Volume 2, Chapter 11: Bringing Out the Shine and Making It Bright

When the entire body of the ch'in has all been finished and perfected, then there is no more work to be done, except for bringing out the shine. This so called "bringing out the shine", does not only refer to putting on raw lacquer, waiting for it to dry, and then having a bright face. Actually after it has dried, one then uses some brick or pottery powder that has been through the "flying-clearness" process[1]. Take a sheepskin cloth and first dip it into sesame seed oil and then immerse it in the powder. Then use the cloth to rub the ch'in and bring out the shine. One must first get rid of the superficial outside shine and then bring out the refined shine contained within. The more one rubs, the better it will be. Make it so that it reflects sideburns or eyebrows.

As to the brick or pottery powder, and the shammy skin, do not slightly dip the cloth into the powder and then rub the ch'in, because in the way the finish may get marked. Be careful about this. Also fingernails may cut and mark the finish, so it is best to cut them off at these stages.

As for the method for making the lacquer bright through exposure to sunlight, first strain clean the raw lacquer. Put it in a pan *C:[Wood and pottery are both all right.]* and sun it for awhile. Now use a piece of bamboo and stir it up until it is white down to the bottom of the pan. The lacquer will have water vapor in it. Now sun it and stir for a long time. *C:[Sun it to make the lacquer bright. Stir to keep it from developing a dry skin (on the surface).]* Sun it for a couple of days, until the water vapor has been all dried out of the lacquer. The color should be like soy sauce and very bright. Put in ping-p'ien (冰片)[2] or pig's bile, mixing it in so that the lacquer will be pure and easy (to brush on). It should be bright like a mirror. If one desires the color to be darker, then mix into the lacquer some rusty iron water. *C:[If one mixes in too much rusty iron water, then the lacquer will not dry. One will then have to add bright lacquer (kuang-ch'i)[3] (2).]* When it has all been mixed together, paint it on the instrument. After it is dry, it should be even blacker. *C:[Raw lacquer originally is black. After the addition of iron water, it is even blacker.]* Some use black soot and mix it in the lacquer. This is not as good as rusty water in that it tends to lump or form dregs. If one does not mix in ping-p'ien (etc.), the lacquer will remain dense and unworkable, and will not change its nature. There will usually be brush marks, so take the mixed bright lacquer and use Chinese linen and put it (the linen) on cotton cloth, strain the lacquer several times and there should not be any small lumps.

It should be pure. If one desires a purple, rosy color, then use real vermilion *C:[As for the false variety, which makes the lacquer even blacker, one mixes in yellow lead.]*

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[1] See Volume 2, Chapter 6 for the "flying clearness" process.

[2] Ping-p'ien, "Borneo cement", a reddish-white crystalized camphor is found in a tree that grows as far north as Fukien. Cf, Stuart, p. 157.

[3] Bright lacquer is lacquer that has been processed which is what this particular paragraph is all about. It can be cooked or sunned. Nowadays it is bought already prepared.

pigment and gradually mix it up in the lacquer. The color is best when it is like an ink stone from Tuan (端)[4]. If there is too much vermilion, then it will be red and not purple. *C:[For bringing out the shine on one ch'in, use three ounces of lacquer for one coat.]*

Here is another method: Do not put the lacquer in the sun, but instead use fire and heat it. Take a porcelain bowl and fill it with clean, raw lacquer. Put it on a mild fire, stirring constantly, until the lacquer heats up, then take it off the fire, stirring and fanning simultaneously to keep it cool. Again heat it up, stirring and fanning, going through this process several times. The color of the lacquer will be like gold. It will be brighter this way than if it is placed in the sun. It is difficult to do this correctly - putting it in the sun - and easier to do by cooking it. However as for this method, one must pay attention to it at all times, stirring constantly, guarding against burning the bottom. As soon as it is hot, take it off the fire. Stir and fan it, cooling it off. If too hot, then the lacquer will not be fresh and will not dry. It will be useless. This method was received from Hsu Chu-hsi (許蓫[5]溪) via Mr. Chen Liu-i (陳六逸) of the city of Chih (芝)[6]. It has been tested and is rather good.

List of Materials To Be Prepared And Used As Necessary:

- Deer horn powder. *C:[The two varieties, fine and coarse, are prepared through the flying-clearness process. Use them according to how they should be used. The coarser particles should be used on the bottom. Use the finer particles on the top.]*

- Raw lacquer and bright lacquer. *C:[Both should be strained. Pour the lacquer into a porcelain bowl and use thick oil-paper, sticking it onto the surface of the lacquer, thereby keeping it from forming dregs or drying out.]*

- Pig bile. *C:[Dried in the air. When one desires to use it, take a gall bladder and wash out the bile into the lacquer until it dissolves.]*

- Rusty iron water. *C:[Take iron nails or the like and ten days before their use is desired, stick them in rice vinegar, thus making rusty water.]*

- Ping-p'ien. *C:[Buy this whenever necessary for use. If one stores it for a long time, it may go bad.]*

- An old shammy cloth. *C:[Used in bringing out the shine.]*

- Brick or pottery stone. *C:[Use the flying-clearness process. For details, see the chapter on rubbing the powder on smooth.[7] Save the especially fine powder.]*

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[4] This is a place in Kuangtung famous for its inkstones.
[5] The character shown here for "Chu" is not quite right. The correct character in the text has bamboo above it, not grass.
[6] Chih may be Chih-chou county in Kuanghsi province.
[7] Volume 2, Chapter 6.

- Hui, pegs, wild geese feet, yarn fasteners, strings, etc.