

# Protection and Cultural Heritage of Yunnan Traditional Handmade Carving Techniques

## Taking Lijiang “Jinsmith” Handmade Leather Goods as an Example\*

Qiao Yu

Tourism and Culture College of Yunnan University  
Lijiang, China 674199

**Abstract**—In the beautiful Shuhe Ancient Town of Lijiang, Yunnan, one of the world's three major heritage sites, there is a leather goods store that completely inherits the craftsmanship of the craftsmen — “Jinsmith” handmade leather goods store. Every piece of leather in the store is a painstaking work of craftsmen. The entire process from the original leather to the plate making, cutting, carving, dyeing, sewing and edging is done by hand. “Jinsmith” is a craftsman who creates his own brand and the name means creating beautiful things. The ancient leather town of Shuhe has flourished for hundreds of years for hand-made leather crafts, and it should continue to be passed down in the hands of future generations. The “Jinsmith” handmade leather goods not only spread the design concept of the brand, but also inherit the tea of the ancient town of Shuhe in Lijiang for more than 600 years. The ancient tea-and-horse road cobbler culture in combination of exquisite craftsmanship and ideas at home and abroad, is dedicated to the development of handmade culture and the creation of high-quality handmade leather goods belonging to China.

**Keywords**—*traditional hand-carved carving; technical protection; cultural heritage*

### I. INTRODUCTION

As a long-standing artistic expression, Yunnan traditional leather carving process not only reflects the individual's creative ideas and design style, but also symbolizes the taste of life aesthetics. Handmade leather goods are more and more sought after and loved by people, and their share in the market is getting bigger and bigger. Many people are obsessed with handmade leather goods. They are intoxicated in the leather carving process and cannot extricate themselves from the enjoyment of beauty. The unique works, the temperature texture, the prosperous beauty, the masters of art and craftsmen in the protection of the inheritance of this exquisite craftsmanship, but also further practice the spirit of the great country artisans advocated by the state, the

pursuit of perfection of the ultimate beauty.

### II. OVERVIEW OF YUNNAN TRADITIONAL HAND-CARVING PROCESS

Lijiang Shuhe cobbler, who has “one awl to the world”, has been famous for hundreds of years in the ancient tea-and-horse road. Lijiang “Jinsmith” handmade leather goods brand has also won the pursuit and love of many tourists in the shops of Shuhe and Baisha town. Just as the world famous products represented by Italian leather culture are popular in the city today, Lijiang's traditional leather manufacturing industry is fading out of people's vision. In order to inherit and protect this handmade leather manufacturing process with national cultural connotation, over the years, Teacher Yang Xiaoman has worked tirelessly with all his energy and unique methods. Craftsmen are excellent folk artists, creating the treasures of the nation and the country. The creators inject the inspiration and sweat into the work with a needle, a thread and a knife. Yang Xiaoman uses a craftsman's heart to infiltrate his understanding of national culture into every creation, giving life to leather again. With hardworking hands, Mr. Yang uses the spirit of innovation and enterprising to show the craftsmanship of Lijiang's oldest leather products to the world. So what is a leather carving? Through the research of this topic, let us go into the studio of Teacher Yang Xiaoman to understand this traditional and ancient craft.

The so-called leather carving is a variety of knives, carved on the leather surface to create a variety of expressions, different shades, far and near stereo and other feelings and effects, including plant patterns, animal patterns, and figures. And the landscape pattern makes the pattern emboss the layered and three-dimensional sense of the bump on the leather surface. The hand-made leather goods with this technique are collectively referred to as leather carving.

### III. THE CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE “JINSMITH”

The leather carving of the handicrafts of the smiths usually uses dozens or even hundreds of tools. On the leather which has not been specially treated, it is only wet with the water to wet the smudged leather, and then the pre-designed on the leather surface. The pattern is decorated with hand-

\*This thesis is the Yunnan Provincial Department of Education Science Research Fund Project

Subject Category: Management

Project Type: Guiding Project

Project Number: 2016ZDX264

Project Name: Research on the Protection and Market Value of Traditional Handicrafts in Yunnan — Taking Lijiang “Jinsmith” handmade leather goods as an example

knife or tapped with a printing tool to make the leather soft. It has a layered and three-dimensional effect. During the engraving process, it usually does not penetrate the leather, and only the leather surface is delicate and cumbersome. Engraving finally to set the processing, hand-stitching, and then further dyeing and fixing the color according to the pattern, polishing and grinding the edge, waxing and glossing, etc. Finally complete a beautiful handmade artwork. Therefore, this kind of handmade leather goods is a combination of ornamental, aesthetic, practical and artistic, noble and elegant, simple and sophisticated.

#### *A. Pattern Design*

First of all, to determine the size and color of the pattern, according to the different styles, different sizes, different uses, different functions of the bag to design the pattern of the package, such as wallets and belts, shoulder bags and backpacks, briefcases and medical bags, luggage bags and clutches, shell bags and smiley bags can be customized according to the customer's preferences, or according to the designer's exclusive idea, choose a large area of Tang grass ornamentation or freehand flower decoration or meticulous animal pattern carry out.

The classic pattern of Tang grass, which is often used in the handicrafts of the smith, is that the branches of the blades of grass are circling and reciprocating, constantly rotating and repeating, creating a complex beauty. This pattern is very classic, most of the leather carving process will be adopted, the petals are also very individual, there are peony flowers, roses and chrysanthemum petals, surrounded by leaves or branches, and large-scale use, not a single flower, let people while enjoying the leather carving process, I feel a continuity and bring a powerful visual impact. The jewelry hand-made leather goods will add Chinese traditional ornamentation or ethnic motifs, enrich the theme of the work, not only beautify the product, but also make the bag more ornamental and aesthetic. In the process of making patterns, pay attention to the precise grasp of the knife line, such as smooth flowing water, not dragging the water, but also according to the method of tapping and adjusting the angle of the tilt, etc., to complete a variety of printing patterns, as well as decorative engraving in the leather carving cutting technique, this is a pattern design with relatively high difficulty and decoration. The adoption of the ornamentation also follows a basic principle: from simple to complex, gradually deepening.

#### *B. Carving and Shaping*

At the beginning of the actual leather carving, we must pay attention to the angle and strength of the knife, master the correct method, cannot be too hasty and not the ability to uneven, first use the rotary knife to engrave the printed pattern on the leather. When using a rotary cutter, the blade should face itself, the blade is tilted 45-60 degrees outward, cut into the leather at a depth of about 1/2-1/3, and the line is scored in front of the cutter, while the edge pattern is used to pattern the pattern. The basic outline is tapped, and the background pattern and the place to be decorated are

designed by the printing tool to create a three-dimensional pattern.

For example, the lotus bag of the jeweler has both ethnic elements and traditional elements. The large lotus leaf is wrapped with lotus seeds, and the veins, leaves and leaves are intricately carved, the lines are clearly visible, the silk is visible, and the lotus is beautiful. The petals are also of different sizes, patchwork, dotted with a kingfisher, eyes, feet are extremely expressive, far away, like a very fine meticulous painting, close to see and have a sense of hierarchy, The three-dimensional sense is extremely flexible. I feel that the painting has become elegant, attached to the leather, and the bag has life. This is the invisible charm of the hand-made leather goods and the infinite charm of the leather carving process!

Another example is the jeweler's most classic one-shoulder saddle bag. The two-layer design on the upper edge (usually the upper edge of the package is a single-layer design) is for the upper layer of the carved grass pattern, while the lower layer is carved with the horse's head pattern. The charm of the flower and the fierceness of the horse, the overall combination of texture are prominent, and the bag is very aura. The leather carving process is applied to the leather design, which makes it add luster. In fact, the upper edge is a virtual design, there is not much practical use, just to highlight the Tangcao pattern, the horse head carving design is the finishing touch, and the lower edge is the real functional use, the two layers of pressure, each beautiful Beauty, beauty and fashion.

#### *C. Careful Grinding*

The work of the leather carving process is close to finishing. After the pattern is finished, it is necessary to continue to process the edges and the back. Use a wet sponge to gently wet the place to be polished, and then polish it with sanding rods and sanding rods to make the work more refined. When grinding, pay attention to the direction of fur growth, do not turn back and forth with grinding, no sense of direction, follow the texture of the fur, repeatedly sanding, this process is to remove the rough feeling of the fur, after the carving of the pattern, the cortex also occurs. There is a difference between the original leather and the artificial leather. The so-called artificial carving and natural growth are also different. Therefore, it is necessary to polish and make the whole leather look harmonious and unified. The so-called "jaw is not awkward, not a device", the leather needs to be carefully polished. Improve its level of sophistication. Some people say that the leather carving process is a very troublesome job. It is true in the polishing process. It makes the leather shine in the artificial hand. It requires the craftsmen to observe it with great care. For ensure that the force surface of the leather is even, so that the texture is clear and shiny.

#### *D. Accurate Coloring*

The most important procedure in the leather carving process is to paint the leather in a variety of ways, including oil dyeing, paste dyeing, anti-dyeing, crystal dyeing, dry rubbing, batik, acrylic dyeing, etc., while the dye is also

divided into oily dyes and alcoholic dyes. Generally, it is first colored with an alcohol dye and then dyed with an oily dye. It should be noted that the alcohol dye can be added with water, and the oily dye cannot be added with water. Mix alcohol dye, water, water softener and leather penetrant in a ratio of 10:10:2:1, use a fine brush to first color small places, or use a toothbrush to color large areas, then use a sponge or cotton cloth a little pigment is evenly wiped on the surface of the leather. We should follow the principle of shallow too deep to color the leather. For example, the golden flower bloomer bag of the smith, the color is gorgeous, the color is bright, the red, yellow and green are moderately matched, and the brown, black and blue jumps. Among them, although the color of the whole bag is used, it does not appear messy and the harmony is just right. The secret is that it is not uniform, it is not a unified color, but it is mixed with all kinds of color. The eyes are very comfortable and rise to the aesthetic pleasure. Therefore, each handmade bag made with leather carving is no longer a simple leather bag, but a beautiful piece of art.

#### IV. THE FINE PATTERN OF THE HAND-CARVED LEATHER CARVINGS OF THE "JINSMITH"

Leather carving is one of the richest forms of art in China's folk history and culture. Masters of craftsmanship used tools and leather to sculpt their dreams. Nowadays, the leather carvings draw on a variety of expressions, making modern leather carvings not only enjoyable, but also contemporary, decorative and practical. At the same time, they have already gone to the world and showcased the elegance of Yunnan ethnic handicrafts to the world.

"Jinsmith" handcrafted leather goods combine classic flow patterns with their own unique design concepts. For example, adding Chinese traditional flowers, raised, peony, etc. on the basis of Tang Cao, it does not look awkward, but also highlights national characteristics, as well as lotus leaf. Lotus plum, bamboo and chrysanthemum, etc., both with the charm of ink painting and meticulous painting, the founder of the brocade, Yang Xiaoman, has improved and innovated various patterns, such as animal patterns, but the pets and cats bring more peace. The warm feeling will be used frequently, and the rare animal of the lion tiger is used. It is also a horse herd. When creating, it also presents a unique aesthetic feeling and warmth, rather than the traditional meaning. The character pattern will also adopt the traditional Chinese lady pattern and group fan shape. At the same time, the most unique pattern of Lijiang is the Dongba script of the Naxi people, the Tibetan scripture of Tibetan Buddhism, but usually it will not be carved by the Buddha's statue art above the bag for respect of faith. Sometimes it will use the traditional Chinese traditional pattern, the fish frog bird crane, although the mixed stalk is Tang grass, but it also blends together.

#### V. THE INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF THE HANDICRAFT LEATHER GOODS

Under the current rapid development of industrialization in modern society, the colorful traditional folk arts and crafts

culture is rapidly disappearing. Handicrafts are the art of connecting people's lives. It is the embodiment of people's use of nature for nature. It is countless labor. Through the precious crystallization of hard work, the inheritance and development of any traditional folk crafts are closely related to the environment and humanities in which they live. Yang Xiaoman, the founder of Lijiang "Jinsmith" handmade leather goods brand, has been engaged in the leather carving process for a long time in Lijiang. The real thing is to use the long-term practice to consolidate the beauty of the leather carving process. In order to carry forward the ancient leather craftsmanship of ethnic minorities in daily life, Teacher Yang Xiaoman also personally went to the university to give lectures, mainly from the historical origins of the leather carving process, production techniques, performance styles, and appreciation points. At the same time, using lively, vivid language to explain, pass on your thoughts, feelings and insights to each teacher and student present.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Teacher Yang Xiaoman re-examined and studied the traditional leather carving crafts and styles of Yunnan, and on the basis of this, he used traditional art and modern leather carving techniques to learn from each other. Innovate in the form of leather carving art, drawing on the essence of traditional Chinese art as the main line. Analyze traditional elements, inherit and promote traditional art. Focusing on the artistic style and artistic language of the leather carving, rational discussion, broadening the way of thinking for creating new forms of leather carving art. The analysis, refinement and reference to the traditional elements of Yunnan nationality is an improvement of the creative concept of the leather carving art.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Li Chenchen, Wu Jing, Liu Weilin. Analysis of the leather carving process and its application in the design of leather products [J]. *Leather Science and Engineering*, 2012 (06).
- [2] Wang Wei. Research on the Techniques and Expressions of Leather Art Products [J]. *Design*, 2014(09).
- [3] Liu Haiyan. Exploration of leather carving art and its techniques [J]. *Xi'an University of Arts and Sciences (Social Science Edition)*, 2012 (3).
- [4] He Chuanhua. Research on the fusion of tradition and modernity in leather modeling art [D]. *Dalian University of Technology. Design Art*, 2013.
- [5] Zhao Qing. Research on Modern Handmade Leather Carving Art [D]. *Southwest Jiaotong University. Art Design*, 2013.
- [6] Zhou Aiping. Protection and inheritance of traditional handicrafts of Yunnan minority people under the background of tourism. *Thought Front*, 2011.