

# **The study of fisherman's culture: a case study of Kolek's color design in Pattani**

Nutyawee Benna<sup>1</sup>

Sumedta Prasatkaew<sup>2</sup>

## **Abstract**

The study of fisherman's culture: a case study of Kolek's color design in Pattani aimed to study fishermen's culture which gives an expression of ways of life in the dimensions of occupation, belief, popularity, preference behaviors of fishing boat's owners toward Kolek' color design in Pattani Province. Datas were conducted by using in-depth interviews with 10 Kolek painters in Saiburi District, Pattani Province. The result showed that the color design of Kolek could reflect the culture of fishermen in the dimensions of occupation, belief and popularity of fisherman. Nevertheless, for the preference behaviors of fishing boat's owners in the color design of Kolek, most of them chose to use contrasting colors and vivid colors that could be divided into 7 types according to color schemes: 1. Warm Color 2. Cool Color 3. Monotone 4. Monochromatics 5. Analogous 6. Complementary and 7. Split Complements to create a unique identity of local fishing boats in Pattani Province.

**Keywords:** Fisherman's culture, color scheme, Kolek

## **Introduction**

---

<sup>1</sup> A lecturer of the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Arts and Design, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yala Rajabhat University

<sup>2</sup> A lecturer of the Bachelor of Education in Thai, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yala Rajabhat University

Kolek is a word in Melayu language, a local language in three southern border provinces of Thailand, which means wobbly or floating, from the encyclopedia of the Royal Academy, volume 3 (2505: 1448). Kolek is used to call a small or medium fishing boat, but it is used to call a giant fishing boat on some occasions. The pattern which appears on the Kolek arises from creativity and the influence of the environment, the period of time, the characteristics of a multicultural society and the livelihoods in Pattani. Thus, the pattern on Kolek is colorful which is influenced by arts of four ethnicities: Thai-Buddhist, Thai-Muslim, Javanese and Chinese. The fishermen in Pattani have boats as an important factor in their occupation. Traveling is an integral part of the local way of life with a distinct identity.

The Kolek is one of the symbols of the deep Southern part. The beautiful, unique and fascinating shape of the paintings indicates the art culture of people in the Southern Border area. The painting on the boat, which is colorful, is created with the elaboration that makes Kolek being different from other boats. The painting on Kolek mostly is marine animals, fantasy animals from traditions, religions, literature, performing arts as well as Himmapan creatures and underwater landscapes. The purpose of the painting is to share the aesthetic and maybe to show that Kolek is for fishing (Wattanasin, 1999)

Kolek has its own patterns which are different from other boats, and its color design is also unique and fantastic. It can convey the fishermen's ways of life in the dimensions of occupation, life being, belief and values. Due to the colors of Kolek which relate to the living of people in the past, they have invented a method for producing colors by observing the natural and environmental contexts to create the design of Kolek's color. Color is also used to convey a certain meaning or maybe a certain sign in each cultural society. Humans have developed their thought and belief toward colors, both their own and those that are influenced from elsewhere, and that belief changes over time according to society's transformation (Anukul, 2004).

The color design of Kolek is a sign to show the identity of local fishermen in Pattani because each color gives different meaning like emotions and feelings as below;

Red is a warm tone that represents strength, victory, wealth, and power.

Orange is a warm tone that represents warmth, vitality, and friendship.

Green is a cool tone that represents nature, peace, safety, and a cool feeling.

Dark blue is a cool tone that represents sea, calm, peace, and solidarity.

Blue is a cool tone that represents sky, spaciousness, independence and safety.

It can be seen that the above colors have a diversity of emotions, feelings and meanings. When the colors are used to design the color of Kolek, it can increase art values, and create a unique identity for the fishermen as well.

Following the above examples, the researchers were interested to study about fisherman's culture: a case study of Kolek's color design in Pattani in the dimensions of occupation, belief, popularity of Kolek's color design as well as preference behaviors of fishing boat's owners toward Kolek' color design in Pattani Province to emphasize the unique identity and to disseminate the works of art of local fishermen in Pattani.

### **Purposes**

1. To study cultures of fisherman which gives expressions of ways of life in the dimensions of occupation, belief, popularity, preference behaviors in Pattani Province
2. To study the fisherman's preference behaviors of Kolek's color design in Pattani Province

### **Literature Review**

This research applied the framework of color theory and the culture of Thai coloring. Besides, the researcher studied "The Influence of 'colors' on branding" by Kitjatam and thesis written by Suwanwattana (2010) under the topic "Colors in Thai Culture Believings and Myth" to integrate into the study of fisherman's culture: a case study of Kolek's color design in Pattani.

### **Methods**

1. Study related documents and research on fisherman culture, color design, concept and theory of color design.
2. Search for the place where traditional fishing boats were produced, the place where the boat is painted and the community fisheries learning center to choose the area to go on a field trip. The chosen place is Saiburi District and Panare District, Pattani Province because it is an area that is popular for Kolek's pattern and color design.
3. Interview with fishing boat producers and boat painters who draw the colors on the fishing boats, total 10 people, 5 people from Saiburi District and 5 people from Panare District.
4. Record voice, photos and video to educate about Kolek's color design

5. Analyze data from interviews about Kolek's color design in the dimensions of occupation, belief, popularity and preference behaviors of fishing boat's owners in color design.

6. Summarize all data from the analysis and compose the results of the study in the format of Description Analysis.

7. Conclude, discuss and give suggestions.

## **Results**

### **1. Fisherman's cultures which give expressions of ways of life in the dimensions of occupation, belief, popularity, preference behaviors in Pattani Province**

Fisherman's cultures give expressions of ways of life in the dimensions of occupation, belief, popularity, preference behaviors in Pattani Province as following:

1.1 Fisherman's cultures which give expressions of ways of life in the dimensions of occupation represent the relationship between fishermen and nature. By observing situations and occurrences, fishermen know the meaning of colors which are influenced by different senses and environments. When they look at the blue sky which is bright, lively and clear, for example, they feel calm and cheerful. On the other hand, when looking at the cloudy sky or the dark sky, they might think of the fear of thunder or thunderbolt. When looking at the colorful marine animals, they might think of gentleness and ease. When they look at the trees lining up along the pretty nature, they feel fresh. All these feelings become Kolek's color design.

Kolek's color design is created from the context that fishermen give importance to the fishery. The colors that can reflect the ways of fisherman's life are as follows:

Red, yellow and orange: fishermen choose to use these colors to design Kolek's color. Red, yellow and orange are warm colors. They use these colors to represent the tolerance and strength in the fishery that fishermen have to struggle with the weather. Red, yellow and orange are colors that represent struggle and bravery.

Blue and Indigo: fishermen use blue or indigo in Kolek's color design to represent the sky and the sea which are important factors of fishery. Before every sailing, fishermen will check the weather.

Green: fishermen choose to use green on their fishing boats to represent trees or nature because an area that is full of trees means the area which is plentiful.

White: fishermen choose to use white in Kolek's color design to represent the pureness in the fishing career. White is the color that conveys good meanings. It is a color

that is pure as the starting of the fishery that is needed to start from good things. Fishermen use white color to design Kolek's color.

From the above examples, it shows that Kolek's color design can reflect the ways of fishermen's life in the dimension of career, and it also shows the uniqueness of the fishing career. Besides, it indicates the feelings of fishermen toward the career which is a relationship with the reality, events and environments of the fishing career as well.

1.2 Fisherman's cultures which give expressions of ways of life in the dimensions of belief mostly are from the relationship between human and nature which affect the ways of life in giving benefits and harms, and in accepting any matter, be it mental or physical. Fishermen believe that to design colors of Kolek is the artwork creation, and it gives spiritual values. It influences a wide variety of feelings. In addition, it illustrates the comfort, beauty and uniqueness of fishermen.

The expression of beliefs, fishermen's values of feelings can indicate the belief in art in Kolek's color design, as following:

Blue	representing the feelings of being	lively, clean, neat
Yellow	representing the feelings of being	cheerful, energetic
Red	representing the feelings of being	excited, brave, powerful
Dark blue	representing the feelings of being	fresh, forceful
White	representing the feelings of being	pure, clean
Black	representing the feelings of being	steady, mysterious

The expression of feeling in Kolek's color design can be considered as an expression of beliefs that creates spiritual value for fishermen. The color design of Kolek has been created as if to bring peace of mind and happiness to themselves and the audience.

1.3 Fishermen's culture which gives an expression of ways of life in the dimensions of popularity is the value that a person or society agrees to be proper, valuable, admirable, appropriate to behave and acceptable. Kolek's color design illustrates the popularity of Pattani people in expressing your passion through your family, the value of giving importance to the profession of fishing and the value of using other color designs on Kolek.

The value of the importance of family is the popularity that fishermen have transferred Kolek's color design from generation to generation. For example, if grandparents like red, pink and design the boat pattern in the shape of a hibiscus flower, parents or their children will retain those shapes to indicate that they are the same family or to realize benefactors. Besides color and pattern design, family values are also giving the name of the parents, the names of the children, the family names to the fishing boats.

About the values of giving importance to the fishery, most fishermen design Kolek's colors to reflect the importance of the fishing profession. For example, red, yellow and orange, which is the color that represents fighting, not giving up, are colors that represent endurance and strength. It indicates that fishermen must have endeavor and tolerance in every situation. They choose blue, green and dark blue, cool tone colors, to convey the natural context of the fishery, such as sea, sky, trees, because these contexts are environments that are important to complement the fishing career.

The popularity of using other color designs to decorate Kolek is a value that fishermen design other colors on Kolek to increase the beauty of Kolek's color design, such as Thai pattern, Krajang pattern, Gardenia pattern, Siamese pattern, Double Dahlia pattern. It can be made of Chinese patterns like board pattern, geometric pattern and plant pattern. Moreover, it can be made of local Melayu patterns such as calligraphy pattern, vine pattern, geometric pattern and flower pattern. Some Kolek have other patterns. However, most are painted with flashy colors. The addition of these colors is only to create aesthetics and uniqueness.

From the above characteristics, it indicates that the color design of Kolek for fishermen in Pattani Province has created values that have been passed down from one generation to the next. Whether it is values of the family's importance, values of giving importance to the fishery as well as values of other color designs which are used to decorate Kolek are a unique expression of the Kolek's color design, and it reflects the culture and lifestyle of fishermen as well.

## **2. The preference behavior on Kolek's color design**

The preference behavior on Kolek's color design is the color design that most of the fishermen give importance and attention to. Most of them use the discord and showy colors as red, blue, yellow, orange, green, and dark blue to identify the traditional fishing boat in Pattani referring to the structural coloration by Khiatthong (2005, page 193-195) as following:

2.1 Warm Color consists of red, yellow, orange and the combination of these colors remind to the energy, movement, strength, and outstanding looks, as below:



Image 1 Warm Color

2.2 Cool Color consists of dark blue, green and purple. These colors represent the calmness, silence, tactiturness, conservatism, and accessible spirituality



Image 2 Cool Color

2.3 Monotone consists of natural monochrome, black and white, as light grey, dark grey and beige. It represents calmness and classic features which are mostly used with designs such as Signage System, packaging, advertising and graphics to create the various colors on it or to differentiate the surface tones looking more outstanding.



Image 3 Monotone Color

Source: kolek-s.blogspot, Kolek and the Local Identity of Thai-Muslim Southern Coast in Kao Seng, Songkhla

2.4 Monochromatics consists of an outstanding color by gradations from darkest to lightest tones to represent the differences. The color will be the darkest or the lightest as a hue color to make the art look more remarkable and the same color but lighter is used as the minor composition.



Image 4 Monochromatic Color

Source: kolek-s.blogspot, Kolek and the Local Identity of Thai-Muslim Southern Coast in Kao Seng, Songkhla

2.5 Analogous is the group of colors that are next to each other on the natural color wheel, consisting of blue, blue-green, and green. These tones more harmonize and look alike which refer to discreteness, softness, and having a high sense of taste.



Image 5 Analogous

Source: Southern of Thailand (A New Generation of Fishery in Pattani: the Traditional Wisdom with Technology Supports) <https://voicetv.co.th/read/SJ-wIJgFM>

2.6 Complementary is the opposite colors on the color wheel between the warm and cool. These colors are more appropriate with works created to look prominent such as exhibitions, banners, and packaging.



Image 6 Complementary Color

Source: The Kolek Designs and Narathiwat  
<https://c.mi.com/us/thread-2667714-1-0.html?mobile=no>

2.7 Split Complements is pairing the opposite colors that are not too strong as Complementary. These colors are combined with complementary color schemes, for instance, red and green, blue or yellow-green.



Image 7 Complementary Color

Source: The Kolek Designs and Narathiwat

<https://c.mi.com/us/thread-2667714-1-0.html?mobile=no>

## Discussion

For the fisherman's preference behaviors on Kolek's color design, different cultures differently see and define the meaning of color when compared to the culture in Malay Peninsula. It is obviously seen from Kolek's handicrafts. Colors are a symbol which represents beliefs, cultures, living and the changes of time. The colors and patterns of Kolek arose from four ethnicities: Thai-Buddhist, Thai-Muslim, Javanese and Chinese (Srinual, 2004). It is accepted that the distinctive features of Kolek are patterns and vivid colors of the boat. The carved bow of Kolek is a curved wood protruding out of the boat which is in a pattern of vine or plants by assembling various parts of plants harmoniously. This pattern is popular among fishermen in Malay Peninsula. It is not only used to decorate the bow, but it also appears as an art pattern related to buildings as housing and Mosque as well. The colors and patterns of Kolek are not only for attractiveness. The influence of belief, values and environments impact on Kolek's color design. The popular colors are black, green, yellow, orange, red, dark blue and blue which are basic colors. In addition, gold, yellow, grey and white are colors used to draw the lines of the pattern to make it distinctive and alive. This is the origin of the color meaning of Kolek which could be divided into 2 large groups;

Warm color consists of yellow, orange-yellow, orange, orange-red, purple-red and purple, etc. It is flashy and eye-catching. It is a group of colors that could be felt hot, attractive and enthusiastic. Fishermen in Malay Peninsula defined that a warm color is a

group of colors that is flashy and makes the boat stand out. Because while they are sailing the boat, the colors of the boat will be outstanding to see. It has been popular for a long time in the area. With the freshness of the colors and the beauty of the colors, fishermen choose to use these colors to design a pattern and color for their Kolek.

Cool colors consist of dark blue, green, purple, etc. It is any color that is calm or soothing in nature. It represents the context in the area, as simplicity, belief, meticulousness, conservatism and spirituality. For fishermen in Malay Peninsula, green (family and society), nature, richness, calmness and sharing make them feel comfortable to look at. Blue or dark blue make them feel cool, calm, and it make them realize of the sea, the sky and security.

### **Suggestions**

1. There should be further studies to compare the color design of fishing boats in each region.
2. There should be further studies on patterns that reflect ways of life, belief, and value in three southern borders.

## References

- Anukul, C. (2004). *The culture of Coloring in Thai Society*.
- Bualuang, A. S. (2020). Ways of Melayu Southern Asean People. *Journal of Art and Culture*. February.
- Chokepirom, P. (2016). *Floating Ornament in Southern Folkway*. Bachelor of Fine Art Thesis, Faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts, Silpakorn University.
- Kitjatam, W. (2015). The Influence of 'Colors' on Branding. *Journal of Communication and Management NIDA*, 1(1), 76-85.
- Payungpan, K. (2015). *The Art in a New Perspective of Beliefs and Forms from Plajuk Kolek Nomphe Boats*. Chonburi: Burapha University.
- Pisapornom. (2021). *The meaning of colors*. Retrieved May 29, 2021 from [http://pisapornom12.blogspot.com/?view=timeslide\\_](http://pisapornom12.blogspot.com/?view=timeslide_)
- Srinual, S. (2004). Kolek: Cultural Relations Between Races. *Journal of Thaksin University Library*. 3(1), 46-52.
- Suwanwattana, C. (2010). *Colors in Thai Culture Believings and Myth*. Master of Fine Arts Thesis, Graduate School, Silpakorn University.
- The Encyclopedia of Royal Academy, Volume 3 (1962: 1448)