tribute to the deceased and enhance social connections, emphasizing the universal role of funerary art as a method of cultural representation and conservation.

Another significant subject is the influence of modernization on funeral customs. Research conducted in Nigeria (Oripeloye, 2016; Ejikeme, 2020) and Ghana (Yeboah et al., 2017) demonstrates the impact of modern influences and globalization on the evolution of traditional rites. Similarly, Hastilinga's funeral art has undergone significant changes as a result of modernity and globalization. It has embraced new materials and techniques while also seeking to preserve its cultural core. This

comparison exemplifies a prevalent pattern in which traditional funerary art adjusts to modern circumstances while striving to preserve fundamental cultural principles.

Numerous studies have shown that funeral customs can adapt to modern influences. Studies conducted by Ikwuemesi and Onwuegbuna (2018) as well as Ugwu and Nwankwo (2020) examine Igbo funeral rituals, while Hall (2015, 2021) explores the development of Thai Buddhist funerals. These research findings demonstrate how ancient customs adapt and transform in accordance with shifting social and cultural dynamics. The funeral art of Hastilinga showcases its versatility by seamlessly incorporating contemporary creative aspects while maintaining the essence of traditional motifs. This adaptability mirrors the broader patterns seen in other cultures as traditional funeral art transforms to meet changing cultural values and creative styles.

While numerous studies highlight the worldwide influence of urbanization and industrialization on burial customs, the local distinctiveness of Hastilinga funeral art in Northeast Thailand stands in contrast to the broader focus of other studies. The elaborate intricacies and symbolic patterns exclusive to Hastilinga emphasize a localized interpretation of Buddhist art that maintains a strong connection to indigenous customs. This regional distinctiveness differs from the broader conclusions of studies, such as those on Asante and Torajan funerals, which, although they also adapt to modernity, involve a wider range of cultural traditions.

The conflict between maintaining traditional customs and adopting new ideas is a common motif in literature. Studies on funeral art in Ghana and Indonesia reveal a traditional approach to maintaining rituals (Adjei, 2010; Baan et al., 2022). On the other hand, Hastilinga funeral art displays a dynamic interplay between tradition preservation and the introduction of new ideas. The conclusion emphasizes that Hastilinga art not only incorporates novel materials and processes but also preserves its original character, indicating a subtle equilibrium between respecting past customs and accepting modern modifications.

Studies that look at how funerary art affects the economy, like the effect of Asante funerals on tourism (Yeboah et al., 2017) or the meaning of ceremonial buffaloes in Torajan funerals (Dewi et al., 2024), are different from those that focus more on how Hastilinga art brings people together. Although Hastilinga art contributes significantly to cultural and social unity, its influence on the wider socioeconomic setting is less prominent when compared to the global influences shown in other areas.

Regional variations influence the expression of certain universal elements of funerary art, such as its role in cultural preservation and its ability to adapt to modernity. The unique geographical traits of Hastilinga art highlight the significance of local customs and beliefs, which may occasionally deviate from broader patterns observed in other civilizations.

The juxtaposition of preservation and innovation, as well as the balance between regional character and global influence, exemplify the intricate dynamics between upholding cultural identity and embracing modern influences. The Hastilinga painting's distinctive location exemplifies how different cultural contexts handle these processes in contrast to other global approaches.

To summarize, comparing Hastilinga funeral art to other funerary rituals around the world reveals both common motifs and unique regional features. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these parallels and variances offers useful insights into the wider realm of funerary art and its changing function in safeguarding and adjusting cultural practices across many nations.

## **CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY**

Conducting a comprehensive analysis of the study leads to the following conclusions. Above all, the examination of Hastilinga funeral art in Northeast Thailand reveals its abundant historical origins,

growing cultural importance, and the deep influence of industrialization. Hastilinga art has evolved from its ancient Sanskrit origins and incorporation of Thai-Lao traditions, progressing from basic symbolic depictions to complex and detailed designs. This progression exemplifies wider socio-religious shifts and the dynamic interaction between conventional and contemporary artistic methods.

In addition, Hastilinga's funeral art plays a critical role in strengthening cultural identity and promoting solidarity throughout the Isaan region. It functions as a means of paying tribute to the deceased and promoting social cohesion by constructing elaborate ceremonial edifices. These artistic expressions serve the dual purpose of safeguarding age-old customs while strengthening communal recollection and societal cohesion. The incorporation of conventional patterns alongside contemporary artistic components emphasizes the enduring significance and flexibility of art in modern Thai culture.

Lastly, the influence of modernization and globalization on Hastilinga art has been substantial. The incorporation of novel materials and methodologies has resulted in the fusion of several artistic styles, combining conventional artistry with contemporary visual appeal. Although this transition has brought about new ideas and enhanced the art form, it also presents difficulties in preserving the genuineness and cultural importance of Hastilinga art. To avoid diluting ancient behaviors by incorporating foreign influences, it is important to strike a delicate balance between preserving those customs and adapting to new influences.

Overall, cultural organizations, local communities, and skilled artisans must make coordinated and determined efforts to preserve and revitalize Hastilinga art. Efforts such as documenting, providing specialized training, and promoting cultural education play a vital role in preserving old customs while adapting to modern changes. The ability of Hastilinga funeral art to adapt to modernization while maintaining its essential cultural features highlights its lasting significance in the shifting cultural landscape of Northeast Thailand. Hastilinga funeral art continues to be an important manifestation of cultural legacy, showcasing its historical development and ability to incorporate contemporary influences. The art form's capacity to incorporate modern elements while maintaining its traditional origins guarantees its ongoing significance and energy in the cultural practices of the region.

## **Implications, Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Study and Practicality**

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings of the study yield the following implications. First, the study emphasizes the importance of striking a balance between preserving traditional Hastilinga funeral art and incorporating contemporary elements. Cultural institutions and local communities play a crucial role in preserving the authenticity of art while also embracing contemporary techniques. This equilibrium ensures that Hastilinga art remains relevant, allowing it to fulfill its cultural and ceremonial functions.

Moreover, the results highlight the efficacy of community-driven endeavors, such as workshops and cultural festivals, in conserving and rejuvenating Hastilinga art. These efforts have the dual purpose of providing training to new craftspeople and cultivating a greater understanding and admiration for the art form among younger generations. Education initiatives and community engagement are critical for preserving cultural heritage and effectively transmitting traditional practices. The study also demonstrates how modernization and globalization processes result in the blending and fusion of different artistic styles. The use of both traditional and contemporary elements in Hastilinga art can enhance its artistic value, but it can also provide difficulties in preserving its original cultural importance. To maintain the fundamental principles and significance of Hastilinga art, art practitioners and cultural regulators must carefully negotiate the process of hybridization, while also allowing for innovative development.

Lastly, cultural preservation measures should include tactics to bolster both conventional and modern manifestations of art. The involvement of both governmental and non-governmental groups is crucial in terms of providing financial support, necessary resources, and platforms to facilitate the preservation and advancement of cultural heritage and creative endeavors. Policies should also tackle the difficulties presented by modernization and globalization, endorsing endeavors to preserve cultural authenticity in a swiftly evolving environment.

Despite the study's many implications, the following section will discuss the limitations of the study.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study predominantly employs documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews, which provide useful insights but may not comprehensively represent current practices and opinions towards Hastilinga art. Restricting the data to specific geographic locations within Northeast Thailand may result in a lack of representation of differences within the wider Isaan region. Furthermore, the analysis of cultural value and the impact of modernization on Hastilinga art is subject to some degree of subjectivity due to the researchers' opinions and prejudices influencing the interpretation of historical documents and interview replies. The rapid pace of industrialization and globalization complicates this issue, as the research has not thoroughly examined the potential impact of novel materials, techniques, and cultural influences on Hastilinga art. Despite its aim to include diverse participants, the study's interview sample size may still be limited, potentially hindering the ability to apply the findings to all practitioners and community members interested in Hastilinga art.

The subsequent part offers suggestions to address the limitations of the study.

### **Suggestions for Future Study and Practicality**

#### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Further investigation should prioritize several critical domains to enhance comprehension of Hastilinga art. We can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the execution and interpretation of the art by incorporating diverse groups from the Isaan region and other parts of Thailand, including the northern region, into our study. It is advisable to do longitudinal research to investigate the continuous development of Hastilinga art, which encompasses changes in techniques, materials, and cultural perspectives across time. By incorporating quantitative tools such as surveys, it is possible to enhance qualitative findings by collecting the perspectives of the community and assessing the effects of contemporary influences. Through comparative research, an examination of traditional art forms in Laos and other Southeast Asian nations could elucidate the similarities and disparities in cultural conservation amidst industrialization and globalization processes. Finally, assessing community-led initiatives for preserving cultural heritage and educational programs will offer valuable insights into successful strategies for sustaining cultural heritage. This evaluation will specifically focus on the influence of these activities on younger generations and the significance of cultural events.

Some suggestions for practicality are also provided in the subsequent part.

#### **Suggestions for Practicality**

To effectively apply the study's findings and uphold the significance of Hastilinga art, we propose several actionable steps. We should strive to establish comprehensive cultural education programs that integrate both traditional methods and modern innovations. We should seamlessly integrate these programs into the school curriculum, community workshops, and cultural festivals to actively involve younger generations. Providing financial and logistical assistance to artists, such as granting them access to both old materials and modern techniques, can aid them in adapting to technology



while preserving their authenticity. Policymakers should devise cultural conservation measures that uphold both conventional and contemporary manifestations of Hastilinga art, guaranteeing a harmonious equilibrium between heritage and contemporary influences. In addition, promoting community engagement through projects, collaborations with cultural organizations, and public awareness campaigns can increase the prominence and admiration of Hastilinga art. Implementing these ideas will enhance comprehension and ensure the long-term conservation of Hastilinga funeral art.

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