

Design Resource

Bone Carving-Lucknow

The Art of Carving Intricate Patterns

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral with Mr. J. Antony William
NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/bone-carving-lucknow>

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Introduction

Bone carving is an art of carving the animal bones or horns and creating intricate pieces of art work. Lucknow since the times of Nawabs has been an important center for ivory or bone carving. Skilled craftsmen used to make decorative and functional products for the Nawabs of Awadh. Lucknow, in Uttar Pradesh emerged as a main centre of ivory carving due to the patronization of the craft by the Nawabs. After the ban on ivory, artisans have been carving on camel and buffalo bone with great skill.

Place and People:

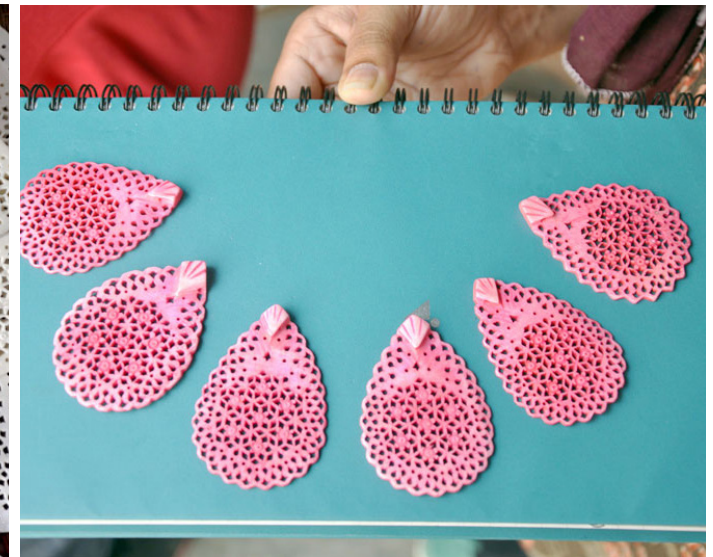
Thakurganj is a small locality where a number of artisans are practicing bone carving in small vicinity of their houses. The place is situated in the heart of the city majorly dominated by Muslim population. It houses many bone carvers who since ages have been practicing the craft. Carving is done majorly by the Muslim communities. Though these days few Hindu communities have also learned the craft and make small products. Ivory carving or bone carving is considered as one of the luxurious craft and therefore got patronized by the royals.

The craft is practiced in Rajasthan, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Lucknow. In Lucknow the craft is being practiced in many neighboring places like Mandiaio thanna, Barabanki, Mahila Raiganj etc.

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Intricate jaali motifs influenced by Mughal architecture.



Dyed bone ear rings to meet the new trend.

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Delicate art depicting elephant.



Bone knives of different sizes.



Knife in Jaali motif.



Skilled artisans in Lucknow.

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Making of ear rings.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Tools used in bone carving are as follows:

Basula: The type of hammer that is used for cutting the bone in desired shapes and sizes.
Reti-Files: Used for planning the surface.

Chausi: It is a Chisel used for carving intricate jaalis. Round, half-round and flat chisels are used as per the requirement.

Tekora: Used to file the small holes of jaali. Tekora is made out of the thin wire. The fine wire is shaped to make the grooves.

Thiya: Used as a base to work on, Thiya is a circular wooden block with a small stand in between.

Prakar: It is a Compass used for marking the design.

Drilling Machine: Used to drill the holes on bone.

Buffing Machine: Used to polish the final product.

• Raw Material:

The raw material mainly used is the 'Bone'. Initially craftsmen used elephant tusk to carve out elaborate decorative and functional pieces. Due to the ban on the use of elephant tusk artisans have now moved to alternative raw material and use bones of camel or buffalo. These bones are brought from the butcher's shop at the rate of Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 5000/- depending on the quality and size.

There are four types of bones procured from the animals:

Tersoor: A Grade (Rs. 14/- kg)

Gola: B Grade (Rs. 12/- kg)

Bhanhu: C Grade (Rs. 8/- kg)

Paaya: D Grade (Rs. 6/- kg)

Tersoor is the best and artisan can obtain up to 1 inch thick strip from it.

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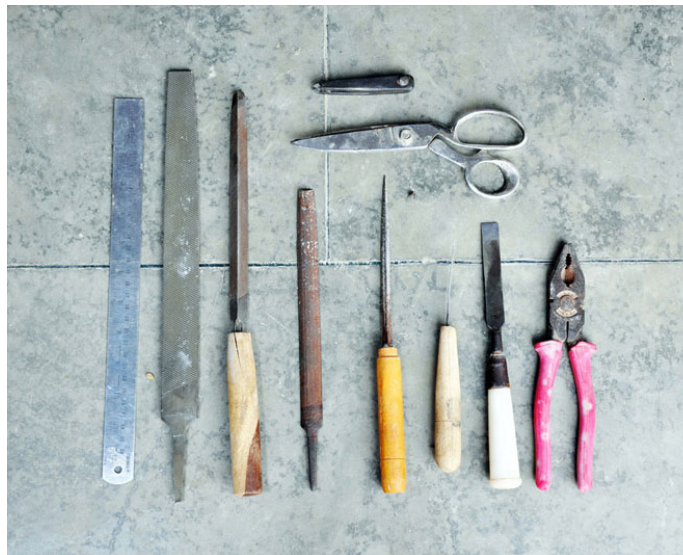


Buffalo bone- the main raw material.



Hammer used to cut the bone.

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Collection of all tools used in bone carving



Types of files and Tekora tool.

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Drilling machine to make holes on the bone surface.



Buffing soap used to obtain glossy finish on the bone surface.



Polishing pad to polish the bone products.



Cutter is attached to buffing machine to cut the bone into required pieces.

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Small polishing pad.



Marble powder used to obtain brightness of bone.



Over-view of buffing machine.



The working area of a bone carving unit.

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Making Process

The carving process involves the following steps:

1. Cutting
2. Cleaning
3. Bleaching
4. Carving
5. Finishing

Cutting:

The bone once brought from the market is cut into desired pieces. Firstly the upper layer is removed by scraping and then cutting is done using Basuli. These cut pieces are further shaped using a cutting machine. Bone smells during the cutting and buffing. Apart from this it doesn't smell afterward.

Cleaning:

After cutting the bone is boiled in hot water along with soda. This helps in removing the fat and other greasy elements from the surface of the bone. Boiling process continues for 3-4 hours. It also helps in removing the foul smell to some extent.

Bleaching:

After cleaning, the bone is dipped in a solution of hydrogen peroxide and kept in sun for 6-7 hours. This helps in whitening the bone.

Carving:

Bones are cut in desired shapes and stuck/ joined together with the help of adhesive (fevicol). After drying, marking is done with the help of a compass. Holes are made using drilling machine and then the carving start by hand using different tools.

Finishing:

After carving, the product is buffed using different grades of buff. This brings shine in the product. The intricate pieces are also sometime dyed in different colors as per the requirement.

The whole process of processing the bone, carving and finishing takes at least 4-5 days. The processes are practiced only by the males. The best time to work on bone is monsoon and winters. During summer due to excessive heat bones tend to develop crack and therefore artisans work in shades to avoid any kind of damage. The damaged left-over is recycled to make manure and used in farms.

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The raw bone is cut into small rectangular shape.



The bone piece is now taken for polishing.



Artisan polishing the bone to smoothen the surface.



The bone is allowed to dry under shade.

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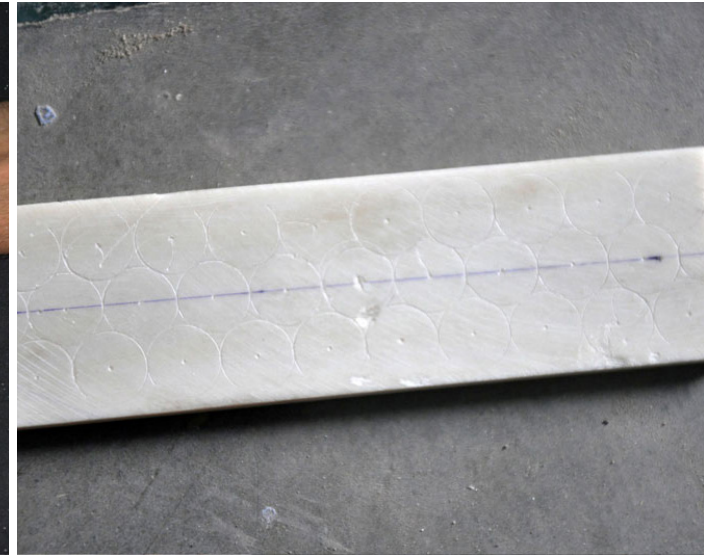
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Initial designs are marked on the surface of the bone



The details of marked designs.



The holes are drilled as per the marked design.



Artisan involved in the carving work

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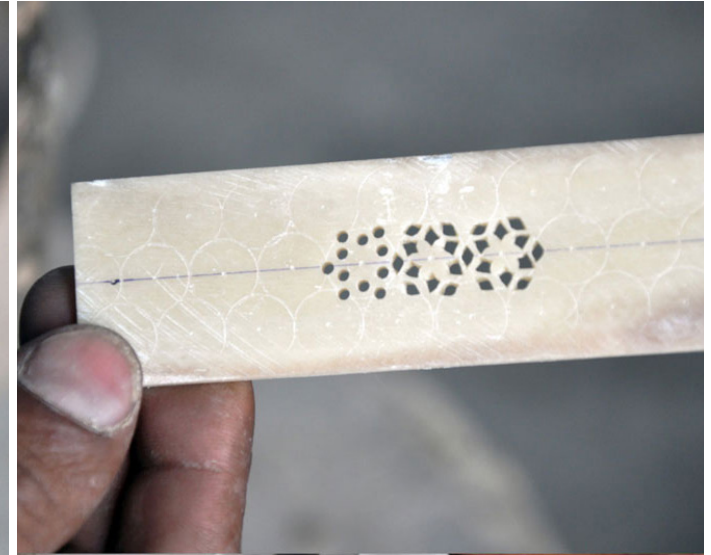
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Creating the holes of jaali with Tekora tool.



The closer view of Jaali work.



The carved parts are joined together to make the final product.



Creating the motifs using buffing machine.

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Bone carved replica of peacock is used as hair clip.



The products are coated with marble powder as it brightens surface of the final work



The coated piece is again buffed.



Cleaning the product with cold water.

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Articles made out of bone carving process

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Products

Earlier the artisans used to make extensive products for the royal courts and the Nawabs of Avadh. Ivory was used to decorate sword and dagger hilts, plaques to adorn the sides of carriages and howdahs, palanquins, games like chess, chowpad, figures, utilitarian objects like combs, bangles and mirror frames, photo frames, furniture's etc. Today, bone has replaced the ivory and now the artisans make jewelry boxes, pen stand, trinkets, paper knife, scissors, earrings, rings, cutlery, chilam's etc.

There are majorly two types of work being done in Lucknow. One is Jaali work and other is Carving. Jaali work is influenced by the Mughal culture. It takes inspirations from the architecture, nature etc. These jaalis are carved extensively on jewelry boxes, table lamps, jewelries, etc. Different types of camel bone and even dyed pieces are used to make different decorative products. Carving in the round, comprising hunting and forest scenes complete with elephants, tigers, parrots, peacocks and flowering trees is done on thicker bones.



Bone knives with carved handles.



Scissors made using bone.

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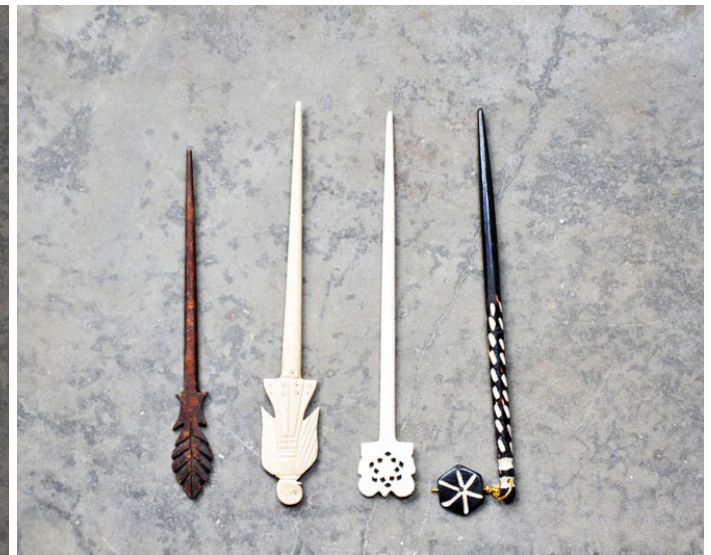
Cigarette holder made of bone.



Designer spoons and fork.



Book marks.



Juda Pins used to tie the hair.

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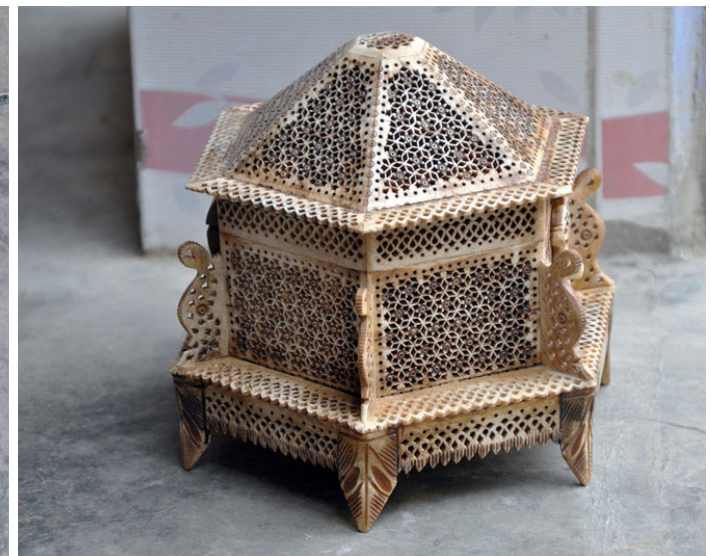
Bunch of bone necklaces.



Contemporary necklace.



Modern necklaces in different colors.



Intricately carved Jewelry box.

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Variety of colored finger rings.



Pen holder.

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Pendant in Jaali motif.



Pendant depicting butterfly.

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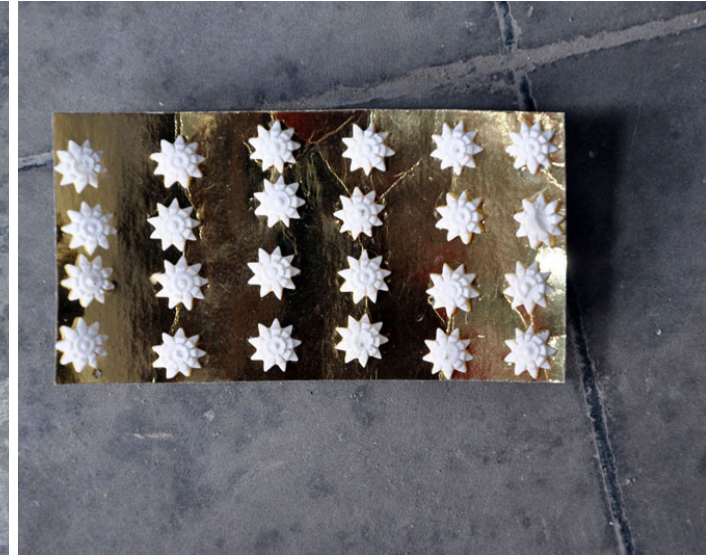
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Varieties of pendants.



Small studs for women.

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Plane jewelry box.

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