嘉定報

Artisans launch new era of development

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The *yaobanbu* textile embodies new energy through innovation. — Ti Gong

Yellow grass weaves nimbly between fingers, and indigo dye blooms on cloth. When millennia-old intangible cultural heritage meets modern copyright protection, artisans in Jiading District are ushering in a new era of development.

Recently, officials announced the first batch of proposed supported projects from the 2025 Shanghai special fund for the development of cultural and creative industries.

Two enterprises in Jiading, Shanghai Xuhang Straw Plaiting Culture Development Co and Shanghai Anting Culture and Tourism Development Co, were included in the list.

With Xuhang straw weaving and Anting *yaobanbu* (indigo-dyed cloth) as their core, they have revitalized intangible cultural heritage techniques through innovative development and copyright protection.

During a folk culture and art exhibition and the serial activities for establishing the pilot project of folk art copyright protection and promotion, representative inheritors of tangible cultural heritage projects, folk artists, experts and scholars jointly explored new paths for folk art copyright protection.

Millennium-old techniques

Inside the ICH Rural Life Pavilion in Xuhang Town, Sheng Xuejuan, in her 70s, focused on weaving a palm-sized straw-woven blind box.

"It's my first time weaving a bag on such a small mold, and one wrong move will mess up the work," she said. Though her eyesight isn't what it used to be, classic patterns still "blossom" under her hands, showcasing her profound craftsmanship.

Xuhang straw plaiting originated in the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907) and flourished in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties (1644-1911). Numerous skilled hands have passed down this ancient craft to the present day. In 2008, Xuhang straw plaiting was included in the list of national intangible cultural heritage.

Recently, Chen Jiao, a district-level representative inheritor of the item, led her team to launch the first blind box series of Xuhang straw plaiting. It includes 12 exquisitely patterned, straw-woven small bags with distinct styles.

"When the size of the straw bag is reduced, the length, thickness and quantity of the yellow grass used must be adjusted accordingly. The warp and weft ratios also vary for different bag styles, so each small bag requires multiple tests," Chen said. These straw bags can be used as decorations, car storage, or aroma diffuser holders.

Innovation isn't limited to blind boxes. In April, five Xuhang straw-woven bags made a stunning appearance on the stage at Taiping Lake in downtown Shanghai's Xiantiandi during Shanghai Fashion Week, marking the first time this national-level ICH has graced an international fashion stage.

Traditional straw weaving and ancient-style clothing on professional models reflect antiquity, elegance and vibrancy. Surprisingly, Xuhang straw weaving has partnered with BEAST to create straw-woven aroma products, bringing the craft into modern life.

"ICH plus copyright" is the keyword for the development of Shanghai Xuhang Straw Weaving Culture Development Co.

Leveraging its unique raw material supply and strong design and weaving skills, the company has formed a production chain from yellow grass planting to pattern design, giving it the ability to create copyrighted works.

Additionally, it has actively applied for trademarks and strengthened protection for its straw-woven works through copyright registration.

It has 191 copyright registration certificates and 200 work applications. "We will continue to increase investment in ICH innovation and research, launching no fewer than 50 new copyrighted works annually, and continuously exploring copyright operation models such as copyright sharing and co-branding," said Wang Zeyuan, the firm's CEO.

Revitalizing old cloth

Anting *Yaobanbu* is also embracing new vitality through innovation. It originated in the Tang and Song dynasties and flourished in the Ming and Qing dynasties, with a history of nearly a thousand years.

Shanghai's intangible cultural heritage list included the Anting *yaobanbu* dyeing technique in its second batch in 2009.

At the Yaobanbu Experience Base on Anting Old Street, visitors and residents can witness the transformation of simple white cloth into beautiful handicrafts.

Hu Sufen, the representative inheritor of Anting *yaobanbu*, skillfully combined the traditional craft of *yaobanbu* with leather carving, dried flowers and wool, transforming it into fashionable items such as bags, dolls, cheongsams, and sachets.

In 2024, Shanghai Anting Culture and Tourism Development Co integrated intangible cultural heritage techniques such as *yaobanbu* into cultural and tourism experiences, yielding fruitful innovative products.

Ginkgo coffee cups, ceramic cups, cloisonne plates, tea sets, bamboo-carved hairpins and automotive culture fridge magnets were introduced. The *yaobanbu* scarf won "Shanghai Gifts" status.

As a cultural and creative enterprise that values copyright management, the company has successfully applied for multiple copyrights and patents. The company's cultural and creative products have established a widely influential IP image.

A highland for copyright protection

As an important carrier of Shanghai's historical and cultural roots, Jiading has established a service system covering copyright registration, legal rights protection and achievement transformation.

The district-level copyright workstation serves as the central hub for six characteristic service branches and service venues across all subdistricts and towns, ensuring easy access to copyright services.

This year, the Shanghai Copyright Bureau recommended Jiading as the only pilot district, awarding it the title of "2025 pilot district for folk art copyright protection and promotion."

Xuhang straw-woven products bring heritage craft into modern life. — Ti Gong