



# LANTERNS LIGHT WAY FOR SHANXI VILLAGE

Workshops combine tradition  
with modern desires to create  
popular products

Workers stack semifinished lanterns for drying at a workshop in Yangzhao in Jishan county, Shanxi province, on Jan 11. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

By ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan  
and CHEN LIANG

As the Year of the Snake draws near, the rural landscapes of northern Shanxi province are vibrant with a festive spirit, adorned by a myriad of red lanterns.

In the renowned “lantern village” of Yangzhao in Jishan county, Shanxi, the bustling season has returned, as villagers engage in meeting orders from domestic and international markets, with workshops brimming with an array of lanterns awaiting shipment.

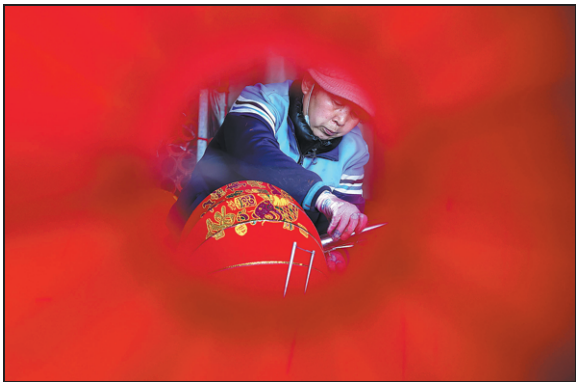
Jiao Tingting, 25, has been learning the art of lantern-making from her grandfather since childhood, progressing from bamboo lanterns to modern foldable ones. “In traditional Chinese culture, lanterns are often seen as symbols of good fortune, prosperity and reunion,” she said.

Lanterns not only illuminate but also carry rich cultural connotations and symbolic meanings, and have evolved into a decorative item.

The tradition of lantern-making in Yangzhao dates back to the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. In 2008, “traditional lantern-making craft of Yangzhao village” was listed in the first batch of city-level intangible cultural heritage in Yuncheng, the village’s administrative city.

Most lanterns from Yangzhao are handmade, with workers diligently producing lanterns using a standard procedure in workshops.

“We are busy making lanterns throughout the year, especially during various festivals when the demand is higher,” said Guan Jungeng, who manages a local lantern



A worker makes a lantern in the village on Jan 11.



A worker prints patterns on lantern covers at a workshop on Jan 11.

processing factory. “To welcome the Year of the Snake, orders have significantly increased since October, and workers have been busier. I have been answering order calls and managing deliveries all the time.”

Yangzhao is home to 22 compa-

nies and professional cooperatives engaged in lantern making, along with three lantern accessory manufacturers. Annually, they produce around 10 million pairs of lanterns — pairs traditionally symbolizing good fortune — with a total output



A worker decorates lanterns at a factory in Yangzhao on Dec 30. SHI YUNPING / FOR CHINA DAILY



A worker packages lanterns in the village on Jan 11.

value of 150 million yuan (\$20.5 million). Lanterns provide employment for over 2,000 people in the village and surrounding areas.

Guan said that the workers in his factory are mainly local villagers. Workers are paid by the piece, and

one person can produce 200 to 300 lanterns per day. Villagers engage in lantern-making during their free time from farming.

It is reported that some villagers can earn over 100 yuan per day making lanterns, resulting in an

annual income of nearly 40,000 yuan. Many villagers have built two-story houses and can afford to purchase cars.

Yangzhao’s lanterns were once presented to the imperial court as decorative items. Leveraging traditional production techniques, the village primarily manufactures plush lanterns and traditional palace lanterns, which are exported across the country and overseas. The 1.2-meter-diameter plush lantern is the best-selling item. Adorned with auspicious patterns such as peonies and phrases such as “surplus every year”, it embodies people’s fervent hopes for a better life.

In recent years, workshops in Yangzhao have continued to innovate and have created nearly 100 varieties of lanterns, including sheepskin, flower, white gauze and acrylic colors. To meet market demands, workers have begun producing electronic toy lanterns that incorporate interactive elements such as sound and light, which have become a new favorite in the market.

Jiao emphasized the importance of creating lanterns in ways that appeal to young people, combining heritage with innovation. She said that she has also opened an online store to further tap into overseas markets. “Our lanterns can also be custom-made to suit different clients’ requirements,” she said.

According to Ma Jinfeng, Party chief of Yangzhao, the village is upgrading its infrastructure to develop a lantern industry park. “Red lanterns not only decorate people’s lives, but also bring us prosperity,” he said.

Contact the writers at  
zhuxingxin@chinadaily.com.cn



Workers place semifinished lanterns for drying on Jan 11.