**Making the world's best Go pieces**

Updated: 2013-11-27 11:16 (chinadaily.com.cn)

Sitting in front of a clay oven in which the temperature is kept at 1,200 C, workers use a traditional tool to precisely drop melted materials onto an iron board. As a result, crystal-clear Go pieces, which look like black jade along with the color white, immediately appear.

This is how the world-famous Yunzi, the special Go pieces, are produced.

Go, a board game for two players that originated in China thousands of years ago, is also called "sitting in seclusion," or "hands talk." When people play the game, they only see the world that changes on the board and forget annoying real world issues, which is where the name "sitting in seclusion" comes from. The Chinese do not talk when playing Go and the only communication allowed takes place on the board itself, which is where the name "hands talk" comes from. These unique attributes serve as part of the game's charm.

Yunzi is short for Yunnan Go pieces, and has a history of more than 500 years. The ancient process of making Yunzi was lost towards the end of the Ming Dynasty. In 1974, researchers found the formula from ancient Go pieces and the process remained a secret. Now, only Liu Wenfu, a 3rd generation Yunzi heir, has the formula.

In 2009, Yunzi and the production process were listed as a provincial intangible cultural heritage in Yunnan province. The white pieces are made in an ancient style with heavy and smooth lines, and the black pieces look like jade as their edges shine with sunlight almost like clear water in a pool.

The best Go pieces are still made by hand utilizing more than 10 steps. Making Yunzi is a precious process that comes with number of details and specifications.[Photo/icpress]