



Japan - Myanmar Lacquer Craft Exchange Research Program

Asian Lacquer Craft Exchange Research Project

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The 60th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Myanmar and Japan Japan-Myanmar Lacquer Craft Exchange Program, “Japan-Myanmar Lacquer Art Exhibition” Commemorating 60 Years Friendship and 10 Years Exchange Program

The Japan-Myanmar Lacquer Craft Exchange Research Program is holding an exhibition of international and Myanmar lacquer art at the Bagan Lacquerware Technology College in Bagan from 10-13 September concurrent with its yearly workshop and lecture program. Over 40 artworks will be exhibited.

2014 is the 60th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Myanmar and Japan. The Japanese Foreign Ministry and the Japanese Embassy in Myanmar has recognized our program and authorized the "Japan-Myanmar Lacquer Craft Exchange Research Program" to be an official part of the celebrations. Professor Kiichiro Masumura, a Japanese Living National Treasure, will lecture on and demonstrate his lacquer art techniques. In addition, Professor Seiichi Onobori, a product designer, will lecture on lacquer design.

The Lacquer Exchange Program began when project members first visited the Bagan Lacquerware Technology College in 2003. The workshop outlined below is a continuation of the series that began in January 2005. Since then, yearly workshops and slide lectures have been held by Japanese lacquer experts and professors in order to introduce Japanese lacquer art and techniques to the faculty and students of the College as well as to the Bagan lacquer community as a whole.

Date : 10 - 13 September 2014 (4 days)

Place : Auditorium and Exhibition Space Lacquerware Technology College (Old Bagan)

Attendees : Faculty teachers and students of Bagan Lacquerware Technology College, and artisans from workshops in Bagan. The general public is welcome to participate.

Content : 1-Lectures, 2-Workshop, 3-Exhibition

Sponsors : Toshiba International Foundation, The Satoh Artcraft Research & Scholarship Foundation

Support : Embassy of Japan, Myanmar, Small Scale Industries Department, Ministry of Co-Operatives

Organizers : Lacquerware Technology College, Asian Lacquer Craft Exchange Research Project

1- Lectures 11 - 12 September, 9:00~ 12:00 Auditorium, Lacquerware Technology College

- Keynote Lecture "Japanese Lacquer—Kanshitsu and Color Coating", Kiichiro MASUMURA (Professor Emeritus, Tokyo University of the Arts • Living National Heritage in Urushi Coating)
- "Lacquer—Hospitality Design", Prof. Seiichi ONOBORI (Tokyo University of the Arts)
- "10 years of workshops and lectures in Myanmar", Prof. Sakurako MATSUSHIMA
- "Lacquer Art in Kyoto", Profs. Natsuki KURIMOTO and Emiko INOUE (Kyoto City University of Arts)
- "Japanese Bamboo Weaving and Ka-nyit Technique" Ms Kayo TAKAHASHI (Lacquer Artist)
- "Lacquer Exhibition and Activity in Japanese Museums", Ms Takayo AKIMA (Curator, Sekido Museum of Art) and Ms Aiko TERAOKA (Curator, Wajima Museum of Urushi Art)
- "Current State of Lacquer in Cambodia" Mr Eric Stocker (French Lacquer Artist, Cambodia)
- "Myanmar Lacquer Art and Technique" (Myanmar lacquer artists and experts)

2- Workshop 12 - 13 September 9:00~ 12:00, Auditorium and Workspace, Lacquerware Technology College

- Japanese and Myanmar lacquer techniques

3- Exhibition 10 - 13 September 9:00~ 16:00, Exhibition Space, Lacquerware Technology College

- Lacquer art works from Japanese, Myanmar and Asian countries. About 40 lacquer art works will be exhibited.
- **Reception and Artist Talk : 11 September, 14:00~**

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What is urushi ?

Urushi is the purified sap of the lacquer tree. The scientific name of the tree used in Japan is *Rhus vernicifera* (*Toxicodendron vernicifluum*). It is native to China, Korea, Japan, and the eastern Himalayas region. The sap of this tree contains a resin—"urushiol", which when exposed to moisture and air, polymerizes and hardens (dries). Constant temperature and humidity is required for it to harden uniformly, so urushi work is often "dried" in special chambers. Once hardened, urushi is resistant to alkali, acid, and heat. By adding various natural pigments, urushi can be colored—black, red, brown, or yellow. Gold powder is used to decorate the lacquered objects. In addition there are various types of decoration including "maki-e", "raden", "chinkin", "hyomon", "kinma", "urushi-e", "haku-e", and "rankaku". Especially in Japan, the decorative power of urushi became an important aspect of its artistic culture.

In Myanmar lacquer is called "thit-si". Lacquer trees are found in Northwest and west Myanmar. The scientific name is *Melanorrhoea usitata* (*Gluta usitata*). They are in the same Anacardiaceae family as the Japanese-Chinese and Vietnamese trees, but this species is much taller with large leaves and thick bark. The active chemical is "thitsiol". Myanmar lacquer dries or hardens much more slowly than Japanese-Chinese or Vietnamese lacquer. The sap is black and after drying, shiny. In Myanmar, people call lacquerware "yun". Lacquer is used in daily life to strengthen baskets, bowls, cups, plates, furniture, and other utensils. Lacquer is applied by hand or using simple tools. Bagan in the Mandalay division and Kyaukkha in the Sagain division are well known lacquer centers. In addition, in the Shan States there are also several lacquerware-producing centers. Kyaukkha lacquerware uses simple black and red colors. It is mostly daily use and temple offering lacquerware. Bagan is Myanmar's most important lacquerware production center. The makers are highly skilled craftspeople who use a variety of sophisticated techniques. The number of people involved in lacquer craft production has been declining in all areas except Bagan. In Myanmar, bamboo is the main material. It is woven, coiled, and twisted to produce shapes. In addition, wood, cloth, horse hair, and metal are also used. In Myanmar there are many different kinds of decorative techniques. The main techniques are etching, drawing, layering and inlay. "Kanyit" technique is an etching technique. Gold leaf layer technique (gilding) is called "Shwei zawa". "Thayoe" technique is the mixing lacquer with bone or straw ash to make a putty to create a raised relief. Decoration designs on lacquerware are drawn using a number of motifs such as of animals and gods, folklore, royal palaces, mythological beasts and flowers, and Jataka (Buddhist tales).



Lacquer Tree in Myanmar



Myanmar Lacquerware



Japanese Lacquer Work, Kiichiro Masumura, a Living National Heritage



Japanese Lacquer Work, Tatsuya Matsumoto

Lacquer Workshop and Lecture in Bagan (2008-2013)



April 2008, Lacquer Artist Mr Matsumoto introduced Japanese kanyit technique. We compared Myanmar and Japanese kanyit technique.



March 2009, Lacquer Artist Mr Torige introduced Japanese Chinkin technique. He showed different shape of Chinkin chisel and demonstrated curving.



August 2010, Prof. Nobuyoshi Kobagashi (Tohoku University of Art and Design) showed various patterns of Japanese Kawarinuri technique.



August 2011, Dr. Hiroshi Oyabu lectured on the mechanism of urushi drying and degradation.



August 2012, Prof. Toshiaki Fujita demonstrated a Japanese style of lacquer restoration.



August 2013, Lacquer Artist Ms. Ando demonstrated Vietnamese lacquer painting and discussed current lacquer art in Vietnam. Prof. Voharn (Chiang Mai University) also talked about the Thai lacquer situation.