A dried leaf and stem are positioned on the left side of the page, extending from the top to the bottom. The leaf is dark brown and curled, while the stem is thin and dark. The background is a light, textured surface with some faint, irregular brown spots.

**Anticipated Encounters and
Unanticipated Outcomes:
The Experiences of Thai Woodcarvers
and Furniture Artisans**

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Overview

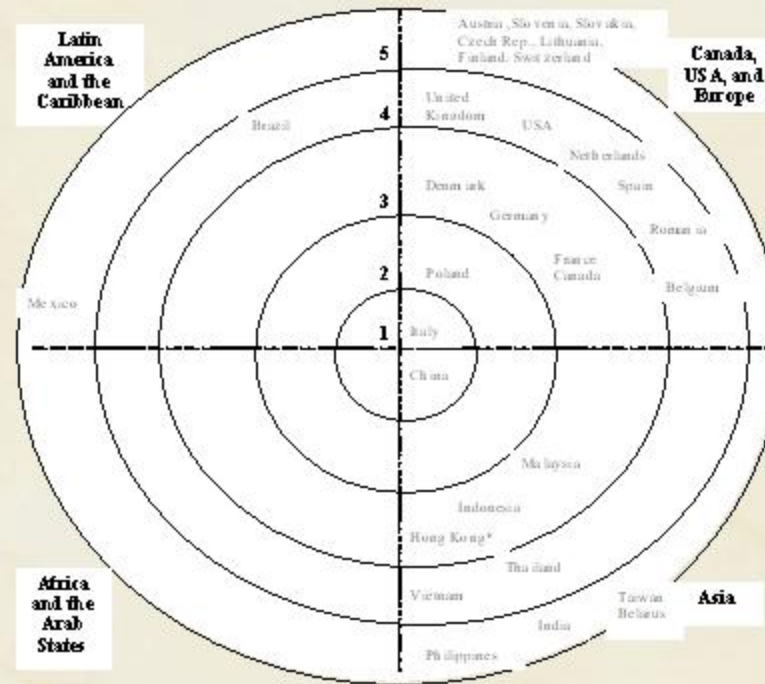
- Buyers anticipate encounters
- Anticipation influences outcome
- Good intentions, unintended outcomes
- Good practices, counter-intuitive



Methods and Data

- Semi-structured interviews (52 artisans)
- Transcripts from 21 Thai exporters
- Direct observation (5 months)

Handcrafted Furniture in Comparative Perspective



*Note: Hong Kong re-exports

The rings indicate the share of total world exports in US current dollars


1.10% + 4.2.0%-3.9%
 2.6.0%-9.9% 5.1.0%-1.9%
 3.4.0%-5.9%

Total world exports of wooden furniture made by artisans was 14.6 billion current US dollars in 2003.

Figure 1: The regional structure of wooden furniture exports made by artisans in 2003

Accounting for the Sacred: *“This is not a birdhouse!”*





Traditional and innovation: “*Can’t sell the real one!*”

- Can’t sell real spirit house (price too high)
- Can sell real spirit house without spirits (high \$ price)
- Can sell a fake spirit house (lower \$ price)




Routinized Charisma: The Mechanical Performer

- Staged authenticity
- Pricing logic: Lowest price/ Largest quantity
- Economic Development
 - Slim profits for producers
 - Large volume sales but little upgrading potential



The Reluctant Artisan

- Refuses to “go global”
- Pricing logic: Higher price/ lower quantity
- Economic development
 - High profit for producers
 - Low volume sales but high potential for upgrading



Public Policy Responses

○ Identity narratives -- YES

- Legitimizes local cultural industries in non-commercial spaces

○ Standardization -- NO

- Detrimental for reluctant artisan and for pious producers
- Transforms seller into mechanical performer



Conclusions

- Reluctance to commercialize makes commercialization more likely
- Government support of culture directly and cultural industries indirectly
- Avoid standardization
- More experimentation and comparative observation needed