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## Lacquer Nation: An Eco Art History of Modern Jōbōji Lacquer

By

Joel Mathias Thielen

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History of Art

in the

**Graduate Division** 

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Gregory Levine, chair Professor Junko Habu Professor Jun Hu Professor Sugata Ray

Summer 2024

#### **Abstract**

Lacquer Nation: An Eco Art History of Modern Jōbōji Lacquer

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Joel Mathias Thielen

Doctor of Philosophy in History of Art

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Gregory Levine, Chair

This dissertation employs a landscape-focused approach to examine practical craft objects, fine art, and architecture coated with Jōbōji lacquer that date from the late nineteenth century to the early 2000s. I address lacquered objects made from "Jōbōji lacquer" tree sap tapped from East Asian lacquer tree (*Toxicodendron vernicifluum*) forests in a remote, mountainous area of northern Japan that I refer to as the "Jōbōji lacquer landscape," centered in the town of Jōbōji. I examine the dynamic expansions and contractions of Jōbōji lacquer as it is planted, harvested, purified, and rematerialized as craft objects and architectural complexes that serve as visual and material indicators of the modern Japanese nation-state. This landscape approach discloses site-specific responses to a shifting world of craft production; it reveals an ongoing struggle for survival—social, cultural, and biomaterial—of lacquer craft and the specific forest, community, and artisanal practices of Jōbōji. This struggle arose in the face of industrial modernity and its challenge to the value of the "handmade" and "traditional" crafts, mass-production of plastic wares that lowered demand for lacquerware, and the nation-state's campaign to establish a national art canon and history, as well as a national aesthetics.

I show how Meiji period (1868-1912) Jōbōji lacquer artisans conjoined the techniques and designs of Jōbōji lacquer with a nationalized lacquer tradition known as maki-e ("sprinkled picture") in response to the technique's promulgation by the Artists for the Imperial Household System, the Tokyo School of the Arts, and International Expositions in the 1880s and 1890s. In the 1930s and 1940s, Jōbōji lacquerware appears in magazines, periodicals, and exhibitions formulated by advocates of the Folk Crafts Movement (Mingei Undō), demonstrating how the aesthetic qualities of Jōbōji lacquer—simple designs, practicality, and the lively technique of urushi-e ("lacquer pictures")—embodied the mingei theorist and collector Yanagi Muneyoshi's (1889-1961) ideals of the "People's Art." In the postwar period, artists such as Koseki Rokuhei (1918-2011) utilized Jōbōji lacquer to execute the traditional maki-e lacquer technique, creating abstract sculptural forms that reveal the possibilities of lacquer material as a medium capable of abstract visual expression in the realm of contemporary "craft art" (kōgei bijutsu). Finally, the use of Jōbōji lacquer in the restoration of the exterior of the Yōmeimon ("Gate of Illuminating Sun") at the Nikkō Tōshōgū shrine-temple complex—designated as a National Treasure and UNESCO World Heritage Site—points to the growing sense of national pride associated with the tapping of "authentic" Japanese lacquer, and demonstrates how the efforts lacquer sap collectors are now oriented toward national and global cultural heritage preservation and restoration.

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#### Note to Readers

All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Japanese names are listed with family names preceding first names in the body text, notes, and Bibliography. Japanese terms are italicized except when they appear in English dictionaries such as the Oxford English Dictionary. In such cases, for example "maki-e" and "mingei," I follow the spelling presented in English dictionaries and do not italicize.

All creators of visual materials described in this dissertation are unknown unless otherwise indicated.

I use the term "artisan" to describe the identity of those individuals who produced lacquerware, as well as the substrates to which lacquer is applied. I chose this term, as opposed to the word "craftsman," because it does not carry a specific gender connotation. Most of the lacquered objects discussed in this dissertation are unsigned objects and the creators of them are therefore unknown. The analysis of gender dynamics within the lacquer communities of Iwate is warranted but is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

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#### Introduction

"A curious excavator of traditions stumbles over something protruding above the surface of the commonplaces of contemporary life. He scratches away, discovering bits and pieces of a cultural design that seems to elude coherent reconstitution but which leads him deeper into the past."

—Simon Schama, Landscape and Memory, 1995

This dissertation employs a landscape-focused approach to examine practical craft objects, fine art, and architecture coated with Jōbōji lacquer that date from the late nineteenth century to the early 2000s. Situated within the emerging field of ecocritical art history, and nestled within the environmental humanities, this dissertation concerns lacquered objects made from "Jōbōji lacquer," tree sap tapped from East Asian lacquer tree (*Toxicodendron vernicifluum*) forests in a remote, mountainous area of northern Japan.

With a "landscape-focused approach," I treat these objects as having been constituted with lacquer procured from a landscape composed of lacquer sap tappers, lacquer artisans, lacquer refiners, creators of fine art, and others. Together, I call this lacquer-producing assemblage of human and nonhuman actors the "Jōbōji lacquer landscape." This dissertation traverses boundaries delineated by humanistic research and opens the study of Jōbōji lacquer to a larger set of objects that reveal the unevenness—from a simple small black-lacquered rice bowl to monumental architecture—of the visual history of modern Jōbōji lacquer. I select objects for analysis based on their material linkages to this specific landscape. This dissertation does not offer a definitive history, but instead one that is open to contradiction, unevenness, "messiness," simultaneity, and adaptive and contingent processes. Some of these processes occur under the force of the nation, while others respond to planetary systems and new technologies.

The modern Jōbōji lacquer landscape is centered on the community in Jōbōji, located along the Appi River in northern Iwate Prefecture in an environment long considered beneficial for lacquer tree cultivation (Figs. 0.1-2). I largely use the term "Jōbōji lacquer landscape" to refer to the lacquer communities—tree cultivators, lacquer artisans, and others—located in the town of Jōbōji, but I also use the term "Appi River region" because these communities are largely scattered along the Appi River and at times breach the contemporary administrative boundaries of the town of Jōbōji. My examination of this expansive human and more-than-human landscape is premised on sustained attentiveness to the study of lacquered objects in diverse and complex relationships with specific places, from a tree or plantation and the workplace of a lacquer tapper, to the artisanal workshop, to national and transnational spaces of art exhibition. The resulting analysis of Jōbōji lacquer is thus eco-local and place-based but also constituted in scalar relationships that contract and expand with varied usage of Jōbōji lacquer material. As I demonstrate, this landscape approach discloses site-specific responses to a shifting world of craft production; it reveals an ongoing struggle as well for survival—social, cultural, and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Simon Schama, Landscape and Memory (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1995), 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In my use of the term "assemblage," I draw on Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's research on *matsutake*, in which she conceptualizes assemblages as "open ended gatherings" of multiple species (including humans), environments, and spatial scales. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 22-23.

biomaterial—of lacquer craft and the specific forest, community, and artisanal practices of Jōbōji.

This struggle, taking place during what I refer to as the "long twentieth century"— approximately 1880 to 2020—arose in the face of industrial modernity and its challenge to the value of the "handmade" and "traditional" crafts, as well as the Japanese nation-state's campaign to establish a national art canon and history, and a national aesthetics.<sup>3</sup> Industrial modernity, while introducing new technology that expedited the lacquer refining process and lacquerware substrate preparation (primarily local beechwood), also brought innovations in plastic production that threatened to eliminate the lacquer sap tapping industry altogether. Population decrease—exacerbated by a trickling urban exodus from communities such as those in rural Iwate—continues to threaten existing systems of knowledge transmission. The conditions and challenges, but also opportunities, of modernity were, and continue to be, addressed by the constituents of the Jōbōji lacquer landscape.

Although Jōbōji lacquer is less well known than Wajima—a city on the Nōtō peninsula well-known for sturdy and ornate maki-e or "sprinkled picture" designs—the Jōbōji lacquer landscape produces eighty-two percent of the domestic lacquer consumed in Japan. Analysis of lacquered objects and textual sources written by lacquer artisans, officials of the Meiji government (1868-1912), and a range of publications—newsprint, magazines, exhibition catalogues, lecture proceedings, and others—shows that along this tumultuous path through the long twentieth century there occurred numerous local, regional, and national efforts to "rebrand" or "recalibrate" Jōbōji lacquer. For example, artisans conjoined the techniques and designs of Jōbōji lacquer with a nationalized lacquer tradition known as maki-e, noted above, in response to the technique's promulgation by the Artists for the Imperial Household System, the Tokyo School of the Arts, and International Expositions and World's Fairs in the 1880s and 1890s. Although the technique of maki-e had not been widely practiced in Jōbōji before the modern era, its potential value to Jōbōji's resilience prompted resourceful efforts to adapt this technique to pre-existing local forms and styles.

The resilient efforts of the Jōbōji lacquer landscape to survive these challenges are one subject of this dissertation, and its examination takes place in relation to the biomatter of lacquer and its forest-human communities, and in relation to the "matter" of modern national identity, the physical material that composes objects that have historically become emblems of Japanese identity. Put differently, I examine the modern history of lacquer as a "national(ist) matter," both bio-material and discursive. I indirectly imply how lacquer matter, in this dialectical sense, relates to structures of community, knowledge generation and transmission, and embodied skill necessary for the material production of lacquer. Were lacquer production in Japan to go

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> I use the term "long twentieth century," similar to Melia Belli Bose and others who examine the textile industry in Asia, as it becomes entangled with industrialization, threats to cultural heritage, and environmental destruction from the late nineteenth century to the present. See Melia Belli Bose, ed., *Threads of Globalization: Fashion, Textiles, and Gender in Asia in the Long Twentieth Century* (Manchester University Press, 2024).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Tabata Masanobu, ed., "Washokubunka o irodoru 'urushi' no sekai," *aff* (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) (November 2022), https://www.maff.go.jp/j/pr/aff/2211/spe1\_02.html. Raw Jōbōji lacquer can theoretically be purchased and shipped internationally, although to date I have not learned of such cases. Most, if not all, harvested Jōbōji lacquer is used for restoration of Important Cultural Properties or in lacquerware workshops in Japan (see Epilogue for contemporary usage of Jōbōji lacquer). At the time of writing, a portion of annually harvested raw Jōbōji lacquer is sent to Wajima, where it is used by the lacquer workshop Wajimaya Zenni. Finished lacquerware produced in Japan are regularly shipped abroad and can be purchased on workshop websites.

extinct—in the genus/species and artisanal senses—this would constitute the disappearance of one materiality of Japan's national identity. An examination of Jōbōji lacquer—its matter and landscape—is therefore crucial to our understanding of the bio-visual survival of a modern nation.

This struggle is acutely evident in the dissertation's final case study, which investigates how architectural conservators of Important Cultural Properties were forced to rely on a supply of Jōbōji lacquer for use in the 2013-2016 restoration of the Gate of Illuminating Sun (Yōmeimon) at the Nikkō Tōshōgū shrine temple complex. This structure is designated as a Japanese National Treasure and UNESCO World Heritage Site, and functions as a mausoleum where the spirit of Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868), is deified and enshrined. But prior to this recent restoration campaign—and critical to our understanding of it—is the modern history of Jōbōji lacquer, which I address in the dissertation's three chapters. Taken as a whole, this dissertation follows the dynamic expansions and contractions of Jōbōji lacquer as it is planted, harvested, purified, and rematerialized as craft objects and architectural complexes that serve as visual and material indicators of the modern Japanese nation-state.

Transnational encounters played a significant role in the positioning of lacquer as a "material indicator" of modern Japan. In 1889, the same year the Tokyo School of Arts was established with a special course on maki-e, German Professor of Geography at the University of Bonn, Johannes Justus Rein, published in English *The Industries of Japan: Together with an Account of Its Agriculture, Forestry, Arts, and Commerce*. Included in Rein's text is a robust description of Japanese lacquer, from lacquer tapping to lacquerware production. Rein's account is revealing because he frames Japanese lacquerware as evidence of Japan's modernity:

Among the many well developed branches of Japanese art industry, lacquer work undoubtedly take the first place. In no other have the feeling for art and artistic ability of the Japanese, their free play of fancy, and their admirable perseverance and skill in executing their richly figured pictures, developed earlier and more. In none have they so quickly disengaged themselves from their Chinese masters and patterns and stood more independently, and finally in no other have they so surely won eminence among all civilized people. Besides, in scarcely any other branch of their industry is the employment and use of the raw material so varied, the purposes and excellence of the articles it serves to adorn so manifold, as in the case of the Japanese lacquer-work, and the industry which gives it value.<sup>5</sup>

Rein's commentary on Japanese lacquerware and his framing of this material and its related craft traditions can now easily be understood as teleological in their prioritization of "progress" within a loose conception of the "civilized." However, at the time of his text, Japanese government officials—and the artisans who were incorporated into the Artists for the Imperial Household System, formalized art schools, and later, the Agency for Cultural Affairs—were scrutinizing the

how these early visitors to Japan perceived Japanese lacquer and its related industries.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Johannes Justus Rein, *The Industries of Japan: Together with an Account of Its Agriculture, Forestry, Arts, and Commerce* (New York: A.C. Armstrong, 1889), 338-39. Rein's research was funded by the Prussian Government. The rich history of European and American geographers and natural scientists who visited Japan in the nineteenth century deserves more attention than can be given here. Further research might include an extended examination of

history of their own visual and material culture in search of objects that would articulate how they were indeed, both modern and Japanese.

The modern history of Jōbōji lacquer, I argue, reveals that the particularities associated with lacquerware production—local environments found only in Japan, "traditional" lacquer saptapping techniques, the elusive and embodied skill of Japanese artisans, and long histories that dwarf those of other modern nations such as the United States—certified and authenticated a modernity that could be represented as distinctively "Japanese." Despite the convulsions that gripped the Jōbōji lacquer landscape throughout the long twentieth century, lacquer became significant, if not intrinsic, to conversations regarding tradition, skill, the very definition of "art," and perhaps most frequently, the material and aesthetic futures of Japanese identity and cultural heritage.

This is not to say that all human constituents of the Jōbōji lacquer landscape are driven by nationalism. Surely the lacquer trees themselves are not conscious of the anthropogenic category of "nation." In terms of human constituents, I do not intend to paint the landscape with broad strokes that generalize motivations of diverse individuals who reside in Jōbōji lacquer communities. However, the chapters that follow demonstrate how Jōbōji lacquer is repeatedly oriented and reoriented—in both its usage as a craft material and in its underlying significance to culture—toward the efforts of an emerging lacquered visual culture that sought to distinguish itself in terms of national identity. In some ways, the national obscures the personal, the individual, and the communal, coopting local tradition and recalibrating it in terms of a broader, more general "Japan." In other instances, as we will see in the Epilogue, the personal motivations of an individual lacquer sap tapper are at least in part driven by a desire to harvest Jōbōji lacquer for its use in the restoration of a cultural heritage site. We might then characterize the "national" as an "undertow"—an unseen force that pulls the Jōbōji lacquer landscape under the surface and consolidates it within a vast ocean of a general "Japan."

## Key Components of the Jōbōji Lacquer Landscape

My analysis treats the visual history of objects made with lacquer procured from the Jōbōji area as essential to the practice of art history. That said, the depth of the histories related to each of the categories defined below warrant multiple dissertations on their own. This is not a comprehensive survey of all the actors that comprise the Jōbōji lacquer landscape; there are countless additional microorganisms, fungi, bacteria, soil types, water systems, and a complex array of human systems and relationships that are vital to this landscape. Nevertheless, this dissertation prioritizes the conjuncture of multiple places, actors, agencies, exchanges, and representations that co-produce the modern visual history of Jōbōji lacquer. Throughout this dissertation, I seek to demonstrate this conjuncture, its assemblage, and its implications using the concept of the "Jōbōji lacquer landscape," comprised of the primary components described here.

These discrete components are separated and defined below to guide readers through the landscape. It is important to note, however, that the boundaries between these components can be porous, even unstable. For example, some lacquer tappers collect lacquer sap during the harvesting season from June to October, then become lacquer artisans when they shift their work to lacquerware production during the winter months. The landscape, characterized by the components outlined below, form an assemblage of actors with a complex set of agencies and

corresponding modes of response to the challenges presented by the introduction of mass-produced plastics and other threats.

Lacquer tree (urushi no ki ウルシの木), Figs. 0.3-4: I use the term "lacquer tree" to refer to the organism with the scientific name Toxicodendron vernicifluum. Sometimes referred to as the "East Asian lacquer tree," the current distribution of the species stretches from Hokkaido to Oita Prefecture. Toxicodendron vernicifluum is endemic to China but requires human-assisted cultivation on the Korean peninsula as well as in Japan. A distribution map of the East Asian lacquer tree published by the National Museum of Japanese History shows the distribution of both cultivated and naturally occurring lacquer trees (Fig. 0.5). Mature lacquer trees are usually about fifty centimeters in diameter and ten meters in height. In textual sources, the "lacquer tree" is written in several ways. Most commonly it is written following conventional scientific writing in Japanese and indicated using the katakana syllabary ウルシノキ. In some cases, the tree may be referenced in kanji, and is written as 漆の木 or simply 漆木.

Lacquer (urushi 漆 うるし), Fig. 0.6: I use the word "lacquer" to refer to lacquer tree sap of the species Toxicodendron vernicifluum. Lacquer tree sap exists in the vasculature of the organism (both living and dead) and can be tapped from the lacquer tree in liquid form. Liquid lacquer is stable and is often stored in wood barrels for long periods of time. It can be shipped over great distances before it is purified, refined, and applied to substrates of nearly inexhaustible variety. In liquid form, lacquer sap is toxic to humans and causes allergic reactions in the form of painful welts and rashes. When lacquer is applied to substrates and allowed to "harden" in an environment with approximately 80% humidity, it polymerizes and becomes a stable, nontoxic, durable coating.<sup>8</sup>

Lacquer tapper (urushikaki 漆掻き; urushikaki shokunin 漆掻き職人, urushikakiko 漆掻き子) Fig. 0.7: Lacquer tapper(s) indicates the individual or individuals who harvest lacquer from the lacquer tree. Lacquer tappers carry a standard set of tools designed specifically for lacquer tapping (see Chapter Two).

Jōbōji lacquer (Jōbōji urushi 浄法寺漆, 浄法寺うるし): Generally, the term "Jōbōji lacquer" indicates lacquer that is harvested in or near the town of Jōbōji in Iwate Prefecture. However, as we will see on the 2022 lacquer tree distribution map, lacquer collected outside the administrative boundary of Jōbōji can still be certified as "Jōbōji lacquer" if it is tapped using the traditional tapping methods taught in Jōbōji. The "Implementation Guidelines for the Jōbōji Lacquer Authentication System" were inaugurated in 2008 and stipulate the conditions that must be met for lacquer to be certified as "Jōbōji lacquer."

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Yotsuyanagi Kashō, *Urushi no bunkashi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 2009), 7; Ningen Bunka Kenkyū Kikō Kokuritsu Rekishiminzoku Hakubutsukan, ed., *Urushi fushigi monogatari: hito to urushi no 1200 nenshi* (Sakura: Kokuritsu rekishiminzoku hakubutuskan, 2017), 20. Human assistance is required in Japan because lacquer trees, especially young saplings, are easily overtaken by other plant species, particularly vines.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Ningen Bunka Kenkyū Kikō Kokuritsu Rekishiminzoku Hakubutsukan, ed., *Urushi fushigi monogatari: hito to urushi no 1200 nenshi* (Sakura: Kokuritsu rekishiminzoku hakubutuskan, 2017), 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Yotsuyanagi Kashō, *Urushi no bunkashi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 2009), 15.

Substrate (kiji 木地 etc.): I use the word "substrate" to indicate a mass of material to which lacquer is applied, which is usually but not always wood. Beech tree wood (buna) is often used as a substrate for small vessels in Jōbōji. As material science innovations developed throughout the twentieth century, the variety of substrates increased and eventually included synthetic resins made with a cast-and-mold technique (see Chapter Three).9

Lacquerware/Lacquerwork (shikki 漆器, shikkō 漆工): I use the term "lacquerware," and "lacquerwork" to indicate mobile objects that consist of a substrate and any amount of lacquer applied to that substrate. The term "lacquerware" does not indicate any specific lacquer technique, of which there are dozens.

Lacquered architecture: Lacquered architecture indicates a permanently sited architectural structure that serves as the substrate for lacquer application. Unlike lacquerware, these structures are not mobile. Lacquered architecture requires regular maintenance and restoration because most structures are directly exposed to the elements, including sunlight that breaks down the chemical composition of lacquer and causes bleaching and cracking.

Lacquer artisan (nusshi, nushi 塗師; shikkō 漆工, etc.): A lacquer artisan is an individual who applies lacquer to a substrate to produce lacquerware or lacquered architecture.

Town of Jōbōji (Jōbōji-machi 浄法寺町): The Town of Jōbōji is located in the northern region of Iwate Prefecture, roughly 600 kilometers north of Tokyo and reachable in four hours from Tokyo Station via a combination of bullet train and car (Fig. 0.1). The town has a population of roughly 5,000 people and in 2006 was formally consolidated into the larger city of Ninohe to form a combined population of approximately 30,000 people. The land area of Ninohe City, including the town of Jōbōji, is just over 420 square kilometers and follows the Appi River as it flows northeast from its headwaters in the Ōu Mountains. The Appi River carves through mountainous terrain, passing through the town of Jōbōji before it empties into the larger Mabechi River near the central area of Ninohe City. The Mabechi River then continues its northeastern path to Hachinohe City in Aomori Prefecture until it empties into the Pacific Ocean (Fig. 0.2).

## Landscape as an "Eco Art Historical" Approach

The landscape-focused approach employed in this dissertation differs from most scholarship on lacquer to date. Study of Japanese lacquer has been dominated by a focus on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Although this project is primarily concerned with lacquer and lacquerware production, it should be noted that the Appi River region provides ideal conditions for secondary forests with a high proportion of beech trees that can still be seen today. The beech trees are logged, roughly cut into vessel shapes, then turned on lathes to form round substrates.

<sup>10 &</sup>quot;Kennai shichōson no gappei jōkyō (Heisei 11 nen kara)," Iwate-ken chō, last modified February 20, 2019, https://www.pref.iwate.jp/kensei/seisaku/bunken/gappei/1011834.html.
11 Ibid.

premodern objects, export wares, and conservation/technical art history. <sup>12</sup> Japanese lacquer has in a number of cases been associated with geographical placenames, including the case of Jōbōji but also for other lacquer craft categories and styles, such as Negoro lacquer, Kōdaiji maki-e, Kamakura-bori (carved lacquer) and Wajima-nuri (Wajima lacquerware). The placename "Jōbōji" appears in Kurokawa Mayori's 1878 publication *Kōgei shiryō* (discussed in Chapter One), marking the beginning of a series of modern iterations of the history of Jōbōji lacquer. The text, one of the earliest histories of Japanese craft prepared in advance of the 1878 Exposition Universelle held in Paris in the same year, was later republished as the "revised and supplemented edition" (zōhokaitei) in 1888 by the Department of the Imperial Household Museum (Kunaishōhakubutsukanzō). <sup>13</sup>

Throughout our examination of Jōbōji lacquer, we will interrogate several names and monikers related to Jōbōji lacquerware that at times indicate specific vessel types, and at others function as broad generalizations that obscure fine grained variations. My focus on the Jōbōji lacquer landscape provides a method of art historical analysis that can accommodate this messy entanglement of humanistic renderings of visual and material culture. Both historians and consumers of lacquerware often associate these objects with placenames—for example "Nanbu vessels." But my examination of the visual history of the modern Jōbōji lacquer landscape, characterized by a series of materializations and rematerializations across numerous media and geographies, shows that Jōbōji lacquer is no longer identifiable as any "one thing" or located in any "one place." As such, this landscape approach, nestled within ecocritical art history, opens new horizons of inquiry previously unavailable to studies focused on style or form.

This dissertation also builds from recent scholarship in the environmental humanities, particularly those studies that can be considered part of subfield of art history referred to as "ecocritical art history" or "eco art history." The field of "eco art history" encompasses multiple methods as well as theoretical and philosophical perspectives, and includes work related to the geographical/biogeological context of Asia. This project adds to this scholarship a site-specific approach to the study of landscapes and their visual-material histories. Its historical context, situated firmly in the modern period, brings to the forefront issues of canonization, traditional craft techniques, the profusion of plastic technology, and the decay of material culture, and situates them in relation to specific landscape managed by human beings.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ragué, Beatrix von, A History of Japanese Lacquerwork, trans. Annie R. de Wassermann (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976); Brommelle, N.S. and Perry Smith, eds., Urushi: Proceedings of the Urushi Study Group June 10-27, 1985 Tokyo (Marina del Rey, CA: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1988); Barbara Teri Okada, Symbol and Substance in Japanese Lacquer: Boxes from the Collection of Elaine Ehrenkranz (New York: Weatherhill Inc., 1995); Shayne Rivers, Rupert Faulkner, and Boris Pretzel, eds., East Asian Lacquer: Material Culture, Science and Conservation (London: Archetype Publications in association with the V&A, 2011).

Kurokawa Mayori, *Zōhokaitei kōgei shiryō*, (Tokyo: Kunaishō hakubutsukan zōban, 1888).
 Alan C. Braddock, "From Nature to Ecology: The Emergence of Ecocritical Art History," in J

Alan C. Braddock, "From Nature to Ecology: The Emergence of Ecocritical Art History," in John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill and Jason D. LaFontaine, eds. A Companion to American Art (Malden: Wiley & Sons, 2015), 47–67; Karl Kusserow, Alan C. Braddock, et al., Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2018); Andrew Patrizio, The Ecological Eye: Assembling an Ecocritical Art History (Manchester University Press, 2019). Though not an art historical study, Christine Marran's formulation of the "biotrope," has wide applicability to the discipline of art history. See Christine Marran, Ecology Without Culture: Aesthetics for a Toxic World (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Sugata Ray, *Climate Change and the Art of Devotion: Geoaesthetics in the Land of Krishna, 1550-1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019); De-nin D. Lee, ed., *Eco-Art History of East and Southeast Asia* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019).

The "Jōbōji lacquer landscape," as I have conceptualized and studied it, draws from historical ecology and, in particular, the writings of William Balée and Carl Erickson, who describe landscapes as places where "people and the environment can be seen as a totality—that is, as a multiscalar, diachronic, and holistic unit of study and analysis." <sup>16</sup> In this context, Balée and Erickson are addressing anthropogenic change in South America, but for our purposes, their inclusion of humans as constituents in the "landscape" effectively eliminates the notion of an external "environment" free from human activity. The Jōbōji lacquer landscape therefore includes a shifting constituency of human and nonhuman actors, including human lacquer tappers and lacquer artisans, countless microorganisms, soils, water, sunlight, and so on. The material of lacquer, produced and procured as part of this landscape, is a particularly promising locus of art historical study because of its application to modern objects that disclose the concerns, hopes, and futures of modern Japanese visual culture.

This conception of a landscape comprised of human and nonhuman constituents allows me to group together a set of objects according to their membership among a landscape rather than according to anthropocentric and humanistic categories that have previously dominated art historical scholarship. Studies that have examined Jōbōji lacquer often focus on specific types of vessels named after a specific place, clan, or person, such as "Jōbōji vessels" or "Nanbu vessels" (see Chapter One). By selecting objects for analysis based on their material linkages to the Jōbōji lacquer landscape, this dissertation overcomes the boundaries guarded by humanistic research that has sought to differentiate and analyze wares based on stylistic differences. With this landscape-focused approach, I seek to grant greater agency to the broader Jōbōji lacquer landscape within the discipline of art history, as well as provide a model of an eco art historical approach that centers complex landscapes and their significance to art despite challenging unevenness among the objects related to that landscape.

In each chapter, I have selected objects that reflect the diversity of forms, styles, and motivations of the Jōbōji lacquer communities as they negotiate shifting local, national, and international priorities. A great number of the objects discussed in this study are held in the collection of the Jōbōji History and Folk Museum, and limited details about the objects are recorded in the *Inventory of the Museum's Collection (Iwate-ken Jōbōji-machi Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan shūzō shiryō mokuroku* that was published in 1989.<sup>17</sup> Other works are held in museums in the Tōhoku region or in Tokyo. The Ninohe Lacquer Production Division (Ninohe Urushiseisanka), the Jōbōji Lacquer Production Guild (Jōbōji Urushi Seisan Kumiai), and the Japan Lacquer Tapping Technique Preservation Association (Nihon Urushikaki Gijutsu Hozonkai), provided texts and arranged for me to meet with lacquer tappers to observe work during the tapping season. Lacquerware produced in Jōbōji is addressed in numerous periodicals, popular magazines, newspaper articles, and exhibition catalogues that disclose a series of "recalibrations" that suit particular historical developments presented in the chapters.

William Baleé and Clark L. Erickson, eds, "Time and Complexity in Historical Ecology," *Time and Complexity in Historical Ecology: Studies in the Neotropical Lowlands* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 2-3.
 Jōbōji-machi Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan, *Iwate-ken Jōbōji-machi Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan shūzō shiryō mokuroku dai isshū Jōbōji no urushi kaki to Jōbōji nuri no yōgu oyobi seihin* (Ninohe-shi: Jōbōji-machi Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan, 1989).

#### Jōbōji Within Scholarship on Japanese Lacquer and Modern Art History

In terms of scholarship on Japanese lacquer, recent studies in the field of lacquer and craft history have steadily expanded to include objects beyond lauded collections, which have long dominated the field. Yotsuyanagi Kashō's *Cultural History of Lacquer (Urushi no bunka shi)* addressed this gap in 2009 by reaching beyond the treasured works held in imperial repositories such as the Shōshōin, lacquered furniture belonging to daimyō, as well as export lacquer and lacquered architecture. <sup>18</sup> In 2017, an exhibition and accompanying catalogue produced by the National Museum of Japanese History contributed to a growing body of geographically diverse examinations of Japanese lacquer. <sup>19</sup> Site-specific art histories on architectural structures coated with lacquer are few, with notable exceptions including studies of the Konjikidō at Chūsonji, Tsukubushima Shrine on Chikubushima, and Ōsaki Hachiman Shrine in Sendai. <sup>20</sup>

This dissertation is the first art historical study in the English language that covers the history of the lacquerware produced in Jōbōji. In Japanese, several scholars have researched the multi-millennia history of lacquer tree usage in the Appi River region. Scholarship written in Japanese often addresses the topic through the lens of agricultural history or the history of lacquer as a material. Kudō Kōichi's *History of Modern Iwate Lacquer (Iwate urushi no kindaishi)* published in 2011 is the most comprehensive and serious study of modern Iwate lacquer. Kudō's thorough analysis reveals an expansive network of trade and industry linked to the cultivation of lacquer trees in Iwate. For example, Kudō demonstrates how lacquer tree wood was acquired from felled trees, processed, and used to create semi-buoyant fish nets (abagi) that were shipped throughout much of the Japanese archipelago. Lacquer tree fruit was also valuable for its wax coating, which could be separated from the seeds and used to make candles decorated with pictorial designs (erōsoku). Kudō also narrates, through his examination of newspaper articles, the fluctuating and unstable evaluations of Jōbōji lacquerware at local, regional, and national craft and lacquerware exhibitions.

Art historical analysis—in particular formal analysis—that gives critical attention to aesthetic qualities such as form, composition, motifs, technique, texture, color, and materials is missing from the study of lacquer communities in the Appi River valley. This dissertation builds

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Yotsuyanagi Kashō, *Urushi no bunkashi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Ningen Bunka Kenkyū Kikō Kokuritsu Rekishiminzoku Hakubutsukan, ed., *Urushi fushigi monogatari: hito to urushi no 1200 nenshi*, 2017.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Notable exceptions include Mimi Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi: Buddhist Art and Regional Politics in Twelfth-Century Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998); Anton Schweizer, *Ōsaki Hachiman: Architecture, Materiality, and Samurai Power in Seventeenth-Century Japan*, (Berlin: Reimer, 2016); Andrew Watsky, *Chikubushima: Deploying the Sacred Arts in Momoyama Japan*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Habu Junko, ed., Rejirientona chiiki shakai Vol. 2: urushi no ki no aru keikan: Iwate-ken Ninohe-shi Jōbōji ni okeru urushikaki to hibi no kurashi (Kyoto: Sōgō Chikyū Kankyōgaku Kenkyūjo, 2019); Kudō Kōichi, Iwate urushi no kindaishi (Morioka: Kawaguchi, 2011); Misuda Yoshinobu and Shōji Chieko, "Nikki ni miru Shōwa zenki Ishigami ōya Saitō ka no seisan to seikatsu," Iwate Kenritsu Daigaku Morioka Tanki Daigakubu Kenkyūronshū dai 22 shū (2020): 45-50.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Tanaka Shōichi, *Nanbu urushi* (Tokyo: Meicho, 1981).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Kudō, 65-69.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Ibid., 43-53.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ibid., 135-43

on the work of local historians such as Kudō, in conjunction with many others who will appear throughout the chapters that follow, by acknowledging the richness of historical information presented in the visual appearance of lacquerware, and mining this history through analysis of the visual presentation of lacquered objects.

My approach to Jōbōji lacquer also builds from the work of scholars in other areas of Japanese art and modern art more broadly, which address the nexus of visual culture, modernity, and nationalism.<sup>26</sup> For example, Christine Guth demonstrates how imported systems of cultural heritage consolidated local visual cultural traditions on behalf of the modern nation-state.<sup>27</sup> We will examine similar processes throughout the chapters that follow, including the consolidation of local "folk craft" traditions (mingei) projected onto a map of Japan in the form of a folding screen produced by Serizawa Keisuke in 1941 (see Chapter Two). Others such as Kida Takuya have interrogated the modern formation of the genre of Japanese "craft" (*kōgei*) as a mode of resistance against western conceptions of fine art.<sup>28</sup> Chapter One examines this search for "Japanese" craft through investigation of national efforts to canonize the maki-e "sprinkled picture" lacquer technique—believed, at the time, to be "native" to Japan—and its "translation" onto local lacquerware forms unique to Jōbōji in the Meiji period (1868-1912). By foregrounding a regional lacquer landscape in a study of modern Japanese art, this dissertation demonstrates the localized currents that flow beneath mainstream narrative histories of craft, art, and nation.

## The Emergence of the Modern Jōbōji Lacquer Landscape

The earliest archaeological evidence of lacquer tree wood on the Japanese archipelago currently dates to 12,600 years before present.<sup>29</sup> However, the earliest known evidence of lacquer sap usage along the Appi River is a red-lacquered stone blade that was recovered from the Kamisugizawa Archaeological Site that dates to the Final Jōmon period (1,300 BCE-500 BCE) (Fig. 0.8).<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, there is a large gap in the archaeological and historical record of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Notable examples include Satō Dōshin, *Meiji kokka to kinndai bijutsu—bi no seijigaku* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1999); Alice Tseng, *The Imperial Museums of Meiji Japan: Architecture and the Art of the Nation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Kim Brandt, *Kingdom of Beauty: Mingei and the Politics of Folk Art in Imperial Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Jonathan M Reynolds, *Allegories of Time and Space: Japanese Identity in Photography and Architecture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015); Chelsea Foxwell, *Making Modern Japanese-style Painting: Kano Hōgai and the Search for Images* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Christine Guth, "Kokuhō: From Dynastic to Artistic Treasure." *Cahiers d'Extême-Asie* 9 (1996–1997): 313 – 322.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Kida Takuya, *Kōgei to nashonarizumu no kindai—"nihontekina mono" no sōshutsu* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Ningen Bunka Kenkyū Kikō Kokuritsu Rekishiminzoku Hakubutsukan, ed., *Urushi fushigi monogatari: hito to urushi no 1200 nenshi*, 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Okamura Michio, *Jōmon no urushi* (Tokyo: Dōseisha, 2010), 136-37. Archaeological excavations are ongoing, and new discoveries may indicate that lacquer sap was utilized before the late Jōmon period in and around the vicinity that is now Jōbōji. Scholars are still unsure when lacquer trees were first utilized by humans. In 2001, a corpse was discovered on the Oshima Peninsula in the former town of Minamikayabe (now part of Hakodate City) on Kakinoshima B Archaeological Site. The corpse dates to the first half of the early Jōmon period. The corpse was wearing garments made from threads coated with red lacquer. Samples taken from the corpse show that the person lived around 9,000 years ago, and therefore the lacquer can be dated to around the same time. This date is about 2,000 years older than the oldest examples from China, which were excavated from the Hemudu archaeological site in Zhejiang Province. Unfortunately, the samples from this site were lost in a fire in December of 2002 and we

lacquerware production in Jōbōji and the majority of reliable evidence dates to the Edo period (1600-1867).

Most accounts of the Jōbōji lacquer landscape begin with the purported production of lacquerware by monks who resided at the Tendai Buddhist temple Tendaiji, located atop a large hill in Jōbōji near the Appi River. The official *History of Jōbōji (Jōbōji-cho shi)*, which is a compiled history book comprised of annotated photographic reproductions of gazetteers, letters, paintings, maps, and temple plaques (*munafuda*), among other historical documents, provides an account of Tendaiji's founding. According to the *Katsura Shimizu Tendaiji engi*, which was compiled by a Tendaiji monk Kakuta Jukei (1861-1945), in 728 Emperor Shōmu ordered the Buddhist sculptor and monk named Gyōki (667-749) to journey from Nara north to Mutsu Province to quell the so-called "barbarian" Emishi, which could be achieved in part through construction of a new Buddhist temple. Scholars have since critically examined Gyōki's role in establishing numerous places of worship in seventh- and eighth-century Japan and have determined that his role as an "alms collector, temple builder, civil engineer" in establishing dozens centers of worship is largely exaggerated, even "legendary." "31"

Whether it was "legendary" or real Gyōki, the *Tendaiji engi* states that he was to search for a site with "eight peaks and eight valleys," and a summit with a flat area where a small worship hall could be built. Gyōki immediately left the capital in Nara and located a suitable site in what is now present-day Jōbōji, naming the mountain Hachiyōzan or "Mountain of Eight Leaves." According to the *engi*, it was at this location that Tendaiji was built in 728.<sup>32</sup> The *History of Jōbōji* notes that the 728 date is unlikely because the Yamato imperium did not have control of Mutsu Province until 811 at the earliest.<sup>33</sup> Although no evidence of a 728 establishment of Tendaiji has been found, the temple retains a carved Buddhist image that likely dates to the late Heian period (794-1185) and most scholars date the founding of Tendaiji to the late eleventh or early twelfth century (Fig. 0.9).<sup>34</sup>

Despite historical evidence that points to a late eleventh-century establishment of Tendaiji, ephemera—including booklets available at tourist sites in and around Jōbōji today—suggest that the tradition now referred to as "Jōbōji lacquerware" began when the monks of Tendaiji lacquered their own tableware using local materials.<sup>35</sup> These may have been modest low

cannot confirm this use of lacquer. However, Yotsuyanagi asserts that lacquer was likely used in these garments based on photographs of the samples. See Yotsuyanagi, 4-5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Janet R. Goodwin, "Building Bridges and Saving Souls. The Fruits of Evangelism in Medieval Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 44, no. 2 (1989): 140-41; Yoshida, Kazuhiko, "Revisioning Religion in Ancient Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 30, no. 1/2 (2003): 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Hosoi Kazuyu, and Jōbōji-chō shi hensaniinkai, eds., *Jōbōji-chō shi gekan* (Jōbōji: Jōbōji-machi, 1998), 3-4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Hosoi Kazuyu, and Jōbōji-chō shi hensaniinkai, *Jōbōji-chō shi gekan*, 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> According the *engi*, Gyōki locates a large *katsura* tree, has the tree cut down, and carves the Shō Kannon-zō on the tenth day of the seventh month of 728. See Hosoi Kazuyu, and Jōbōji-chō shi hensaniinkai, *Jōbōji-chō shi gekan*, 5. However, it is noted in *Jōbōji-chō shi* that the image dates to the eleventh century based on other carved Buddhist icons in a similar style known as "hatchet carving" (*natabori*) style. For deeper discussion of the *natabori* technique in Tōhoku, see Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi: Buddhist Art and Regional Politics in Twelfth-Century Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998), 45-46. The *engi* also narrates that Tendaiji became a provincial temple established by the state (*kokubunji*) in 737, which is also not likely because the edict regarding provincial temples was not issued until 741, and many of the provincial temples were not completed until 770. See Hosoi Kazuyu, and Jōbōji-chō shi hensaniinkai, *Jōbōji-cho shi gekan*, 5-7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> For example, one booklet titled "Okunanbu urushimonogatari" published by the *Japan Heritage Okunanbu Tale* of *Lacquer Council* (Nihon isan okunanbu urushimonogatari suishin kyōgikai) suggests the beginning of Appi River lacquer culture begins around 728 when Tendai was supposedly established.

tables (*oyama zen*) and were accompanied by lacquered sets of three bowls (*mittsu wan*), as reflected in modern examples (Fig. 0.10). Each vessel is of a different size, which allows them to nest inside one another and form a compact stack for easy storage. The low tables (*zen*) can be stacked on top of one another as well. Painted with red and black lacquer, these unadorned wares appear to be designed for everyday sustained use. Typically, the largest bowl was used for cereals or rice, the medium-sized bowl for soup, and the smallest for pickled foods. The many examples of *oyama zen* and *mittsu wan* donated to local museums suggest this type of lacquerware appears to have been an important category of Jōbōji lacquer production despite the unlikely origin story that the monks of Tendaiji began this tradition in 728.

Indications of lacquer tapping, as well as wax harvesting from the fruits of the lacquer trees in the Appi River region, are found in early modern documents. A letter written by Nanbu Toshinao—second chief of the Nanbu (Morioka) clan who controlled the Appi River valley from 1599 to 1632—addressed to a chief retainer urges the use of the "recuperative lacquer tapping technique" (*yōjōgaki*). <sup>36</sup> Scholar of Iwate lacquer, Kudō Kōichi, argues that the Nanbu clan leaders sought to utilize the recuperative tapping technique, which involved inserting shallow incisions in the lacquer tree that cause minimal harm and allow the tree to continue producing fruit over successive years. The fruits could be harvested and stripped of their wax and used to produce candles before the electrification of modern Japan. Further, the diary of a Nanbu clan chief retainer that dates to 1645 indicates that lacquer-related goods were designated as "prohibited items" (*gokinseihin*), demonstrating that lacquer sap, substrates, lacquer wax, and lacquered vessels decorated with gold leaf (*hakuwan*) could not leave the territory of the clan without permission. The four goods designated as *gokinseihin* suggest that a robust lacquerware producing network existed in the Iwate area during the early Edo period.<sup>37</sup>

Scholars have noted that Nanbu clan surveys related to lacquer dating from 1716 to 1736 record the names of "lacquerware substrate producing towns," "lacquer sap producing towns," and "lacquerware producing towns," throughout the Appi River valley. This apparent division of labor allowed communities to produce large quantities of lacquerware along the Appi River in the eighteenth century.<sup>38</sup> Beechwood substrates used for lacquerware production were available in the broader Appi River area, and it was rare for one region have both an abundance of lacquer trees and beech trees necessary to make robust substrates.<sup>39</sup>

During the final years of the Edo period and the first years of Meiji, lacquer tapping shifted significantly in technique when lacquer tappers from Echizen (present-day Fukui Prefecture) traveled to northern Iwate for seasonal work as tappers. They brought with them lacquer tapping tools used not for the recuperative tapping technique practiced in the Edo period under the Nanbu clan, but the "tap and kill" technique (*koroshigaki*). Unlike the recuperative tapping technique, the tap and kill technique involves aggressively tapping the lacquer tree beginning in June and finally girdling and killing the tree at the end of the tapping season in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> The document is held by the Iwate Prefecture Board of Education (Iwate-ken Kyōikuiinkai) and is registered as 岩手県戦国期文書 I. See Hosoi Kazuyu, and Jōbōji-chō shi hensaniinkai, *Jōbōji-cho shi jōkan*, 479 and Kudō, 4-5. After the electrification of Japan in the Meiji period, the *yōjōgaki* technique was replaced with the "tap and kill" technique (*koroshigaki*), which involves killing the lacquer tree in just one season and eliminates the opportunity to harvest wax from the fruit of the tree over successive years.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Kudō, 6-7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Shinkai Hikaru, *Edo jidai no urushi-e zara* (Tokyo: Bungeisha, 2022), 253.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Shinkai, 253.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Kudō, 34-39.

October. With this new technique, higher yields of lacquer could be tapped. Tapped trees are then cut down, and new saplings will often emerge from the roots of the killed tree, sometimes several feet from the original location of the tree. The tap and kill technique was widely adopted throughout the Meiji period and has endured to the present. It is now the standard tapping technique used in Jōbōji and is simply referred to as "lacquer tapping" (*urushikaki*) (Fig. 0.11). Tap and kill is taught to new lacquer tappers entering the industry, often through short apprenticeships and through a small number of texts recently published by Ninohe City that explain the tapping process.<sup>41</sup>

An enduring threat to the lacquer tapping industry appeared in the 1950s: mass-produced plastics. A graph created by Hayashi Masahide illustrates how the influx of plastic wares, which has continued globally to the present, nearly decimated the lacquer industry beginning in 1951 by reducing demand for the labor-intensive process of traditional lacquer tapping (Fig. 0.12).<sup>42</sup> The strain on the Japanese lacguer industry was exacerbated by the increase of imported lacguer from China. In 1951, approximately 33,000 kilograms (nearly 73,000 pounds) of lacquer were produced in Japan, and approximately fifteen percent of that was tapped in Iwate. The remaining 85 percent was produced by a large number of other sites in Japan, including Daigō in Ibaraki Prefecture. The Nagasaki Flag incident of 1958 prompted a trade embargo between Japan and China that boosted demand for Japanese lacquer. However, demand for lacquer plummeted again once trade resumed with China, and by 1962 less than 10,000 kilograms of lacquer were produced in Japan.<sup>43</sup> Throughout the 2000s, that number would hover below 2,000 kilograms of lacquer produced annually. Hayashi's graph reveals that despite the overall decline of lacquer production that has occurred since the 1950s, the percentage of total domestically produced lacquer procured from Iwate has risen from approximately fifteen percent in 1951 to seventythree percent in 2016. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, in the year 2021 the northern region of Iwate Prefecture produced eighty-two percent of the raw lacquer consumed in Japan.44

Today, the Jōbōji lacquer landscape consists largely of small-scale plantations of lacquer trees owned by a combination of local stakeholders. A 2022 distribution map created by the Jōbōji Lacquer Production Division of Ninohe City illustrates the locations of small-scale lacquer tree plantations visible as clusters of dots on the map (Fig. 0.13). Most of the plantation locations are near the center of the map within the administrative boundaries of Ninohe City. However, the distribution map discloses locations of lacquer trees found outside the jurisdiction of Ninohe City and Jōbōji. There are several significant plantations in the neighboring town of Ichinohe, as well as some even farther afield in the village of Kunohe to the east. As we will see in the Epilogue, the contemporary Jōbōji landscape extends beyond the administrative boundaries of Ninohe City and the town of Jōbōji. This distribution map reveals that the lacquer tree landscape does not readily conform to the political boundaries of cities and towns. The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Nihon Urushikaki Gijutsu Hozonkai, *Ki o tsukuri urushi o kaku: Suzuki Kenji no waza* (Ninohe, Iwate Prefecture: Japan Lacquer Harvesting Technique Preservation Association, 2014); Iwate-ken Ninohe-shi, *Jōbōji urushikaki gijutsu no denshō: Kudō Takeo no waza* (Jōbōji-machi: Iwate-ken Ninohe-shi Jōbōji urushi seisanka 2020).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Hayashi Masahide, "Iwate-ken hokubu chihō no nōka ga urushi shokusai o sentakushita yōin," *Nihon ringakkaishi* 101 (2019): 329.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Kudō, *Iwate urushi no kindaishi*, 234-35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Tabata Masanobu, ed., "Washokubunka o irodoru 'urushi' no Sekai."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> The abrupt boundaries on the west and north sides of Ninohe at the borders Takko and Sannohe suggest that this survey did not include examination of these jurisdictions.

Jōbōji lacquer landscape continues to expand, contract, and scatter throughout the modern period, similar to the unevenness of lacquerware applications addressed in the chapters that follow.

#### **Outline of Chapters**

What objects comprise the visual history of modern Jōbōji lacquer? How might a history of objects procured from the Jōbōji lacquer landscape differ from studies that prioritize human authorship or stylistic continuity among objects? To address such questions, this dissertation foregrounds specific case studies and watershed moments in the bio-visual history of modern Jōbōji lacquer. The identification and analysis of such watershed moments required me to draw upon diverse source materials that capture the "messiness" of the modern history of Jōbōji lacquer. In addition to the diversity of visual materials—sake ewers, tableware, abstract sculptural forms, and an architectural gate—supporting historical materials consist of design journals, art magazines, newspaper articles, local newsletters, museum registers, and family archives and photographs. The landscape-centered approach also drove me to engage with non-textual sources that included interviews with local sap collectors, which provided critical insight into the embodied knowledge required to procure Jōbōji lacquer, the handmade processes of preparing tapping tools, and the motivations of lacquer tappers to complete their work.

These diverse source materials shaped the modes of analysis and writing style of each chapter so that this dissertation might be understood to consist of three "acts" in a theater production with an additional Epilogue that contextualizes the current moment of the Jōbōji lacquer landscape through an analyzed interview with a working lacquer tapper. These different modes of analysis—shifting, for example, between formal analysis of lacquerware and the interview with a lacquer tapper—capture the unevenness of the Jōbōji lacquer landscape archive, in ways that other studies focused on conventional archives might overlook.

Chapter One examines lacquerware produced in the Meiji and Taisho periods (1868-1926). Craft production in the Meiji period was impacted by Japan's increased participation in International Expositions, dynamic shifts in consumption, and the systemization of cultural objects displayed in museums. These changes impacted craft production conditionally as lacquer artisans drew upon pre-existing local craft histories, materials, technologies, and markets. Focusing on the ways in which local lacquer artisans working in Jōbōji adapted the maki-e or "sprinkled picture" technique to local forms, I argue that some examples of Meiji period Jōbōji lacquerware reveal a strained alignment with maki-e designs that were part of a newly established canon of Japanese lacquer craft. This chapter also engages with Kurokawa Mayori's 1888 seminal history of Japanese craft, *Kōgei Shiryō*, to examine how Jōbōji lacquer was consolidated under monikers such as "Nanbu lacquerware" that were more legible to audiences outside of Iwate.

In Chapter Two, I trace Jōbōji lacquerware as it appears within the magazines, periodicals, and exhibitions formulated by advocates of the Folk Crafts Movement (Mingei Undō) throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Led by Yanagi Muneyoshi, the writings and exhibitions produced by the Folk Crafts Movement redefined an aesthetic criterion that aligned with local traditions of handmade craft throughout the Japanese archipelago, Okinawa, and Korea. I demonstrate how the aesthetic qualities of Jōbōji lacquer—in particular the simple designs, practicality, and the lively technique of *urushi-e* (lacquer pictures)—embodied Yanagi's ideals of

the "People's Art" and effectively elevated the aesthetic value of Jōbōji lacquerware. I also examine how lacquer tapping tools, presented on the cover of a 1941 issue of *Mingei* magazine, functioned as a testament to the intimate relationship between Iwate lacquer craft and local lacquer tree environments.

Chapter Three examines the work of lacquer artist Koseki Rokuhei (1918-2011) after the Second World War. Koseki was trained to design and produce fine lacquerware in maki-e and he spent much of his life using Jōbōji lacquer to create vessels and sculptural works in lacquer that blur boundaries between "art" (bijutsu) and "craft" (kōgei). I show that, by utilizing traditional lacquer techniques such as maki-e and mother-of-pearl inlay (raden) to design modern works of abstraction, Koseki forces viewers to engage with a complex interplay between local materials and globalized visual forms. Koseki centered the technical and material possibilities of Japanese lacquer to create works that communicate compelling, multivalent expressions of place. As such, Koseki's work forces us to reconsider how eco-local contexts and histories inform the visual and material possibilities of global modern art. Koseki's concern for the future of the lacquer tree population in Jōbōji, reflected in his participation in ceremonial plantings as the Director of the Japan Lacquer Craft Association, links his role as an artist to the materiality of contemporary Japanese art.

The Epilogue examines the use of Jōbōji lacquer in the restoration of the Yōmeimon at Nikkō Tōshōgū. Designated as a National Treasure and UNESCO World Heritage Site, the use of Jōbōji lacquer points to the growing sense of national pride associated with the tapping of "authentic" Japanese lacquer. I also examine the founding of the Japan Lacquer Tapping Technique Preservation Association in 1996 and the formal branding of "Jōbōji lacquer" in 2008 using criteria to certify the lacquer quality. I consider the future of the Jōbōji lacquer landscape, as well, which is now firmly planted within the realm of cultural heritage preservation and restoration.

#### **Chapter One**

## Make it Maki-e, Make it Gold: The Emergence of Modern Jōbōji Lacquer

On March 29,1908, the *Iwate Mainichi* newspaper published the "Prospectus of the Nanbu Lacquerware Revival Association" (Nanbu shikki shinkōkai shuisho). The Association, named after the Nanbu warrior house of the late sixteenth century—also referred to as the Morioka clan—was located in Arazawa Village along the Appi River south of Jōbōji. The Prospectus opens with:

Since time immemorial, our [Japanese] craftsmanship has distinguished itself. Still, in recent times, in the age of civilization and enlightenment, it is our lacquerware production that falls short of the science-based, fine craftsmanship of Europeans and Americans who boast of their wares. We also hear that the name of our country is called "Japan" by foreigners based on our lacquerware production. It is favorable to wish to develop the lacquerware industry that should represent the name of the country.<sup>46</sup>

Among the sentiments expressed in the opening lines of the Prospectus, there is a sense of deep anxiety regarding the reputation of Japanese craft production on the international stage, specifically in relation to the International Expositions and World's Fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Japan's participation in International Expositions—particularly the 1878 Exhibition Universelle in Paris and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago—presented Japanese government officials, artists, and citizens with technologies and products of other nations, which prompted the self-reflexive establishment of organizations such as the Nanbu Lacquerware Revival Association. The Nanbu Association's Prospectus suggests that the global scale of the fairs also ramified local spaces, and we might understand these rippling effects of the fairs as a "scalar" phenomenon in a transnational system, in which lacquer as material and visual craft was circulated, re-signified, and tangled with the nation state and modernity. This chapter investigates such scaled efforts—at the local, national, and international levels—to elevate local lacquer production within a relatively peripheral community found along the Appi River in northern Iwate Prefecture.

The Nanbu Association's Prospectus exemplifies the responses of local actors within the communities of the Appi River valley during the Meiji and Taisho periods to position Jōbōji

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> "Nanbu Shikki Shinkōkai Shuisho," *Iwate Mainichi*, March 29, 1908. Kudō Kōichi quotes the Prospectus in full in *Iwate urushi no kindaishi*, (Morioka: Kawaguchi, 2011), 172-4. Evidence that Europeans referred to lacquerware imported from Japan simply as "Japan" has yet to be confirmed, although it is often referenced in Japanese scholarship that durable lacquerware with ornate maki-e designs collected in Europe were often associated with Japan. There is, however, a technique referred to as "Japanning," which involves concocting a varnish out of materials other than the sap of the East Asian lacquer tree and applying it to substrates, which was common practice in Europe in the seventeenth century. Textual evidence exists that refers to these "Japanned" items as "Japan" or "Japan-work," indicating that they are coated with a concocted varnish to imitate lacquerwares coated with sap from the East Asian lacquer tree and produced in Japan. A late seventeenth-century text widely circulated in Europe details the Japanning process and uses terms such as "Japan" and "Japan-work" to refer to these wares. See, George Parker, and John Stalker, *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing* (Oxford: Printed by the authors, 1688). Scholar of Japanese lacquer, Yotsuyanagi Kashō, asserts that "authentic" lacquer should be referred to as "urushi"—the Japanese term for "lacquer" to avoid any confusion about the materials used in lacquering. See Yotsuyanagi, 3.

lacquer within a pantheon of modern nations in the context of increasing globalization. The founding members assigned to Japanese craft excellence an ambiguous origin, noting its existence since "time immemorial" (*korai*). Despite the long history of lacquerware in Japan, these Appi River lacquer communities felt compelled to respond to a new age of "civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika*) that challenged the ability of traditional craft to compete with objects produced by European and North American nations. Even so, the authors of the Nanbu Association's Prospectus positioned lacquerware itself as congruent with the nation of Japan and therefore essential to the organized effort to "develop" (*hattatsu*) the industry to adequately represent the nation on the international stage.<sup>47</sup>

This chapter examines the efforts of modern lacquer artisans, craft educators, and political officials to address—with varying levels of success—a perceived inferiority of Japanese lacquer craft, a sense of being "overtaken" or "suppressed" by modernization and Eurocentric, transnational power relations and in turn a response of resilience at the local level. All chapters in this dissertation explore the entanglement of local, national, transnational and global priorities. In Chapter One I focus on the multidirectional, dialectical formation of modern Jōbōji lacquer as it calibrates to the movement of lacquer artisans, lacquerware designs and techniques, and to the shifting historical narratives of lacquerware written at the end of the nineteenth century. In the paragraphs that follow, we will see efforts to "revive" premodern and early modern modes of lacquerware through the establishment of training centers, as demonstrated by the Nanbu Lacquerware Revival Association. Equally important was the incorporation and adaptation of lacquering techniques intriguing to European and American audiences, consumers, and collectors, in particular the maki-e technique, which is a method of adorning lacquered objects by sprinkling them with precious metallic dusts. 48

As we will see, increased institutionalization of lacquer craft production at the national, regional, and local levels pressed disparate lacquer traditions into strained alignment as local lacquer communities bent toward the priorities of a widening craft market, prestigious art schools, and International Expositions and World's Fairs throughout the Meiji (1868-1911) and Taisho (1912-26) periods. This complex alignment was not unique to lacquerware, however. In her study of Japanese painter Kano Hōgai (1828-1888), Chelsea Foxwell notes that Hōgai was only one of many figures negotiating "conflicting domestic and international images of Japan."<sup>49</sup>

At the same time that Meiji government officials were busy selecting lacquered objects with maki-e and mother-of-pearl inlay (*raden*) for international exhibition and sale, the lacquer communities along the Appi River in northern Iwate began to meld their pre-existing knowledge and local materials with a rapidly crystallizing national canon of maki-e lacquerware fit for

<sup>49</sup> Foxwell, 10.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> We should note that the tendency to draw upon the traditional arts as a response to the specific forces felt in modernity—the loss of "handmade" craft, increased industrialization, and globalized systems of capital exchange—was not limited to Japan. See, for example Larry D. Lutchmansingh's examination of King René's Honeymoon Cabinet (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London), designed by John P. Seddon and painted by William Morris, in which he describes how "the very principle of richly painted furniture…alluded to the traditional practice

that employed decorative painting on useful objects before the emergence of autonomous easel painting." Larry D. Lutchmansingh, "The British Arts and Crafts Workshop between Tradition and Reform" *Studies in the History of Art* 38 (1993): 186.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> See, for example, the lacquer collection of Charles A. Greenfield held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Andrew J. Pekarik, *Japanese Lacquer*, 1600-1900: Selections from the Charles A. Greenfield Collection (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980).

international display and commerce. The final section of this chapter examines how Kurokawa Mayori's authoritative history of Japanese craft, *Kōgei Shiryo*—published in 1878 in preparation for Japan's participation in the Exposition Universelle held in Paris in the same year—concealed the significance of the modern Jōbōji lacquer landscape in favor of strengthening narratives of lacquerware associated with the premodern Northern Fujiwara and the Nanbu warrior house. <sup>50</sup>

## Maki-e as an "Intrinsic" National Art of Modern Japan

Crucial to this chapter is the adoption in Appi River valley lacquer communities of the maki-e technique, which came into more frequent use in Jōbōji during the Meiji period. For example, a Meiji-period lacquered one-spouted sake vessel, referred to in Jōbōji as a *hiage*, is adorned with a maki-e design depicting a crane spreading its wings over a cluster of pine saplings (Figs. 1.1-4). These types of one-spouted vessels would typically be used to distribute a viscous variety of sake known as *doburoku*. Standing at 15.5 centimeters in height and twenty-two centimeters in diameter, the substantial vessel would have exuded a sense of prominence among various accompanying serving implements.<sup>51</sup> On the reverse side, a turtle is represented with an auspiciously long tail and pointed ears and a stalk of bamboo that extends upward alongside the turtle.

The maki-e technique lies at the center of this story of modern Jōbōji lacquer and its dialectical calibration to the local, regional, and national priorities. As a technique, maki-e allows lacquer artisans to create pictorial designs using precious materials such as gold and silver dust (maki-e-fun). First, the artisan applies layers of lacquer—usually pigmented black with pine soot—to a substrate to create a dark background. Once these initial layers have hardened, the maki-e artisan will brush a design in lacquer on top of the dark background. While all, or a portion of, the brushed lacquer design is still wet, gold or silver dust is applied—often through a small pipe—to the wet lacquer. Excess metal dust is then removed, and the lacquer is hardened once again. During the hardening process, the gold and silver dust adheres strongly to the lacquer and the design becomes part of the object's surface. Additional layers of transparent lacquer can be applied on top of the newly decorated surface and these layers can be polished or abraded to complete the technique. There are numerous variations of the maki-e technique, and artisans can vary both the size and concentration of gold and silver dust particles to create gradients and shading (makibokashi), patterns, and pictorial elements, or even an entire background.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Kurokawa Mayori, 2. See also, Kurokawa Mayori and Maeda Yasuji, *Zōhokaitei Kōgei Shiryō*, Tōyō Bunko 254 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1976), 208-9.

Jōbōji-machi Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan, *Iwate-ken Jōbōji-machi Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan shūzō shiryō mokuroku dai isshū Jōbōji no urushi kaki to Jōbōji nuri no yōgu oyobi seihin* (Ninohe-shi: Jōbōji-machi Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan, 1989), 89. The maki-e *hiage* was donated by a Satō Miyo to the Jōbōji History and Folk Museum (*Jōbōji-machi Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan*) in the Town of Jōbōji in 1981. Satō lived in the Erosu area of Jōbōji, located in the mountains across the Appi River from Tendaiji. Given the numerous examples of lacquered *hiage* in this locality, it is likely that this ware was produced and used in the Jōbōji area. Although the precise date of this vessel is unknown, the pictorial quality of the designs in the lacquering technique known as maki-e, or "sprinkled picture," indicates that this vessel likely dates to the Meiji period.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> This is a cursory explanation of the maki-e technique, which contains numerous variations including *takamaki-e*, *hiramaki-e*, *togidashimaki-e*, among others. There are also numerous varieties of metal powders that can be used, each for a specific desired visual effect. For a description of various lacquering techniques, including twenty-three maki-e techniques, see Komaba Makiko, Nagata Tomoyo, et. al., *Nihon no shikkōgihō—zairyou no kihon yōgo* 

When compared with another Meiji period *hiage* produced in Jōbōji that resemble wares produced in the preceding Edo period (1600-1867), we can clearly observe shifts in aesthetic priorities. Like the black lacquered vessel with the maki-e design, the body of a second spouted vessel stands prominently atop a substantial foot, with a wide spout extending confidently into space and expanding the object's profile (Fig. 1.5). Unlike the maki-e design, which prioritized formulaic depiction of motifs and symbols associated with longevity and prosperity—the crane, turtle, and pine—this *hiage* is characterized by geometric patterns painted in a red-orange pigmented lacquer that encircles the pouring spout. The lacquer artisan painted small lines that form a braid-like pattern directly below the spout. Two thick lines of orange lacquer flank the braid-pattern, and the outermost line is elaborated with lobed, circular, cloud-like forms that balloon out across the black-lacquered body of the vessel.

The marked differences in these two *hiage* demonstrate one of two creative responses to the convulsive forces of a rapidly modernizing Japan. Lacquer artisans situated along the Appi River, likely inexperienced with the maki-e technique, experimented with maki-e designs in response to burgeoning narratives of its "intrinsic" beauty, presented on the global stages of World Expositions, World's Fairs, and international trade. As we will see, evidence of a Meiji period lacquer training program along the Appi River suggests that through the adoption of maki-e designs, local members of the lacquer communities sought to elevate the value of Iwate lacquerware. A second modern adaptation made to Jōbōji lacquer communities was repeatedly "rebranding" Iwate lacquerware to align them with the historic Nanbu clan and even the Northern Fujiwara of the twelfth century.

In Meiji-period Japan, maki-e was by no means a new technique, and neither were the crane and turtle designs seen on the Jōbōji maki-e *hiage* (Figs. 1.1-4). For example, a well-known example of Heian period maki-e that dates to the eighth century is held in the Imperial collections of the Shōsōin.<sup>53</sup> As maki-e scholar Toshikatsu Nakasato notes, early examples of maki-e in Japan date to the eighth and ninth centuries and are generally referred to as "early maki-e."<sup>54</sup> Heian-period lacquerware are similarly lauded in histories of Japanese art, and their status as culturally significant objects is indicated by their presence in Imperial collections, National Museum Collections, Important Cultural Property and National Treasure designations. As discussed below, Meiji- and Taisho-period lacquer artisans and officials—notably the esteemed maki-e artisan Rokkaku Shisui (1867-1950)—argued that maki-e was a technique that distinguishes Japan not only from other Asian countries but from the rest of the world.

Japanese officials also sent maki-e wares to International Exhibitions throughout the Meiji and Taisho periods, even establishing the Japan Maki-e Limited Partnership Company (*Nihon maki-e gōshigaisha*) to promote production of maki-e wares ahead of the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. This emphasis on production and exhibition of maki-e suggests that lacquer artisans and historians were incorporated into a national art system and regime that sought to leverage the arts in transnational relations in the late nineteenth century. We should also note that the late nineteenth century was steeped in the "age of

(Essential Bilingual Glossary of Japanese Urushi (Lacquer) Materials and Techniques) (Tokyo: Mejiro Institute of Urushi Research and Restoration, 2020).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Although the long history of maki-e is beyond the scope of this chapter, we should note that early examples of maki-e in Japan are held in collections with great political and historical import. See Ningen Bunka Kenkyū Kikō Kokuritsu Rekishiminzoku Hakubutsukan, ed., 68.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

imperialism" punctuated by the promulgation of the Japanese constitution in 1889 that situated the emperor as the absolute monarch, the Japanese victory in the First Sino-Japanese war from 1894-95, and later the first victory of an Asian nation over a European power in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. It was within this expanding age of imperialism that the arts, including maki-e lacquer, were economically and politically advantageous in positioning Japan among a new world order that saw increased opportunities and threats to the histories and futures of Japanese craft. <sup>55</sup>

Despite the domination of maki-e within aesthetic hierarchies of modern craft production, the technique was not widely employed in Jōbōji prior to the Meiji period. In fact, Meiji-period use of maki-e deviated significantly from wares that date to the preceding Edo period that made use of the *urushi-e* technique. Pre-Meiji lacquerware produced along the Appi River, including Jōbōji, fell into three main categories: simple red and black vessels with no additional adornment; objects with *urushi-e* or "lacquer pictures" painted with pigmented lacquer; and variations of Nanbu-type vessels, including the "Jōbōji vessels" (Jōbōji-wan) and "Hidehira vessels" (Hidehira-wan) with black and red lacquer and applied gold leaf. Although the production of these wares continued into the Meiji period, artisans working along the Appi River learned and absorbed maki-e designs and techniques, suggesting a desire to align their wares more closely with modes of lacquer design and technique that received national and international recognition.

Alongside the drive to adopt maki-e designs and techniques, local political leaders and artisans sought to reframe Jōbōji lacquer in terms that were more legible to audiences outside of the immediate region. For example, in this chapter we will see how Kurokawa Mayori, in his seminal 1878 text *Kōgei Shiryo*, refers to lacquerware produced along the Appi River region as "Nanbu vessels" (Nanbu-wan) in reference to the long-standing Nanbu clan that dominated a large swath of northeastern Japan from 1590 to 1868. Rather than using the relatively obscure name of "Jōbōji," local officials chose monikers that linked Meiji and Taisho lacquer craft traditions to the long-standing Nanbu family and the Northern Fujiwara.

Despite these shifts in aesthetic priorities, artisans working in Jōbōji continued producing *urushi-e* wares much as they did during the Edo period. The technique known as "lacquer pictures" or *urushi-e*, discussed below in relation to maki-e, required local lacquer artisans to use pigmented lacquer to brush simple designs on small, shallow dishes and vessels.<sup>56</sup> In fact, according to the Taisho period lacquerware sales ledgers that record sales of wares beginning in 1918, the Satō Setsurō family of Jōbōji sold thousands of red- and black-lacquered bowls without any maki-e adornment.<sup>57</sup> When put in conversation with discourse on lacquer that was circulating at the national level, such as Kurokawa's *Kōgei Shiryō*, these local historical records

<sup>55</sup> Of the Japanese lacquerware sent for exhibition at the 1900 Paris Exposition, virtually all the wares were makie or lacquer with mother-of-pearl inlay (*raden*).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Hikaru Shinkai, graduate of Tokyo University of the Arts and formerly Professor Emeritus at Tokyo Gakugei University, published three well-illustrated volumes addressing lacquerware and providing numerous examples of Jōbōji *urushi-e*. Shinkai was a scholar-teacher of lacquer craft and amassed his own collection of *urushi-e*, some of which has been moved to the National Museum of Japanese History in Sakura, Chiba. See, Shinkai Hikaru, *Edo jidai no urushi-e zara* (Tokyo: Bungeisha, 2022). Many examples of wares with *urushi-e* designs are held at the Jōbōji History and Folk Museum.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Ninohe Shiritsu Jōbōji Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan, *Ninohe shiritsu Jōbōji Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan chōsa hōkoku dai ni shū Ninohe-shi Jōbōji-machi Ōshimizu—Satō Setsurō-ke urushi kankei shiryō chōsa hōkoku* (Ninohe: Ninohe Shiritsu Jōbōji Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan, 2016).

demonstrate tensions between conservative adherence to existing methods and styles, as well as expedient adoption of the maki-e technique.

To better understand why and how lacquer artisans working along the Appi River adopted maki-e designs into their work, it is necessary to examine the broader context of lacquer production in the Meiji period and the economies of value that comprise that context. As we will see, maki-e occupied, and continues to occupy, a prime position at the top of hierarchical value systems that dominated the institutionalization of the visual world. The establishment of the system of the Artists to the Imperial Household, the display of Japanese visual materials at the International Expositions, and the development of classification systems in museums and art schools regulated and enforced the contours of value within lacquer production. Pedigreed lacquer artisans advocated for the overwhelming representation of maki-e in the lacquer arts, and thus sought to command the trajectory of future lacquerware production. A brief examination of maki-e production within the broader political, social, and economic contexts illuminates the efforts of Iwate lacquer communities as they strained to more fully participate in national and international market of lacquerware production. In other words, lacquer art became one of the many spaces in which "Japanese art" became modern.

The varied genres, formats, and materials that comprise the category of objects we now refer to as "Japanese art" posed an unwieldly problem for Meiji officials who sought to systematize a pantheon of visual-cultural materials in the late nineteenth century. Christine Guth argues that Meiji officials sought to both classify Japanese objects according to European classification systems as well as to promote traditional Japanese craft production.<sup>58</sup> Guth cites the 1872 founding of the Museum Bureau (Hakubutsukyoku)—a team of connoisseurs, photographers, and artists that "carried out a province by province survey of the nation's antiquities" under the direction of Machida Hisanari (1838-1897)—as one example of the national effort to survey and document objects that would eventually comprise modern Imperial and National Museum collections.<sup>59</sup> As Guth notes, international exhibitions in Vienna in 1873, Philadelphia in 1876, and Paris in 1878, solidified and promoted this understanding of the museum and the objects it was to house.<sup>60</sup>

We may ask in turn: When the Museum Bureau selected lacquerware to present on an international stage, what types of wares were deemed both impressive as art and culturally legible to international audiences? This was the task of Meiji officials charged with the responsibility of commissioning wares to be sent to international exhibitions, and in terms of lacquer, maki-e works were overwhelmingly selected for their capacity to fulfill these two criteria. This was especially notable in the case of the Columbian Exposition of 1893, named to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas.

This World's Columbian Exposition brought to Chicago a vast quantity of Japanese objects for display and sale. The Exposition demonstrated the newly embraced efforts and enthusiasm of the Meiji government to identify and promote craft objects that would present to a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Christine Guth, "Kokuhō: From Dynastic to Artistic Treasure." *Cahiers d'Extême-Asie* 9 (1996–1997): 313 – 322.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Guth, 315-16. Machida was sent by the Satsuma domain to study in London 1866.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> A compilation of craft designs known as the *Onchizuroku* attests to the sweeping effort of Meiji officials to systematize Japanese craft production for successful aesthetic evaluation overseas. The *Onchizuroku* was used to produce objects that were displayed in international exhibitions held throughout the end of the nineteenth century. See Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, *Meiji dezain no tanjō: chōsa kenkyū hōkokusho "Onchizuroku,"* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1997).

global audience a curated version of Japan that was both commercially and politically favorable. Most if not all the works included in the Japanese display were produced in 1892 or 1893 expressly for the purpose of the Exposition, rather than existing in museums and private collections in Japan as heirloom works. Many of the works were returned to Japan and are now housed in the collections of the Tokyo National Museum.<sup>61</sup>

Exhibition selections, both domestic and international, favored the more intricate layering of precious materials found in maki-e designs. In the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, the list of submitted lacquerware consisted primarily of maki-e wares. 62 Among these were maki-e works on standing plaques that emphasized the abilities of Japanese artisans to depict landscapes with a foreground, middle ground, and background using the medium of lacquer. One such example was a wood plaque produced by the renowned maki-e artist Ikeda Taishin (1825-1903), who had studied under esteemed lacquer artist Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891). Ikeda was appointed Artist for the Imperial Household for his ability to produce high quality maki-e designs that won awards overseas, including the lacquered plaque exhibited at the 1893 Exposition in Chicago (Fig. 1.6). The plaque depicts a view of the Katase shoreline and the island of Enoshima. A round, verdant landmass of Enoshima is centered in the composition, while a prominent Mount Fuji rises through thin strands of clouds. Travelers of all ages traverse the thin strip of land connecting Enoshima to the mainland. Children are crouched in play and the elderly hold walking canes as they proceed across damp sand toward the Enoshima Shrine complex in the middle of the mountain-island. Concentric rings of gentle waves, depicted in gold, glide toward the shore and transform into a silvery blue color as they curl over themselves and break against the beach. Sailboats dot the horizon and several skiffs bob peacefully in shallow water close to the island. Although Ikeda worked in lacquer and precious metals, the pictorial quality of his work in lacquer rivals the composition and detail of a finely crafted woodblock print or scenic landscape painting.

On this plaque, Ikeda used the raised lacquer technique, *takamaki-e*, to give texture to the craggy surface of the island's sharply descending cliffs; he used numerous metals to distinguish pine tree and camphor trees that crowd the island to create a sense of verdant abundance. The slender strip of land, threatened by ocean on both sides, is precarious, yet tantalizing. Behind the detailed portrait of Enoshima, the presence of Mount Fuji would have assured any viewer in Chicago that they were indeed looking at a picture of Japan.

Lacquered objects, among Japanese paintings, ceramics, metalworks, and other works on display at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, performed the national task of managing an image—a Japanese "brand" of craft, skill, and aesthetic excellence. Historian of modern Japanese art Chelsea Foxwell describes the "double duty" many of these objects performed, characterizing them as "attempts to demonstrate Japan's technical sophistication while insisting on East Asian or Japanese cultural distinctness" Ikeda's maki-e lacquered plaque does just that: it conveys a form of Japanese cultural distinctiveness through the trifecta of Japanese topography, the medium of lacquer, and the sophisticated skill of an elite maki-e artisan. Depictions of Mount Fuji in a number of media, including woodblock prints and cloisonné,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, *Umi o watatta Meiji no bijutsu: saiken! 1893-nen Shikago Koronbusu Sekai Hakurankai* (Tokyo: Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 1997).

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> See The Department of Fine Arts, ed., World's Columbian Exposition Official Publications Revised Catalogue Department of Fine Arts With Index of Exhibitors (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Company, 1893).
 <sup>63</sup> Foxwell, 66.

effectively performed this "double duty" by simultaneously identifying the work as Japanese through a depiction of Mount Fuji while also demonstrating technical prowess. This is perhaps most obvious in works such as Ikeda's maki-e lacquer, as well as that of Namikawa Sōsuke (1847-1910), whose *Mount Fuji plaque in cloisonné* (*Shippō fugakuzu gaku*) was also produced in 1893 and displayed at the Columbian World's Exposition (Fig. 1.7).<sup>64</sup> We might describe these objects as participants in an multi-media, mutually reinforcing entourage of objects that evoked Japan's technical and cultural identities in the global sphere of arts exhibitions. Depictions of Mount Fuji likely connected these objects across media through their immediate indication of Japanese topography and technical skill legible to foreign audiences.

Maki-e lacquer was instrumentalized by Meiji officials, among other categories of craft, to exemplify the "intrinsic"  $(koy\bar{u})$  arts of Japan in the Meiji period, indicating both the "sprinkled picture" technique and the name for finished lacquerwares that make use of this technique. Modern craft historian Kida Takuya traces this alignment of national identity and visual-cultural production to the "Revival of the intrinsic  $(koy\bar{u})$  arts of Japan" policy enacted in 1889 at the Tokyo School of the Arts, which pushed aside the School's emphasis on western art and aesthetics in favor of traditional art categories, methods, and materials included "traditional" arts such as Japanese-style painting (nihonga), wood sculpture  $(mokuch\bar{o})$ , ivory carving  $(gech\bar{o})$ , metal carving/chasing  $(ch\bar{o}kin)$ , casting/metalwork  $(ch\bar{u}kin)$ , and maki-e. In the case of the lacquer arts, it is important to note that the term "maki-e" is used instead of the more general term for lacquer craft or "lacquerware" (shikki). Maki-e was specifically indicated within the larger genre of lacquer craft, and this emphasis on maki-e suggests that not all lacquer techniques were ideally situated to demonstrate "intrinsic artistry"  $(koy\bar{u}\ bijutsu)$ .

Kida situated this nationalist art ideology within a larger formation and system of Japanese philosophical and social-cultural nationalism. Kida noted that in the late 1880s, ideas such as "ultranationalism" (kokusuishugi) were commonly found in publications as diverse as Shiga Shigetaka's (1863-1927) Japanese Theory of Landscape (Nihon Fūkeiron), Mitaka Setsurei's (1860-1945) serial "Nihonjin," and Kuga Katsunan's (1857-1907) newspaper "Nihon." Kida writes that at the "root" (kontei) of these works was a resistance to the indivisibility of modernization and westernization. Instead of the more comprehensive adoption of western modernity evident in the first decades of the Meiji period, there was a pivot from massive adoption to a "reactionary" rebuttal. Meiji officials asserted that Japan was to look for its own individual modernity that was different from Western Europe (seiō), or more generally "the West." In actual practice, however, it was the artisans themselves who also simultaneously functioned as craft historians that largely dictated the course of modern Japanese craft production.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> "Shippō fugaku zugaku," *e-kokuhō, Kokuritsu Bunkazai Kikōjozō: Kokuhō, Jūyōbunkazai*, National Institutes for Cultural Heritage,

https://emuseum.nich.go.jp/detail?langId=ja&webView=&content\_base\_id=101307&content\_part\_id=0&content\_pict\_id=0.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Kida, 24. The origins of the maki-e technique remain vague. Kaori Hidaka noted that while the exact origin of the maki-e technique remains unknown, it was likely brought to Japan from the Asian continent, as were other decorative lacquer techniques. See Ningen Bunka Kenkyū Kikō Kokuritsu Rekishiminzoku Hakubutsukan, ed., 66. <sup>66</sup> Kida, 24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

The Tokyo School of the Arts "Art Craft" Department (*Bijutsu kōgeika*) was established in 1890, where metalwork and maki-e lacquer were offered as special courses (*senshūka*).<sup>68</sup> As students, lacquer artisan Rokkaku Shisui (1867-1950), ceramicist Itaya Hazan (1872-1963), and metalwork artist Katori Hotsuma (1874-1954) questioned how to modernize Japanese craft. The training offered at the School subsequently permeated lacquerware production designs and techniques in Appi River communities. In fact, as we will see below, Koiwa Shun (1879-1968), a maki-e artisan who graduated from the lacquer arts program at the School, later returned to his home prefecture of Iwate to aid in the establishment of a lacquerware training school.

Alongside formalized maki-e education at the Tokyo School of the Arts, Meiji officials developed policies and systems of preservation that contributed to the creation of a "nationalized" Japanese art canon. Christine Guth's analysis of the historical development of the highest tier of cultural preservation designation, the "National Treasure" (kokuhō), reveals how this designation consolidated disparate local and regional traditions of object-making into a national whole. Guth asserts that "By designating these exhibition pieces as kokuhō, Meiji officials capitalized on the term's magical and ritual overtones to reframe what had previously been emblems of individual, local, or regional pride as works of art representative of the spirit of an entire nation." It was not simply that these individual works could be reframed as representative of the Japanese nation. Such objects would become tools for establishing an image of Japanese modernity. As Guth puts it, "Although Japan's cultural nationalism included efforts to protect its artistic heritage, its primary thrust was not retrospective but rather animated by the belief that traditional arts could serve as agents of modernity."

As part of preserving this artistic heritage, attestations to the excellence of traditional Japanese lacquer craft cite the limited ecological range of the East Asian lacquer tree (*Toxicodendron vernicifluum*) as reason for artisans' ability to produce high quality lacquerware worthy of international acclaim. Meiji period writings published by lacquer artisans suggest that the limited range of the East Asian lacquer tree—a species not cultivated outside of Asia—added to the exotic and intrinsic value of maki-e as globally recognized exceptional Japanese craftsmanship. In November 1917, maki-e artisan Rokkaku Shisui wrote an article titled "The Prospects of Fine Lacquer Arts" (*Shikkō geijutsu no zento*). In the first two sentences, Rokkaku, who became a professor of lacquer craft at the Tokyo School of the Arts and was known for elaborate maki-e designs at the time, makes an assertion regarding the ecological range of the East Asian lacquer tree: "From ancient times, production of lacquer sap has been limited to the Orient ( $T\bar{o}y\bar{o}$ )... The lacquer tree does not grow in Europe and North America." Rokkaku names China and Siam as other nations that grown lacquer tree abundantly, but his emphasis on the limited range of the East Asian lacquer tree discloses a linkage between regional ecologies and transnational visual cultures of the Asian continent.

Further, Rokkaku distinguishes the Japanese lacquer tradition from other Asian histories of lacquer tree cultivation and lacquerware production. He writes, "It goes without saying that lacquer craft was brought to Japan from China. But from then on, lacquer technique gradually

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Guth, 322.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Rokkaku Shisui, "Shikkō geijutsu no zento," *Gendai no zuan kōgei* 42, Tokyo (1917): 16-17. https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/1527846.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Ibid., 16.

progressed, the maki-e technique was developed, and it became the contrary: people came from China to Japan to learn about this technique."<sup>73</sup> Here Rokkaku seems to disclose how maki-e held a preeminent position as a lacquer technique that was distinct from Chinese and other lacquer traditions in Asia. Maki-e was strategically positioned to distinguish the Japanese craft from not only those regions of the world where the tree does not naturally grow, but also from other Asian nations with their own long histories of lacquer craft.

## Maki-e Along the Appi River in Iwate

Clearly, maki-e was prioritized by Meiji officials and artisans, notably by Rokkaku, professor at the Tokyo School of the Arts, as an artistic agent of a burgeoning, yet sophisticated, modern Japanese nation. This was the environment within which the lacquer communities of the Appi River region in Iwate found themselves in the Meiji and Taisho periods. As one might expect, production of maki-e wares increased as these local communities strove to participate in formalized systems of lacquerware valuation. These systems of valuation included participation in international exhibitions of award-winning artists such as Ikeda Taishin, designations as Artists for the Imperial Household, and importance in the curriculum of the Tokyo School of the Arts. Local community leaders likely acknowledged these national systems of valuation and thus artisans responded with the establishment of a lacquer training school in Ashiro under the guidance of the Tokyo-trained maki-e lacquer artisan Koiwa Shun. Appi artisans began using maki-e pattern books to guide their work as they adapted maki-e designs to vessel forms distinctive to Jōbōji, such as the *hiage*.

For local lacquer artisans in Iwate, however, the establishment of maki-e as the representative example of "intrinsic" Japanese lacquer craft posed challenges. Due to the dearth of surviving precedents of maki-e lacquer works in the Appi River region, and the lack of Edo period examples of Jōbōji maki-e designs, one might suggest that local artisans did not specialize in the technique before the Meiji period. Instead of maki-e, Jōbōji wares were largely known for their unassuming, simple decoration. Using a technique known as "lacquer pictures" or *urushi-e*, local lacquer artisans used pigmented lacquer to brush simple designs on small, shallow dishes and vessels.<sup>74</sup> Scholar of lacquer craft, Shinkai Hikaru, posits that *urushi-e* is the most simple and oldest form of pictorial work performed with lacquer.<sup>75</sup> Unlike maki-e, the *urushi-e* technique is characterized by pigmented lacquer—colored with minerals such as orpiment—applied with a brush like paint onto the surface of a substrate.

Thus, the *urushi-e* technique differed from maki-e in several ways. First, unlike maki-e, Jōbōji wares produced using the *urushi-e* technique do not make use of precious metals to create the pictorial design, pattern, or motif. Instead, artisans first add pigment to liquid lacquer before it is applied to the substrate. According to the Mejiro Institute of Urushi Research and Restoration, there were only five pigments used to color lacquer until the end of the nineteenth century: vermillion (mercury sulfide), brown (red ochre or *bengara*), yellow (orpiment), green (orpiment and indigo), and lamp black (pine soot).<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> For a richly illustrated volume of *urushi-e* examples, see Shinkai Hikaru, *Edo jidai no urushi-e zara* (Tokyo: Bungeisha, 2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Shinkai, 250.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Komaba Makiko, Nagata Tomoyo, et. al., Nihon no shikkōgihō—zairyou no kihon yōgo, 39.

As we will see in Chapter Two, numerous examples of the *urushi-e* technique can still be seen in Jōbōji today in the form of small, shallow lacquered dishes called the *kashibon*.<sup>77</sup> Many of these wares date to the Edo period, but artisans produced *kashibon* into the modern period alongside their efforts to elevate local lacquerware with the maki-e technique. Kashibon consist of a wood substrate turned on a lathe and then coated with just one or two layers of black lacquer. Some kashibon are left with no adorning lacquer design, but many are enlivened with a picture that is brushed with pigmented lacquer. Many such designs are relatively simple depictions of ginko leaves, pine trees, noshi (decorated folded paper, sometimes with a strip of abalone inside), among other motifs. The brushed application of color, rather than "sprinkled" application as in the maki-e technique, is plainly visible in one example of a kashibon with a noshi design (Fig. 1.8). Yellowish lacquer has been pigmented with orpiment and used to brush the noshi with calligraphic strokes. Variations in the amount of force applied to the brush are visible as the brush hairs lift off the surface of the substrate. Playfully executed, the *noshi* design highlights the utility of the *urushi-e* technique in producing elegant tableware with economic use of the artisans' materials and time. The abundance of kashibon with urushi-e designs dating to the late Edo period suggests that the *urushi-e* technique was utilized by a large number of workshops—dozens—that capitalized on the relatively small number of tools necessary to complete *urushi-e* designs.<sup>78</sup>

The Meiji period emphasis on maki-e seems to have triggered the migration of maki-e artisans to the Appi River region. As noted above, institutions such as the Tokyo School of the Arts began training students in lacquer departments with express emphasis on teaching the methods, embodied practices, and visual materials of maki-e. Although such prestigious lacquer artisans as Rokkaku Shisui did not reside in Jōbōji, other prominent artisans such as Koiwa Shun relocated to the area and participated in efforts to "revitalize" lacquerware production, possibly through the circulation of "pattern books" (*hinagata*).

One such maki-e pattern book dating to the Meiji period titled *Maki-e hon sensei Kaga yori* (*Kaga Maki-e Pattern Book*) remains in the collection of the Jōbōji History and Folk Museum (Jōbōji Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan). The authorship, precise circulation, and complete ownership history of the *Kaga Pattern Book* is not known. However, the appearance of some of the designs in the *Kaga Pattern Book* in Appi River lacquerware suggests that the book, or perhaps a copy thereof, may have been available to Appi River artisans (Figs. 1.9-11). The *Kaga Pattern Book* likely dates to approximately 1910, when a maki-e artisan by the name of Tsutsui Kanetsugi was invited from Ishikawa Prefecture to lecture at the Ninohe Lacquerware Learning Center (Ninohe Shikki Denshūjo). Kudō located an article in the *Iwate Nippō* dated to August 5, 1913, that listed the subjects taught at the Ninohe Lacquerware Training Center, which included drawing, instruction on maki-e brushwork, and basic maki-e training for new students. For continuing students, the Center taught subjects including drawing, *takamaki-e* (raised maki-e), and *hiramaki-e* (flat maki-e).

Artisans could trace the designs in the pattern book and transfer these to loose sheets of paper, which were then applied to the lacquer surface to guide the artisans as they brushed the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Dozens of *kashibon* remain in the Jōbōji Branch of Ninohe City Hall, and many more remain in the collections of the Jōbōji Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> *Urushi-e* are often brushed using the strength of the "*naginata fude*"—a brush that can accommodate the viscosity of pigmented lacquer. See, Shinkai, 250.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Kudō, 174-175.

design in wet lacquer. Maki-e requires the subsequent application of metallic dust to wet lacquer that is then allowed to harden before polishing, as opposed to the pre-pigmented lacquer used to create a pictorial design in the *urushi-e* technique. The sixty-three-page pattern book was donated to the museum in 1955 by Satō Motozō, who was born in Jōbōji in 1914 and was both a farmer and a lacquer artisan before the Second World War. After the war, Satō was a lacquer tapper before he began conducting surveys of cultural properties in the town of Jōbōji in 1972. Most of what Satō donated appears to be family heirlooms that he later donated to the Museum as part of his surveys of cultural properties. As further evidence that maki-e was incorporated into Appi River lacquer production, Satō also donated tools used for maki-e adornment, including a container used to store gold dust (*kinpuniri*), shears for cutting gold foliate (*haku hasami*), a blade used to carve designs in lacquer (*chōkokutō*), and tools used for the heated application of gold leaf (*hakuoshi*). 81

Examination of the designs in the Satō maki-e pattern book shows that these drawings exhibit a higher level of detail and compositional complexity than urushi-e wares commonly found in Jōbōji. While the *urushi-e* designs appear almost flattened on the surface of the substrate and devoid of any background or spatial depth, many of the drawings found in the maki-e pattern book consist of carefully condensed landscapes with a clear foreground, middle ground, and background. One such design features a landscape of Mount Fuji (Fig. 1.9). The triangular form of the mountain is limited to the top half of the composition and pushed to the left edge of the design, leaving room for a body of water dotted with sailboats below. Below the mountain, a landmass hugs the right edge of composition and occasionally juts out into the same body of water, leading the viewer to the bottom of the composition. Migrating geese inhabit the top right corner, appearing successively smaller as they recede into the distance. By confining elements of the landscape to specific compartments of the overall composition, the creator of this maki-e design effectively creates a balanced and complete landscape without cramping the elements together. Small details—the creases radiating from the base of Mount Fuji depicting valleys; the differentiated trunks of pine trees on the shoreline—combine with the balanced composition to convey the iconic landscape with precision and ease.

The treatment of space and the level of detail depicted in the Satō maki-e pattern book differs from many of the wares found in Jōbōji around the turn of the twentieth century. An *urushi-e* design brushed on the lid of a small vessel in the collection of the Jōbōji History and Folk Museum (also discussed in Chapter Two in the context of the Mingei Movement) exhibits a scene similar to the Mount Fuji landscape in the maki-e pattern book (Fig. 1.12). On the lid, Mount Fuji is centered on the horizon line above a pine tree landscape that is ambiguously split between two swaths of land. The level of detail also differs: the elimination of the geese removes the opportunity for an elaboration of receding space, and Mount Fuji is presented as a solid form with little contour. The comparison between the maki-e pattern book and the Jōbōji lid is not meant to belittle the work of the Jōbōji artisan. Rather, this comparison demonstrates what we might refer to as a translation of a maki-e designs into techniques practiced locally in the lacquer communities along the Appi River.

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<sup>80</sup> Jöböji-machi Rekishi Minzoku Shiryökan, Iwate-ken Jöböji-machi Rekishi Minzoku Shiryökan shūzō shiryō mokuroku dai isshū Jōböji no urushi kaki to Jōböji nuri no yōgu oyobi seihin (Ninohe-shi: Jōböji-machi Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan, 1989), unpaginated.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 56.

We might also consider what depictions of Mount Fuji—subject matter depicted on both Jōbōji lacquerware and in the *Kaga Pattern Book*—reveal about the force of this landscape as a geophysical and symbolic body distant from Northern Japan. Rather than draw upon local landscapes, such as the prominent Mount Iwate near Morioka—sometimes referred to as the "Mount Fuji of Iwate"—these lacquerware designs found in the Appi River valley demonstrate how images of distant landscapes such as Mount Fuji were painted into the visual culture of Iwate, likely through the circulation of maki-e artisans and pattern books. Like Namikawa Sōsuke's *Mount Fuji plaque in cloisonné* produced in 1893 for the Columbian World's Exposition in Chicago, the appearance of the Mount Fuji landscape on lacquerware produced in the Appi River region attests to the reach of this landform as it overtook the local landscapes that had less domestic and international legibility.

We might also consider the application of maki-e designs through different "modes" of translation. In one mode, we see execution of a maki-e design found in the Kaga Pattern Book translated into the urushi-e technique. As such, this might be described as a "digestion" or "translation" of a national style into the technical expertise of Jōbōji lacquer artisans. Another mode of translation might be the depiction of a maki-e design on a vessel shape specific to Jōbōji such as the *hiage*. For example, we see maki-e designs mapped onto forms of lacquerware with a particular locality that is keyed to Jōbōji. The spouted sake ewer (hiage) with the crane, pine, and turtle design described at the beginning of this chapter shows this intermingling of "national" technique with local form (Fig. 1.1). Hiage found in Jōbōji are notable for their thick, elongated pouring spouts, relatively high foot, wide body, and simple adornment with just one or two layers of lacquer. Notably, the maki-e pattern book contains a drawing of a crane swooping down toward a young pine sapling similar to the design found on the Jōbōji hiage. Albeit a common motif, both the pattern book depictions and *hiage* examples show a downward-facing crane dramatically twisting its neck back towards its legs as it changes directions mid-flight. Below both cranes, young pine tree saplings emerge from the ground. As such, the hiage with the crane maki-e design suggests a mode of translation where a pictorial design was mapped onto a localized form.

Prior to the Meiji period and the subsequent efforts to institutionalize maki-e education and technique at the national level, most *hiage* produced in Jōbōji exhibited geometric patterns around their spouts as described in Fig. 1.5. It was also common to adorn hiage with family crests (kamon) for use in weddings, funerals, and other special occasions. For example, a large Meiji-period *hiage* is adorned with a crest consisting of three stacked and encircled rhombuses (sangaibishi) brushed in yellow lacquer pigmented with orpiment (Figs. 1.13-16). Like the kashibon, this hiage was decorated using the urushi-e technique that involved adding powdered orpiment to liquid lacquer and applying it to the substrate like paint. The form of the hiage, with its large body and wide spout, was ideal for distributing a viscous form of sake produced locally in Jōbōji called doburoku (also discussed in Chapter Two). Doburoku would then be consumed with the small lacquered drinking vessels (kobukura). The abundance of wide-spouted hiage in Jōbōji and neighboring communities located along the Appi River attests to the importance of the form within social gatherings. This example brings into higher relief the significance of the shift in Jōbōji iconography and ornamentation that is particularized to designs common on maki-e lacquerware, such as the hiage with the crane, pine, and turtle design. Rather than the lobed pattern or a kamon of a local Jōbōji family, the crane design inflects national priorities onto localized form.

Other examples of vessels in the Jōbōji History and Folk Museum bearing designs that suggest the influx of maki-e lacquerware to the Appi Region do not find corresponding visual indication in the *Kaga Pattern Book* and thus suggest other sources, perhaps as yet unidentified pattern books. Even without such evidence, individual vessels suggest the dialectical relationship between local and national lacquerware styles. A black lacquered hot water jug (*yutō*) is also adorned with a *kamon*, but the *urushi-e* technique is replaced with a crest executed in gold maki-e (Fig. 1.17). The crest (likely family crest of the Komukai family of Jōbōji) consists of a stylized depiction of the blossom of a Japanese quince (*boke*), with four primary petals encircled within a thick circular border. Donated by Komukai Ikio, who lived in the Mukaida area of Jōbōji located just across the Appi River from Tendaiji, the *yutō* with a family crest in maki-e is a departure from predecessors that primarily employed the *urushi-e* technique, suggesting a greater status or wealth. Similarly, a vermillion lacquered horned cask (*tsunotaru*), likely used to store sake for a celebratory occasion such as a wedding, is adorned with the same *boke* crest in maki-e (Figs. 1.18-19).

In sum, Appi River artisans appear to have responded in different ways to the Meiji national arts system's hierarchy of lacquer art, in which maki-e was established at the top, electing to utilize the challenging process of maki-e and adopting conventional maki-e designs, rendering them in a local visual style and adorning local vessel types with family crests in maki-e. How we interpret these responses in aggregate is a more difficult matter, but there is reason to speculate that the national mandate to "make it maki-e, make it gold" was met with some degree of (conservative) resistance and modern resilience.

# Kurokawa's *Kōgei Shiryō*: Forging a Modern Connection to the Nanbu family and the Northern Fujiwara

In addition to these efforts to produce maki-e wares, local artisans found themselves to be central subjects in Meiji period authoritative texts on the history of Japanese craft. As we will see, modern iterations of lacquerware history consolidated local histories under broad monikers that muddled the disparate histories of Iwate lacquerware and invited the formation of unsubstantiated narratives that emerge from the distant past. Closely related to the efforts of Jōbōji lacquer artisans to incorporate maki-e into their repertoire of techniques and designs was the similarly dialectical process of associating modern lacquerware with well-known examples of premodern wares thought to have originated in the region. As successive World's Fairs and International Expositions taking place throughout the Meiji period prompted governmental and academic self-reflection on lacquer techniques and the types of objects to present overseas, these global contexts also spurred Meiji officials—such as Kurkoawa Mayori—to write authoritative histories of Japanese craft. These histories were principally based on the analysis of the formal features of craft objects, rather than on archaeological or anthropological study, which would emerge later with the rise of mingei studies and the Mingei Movement.

Our reliance on the stylistic analysis in these written authoritative histories poses several obstacles for critical study of lacquerware. Not only are the majority of lacquerware unsigned and undated, but it is also difficult to determine their production regions and sites. Lacquer artisans often referenced or directly copied designs from neighboring and distant regions as part of a shared visual "vocabulary" produced by the migration of artisans and pattern books and, later, the emergence of the dominant maki-e style. Additionally, like ceramics and other craft

objects, lacquerware is readily portable. Modern collections of lacquerware such as that of Shinkai Hikaru, now housed in the Japanese National Museum of History, often contain objects from numerous sites of production mixed together, making stylistic analysis the most readily available means to study temporally and regionally diverse objects together. These stumbling blocks are important because they produce—as we will see below in our examination of Kurokawa's text—a narrowing of knowledge that reflects particular art historical disciplinary preferences and exclusions, which in turn obscure communities and the landscapes that coproduce lacquerware. In primary sources dating to the late nineteenth century, the phrase "Jōbōjinuri" or "Jōbōji lacquerware" intersects with other monikers for lacquerware found along the Appi River as well as in the prefectural capital of Morioka, and even in the southern areas of the prefecture. In the paragraphs below, I am not seeking to remove this "ambiguity" but to disclose the ways in which the name "Nanbu lacquerware" consumes Jōbōji lacquer within national and transnational configurations of power. In the modern period—the focus of this study—the consumptive force of the moniker "Nanbu lacquerware" impedes historical analysis, makes concrete conclusions difficult, and invites claims and connections to temporally distant traditions of prestige that may be overstated.

Modern analysis and writing—which have produced a tangling of monikers—remain an unresolved issue to date. This dissertation is not focused on disentangling what are frequently minute stylistic discrepancies between premodern Hidehira vessels, Nanbu vessels, Jōbōji vessels, and others. Instead, this section shows how officials in Iwate Prefecture chose to "rebrand" and elevate the perceived value of Jōbōji lacquer by selecting names with broader cultural legibility and significance outside of the Appi River region and the prefectural capital of Morioka.

The naming patterns used to designate premodern, early modern, and replicas of premodern wares are central to analysis of the shifting monikers in the Meiji and Taisho periods. In the archive, lacquer vessels are often simply named as "types" by attaching the word for vessel ("-wan") to a person, clan, or place name. For example, lacquer vessels associated with a style thought to have close connection to the premodern Nanbu clan are referred to in texts and in conversation as "Nanbu-wan." This phrasing can refer both to a single vessel or a group of vessels all with a similar design. Similarly, lacquer techniques and patterns that appear on multiple substrate forms—for example, vessels and flat dishes—are referenced by attaching the verb "to lacquer" or "nuri." "Nanbu-nuri (Nanbu lacquerware)," therefore indicates wares of many different shapes—vessels, shallow dishes, small tables, etc.—that all share a common set of designs.

One of the earliest appearances of Nanbu-nuri in the modern art historical record comes in 1878 when Kurokawa Mayori, under the auspices of the Museum Bureau (Hakubutsukyoku), published an encyclopedic two-volume study of Japanese craft titled *Kōgei Shiryō*. Largely regarded as the first "history of Japanese craft," many revised and reprinted versions of this text were subsequently published. The "revised and supplemented edition" (*zōhokaitei*) was published in 1888 by the Department of the Imperial Household Museum (Kunaishō Hakubutsukanzō). Although the 1888 version was called a "revised and supplemented edition," it is almost identical to the 1878 original.

In the introduction to  $K\bar{o}gei\ Shiry\bar{o}$ , Kurokawa informs readers that the text serves a dual purpose of preparation for Japan's participation in the 1878 Exposition Universelle held in Paris in the same year, as well as to inform the broader Japanese public about the positive qualities of

Japanese craft.<sup>82</sup> As noted above in the discussion of maki-e as representing an "intrinsic" national art, Meiji officials surveyed craft collections to identify promising objects that would display Japan's economic and political power in the context of World's Fairs and International Exhibitions. As we will see, entries for lacquerware found in *Kōgei Shiryō* reflect these consolidated histories of lacquerware that conceal fine grained, local histories. Kurokawa's task of synthesizing a national history of Japanese craft was gargantuan and would necessarily require abbreviation and consolidation. However, the choice to include vessels that were made in Jōbōji and other areas of Iwate within the entry for "Nanbu-nuri" in *Kōgei Shiryō* suggests that the name "Nanbu" was favored over other types of wares that were, according to local archival evidence examined below, more abundant.

Kurokawa's voluminous text is divided into seven sections, each dedicated to a specific genre of craft. "Lacquerwork" ( $shikk\bar{o}$ ) occupies the final section and follows textile work, stonework, ceramics, woodwork, leatherwork, and metalwork. The lacquerwork portion begins with a description of the broader history of Japanese lacquer, lacquering techniques, and well-known styles of lacquer production, each ending with "-nuri." Among those listed is "Nanbunuri." In the first section of the entry, we find evidence that Kurokawa used the single moniker "Nanbu-nuri" to consolidate and simplify varied histories of lacquerware production. Kurokawa decribes Nanbu-nuri as the following:

Nanbu lacquerware [Nanbu-nuri] was produced in the southern part of Mutsu Province and was known throughout the realm as "Nanbu-nuri." There were numerous wares coated with red lacquer. Wares produced in the Nanbu lacquerware workshops were made 600 to 700 years ago and still exist today. Some say that during the reign of Emperor Takakura, Fujiwara Hidehira, the feudal lord of Mutsu [Mutsu no kami], was the first to order artisans to make these wares and so they came to be called "Hidehira vessels" [Hidehira-wan]. Nanbu vessels have vermillion lacquered interiors and black lacquered exteriors. Further, by applying vermilion, green, and yellow lacquer on top of black lacquer, cranes and flowering plants are depicted, and cut gold leaf is applied in several places, making the vermilion shine. Tea practitioners of the ceremonious preparation of powdered tea [tencha] used these wares as food vessels.<sup>83</sup> The Nanbu vessels have the most elegance. Because textile-dying houses created designs that imitated this flower motif, it came to be called the "Nanbu pattern."<sup>84</sup>

The name "Nanbu" refers to the Nanbu clan (Nanbu-han), also referred to as the "Ōshū Nanbu-clan" and "Morioka clan" after the location of the clan in the castle constructed in Morioka from 1592 to 1633. The long and complex history of the Nanbu clan is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is important to note that the clan controlled a large swath of land in northeastern Japan when Toyotomi Hideyoshi formally acknowledged their domain 1590.<sup>85</sup> The castle served as the focal point of Nanbu authority, and the lacquer communities along the Appi

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Kurokawa Mayori Zōhokaitei Kōgei Shiryō (Tokyo: Kunaishō hakubutsukan zōban, 1888), 2. See also, Kurokawa Mayori and Maeda Yasuji, Zōhokaitei Kōgei Shiryō, Tōyō Bunko 254 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1976), 208-9.

<sup>83</sup> Original Japanese: 点茶家以テ飯器と為す. Kurokawa, 230.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Kurokawa, 230-31.

<sup>85 &</sup>quot;Morioka-han," Kokushi Daijiten (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan), accessed March 17, 2024.

River, including Jōbōji, were under the control of the Nanbu until the area became Iwate Prefecture in 1870.

In his history of "Nanbu-nuri," Kurokawa includes the reign of Emperor Takakura (r. 1168-1180) at the end of the Heian period and specifically names Fujiwara no Hidehira (1122-1187) of the so-called "Ōshu Fujiwara-shi." Also known as the "Northern Fujiwara," these local rulers are notable for commanding the construction of a northern capital at Hiraizumi during the twelfth century in what is now southern Iwate Prefecture. Several of the sites constructed by the Northern Fujiwara rivaled the grandeur of temples in Kyoto at the time. In particular, the Konjikidō (literally "Gold Colored Hall"), completed in 1124 and located within the Chūsonji shrine temple complex, is notable in its excessive use of gold leaf and lacquered pillars (makibashira) with maki-e and mother-of-pearl inlay (raden). 86

It was Fujiwara no Hidehira, according to Kurokawa, who ordered the production of lacquered vessels that have since become known as "Hidehira-wan." Such wares are usually described in congruence with Kurokawa's description. One such example, catalogued as "Hidehira-wan" in the collection of the Hachiro Yuasa Memorial Museum at the International Christian University in Tokyo, consists of a set of three nesting vessels adorned with a Siberian iris (*ayame*) design in red-pigmented *urushi-e* that contrasts with a black lacquered exterior (Fig. 1.20). Near the rim of the outer vessel, remnants of damaged pieces of rhombus-shaped gold leaf are visibly adhered to cloud forms that expand downward to frame the enlarged flowering plant.

Though an authoritative text on Japanese craft, Kurokawa's text contains claims regarding Hidehira-wan that more recent scholarship has corrected. Importantly for our examination of Iwate lacquerware, the direct connection between Jōbōji lacquerware and Hidehira lacquerware has been seriously questioned. Maeda Yasuji, author of the annotated edition of *Zōhokaitei kōgei shiryō*, cautions those who read Kurokawa's passage on Hidehirawan, writing: "There is no evidence that objects called 'Hidehira-wan' existed during the Heian and Kamakura periods. In later generations, these were called Hidehira-wan, and people may have thought that the so-called Hidehira-wan type items were older than they actually were. Hidehira-wan, Shōbōji-wan, and Jōbōji-wan each seem to have their own lineage, but the history of each is not yet clear." 87

This tangling of monikers remains an unresolved issue to date. More recently, scholars prefer to reference wares with red interiors, black exteriors, gold leaf, and *urushi-e* designs as "Nanbu hakuwan," meaning "gilt Nanbu vessels." <sup>88</sup> Many of these wares date to the Edo period and exhibit designs that adhere closely to wares referred to as "Hidehira-wan." One vessel held in the collection of the Iwate Prefectural Museum illustrates the form, patterns, and motifs found on wares commonly described under the broad term "Nanbu hakuwan" (Fig. 1.21). The small vessel is adorned with a now-familiar formula—a red interior, black exterior with red *urushi-e* design depicting a stemmed chrysanthemum, and pieces of gold leaf in the shape of rhombuses. Until further evidence is uncovered, likely through archaeological excavation, the general term "Nanbu hakuwan" seems most appropriate when referring to wares that loosely conform to the "Nanbu-wan" type.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> The Konjikidō was designated as a National Treasure in 1951, restored from 1962-68, and designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011. For detailed analysis of the Konjikidō, see Mimi Yiengpruksawan, "The House of Gold: Fujiwara Kiyohira's Konjikidō," *Monumenta Nipponica* 48 no. 1 (1993): 33-52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Kurokawa Mayori and Yasuji Maeda, *Zōhokaitei Kōgei Shiryō*, Tōyō Bunko 254 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1976), 361.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Ningen Bunka Kenkyū Kikō Kokuritsu Rekishiminzoku Hakubutsukan, ed., 172.

Despite more recent questioning of Kurokawa's narrative, we must note how unsubstantiated claims to Hiraizumi and Fujiwara no Hidehira have become so dominant that the historical truth becomes irrelevant to many who consume the wares. Within such discourse that assumes long histories of Nanbu-nuri and includes in this history wares such as Hidehira-wan, Kurokawa's *Kōgei Shiryō* is a watershed moment in the generation of ambiguously defined histories of Iwate lacquerware. Although focused discussion of the lore surrounding Hidehira-wan is not the central focus of this chapter, the inclusion of several types of lacquer under blanket terms such as "Nanbu-nuri" and "Hidehira-wan" continue throughout much of the twentieth century.

For example, Matsuda Gonroku (1896-1986)—a student of lacquer artisan and scholar Rokkaku Shisui, and arguably the most well-known lacquer artist of the twentieth century—published an authoritative text in 1964 titled *The Tale of Lacquer* (*Urushi no Hanashi*) on the history of Japanese lacquer with examples from regional centers of lacquerware production. Scholar of Iwate lacquer, Kudō Kōichi, has pointed out that *Urushi no Hanashi* differs from Kurokawa's narrative in that it uses the term "Hidehira-nuri," instead of "Hidehira-wan." As noted above, the use of "-nuri" attached to a person's name, clan name, or place name implies lacquerware production more broadly without referencing the specific form of a vessel. "Hidehira-nuri" written in Matsuda's *Urushi no Hanashi* implies broader production of lacquerware in the Hidehira style. In Chapter Three we will examine the works of lacquer artist Koseki Rokuhei (1918-2011), who, after the Second World War, continued to reference the Northern Fujiwara through his creation of replica vessels (*jidai-wan*). Even today, several craft shops in Iwate advertise contemporary Hidehira-wan with written descriptions claiming an unbroken connection to the Northern Fujiwara.

Kurokawa's description goes on to explain that Nanbu vessels are also produced in Jōbōji Village, in the Kunohe District of Mutsu. Kurokawa writes of Jōbōji:

It is here that the wood bases are produced, and the wares are lacquered. All this land was managed by the Nanbu clan, so the wares were named Nanbu vessels. Even so, within the Nanbu-ruled region the wares were called Jōbōji vessels, but in other regions they were referred to as Nanbu vessels. In later times, lacquerware stopped being produced at Shōbōji in Esashi District, and lacquerware produced in Jōbōji Village in Kunohe was also called Nanbu vessels. The transmission of the artisans' skills in this region has continued to this day. 92

<sup>90</sup> Gonroku Matsuda, *Urushi no Hanashi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1964), 144, https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2505288/1/78.

<sup>89</sup> Kudō, 184-5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> While this dissertation is primarily concerned with lacquer and lacquerware production, it should be noted that the Appi River region provides ideal conditions for secondary forests with a high proportion of beech trees. The supply of beech trees undergirded the lacquer industry because of their utility as sturdy wood substrates that are used to make lacquerware. The beech trees are logged and are roughly cut into bowl shapes. These substrates are then turned on lathes and made into perfectly round vessels upon which lacquer can be applied. As such, the vast majority of wares produced in the region are rounded vessels, including the primary stylized types discussed by scholars and active artisans: Hidehira-wan, Jōbōji-wan, Nanbu-wan, Shōhōji-wan, and others. See Kudō, *Iwate urushi no kindaishi*, 79-82.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> Kurokawa wrote a short passage on the lacquered vessels produced at Shōbōji in Kuroishi Village, Esashi District, Mutsu Province. Kurokawa writes that Shōbōji was founded in the Shōhei era by a monk named Mutei and is a head

Here Kurokawa provides more specific information about how lacquerware naming depended on who was referencing the wares, and where they were located. In Jōbōji, locally produced vessels would simply be referred to as "Jōbōji-wan." But if and when these vessels were shipped outside of Jōbōji, Kurokawa writes, they were referred to under the broader term "Nanbu-wan." Perhaps the most crucial point in Kurokawa's narrative comes at the end of his entry for "Nanbu-nuri," where he asserts that artisans have passed down their skills for generations and the tradition continues to the present. The transmission of lacquer skills in Jōbōji continued from the Edo period, attested to by the abundance of Edo period examples. But the lack of concrete evidence of a continuous lacquer tradition that reaches back to the Heian period suggests that Kurokawa assumed modern Jōbōji lacquerware has a longer history than is historically substantiated.

In 1908—twenty years after the Revised and Supplemented edition of Kurokawa's *Kōgei Shiryō* was published—individuals within Iwate's lacquer craft community founded the organization introduced at the beginning of this chapter: the Nanbu Lacquerware Revival Association in Arazawa Village (formerly Ashiro Town, presently Hachimantai City). The objective of the Association, noted in its Prospectus, was to plan for and promote the improvement of lacquerware production in the region. To meet these goals, an instructor from the Iwate Prefectural Industrial School, Koiwa Shun, was invited to serve as an advisor of the Association. In addition to disclosing a desire to more adequately represent Japan through elevated lacquer craft, the Prospectus situates this goal within the local context and history of the Appi River region where it was established. The remainder of the Prospectus reads as follows:

...One sees lacquerware production throughout all parts of Japan. In this prefecture [Iwate], there are Nanbu lacquerware [Nanbu-nuri] from the medieval period. It is known to many people that vessels named Hidehira-wan were greatly admired at the time for their elegance and grace. Despite the abundant production of lacquer sap, the industry has withered and now we have just one producer of lacquerware in a small part of Ninohe District, Arasawa village, that produces Jōbōji lacquerware [Jōbōji shikki]. On the other hand, Aizu lacquerware, which long ago was criticized as an imitation of Nanbu lacquerware, has increasingly shown its true worth, and has reached the height of its prosperity today. 95 Now, those in the same industry are able to reflect deeply on these developments. Mr. Koiwa, who graduated from the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and is currently an instructor at the Prefectural Industrial School, will resign from his teaching position on the coming 4th

temple of the Zen sect (Sōtō sect), along with Eihei-ji Temple in Echizen Province and Sojiji Temple in Notō Province. See Kurokawa, *Kōgei Shiryō*, 230-31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> Kudō, 172.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Koiwa is known for his contribution to the development of the iridescent lacquering technique known as "Tamamushi-nuri," which was developed in Sendai during the Showa period. Koiwa Shun, "Tamamushi-nuri to sono shikōhō" *Kōgei Nyūsu* 1, no. 1, Sangyōgijutsu Sōgōkenkyūjo (June 1932): 9-10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> The claim that Aizu lacquerware is generally copied from what was referred to as "Nanbu-nuri" is generally supported by scholars of Aizu lacquerware. For one example, see Fukushima Kenritsu Hakubutsukan, ed., *Fukushima Kenritsu Hakubutsukan chōsa hōkokusho dai yonjū shū: Aizu-e Aizu no urushi-e shikki* (Aizuwakamatsu: Fukushima Kenritsu Hakubutsukan, 2004), 17.

day of the month and move to the village [Arasawa]. He will organize the Association, plan for the improvement of production, and under the name of Nanbu lacquerware produce wares that demonstrate the distinctive duality of practical use ( $jitsuy\bar{o}$ ) and artistic beauty (bijutsu). It is our hope to make it one of the prefecture's main products to meet the needs of the world...<sup>96</sup>

The beginning of the Prospectus is similar to Kurokawa's entry for "Nanbu-nuri": the so-called "Nanbu-nuri" is once again broadly conceived through inclusion of several localized lacquer communities, including Jōbōji. We see a familiar adherence to long histories of lacquerware production that originated in an ambiguously defined "medieval period" (*chūko*), and the grandeur of Hidehira vessels is again emphasized.

The Prospectus is valuable because it provides insight into local plans made for the "improvement" of Nanbu lacquerware, which at the time was concentrated in two communities, Arasawa and Jōbōji, located along the Appi River. Central to these plans was Koiwa Shun, who brought to the Nanbu Lacquerware Revival Association a maki-e-infused pedigree of training which local craft leaders seem to have understood as necessary to "develop the lacquerware industry that should represent the name of the country." Koiwa was trained in the Lacquer Craft Department (Shikkōka) at the Tokyo University of the Arts and graduated in 1902. A delicately lacquered box produced by Koiwa titled *Lacquer casket, with flying geese in maki-e* for his graduation from the University provides a sense of his design style and delicately executed technique (Fig. 1.22).<sup>97</sup> On the exterior of the lid, three geese depicted in maki-e descend toward the bottom left corner of the box with stiff, outstretched wings that provided Koiwa with an opportunity to delineate each feather with slender lines of gold maki-e. Upon graduating, Koiwa took up numerous posts in the Tōhoku region, systematizing production of regional wares, including his role at the Nanbu Lacquerware Revival Association. In 1918 he was invited back to Tokyo University of the Arts where he worked as an assistant professor until 1927.<sup>98</sup>

The end of the *Prospectus* foreshadows some of the aesthetic ideals that would be espoused by advocates of the Folk Craft Movement (Mingei Undō) in the 1930s and 40s, which is the subject of Chapter Two. The Nanbu Lacquerware Revival Association asserted that their goal was to create wares that exhibit both "practical use" (*jitsuyō*) and "artistic beauty" (*bijutsu*), qualities that Yanagi Muneyoshi, leader of the Folk Craft Movement, saw as interdependent. Chapter Two shows Yanagi understood practicality to be a prerequisite for beauty. Ironically, the efforts of Yanagi and others who participated in the Folk Craft Movement marked a re-evaluation of the Jōbōji lacquer communities who were recognized not for their maki-e wares, but for the simplicity and practicality of wares adorned with *urushi-e* designs.

98 Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Kudō quotes the prospectus in *Iwate urushi no kindaishi*. The original was published in 1908 in the *Iwate Mainichi* on March 29th, 1908. See Kudō, 172-4. The Prospectus also includes stipulations that required the regular exhibition of wares produced by members. Kudō, 172-4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> A maki-e ware produced by Shirayama Shōsai, who trained Tsuda Tokumin (an important lacquer artisan discussed in Chapter Three), is listed in the same pictorial record alongside the work of Koiwa in Tokyo Geijutsudaigaku, *Tōkyo Geijutsudaigaku zōhin zuroku* vol. 3 (Tokyo: Tokyo Geijutsudaigaku, 1958), 211-14, https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2466203/1/214.

#### Conclusion: The Limits of "National" Lacquerware

To a degree, efforts of lacquer communities in northern Iwate fell short of wholescale alignment with national maki-e designs, international exhibition success, and greater domestic recognition. However, the industry did survive this somewhat tumultuous period through the numerous resilient responses discussed in this chapter. Maki-e design books were produced and circulated in Iwate, and maki-e specialists with skills gleaned in Tokyo guided local artisans with the hope of creating wares that were both elegant and practical to use. Jōbōji and other local sites of lacquerware production were, for better or worse, consolidated under several differing monikers with their own complex and ill-defined distant histories such as "Nanbu-nuri" and "Hidehira-wan." This consolidation of histories in widely circulated texts such as *Kōgei Shiryō* propagated the idea that Jōbōji lacquerware maintained continuous connection with lacquer artisans of the distant past, despite a lack of concrete historical evidence of such continuity.

Perhaps it is best to address these efforts not as contentious attempts to fabricate false histories of lacquerware, but as historical events. For early craft historians such as Kurokawa Mayori and Rokkaku Shisui, the late nineteenth century presented an opportunity to define the arts of Japan for a broader public. Texts such as the *Kōgei Shiryō*, which connected modern Japanese bodies, skills, and materials to the distant past, reveal the utility of lacquer arts in delineating Japanese modernity. Within the lacquer communities of Jōbōji, the path forward for lacquerware production needed to involve the skills and designs approved and promoted by a newly formed canon of fine lacquer art in Meiji and Taisho Japan.

Despite efforts to "revive" Jōbōji lacquer and the adoption of maki-e designs along the Appi River, local archival evidence shows that the most abundantly produced lacquerwares in Jōbōji in 1923 were small vessels without any adornment except for their red interiors and black exteriors. Described in the Introduction of this dissertation, these simple wares are sometimes referred to as "mittsuwan" or "sets of three bowls" when they are nested together in groups. (Fig. 0.10). Data compiled by the Jōbōji History and Folk Museum from the ledgers of the Satō family reveal the type, quantities, and destination of lacquerwares produced in Jōbōji beginning in 1918.<sup>99</sup> According to the Satō ledgers, in 1923—long after Kōgei Shiryō circulated and maki-e production began in Jōbōji—the Satō family shipped more than 55,000 vessels, mostly throughout the Tōhoku region, that were simple, unadorned red and black wares such as those pictured in Fig. 0.10. The Satō family sent just 200 "Nanbu-nuri" vessels to Osaka in the same year. 100 This abundance of "everyday wares" that greatly outnumbered Nanbu-nuri or maki-e wares demonstrates how the "national" style of maki-e did not fully penetrate the Jōbōji lacquer industry in the Meiji and Taisho periods. Rather, the presence of these wares in the collection of the Jōbōji History and Folk Museum points to the Jōbōji lacquer community's heightened sense of national consciousness of lacquerware styles, as well as an awareness of the formation of national histories of craft. Despite these modern interventions that sought to elevate or align Jōbōji lacquer with national standards, the inertia—seen in the sheer number of everyday wares

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> The oldest ledger that dates to 1918 is labeled "Number 8" (*Dai hachi gō*), suggesting that there are seven other ledgers that predate the 1918 beginning of this archive. The ledgers continue until the conclusion of the Second World War. See Ninohe shiritsu Jōbōji Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan, *Ninohe shiritsu Jōbōji Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan chōsa hōkoku dai ni shū Ninohe-shi Jōbōji-machi Ōshimizu—Satō Setsurō-ke urushi kankei shiryō chōsa hōkoku* (Ninohe: Ninohe shiritsu Jōbōji Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan, 2016), 1.
<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 57.

that were produced in Meiji and Taisho—of pre-Meiji production lingered. Although recognition of such unadorned Jōbōji lacquerware would not be received until the very criteria of "art" was reevaluated in the 1930s and 1940s during the Folk Crafts Movement, lacquer artisans of the Appi River valley continued to produce these simple and practical designs in conjunction with "Nanbu-nuri" and the "intrinsic" art of maki-e.

#### **Chapter Two**

### Reviving "Traditional" Japan: Jōbōji Lacquer and the Mingei Movement

In September 1942, Japanese poet Sueshige Hirokazu praised Iwate lacquer in a short poem titled "Iwate Lacquerware," published in the popular magazine *Folk Craft (Mingei)*:

As my wife looks at lacquerware with a Mount Fuji design And while I sip miso soup Iwate lacquerware gently scoops up the beauty of life in a distant Japan And warmly turned darkness to green.<sup>101</sup>

妻は漆器の富士山を見ながら 私は味噌汁をすゝりながら 遠い日本に生活の美しさを掬してゐる 岩手の漆器は黒さを温かくみどりにしてゐた

#### —Sueshige Hirokazu 末繁博一

Sueshige's poem suggests that his wife was gazing at a lacquerware adorned with a design of Mount Fuji while he raises another lacquered vessel to consume miso soup held inside. Reflecting on this moment, Sueshige seems to personify Iwate lacquerware by describing its ability to "gently scoop up" (kikushiteiru) something intangible—the "beauty of distant Japan." This poem, one of several Sueshige produced that are saturated with quotidian references, reflects on Iwate lacquerware as a nostalgic fragment of a distant, perhaps lost, but beautiful Japan during a particularly tumultuous year in Japanese history. 102 1942 was a particularly tumultuous point in the Pacific War; the Japanese military suffered critical defeats at the Battle of the Coral Sea and at Midway in May and June, respectively. Then in August, just before this poem was published, the Japanese Imperial Navy began suffering grave losses resulting from the U.S. military's Solomon Islands Campaign. It is no surprise, then, that Sueshige ponders the "darkness" of the present. What is surprising, however, is that Sueshige is comforted by a handmade tradition of living with and using lacquerware in the remote regions of Iwate. Moreover, by granting a degree of agency to the lacquered vessel—it "scoops up the beauty of life"—Sueshige offers his belief that lacquer has some capacity to transform the darkness of the current moment. In a "distant Japan," perhaps in Iwate or elsewhere, lacquer was a part of everyday life, and that life was, indeed, more beautiful.

Sueshige's poem exemplifies the values that mingei enthusiasts—those who published essays, poems, maps, and collected mingei or "folk craft" objects—mapped onto Iwate lacquerware in the 1930s and 1940s. Six months before Sueshige's poem was featured in *Mingei*—a public-facing magazine founded by leaders of the Mingei Movement, published from 1939-1946—lacquerware produced along the Appi River in a town called Arayashinmachi in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Sueshige Hirokazu, "Iwate no shikki (shi)," Mingei 4, no. 9 (September 1942): 59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Sueshige Hirokazu, *Ie: shishū* (Tokyo: Sueshige Hirokazu, 1931), National Diet Library Digital Collection: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/1025100.

Iwate appeared on the cover of the March 1942 issue of same magazine, "headlining" its special article on Iwate lacquerware (Fig. 2.1). There we see the lid of a small, round, black lacquered vessel from above. Depicted in pigmented lacquer on a black background, the iconic profile of Mount Fuji rises to occupy the center of the lid, its shoulders slope gently toward the ringshaped, raised handle. At the bottom edge of the lid, two clusters of pine trees, depicted as a series of thick horizontal brushstrokes stacked atop one another, indicate the presence of a landmass in the foreground. A body of water, shown as a series of thin, horizontal lines connects the foreground to the central form of Mount Fuji. Finally, wisping clouds float just to the right of the mountain; their weighted brushstrokes taper to the left creating a vague sense of distance. As discussed in Chapter One, many wares with similar depictions of Mount Fuji are held in the Jōbōji History and Folk Museum (Jōbōji Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan) in Ninohe City (Fig. 1.12).

The fact that the iconic Mount Fuji is depicted in the traditional material of lacquer imbues the image with a heightened sense of nostalgia and nationhood. Read in the context of growing concerns over both the impact of the Second World War and the detrimental effects of modernization on Japanese culture, Sueshige and other writers may have sought to affirm Japanese lacquerware as integral to their nationhood amidst a modernizing world. In this context, among artisans of traditional craft, one might think of lacquerware as representing the "antimodern" in relation, even opposition, to the techno-industrial complex of Japan's war mobilization and campaigns. <sup>103</sup>

Wares such as those Sueshige references were made entirely by hand using traditional, and often painstaking, methods. The wood was coated with lacquer sap carefully tapped from East Asian lacquer trees (*Toxicodendron vernicifluum*) grown in the soils of Iwate. As we will see, lacquer sap tapping tools and techniques were presented in the *Mingei* magazine, which positioned the Iwate lacquer tradition as a consummate example of Japanese folk craft. The artisan transformed the convexly curved surface of the unadorned lid into a recognizable landscape of minimal strokes and areas of pigment, which rises in a simple composition from foreground to a horizon line punctuated by the volcanic peak. One should also bear in mind the multisensory experience of using lacquerware that would include visually perceiving the designs on the surface of the ware, experiencing the warmth of the vessel as it sits in the hand, as well as the aroma of food, in addition to its practical function a vessel for miso soup and other foods. In use, the lid would sit snugly atop a similarly black-lacquered vessel. It could then be removed, and the food inside consumed.

Perhaps most importantly, the lyricism of Sueshige's poem depicts how Iwate lacquerware functioned as a portal providing access to a "distant" past more beautiful than the dire present. In Sueshige's poetic response we may perhaps recognize how individuals lodged their nostalgia for an idealized past in common objects found in the intimate spaces of homes. Iwate lacquerware brought the beauty of that past into the present through the act of "scooping up" a nourishing liquid with the power of "turning darkness into warmth." The agency of the object is of critical importance. As we will see, Yanagi Muneyoshi (1889-1961, sometimes referred to as Yanagi Sōetsu), the founder of the Japan Folk Craft Museum (Nihon Mingeikan) in Tokyo and a critical leader of the Folk Craft Movement (Mingei Undō), and other enthusiasts of

<sup>103</sup> I borrow the term "antimodern" from Kim Brandt's characterization of mingei as an "antimodern reaction against urban industrialization." See Kim Brandt, *Kingdom of Beauty: Mingei and the Politics of Folk Art in Imperial Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 1.

uke University Press, 2007), 1.

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mingei, understood their material surroundings as capable of shaping their well-being. We will also see how Iwate lacquerware produced along the Appi River, including Jōbōji lacquer, proved to be particularly useful within mingei discourse as an articulation of Japanese modernity that is anchored by age-old traditions and materials.

Although Iwate lacquerware was largely unknown to many outside the broader Tōhoku region during the Meiji period, its "handmade" production, use of locally tapped lacquer tree sap, functionality, and simplified designs were lauded by enthusiasts of the Folk Craft Movement during the 1930s and 1940s. Articles on Iwate lacquer soon appeared in journals with national audiences, including *Kōgei* (*Craft*), *Mingei*, and *Gekkan mingei* (*Mingei Monthly*), which propelled increasing awareness and appreciation for simplified lacquer designs emblematic of rural life in Japan and that were produced in Iwate for several centuries. <sup>104</sup> This chapter examines a re-evaluation of Iwate lacquerware, not merely in terms of abstract aesthetic values and judgement but also their entanglement with local environments in peripheral Japan. This re-evaluation includes revised conceptions of "art" and "craft," and recognition of concerns that an authentic "handmade" Japanese culture could be lost to industrial modernization. Therefore, rather than speak to any inherent value of modern Iwate lacquerware as aesthetic objects, this chapter discloses the aesthetic, cultural, and nationalistic values mingei enthusiasts attributed to Jōbōji lacquer amid the convulsions of the modernizing Japanese nation.

## Jōbōji Lacquer as a Defining Example of Yanagi's Mingei Ideology

In April of 1926, Yanagi Muneyoshi, along with potters Tomimoto Kenkichi (1886-1963), Kawai Kanjirō (1890-1966), and Hamada Shōji (1894-1978), self-published the *Prospectus on Establishment of on the Japan Folk Crafts Museum (Nihon Mingei Bijutsukan setsuritsu shuisho*). <sup>105</sup> It is in this text that the term "mingei" is likely to have been introduced publicly. Thereafter, Yanagi repeatedly articulated his vision of mingei for varying audiences. For our purposes—which are focused on Iwate lacquerware within the Mingei Movement—it is Yanagi's explanation of the origin of "mingei" in his 1933 essay titled "What is Folk Craft?" that provides an especially cogent explanation of the origin of the word "mingei." Here, Yanagi defines the terms as follows:

We took the word *min*, meaning "the masses" or "the people," and the word *gei*, meaning "craft," and combined them to create *mingei*. Literally, the word means "crafts of the people." It is meant to stand in contrast to aristocratic fine arts, and refers to objects used by ordinary people in their daily lives. These objects include household effects such as clothing, furniture, eating utensils, and stationary. In common parlance they are referred to as "ordinary things" (*getemono*), "the roughly made" (*sobutsu*), and "sundry implements" (*zatsugu*). All of these are counted as *mingei* or folk craft. <sup>106</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Yanagi Muneyoshi, Tomimoto Kenkichi, Kawai Kanjirō and Hamada Shōji, *Nihon Mingei Bijutsukan setsuritsu shuisho (Prospectus on Establishment of on the Japan Folk Crafts Museum)* (self-published, 1926).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> The journal *Gekkan mingei* was renamed *Mingei* in January of 1942.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Yanagi Sōetsu, *Soetsu Yanagi: Selected Essays on Japanese Folk Crafts*, translated by Michael Brase with the cooperation of The Japan Folk Crafts Museum (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture (JPIC), 2017), 75. The original essay was published in 1933 under the title "What is Folk Craft?"

This passage reveals the concise reasoning behind the linguistic decisions that combine to form the compound word "craft of the people," as well as the specific contrast of mingei with the "aristocratic fine arts." This distinction between the "crafts of the people" and the "aristocratic fine arts" is essential to Yanagi's conceptualization of mingei and is especially meaningful for the reception history of modern Jōbōji lacquer. As Sueshige's 1942 poem published in *Mingei* suggests, Iwate lacquerware functioned as eating utensils firmly embedded in daily life. Yanagi's explanation also discloses the omnivorousness of the neologism mingei, which incorporates objects belonging to multiple linguistic and conceptual categories. With this coinage, "getemono," "sobutsu," and "zatsugu"—all terms that predate mingei and could be used to describe household items that were not typically admired for their aesthetic qualities—could now be bundled into the ideological, aesthetic, and simultaneously ambiguous term of "mingei."

Given this expansive definition, it is not surprising that the archive of mingei materials comprises thousands of craft objects in diverse categories of visual-material culture held in collections across Japan and overseas. Writing utensils, furniture, dishware, architecture, clothing, even the covers of each issue of *Mingei* magazine themselves, can be consolidated into the category of mingei. For their part, folklorists, anthropologists, historians, and art historians have examined mingei from diverse perspectives reflective of the variety of objects included in this definition. But what concerns me here is the specific modern emergence of Jōbōji lacquer in relation to the larger history of mingei and its study. For example, how does the Jōbōji lacquer landscape—the complex assemblage of organisms and environments that produce Jōbōji lacquerware—and its archive reveal a re-evaluation from "slipshod" design to an embodiment of the "beauty of life?" In the paragraphs that follow, we will see how the Jōbōji lacquer landscape provided at least part of the answer to growing anxieties surrounding the decay of Japanese material culture amidst modernization and war.

This chapter addresses the mingei archive with the distinct purpose of situating the Jōbōji lacquer landscape of the Appi River valley within it. As one might expect, Yanagi identified lacquerware produced in Iwate as representative of functional objects, unsigned by their makers and therefore exemplary models of the work of the "non-individualist," or "anti-hero" that lies at the core of mingei ideology. Others have insightfully analyzed Yanagi's 1926 Prospectus for the Japan Mingei Art Museum, the Mingei periodical, and Yanagi's book length study of the "handmade" in *Teshigoto no Nihon*, among other textual sources to reveal the nationalist undertone of mingei theory and the Mingei Movement. For example, Kim Brandt has convincingly demonstrated how the Mingei Movement received support from the state who "recognized in folk art the potential for an updated national aesthetic" in the 1930s and 1940s. 107 This chapter adds a localized approach to this scholarship that highlights lacquered objects from Iwate to parse the nationalist implications embedded within the Mingei Movement. Rather than imposing a generalized interpretation of Yanagi's mingei ideology onto local craft and ecology, I examine how Iwate lacquerwares were folded into the Mingei Movement, and how they were characterized, described, and contextualized for national and international audiences from 1920 to 1950.

Similar to others studying mingei, I, too, utilize these canonical texts produced by Yanagi and his friends and colleagues that outlined mingei ideology, described mingei production centers across the Japanese archipelago, and espoused the importance of mingei during a period

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> Brandt. 5.

of rapid modernization. Many of these texts reveal that advocates of mingei understood the profusion of machine-made objects to be a threat that required an intentional intervention and remedy. That said, I analyze this extensive archive with a particular attention to place: How did Yanagi and other mingei enthusiasts understand the contribution of Iwate lacquer within the Mingei Movement? What objects captured their attention and why? Which objects did Yanagi bring to Tokyo and display at the Mingei Museum and how were they displayed? Building from our examination in Chapter One of strategies employed by local lacquer artisans who sought to elevate Iwate lacquerware through the use of maki-e in Meiji and Taisho, this place-based study of mingei discloses how Jōbōji lacquerware were presented in Tokyo as romanticized models of traditional lacquer artisanship.

One of the first published images of Iwate lacquerware appears in Yanagi's Folk-Crafts in Japan, printed in December 1936, the same year the Japan Museum of Folk Crafts opened in Tokyo. Interestingly, however, the image of a lacquered spouted sake ewer (Yanagi refers to it as a "decanter") had been previously used in a lecture Yanagi delivered at the Peers Club of the Society for International Cultural Relations (Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai) in Tokyo on April 8 of the same year. <sup>109</sup> In the proceedings from his lecture that were directed at an international audience, Yanagi provided some of his most lucid descriptions and definitions of mingei. The qualities of mingei that Yanagi defines often fit neatly onto the lacquered objects collected from the Jōbōji area. The proceedings were converted into a text with an accompanying English translation and published just a month after the opening of the Japan Museum of Folk Crafts in Komaba, Tokyo, which showcased Yanagi's mingei collection. This text introduces examples of farmhouses, votive pictures (ema), souvenir pictures from Ōtsu (Ōtsu-e), Seto ceramics, and block-dyed textiles (katazome) before introducing listeners and readers to lacquerware. There is only one example of lacquer, and the chosen object is a lidded red lacquer sake ewer from "Nambu [Nanbu] in Northern Japan" (Figs. 2.2-3). <sup>110</sup> Yanagi captions the image as follows:

Here is an example of lacquer *Saké-tsugi* (*saké* decanter). Japanese lacquer wares are known the world over. There are many different kinds of lacquer work, of which the most famous is *makiye*. This particular kind is always of select quality and expensive. An antithesis to the aristocratic *makiye*, there is for the use of the people *ye-urushi* which includes all lacquer wares with figure in different colours. Among *ye-urushi* vessels may be found some really artistic creations. They were

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Yanagi was not alone is his concern over the future of craft production, and lacquerware in particular. The Ministry of Commerce had benefitted from decades of success in the market of lacquer export wares, but in the midtwentieth century that market for Japanese lacquerware was in decline. In 1937, lacquer artisan Yamazaki Kakutarō (1899-1984) was sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's Bureau of Foreign Commerce (Shōkōshō bōekikyoku) to travel overseas to Europe and the United States to survey the condition of craft (*kōgei*) with the intention of reviving the lacquer industry back in Japan. The result is a nearly 200-page written report titled *New Trends in Craft Overseas* (*Kaigai kōgei no shin keikō*). In this report, Yamazaki noted that while surveying many luxury department stores in the United States, many of the goods for sale were not produced in the U.S. Rather, he found that when he turned over wares to look for a mark of origin they often originated in Czechoslovakia, France, England, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Italy, among other countries. Yamazaki spends much time lamenting the lack of enthusiasm for Japanese lacquer compared with previous decades in which the craft items were popular among collectors. See Yamazaki Kakutarō, and Shōkōshōbōekikyoku, eds., *Kaigai kōgei no shin keikō*, (Tokyo: Nihon shutsukōgei rengōkai, 1937), 1-2. Accessed: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/1227895.

<sup>109</sup> Yanagi Sōetsu, Folk-Crafts In Japan, trans. Sakabe Shigeyoshi (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1936).110 Ibid.. 54.

produced in all parts of the country, but the most outstanding examples came from Nambu [Nanbu] in Northern Japan, Etchû and Ômi provinces. The illustration is of a two hundred year old Nambu product, used as a *sake* decanter.

Here, Yanagi uses the antithesis of the Nanbu lacquerware—maki-e lacquer or "sprinkled picture" lacquer—to elucidate its value as an example of "crafts of the people." In contrast to maki-e wares, the presented sake ewer is covered with black lacquer and then adorned with a "lacquer picture" (*urushi-e*). As discussed in Chapter One, the *urushi-e* technique involves first covering the wood base or a section of the base with at least one layer of pigmented lacquer, usually black. Then, an artisan applies red lacquer pigmented with iron oxide or yellow lacquer pigmented with orpiment to their brush before applying it onto the black lacquer base to create an image. *Urushi-e* are often simplified versions of images depicted in the more labor-intensive and technically demanding maki-e lacquer technique.

Yanagi refers to both techniques in the caption of the Nanbu sake decanter and contrasts them. Like *urushi-e*, the maki-e technique creates pictures, usually on top of a dark lacquered background. The key difference between the two techniques is that instead of creating the image from pigmented lacquer as is done in the *urushi-e* technique, maki-e designs are created by sprinkling small pieces of gold and silver onto translucent wet lacquer. The picture is then formed when the small pieces of precious metals bind to the wet lacquer. Such maki-e pictures are constituted by the precious metals, and the lacquer functions as an adhesive. Premodern examples of maki-e lacquerware often belonged to the aristocracy, for example an *Inkstone case with Mount Kasuga in maki-e (Kasugayama maki-e suzuribako)* believed to have belonged to Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436-1490), depicting three deer in an autumn landscape, is designated as Important Cultural Property (Figs. 2.4-6). Many such maki-e lacquerwares are regarded as consummate examples of Japanese lacquer work, artistic sense of design, and elegant craftsmanship.

Sake ewers, colloquially referred to as "hiage" in Jōbōji and the areas along the Appi River in Iwate Prefecture, were used since at least the Edo period (1600-1868) to decant locally produced sake called doburoku. This viscous variety of sake is a mixture of solids and liquid, requiring decanting upon serving. The hiage, with an elongated, wide spout is designed to decant doburoku while distributing it to smaller sake cups for consumption. In opposition to maki-e, the sake ewer pictured is adorned with urushi-e that depicts a design of chrysanthemum and scrolling foliage on the lid. The body brushed with pigmented lacquer. The design consists of three colors—black, orange, and red—and all are created by adding pigments to lacquer. The black is likely pigmented with pine soot, the orange/yellow with orpiment, and the red with iron oxide (Fig. 2.3). Perhaps most distinctive of the Jōbōji sake ewers are the rings of pigmented lacquer brushed at the base of the spout that continue onto the lid. Each line is characterized by enlarged nodes where the lid meets the body. The ring design around the spout is seen on lacquered vessels in the Jōbōji area since at least the Edo period.

Yanagi's commentary on this *hiage* example foregrounds the importance of place. Yanagi asserts that the "most outstanding examples" of *urushi-e* are found in named locations: "Nambu [Nanbu] in Northern Japan, Etchû and Ômi provinces." According to the caption, the decanter depicted in the image is from Nanbu, which is a slightly ambiguous reference to Tōhoku region. During the Edo period, the Nanbu clan controlled a large swath of northeastern Japan that included areas that span across multiple modern prefectures, including Iwate, Aomori, and

Akita.<sup>111</sup> The Nanbu clan are perhaps most famous for their construction of Morioka Castle completed in 1633 in the center of present-day Morioka City, of which only the stone foundation remains. The Nanbu clan's expansive geographic domain renders Yanagi's reference to the original location of the sake ewer vague and unclear. Even so, vast quantities of similar examples found in the Jōbōji area and along the Appi River make it likely that the ewer pictured in the 1936 text originated near Jōbōji. The point, however, is that Yanagi appears to emphasize that the broad area of "Nanbu" representing the northern regions of Japan is important to his explanation of the sake ewer. Northern Japan, then, is a geographical signifier of mingei craft and its qualities.

The fact that Yanagi chose a work of Jōbōji lacquer to represent lacquered mingei to an international audience seems significant for several reasons. For instance, the incorporation of mingei into larger programming that catered to American audiences sought to explain Japanese cultural amidst heightening concern over Japan's militaristic expansion. As John Gripentrog notes, the Society for International Cultural Relations where Yanagi gave his lecture was involved in decades of programming—exhibitions, lectures, publications, and films—both overseas and in Japan that, among other efforts, attempted to construct a diplomatic position that humanized the Japanese government after the Manchurian occupation of 1931-1933. 112

Additionally, we might recall that there were several key criteria that mingei must exhibit, as articulated in Yanagi's writings and in the broader mingei archive. Yanagi and other mingei enthusiasts such as Sueshige based their high evaluation of Jōbōji wares on how these wares exemplified the aesthetic-ideological construction of mingei as a broad entity consisting of these criteria. In his 1936 lecture, Yanagi summarized these criteria, stating that mingei must be: practical objects; not signed by the maker (they are "non-individualistic"); characterized by tradition, not individuality; simple and unassuming; and their beauty is borne out of their practicality. In accordance with Yanagi's definition of mingei as "crafts of the people," these characteristics of mingei are notable for their subjectivity and expansiveness. Yet, we do get a sense that the objects he considers to be mingei are not valorized as the result of individual artistic genius. Rather, they are anonymously produced wares rooted in traditions of the past. Like the lacquerwares referenced in Sueshige's poem—the miso soup bowl and ware depicting Mount Fuji—the value of mingei objects hinges on their ability to perform their functional task of containing and "gently scooping" soup.

In his elaboration of these criteria in this lecture, Yanagi makes it abundantly clear that a sense of individualism should not be perceived in a mingei object. This is a significant shift from Yanagi's earlier interest in post-impressionist artists—the likes of Cézanne and Van Gogh—prior to his interest in mingei. As Erin Schoneveld shows, Yanagi was heavily involved in the Shirakaba-ha (White Birch Society,) in the early twentieth century. Yanagi published in the group's literary magazine *Shirakaba* (1910-1923), and the writing of Yanagi appears to reflect the thinking of the group's members. In an essay titled the "The Revolutionary Artists" (*Kakumei no gaka*), Yanagi writes that "The Post-Impressionist artists who tread the path of a revolutionary artist and who have strongly influenced us, are Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Matisse. It is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> Specific territories controlled by the Nanbu clan included Mutsu, Sannohe, Ninohe, Kunohe, Hei, Iwate, Shiwa, Hienuki, Waga, and Kazuno.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> John, Gripentrog, "Power and Culture: Japan's Cultural Diplomacy in the United States, 1934–1940," *Pacific Historical Review* 84, no. 4 (2015): 478–516, https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2015.84.4.478.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> Yanagi Sōetsu, Folk-Crafts In Japan, trans. Sakabe Shigeyoshi, 1-15.

appropriate to say that these men are "expressionists" (*hyōgenha no hito*). Their art is an ongoing expression of their own individualism." <sup>114</sup>

Clearly, then, this focus on the Self and individuality is at odds with the ideas Yanagi later espoused. In contrast to the position articulated in texts such as "The Revolutionary Artist," Yanagi turned away from these topics and their philosophical and political significance to focus attention on "the common people" and their "unpretentious and modest art." In turn, Yanagi came to be concerned with the trajectory of aesthetic judgement that had dominated much of the early twentieth century. The "Age of Individualism," Yanagi warned, reconfigured an age of nameless artisans into a system where:

...discussion of art is synonymous with a discussion of the works of geniuses. The art historian's attention seems to have been greatly given to discovering which great artist created this or that particular work of art. He is busily engaged in "attributing" from morning till night. And we believe with him that to understand works of art is to appreciate the remarkable individuality and genius of their creators. A great work of art, therefore, is always considered to be the expression of a great personality. So, it is hero-worship, more than anything else, that is characteristic of the moderns' attitude toward life. 116

The work of mingei ideology was thus to counter such singular focus on "artistic geniuses" and "heroes," and to call into question the lingering interests in the self-actualization of the individual such as those we find espoused in Yanagi's earlier writing in *Shirakaba*. In this sense, the humble design of the Jōbōji sake ewer with its *urushi-e* decoration served as more than merely an illustration of a category of object. It was a potent embodiment of Yanagi's post-Shirakaba thinking about art and aesthetics more broadly.

### (De)Localizing Jōbōji Lacquerware: Mingei Magazines, Maps, and Exhibitions

During the early twentieth century, proponents of the Mingei Movement were focused on efforts to identify, collect, and promote the future production of folk crafts. <sup>117</sup> In this regard we should note that Yanagi's 1936 Peers Club lecture coincided with the completion of the Japan Folk Craft Museum (Nihon Mingeikan). Construction in Komaba, Tokyo, began in 1935, and on October 24, 1936, the Japan Folk Craft Museum opened to the public. Yanagi, who designed the museum's style and chose the storehouse-style design (*kurazukurifū*)—with plastered walls and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Erin, Schoneveld, *Shirakaba and Japanese Modernism: Art Magazines, Artistic Collectives, and the Early Avant-Garde* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 209. The original text is from Yanagi Muneyoshi, "The Revolutionary Artist" (Kakumei no gaka), *Shirakaba* 3, no. 1 (1912): 1-31. Yanagi was broadly interested in Euro-American intellectuals, poets, and artists. Yanagi wrote extensively on aesthetics and poetry, including the work of Walt Whitman, William Blake, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Edgar Allen Poe, among others. Many of these writings take the form of translations and annotations, demonstrating Yanagi's deep interest and engagement with the material.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Yanagi, Folk-Crafts In Japan, (Foreword).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> The centralizing administrative body of mingei-related activities is the Japan Mingei Association (Nihon Mingei Kyōkai). Yanagi served as the first director of the Association when it was established in June 1934. In November 1942, the Iwate branch of the Japan Mingei Association was founded. This was part of a larger trend of satellite branches of Mingei Associations spreading throughout much of Japan. See Nihon Mingei Kyōkai, "Nihon Mingei Kyōkai no ayumi," accessed: https://www.nihon-mingeikyoukai.jp/society/history/.

Ōya stones—was also named the museum's first director (Figs. 2.7-8)<sup>118</sup>. The museum's collection today comprises approximately 17,000 objects, many of which were collected by Yanagi himself.<sup>119</sup> One of the goals of the museum, as outlined in its prospectus, was to guide and promote the production of crafts in the future.<sup>120</sup> This had its basis partly in the relationships with Yanagi, cultivated by a number of artisans, which became vital to the development of mingei across the 1920s. Some artisans cultivated relationships with Yanagi and were instrumental in constructing the future of mingei throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. In particular, Bernard Leach (1887-1979), Kanjiro Kawai (1890-1966), Shoji Hamada (1894-1978), Keisuke Serizawa (1895-1984), Shiko Munakata (1903-1975), and Tatsuaki Kuroda (1904-1982) avidly participated in the Mingei Movement through production of folk craft objects, many of which were displayed in mingei exhibitions and published in mingei-related journals.<sup>121</sup>

To identity and collect mingei from distant regions, Yanagi often traveled to these locations himself. From 1927 to 1944, he made more than twenty visits to the Tōhoku region. 122 Nemoto Ryōko noted that Yanagi made a survey trip in December of 1927 to Sendai (Miyagi Prefecture), Morioka (Iwate Prefecture), Aomori City, Hirosaki (Aomori Prefecture), Akita City, Sakata (Yamagata Prefecture), and Kashiwazaki (Niigata Prefecture), among other locations. Although this survey was limited to major cities in Tōhoku, Yanagi visited each of the prefectures in the region in preparation for the 1934 Genzai Nihon Mingei-ten (Exhibition of Contemporary Japanese Folk Craft). 123 Yanagi again visited Tōhoku to conduct research on mingei in early August of that year, traveling to Ichinoseki, Hanamaki, Tono, Morioka, Ichinohe, Kuji, and Hachinohe. Notably, the Japan Folk Crafts Museum dates a *hiage* produced in Ninohe to this 1934 visit to Iwate. According to Mizuno Hiroshi, Yanagi made four separate visits to Iwate in the two years of 1934 and 1935, four additional visits in the period from 1938 to 1940, and then five more visits from 1941 to 1945. 124 Most of these trips were part of larger excursions throughout the Tōhoku area, but the total of five visits to Iwate Prefecture from 1941 to 1945 is the largest number of visits to any prefecture in Tōhoku, suggesting Yanagi's increasing interest in "discovering" mingei in multiple villages, towns, and cities in Iwate. 125

As Iwate lacquerware were collected and brought to Tokyo for display in the Japan Folk Craft Museum, they began to appear in mingei-related publications as well. In the March 1942 issue of *Mingei*—the same issue in which Sueshige's poem appeared—Ueno Kuniharu wrote an article titled "Iwate Lacquerware" (*Iwate no shikki*) to accompany the Jōbōji lacquered lid on the front cover of the issue. As with much discourse on Iwate lacquer within the mingei archive, Ueno uses the first sentence of his article to connect contemporary Iwate lacquerware production with the Hidehira-wan (Hidehira vessels) and, therefore, Fujiwara no Hidehira of the twelfth

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Nihon Mingeikan Gakugeibu, ed., Nihon Mingeikan Annai (Tokyo: Nihon Mingeikan, 2016), 10.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 11, 48. There are around 1,600 items collected from the Joseon dynasty.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> Yanagi Muneyoshi, Tomimoto Kenkichi, et. al., Nihon Mingei Bijutsukan setsuritsu shuisho, 1926.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Nihon Mingeikan Gakugeibu, ed., 58.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> Nemoto Ryōko, "Yanagi Muneyoshi no mingeihin chōsa shūshū ryokō chizu," *Tōhoku-e no manazashi 1930-1945 (Eyes on Tōhoku)*, edited by Izumi Kuroishi et al. (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 2022), 227.
 <sup>123</sup> Nemoto, 227.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> Kobatake Kunie, "Yanagi Muneyoshi no ashiato to sanchi no chizuka: *Nihon mingei chizu byōbu* no seiritsu chūshin ni," *Jinbunchiri* 53 no. 3 (2001): 35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> Mingei objects produced in Iwate appear to have been sold at Kōgensha located in Morioka. See Discover Japan, "Morioka: Kōgensha-e. Issei mono no mingei ni deau jikan ryokō [No. 1], last modified Jan. 20, 2017: https://discoverjapan-web.com/article/1651.

century. However, as discussed in Chapter One, Kudō Kōichi has found evidence to suggest that vessels with the genji cloud design and rhombus-shaped gold leaf adornments were referred to as "Nanbu-wan" (Nanbu vessels) or "Hidehira-wan" in regions outside of the Appi River valley and as "Jōbōji-wan" (Jōbōji vessels) within the region. 126

These discrepancies in naming are intriguing, given that most of the vessels are very similar in their form, coloration, and decoration. Modern scholars of lacquer, and even renowned lacquer artisans such as Matsuda Gonroku (1896-1986), have prioritized lacquer traditions that are more legible to a national audience. In this case, the frequency with which the names "Hidehira-wan" and "Nanbu-wan" are used instead of "Jōbōji-wan" (Jōbōji vessels) appears to demonstrate this tendency. Jōbōji-wan would likely be overly obscure to those readers of *Mingei* who were not experts on regional lacquerware production. To writers and publishers embedded in the Mingei Movement and beyond, the association to a historical reference understood by their audiences—the Northern Fujiwara—was crucial. Tapping into this well-known national history dating to the twelfth-century appears to have been instrumental to the promotion of lacquered objects associated with the Mingei Movement throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

Although he does not mention Yanagi, Ueno's *Mingei* article positions Iwate lacquer so that it aligns it with the general definition of mingei objects discussed above: "...the landscape pattern (the vessel lid), and the ginko tree pattern (wood dish) are patterns of old, every one of the numerous artisans makes them and they are drawn over and over again many times. Without any sense of idleness and with dexterous, unrestrained brushwork, there is something about these works that captivates the heart. These are the objects of Arasawa." The "landscape pattern" Ueno references is the depiction of Mount Fuji with a body of water and pine trees in the foreground described above. The model for the Mount Fuji design likely reached the lacquer community along the Appi River through the migration and circulation of maki-e pattern books by at least the Meiji period (see Chapter One). One Meiji-period pattern book in the collection of Satō Motozō and now in the collection of the Jōbōji Folk History Museum preserves several circular drawings of Mount Fuji that likely served as the model for the lacquerware depicted on the cover of the March 1942 issue of *Mingei* (Fig. 1.9).

The circulation of maki-e pattern books among the Appi River lacquer community, including Jōbōji, complicates the reading of these works as examples of traditional, strictly local craft objects. As discussed in Chapter One, the maki-e pattern books circulated to the Appi River communities through invitation of maki-e artisans who were trained in Tokyo, Aizuwakamatsu in Fukushima Prefecture, and Wajima in Ishikawa Prefecture. Kudō Kōichi notes that a graduate of the Kōgyō Gakko (Industrial School) in Ishikawa Prefecture came to Arasawa village to lead the Ninohe Lacquerware Training Center (*Ninohe shikki denshūjo*) in June 1910. Lacquer that such graduates from industrial schools were invited to the Appi River region to bolster the lacquer industry by teaching maki-e techniques and lacquerware design to those with little to no experience with such techniques. Lacquerware depicting Mount

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> Kudō Kōichi, *Iwate urushi no kindaishi* (Morioka: Kawaguchi, 2011), 171. Kudō cites articles from 1913 and 1919 titled "On Jōbōji lacquer" and "Hachiyōzan Tendaiji" respectively.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> Ueno Kuniharu, "Iwate lacquerware" (Iwate no shikki), Mingei 4, no. 3 (March 1942): leaf.

<sup>128</sup> Kudō lists the specific maki-e artisan's name as Tsutsi Kanetsugi (筒井金次). Kudō Kōichi, *Iwate no kindaishi*. 127

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

Fuji on a vermillion background and originating from the Suzuzen Lacquer Workshop in Aizuwakamatsu demonstrates this type of ornate gold and silver maki-e (Fig. 2.9).

As noted previously, the Mount Fuji design pictured on the cover of *Mingei* (Fig. 2.1) is depicted in the *urushi-e* "lacquer picture" technique, not maki-e. On one hand, the Mount Fuji design represents a design that circulated widely throughout lacquer communities. On another, the Fuji designs exemplify the local materials and techniques specific to the Jōbōji lacquer community. We might say that this lacquered lid retains elements of nationally recognized lacquer techniques that were filtered through the pre-existing skills of local artisans working in Jōbōji. The differences in visual appearance—the dexterous brushstrokes, for example—as opposed to the fine, delicate work of maki-e, read to Ueno as powerful visual indicators of robustness, a quality that, in contrast to maki-e, pointed to the vigor and unrestrained vitality of locally produced *urushi-e* lacquerware.

Six additional images of lacquerware directly follow Ueno's March 1942 article—four small black lacquered dishes with *urushi-e* designs and one set of three small nesting vessels called *mittsu-wan* (Figs. 2.10-12). One of the dishes, with a yellow *urushi-e* design depicting a pair of overlapping ginko leaves, was, according to its caption, produced in Arayashinmachi along the Appi River (Fig. 2.12). Many nearly identical small lacquered trays, commonly referred to as *kashibon* in the Jōbōji area, are adorned with the same simple design. Against a black background, the leaves are rendered only in outline with their roughly triangular shape filling the majority of the tray's surface. Two delicately brushed lines slowly converge to a sharp point in the center of the top leaf, creating a deep central groove that divides the symmetrical notches along the leaf's edge. The long, stem-like petioles curve outward toward the edge of the dish; as the pressure applied to the brush increases, the petiole gradually widens and, in turn, creates a sense of weight that complements the wide leaves. The combinations of thin converging lines with weighty and wavering brushstrokes suggest a sense of balance and ease in the dexterity and playfulness Ueno referenced.

Writing on mingei that appeared in magazines during the 1930s frequently addressed, and often promoted the revitalization of declining craft communities perceived to have direct connections to traditional craft production. In terms of lacquerware, the *urushi-e* technique utilized by those artisans working in the Appi River lacquer community was identified as a particularly vibrant and sincere expression of mingei, but writers publishing in mingei-related magazines were equally invested in promoting the revitalization of Iwate lacquerware. Concerns about rural community revitalization, craft material procurement, and economic vitality were foregrounded in such mingei discourse. For example, in his March 1942 article on Iwate lacquerware, Ueno claimed that "All regions are suffering from shortages of lacquer, but Iwate Prefecture is incredibly powerful because it is able to meet demand with locally produced lacquer and still have a surplus." He then elaborated:

Further, the Koromogawa workshop gathers the outstanding lacquer artisans in the prefecture, in the land that possesses tradition, to resist the intensifying decline of lacquerware at present. They are endeavoring to respond as much as possible new the uses of lacquerware, progressing from improvement in quality to the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> Ueno Kuniharu, "Iwate lacquerware" (Iwate no shikki), *Mingei* 4, no. 3 (March 1942): leaf.

development of quantity—they produce lacquerware necessary to lead a healthy life.<sup>131</sup>

Precedents for Ueno's concern with the revitalization of mingei communities and their traditions can be seen in several of Yanagi's earlier essays on mingei, including "The Beauty of Miscellaneous Things" ("Zakki no Bi"), published in 1926. By "miscellaneous things," Yanagi is referring to objects found around the home that are "not meant for display or decoration." In the essay, Yanagi first draws a close connection between the "local environment" and folk craft. He wrote:

Particular attention should be paid to the material used, for good craftsmanship is built on natural foundations, and nature assures the material's quality. Rather than the craft object finding the most suitable materials, it can be said that the material finds the right object. Folk crafts are invariably the product of a local environment. When a certain locality is rich in a certain raw material, that material gives rise to a certain craftware. It is these resources, the gift of nature, that are the veritable mother of craftwork. The natural environment, raw materials, and production, these three are inseparable. When they are as one, the resultant craftwares will be natural and free-flowing, for they are the products of nature. 133

Though he wrote expansively about the connection between local environments and mingei, his description of a "certain locality...rich in a certain raw material" accurately describes the Jōbōji lacquer landscape. As outlined in the Introduction of this dissertation, the Appi River valley provided ideal conditions for the growth of beech and lacquer trees—both necessary to produce lacquerware substrates and lacquer sap procurement, respectively. By connecting craft-making with these environmental conditions, Yanagi, and those expanding upon his work, connected the value of mingei with local landscapes that continued to exist in twentieth-century Japan. He continues:

When raw materials dwindle and disappear, there is little choice but to close up shop. Nature is unforgiving when materials are stretched beyond reason. And if material is not available, close at hand, how can crafts be produced in mass, both cheap and durable? Behind each object there exists a certain clime, temperature range, and soil quality, as well as other physical conditions. It is this that adds flavor and color to provincial crafts, being products of multiple factors. Crafts that adhere to nature receive the blessings of nature. When natural conditions are not satisfied, craftwork becomes weak and dull. The rich quality of common handicrafts is a gift of nature. To see its beauty is to see nature's spontaneous workings."<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Yanagi, Sōetsu, Soetsu Yanagi: Selected Essays on Japanese Folk Crafts, trans. Michael Brase, 88.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup> Sōetsu, translated by Brase, 92.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

In this passage, Yanagi makes some of his strongest assertions that beauty lies at the intersection of local material and object-making. Problems may arise, however, when the local materials that support mingei production begin to dwindle. As is the case for many craft traditions throughout Japan, a lack of raw materials endangers viability of these traditions in the future. The attention drawn to local communities and their environments throughout the Japanese archipelago should therefore be considered in relation to issues of revitalization and perpetuation of essential skills and materials.

The Jōbōji lacquer landscape and its associated sites of lacquerware production were just one of hundreds of sites Yanagi and others identified as critical centers of mingei production. After traveling throughout much of Japan documenting numerous sites of traditional Japanese craft production in the 1930s and 1940s, Yanagi sought to create a visual aid to locate these local sites of production and to "Make it so that the shape of our country could be seen through the distinctive handicrafts (*mingei*) made in each region." The result is the *Map of Mingei in Japan (Nihon Mingei Chizu*), also referred to as *Contemporary Japanese Mingei (Genzai no Nihon Mingei*) (Figs. 2.13-16). Serizawa Keisuke, a well-known textile artist, produced the set of three folding screens in 1941. Together, the work stands at 170 centimeters in height and extends horizontally over thirteen meters across three separate folding screens that depict a detailed colored map of Japan. Following cartographic convention, northern Japan is depicted at the extreme right, and as we move to the left, we are presented with central, western, and finally southern Japan including Okinawa.

Although the map serves as a panoptic visualization of mingei locations, it was likely mapped using the locations of mingei objects that Yanagi collected on his numerous research and collecting trips and brought back to Tokyo with him. The work was displayed from March 6 to June 8, 1941, at the Japan Folk Crafts Museum in Tokyo as part of the *Exhibition of Current Mingei Wares of Japan (Nihon Genzai Mingeihin-ten)*. The screens were displayed again in October of the following year. As Suzuki Katsuo noted, "mingei's practice" was "rooted in bundling together a variety of folk crafts from different regions into the single category of

<sup>135</sup> Original Japanese: 「各地で出来る特色ある手仕事を通して、我国の姿を見ようとする」. Yanagi Muneyoshi, *Teshigoto no Nihon* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1948), 32.

<sup>136</sup> Although Serizawa Keisuke, born in 1895 in Shizuoka Prefecture, produced the *Map of Mingei in Japan* on paper, he is known primarily as a textile artisan specializing in stencil-dyeing textiles. In 1956 Serizawa was designated as an Intangible Important Cultural Property, also referred to as a "Living National Treasure." As Kobatake notes, Serizawa produced a well-known folding screen map of Okinawa using stencil-dyed silk, now held in the Japan Folk Craft Museum in Tokyo which likely serves as the precursor to the national *Map of Mingei in Japan* produced two years later. See Kobatake, 32. The *Map of Mingei in Japan* has been displayed a number of times since the initial exhibition in 1941. It was displayed at a mingei display for the World Exposition in Ōsaka in 1970; in 1972 for the opening of the Ōsaka Nihon Mingeikan; and in 1989 and 2000 at the Mingeikan in Tokyo. Kobatake notes that the screens are displayed at particular moments of historical change (for example during the first year of the Heisei period, 1989), suggesting that the screens serve as a symbols of mingei. See Kobatake, 235. Most recently the screens were displayed in 2021 and 2022 at the National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo, and the Tokyo Station Gallery, Fukushima Prefectural Art Museum, Iwate Museum of Art in 2022.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> Kobatake notes that the exhibition with the *Map of Mingei in Japan* was originally planned to close at the end of April but was extended to early June, likely due to audience appeal. Kobatake, 29. Much of the Mingeikan collection was split up, sent to a number of locations and stored underground to avoid destruction during the fire-bombing of Tokyo in 1945. The large size of the *Mingei Map* likely meant that it was not sent to another location but remained in the Mingeikan. Kobatake, 235.

Japan."<sup>138</sup> Indeed, the *Map of Mingei in Japan* displayed in Tokyo fulfills this goal of generating a consolidated vision of the Japanese nation state using vastly diverse sets of unique locales and their respective traditional crafts, which were connected and accessible by railway.

In fact, the map consists of several overlaid levels of geographic organization. Areas depicted in color represent premodern feudal domains. However, modern prefectural boundaries are depicted in white lines that sometimes diverge from these premodern feudal boundaries. Railway lines are presented as black lines that traverse invisible mountains that blanket much of the archipelago, connecting cities, towns, and villages with a transportation network. At the far right, the map's alternative title, *Genzai no Nihon Mingei*, is inscribed in black ink, and below it is a map legend consisting of twenty-five seals affixed to the paper surface. Each seal has a unique shape and is inscribed with characters that indicate a particular category of mingei. Across the entire map, 541 different sites of mingei production are marked with paper seals affixed to the surface of the screen, each inscribed with the name of a category of mingei such as papermaking, woodturning, lacquerware, textiles, or ceramics. 139

We see examples of Jōbōji lacquer identified on the 1941 Mingei Map. On the screen placed farthest to the right, we see eastern Japan. Tokyo is visible in the bottom left, indicated by a convergence of black rail lines at the edge of Tokyo Bay. On the far right, we see just the edge of Hokkaidō penetrating the frame of the right panel, just above the title. Once one locates the distinctive hook-like form of Shimokita peninsula, depicted in orange and extending to the right at the northern edge of the main island of Honshu, one can locate Iwate Prefecture depicted mostly in beige just below. Characterized by open space with relatively few seals, we see the main railway running north to south (depicted running right to left) with additional lines cutting across the Ōu mountains toward Akita in the west and towards the Pacific Ocean on the right. Then, visible in the top right corner of the prefecture, we see two seals, one depicting a simple red-lacquered bowl with the label "Jōbōji lacquerware" (Jōbōji-nuri) and another just to the left with a black-lacquered spouted vessel labeled "hiage" or "spouted vessel" (Fig. 2.16). The redlacquered bowl refers to wares produced near the temple Tendaiji, which is said to have been founded by monks sent from Nara in the late eighth century (see Introduction). The spouted black vessel is labeled with the location "Arayashinmachi," referring to a small town along the Appi River.

The *Mingei Map* screens reveal several priorities espoused by Yanagi and his fellow mingei enthusiasts, not least of which is the importance of "place" within the mingei framework. Although the Japan Folk Craft Museum collection, largely supplied by Yanagi himself, fulfilled the purpose of displaying actual mingei to the public, the production of the *Mingei Map* reflects a deepening desire to show the public a visualization of Japan that was, as Yanagi's goal stated, shaped by the locations of distinctive mingei across the country. Although Yanagi sought to show real mingei objects on display to the public at the Folk Craft Museum in Tokyo, it was no doubt difficult to comprehend exactly where each of the items was made. The *Mingei Map* attempts to mitigate this lack of visibility of place by depicting a range of mingei production sites across remote regions that were rarely, if ever, visited by most of the Japanese population. Akin to Benedict Anderson's theory that nations are formed through "imagined" connections between vast populations distributed throughout time and space, the *Mingei Map* serves as an apt

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> Tokyo Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, Hanai Hisaho, Suzuki Katsuo, et. al., *Mingei no hyakunen* (Tokyo: Tokyo Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 2021), 129.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> Kobatake counted 541 sites. Kobatake, 27.

mechanism to consolidate disparate local craft traditions into a visually complete profile of modern Japan. 140

We might, then, understand the *Mingei Map* in terms of Arjun Appadurai's assertion in *Modernity at Large*, where he notes that "the nation-state conducts throughout its territories that bizarrely contradictory project of creating a flat, contiguous, and homogenous space of nationness." Viewing the *Mingei Map* at the Mingeikan may therefore be an exercise in localization and delocalization: to perceive each folk craft, we must acknowledge its presence outside of Tokyo and embedded in the local environments, raw materials, and production processes of a distant region. At the same time, viewers would be presented with images of more than 500 mingei objects on the map, along with the vast collection of thousands of mingei in the Mingeikan itself. The *Mingei Map* also appeared on the cover of, and over a spread of pages within an issue, of *Mingei* in October 1942 (Figs. 2.17-18). The printing and distribution of the *Mingei Map* effectively circulated images of the map beyond the confines of the museum exhibition space to readers of *Mingei* throughout the archipelago.

#### Transforming Nature into Art: the "Handwork" of Mingei and Jōbōji Lacquer

As we have seen, the visual appearance of Jōbōji lacquerware urushi-e—rendered in what visually appears as unrestrained playful brushstrokes—and their functionality as sake ewers and food vessels qualified them as consummate examples of what Yanagi and others considered to be valuable mingei objects. As noted above, inherent in this designation was the ability of these objects to resist the decaying forces of modernity. But, just as important as their visual appearance and function, if not more important, was the handmade processes of their production. As we will see, mingei-related publications pictured the handwork involved in the production of lacquerware in the Appi River communities. For example, a woodcut image printed in the monthly magazine Gekkan mingei depicts a set of handmade tools required for lacquer sap collecting in Iwate (Fig. 2.19). The image suggests an interest in representing both the procurement of local materials and the hand-driven processes that were essential to lacquerware production in Iwate. By emphasizing the handmade processes of mingei-making, Yanagi and others ensured the inherent value of these objects was protected from the potential degradation of craft from industrialization. Instead, value was lodged firmly within the body of an "unknown" Japanese artisan. We might consider, following Christine Guth's study of early modern craft production, the handmade mingei object as representing both the physical and cognitive work of production—a physical manifestation of a "material consciousness." 143

In fact, nowhere is this value, embodied through human skill rather than industrialization, more apparent than in Yanagi's 1948 volume titled *Handwork Japan (Teshigoto no nihon)*. The *Mingei Map* screens produced by Serizawa Keisuke in 1941 served as the visual analogue to *Handwork Japan*, mapping each site of handmade mingei across the Japanese archipelago to visualize the modern Japanese nation as an amalgamation of locally produced craft. Yanagi built

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 198.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>142</sup> Nihon Mingei Kyōkai, *Mingei* 4 no. 10 (September 1942): cover and unpaginated leaves.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>143</sup> Christine Guth, Craft Culture in Early Modern Japan (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 153.

a safeguard into his mingei ideology—through his emphasis on the "handmade"—that ensured value would remain couched in the ethno-national identity of Japanese artisans working with their hands and attuned to practices of production understood to be "traditional."

Shifting the discussion to tools of lacquer sap tapping, Serizawa Keisuke published a woodcut printed image in the April 1941 issue of *Gekkan mingei* that depicts eight of the primary tools needed to collect lacquer sap (Fig. 2.19). In this issue, the contents of the image disclose a particular interest in the essential abilities and tools necessary for lacquer sap harvesting as opposed to those used for lacquered vessel production. In this image, the emphasis is on the procurement of local materials, local lexicons related to lacquer sap procurement, and acknowledgement of the overall handmade production process undergirding lacquerware production in northern regions of Japan. In this section, I argue that this image of lacquer sap tapping tools suggests an expansion of the definition of mingei that includes the tools necessary for local craft production. One might even say that by turning to tapping tools, the publication shifts away from a more anthropocentric discussion of lacquerware.

Additionally, a deeper consideration of the history of the tools used for lacquer sap collection in Iwate reveals transregional flows of laborers, knowledge, and technology that complicate notions of isolated localities. An accompanying annotation on the far right edge of the image informs us that it illustrates the tools used for lacquer tapping in Koromogawa. The Koromogawa area remains a center of lacquer production in Iwate Prefecture in the modern city of Ōshū, which is known for production of Hidehira-nuri, or Hidehira-type wares. As noted previously in Chapter One, the history of Hidehira-nuri is murky, and it is unclear how the term became associated with modern production of vessels made to resemble Hidehira vessels (Hidehira-wan). But in this case, Serizawa did not produce an image of Koromogawa vessels. Rather, he labeled images of sharp-edged tools used to make incisions in the tree trunk, a sap collection bucket, and a woven basket used to store the tools around the sap tappers' waists while working outside. 144

Lacquer sap tappers' tools generally consist of two major components: a piece of worked metal and a wood handle. A metalworker first produces the metal component, which the tapper drives into a wood handle made of paulownia wood. Wire, visible as short lines at the conjunction of metal and wood, is wrapped tightly around the joint to secure the two pieces together. As I observed during my fieldwork, lacquer sap tappers in the Appi River valley today continue to assemble their tools for the season in this manner, often gathering as a group. Those with less experience lean on veterans for guidance to avoid the blisters and splinters that often result from poorly crafted tools. Most of the work lies in shaping the wood handle to fit the grip and motion of the sap tapper. Points of leverage are key—the heel of the hand, the fulcrum between the thumb and forefinger—and must be whittled and sanded slowly so that they fit snugly against the tapper's hand. The tools are usually used for just one season, from June to October, before they are replaced for the following year. After a season of use, the wood handles are smooth and worn, stained brown from lacquer sap. A photograph taken in Jōbōji, May 2022, shows two kama, a tool used to shave off the outer layer of tree bark before making an incision. In the photograph, the upper kama was used for the 2021 season and has a smooth handle stained brown from a season of lacquer exposure, while the newly assembled *kama* below is freshly whittled (Fig. 2.20).

<sup>144</sup> Serizawa's mark is seen as the hiragana "se" written inside a small hexagon near the bottom of the image.

In Serizawa's image, the *sorigama*, or *kama*, is depicted horizontally along the bottom of his image. Just above the *sorigama* on the far left is the *hengaki kanna*, often referred to simply as a *kanna*. The *kanna* is a small, curved, sharp-edged tool used to make incisions (*hen*) in the tree; the *hera*, to the right of the *kanna*, is a curved, spatula-like tool used to remove sap that seeps from incisions made with the *kanna*. Finally, the black cylindrical container occupying the right half of the image, labeled "*jippō*," is held by the attached rope to collect the freshly tapped sap seeping from the incisions. Sap collectors would then, and still do, carry the tools necessary for sap collection in slim containers that hang from thin ropes tied around their waists that allow them to quickly switch between tools. 145

The choice to include a woodcut of lacquer tapping tools near the front of the 1941 issue of *Gekkan mingei* suggests that Serizawa and others sought to integrate the lacquer tapping tools themselves into the broader category of mingei objects. In fact, these tools fit most of the criteria—functionality in particular—that Yanagi had defined in his writings in the 1930s and 1940s. The distinctive shape of each tool is determined by a specific function. The sharply curved blade of the *kanna* (Fig. 2.21) creates a trough-like incision in the tree of the specific depth necessary to induce sap secretion. The tapered tip of the *hera* (Fig. 2.22), meanwhile, fits snugly inside the incision made with the *kanna* to obtain as much sap as possible and deposit it into the *jippō* (Fig. 2.23). The *jippō*—stained black with flecks of lacquer by the flinging action of the tapper—is made with a thick strip of dried magnolia bark shaped into a cylinder. A seam, visible as a white line running vertically up the side of the vessel, reveals the work of shaping the dried bark and adhering it together to create a sealed container with the very lacquer sap harvested for production of lacquered vessels. This gently oscillating line depicting the upper rim of the *jippō* reveals the strained warping of the thick magnolia bark.

Nowhere is the handmade quality of the tools more obvious than in the wood handles—each whittled and sanded to conform to the grip of a particular person who wields them nearly every day for six months. Serizawa emphasizes the shaped contours of each wood handle with gentling curved lines and shaded patches of wood—disclosing the particularities of the tapper's hand and corresponding points of leverage. In the swelling and slimming of each handle, we are presented with the individually hand-whittled forms of a particular lacquer sap collector's grip. Although the image may appear to be a simple black and white illustration, Serizawa's attention to the irregular contours of the wood handles effectively communicates the snugness of each handle as it conforms to the shape of the hand. Tempting us to imagine the use of tools that fit our own hands, Serizawa may have sought to create a haptic embodiment of handwork throughout the lacquer tapping process. By emphasizing the particularity of each hand-whittled handle, Serizawa undermines the possibility of mechanizing the production of such carefully crafted tools.

A deeper examination of the history of Iwate lacquer tapping tools complicates the neat categorization of Iwate lacquer sap collection as a purely "local" craft tradition. As scholars such as Kudō Kōichi and others have demonstrated, the prototypes for the lacquer sap collection tools depicted in Serizawa's image did not originate in Iwate. In fact, these types of tools had been

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> Inscribed names of each tool reflect local discrepancies in naming. In Koromogawa, the tool used to scrape bark from the tree before inserting an incision is called a *sorigama*. In Jōbōji, the same tool is called a *kama*. The

from the tree before inserting an incision is called a *sorigama*. In Jōbōji, the same tool is called a *kama*. The inscribed name of the container where sap is collected is noted as "*jippō*" in Serizawa's woodcut but in Jōbōji this took is referred to as a "*takappō*." The *takappō* is made with either linden (*shinanoki* or simply "*shina*") or magnolia (*honōki*).

brought from the Imadate region of Echizen in Fukui Prefecture—southwest from Iwate and on the Sea of Japan side of Japan's main island—from at least the early Meiji period. Higrant lacquer sap collectors, who were known at the time as "Echizen-shū" or "Echizen-masses" trekked great distances from Fukui at the beginning of the twentieth century to take advantage of the abundance of lacquer trees in northern Japan, seeking lacquer sap collection work and income. He Echizen-shū arrived in great numbers and brought with them the types of sap collections tools depicted in Serizawa's illustration in the April 1941 issue of *Gekkan mingei*. Today, virtually all sap collectors working in Iwate use tools similar to, if not identical to, those pictured in Serizawa's illustration, which suggests the efficiency of Echizen-shū tools and their widespread adoption by sap collectors throughout Iwate. He

With these tools, the Echizen-shū brought with them increased lacquer tapping efficiency. Their metal tools were sharper than those previously used in Iwate.<sup>149</sup> The city of Takefu, now part of Echizen City in Fukui Prefecture, has long been famous for producing *uchihamono*, or "hammer-forged blades" for agricultural use, including the sickle (*kama*).<sup>150</sup> The long and complex history of *uchihamono* production in Echizen is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it should be noted that the tool history of lacquer sap collection deeply involves the incorporation of tools that were part of their own craft history said to stretch back to the fourteenth century in Takefu.

The Echizen-shū also brought the "tap and kill" (*koroshigaki*) lacquer tapping technique, facilitated by these new tools, which is still the primary mode of sap collection in use today in Iwate. As noted in the Introduction, the tap and kill technique involves exhausting ten- to twenty-year-old trees of their lacquer sap in just a single season from June to October. After the tree is finally girdled at the end of the tapping season in October or November, it is cut down and used for firewood or some other purpose. Shoots from the trunk and root system of the felled tree are then stimulated to grow in the immediate vicinity of the felled tree. Some of these new shoots will turn into healthy saplings and grow to full-sized trees to be tapped 10-15 years later. However, the regrowth of saplings from felled lacquer trees occurs in irregular and unpredictable patterns and is inadequate to fully replenish the lacquer tree population. Efforts to germinate lacquer tree seeds and raise saplings has been common practice and continues today. This was necessary even before the tap and kill technique replaced "recuperative tapping" (*yōjōgaki*), a less-aggressive tapping method that involved preserving the tree over several tapping seasons by allowing it to "recuperate" between each season after suffering numerous tapping incisions. 152

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> Kudō, Iwate no urushi no kindaishi, 34-39.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>148</sup> Like lacquer sap collection and lacquerware production, the metalworkers who produce the tools necessary for lacquer tapping have dwindled in number throughout the twenty-first century. Currently there is only one metalworker, Nakahata Fumitoshi, who produces all the tools for the Jōbōji Lacquer Sap Tapping Preservation Society. Nakahata's workshop is located west of Ninohe in Tako-machi, Aomori Prefecture. See "Koe ga kakareba kakan ni chōsensuru," Iwate-ken Ninohe-shi Jōbōji Sōgōshisho Urushi no Satozukuri suishinka, https://urushi-joboji.com/joboji/nakahata.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>149</sup> Kudō, 36-37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>150</sup> Kudō, 37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>151</sup> In the Edo period, lacquer tree wood was used as fishing tackle. See Kudō, 62-68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>152</sup> Kudō, 36-37. Those Echizen-shū who brought to Iwate the tools used for tap and kill did more than revolutionize the sap collection process; they also transformed the economics behind lacquer tree cultivation and sap distribution by creating a new role as the "middle-man" controlling the movement of lacquer tools, saplings, and tapped sap.

Given this complex history of lacquer tapping tools, we might consider how Serizawa's image suggests a more complex history of transregional flows of bodies, knowledge, and technology that drastically altered "traditional" methods of lacquer sap collection in existence long before the Echizen-shū brought highly efficient tools to Iwate. Although the tools themselves maintain a long history of production in the Echizen area, historical evidence suggests their widespread incorporation into the lacquer tree landscape in Iwate, including the Koromogawa area, did not occur until the late Edo or early Meiji period. Like the Hidehira-nuri produced in Iwate, which were perceived to maintain a transmitted lineage to the twelfth-century Northern Fujiwara, the tools used for sap collection are framed by mingei publications as visibly handmade. However, the historical fact that these sap collection tools were brought from a distant region of Japan demonstrates how separate traditions—Echizen uchihamono and Iwate lacquerware—are linked together in the modern period. The extraordinarily sharp blades of Echizen, conjoined with minutely whittled wood handles wielded by lacquer tappers in Iwate creates a fortified image of specialized handmade tools that support even more handmade craft production: lacquerware-making. The image therefore acknowledges lineages and practices of tool production as part of an expanding pantheon of mingei objects that includes the tools necessary for the procurement of raw materials used to create craft. Mingei are not just finished craft products—they are also the handmade processes behind craft production.

Crucial to analysis of the significance of the "handmade" in mingei is Yanagi Muneyoshi's book length explanation of the topic, *Teshigoto no nihon (Handwork Japan)*, published in Tokyo in 1948 (Figs. 2.24-25).<sup>153</sup> The title employs an ambiguous but significant grammatical pattern that situates the Japanese linguistic particle "no" between the nouns "Handwork" (*teshigoto*) and "Japan" (*Nihon*). As such, the "no" functions in apposition, effectively equating "Handwork" with "Japan." Although succinct, the title *Handwork Japan* avoids the impression that the book is an encyclopedic record of various handcrafts found throughout the archipelago, as would be the case with the more conventional title *Nihon no teshigoto (Japanese Handwork)*. Rather, interpretation of the title as *Handwork Japan* posits that the nation of Japan and the notion of "Handwork" are conjoined, effectively intertwining the two.

Although the work was published in 1948 after the Second World War, and ends with a postscript dated to 1943, Yanagi writes in the Prologue that his text documents the state of Japanese handwork in the years circa 1940. The book is organized by geographic region, suggesting that it may have been intended to serve as a companion to the set of screens produced by Serizawa Keisuke in 1941, the *Map of Japanese Folk Crafts* (*Nihon Mingei Chizu*). As such, the text has an extensive index divided into two parts. The first part is "place names"

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>153</sup> Yanagi Muneyoshi, *Teshigoto no Nihon* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1948). *Teshigoto no nihon* was written in January 1943, but because of wartime censorship and lack of publishing capabilities, the text was not published until June 1948. The text holds a central position among Yanagi's vast catalog of written work; it was reprinted in 1954, 1981, 1985, and 2000. Kobatake, 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>154</sup> Yanagi, Teshigoto no Nihon, 307.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>155</sup> Yanagi meant to publish an even larger, more comprehensive text on *mingei*, but the draft was lost to fire. In the Prologue to *Teshigoto no Nihon*, he writes: "In retrospect, it was a great blessing that the draft of this book was able to escape the disaster and be safe. Unfortunately, however, the entire manuscript of the even larger book, *Mingei Zuroku Gendai Hen*, which was supposed to be published at about the same time, was reduced to ashes. It was a heavy blow because it was the result of many years of effort. I regret that this book should have been the best reference." Yanagi, *Teshigoto no Nihon*, IV.

(chimei) and the second is "general" (ippan). The text then reads as though one is touring through the modern political boundaries of the Japanese archipelago almost as a travelogue that denotes local specialty craft items along the way. Consequently, the "place names" section of the index reflects this deep interest in geographical specificity, implying that readers must know the names and locations of places—hundreds of local towns, districts, and villages—to understand Yanagi's extended study of mingei.

The text is significant as well because, unlike journals such as *Mingei* and *Gekkan mingei* that regularly published shorter articles on a specific craft object, it presents a comprehensive survey of sites of mingei production throughout the Japanese archipelago. In the body of the text, Yanagi provided the *furigana* reading of the names of craft items, which are often toponymic. Given what we have noted already, it is not surprising that Yanagi included a passage on lacquerware in the book's section on "Tōhoku." Yanagi's entry on Iwate lacquerware begins with description of "Nanbu-wan" ("Nanbu vessels") and immediately follows discussion of another famous local Iwate craft known known as "Nanbu tekki" or "Nanbu ironware." As noted above, the Nanbu vessels are lacquerware named after the Nanbu clan, yet Yanagi acknowledged that these wares are known to some as "Hidehira-wan" (Hidehira vessels), suggesting the muddling of monikers used to describe vessels that appear similar. <sup>156</sup> Yanagi wrote:

"Of the famous things with the Nambu [Nanbu] name, there are the longstanding "Nambu [Nanbu] vessels" (*Nanbu-wan*). At times, people call these objects "Hidehira vessels" (*Hidehira-wan*). In fact, it is not certain where these vessels named after Fujiwara no Hidehira were made. However, the lineage of what are called "Nanbu vessels" have been passed down through miscellaneous wares, albeit in a small way. From Arasawa to Arayashinmachi in Ninohe District, there are numerous artisans who work in the lacquer industry. It is reminiscent of the days when Saitō Zensuke, who was famous in the area, had his residence and flourishing business. The name "Jōbōji vessel" (*Jōbōji-wan*) also remains in use, but Jōbōji is the name of a village on the same road, and it is there, along with Ichinohe and other villages, where markets are set up to sell goods. Of these, small vessels (*wan*) are the most common, but you can also see spouted vessels (*katakuchi*), wood plates (*kizara*), and small dining tables (*zen*).<sup>157</sup>

Here too, Yanagi's commentary emphasizes the importance of the transmission of tradition in Iwate lacquerware. "Albeit in a small way," he added, there are remnants of a "longstanding" tradition perceived to still exist in the forms and motifs visible in Iwate lacquerware produced in Arasawa and Arayashinmachi. For example, Yanagi specified the "Nanbu-wan," a vessel type referencing the Nanbu clan who controlled the Appi River region beginning at the end of the sixteenth century. Yanagi continued, emphasizing how lacquerware produced in Ninohe County "retained some quality of the past," writing:

There are many other more famous lacquerware manufacturers in other domains (*kuni*) with superior technique, but in that they retain some of the quality of the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>156</sup> Yanagi, Teshigoto no Nihon, 100-101.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>157</sup> Ibid.

past, I think the lacquerware of Ninohe County should be reconsidered—even if they are cheap. Another significant strength of these wares is that a large proportion of local lacquer tree sap is used to produce them. Recently, we have been able to make products for export and even incorporate Western forms into lacquerware production. But this is not work that deepens our history. After all, a far more virtuous beauty (*tadashii utsukushisa*) shines from vessels that have preserved traditional qualities and those with a single spout called "*hiage*." <sup>158</sup>

As he did in his 1936 lecture, Yanagi focused his attention on the sake ewer (*hiage*), which, with its notable form, indicated that artisans in Ninohe were invested in maintaining the form of the *hiage* rather than cater in some way to export markets geared toward users in North America or Europe. We also see the now familiar reference to usage of local materials to produce lacquer craft in Ninohe County where the Jōbōji lacquer landscape was, and is still, located.

"Hiage" are used as vessels to serve sake; the exterior is black, the interior is vermilion, and the base of the spout is decorated with a pattern depicted in yellow pigmented lacquer. When of large size, the *hiage* even has a commanding elegance. "Hiage" (ひあげ) is a misrendering of the characters for "hisage" (提子). [a hisage is a ceremonial sake decanter, usually equipped with a handle].

Further, what draws one's eyes in Arayashinmachi and other villages is the painted lacquer pictures on the lacquerware. Three or four fixed patterns, such as ginko, peach, and Mt. Fuji, have been passed down for ages (*furuku kara*), and they continue to be painted even today. Because the artisans are used to this work, they move the brush well, the paintings have force, and compared to the new patterns (*shingara*), their degree of vitality is of a different class. I presume that they possess a sense of freedom because the patterns are constituted with the power of tradition. Even if they are simple designs, they were left to us by our ancestors and must be cherished. Even more so because they are beautiful.<sup>159</sup>

These passages may suggest how the *hiage* exemplifies Yanagi's conception of mingei. He touches on function—to serve sake—and also on the way the *hiage* maintained its *urushi-e* design commonly found in Appi River lacquer communities. The artisans' resistance to change allowed the *hiage* to persist in its recognizable voluminous body and simple *urushi-e* design that visibly exemplify "tradition." Although Yanagi criticized "the aristocratic fine arts," here he also questions the production of wares that cater to consumers abroad, or wares with newly introduced forms originating outside of Japan. For Yanagi, incorporating globally circulating forms and production techniques is not valuable. Rather, it is the traditional form of the *hiage*, rooted in tradition, that shines with "a more virtuous beauty."

We might note too that Yanagi's book was illustrated by Serizawa, attesting to the sociology of mingei—the circle of collaborators in the mingei project that involved different

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>158</sup> Ibid., 101-102.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>159</sup> Ibid., 102.

areas of expertise, notably those of visual representation. Mingei, then, as a theory and philosophy, is not merely objects, sites of production, and Yanagi's recorded observations, but also images that necessarily visualize key mingei objects. Notably, Serizawa Keisuke produced all the illustrations for *Handwork Japan* (Figs. 2.26-27). Yanagi writes in his Prologue that Serizawa prepared a previous set of illustrations that were lost in the war and that the images produced in the published version of *Handwork Japan* were part of a second, expanded set of illustrations also produced by Serizawa. Of the illustrations in *Handwork Japan*, two images of lacquered items from Iwate strongly resemble real objects collected from Iwate and held in the Mingeikan collection in Tokyo (Fig. 2.28). Serizawa's black and white printed image of the *hiage* is framed within a double border and depicts the vessel in three-quarter profile, which exposes both the elongated pouring spout and the collar design around its base. Again, nodes of pigmented lacquer placed around the spout provide minimal adornment to the high-footed vessel.

The model for Serizawa's printed illustration was likely in the collection of the Mingeikan, which has a black-lacquered *hiage* with a nearly identical design. According to the Mingeikan, the *hiage* is associated with the date 1934 and the village of Ninohe in Iwate Prefecture. As discussed in Chapter One, numerous examples of *hiage* with a similar design are held in the collection of the Jōbōji History and Folk Museum (see Figs. 1.15-16 from Chapter One). Serizawa illustrated the vessel as though we address it from a 45-degree angle, which enables him to depict both the distinctive elongated pouring spout as well as the brushed lacquer design unfolding beneath the spout. This painted lacquer design—characterized by a series of rounded nodes arranged along the upper rim of the vessel and beneath the spout—is commonly found in Jōbōji and is not seen on other spouted vessels produced in Japan (referred to outside of Jōbōji simply as "spouted vessels" or *katakuchi*), and therefore registers the vessels as linked to a specific, distant craft tradition in Iwate. The exaggerated foot and large, voluminous body of the vessel—also characteristics associated with the Jōbōji *hiage*—confirm the identity of the lacquerware as a vessel with visually legible connections to a distant Japan located in the countryside.

Serizawa's visual contributions to the Mingei Movement provided consumers of the *Mingei* magazine and visitors to the Mingeikan with a mechanism through which they could consume the locality of Jōbōji lacquer communities without having to travel to Iwate. The woodcut image of lacquer tapping tools invited viewers to connect lacquerware production with hand-whittled tools. Together, with their work on the *Mingei Map* and *Handwork Japan*, Serizawa and Yanagi effectively situated Jōbōji lacquer within a panoptic view of the modern Japanese nation state.

#### Conclusion

As we have seen, the convulsive forces of war and industrialization prompted cultural figures such as Sueshige, Serizawa, and Yanagi to interrogate the material and craft histories of their own nation in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. As part of these efforts, Yanagi and others identified and visited local craft production communities throughout the archipelago to reevaluate Japanese craft. In particular, the lacquer communities throughout the Appi River valley in Iwate were identified as exemplary models of mingei production. Yanagi's focus pivoted from examination in the art magazine *Shirakaba* of such artists as Van Gogh and Cézanne to the unnamed traditional Japanese artisan. Thus, the lacquerware produced in Jōbōji and other small

villages were not simply addressed as Japanese equivalents of western artworks. Instead, Yanagi utilized his previous study of European art and artists in *Shirakaba* to construct an ideology of Japanese folk craft that dodged direct comparison with such modern, individualized artists. This ideology created the new Japanese word "mingei" and established a set of aesthetic values that prioritized local history, local environments and materials, handmade production, and functional use. Jōbōji lacquerware fit neatly into Yanagi's construction of mingei through their assumed linkage to traditional craft production in the distant past, including the Nanbu clan and even the Northern Fujiwara of the twelfth century. These assumed connections to a "distant" Japan remained unaffected by the threats of modernity, including the value assigned to the heroic individualism of modern "artists." These important characteristics of Jōbōji lacquerware prompted demand for their collection at the newly established Mingeikan in Tokyo, as well as their publication in magazines circulating throughout Japan in the 1930s and 1940s.

By incorporating Jōbōji lacquerware into the Mingei Movement, Yanagi and others attributed new meaning and value to local lacquerware that had largely been overlooked—if not outright ignored—by art and craft institutions in major metropolitan centers in Japan. In contrast to the intricately ornamented maki-e lacquer designs that often represented the lacquer exhibition in twentieth century, the simple yet vibrant brushwork such as urushi-e depictions of ginko leaves exemplified local techniques that communicated a sense of vitality. An emphasis on the "handmade" qualities—pictured by Serizawa in Mingei magazine and published by Yanagi in Handmade Japan—ensured the value of mingei would remain intimately connected to the ethnonational identity of Japanese artisans who worked according to a carefully cultivated "material consciousness." This emphasis on the handmade qualities of Iwate lacquer—including the handcrafted tools used for lacquer sap tapping, tied lacquer production both to the local lacquer tree landscape and to the embodied handwork of skilled Japanese artisans—emboldened tastemakers seeking affirmation of the value of their premodern past. Together, this expansive multimedia program—which consisted of magazine publications, books, maps, and exhibitions—animated Iwate lacquer as a promising modern formation of past tradition capable of quelling uncertainties brought by war and industrialization.

### **Chapter Three**

# Layers of Place, From Local to Global: Koseki Rokuhei's Postwar Lacquer Art

I reflect a sense of stillness, dim light, tranquility, and turn them, set them in motion, and then gave form to my mental image of that feeling of quietude. 160

静寂な気、ほのかな光、静けさを映して転じ動く、寂々たる心情、 その心象を造形にした。

This are the words Koseki Rokuhei (1918-2011) chose to describe his lacquer artwork titled *Quiet Spin (Seiten)*—made with Jōbōji lacquer—for the "Support Japanese Culture: The Beauty of Lacquer" Exhibition (Nihon bunka o ninau: urushi no bi-ten) at the Meiji Shrine Treasure Hall (Meiji Jingū Hōmotsuden) held in 2007 (Figs. 3.1-3). Koseki produced *Quiet Spin* in 1982 in his studio in Morioka, Iwate Prefecture, over twenty years prior to its exhibition at Meiji Jingū. However, this work—with its bands of red lacquer, mother-of-pearl inlay, and gold and silver leaf that mysteriously emerge from the foot of the vessel—was repeatedly selected for exhibitions in Iwate and in this case, in Tokyo, to represent Iwate Prefecture and the "beauty of lacquer."

Technically a "vessel," *Quiet Spin* consists of a wide, cube-like base with rounded corners that rises upward into a long, narrow neck with a small opening. Unlike the lacquerware examined in previous chapters, Koseki utilized synthetic resin to create a substrate upon which he applied three groupings of "bands." Depicted on a black-pigmented lacquer background, one collection of bands consists of approximately fifteen smaller bands of varying shades of red and orange lacquer. Another band is comprised of small pieces of mother-of-pearl cut into rectangles, and a final grouping consists of a pair of thin gold and silver lines. As noted in his description of the work, Koseki sets these bands—perhaps representing the "sense of stillness," "dim light" and "tranquility"—into motion as they turn around the neck of the vase, tapering as they spin upward toward the gold opening at the top.

Compared with the functional lacquered vessel, for example the sake ewer "hiage" Yanagi Muneyoshi included in his 1936 lecture on mingei at the Society for International Cultural Relations (Figs. 2.3-4), Koseki's *Quiet Spin* demonstrates a significant departure from the "utilitarianism" of mingei, and Koseki's signature on the bottom of his work indicates the importance of individualistic artistic expression for aesthetic consumption. No longer a functional vessel adorned simply with a chrysanthemum design in the "lacquer picture" *urushi-e* technique, Koseki deemphasized utilitarianism in favor of a bolder, subjective expression of an idea—Koseki's visualization of "revolving" or "spinning" quietude.

As we will see, Koseki's postwar lacquer art demonstrates a significant shift in the multidirectional movement of Jōbōji lacquer into multiple genres and modes of signification. In this chapter, I examine Koseki's biography as it is entangled with visual-material in postwar-period realities and possibilities of lacquer craft and art. In contrast to the re-evaluation of Iwate lacquerware as consummate examples of Yanagi's theory of mingei, Koseki brings Jōbōji lacquer

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>160</sup> Koseki Yūhei, ed., Saishitsu to maki-e: Koseki Rokuhei sakuhinshū shōgai ban (2024), 87.

into modes of signification that resist the haptic, corporeally functional wares such as those Sueshige praises in his poem on Iwate lacquerware (see Chapter Two). Instead, Koseki foregrounds lacquer as a tool for subjective, individualistic expression in the form of craft art (kōgei bijutsu or bijutsu kōgei). Yet, Koseki's work resists clear definition because he dramatically altered the forms, techniques, styles, and subject matter of his lacquer according to local, national, and international systems of aesthetic judgement and politics. Some of these contexts included his role as a lacquer craft instructor who taught other lacquer artisans how to produce utilitarian wares in Iwate Prefecture, both in Morioka and in the Appi River valley.

Much of Koseki's career was spent creating works as a lacquer craft artist for contemporary art shows in Morioka, and as a national artist, he produced sculptural lacquer craft on synthetic resin substrates—sometimes with large, twisting forms over sixty centimeters in height—that satisfied the experimental and unconventional aesthetic priorities of the Japan Contemporary Craft Art Exhibition (Nihon gendai kōgei bijutsu ten) and the Japan Fine Arts Exhibition ("Nitten") in Tokyo. This participation in the Contemporary Craft Art Exhibition, organized by the Contemporary Craft Artists Association established in 1961, put Koseki's lacquer artwork on display in Europe and the United States, constellating Jōbōji lacquer into ever-expanding networks of the local, national, and global contemporary art.

Included in this constellation are not only those "unconventional" works that fit the objectives of the Contemporary Craft Art Exhibitions, but also objects that reflect Koseki's connections to Iwate and the broader Tōhoku region as his long-term place of residence. For example, Koseki demonstrated the crafting of Hidehira-style vessels for the Emperor and Empress in 1970, exemplifying a specific iteration of lacquer modernity that can hold traditional craft production (dentō kōgei) in tandem with emerging interests in the possibilities of lacquer to transform traditional skills and techniques into a powerfully expressive contemporary art.

Koseki is an example of a disparate group of individual artisans born outside of the Appi River region who were invited or otherwise drawn to the region for lacquerware production. With them, they brought their own skillsets, artistic priorities, and experiences. <sup>161</sup> For example, although Koseki spent much of his life creating lacquered objects representative of localized history found in what is now Iwate Prefecture, he was born in neighboring Akita Prefecture in Ogachi County Kawatsura town (currently the town of Kawatsura in the city of Yuzawa). <sup>162</sup> The town of Kawatsura was, and still is, a significant lacquerware production center. Koseki's family were lacquer producers and sellers, and he was surrounded by the industry since birth.

This chapter focuses on the career of Koseki Rokuhei, including his early training in Aizuwakamatsu under maki-e lacquerer Tsuda Tokumin (1889-1955), and his participation in the burgeoning genre of lacquer art objects that have been included in the modern category of bijutsu kogeihin, literally "art-craft objects." A close study of Koseki's work requires an approach that embraces the multidirectional movement of Jōbōji lacquer into multiple genres and exhibition spaces. As we will see, Koseki himself does not confine himself to a single genre of "art" or "craft." Instead, Koseki used the plastic qualities of the raw material of Jōbōji lacquer in ways that confound attempts to define his works as either "traditional craft" or "contemporary art."

<sup>162</sup> Koseki Yūhei, 90.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>161</sup> Kudō Kōichi's scholarship details the movement of both lacquer sap collectors from Echizen (Fukui Prefecture) as well as lacquerware artisans who are invited to the Appi River region to bring the region closer in line with nationally accepted aesthetic criteria. See Kudō, Iwate urushi no kindaishi, 2011.

As a native of Tōhoku, a largely rural region of northeast Japan, and a multi-decade resident of Iwate Prefecture, Koseki steeped his work in tradition to remedy a sense of lost "authentic" Japanese lacquer craft, an industry reeling from a sudden profusion of massproduced plastics that flooded the archipelago beginning in the 1950s. At the same time, Koseki's work takes on a sense of dialectical, multivalent integration of plastics into traditional lacquer designs. His work sheds light on the contours of lacquer craft production, including lacquer tree planting. What Koseki's biography discloses is a concerted effort to entangle regional and national lacquer during a period in history when an authentic Japan would be located further and further from the metropole in the northern reaches of Tōhoku. Among these entanglements found in Koseki work is his staunch insistence that lacquer procured from Jōbōji in the Appi River region should be used for his art craft work. We might then consider how Koseki's work suggests that he was determined to bring nationally recognized lacquering techniques—in particular the internationally beloved technique of maki-e—to bear on local subject matter and forms representative of Iwate and the Tohoku region more broadly. Through this grafting of technique onto regional forms, motifs, subject matter, and history, Koseki's oeuvre demonstrates visual and ecological negotiations involving regional and national identity in Japan in the mid- to late-twentieth century.

Similar to the appeal of Appi River regional lacquerwares among mingei enthusiasts discussed in Chapter Two, Koseki's lacquer art used local materials and drew upon Iwate's rich history far from the urban center of Tokyo. At the same time, Koseki moved toward increasingly abstract designs with little to no obvious reference to regional histories, and his art craft works displayed at Nitten and other national exhibitions demonstrate an increasing sense of delocalization and insert Jōbōji firmly into global networks of contemporary art.

### Koseki's Maki-e Training and Early Lacquerware

From a young age, Koseki was trained in a variety of lacquer techniques—notably maki-e—that equipped him for a lengthy and robust career. Koseki also relocated within the Tōhoku region and frequently visited Tokyo, exposing him to ever-widening spheres of aesthetic judgement and priorities. Koseki was born into a family involved in the lacquer industry in Kawatsura, Akita Prefecture. Kawatsura has long been famous for its lacquerware production, and Koseki's family was involved in the industry, exposing him to the world of lacquer. He studied at the Akita Prefectural Kawatsura Lacquer Laboratory beginning in 1932 at the age of fourteen and quickly began garnering success as an adolescent. A Certificate of Selection for the Twenty First Ministry of Commerce Craft Exhibition (Shōkōshō Kōgei Tenrankai) in April 1934 demonstrates success when Koseki was just sixteen years (Fig. 3.4). While the ware itself is now lost, the selection certificate in the Koseki family archive refers to the objects as a "tray" (bon). 163

Although Koseki's training as an adolescent at the Kawatsura Lacquer Laboratory prepared him to achieve a degree of success at an early age, it was his move at nineteen to the city of Aizuwakamatsu in Fukushima Prefecture, where he resided from 1937 to 1939 studying

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>163</sup> Koseki Rokuhei's son, Koseki Yūhei, believes that this ware might have been based on a design produced on paper in the family archive that is of the Hidehira-style with Genji-style clouds and rhomboidal-shaped pieces of gold leaf. Koseki's wares were selected on two additional occasions for the Ministry of Commerce Craft Exhibition: once in 1936 for *Small Box with Plum Design*, and again in 1937 for *Fruit Bowl with Geometric Design*.

the maki-e lacquer technique, that would prove critical to his later success as a lacquer craftsman and instructor. Koseki studied under the respected maki-e craftsman Tsuda Kenji (1889-1955), known by his professional name Tsuda Tokumin.

Born to a family of textile dyers, Tokumin is said to have learned the basics of Nihonga painting at four years old, but for economic reasons was steered toward the lacquerware industry. He entered the Wakamatsu Municipal Lacquerware Apprentice School (Wakamatsu Shiritsu Shikki Totei Gakkō) in 1903 just five years after it was established. Tokumin graduated as a member of the school's second cohort of graduates in 1906. The natural advancement of Tokumin's career would have him progress to the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, but his economic conditions did not permit him to study in Tokyo. He instead remained in Aizuwakamatsu to study traditional maki-e technique under Watanabe Chūzō. 165

In 1916, Tokumin became a private pupil of Shirayama Shōsai (1853-1923), Artist to the Imperial Household and professor at the Tokyo School of Fine Art known for his creeds on the delicacy and precision of the maki-e technique. Studying under Shōsai in Tokyo, Tokumin trained to pass the entrance exam for the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. Tokumin's mastery of the maki-e technique is visible in surviving works such as his *Mountains and clouds inkstone case with shishi and peony design in maki-e* (Fig. 3.5). Unfortunately, Tokumin only worked with Shōsai for about one year before Tokumin's father suddenly died and he was forced to return to Aizuwakamatsu. <sup>166</sup> But the combination of Tokumin's early maki-e training in Aizuwakamatsu and his short burst of training with Shōsai positioned him well to take on pupils after his return to Tōhoku. <sup>167</sup>

Koseki studied with Tokumin in Aizuwakamatsu for two years where, along with other young adults who studied with the artisan, he was exposed to Tokumin's staunch belief that "painting is the root [of lacquerware making]." Tokumin's emphasis on painting is evident in the considerable number of painted practice sheets produced by Tokumin and his students. The maki-e technique requires gold and/or silver metallic powder to be "sprinkled" onto a wet lacquered surface to create a pictorial or pattern design. Because the metallic powder sticks to the wet lacquered surface, the final appearance of the sprinkled design depends entirely on the brushed application of liquid lacquer to the substrate surface. This makes training in painting—the ability to create extremely fine lines with precision and with a variety of brushes—a core skill of maki-e lacquerwork.

Unsurprisingly, then, the Koseki family archive preserves an abundance of sketchbooks and paintings produced by Koseki during his training under Tokumin (Figs. 3.6-7). There are

<sup>167</sup> Tokumin also took on several Imperial-related commissions after his return to Aizuwakamatsu. He prepared implements used in the wedding of Princess Chichibu, whose paternal line is linked to the Aizu Heike, into the Imperial family in 1928. In the same year, Tokumin produced tributary lacquerware gifts (*kenjōhin*) for the enthronement of the Showa Emperor. In the postwar period, Tokumin served as an advisor to the American-facing market craft seller Maruni Craft and produced large amounts of lacquerware designs for the company. Kobayashi reports that Tokumin drafted designs for wares and the maki-e artisans of Aizu applied the decorate elements. Kobayashi, 32.

Megumi Kobayashi, "Tsuda Tokumin to Aizu Shikki," Fukushima no Shinro no. 394 (June), Tōhō Chiiki Sōgō Kenkyūjo (2015): 31. Kobayashi notes that there was no tuition to attend the Wakamatsu Municipal Lacquerware Apprentice School, and in fact students received a one yen fifty sen stipend while enrolled.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>165</sup> Kobayashi, 31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> The belief that "painting is the root of lacquerware making" 「画が源だ」 was at the core of Tokumin's teaching philosophy. Kobayashi, 32.

many more designs on paper in the Koseki family collection than there are lacquerwares that date to this period, not only because wares were commercially sold but because Koseki made countless copies of Tokumin's designs to train his mind and body replicate the brushstrokes in wet lacquer using a maki-e brush.

Little survives of Koseki's lacquerware from his time in Aizuwakamatsu. However, *Bowl with maki-e lacquered rhododendron design* (*Shakunage maki-e wan*), closely adheres to designs thought to have been produced by Koseki while residing in Aizu in 1937 (Figs. 3.8-9). Our eyes are led by the thin, woody stalk of the rhododendron plant as it juts back and forth across the outside surface of the lid. Colorful pink blossoms are centered within clusters of succulent leaves that naturally straddle the round handle of the lid. When the vessel is opened, the viewer is greeted with a fallen blossom and single petals depicted against a solid black lacquered ground on the interior surface of the lid. The overall effect is effortlessly charming and technically rigorous—Koseki's style adheres closely to the level of execution exhibited by Tokumin and his teacher Shōsai.

Koseki's subsequent career led him to multiple positions and affiliations in Iwate Prefecture, opportunities that arose from the prestige of his training under Tokumin. Similar to Tokumin's training under Shōsai in Tokyo, Koseki's maki-e training, along with his collection of Tokumin's designs, afforded him authority as a local lacquer artisan working in the Tōhoku region. After two years in Aizuwakamatsu, he moved to Iwate in 1939 to join the Iwate Prefectural Nanbu Lacquerware Research Center located in the village of Arasawa along the Appi River in Ninohe County. Although Koseki's motivations for this move are not clear from available historical evidence, he likely was invited to become a member of the Center as an advisor, receiving a commission for his work. In 1940, he began working at the Ashiro Branch of the Commerce and Industry Division before moving to the Iwate Prefectural Industrial Advisory Center the same year. 169 Thereafter, Koseki's lacquer production was curtailed by the escalation of the Second World War when, in 1942, he was conscripted and sent to the battlefront in Northern China. After sustaining a leg injury, Koseki was decommissioned. He returned to Iwate in 1943 after recuperating in Kokura. Relieved of military duty due to his war injury, he returned to work at Iwate Prefectural Industrial Advisory Center in 1944. At the age of twenty-nine, he married Ōwada Kinu in 1947, and together they rented a house in Morioka where they would settle for the remainder of their lives.

At this point, Koseki restarted his artisanal work, drawing on his previous training and expertise to thoroughly embed himself in the craft world of northern Tōhoku. In 1947, he served as a judge for the Craft section of the First Iwate Art Festival Art Exhibition and the following year he was appointed lacquer instructor at the Iwate Prefectural School of Arts and Crafts (later Morioka Junior College, presently Iwate University Faculty of Education Specialty Arts Division). When the Iwate Craft Association (now the Iwate Craft Art Association) was founded in 1949, Koseki served as a founding member. 170

In a demonstration of position as a regional representative, he became a member of the nationwide Japan Lacquer Craft Association (Nihon Shikkō Kyōkai) in 1950, two years after that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>169</sup> This institution was formerly the Iwate Prefectural Industrial Research Center and is presently named the Iwate Prefectural Industrial Technology Center.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>170</sup> Other founding members included: Chief Secretary Koizumi Seiichi (Jin Saemon), Suzuki Morihisa, Funakoshi Kenjirō, Oikawa Kinzō, Hiradate Daimi, Kokusu Tadashi, Koseki Rokuhei. The administrative seat of this institution was located in the Iwate Prefectural Industrial Advisory Center.

organization was established in 1948.<sup>171</sup> At this point in his career, Koseki seemed to have been preoccupied with the task of elevating the level of lacquer craft production in Iwate, although he does not simply mimic formulaic, predetermined maki-e designs in the pattern books that he inherited from his teacher Tsuda Tokumin. Koseki instead seems to have sought a balance between elegant mastery of nationally accepted lacquer designs and techniques and articulation of an Iwate canon of lacquer forms and motifs.

Held in the Iwate Prefectural Art Museum, Koseki's 1955 *Box with Plum Blossoms* reflects his experimentation with lacquer technique and marks a shift toward the abstract and exaggerated visual forms that would become more prominent in his later work (Figs. 3.10-12).<sup>172</sup> Prior to the availability of synthetic resins for use as substrates, Koseki applied lacquer to traditional wood in his earlier work. The black lidded box, on a base of Japanese cypress, is decorated with a simplified image of a plum tree in bloom depicted in colored lacquer. The tree's sturdy brown limbs first extend horizontally to fill the lateral space before rising toward the back of the box and filling the surface with oversized pink plum blossoms. Koseki includes pointed green blossomless twigs that jut out from major branches and contrast with the delicate rounded blossom forms that add a minimal sense of naturalism to an otherwise abstracted image of a plum tree.

The visual abundance expressed in the blossoming plum tree is complemented by a range of lacquering techniques that suggest reflect a virtuoso sample of difficult lacquering techniques, which transform the plum tree into a three-dimensional image. To this end, Koseki represented the plum tree trunk using separated layers of pigmented lacquer that allude to varied heights of knots and other irregularities in the bark of the tree. This technique of layered lacquer (*tsuishitsu*) is combined with another technique of carved lacquer (*chōshitsu*) for the blossoms that project out from the top surface of the lid (Fig. 3.11). Like the trunk, pigmented layers are visible because of the repeated application of lacquer in multiple layers, each with a particular drying time. Koseki then carved down into the center of the protruding lacquer (*chōshitsu*) to resemble real petals of plum blossoms that slightly protrude out into space from the flat surface of the box.

Koseki employed both *tsuishitsu* and *chōshitsu* to create what he called a distinctive "tree-ring" shaped pattern (*nenrinjō monyō*): concentric rings of pigmented lacquer that resemble the annual growth rings of a tree. As we will see, the tree-ring pattern and its variations appear regularly in Koseki's future works and, in some cases, the pattern becomes the entire subject matter. In *Box with Plum Blossoms*, the tree-ring pattern as it appears on the lid rewards those who view the box in proximity and notice each delicately applied layer of lacquer. The bottom of the sides of the box are treated with equal technical prowess. Koseki chose to use the *rangakuchō* technique, which requires carefully arranging shattered pieces of eggshells and adhering them to the surface of the box with lacquer (Fig. 3.12). With the lid of the box removed, gold flecks inlaid in lacquer become visible.

Koseki deemed *Box with Plum Blossoms* "incomplete" (*mikansei*)." As his son Yuhei recounts, the work is considered unfinished because there is a small gap between some of the raised plum blossoms and the black background, which led to the work being withheld from exhibition. The fact that he deemed his work "unfinished" suggests Koseki began to view his work as art, separate from utilitarian lacquerware. Its present location on in the Iwate Prefectural

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>171</sup> Due to the reorganization of the Iwate Prefectural School of Arts and Crafts, Koseki was appointed lecturer at Morioka Junior College Art Crafts Department and Iwate Prefectural High School of Art Craft in 1951.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>172</sup> Unlike works produced years later in his career, this piece is not signed by Koseki.

Museum of Art, even as an "unfinished" work, however, confirms its status as an art object that foreshadows major conceptual shifts in Iwate lacquer production.

### Modern Vessels, with Nostalgia: Koseki's Multipurpose Hiage

In the second half of the 1950s, Koseki's lacquered sake ewers (hiage) were incorporated into larger discussions of Japanese craft in publications such as  $K\bar{o}gei\ ny\bar{u}su\ (\bot \not = \neg \neg \nearrow)$ — alternatively titled in English as Industrial Art News—printed from 1932 to 1974. The objective of the magazine, first published by the Ministry of Commerce Craft Advisory Center ( $Sh\bar{o}k\bar{o}sh\bar{o}k\bar{o}gei\ shid\bar{o}jo$ ), was to introduce new materials, research, designs, and local products to improve the quality of craft among those in the Japanese public who engaged with its production. The appearance of Koseki's lacquer vessels in  $K\bar{o}gei\ ny\bar{u}su$  reflects the expanding significance of Iwate lacquer beyond the prefecture's boundaries, and ironically juxtaposed it with newly available synthetic resins that have heavily competed with the lacquer industry in the second half of the twentieth century. The advertisements featured in  $K\bar{o}gei\ ny\bar{u}su$ , discussed below, show how Koseki's hiage were situated amid a robust variety of synthetic resin materials with seemingly inexhaustible applications. These new materials, including polylite, permeated the daily lives of those living in Japan and consequently carved out space for idealized image of regional craft to provide a welcome sense of respite from postwar development and consumption.

The reception of Koseki's set of three spouted lacquer vessels ("katakuchi" or "hiage") produced in 1958 serves as a revealing example of the ways Koseki's work modeled authentic Japanese craft designs that were unadulterated by postwar mass production and the resin "revolution" (Fig. 3.13). Koseki's hiage gained recognition within craft spheres outside of Iwate precisely for their utensil type and visual allusions to the Tōhoku region and Iwate in particular. This set of red- and black-lacquered vessels makes overt references, perhaps quotations, to utilitarian lacquer craft produced in the Meiji period and earlier in the Appi River region (see Chapter One). Koseki produced two versions of the set—one with red exteriors and black interiors, and another with these colors reversed. Each set consists of a large, medium, and small vessel. Although the adornment visible beneath the spouts are similar to the larger hiage produced and used locally in Jōbōji and discussed in Chapter One (Fig. 1.15), his postwar works are considerably smaller and topped with lids that taper slightly before leveling off to a flat surface (Fig. 3.13). Koseki embellishes and highlights the forms by painting with bold black lacquer in a ring with sharp tips that radiate below the spouts. He also added a single line that wraps completely around the top edge of each vessel.

Traditionally, *hiage* had multiple functions, and, in fact, for Koseki's version, a draft of the three vessels preserved in the Koseki family archive is labeled "condiment set" (*chōmiryō setto*) (Fig. 3.14). Although *doburoku* sake is traditionally served from *hiage*, the draft of the set informs us that Koseki instead intended the vessels for use as condiment storage. With their form, color, patterns, and intended use, Koseki appears to have adapted and modernized the local lacquered *hiage* to catch the eye of those unfamiliar with regional tastes.

Koseki's set of three *hiage* appears at least twice—curiously, almost twenty years apart—in two different published magazines. It first appears in *Kōgei nyūsu* in a short article written by lacquer artisan Fukuoka Nuitarō (1900-1978) and published in the magazine in September 1959

(Fig. 3.15).<sup>173</sup> In his article, Fukuoka first notes that the lacquer industry was in decline due to "modern industrialization" and "ceramics, glass, plastics, etc.," before he describes the necessity of traditional craft, and particularly these *hiage*, in postwar Japan. Fukuoka writes: "For people to be relived of the pressure (*seppaku*) and stress (*kinchō*) of their daily lives, time for rest, calm, and relaxation is necessary. If we are to uncover even one object that can fulfill this role, we (*ware ware*) must have the confidence to bravely tell the world. For example, I believe this *hiage* (*katakuchi*), as a work of lacquer, is of superior rank within the world of craft (*kurafuto*)."

Fukuoka justifies his assessment of Koseki's *hiage* as "superior rank" by pointing to its versatility such as containers for tempura dipping sauce or the sauce for unagi. He concludes with a statement that draws upon recurring tropes of craft and society: objects that are visually striking in their form; the discovery of local, non-mass-produced objects that pertain to everyday life; and the survival of such traditional objects despite postwar mass production and consumption. For Fukuoka, Koseki and his *hiage* completed an essential task of modernizing and revitalizing a traditional form of Japanese craft through both functional and visual adaptations.

Perhaps the linguistic obscurity of the word hiage—which Fukuoka explains is a local moniker—added to its caché as a local object yet to be consolidated into national histories of craft through encyclopedic categorizations that occurred in the Meiji and Taisho periods (1868-1926). In fact, the word hiage still does not appear in lacquer craft dictionaries, including in the 2004 Revised and Consolidated Encyclopedia of Lacquer Craft (Shinsōgappon Shitsugei Jiten). 175 Although spouted vessels similar to the Jōbōji hiage were produced throughout much of Japan, many are ceramic and generally referred to as "spouted vessels" (katakuchi). However, along the Appi River, these wares were and continue to be referred to as "hiage." Fukuoka, though clearly not an expert on Iwate lacquerware, adopts a didactic tone to introduce Koseki's hiage to the wider audience of Kōgei nyūsu readers. Intriguingly, a caption written in English below the image of the single hiage in the top left corner of the spread reads "'HIAGE' Japaneselacquered sauce-pot." Notable here is the "Japanese" prefix to "lacquered," which likely reflects the importance of indicating the material origins and identity of the lacquer craft industry in Japan and the arts more broadly. Importantly, we should acknowledge Fukuoka's response toward lacquered Japanese objects saturated with elements that signal local origins in northern Tōhoku and, in turn, embody and visually animate a nostalgic impression of regional, local craft. What had once been local, to its detriment, was now fortunately local. It is therefore no surprise that Koseki chose to deploy this form of the *hiage*, in vibrant red with an exaggerated geometric design and functional lid, and that these images were subsequently published in Kōgei nyūsu.

In the same September 1959 issue of *Kōgei nyūsu*, advertisements promoting materials that competed with the lacquer industry, in particular the development and availability of synthetic resins, reveal the applications and benefits of such technology to consumers in 1950s and 1960s Japan. For example, an advertisement for "Vinytop"—a vinyl chloride resin decorative steel sheet produced by the company Tōyō Kōhan—is labeled as a "revolutionary new

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>173</sup> Fukuoka Nuitarō was himself was a lacquer artisan and educator who spent time abroad in Europe, the US, Mexico, and India.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>174</sup> Fukuoka Nuitarō, "Iwate no Hiage," *Kōgei Nyūsu (Industrial Art News)*, vol. 27 no. 6, edited by Kōgyō gijutsuin sangyō kōgei shikenjo (Industrial Arts Institute), Tokyo, Maruzen (September 1959): 24-25. Accessed: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2351237.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>175</sup> Kōgei Shuppan, ed., *Shinsōgappon Shitsugei Jiten* (Tokyo: Kōgei Shuppan, 2004). This encyclopedia was formerly published as *Introduction to Lacquer Craft (Shitsugei Nyūmon)* in 1972 and *Dictionary of Lacquer Craft (Urushi Kōgei Jiten)* in 1978.

material" (*kakkiteki shin zairyō*) (Fig. 3.16). According to the printed advertisement, Vinytop came in four basic varieties and could be used to as a protective and decorative coating on surfaces. Boasting corrosion resistance (*taishokusei*), weather resistance (*taikōsei*), and available in eight different colors, the advertisement names multiple applications, including "everyday use items" (*nichiyōhin*), furniture, architecture, even automobiles and buildings. Another advertisement for "polylite" (*poriraito*) polyester resin produced by the company Nihon Raihihōrudo Kagaku Kōgyō (now DIC Corporation) highlights the water-resistance, chemical resistance, low thermal conductivity, light weight, and selectable coloration, among other advantages of the material (Fig. 3.17). Together, these advertisements reveal the properties of resins that compete with the advantages of lacquered objects—the low thermal conductivity and water resistance of lacquerware makes them valuable as vessels for food.

The location of Koseki's *hiage* within a publication promoting manufactured resins points to the conflicting objectives of  $K\bar{o}gei$   $ny\bar{u}su$ . This contradictory promotion of Koseki's lacquered *hiage*—produced with a "natural" plastic lacquer tree sap—alongside Vinytop and polylite material exemplifies the position of Japanese craft entrenched within new conditions of postwar synthetic material modernity. We might then consider how  $K\bar{o}gei$   $ny\bar{u}su$ —which sought to report on recent research in the realm of craft and design as well as to highlight the promising examples of craft for public consumption—indicates a broader tension inherent in efforts to bring lacquer craft traditions into the 1950s and 1960s amid the new efficiencies and possibilities of industrial modernity. Ironically, we will see below how the expanding availability of synthetic resin materials that compete with lacquer, demonstrated by these two advertisements, foreshadows Koseki's own adoption of similar materials for use as substrates in his contemporary lacquer art.

The same set of three *hiage* also appeared in a 1977 issue of the tea magazine *Tankō tekisuto*, a publication of the Urasenke Tea School that provided practitioners with tips from a variety of perspectives, including flowers used for tea ceremonies, tools, and advice for hosting tea gatherings. Iguchi Kaisen served as the supervising editor for the issue, which appears to have been prepared after he visited craft workshops in Iwate, including Koseki's Morioka studio. <sup>176</sup> Scholar of tea ceremony Mita Tomiko provided the text for the article and suggests how the *hiage* might be arranged within an assemblage of tea implements. <sup>177</sup> In particular, Mita notes that the *hiage*, which possesses "the atmosphere of a sunken hearth in a country dwelling" would complement a celadon vase or a mortar-shaped water pitcher (*mizusashi*). <sup>178</sup> That the *hiage* would evoke such an atmosphere within the context of tea ceremony is significant, suggesting that the simple lacquered vessel could bring with it the air of a more rustic environment even when extracted from the countryside.

Mita writes of how the *hiage* triggered her own wistful reminiscence: "When I hold the red *hiage* in the palm of my hand, I remember seeing the back of my mother, standing in the cold winter kitchen doing the washing with her head wrapped in a white hand towel. It had that kind of nostalgia." The specifics of Mita's memory—from the coldness of the kitchen to the towel

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>176</sup> Iguchi Kaisen and Mita Tomiko, eds., "Cha no Kōgei: Iwate," *Tankō tekisuto* (February, 1977):16-20. Workshops where Nanbu *tekki* are produced and other lacquering workshops where Hidehira-nuri is produced are also included in this issue.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>178</sup> Mita refers to a specific type of celadon vase with defined shoulders and a long neck, *kinuta no hanaire*. Ibid., 20. <sup>179</sup> Ibid.

wrapped around her mother's head—are spurred by her physical interaction with the *hiage* as she holds it in her hand. This haptic engagement and the simple visual design bring the familiarity of Mita's past into her present, an experience she deems desirable first for the context of Urasenkei Tea practice and, in turn, a wider discourse on Japanese culture. The local charm of an Iwate *hiage* is found not only in its rustic visual appearance or its invitation to be touched, but also in its ability to remind individuals of lost, simpler times.

The adoption of Koseki's *hiage* set by both *Kōgei nyūsu* and *Tankō tekisuto* shows the multidirectional movement of Koseki's iteration of Jōbōji lacquer within postwar networks of craft consumption. The appearance of these small lacquered vessels in *Kōgei nyūsu* shows how modern usages of Jōbōji lacquer were framed as fine examples of versatile, multipurpose craft objects worthy of national promotion. Their appearance alongside proliferating synthetic resins, however, reveals the messiness of promoting innovative craft production in 1950s and 60s Japan which required frequent toggling between "traditional" craft and the utilization of newly engineered resins. The appearance of Koseki's *hiage* in *Tankō tekisuto* demonstrates yet another reframing of Koseki's work, which suited the needs of 1970s Urasenke tea practitioners who might have used the *hiage* to evoke an atmosphere of "rural" rusticity. Both publications bring Koseki's *hiage* into broader discussions of traditional craft amid drastic changes to the material culture of everyday life and offer the *hiage* as a possible remedy for retaining traditional Japanese craft within an increasingly plastic material culture in Japan.

# Koseki's Contemporary Lacquer Art in a Global Context

Koseki's later work—produced in the latter half of the 1960s onward—emerged from his engagement with expanding fields of aesthetic value and the shifting tectonics of aesthetic judgement of craft. In particular, Koseki began deepening his relationship with members of the Association for Contemporary Craft Artists, including prominent members such as Takahashi Setsurō (1914-2007), and, indirectly, the founding member of the Association, Yamazaki Kakutarō (1899-1984). Beginning around this time, Koseki spent more energy creating works that, along with other contemporary craft artists globally, adapted—and at times completely abandoned—"functional" or "utilitarian" forms for bolder, twisting forms made possible by the advent of synthetic resin substrates. Similarly, Koseki and others wielded traditional techniques, such as maki-e and the layered lacquering technique (tsuishitsu), not simply as adornment but as the subject matter of their works. Koseki used these dramatic forms and exaggerated techniques to create individualistic, novel visual expressions using Jōbōji lacquer that brought the material into global discussions questioning the purpose of craft production and the possibilities of craft to express intangible and abstract ideas such as *Quiet Spin*.

In contrast to "traditional craft" (*dentō kōgei*), which was supported by the Japan Traditional Craft Exhibition (Nihon Dentō Kōgeiten) inaugurated in 1954 by the Japanese Art Crafts Society (*Nihon kōgei kai*) and aligned with the goals of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, Koseki focused attention on submitting works for display in exhibition spaces such as the Japan Contemporary Craft Art Exhibition. Established in 1961 by core

<sup>180</sup> Andreas Marks importantly acknowledges that although Tokyo served as the "center" of contemporary craft production, artists born in peripheral areas often "maintained their support of lacquer art produced on their native grounds" through their engagement with local research institutes and workshops, including the Kagawa Prefectural

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members of the art craft division of the Japan Fine Arts Exhibition, often referred to as "Nitten," Koseki applied Jōbōji lacquer to substrates made of plastic synthetic resins, which broadened the possibilities for him to include large-scale, technically intricate lacquer art designs that deploy an abstracted visual language resembling "art works" (*bijutsu sakuhin*) or "art crafts" (*bijutsu kōgeihin*). His efforts to create unconventional lacquer art designs were punctuated, however, by projects or "interludes" that demonstrate a lingering commitment to traditional styles and forms associated with Iwate, including a demonstration of Hidehira-style lacquer vessel production for the Showa Emperor and Empress in 1970, discussed later in this chapter.

The postwar period saw a splitting of aesthetic priorities, a deviation from a strict adherence to recreating traditional models using well understood and practiced techniques and forms. Venues such as the 1954 Japan Traditional Crafts Exhibition maintained space for the continued practice of traditional wares. At the same time, however, artists such as Yamazaki Kakutarō, who trained and taught with Rokkaku Shisui (1867-1950) at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and later founded the Association for Contemporary Craft Artists in 1961, began producing wares that challenged established conventions. This expanded the use of lacquer as a medium articulated a Japanese visual modernity within the context of global modern art through its rejection of utilitarianism in favor of individualist artistic expression. Koseki's work from the late 1960s onward, though punctuated by opportunities to demonstrate a commitment to "traditional" lacquerware forms and designs, would align with such conceptions of contemporary craft.

Yamazaki was central to the promulgation of contemporary lacquer craft in postwar Japan. After graduating from the Tokyo School of Fine Arts Lacquer Department in 1924, Yamazaki became an assistant professor in the same department the following year. He traveled to Europe and the U.S. from 1937 to 1938, sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and upon his return to Tokyo he began using colors in his lacquer works that deviated from the traditional palette. These bold colors were employed on objects that diverged from more traditional vessel-type wares like boxes and bowls, although Yamazaki is perhaps most famous for his lacquer screens and panels. Notable is his 1939 work titled *Gibbons*, which depicts three of the animals seated on a gently undulating tree limb that spans the width of the two folding panels (Fig. 3.18). The flattened composition that emphasizes the curved forms of the gibbons' tails indicates an important departure from functional lacquered vessels and a move toward use of lacquer for the purpose of pictorial depiction on a flat picture plane. 183

Early experiments in pictorial usage of lacquer on larger screens as well as on sculptural works continued through the 1950s with the work of Takahashi Setsurō, one of Yamazaki's students, and a mentor of Koseki. Like Yamazaki, Takahashi was a graduate of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and is known for producing large panels in lacquer that emphasize the pictorial capabilities of the material. For example, Takahashi's *Petrified woods, cultivated forest (Kaseki* 

Research Institute on Lacquer Art. See Andreas Marks, *Hard Bodies: Contemporary Japanese Lacquer Sculpture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 19.

With his submission of  $Sh\bar{o}$  in 1959, Koseki made his first appearance at Kōfukai Art Association—an institution that has been holding national exhibitions of painting and craft since 1912.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>182</sup> Itani Yoshie, "Kakutaro Yamazaki, His Visit to the West, and His Influence on *Urushi* Art Education at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts," *The Asian Conference of Design History and Theory Journal*, no.1, (2016): 75. 
<sup>183</sup> Shibata Zeshin's (1807-1891) pictorial depictions in lacquer are a key precedent for Yamazaki's usage of the material. See, Nezu Bijutsukan Gakugeibu, eds., ZESHIN: *Shibata Zeshin no shikkō, urushi-e, kaiga* (Tokyo: Nezu Museum, 2012).

no mori, kaikon rin) of 1966, depicted in lacquer and gold on a six-foot-by-six-foot square panel, is characterized by a series of overlapping gold semicircles, concentric tree-rings, and flattened leaves that diminish in size as they recede into a distinguishable horizon line, confounding the viewer's perception of space (Fig. 3.19). We are forced to examine colorful shapes that extend below each "tree," which are depicted in sprinkled silver metallic dust and an orange-like rust. Unlike Yamazaki's *Gibbons*, which sustains figuration and a degree of naturalism in his depiction of animals, Takahashi pushes lacquer art even farther from traditional craft usage by choosing to portray a petrified forest as a series of semi-circles and flattened leaves.

Other postwar lacquer artists, including Koseki, experimented with the vessel form as a possible vehicle for their individual artistic expression. In 1957, Kuroda Tatsuaki (1904-1982) created *Ornamental box with red lacquered ridged design* (Figs. 3.20-21). Consisting of eight high ridges that radiate outward from the center of the lid, wrapping down and around the sides of the box, the vermillion vessel presents a hypnotizing, flowing texture that unites the object as a solid whole. The practicality of the box as a vessel is barely discernable in the thin slit where the lid rests on the body, appearing almost vestigial and secondary to Kuroda's emphasis on the multidimensional ridged surface of the object.

Koseki's work during the 1960s and 1970s seems to align with this desire to experiment with vessels as a possible mode of individual aesthetic expression in lacquer. In 1960, Koseki submitted a four-sided decorated dish titled *Sun Wave* (*Yōha*) to the Third Revised Nitten Exhibition, but was not selected for exhibition. While the location of *Sun Wave* is unknown, a drawing in the Koseki family archive is thought to closely resemble the completed object (Fig. 3.22). A large, four-sided decorated dish, *Sun Wave* expanded Koseki's usage of the "tree-ring" shaped pattern (*nenrinjō monyō*) that became emblematic of his early works and reappears throughout the remainder of his career. Using different shades of orange- and yellow-pigmented lacquer, Koseki creates a design of concentric rings that gradually expand outward toward the edges of the dish. Framed by a black rim, clusters of light grey and blue hydrangea flower petals with cusped tips—suspiciously resembling the *yotsuwaribishi* forms placed along the rim of the Hidehira-wan—occupy the outermost concentric ring. Although the resonance between the hydrangea flower petals and the *yotsuwaribishi* motif seen on Hidehira-wan (discussed below) may be a formal coincidence, it nonetheless imbues *Sun Wave* with a sense of residual, formulaic usage of traditional lacquerware motifs.

Sun Wave makes a distinct effort to depart from the functional hiage featured in Kōgei nyūsu and Tankō tekisuto. The interior surface of the dish is not designed to be an efficient vessel to serve food. Rather, the form is "deceptive" in its suggestion of a functional use; it is designed instead to serve as a surface for visual ornament. The substrate acts as a blank canvas upon which Koseki applied lacquer to create what resembles the cross-section of a tree trunk ringed with an ornamental motif. The warped edges of dish emphasize visual priorities over utility—Koseki chose to cramp the right half of the dish by thickening the rim, creating an unbalanced, asymmetrical design.

Then, in 1961, Koseki received his first acceptance to the 4th Revised Nitten, for *Radiating Ring (Genrin)*, a decorated dish with pigmented lacquer (Figs. 3.23-24). Here, Koseki demonstrates his prowess as a master of the *tsuishitsu*, or "layering technique," which requires applying one layer of lacquer coating, in this case with a particular shade of color, and allowing

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>184</sup> However, *Sun Wave* was accepted to another competitive exhibition, Kōfukai, that same year.

it to harden before repeating the process. A black-and-white photograph from 1961 highlights the density of concentric lines that compose the tree-ring pattern which gradually expands to fill the entirety of the object's surface (Fig. 3.24). The decorative hydrangea petals seen in *Sun Wave* are eliminated, and Koseki provides viewers with a more disciplined focus on the *tsuishitsu* technique as an arresting visual form that deserves our undivided attention. Like *Sun Wave*, *Radiating Ring* is given an abstract, conceptual name rather than a descriptive one such as "hiage" ("spouted vessel") or "hako" ("box").

Koseki's son Yūhei reports that Koseki sought the advice of established lacquer artist Takahashi Setsurō, mentioned above, when designing *Radiating Ring*. Takahashi's comments on Koseki's design—including a suggestion to add black lacquer in the bottom left corner of the design—are legible on the design drawings for *Radiating Ring* (Fig. 3.25). As noted above, Takahashi was a graduate of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and quickly enjoyed acceptance at national exhibitions as both a Nitten judge and an artist who submitted work to the exhibition. Most famous for his large-scale lacquered panels and folding screens, Takahashi was a key producer of works made from lacquer that could be displayed and understood as fine art. Koseki seems to have continued to aligned himself with Takahashi, and the ideas of Takahashi's teacher Yamazaki, who founded the Association for Artists of Contemporary Art Craft and provided further opportunities for such experiments with form and individual artistic expression.

Throughout the 1960s, Koseki's work drew broader attention; 1964 saw the acceptance of his work for the first time in the third annual Contemporary Art Craft Exhibition for his artwork titled *Katachi*, as well as another acceptance to the seventh annual Nitten later the same year. In addition to his success with designs at the national level, Koseki also enjoyed regular success showing his works in the Tōhoku region. We might consider Koseki's work using Reiko Tomii's characterization of "world art history," which she describes as "a networked whole of local/national histories linked through resonances and connections. The connectedness is both explicit and implicit, underscored by the idea of 'international contemporaneity.'" Koseki's investment in experimentation with vessel forms, created in lacquer, would become conjoined with local histories of Iwate, reflecting his long-term residence and proximity to local craft traditions in that prefecture.

At the local level, several of his artworks make more explicit reference to longer histories of the northern reaches of Tōhoku while also bringing these local references into the fold of contemporary craft production. For example, on October 4, 1965, Koseki submitted *Vessel of the Eastern Barbarians* (*Tōi no Utsuwa*) to the inaugural Iwate Craft Artist Association Exhibition at the Kawatoku Gallery in Morioka City, Iwate Prefecture (Fig. 3.26). A photograph from the Koseki family archive shows Koseki's wife Kinu and her friend Toshiko Kuji gazing at the vessel from a close distance (Fig. 3.27). About three times the size of a typical Hidehira-wan, the large body of the vessel rests upon an elongated foot, giving the work an exaggerated sense of height and grandeur. Excluding two thin, gently wavering lines of gold placed just below the upper rim of the vessel, Koseki has eliminated any easily recognizable pictorial elements or motifs and instead covered the entire vessel—inside and out—with a deep red lacquer. However, the base and bottom half of the body demonstrate Koseki's deep interest in the utilizing lacquer

<sup>186</sup> Tomii Reiko, "'International Contemporaneity' in the 1960s: Discoursing on Art in Japan and Beyond," *Japan Review* 21 (2009): 125.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>185</sup> Takahashi Setsurō also collaborated with Teshigahara Sofu of the Sogetsu School of ikebana, producing lacquered vases for ikebana display.

layering technique to achieve an arresting visual presentation. Significantly, we see Koseki again revealing different shades of lacquer on the surface by polishing down upper layers of lacquer to expose lighter and darker reds below. The result is a finely polished surface that resembles a dynamic, aqueous liquid: a confounding yet tantalizing visual presentation for the exterior of a large vessel.

Despite its minimalist design, *Vessel*'s overt references to geographically and temporally distant Tōhoku demonstrate how local histories serve as a generative source of Koseki's contemporary lacquer designs. Most obviously, the shape of the vessel pays homage to the ubiquity of round, lacquered vessels manufactured in Iwate since at least the Edo period (see Chapter One). But the title, *Vessel of the Eastern Barbarians* (*Tōi no Utsuwa*), also carries local significance because the ideograph compound "Tōi" has a complex nuance, referring to a geographical center-periphery relationship in a charged manner. This term was a derogatory term used by the Kinai imperium as early as the seventh century to refer to the Emishi; those inhabiting what is now the Tōhoku region, including the land that is now the location of Iwate Prefecture. As Mimi Yiengpruksawan notes, the Emishi were perceived as ethnically confounding and a threat to the imperial capital in Nara. She writes that the Emishi "were for the authorities in Nara an alien people and culture that posed a threat to the expansion and consolidation of empire." 188

Koseki therefore coopts the term "Eastern Barbarians" and affixes it to an opulent and abstract vessel linked to Fujiwara no Hidehira and the Hiraizumi Buddhist complex, which, as noted in previous chapters, came to the height of its prosperity in the twelfth century. The Northern Fujiwara themselves drew upon their Emishi lineage to complicate their position *vis-à-vis* mainstream politics in Kyoto. Together, the naming of a Hidehira-wan shaped object as a *Vessel of the Eastern Barbarians* conflates two elements of Tōhoku's distant past, both of which succumbed to centralized political power. And, by presenting this composite Tōhoku identity at a large scale through layered gold and vermillion lacquer, Koseki poignantly reinscribes an aura of grandeur and elegance onto a defeated Tōhoku past. It seems that for Koseki, contemporaneity is articulated through the local, as well as through the historical.<sup>189</sup>

Consisting of vermillion lacquer, sparse use of gold, and polished-down layers of lacquer that create a nebulous texture near the bottom of the vessel, Koseki's *Vessel of the Eastern Barbarians* integrates contemporary abstraction with the longer histories of vessel production in Jōbōji and Tōhoku more broadly. This oversized vessel—standing at 28.5 centimeters high and 35.5 centimeters wide—holds our attention not just because it conjures images of the opulent Northern Fujiwara and grandeur of Chūsonji, but also because of its the tantalizing lacquered surfaces and thin, wavering gold line near the rim. This broadening of aesthetic priorities reflects Koseki's strengthening interest in experimenting with vessel forms as well as the visual possibilities of lacquer techniques. *Vessel* suggests that Koseki's contemporaneity among craft

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>187</sup> This term is of Chinese origin and originally referred to inhabitants on the Japanese archipelago as *Dongyi* ("Eastern Barbarians"). The term was appropriated by the Kinai imperium to refer to those east of the Kinai imperium, the broad region of what is presently the Tōhoku region. See Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi*, 12. Yiengpruksawan refers to the Kinai state as the Japanese state after 645 located in what is now the municipalities of Kyoto and Osaka and the prefectures of Nara and Hyōgo.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>188</sup> Yiengpruksawan, 19.

After its display at the first Iwate Craft Artist Exhibition in 1965, the vessel was held in the collection of a business, Yamada Lacquerware Hall in Aizuwakamatsu. Yamada has since gone bankrupt, and the current location of the work is unknown.

artists drew upon lacquer not only as a material of tradition or even modernity but also as a material that could express a liberation of lacquerware from workshop production and the unnamed craftsman espoused by advocates of the Mingei Movement. As we will see, Koseki's work toggles between these priorities, suspended between traditional lacquer practice and artistic subjectivity in an increasingly global craft movement.

In the 1960s, Koseki begins using synthetic resins (*gōseijushi*) as substrates for his lacquered objects. This transition was not wholescale—Koseki continued to produce some small vessels with wood substrates. However, the consistent use of synthetic resins suggests Koseki's desire to use the material to further explore the possibilities offered by larger, more complexly shaped substrates. These plastic substrates could be molded into larger, more complex forms previously unavailable to lacquer artisans who had relied on wood substrates, and therefore introduced new opportunities at the conjunction of lacquerware production and individualistic expression. Liberation of color occurred as well, prompted by advances in pigment technology that allowed a broader spectrum of colors to enrich artistic expression in the material of lacquer.

Koseki's 1965 work titled *Core Heat (Kakunetsu)* exemplifies his emerging interests in experimentation with form and abstract expression, enhanced by his adoption of synthetic resin bases (Figs. 3.28-29).<sup>190</sup> *Core Heat*, an adorned dish (*kazari-zara*), is another virtuoso example of the *tsuishitsu* layering technique, but unlike *Vessel*, which was produced on a wood substrate, *Core Heat* utilizes a synthetic resin base. Though only eight centimeters in height, *Core Heat* extends horizontally over sixty-three centimeters and is thirty-six centimeters deep to create a significant swath of continuous, relatively flat surface area upon which Koseki applies layers of brilliantly pigmented red lacquer. Tapered slightly at each end, Koseki covered most of the inside surface of the dish with bands of vermillion lacquer that become more discernable as one physically approaches the object (Fig. 3.29). Punctuated by bands of yellow-pigmented lacquer and very thin lines of applied gold leaf, Koseki evokes a sense of magma-like molten liquid that courses across the surface of the dish. Like his later work *Quiet Spin*, the name *Core Heat* reflects an abstract idea rather than a descriptive name, reflecting Koseki's growing interest in utilizing the medium of lacquer craft as a vehicle for expansive and experimental personal expression.<sup>191</sup>

The Japan Contemporary Craft Art Exhibition, organized by the Association for Contemporary Craft Artists, provided a venue for Koseki's work to be displayed abroad. *Core Heat* was the second of Koseki's work to be shown overseas, in four European countries, as part of the traveling Japan Contemporary Craft Art Exhibition in 1965. The year prior, Koseki's work titled *Form* (*Katachi*) traveled to North America along with twenty-one other lacquered objects produced by members of the Association. These international exhibitions, organized by the Association, situated Koseki's work within global networks of contemporary craft production

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>190</sup> Koseki's access to the technology required for creating synthetic resin substrates was supplied by his first son, Yūhei, who worked in the automobile industry. Yūhei's work involved constructing plastic car parts such as side and rearview mirror casings, and he used this knowledge and skill to help his father Koseki create substrates with increasingly complicated shapes.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>191</sup> There is very little commentary offered by Koseki on any of his works, and much of the archival documents that record his own explanations of his work are focused on basic descriptions in the form of applications sent to exhibition juries. However, when submitting his application for *Core Heat* to the Japan Contemporary Craft Art Exhibition, Koseki explained that within the non-circular dish, "the core is burning…layers of lacquer ceaselessly flow." "Dai yon kai Nihon gendai kōgei bijutsu ten shuppin mōshikomisho," Undated, Koseki family archive.

and indicate the force with which the Jōbōji lacquer landscape was thrust into larger networks of craft production in the 1960s and 1970s.

The broader objectives of the Association are discernable from publications produced by the Association, including the 1977 exhibition catalogue *Contemporary Craft Art of Japan (Nihon gendai kōgei bijutsu)*, edited by the Association's founder and director, Yamazaki Kakutarō. The catalogue features the work of Association members working in lacquer, metalwork, ceramics, cloisonné, leather, dolls, and bamboo. 192 This 1977 edited volume commemorated fifteen years of the Association's annual exhibitions, which began in 1961.

The works presented in the publication and exhibition suggest that Koseki sought to bring his work in line with this broader network of "new experimental" and "unconventional" (*zanshinna*) craft representative of the efforts of the Association. For example, Asakura Yoshinari, in his work titled *Gigantic Tree* (*Kyoju*), drew upon the traditional ceramic tradition of Kutani ware (Fig. 3.30). According to the explanation in the exhibition catalogue, Asakura utilized the five-color glaze of Kutani ware on porcelain but chose the strength of the tree shape for his work. As such, he sought to "give form to the harmony between shape and color." <sup>194</sup>

In 1978, just one year after the Association's Fifteen-Year Commemorative Exhibition, Koseki produced a work titled *Tree Spirit (Jushin*), which would later be selected for the Twentieth Anniversary of the Contemporary Craft Arts Exhibition in 1981 (Fig. 3.31). Koseki once again used layers of pigmented lacquer and gold leaf applied to a large substrate—sixtyfive centimeters in height and nearly thirty-eight centimeters in width at its widest point—to create a tree form that splits into two limbs. Although the details regarding its selection are unknown, Koseki's *Tree Spirit* was chosen as a gift from Iwate Prefecture to celebrate the wedding of Crown Prince Naruhito and Masako Owada in June of 1993. Tree Spirit is now in the collection of the Imperial Household, which imbues Koseki's work with a heightened sense of geographic and conceptual "layering." This work is "global" because it was selected for exhibition in the globally engaged Contemporary Craft Art Exhibition, which prioritized innovative experiments in "giving form" to such abstract ideas as the "spirit of a tree." Koseki also made use of globally circulating material technologies, such as those that made possible the production of *Tree Spirit's* synthetic resin substrate, inflecting a sense of globality beneath the local use of Jōbōji lacquer. This work is also national, not only because it was included in the "Japan" Contemporary Craft Art Exhibition, but because it was deemed fit for the Imperial collections in Tokyo, as one of many donations from different prefectures. These "layers of place" bring the Jōbōji lacquer landscape into new modes of signification and indicate an expansion of the landscape far beyond the physical, administrative boundaries of the town of Jōbōji.

#### Interlude: Hidehira-style Vessel Production for the Showa Emperor and Empress, 1970

When the Showa Emperor Hirohito (1901-1989) and Empress Kōjun (1903-2000) planned to visit Iwate Prefecture in October 1970 as part of their participation in the Twenty-

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>192</sup> Gendai kõgei bijutsuka kyōkai, ed., *Nihon gendai kōgei bijutsu* (Kyoto: Maria shobō, 1977): https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/12656557.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>193</sup> Yamazaki Kakutarō uses the term *zanshinna* sōsaku ("unconventional creativity") to describe the works of the Association members. Ibid., unpaginated.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>194</sup> Ibid., 307.

Fifth National Athletic Competition, it was decided that the Imperial visit would include a stop at the Iwate Prefectural Industrial Laboratory (Iwate-ken Kōgyō Shikenjō). With that decision, it was certain that the Laboratory should provide a gift fit for the royal family, an apt physical tribute to local history, craft, and physical environments of the most expansive prefecture in Tōhoku. In a photograph produced during the Imperial visit, Emperor and Empress look on as Koseki performs a live demonstration of lacquerware production (Fig. 3.32). Together with two accompanying artisans, Koseki, seated farthest from the viewer in the right half of the image, is positioned at the end of a short assembly line for production of Hidehira-wan (Hidehira vessels)—replicas of black- and red-lacquered bowls adorned with geometric designs depicted in gold. One artisan applies a red lacquer pictorial design (*urushi-e*) while others apply strips of gold leaf to the wet lacquer surface of the vessel. Hanging on the wall behind the three artisans are labeled panels displaying progressive stages of Hidehira-wan production. In It remains unknown who ordered this production demonstration of the Hidehira-type vessels for the royal family, including the specific design chosen for adornment and the preparation of the wood bases.

Together, the three craftsmen represent a specific interest in replicating craft traditions of the past, specifically the opulently decorated vessel known as "Hidehira-nuri" or "Hidehira lacquerware" (Figs. 3.33-34). With a profile that begins with a tall, angled foot and wide, spherical body, Hidehira-type vessels are characterized by their elaborate black and red lacquer designs with gold leaf decorative elements. Rhombus-shaped pieces of gold are arranged in groups of four, creating diamond-shaped forms (yūsokubishimon or yotsuwaribishi) lined with thin parallel strips, also made of gold.<sup>197</sup> Cloud forms, referred to as "Genji clouds" (Genji gumo) depicted in red lacquer descend from the upper rim of the bowl in an oscillating pattern, leaving open spaces for the centralized camelia flower design on the side of the vessel.

As noted above, these vessels are named after Fujiwara no Hidehira (1122-1187), grandson of Kiyohira and son of Motohira. Also known as the "Northern Fujiwara," the three generations of Northern Fujiwara figure prominently in the premodern history of Japanese art as the commissioners of monumental architecture at the expansive Hiraizumi complex in southern

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>195</sup> The Iwate Prefectural Industrial Laboratory (*Iwate-ken Kōgyō Shikenjo*), later renamed the Iwate Industrial Research Institute (*Iwate Kōgyō Gijutsu Sentā*), was originally founded in 1873 and doubled as an agricultural research center. The organization has been restructured on numerous occasions since its founding in the Meiji period. See: Iwate-ken Kōgyō Gijutsu Sentā, "Enkaku," accessed February 20, 2023:

https://www2.pref.iwate.jp/~kiri/about/enkaku.html. The packed schedule of the Imperial family throughout their seven-day visit in Iwate—celebrations, ceremonies, rugby games, swimming meets, prefectural offices, and workshops—is narrated in the *Iwate Kokutai Gyōkōkeishi*. See Iwate-ken, *Iwate Kokutai Gyōkōkeishi* (Morioka: Iwate-ken, 1971), https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/12134430. This was the third occasion that Emperor and Empress had visited Iwate Prefecture since the end of the Pacific War.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>196</sup> The Imperial Family also attended an exhibition of objects during their Iwate visit that included the display of lacquerware. Among the displayed lacquerware were Hidehira-wan, Jōbōji-wan, *katakuchi* (spouted vessels), a food storage vessel (*jikirō*), and a stationary box (*shikishibako*). The Hidehira-wan and Jōbōji-wan groups were divided into "historical vessels" (*jidai-wan*) and "contemporary replicas" (*shin-wan*). See Iwate-ken, *Iwate Kokutai Gyōkōkeishi*, 20-21.

<sup>197</sup> The contemporary workshop Ochiya, which specializes in creating contemporary versions of Hidehira-style wares uses the same term to refer to the quadruple rhombus motif as *yūsokushikimon* (有職菱紋). For an example of a contemporary lacquer workshop specializing in the production of Hidehira-style wares, see Ōchiya, "'Hidehira-nuri no moyō no imi' to 'kinpaku no hagare' ni tuite," accessed February 21, 2023:

https://ochiya.jp/blog/about/2019/09/09/秀衡塗特有の模様の意味と、金箔のはがれについ/.

Ouchi Lacquerware does not use Japanese lacquer unless the customer's budget allows.

Iwate Prefecture. As Mimi Yienpruksawan has argued, the Fujiwara of the north both referenced and elaborated upon architectural structures and wider Buddhist visual cultures in the Kyoto area, forming a complex and competitive relationship with the political center before succumbing to the armies of Minamoto no Yoritomo in 1189. Although most of the structures at Hiraizumi were destroyed, the re-creation of Hidehira-wan in front of the Showa Emperor attest to the lingering grandeur and elegance of the Northern Fujiwara and its utility in articulating cultural *caché* reflecting a regional identity. <sup>198</sup>

That said, historical connection between the so-called Hidehira-nuri and the historical figure Fujiwara Hidehira is tenuous. Contemporary lacquerware workshops in Iwate Prefecture, notably around the vicinity of Hiraizumi and Ōshū, refer to their contemporary iterations of Hidehira-style wares as "Hidehira-nuri" or "Hidehira lacquerware." While Hidehira-nuri refers to modern and contemporary lacquerwork adorned with motifs characteristic of the Hidehira style, the word Hidehira-wan refers specifically to vessels that date to the premodern period adorned with the Hidehira-style. Although contemporary lacquer workshops usually market their wares as objects that maintain a historical connection with the figure of Fujiwara Hidehira, the historical evidence is lacking. In a 1966 article, the art historian Arakawa Hirokazu characterized the historical task of searching for Hidehira-wan "is like chasing an illusion." <sup>199</sup>

We might consider Koseki's production of the Hidehira-type vessel for the Imperial family as an example of a broader interest in deploying lacquerware of the past to create modern lacquerware of the present. Esteemed lacquer artisan Matsuda Gonroku (1896-1986), who studied at the Tokyo School of the Arts under Rokkaku Shisui (1867-1950) and was designated as a Living National Treasure in 1955, was well known for his study of lacquered objects of the distant past. Not only did he restore lacquered artifacts, Matsuda published his findings notably in his 1938 *Comprehensive Survey of Period Vessels (Jidaiwan Taikan*). This text surveys lacquered vessels from around the archipelago and provides information about vessel size along with basic descriptions about how to prepare the lacquer and the substrate, and to create the design (Figs. 3.35-36). Koseki and his fellow lacquer artisans, seated for the Imperial family for production of Hidehira-type vessels in 1970, built on these historical narratives and their associated material practices and visual tradition, which reenacted material, as well as embodied

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>198</sup> For a rich discussion of the Northern Fujiwara and their visual cultural production in the twelfth century, see Mimi Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi: Buddhist Art and Regional Politics in Twelfth-Century Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>199</sup> Arakawa Hirokazu, "Maboroshi no Hidehira-wan," *Kōbijutsu* 13 (1966): 61. Accessed: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/6063308/1/32.

Matsuda Gonroku and Hano Teizō, *Jidaiwan Taikan* (Tokyo: Hōunsha, 1938), plate 30, https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/8311765. Later, in 1964, Matsuda published *The Story of Lacquer* (*Urushi no hanashi*). In this text, Matsuda provides a broad history, beginning with an example of a lacquered object excavated from the Kamegahama site in Aomori Prefecture that dates to the late Jōmon period (from approximately 13,000 to 400 BCE) before describing the Tamamushi zushi at Hōryūji, possibly dating to the seventh century. Predictably, Matsuda attributes the origin of the lacquering technique of maki-e—"sprinkled picture"—to the Japanese archipelago before he provides a summary of locally produced wares divided by region. Here he acknowledges that although there are examples of Hidehira-wan in the collection at Chūsonji, it is unlikely those vessels date to the Heian period (794-1185). Rather, he assumes so-called "Hidehira" lacquerware were likely produced in the Chūsonji area because similarly adorned architectural complexes at Hiraizumi would have required the skill of elite lacquer craftsmen. Matsuda Gonroku, *Urushi no Hanashi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1964), 144. Accessed: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2505288/1/78.

discourse on region and nation. Even so, Koseki's principle artistic goals appear to have been outside of this traditionalist practice.

# Conclusion: Jōbōji's Postwar Lacquer Modernities

Built upon his early training in maki-e lacquerware design and technique under Tsuda Tokumin in Aizuwakamatsu, Koseki brought with him the ambition and technical acumen to serve as both an advisor and artist within the lacquer community in the Appi River region and Morioka City. By merging his technical merit as a lacquer artisan with forms such as the *hiage* and Hidehira-wan that were closely linked to local identity and history, Koseki demonstrates how regional cultures distant from urban centers could quell postwar anxieties regarding industrialization and cultural decay. However, Koseki's desire to experiment with aesthetic and expressive possibilities of lacquer pushed him to consult with other successful lacquer artisans with political and institutional authority, including Tokyo-trained Takahashi Setsurō. Eventually Koseki settled on an abstract style created by an almost compulsive use of the lacquer layering technique of *tsuishitsu* on synthetic resin bases, which pushed pictorial elements aside and allowed for the lacquer technique itself to become the subject of signed, completed art objects.

In 1995, Koseki produced *Crest of the Beech (Buna no monshō*). Standing at sixty-seven centimeters in height, this lacquered object depicts the smooth trunk of a beech tree in black lacquer, adorned with gold and silver patches of mosses and lichen (Fig. 3.37). Near the top of the sculpture, the trunk splits into two limbs that are cleanly cut, which expose delicately crafted tree-rings in gold maki-e (Fig. 3.38). Now held in the collection of Iwate Prefectural Art Museum, *Crest of the Beech* was accepted for exhibition at organizations in Iwate, including the Kawatoku Craft Exhibition in Morioka and the Iwate Craft Art Exhibition, in addition to acceptance for exhibition at a national venue, the Twenty-Seventh Nitten Exhibition. The following year, in 1996, Koseki completed a similar work titled *Crest of the Beech II* (Fig. 3.39). Also completed with maki-e on a synthetic resin base, *Crest of the Beech II* resembles a beech tree resting horizontally as a log.

Koseki's beech tree "series" demonstrates a significant tension that underpins what we might call "Jōbōji's postwar lacquer modernities." As noted in the Introduction of this dissertation, lacquer artisans working along the Appi River have long made use of the abundant beech trees, which could be harvested and used as substrates for small lacquered vessels. Yet Koseki's contemporary lacquer art, as we have seen, prioritized experiments with form that required the plasticity of synthetic resin bases, which he began using in the 1960s. Koseki's contemporary lacquer art substitutes the materiality of beechwood for synthetic resins and conjoins "natural" lacquer with "manufactured" plastic, indicating a postwar visual culture of lacquerware that is perplexing in its conjunctive materialities and their associated, and at times competing, uses.

During the second half of the twentieth century, lacquer production throughout the Japanese archipelago declined sharply as mass-produced plastics became more widely available and the importation of less expensive lacquer from China accelerated. A graph produced by Hayashi Masahide shows the stark decline of Japanese lacquer production (Fig. 0.12).<sup>201</sup> In 1951, about 33,000 kilograms of lacquer were collected from lacquer trees grown in Japan. Excluding a

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>201</sup> Hayashi Masahide, "Iwate-ken hokubu chihō no nōka ga urushi shokusai o sentakushita yōin," *Nihon ringakkaishi* 101 (2019): 329.

spike in domestic lacquer production that resulted from tensions with China following the Nagasaki Flag incident in 1958, the production of Japanese lacquer declined sharply from 1960 to 1965 and then continued a more gradual decline before leveling off around 2,000 kilograms of lacquer in 2016. Despite the overall decline in raw lacquer production, the proportion of domestically produced Japanese lacquer procured from Iwate rises from around fifteen percent in 1951 to approximately seventy-five percent in 2016.

A photograph taken on November 13 1987 shows Koseki Rokuhei—wearing a suit—digging into the soil on the western side of the precinct at Tendaiji in Jōbōji, Iwate Prefecture (Figs. 3.40-42). "Call back the 'heart of Japan'" was the slogan for the third annual "Lacquer Day" ("Urushi no Hi"), designated by the Japan Lacquer Craft Association in 1985 to promote the planting of lacquer trees in various locations throughout Japan in addition to the display of contemporary wares. Gathered with the Mayor of Jōbōji, Yamamoto Hitoshi, and the director of the Ninohe Reconstruction Bureau (Ninohe Shinkōkyoku), as well as local lacquer sap collectors, Koseki makes a ceremonial appearance at the planting as a member of Japan Lacquer Craft Association. Roseki's appearance in the Jōbōji lacquer landscape points to his growing concern regarding the supply of high-quality Japanese lacquer. And, Koseki and the Japan Lacquer Craft Association were not the only parties concerned with an impending domestic lacquer scarcity. The low rates of domestic lacquer production would spark increasingly desperate actions aimed at reviving the Iwate lacquer industry; an industry that remained suspended between local and national interests throughout the postwar period.

Koseki's presence in the landscape should be understood not simply as a desire to secure material for the continuation of Japanese lacquer craft traditions. As we have seen, Koseki was equally, if not more, interested in widening the possibilities of Jōbōji lacquer as an apt material capable of articulating modern, global aesthetics that were materially tied to a specific landscape in northern Japan.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>202</sup> "Tendaiji de urushi no hi kinen shokujusai," *Jōbōji Kōhō*, December 1987.

#### **Epilogue**

# Cultural Heritage and the Futures of Jōbōji Lacquer

Throughout this dissertation, we have witnessed several moments of "recalibration" that positioned Jōbōji to better align with dominant systems of aesthetic hierarchy that emerged from political power relationships, both domestic and transnational. In turn, the local, national, and global significance of Jōbōji lacquer has been shaped through multidirectional flows of ideas, people, technology, and lacquer sap. Within the lacquer communities along the Appi River, we observed the adoption and translation of maki-e skills and designs, the re-evaluation of wares such as the *kashibon* and *hiage* as strong examples of mingei, and the material possibilities of Jōbōji lacquer as contemporary fine art in the work of Koseki Rokuhei. This Epilogue explores the most recent calibration of the Jōbōji lacquer landscape, characterized by the use of Jōbōji lacquer in the restoration of Important Cultural Properties and a World Heritage Site.

The use of Jōbōji lacquer in the restoration of the Yōmeimon (Gate of Illuminating Sun) at Nikkō Tōshōgū (Shrine to the Light of the East)—conducted from 2013 to 2017—is a compelling punctuation to our examination of the eco art history of the Jōbōji lacquer landscape as a center hold of the modern formation of "lacquer nation."<sup>203</sup> The establishment in Ninohe of a branch of Konishi Bijutsu Kōgeisha (Konishi Decorative Arts)—a privatized decorative arts restoration company that cultivates lacquer trees for restoration projects far from Jōbōji—and a series of cultural designations assigned to the Jōbōji lacquer landscape itself, indicate a heightened degree of formalized national interest in preserving and strengthening the assemblage of actors who produce Japanese lacquer in Jōbōji.

I begin this Epilogue with a local perspective on the use of Jōbōji lacquer for the restoration of Important Cultural properties. While waiting at the Jōbōji Branch of Ninohe City Hall, I saw Nagashima Madoka, a lacquer tapper from Saitama, drive up in her bright green four-wheel-drive vehicle and park in a nearly vacant lot. It was 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 14, 2022, and Nagashima-san had agreed to be interviewed, in a room across the hall from the Jōbōji Lacquer Production Division. I was keen to ask her about her choice to become a lacquer tapper, the location of the trees she tapped, and what motivates her to continue this physically demanding work in the heat of summer.

Nagashima-san was born in Saitama but moved to Hiroshima for a job in 2009. In 2016, she saw a television program explaining the restoration of the Yōmeimon, an elaborately decorated gate that serves as a focal point in the vast shrine temple complex of Nikkō Tōshōgū (Figs. 4.1-3). The complex is a mausoleum dedicated to the first Tokugawa Shogunate, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), whose spirit is enshrined there as the diety Tōshō Daigongen (Great Avatar Who Illuminates the East). Ieyasu holds a formidable position within the pantheon of Japanese historical figures and is considered the last of three "Great Unifiers"—following Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) and Toyotom Hideyoshi (1537-1598)—who consolidated warring states and established the capital of Edo (now Tokyo) in the Kanto Plain. The grandson of Tokugawa Ieyasu, Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604-1651), built the majority of the structures that comprise Nikkō Tōshōgu in 1636, twenty years after Ieyasu died near Shizuoka. The complex is located about

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>203</sup> I borrow the translation of Tōshōgū from Morgan Pitelka in *Spectacular Accumulation: Material Culture, Tokugawa Ieyasu, and Samurai Sociability* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 10.

160 kilometers north of Tokyo in Tochigi Prefecture and is reachable in about two hours by train from Tokyo Station.

Before seeing this television program about the Yōmeimon restoration, Nagashima-san was unaware of the dwindling supply of domestically produced lacquer sap. But after her research revealed the importance of Jōbōji as the leading producer of domestic lacquer, she applied for the position of lacquer tapper (*urushikaki*) through a Ninohe City program called the Regional Revitalization Cooperative (Chiiki okoshi kyōryokutai). After she was offered the job as a lacquer tapper, she quit her job in Hiroshima and moved to Jōbōji to begin work. I interviewed her in the spring before she began her seventh year of work as a lacquer tapper. She is no longer part of the Cooperative and is now an independent sap tapper, paid based on the weight of lacquer she harvests each year by the Jōbōji Lacquer Production Guild (Jōbōji Urushi Seisan Kumiai). As revealed in Nagashima-san's interview, the use of Jōbōji lacquer in the Nikkō restoration was a central reason she decided to become a lacquer tapper.<sup>204</sup>

I first gathered details about the location of the trees she tapped. In spring 2022, Nagashima-san planned to tap trees that were split between two locations—one was the large plantation owned by Ninohe City in Jōbōji called the Cultural Properties Forest (Furusato Bunazai no Mori), and the other is a private location east of the City. The Cultural Properties Forest where Nagashima-san taps trees in Jōbōji, a large plot of land with approximately 4,000 trees, was registered by the Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunkachō) as the first "Cultural Heritage Forest" in 2007. Nagashima-san told me that the second, private tapping location became known to her through word of mouth from another lacquer tapper. That person had previously tapped trees there but was unable to reach the trees on the hill due to a knee injury, and so introduced Nagashima-san to the property owner (*yamanushi*); Nagashima-san was subsequently given permission to tap the trees. The property owner had an interest in cultivating lacquer trees and had planted them in open spaces on the property. Here, the networks of information exchange, efforts of mutual aid, and the conjuncture of property owner and lacquer tapper are made visible, highlighting the connections among constituents of the lacquer landscape that make continued lacquer tapping possible.

When I asked Nagashima-san how she learned lacquer tapping technique itself, she mentioned several modes of learning, including didactic textual materials such as the "Kenshū nisshi," which are diaries kept by previous sap collectors. But our discussion made clear to me that most of the technical skill, her "know-how," was acquired through trial and error, working with the tools, internalizing specific bodily movements, and "reading" the lacquer tree. Resonating with my examination of Yanagi's 1948 *Teshigoto no Nihon*, contemporary lacquer tappers, including Nagashima-san, remain keenly aware of the "handwork" that underpins craft production. Nagashima-san was particularly prepared to perform such work that relied heavily upon embodied skill because her previous job making Kumano brushes (*Kumano fude*) in Hiroshima Prefecture also required her to learn by "moving your hands" (*te o ugokashite*). When she applied for the position of lacquer tapper, Nagashima-san was confident she could perform such work because she was accustomed to trial-and-error, experience-based learning modes required of handwork.

It is not simply the bodily movements—the degree of force applied to the *kanna*, or the gentle scraping of the *kama*—that are prerequisites for lacquer tapping; this technique also

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>204</sup> Interview with Nagashima Madoka, Jōbōji Branch of Ninohe City Hall, Thursday, April 14th, 2022. I have omitted non-relevant portions of the interview for length and clarity.

requires "reading" the lacquer tree to appropriately insert incisions when the tree is likely to produce the most sap. Nagashima-san recounted how she learned from her own mistakes and successes in reading the lacquer tree. Although most tappers wait three or four days between inserting an additional incision into the tree, changes in the weather and health of the tree require tappers to interpret and predict exactly when and what time of day to tap the tree. Nagashima-san told me that because the weather changes every year, she must remain aware of the climate and adjust her timing to maximize lacquer yields. She learned this by watching how the sap seeps into the incision immediately after cutting the tree. "When you make the incision in the tree, the way the lacquer comes out of the tree changes, so it's obvious whether you are doing it right or not. When you have timed your tapping correctly, the lacquer seeps out quickly, it doesn't just trickle or barely drip down—it rushes out." Nagashima-san told me that, eventually, the embodied knowledge of lacquer tapping technique comes together with this "lacquer tree literacy" and such tappers settle into their own internalized calculus of lacquer tapping. After explaining some of the nuances of the tapping process, Nagashima-san concluded that you simply "figure out what works best" (nantonaku kono hō ga ii).

I then pivoted to topics related to the future of Jōbōji lacquer and its usage, which relies quite clearly on the presence, knowledge, skills, and motivations of lacquer tappers working in Jōbōji today. When I asked Nagashima-san what motivates her to keep working as a lacquer tapper, she told me that it is because the lacquer was being used, and still in use today, for the restoration of Cultural Properties (*bunakzai*). I observed Nagashima-san's pride as I mentioned that Nikkō Tōshōgū is an Important Cultural Property—a National Treasure—and she enthusiastically added, "A World Heritage Site!"

I asked if Nagashima-san felt there was a now a degree of regional significance included in the Yōmeimon at Nikkō, given that the structure is now coated in Jōbōji lacquer after the 2013-2017 restoration. She affirmed that she did, indeed, sense a regional significance, and quickly proceeded to explain that she had visited Nikkō to see the Tōshōgū mausoleum on an elementary school trip: "Even as a child, I was moved by Tōshōgū, and that impression has remained with me even as an adult. Now it's even stronger, and I'm even more moved. When you are a child, you kind of look at that building and think 'wow,' and now that feeling...when the lacquer that you tapped has been used to beautify this structure..." Nagashima-san trailed off, but I understood that her sense of awe at Nikkō's multicolored and sculptural adornment—glistening with lacquer tree sap—was compounded by her own material contribution to the structure's existence.

In addition to Nikkō and its significance as a national emblem, Nagashima-san also expressed that she is motivated by the use of Jōbōji lacquer in local lacquerware production. When I asked how she views local lacquerware, she told me she "looks at it with a bit of a special feeling...it's something that feels familiar and close to me (*mijikana mono*)." The proximity of lacquer workshops, Tendaiji, and the use of Jōbōji lacquer within homes underscores the "closeness" Nagashima-san describes. Here, we again encounter the toggling between the local and national that has been repeated throughout this dissertation as she adds: "Thinking more globally, there is Tōshōgū...I think of it like I'm contributing to both."

Although Nagashima-san's work as a lacquer tapper contributes to both local lacquer production and national restoration projects, she explained that she feels a stronger sense of national significance in her work because she is not originally from northern Iwate but instead from central Japan in Saitama Prefecture. She continued: "I encountered Nikkō when I was an

elementary schooler. I've only been living in Iwate for six, seven years. But I've known Tōshōgū for over twenty...it's a place close to my hometown. And Saitama is in Kantō, and that's Ieyasu's domain. So, more than people who have lived here [Jōbōji] for a long time, I probably feel closer to Tōshōgū." Similar to the importance of work by figures such as Koseki Rokuhei (discussed in Chapter Three), Nagashima-san inflects the significance of her work at multiple spatial scales—the local, national, and transnational. As Nagashima-san noted, although it is located in Japan, Nikkō is not just a National Treasure—it is recognized as a World Heritage Site and harbors significance as an emblem of global human-nonhuman collaboration.

Regardless of any cultural designation, however, there are real environmental threats to the Jōbōji lacquer landscape—including the structures and objects to which Jōbōji lacquer is applied—that are particular to the 2000s but no less related to the fossil-fueled plasticized material culture we saw emerge in the 1960s and 1970s. I asked Nagashima-san if she had any concerns about the future of the lacquer tapping industry. Nagashima-san answered quickly: "Climate change is scary. If it's too hot, the lacquer won't come out of the tree." Here Nagashima-san is referring to the slow flow of lacquer sap that seeps from the incisions on extraordinarily hot days. She continued: "Recently, the number of hot days has been increasing, even in Iwate. If the amount of rain increases, we can't collect lacquer because we can't tap on rainy days. That's a little worrisome." In a region located in the far north of the main island of Honshū, the issue of climate warming is particularly alarming and prompts questions regarding the future location, perhaps "forced migrations," of lacquer trees to location in Japan even further north.

In this interview, we get a glimpse into one lacquer tapper's motivations regarding the Jōbōji lacquer landscape in the 2010s and 2020s and the recent usage of Jōbōji lacquer for the restoration of Nikkō. Nagashima-san's interview was just one of several I conducted with lacquer tappers currently working in the Jōbōji lacquer landscape. As would be expected, they have diverse reasons for conducting their work, which is challenging not only because of the toxic lacquer sap that causes allergic reactions in the form of painful, itchy welts, but also because it is solitary, physically and mentally demanding work. In addition, their livelihood is precariously dependent on the weight of sap they collect each season, which, as we have seen, is contingent upon an increasingly unstable climate.

I draw attention to Nagashima-san's experience because her interest in Jōbōji lacquer was spurred by a television program—rather than local relationships with the Jōbōji lacquer landscape—that explained the significance of Jōbōji lacquer through its role in the maintenance of Japanese Important Cultural Properties. Nagashima-san is not alone in her aspirations, which, as she notes, are split between supporting local lacquer artisans who continue to produce lacquered vessels in Jōbōji, and contributing to the restoration of a National Treasure and UNESCO World Heritage Site. The efforts of Konishi Decorative Arts and the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunkachō) in the 2010s and 2020s demonstrate a similar interest—at the institutional level—in securing lacquer produced in the Jōbōji lacquer landscape for restoration of structures with designations as National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties.

Together, these collective efforts reflect the current—and likely future—calibrations of the Jōbōji lacquer landscape toward national interests as many of its constituents orient their efforts toward national projects that require lacquer tree sap.

#### The Great Heisei Restoration of the Nikkō Tōshōgū Yōmeimon

The Yōmeimon stands at 11.2 meters in height and is a two-story gate in the *rōmon* style with a hip-and-gable roof supported by eight pillars. The *rōmon* style consists of a Japanese adaptation of a Chinese double-roofed gatehouse that was likely introduced to Japan with Buddhist architecture.<sup>205</sup> On all four sides of the roof, the center of the bargeboard curves upward in the karahafu style. Black-lacquered rafters—adorned with gold leaf—reflect the curvature of the bargeboard and frame the placard (chokugaku) inscribed with name of Tokugawa Ieyasu's deified spirit "Tosho Daigongen." It appears as though every square centimeter of the Yomeimon was utilized as an opportunity to add adornment associated with Confucian ideology, of which Tokugawa Ieyasu was a scholar. There are more than 5,000 carved images that adorn the architectural complex at Nikkō, and 508 of those are carved into the elaborate decoration of the Yōmeimon.<sup>206</sup> Supersaturated with imagery that represents sound Chinese imperial rule, the Yōmeimon features sages (seiken) and ascetics carved in wood and squeezed between the bracket complexes. On the balustrade of the second story, children dressed in Chinese-style clothes playing a game of chase (onigokko) are depicted in carved and painted wood.<sup>207</sup> This imagery is tied together with the adhesive power of black lacquer, which not only chemically bonds gold leaf to its surface but itself provides viewers with a luster that glints between pieces of gold and painted ornament. The lacquered surface is most visible on the bracket complexes, which are packed together tightly (tsumegumi) and adorned with protruding beam ends (kobushibana) carved in the shape of Chinese lions (karashishi) (Figs. 4.4-5).

To reach the Yōmeimon, visitors walk up a long gravel path and pass through the Omotemon before making a left turn and passing a series of three sacred storehouses (Sanjinkō) (Fig. 4.6). Visitors then make a right turn and pass through a small torii (Kanenotori) and are confronted with the Yōmeimon, perched atop another stone staircase and entirely encrusted with glinting gold, black lacquer, and carved wood figures. In the Edo period, most visitors were not allowed beyond the Yōmeimon into the inner precinct where the Worship Hall (Haiden) and Main Hall (Honden) are located. Today, visitors can pass through the Yōmeimon and continue to approach the Karamon—notable for its adornment with white paint—before continuing to the Haiden or climbing a long stone staircase to the Inner Shrine Worship Hall (Okumiya Haiden).

The Nikkō Tōshōgū shrine temple complex was registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1999. The registered site consists of 50.8 hectares, and includes the twenty-three buildings of Futarasan-jinja, the forty-two buildings of the Tōshōgū, and the thirty-eight buildings of Rinnō-ji. Of these structures, nine are designated as National Treasures (Kokuhō), and ninety-four as Important Cultural Properties (Jūyōbunkazai), which brings them under the protection of the 1950 Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. The property is also protected by the 1957 Natural Parks Law, which restricts "construction of new buildings and tree felling." Today, the site attracts throngs of tourists, especially in the autumn when the maples in the area are a brilliant red. According to the Public Relations Office of the Government of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>205</sup> William H. Coaldrake, Architecture and Authority in Japan (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 189.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>206</sup> According to Shrine officials, the Yōmeimon is nicknamed "*Higurashimon*," or "Sunset Gate" because visitors are so entranced by the Gate that they forget the sun is setting. Nikkō Tōshōgū, *Yōmeimon o yomitoku* (Nikkō: Nikkō Tōshōgū, 2017), 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>207</sup> All 508 carvings are identified in Nikkō Tōshōgū, *Yōmeimon o yomitoku*, 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>208</sup> "Shrines and Temples of Nikko," UNESCO World Heritage Centre, United Nations, http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/913.

Japan, the average number of foreign and domestic visitors in the year 2016 was two million people.<sup>209</sup>

Throughout this dissertation, I have sought to intervene in formalist, symbolic, elitecentric art historical analysis and interpretation by "constellating" the relationships of the Jōbōji lacguer landscape as it is conjoined with national spaces. Conventionally, art and architecture historians have addressed the Chinese style architecture, the abundance of carved figures, and the command of material and social power of the Tokugawa regime through the construction of monumental structures that required excessive use of precious materials such as gold and lacquer. Morgan Pitelka aptly described this early modern material culture of excess. He writes: "Like the exchange of hostages, the collection of heads, and the command of massive armies numbering in some cases in excess of one hundred thousand men, art collecting was a form of what I call spectacular accumulation that represents the apogee of warrior power."210 The assemblage of lacquer, gold, and painted architectural elements that comprise the Yōmeimon exemplify the pinnacle of Tokugawa material excess. Yukio Lippit has shown that the sense of power accrued from the material accumulation of art was enhanced by the specific imagery chosen to adorn structures at Nikkō Tōshōgū. For example, the Karamon, which visitors would see once they passed through the Yōmeimon—characterized Tokugawa Ieyasu as the Chinese emperor Shun.<sup>211</sup> According to Lippit, the Nikkō mausoleum "was crucial to Tokugawa ideology, as its enshrinement of a deified ancestor served to equate the Tokugawa family with the imperial lineage."212

The decision to use Jōbōji lacquer for the Heisei restoration of the Yōmeimon appears to be based on political and economic grounds. On February 24, 2015, the Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunkachō) issued a notification to each Prefectural Board of Education explicitly stating that any restoration work conducted on lacquered architectural structures designated as "Cultural Properties" (Bunkazai kenzōbutsu) would be required to use domestically sourced lacquer for that restoration work. Because the restoration of the Yōmeimon did not begin until 2016, the new policy announcement from Bunkachō required the use of domestically produced lacquer for this large-scale restoration project. 14

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>209</sup> Motoyoshi Kyoko, "Heisei no daishūri," Public Relations Office, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, last modified June 2016: https://www.gov-online.go.jp/eng/publicity/book/hlj/html/201606/201606\_07\_jp.html. <sup>210</sup> Pitelka, 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>211</sup> Yukio Lippit, "The Painter in Attendance," Studies in the History of Art 80 (2018): 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>212</sup> Lippit, 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>213</sup> Bunkachō, "Kokuhō, jūyōbunkazai (kenzōbutsu) hozonshūri ni okeru urushi no shiyōhōshin ni tsuite (tsūchi)," February 24th, 2015. Accessed: https://www.bunka.go.jp/takumi/assets/pdf/urushi\_h27\_0224.pdf. The announcement was also covered broadly by national news media. See, for example "Bunkachō, jūbun shuri ni kokusan urushi shiyō o / gensoku shiyō o tsūchi," *Shikoku Shinbunsha*, February 24th, 2015.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>214</sup> The use of Jōbōji lacquer for the restoration of Important Cultural Properties such as the Yōmeimon had precedents beginning in 1960s. The twelfth-century Konjikidō at the Hiraizumi complex was designated as a National Treasure in 1951 and then restored using Jōbōji lacquer from 1962-1968. Then, after Rokuonji (Kinkakuji) in Kyoto was lit on fire by a monk and destroyed in 1950, the structure was rebuilt in 1955 using Vietnamese lacquer. However, when the lacquer beneath the gold leaf that completely covers the exterior of the structure began to disintegrate, the gold leaf began to peel and fall from the exterior. Jōbōji lacquer was selected for use in the Great Showa Restoration of the temple, conducted from 1986 to 1987. See Hosoi Kazuyu and Jōbōji-shi Hensan Iinkai, eds., *Jōbōji-cho shi jōkan*, 599-600.

The restoration efforts required 600 kilograms of lacquer—all of it was domestically produced lacquer and most of it came from Jōbōji (Fig. 4.7). Satō Noritake of the Association for the Preservation of the Nikkō World Heritage Site Shrines and Temples (Nikkō Shaji Bunkazai Hozonkai) supervised the lacquer repairs. As Fukuda Tatsutane—Director and General Manager of the Lacquer Production Division of Konishi Decorative Arts and Crafts Ninohe Branch—indicated, a mature lacquer tree produces only about 200 grams of lacquer sap, meaning that the restoration of the Yōmeimon required the tapping and killing of approximately 3,000 mature lacquer trees. However, as Nagashima-san indicated in her interview, the threats of erratic weather patterns created a sense of precarity for both the lacquer tapping industry and the efforts of lacquer artisans who relied on a steady supply of lacquer to complete restoration projects. According to Satō's report on the lacquer repairs conducted during restoration, the weather in Jōbōji caused a shortage of collected lacquer because it was too hot in Jōbōji in 2015, with subsequent excessive rain in 2016. The lacquer shortage required Satō to use lacquer collected in Yamagata Prefecture to supplement what had been collected from Jōbōji.

Given its political stature as a mausoleum dedicated to the founder of Tokugawa rule, maintenance of the Tōshōgu complex has been conducted on numerous occasions over the last 400 years. Prior to the Heisei Restoration, the most recent repair work on the Yōmeimon was conducted in the Showa period from 1969 to 1972. The restoration completed in 2017 was made in preparation for the 400-year anniversary of Ieyasu's death in 1616. He four-year restoration of the Yōmeimon is just one part of the Great Heisei Renovation, which commenced in 2007 and is scheduled to be completed in 2024. Conducted by the Nikkō Shaji Bunkazai Hozonkai, this multi-year restoration plan will restore the entire shrine temple complex and is supported with financial aid from the Japanese government. He isei Restoration involves refurbishing the entire lacquered surface of the structure, excluding the interior of the second story.

The Nikkō Shaji Bunkazai Hozonkai contracted Konishi Bijutsu Kōgeisha to assist with the restoration of the Yōmeimon. According to Fukuda, Konishi oversaw about seventy-five percent of the work, focusing on the lacquer ornamentation on the north, east, and west sides of the gate. Konishi Bijutsu Kōgeisha is an important actor in the contemporary Jōbōji lacquer landscape, not only through their involvement in the Great Heisei Restoration of the Yōmeimon, but also through their local efforts to lease or purchase land in the broader Ninohe area for cultivation of lacquer trees. Konishi is headquartered in Tokyo, but in October 2016 the company

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>215</sup> Fukuda Tatsutane, "Bunkazai kenzōbutsu hozon shūri ni okeru nihonsan urushi no saikō," *Sanrin* 3 no. 1618 (2019): 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>216</sup> Fukuda also notes that about 240,000 sheets of gold leaf were brought from Kanazawa and used for the restoration work. Fukuda, 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>217</sup> Satō Noritake, "Yōmeimon no urushi nuri," in *Heisei no daishūri shunkō kokuhō Yōmeimon*, edited by Nikkō Tōshōgū (Nikkō: Nikkō Tōshōgū, 2017), 41.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>218</sup> Asao Kazutoshi, "Kokuhō Toshogū Yomeimon Heisei shūri no koji keika gaiyo," in *Heisei no daishūri shunko kokuhō Yomeimon*, ed. Nikko Toshogū (Nikko: Nikko Toshogū, 2017), 8.
<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>220</sup> Asao Kazutoshi, ed. Nikkō Tōshōgū, 8-9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>221</sup> In the Heisei Restoration, the category of "lacquer construction," which consisted of re-lacquering the entire external surface of the Gate, required 27.9% of the overall project budget. Ibid, 10. <sup>222</sup> Fukuda, 5.

established a Lacquer Production Division in Ninohe City, headed by Fukuda, which sought to strengthen support for lacquer tappers in the region and stabilize lacquer sap production.<sup>223</sup>

The Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunkachō) has supported lacquer tree propagation by establishing a "Cultural Property Forest" (Furusato Bunkazai no Mori) in Jōbōji in 2007; the 4.4hectare lacquer tree forest in Jōbōji was the first forest to be registered with the designation. The list of registered Furusato Bunkazai no Mori now consists of eighty-eight forests throughout the Japanese archipelago.<sup>224</sup> More local efforts to meet increased demand for lacquer in response to the announcement from Bunkachō include the work of the Jōbōji Lacquer Production Guild, which has set a goal of planting 8,000 to 10,000 lacquer trees each year to meet the demand for lacquer in the restoration of Important Cultural Properties.<sup>225</sup> To meet this goal, the Guild is actively engaging with local landowners in the Ninohe City area, asking them to contact the Guild if they have land on which lacquer trees can be raised to be harvested in fifteen to twenty years by Guild lacquer tappers.<sup>226</sup> In 2021, the Guild harvested a total of 1,672 kilograms of Jōbōji lacquer, and there were approximately 2,000 kilograms of lacquer collected on the entire Japanese archipelago. According to the Guild, most of the 1,672 kilograms of Jōbōji lacquer was used for the restoration of Important Cultural Properties.<sup>227</sup> The remaining lacquer was used by a limited number of artisans working in Jōbōji, and some was sent to lacquerware producing sites throughout the archipelago, including Wajima in Ishikawa Prefecture.<sup>228</sup>

# Certifying Authentic Jōbōji Lacquer

In addition to the broadening usage of Jōbōji lacquer for large-scale restoration projects such as the Yōmeimon, in the 2000s, the Jōbōji lacquer landscape itself had already been expanding. On August 26, 2008, the Iwate Prefectural Government inaugurated the "Implementation Guidelines for the Jōbōji Lacquer Authentication System," (Jōbōji urushi ninshōseido). The system was designed to determine the authenticity of Jōbōji lacquer using a set of criteria that included stipulations about the locations where sap tapping occurs, as well as usage of the tapping technique that "has traditionally been practiced" (*dentōtekini okonawaretekita urushikaki no gijutsu*). <sup>229</sup> According to the Guidelines, lacquer tapped in a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>223</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>224</sup> The most recent designation was assigned to the Wakayama bamboo farm in Utsunomiya City, Tochigi Prefecture. See Bunkachō, "Furusato Bunkazai no Mori setteichi ichiran," accessed May 25 2024: https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkazai/joseishien/furusato\_mori/furusato\_settei\_ichiran.html.
<sup>225</sup> Iwate-ken Jōbōji urushi seisan Kumiai, "Iwate-ken Ninohe-shi 'Jōbōji urushi," accessed May 10 2024: https://jobojiurushi-seisankumiai.com.
<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>227</sup> Iwate-ken Jōbōji Urushi Seisan Kumiai, "Jōbōji urushi ni tsuite: kokusan urushi saidai shea o hokoru 'Jōbōjij urushi,'" accessed May 10, 2024: https://jobojiurushi-seisankumiai.com/introduction/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>228</sup> Wajimaya Zenni, a lacquer workshop located in Wajima, Ishikawa Prefecture, uses Jōbōji lacquer in its workshop and has been planting lacquer trees managed by Jōbōji lacquer tappers since 1997. See, Wajimaya Zenni, accessed May 12, 2024: https://www.wajimayazenni.co.jp. However, the Nōtō Earthquake that occurred on January 1, 2024, severely damaged the workshops of Wajimaya Zenni, along with many lacquer workshops concentrated in Wajima. The long-term consequences of the earthquake damage, including the effect on the lacquer tapping industry, are still unknown.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>229</sup> A copy of the "Implementation Guidelines Jōbōji Lacquer Authentication System" is available on an Iwate Prefectural website. See Iwate-kenchō, "Jōbōji urushi ninshōseido nit suite," accessed May 12, 2024: https://www.pref.iwate.jp/kenpoku/nino\_rinmu/1044231/1014954.html.

geographic area that is significantly broader than the administrative boundaries of Jōbōji (in Ninohe City) can be branded "Jōbōji lacquer." The "Jōbōji lacquer" procurement jurisdictions include all of Iwate Prefecture; the Sannohe District, Hachinohe City, and Towada City in Aomori Prefecture; and Kazuno District of Kosaka Town, Kazuno City, and Ōdate City in Akita Prefecture. A map created by the Guild shows the vast geographic area that is now included in the brand name "Jōbōji Lacquer" (Fig. 4.8). Samples of raw sap collected within these jurisdictions are examined at the Jōbōji Lacquer Competitive Exhibition (Jōbōji Urushi Kyōshinkai) held each year in October. Those samples deemed adequate by the judgement of veteran lacquer sap tappers are marked with a seal on the outside of the lacquer sap barrel (*taru*) (Fig. 4.9). The mark records information about the collected sap such as the specific period of the tapping season in which it was tapped, the weight, the associated tapper's name, and a "Jōbōji Lacquer" branded logo "mark" (Fig. 4.10).

Besides its authorization of "authentic" Jōbōji lacquer, the brand mark exemplifies the multistranded, tangled process of "nationalization" of Jōbōji lacquer presented in this dissertation. The Office of the Jōbōji Lacquer Authentication Committee (Jōbōji Urushi Ninshō Iinkaijimukyoku) published the Jōbōji Lacquer Brand Mark Design Manual (Jōbōji Urushi Burando Māku Dezainmanyuaru) in 2008 with an explanation of the logo. <sup>230</sup> According to the design manual, the red graphic design signifies viscous, flowing lacquer in a "J" shape—the letter that begins both the words "Jōbōji" and "Japan." The bottom half of the logo depicts the incisions (hen) placed into to the lacquer tree during the tapping process, and the white horizontal lines indicate the presence of lacquer sap exuding from the incisions. The design manual states that the aim of the image was to impress the sense that lacquer represents Japan as the "J" prompts an association (rensōsaseru) with the shape of the Japanese archipelago starting with the island of Hokkaido and then the main island of Honshū hooking to the left. Further, the paired words "JŌBŌJI Japan"—cleanly represented in the center of the logo—reiterate this dissertation's central thesis that Jōbōji—the place, the lacquer material, and the idea—has been increasingly presented as synonymous with the significance of the modern Japanese nation-state. Yet, the *furigana* pronunciation guide below the large Chinese characters anticipates a gap in the name recognition and provides consumers the opportunity to learn the place name "Jōbōji." Despite the fact that Jōbōji produces more than eighty percent of the raw lacquer sap consumed in Japan, the average person in Tokyo will not be familiar with the town of Jōbōji.<sup>231</sup>

The Jōbōji Branch of Ninohe City Hall frequently attempts to bring more domestic and international attention to the world of lacquer sap tapping and lacquerware production. Visitors can now join tours that include hands-on excursions into areas with lacquer tree plantings, and even try their own hands at sap tapping. Additionally, Ninohe City created an English language website with attractive videos of the lacquer landscape and tapping process. Tekiseisha, a lacquerware workshop and store located near Tendaiji, still produces and sells black- and red-lacquered vessels reminiscent of the *oyamagoki* and *mittsu-wan* found in the collection of the Jōbōji History and Folk Museum located just a short walk up the road toward the temple (Fig.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>230</sup> Jōbōji Urushi Ninshō Iinkaijimukyoku, *Jōbōji Urushi Burando Māku Dezainmanyuaru* (Ninohe: Jōbōji Urushi Ninshō Iinkai Jimukyoku, 2008).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>231</sup> Tabata Masanobu, ed., "Washokubunka o irodoru 'urushi' no sekai," *aff* (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) (November 2022), https://www.maff.go.jp/j/pr/aff/2211/spe1 02.html.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>232</sup> Iwate-ken Ninohe-shi Jōbōji Sōgōshisho Urushi no Satozukuri Suishinka, "Urushi nation Joboji," accessed May 12, 2024: http://en.urushi-joboji.com.

4.11). A limited number of barrels of raw lacquer collected by the tappers of the Guild will go to Tekiseisha, who boast their usage of local lacquer as part of their brand image. But most of the lacquer produced in Jōbōji now, and likely for the foreseeable future, will be sent to sites of Important Cultural Properties for use in restoration of structures such as those at Nikkō Tōshōgū. The Yōmeimon—layered with local, national, and transnational significance—adds to our growing list of objects that are materially linked to the Jōbōji lacquer landscape.

Near the end of my interview with Nagashima-san, I asked if she had anything to add to our discussion. She grasped her wallet, opened it and pulled out a slim piece of white paper. "This is the fortune (*omikuji*) I drew at Tōshōgū." She had purchased it from the shrine two or three years previously. "It's just a 'small' fortune (*shōkichi*)," she tells me as she continues to carefully unfold the paper. "It says, 'the job you are doing now is best." Nagashima-san let out a hearty laugh. I shared my amazement, pondering the way this shrine complex and mausoleum has willed her, in some sense, to assist in its material future. I thanked her for showing me this small yet significant piece of paper. It is customary to fold unfavorable fortunes into a thin strip so they can be tied to a designated place within the precinct and not travel home with their recipient. But Nagashima adds: "I didn't tie it [at the shrine], I brought it back home...I always have it with me. I show it to everyone."

## Conclusion

By foregrounding the Jōbōji lacquer landscape as the protagonist of this dissertation, I have provided an example of the complexities that arise when one constructs an eco art history using a landscape approach. The results show that the Jōbōji lacquer landscape produced and continues to produce an unwieldy variety of wares—objects that when considered together in a single study demonstrate the "messiness" of visual-cultural production as it heedlessly transgresses genres of craft, architecture, and fine art. The landscape approach employed here confounds more humanistic approaches to art and craft histories that could have dominated the focus of this dissertation. For example, I could have centered an anthropogenic, humanistic category to organize this study by singularly addressing the history of the Hidehira-wan. Or, I could have focused entirely on the work of Koseki Rokuhei, taking a solely biographical and artisan-centered approach over three chapters that situated his work within the postwar realm of craft production, each devoted to specific aspect of his work.

But the landscape approach utilized in this dissertation required a commitment to the jarring convulsions that characterized changes in lacquer use throughout the long twentieth century. I chose to remain light on my feet, adopting a capacious approach to my research, letting the landscape show me the breadth of visual materials constituted with Jōbōji lacquer. I acknowledge that the consequences of this approach to research and writing can create a dissertation that at times feels jarring, that induces a sense of "whiplash," or that feels disconnected as I follow the lacquer landscape into distant corners of the art historical "field" and unite them under the umbrella of an eco art history of the Jōbōji lacquer landscape. But I challenge readers to exercise what perhaps is now an atrophied intellectual muscle, to consider the value of organizing art historical studies not simply by their familiar and often predetermined archives in art magazines, in museum collections, and newspaper articles. Instead, this dissertation shows how we might decenter the human species by considering an assemblage of actors that produce material with particular art historical import, following this material into

the realm of object making, and addressing those objects regardless of the forms and usages they assume. Landscapes have art histories, but a risk-averse approach to art historical study will be unable to recover these visual histories of landscapes, which, as we have seen, demand resourceful research methods and writing styles that toggle between multiple scales—the local, national, transnational, and the personal.

As I conclude this study, I am struck by the confounding, nested boundaries of the local, national, and transnational with respect to the Jōbōji lacquer landscape. Rather than parsing out clear distinctions between these spatial scales, this study has shown how Jōbōji lacquer is inextricably woven into multiple scales of discourse throughout the long twentieth century. More specifically, "where" is Jōbōji lacquer in the 2000s? Though this Epilogue demonstrates how Jōbōji lacquer provides the "matter" of national identity through its usage in the Great Heisei Restoration of the Yōmeimon at Nikkō, lacquer artisans working at the Tekiseisha workshop near Tendaiji in Jōbōji continue to use Jōbōji lacquer to make "everyday" wares for local use. Some Jōbōji sap collectors were born in Iwate, while others like Nagashima-san migrated from distant regions such as Saitama and Hiroshima. We might therefore understand Jōbōji lacquer to be "nested" within varied spatial scales, exhibiting both a sense of place and placelessness. Jōbōji lacquer is now woven into complex chains of production and application that confound placebased histories of the material. Jōbōji is no longer just a single "place"—it is woven into a larger tapestry that is modern Japan.

## **Introduction Images**

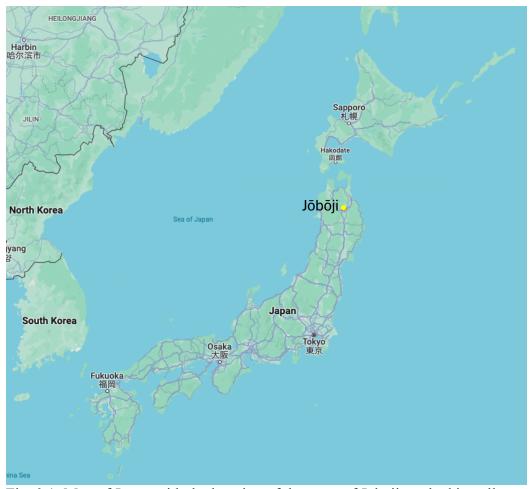


Fig. 0.1: Map of Japan with the location of the town of Jōbōji marked in yellow. Map data from Google, 2024.



Fig. 0.2: The town of Jōbōji, located along the Appi River flowing from the southwest to the northeast toward Ninohe City. GoogleSatellite Map, 2024.





Fig. 0.4: Lacquer tree plantation in Jōbōji, Iwate Prefecture. June 7th, 2022. Photograph taken by author.

Fig. 0.5: Distribution map of the East Asian lacquer tree (*Toxicodendron venicifluum*). Red-shaded area indicate regions where the tree grows without human assistance. Blue-shaded areas indicate regions in which the tree can survive when cultivated by humans. Map published by the National Museum of Japanese History. Kokuritsu rekishiminzoku hakubutsukan, *Urushi fushigi monogatari: hito to urushi no 1200 nenshi*, (Sakura: Kokuritsu rekishiminzoku hakubutuskan, 2017): 20.



Fig. 0.6: Raw lacquer sap in container (*takappo*) after collection from lacquer tree. Jōbōji, Iwate Prefecture. July 2nd, 2022. Photograph by author.



Fig. 0.7: Lacquer tapper harvesting lacquer from the East Asian lacquer tree in Jōbōji, Iwate Prefecture. July 2nd, 2022. Photograph by author.

Fig. 0.8: *Red-lacquered stone blade*. Jōbōji, Kamisugizawa Archaeological Site. Final Jōmon period (1,300 BCE-500 BCE). Photograph by Sawaji Osamu. Ninohe City. https://www.gov-online.go.jp/eng/publicity/book/hlj/html/202205/202205\_05\_jp.html.



Fig. 0.9: Main Hall of Tendaiji. Jōbōji, Iwate Prefecture. May 10th, 2023. Photograph taken by author.



Fig. 0.10: Set of three lacquered vessels (mittsuwan) on low table (zen). Meiji period. Lacquer on wood bases. Largest vessel: 7.6 x 11.2 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photography by author.



Fig. 0.11: Incisions (hen) placed into the truck of lacquer tree as part of the "tap and kill" tapping technique (koroshigaki). Ninohe, Iwate Prefecture. September 8th, 2022. Photograph by author.

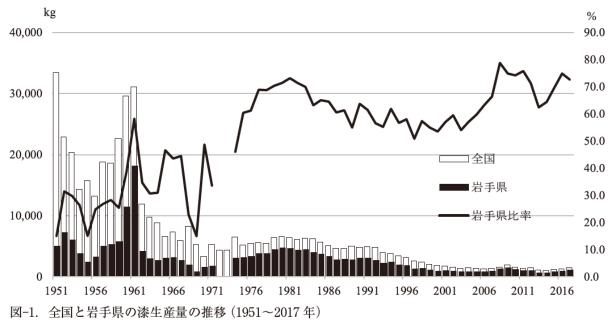
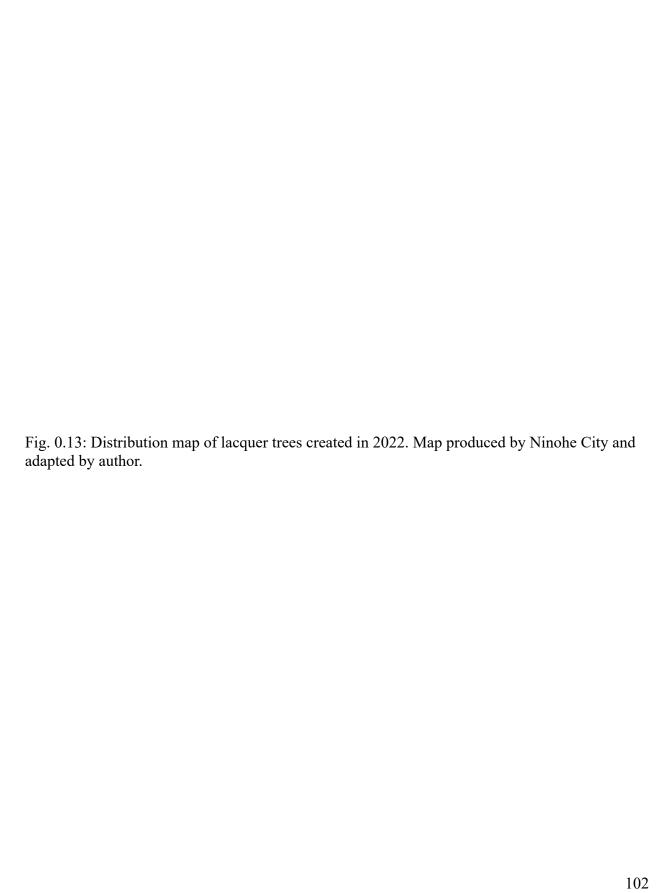


Fig. 0.12: Changes in Raw Lacquer Sap Production in Japan and in Iwate, 1951-2017. White bars: volume of lacquer produced in Japan (kg); black bars: volume of lacquer produced in Iwate (kg); line graph: percentage of total national lacquer volume supplied by Iwate. Graph produced by Hayashi Masahide and published in "Iwate-ken hokubu chihō no nōka ga urushi shokusai o sentakushita yōin," *Nihon ringakkaishi* 101 (2019): 329.



## **Chapter One Images**



Fig. 1.1: *Spouted sake ewer (hiage) with crane, turtle, and pine sapling design.* Meiji period. Lacquer on wood. 15.5 x 22 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.2: Detail of *Spouted sake ewer* (*hiage*) *with crane, turtle, and pine sapling design*. Meiji period. Lacquer on wood. 15.5 x 22 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.3: *Spouted sake ewer (hiage) with crane, turtle, and pine sapling design*. Meiji period. Lacquer on wood. 15.5 x 22 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.4: *Spouted sake ewer (hiage) with crane, turtle, and pine sapling design.* Meiji period. Lacquer on wood. 15.5 x 22 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.5: *Spouted sake ewer (hiage*). Meiji period. Lacquered wood vessel. 14 x 22 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.

Fig. 1.6: Ikeda Taishin. *Plaque with maki-e design of Enoshima (Enoshima maki-e gaku)*. Produced in 1893 for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Wood panel with maki-e lacquer. 79.1 x 92.4 (cm). Tokyo National Museum. https://webarchives.tnm.jp/imgsearch/show/E0027547.

Fig. 1.7: Namikawa Sōsuke. *Mount Fuji plaque in cloisonné* (*Shippō fugakuzu gaku*). Produced in 1893 for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Bronze with cloisonné. 113.6 x 64 (cm). Tokyo National Museum. Important Cultural Property. https://emuseum.nich.go.jp/detail?langId=ja&webView=&content\_base\_id=101307&content\_part\_id=0&content\_pict\_id=0.



Fig. 1.8: *Small dish with noshi and pine design* in *urushi-e*. Edo period. Pigmented lacquer on wood. 1.6 x 18 (cm). Shinkai Hikaru, *Edo jidai no urushi-e zara*, (Tokyo: Bungeisha, 2022): 227.



Fig. 1.9: *Maki-e pattern book (Maki-e hon sensei Kaga yori)* with Mount Fuji design. Meiji period. Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.10: *Maki-e pattern book (Maki-e hon sensei Kaga yori*). Meiji period. Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.11: *Maki-e pattern book (Maki-e hon sensei Kaga yori*). Meiji period. Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.12: *Black lacquered lid with Mount Fuji landscape*. Meiji period. Lacquer on wood. 2.8 x 11 x (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.13: Large spouted sake ewer (hiage) with set of two small drinking vessels (kobukura). Meiji Period. Lacquer on wood bases. *Hiage*: 20.8 x 15.5 (cm). *Kobukura*: 5.8 x 9.8 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum, registered numbers 3924, 2175, and 2040. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.14: Detail of *Large spouted sake ewer (hiage)*. Meiji Period. Lacquer on wood base. *Hiage*: 20.8 x 15.5 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum, registered number 3924. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.15: *Large spouted sake ewer (hiage) with set of two small drinking vessels (kobukura)*. Meiji Period. Lacquer on wood bases. *Hiage*: 20.8 x 15.5 (cm). *Kobukura*: 5.8 x 9.8 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum, registered numbers 3924, 2175, and 2040. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.16: *Large spouted sake ewer (hiage)*. Meiji Period. Lacquer on wood base. 20.8 x 15.5 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.17: *Lacquered jug to contain hot water* (yutō) with Japanese quince family crest design. Meiji period. Lacquered wood with maki-e. 13 x 13.5 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.18: *Horned cask (tsunotaru) with Japanese quince family crest design*. Meiji period. Lacquered wood with maki-e. 41.8 x 16 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1.19: Detail of *Horned cask (tsunotaru) with Japanese quince family crest design*. Meiji period. Lacquered wood with maki-e. 41.8 x 16 (cm). Jōbōji History and Folk Museum collection. Photograph by author.

Fig. 1.20: Set of three nesting Hidehira vessels with Siberian iris design. Edo period, Nanbu region. Lacquered wood with red *urushi-e* design. 8 x 14.1 (cm). International Christian University Hachiro Yuasa Memorial Museum. https://bunka.nii.ac.jp/heritages/detail/136571.



Fig. 1.21. *Nanbu hakuwan* with stemmed chrysanthemum design. Edo period. Wood base, lacquer, gold leaf. Dimensions unknown. Iwate Prefectural Museum. Kokuritsu rekishiminzoku hakubutsukan, *Urushi fushigi monogatari: hito to urushi no 12000 nenshi*, (Sakura: Kokuritsu rekishiminzoku hakubutuskan, 2017): 172.

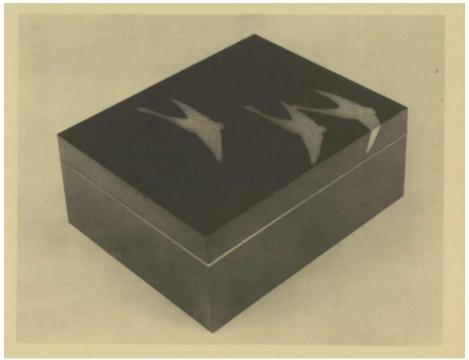


Fig. 1.22: Koiwa, Shun. *Small lacquered box with flying geese in maki-e.* 1902. Maki-e lacquer on wood. 9.3 x 18.2 x 22.7 (cm). *Tōkyo Geijutsudaigaku zōhin zuroku*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Geijutsudaigaku, 1958), plate 72. https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2466203/1/214.

## **Chapter Two Images**



Fig. 2.1: Cover of March 1942 issue of *Mingei* magazine showing a black-lacquered vessel lid adorned with a lacquer picture (*urushi-e*) of a mountain landscape. Produced in Arayashinmachi, Iwate Prefecture. 12 (cm). C.V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley.

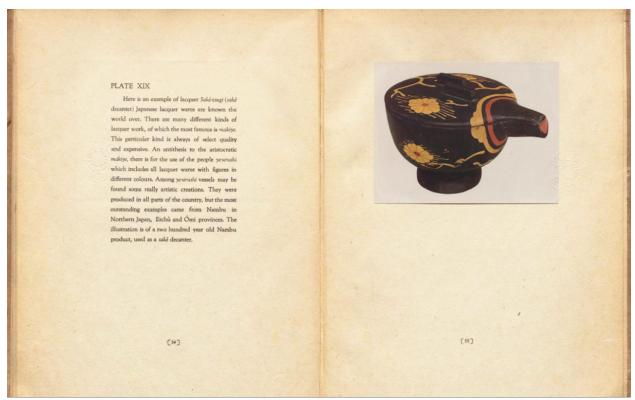


Fig. 2.2: Yanagi, Sōetsu. *Folk-Crafts In Japan*. Translated by Sakabe Shigeyoshi. Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai (The Society for International Cultural Relations), 1936: 54-55.

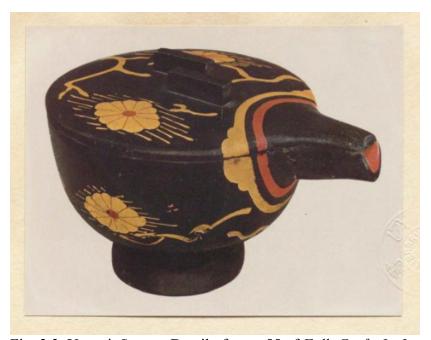


Fig. 2.3: Yanagi, Sōetsu. Detail of page 55 of *Folk-Crafts In Japan*. Translated by Sakabe Shigeyoshi. Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai (The Society for International Cultural Relations), 1936: 54-55.

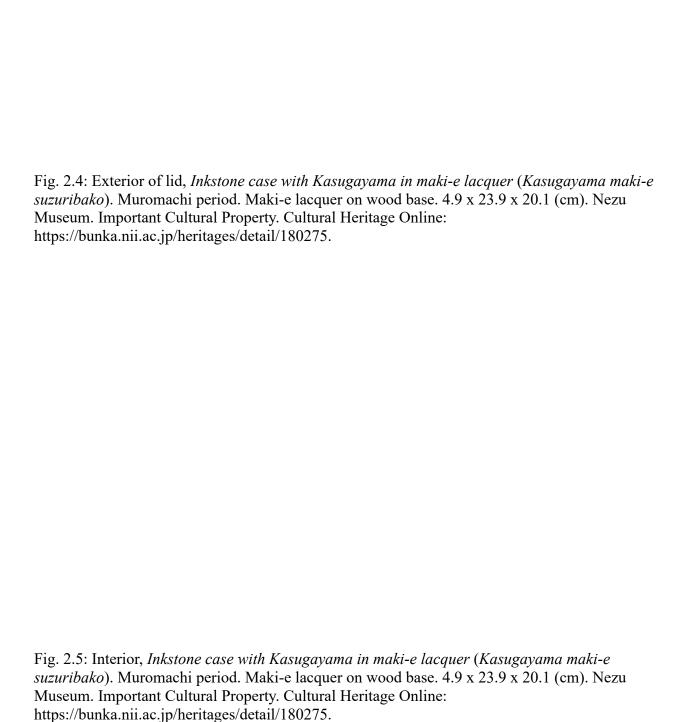


Fig. 2.6: Underside of lid, *Inkstone case with Kasugayama in maki-e lacquer* (*Kasugayama maki-e suzuribako*). Muromachi period. Maki-e lacquer on wood base. 4.9 x 23.9 x 20.1 (cm). Nezu Museum. Important Cultural Property. Cultural Heritage Online: https://bunka.nii.ac.jp/heritages/detail/180275.

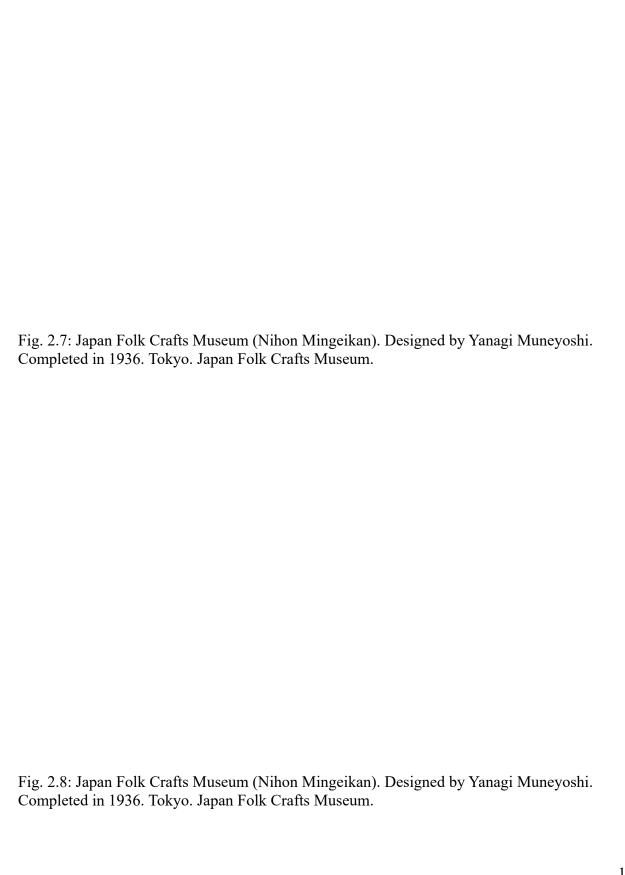


Fig. 2.9: Inside surface of lid of *Lacquered vessel with Mount Fuji landscape in maki-e*. Maki-e lacquer on wood. Undated. Aizuwakamatsu, Suzuzen Shikki-ten. Photograph by author, May 4th 2022.



Fig. 2.10: *Red vermillion lacquered dish (sara) with yellow pine design in urushi-e.* 13.2 (cm). Leaf in *Mingei* 4, no. 3, March 1942.



Fig. 2.11: Black-lacquered tray (kashibon) with red vermillion peach design in urushi-e. 19.6 (cm). Leaf in Mingei 4, no. 3, March 1942.

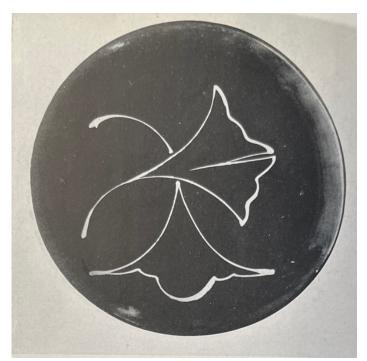
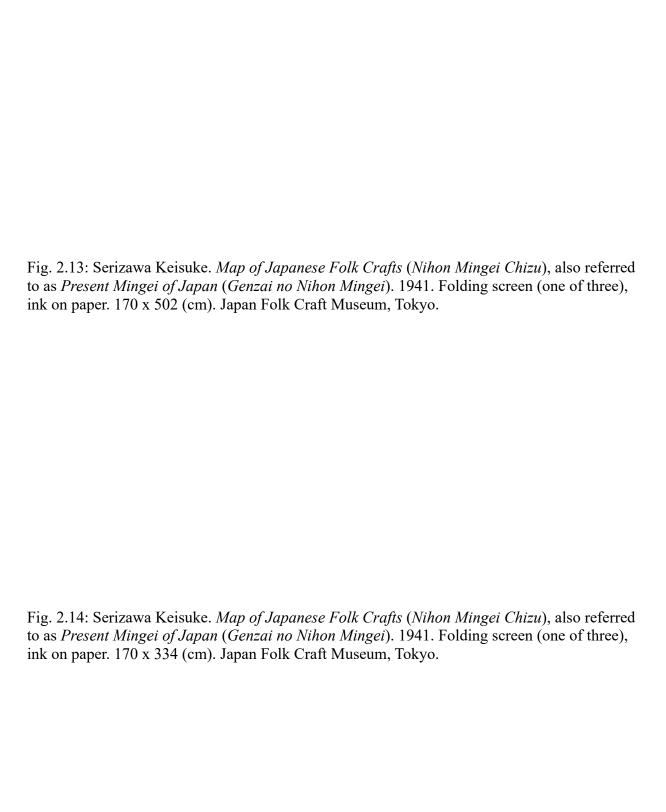


Fig. 2.12: *Black-lacquered dish (sara) with yellow ginko leaf in urushi-e*. Produced in Arayashinmachi, Iwate Prefecture. 17.5 (cm). Leaf in *Mingei* 4, no. 3, March 1942.



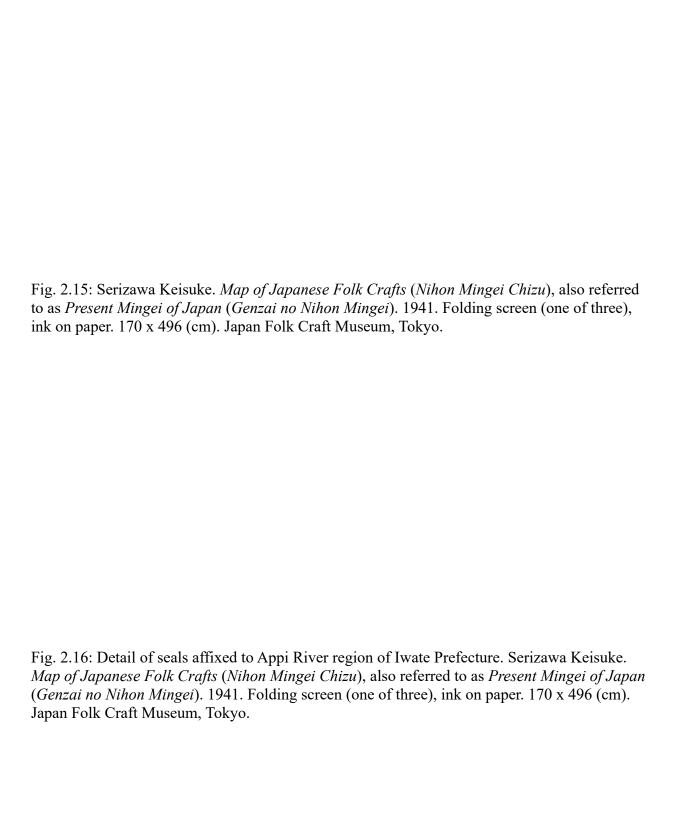




Fig. 2.17: Cover of October 1942 issue of *Mingei* featuring a detail of Serizawa Keisuke's *Map of Japanese Folk Crafts* (*Nihon Mingei Chizu*), also referred to as *Present Mingei of Japan* (*Genzai no Nihon Mingei*). C.V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley.

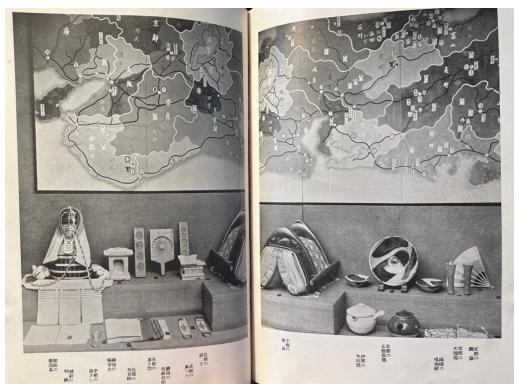


Fig. 2.18: October 1942 issue of *Mingei* featuring display of Serizawa Keisuke's *Map of Japanese Folk Crafts* (*Nihon Mingei Chizu*), also referred to as *Present Mingei of Japan* (*Genzai no Nihon Mingei*) displayed inside the Japan Folk Craft Museum, Tokyo. C.V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley.



Fig. 2.19: Serizawa Keisuke. Woodcut print depicting lacquer sap tapping tools published in the April 1941 issue of *Gekkan mingei*. C.V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley.



Fig. 2.20: *Kama* or "*sorigama*" used to shave off the outer layer of lacquer tree bark before making an incision in the tree. Metal, wire, paulownia wood. Jōbōji, Iwate Prefecture. Photograph taken by author, May 31st, 2022.



Fig. 2.21: *Kanna* (a small, curved, sharp-edged tool used to make incisions (*hen*) in the tree). Metal, wire, paulownia wood. Image from Japan Lacquer Tapping Technique Preservation Association (Nihon Urushikaki gijutsu hozonkai). https://www.urushikaki-hozon.com/world3/.



Fig. 2.22: *Hera* (a curved, spatula-like tool used to remove sap that seeps from incisions in the tree). Metal, wire, paulownia wood. Image from Japan Lacquer Tapping Technique Preservation Association (Nihon Urushikaki gijutsu hozonkai). https://www.urushikaki-hozon.com/world3/.



Fig. 2.23: *Takappo* or "*jippō*" (a deep container used to catch sap collected with the *hera*). Magnolia tree bark, lacquer, rope, cloth. Image from Japan Lacquer Tapping Technique Preservation Association (Nihon Urushikaki gijutsu hozonkai). https://www.urushikaki-hozon.com/world3/.



Fig. 2.24: Yanagi Muneyoshi. Cover of *Handwork Japan (Teshigoto no Nihon*). Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1948. Iwate Prefectural University Library.

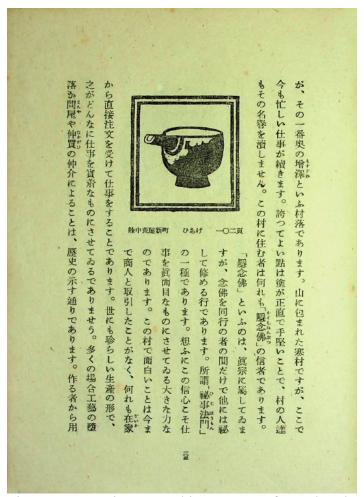
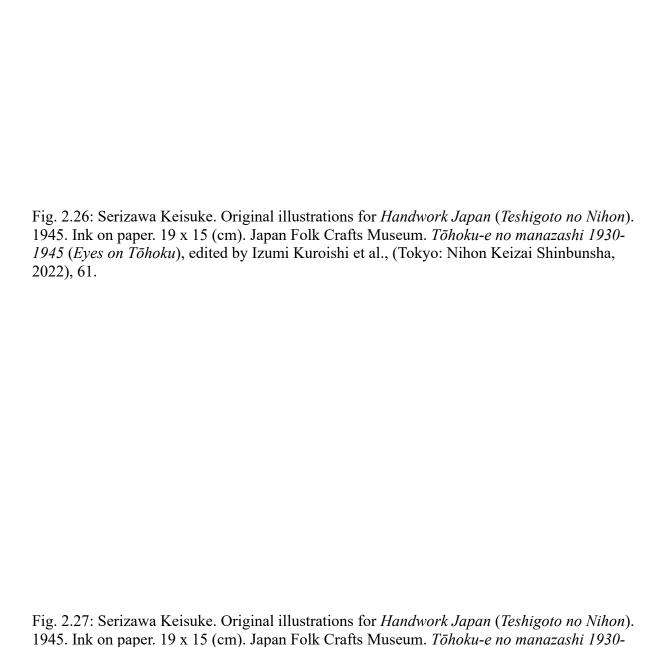


Fig. 2.25: Yanagi Muneyoshi. Page 103 of *Handwork Japan (Teshigoto no Nihon*) depicting Serizawa Keisuke's illustration of the *hiage* (spouted sake ewer). Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1948. Iwate Prefectural University Library.



1945 (Eyes on Tōhoku), edited by Izumi Kuroishi et al., (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha,

2022), 61.

Fig. 2.28: *Spouted sake ewer (hiage)*. 1934. Lacquer on wood. Left: 12 x 23 x 18.5 (cm). Right: 6.8 x 15.7 x 12.1 (cm). Ninohe Village, Iwate Prefecture. Japan Folk Crafts Museum. *Tōhoku-e no manazashi 1930-1945 (Eyes on Tōhoku)*, edited by Izumi Kuroishi et al., (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 2022), 76.

## **Chapter Three Images**



Fig. 3.1: Koseki Rokuhei. *Quiet Spin (Seiten)*. 1982. Pigmented lacquer, mother-of-pearl inlay, gold dust, cut silver, cut gold. 47 x 41 x 41 (cm). Iwate Prefectural Art Museum. Koseki Rokuhei, *Saishitsu to maki-e: Koseki Rokuhei shitsugeiten* (1991): 40.



Fig. 3.2: Koseki Rokuhei. Detail of *Quiet Spin (Seiten)*. 1982. Pigmented lacquer, mother-of-pearl inlay, gold dust, cut silver, cut gold. 47 x 41 x 41 (cm). Iwate Prefectural Art Museum. Photograph by author.



Fig. 3.3: Koseki Rokuhei. Detail of *Quiet Spin (Seiten)*. 1982. Pigmented lacquer, mother-of-pearl inlay, gold dust, cut silver, cut gold. 47 x 41 x 41 (cm). Signature reads: "Made by Rokuhei in 1982" ("1982 Rokuhei saku"). Iwate Prefectural Art Museum. Photograph by author.

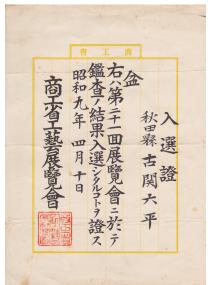


Fig. 3.4: Certificate of Selection for the Twenty First Ministry of Commerce Craft Exhibition (*Shōkōshō Kōgei Tenrankai*) in April of 1934 for "tray" (*bon*). Koseki family archive.



Fig. 3.5: Tsuda Tokumin. *Mountains and clouds inkstone case with shishi and peony design in maki-e*. Date and dimensions unknown. Nihon Shikkō Kyōkai, "Aizu shikki tokushū gō," (July 1984): 23.



Fig. 3.6: Koseki Rokuhei. Copied maki-e design produced with a maki-e brush during Koseki Rokuhei's maki-e training in Aizuwakamatsu. 1937-39. Ink (*sumi*) on paper. Ashiro Lacquer Craft Research Center, Hachimantai City.

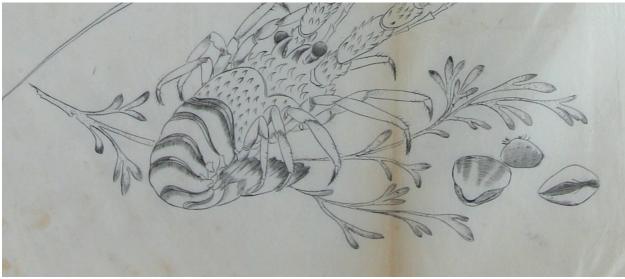


Fig. 3.7: Koseki Rokuhei. Detail of copied maki-e design produced with a maki-e brush during Koseki Rokuhei's maki-e training in Aizuwakamatsu. 1937-39. Ink (*sumi*) on paper. Ashiro Lacquer Craft Research Center, Hachimantai City.



Figs. 3.8 (left) and 3.9 (right): Koseki Rokuhei. *Bowl with maki-e lacquered rhododendron design (Shakunage maki-e wan*). 1937. Lacquer on wood substrate. 8.5 x 12 (cm). Koseki family archive.



Fig. 3.10 (left), Fig. 3.11 (right): Koseki Rokuhei. *Box with Plum Blossoms (Ume no hako*). 1955. Lacquer, egg shell on cypress. 11.5 x 28 x 34 (cm). Iwate Prefectural Art Museum. Koseki Yūhei, ed., *Saishitsu to maki-e: Koseki Rokuhei sakuhinshū shōgai ban* (2024): 10.



Fig. 3.12: Koseki Rokuhei. Detail of *Box with Plum Blossoms (Ume no hako)*. 1955. Lacquer, egg shell on cypress. 11.5 x 28 x 34 (cm). Iwate Prefectural Art Museum. Photograph by author.



Fig. 3.13: Koseki Rokuhei. *Set of three spouted vessels (katakuchi,* locally known as *hiage*) 1958. Lacquer on wood. Large: 8.6 x 9 (cm). Medium: 7.4 x 8 (cm). Small: 5.8 x 6 (cm). Koseki Family Collection. Photograph, Koseki family archive.

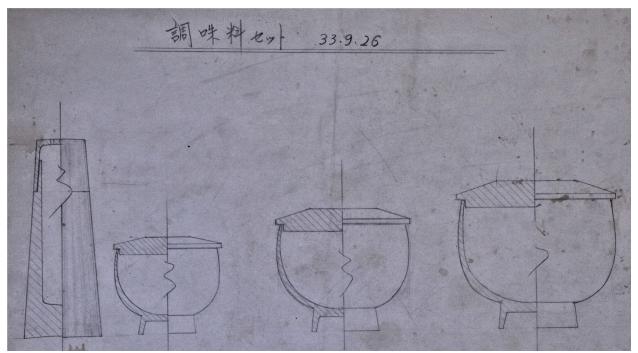


Fig. 3.14: Koseki Rokuhei. Design drawing of *Condiment set (Chōmiryō Setto)*. 1958. Ink on paper. Ashiro Lacquer Craft Research Center, Hachimantai City.



Fig. 3.15: Nuitarō Fukuoka. "Iwate no *Hiage*" article featuring lacquerware made by Koseki Rokuhei. "Iwate no Hiage," *Kōgei nyūsu* (*Industrial Art News*), vol. 27 no. 6, edited by Kōgyō gijutsuin sangyō kōgei shikenjo (Industrial Arts Institute), Tokyo, Maruzen (1959): 24-25. https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2351237.



Fig. 3.16: Advertisement for "Vinytop" produced by Tōyō Kōhan and published in *Kōgei nyūsu* (*Industrial Art News*), vol. 27 no. 6, edited by Kōgyō gijutsuin sangyō kōgei shikenjo (Industrial Arts Institute), Tokyo, Maruzen (1959): unpaginated. https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2351237.



Fig. 3.17: Advertisement for "polylite" (*poriraito*) polyester resin produced by Nihon Raihihōrudo Kagaku Kōgyō (now DIC Corporation) and published in *Kōgei nyūsu* (*Industrial Art News*), vol. 27 no. 6, edited by Kōgyō gijutsuin sangyō kōgei shikenjo (Industrial Arts Institute), Tokyo, Maruzen (1959): unpaginated. https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2351237.

Fig. 3.18: Yamazaki Kakutarō. *Maki-e folding screen with gibbons (Maki-e byōbu saru*). 1939. Maki-e lacquer, gold, and silver on wood. 65.2 x 179.4 (cm). Tokyo University of the Arts. http://jmapps.ne.jp/geidai/det.html?data\_id=9278.

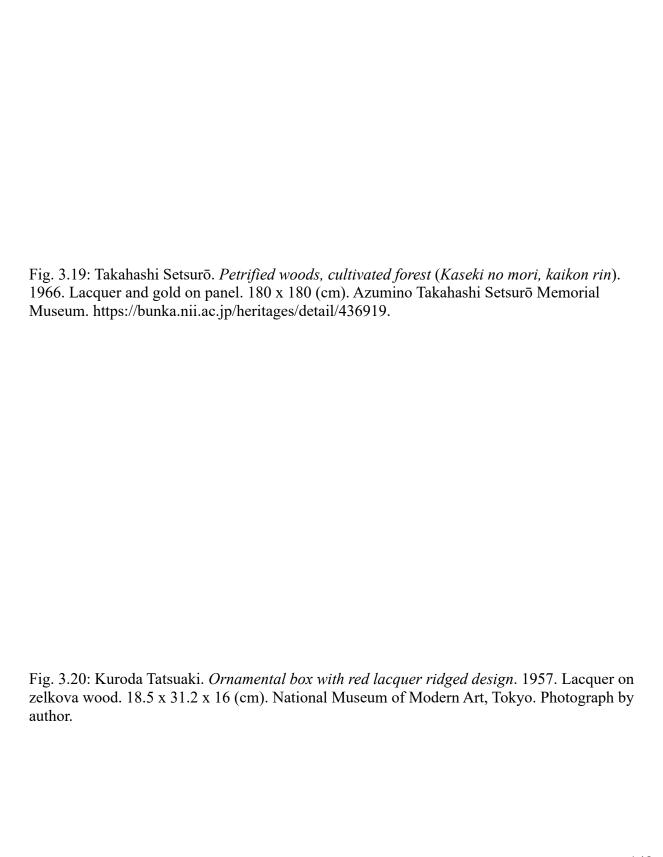


Fig. 3.21: Kuroda Tatsuaki. Detail of *Ornamental box with red lacquer ridged design*. 1957. Lacquer on zelkova wood. 18.5 x 31.2 x 16 (cm). National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. Photograph by author.



Fig. 3.22: Koseki Rokuhei. Drawing of *Sun Wave* (*Yōha*). 1960. 40 x 40 x 5.5 (cm). Iwate Prefectural Art Museum.



Fig. 3.23: Photograph of Koseki Rokuhei's *Radiating Ring (Genrin*). 1961. Pigmented lacquer on reinforced plastic (FRP). 12 x 75 x 45 (cm). Photograph from Koseki family archive. Location of object unknown.

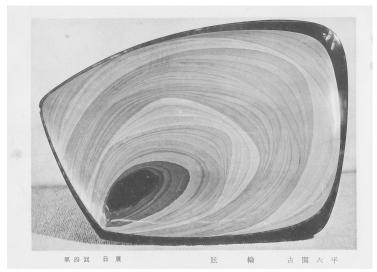


Fig. 3.24: Photograph of Koseki Rokuhei's *Radiating Ring (Genrin*). 1961. Pigmented lacquer on reinforced plastic (FRP). 12 x 75 x 45 (cm). Iwate Prefectural Art Museum.



Fig. 3.25: Koseki Rokuhei. Design drawing/painting for *Radiating Ring (Genrin)* with written advice of Takahashi Setsurō. Iwate Prefectural Art Museum.



Fig. 3.26: Koseki Rokuhei. *Vessel of the Eastern Barbarians (Tōi no Utsuwa)*. 1965. Pigmented lacquer, gold on wood base. 28.5 x 35.5 (cm). Koseki Rokuhei, *Saishitsu to maki-e: Koseki Rokuhei shitsugeiten* (1991): 41.



Fig. 3.27: Photograph of Koseki Rokuhei's wife, Kinu, and her friend Kuji Toshiko as they gaze at Rokuhei's *Vessel of the Eastern Barbarians* (*Tōi no Utsuwa*). October 4th, 1965. First Iwate Craft Artist Association Exhibition. Kawatoku Gallery, Morioka City, Iwate Prefecture. Photograph from the Koseki Family Archive.



Fig. 3.28: Koseki Rokuhei. *Core Heat (Kakunetsu)*. 1965. Pigmented lacquer and gold on synthetic resin. 8 x 63 x 36 (cm). Iwate Prefectural Art Museum. Koseki Rokuhei, *Saishitsu to maki-e: Koseki Rokuhei shitsugeiten* (1991): 33.



Fig. 3.29: Koseki Rokuhei. Detail of *Core Heat (Kakunetsu)*. 1965. Pigmented lacquer and gold on synthetic resin. 8 x 63 x 36 (cm). Iwate Prefectural Art Museum. Photograph by author.



Fig. 3.30: Asakura Yoshinari. *Gigantic Tree* (*Kyoju*). 1977. Glaze on ceramic. 38 x 48 (cm). Published in Gendai kōgei bijutsuka kyōkai, ed., *Nihon gendai kōgei bijutsu* (Kyoto: Maria shobō, 1977): 183. https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/12656557.



Fig. 3.31: Koseki Rokuhei. *Tree Spirit (Jushin*). 1978. Pigmented lacquer, gold on synthetic resin substrate. 65 x 37.5 x 13 (cm). Collection of the Imperial Household. Koseki Rokuhei, *Saishitsu to maki-e: Koseki Rokuhei shitsugeiten* (1991): 11.



Fig. 3.32: Photograph of Showa Emperor and Empress watching a live demonstration of lacquerware production in the Hidehira style (Hidehira-nuri). Iwate Prefectural Industrial Laboratory (*Iwate-ken Kōgyō Shikenjō*). October 10th, 1970. Black and white photograph. Koseki family archive.



Fig. 3.33: Koseki Rokuhei and others. *Black lacquered bowl with camelia pattern painted lacquer (urushi-e)*. Hidehira style vessel. 1970. 11 x 18 (cm). Iwate Prefectural Museum Collection. Photograph from Koseki family archive.



Fig. 3.34: Koseki Rokuhei and others. Detail of *Black lacquered bowl with camelia pattern painted lacquer (urushi-e)*. Hidehira style vessel. 11 x 18 (cm). Iwate Prefectural Museum Collection. Photograph from Koseki family archive.



Fig. 3.35: Matsuda Gonroku and Hano Teizō, *Jidaiwan Taikan* (Tokyo: Hōunsha, 1938). Entry for "Hidehira-wan with chrysanthemum design." Plate 30. https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/8311765.

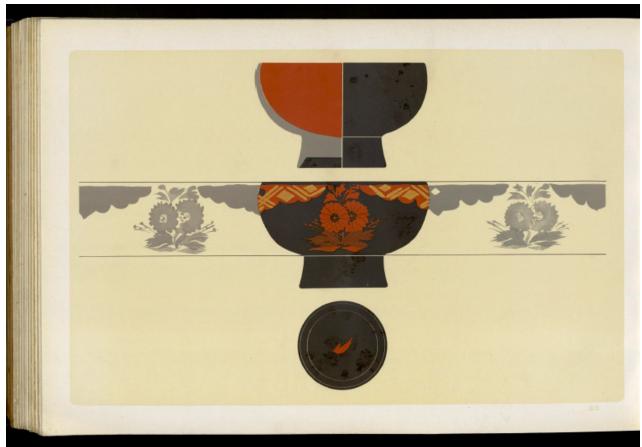


Fig. 3.36: Matsuda Gonroku and Hano Teizō, *Jidaiwan Taikan* (Tokyo: Hōunsha, 1938). Entry for "Hidehira-wan with chrysanthemum design." Plate 30. https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/8311765.



Fig. 3.37: Koseki Rokuhei. *Crest of the Beech (Buna no monshō*). 1995. Pigmented lacquer and maki-e on synthetic resin base. Iwate Prefectural Art Museum. 67 x 43 x 22 (cm). Photograph from Koseki family archive.



Fig. 3.38: Koseki Rokuhei. Detail of *Crest of the Beech (Buna no monshō*). 1995. Pigmented lacquer and maki-e on synthetic resin base. Iwate Prefectural Art Museum. 67 x 43 x 22 (cm). Photograph by author.



Fig. 3.39: Koseki Rokuhei. *Crest of the Beech II (Buna no monshō II*). 1996. Pigmented lacquer and maki-e on synthetic resin base. 25 x 63 x 25 (cm). Iwate Prefectural Art Museum. Photograph from Koseki family archive.



Fig. 3.40: Koseki Rokuhei participating in a ceremonial planting of lacquer tree saplings in Jōbōji on Urushi no Hi. 1987. Photograph from Koseki family archive.



Fig. 3.41: Koseki Rokuhei participating in a ceremonial planting of lacquer tree saplings in Jōbōji on Urushi no Hi. 1987. Photograph from Koseki family archive.



Fig. 3.42: Koseki Rokuhei participating in a ceremonial planting of lacquer tree saplings at Tendaiji in Jōbōji on Urushi no Hi. 1987. Photograph from Koseki family archive.

## **Epilogue Images**



Fig. 4.1: Yōmeimon at Nikkō Tōshōgu. 1634-1636. Wood, lacquer, gold, paint. 11.2 x 7.1 x 4.4 (m). Nikkō, Tochigi Prefecture. Nikkō City Tourism Association, 2024. https://www.visitnikko.jp/en/discover/history-and-culture/.



Fig. 4.2: Yōmeimon at Nikkō Tōshōgu. 1634-1636. Wood, lacquer, gold, paint. Nikkō, Tochigi Prefecture. "The World Heritage NIKKO TOSYOGU x JOBOJI URUSHI," Ninohe City, Lacquer Village Promotion Division (Urushi no Satozukuri Suishinka), Jōbōji Branch of Ninohe City Hall, Iwate Prefecture. https://urushi-joboji.com/urushi/material.



Fig. 4.3: Yōmeimon at Nikkō Tōshōgū, seen from the Kanenotorii. 1634-1636. Nikkō, Tochigi Prefecture. Nikkō Kankō Kyōkai. https://www.nikko-kankou.org/spot/2.



Fig. 4.4: Protruding beam tips (*kobushibana*) with dragon designs attached to bracket complexes (*tsumegumi*) on the Yōmeimon at Nikkō Tōshōgū. 2013-2016. "The World Heritage NIKKO TOSYOGU x JOBOJI URUSHI," Ninohe City, Lacquer Village Promotion Division (Urushi no Satozukuri Suishinka), Jōbōji Branch of Ninohe City Hall, Iwate Prefecture. https://urushi-joboji.com/urushi/material.



Fig. 4.5: Protruding beam tips (*kobushibana*) with dragon designs attached to bracket complexes (*tsumegumi*) on the Yōmeimon at Nikkō Tōshōgū. 2013-2016. "The World Heritage NIKKO TOSYOGU x JOBOJI URUSHI," Ninohe City, Lacquer Village Promotion Division (Urushi no Satozukuri Suishinka), Jōbōji Branch of Ninohe City Hall, Iwate Prefecture. https://urushi-joboji.com/urushi/material.



Fig. 4.6: Site map of central zone of Nikkō Tōshōgū. Nikkō, Tochigi Prefecture. Image from Maxar Technologies, 2024.



Fig. 4.7: Restoration of Yōmeimon at Nikkō Tōshōgū. 2013-2016. "The World Heritage NIKKO TOSYOGU x JOBOJI URUSHI," Ninohe City, Lacquer Village Promotion Division (Urushi no Satozukuri Suishinka), Jōbōji Branch of Ninohe City Hall, Iwate Prefecture. https://urushi-joboji.com/urushi/material.



Fig. 4.8: Current "Jōbōji Lacquer" procurement area. Lacquer procured using the traditional tapping technique within the following jurisdictions can be certified as "Jōbōji Lacquer" and marked with the official logo "mark" of "Jōbōji Lacquer": all of Iwate Prefecture; Sannohe District, Hachinohe City, and Towada City in Aomori Prefecture; and Kazuno District Kosaka Town, Kazuno City, Ōdate City in Akita Prefecture. Jōbōji Urushi Seisan Kumiai. https://jobojiurushi-seisankumiai.com/introduction/.



Fig. 4.9: "Jōbōji lacquer" brand mark affixed to a barrel of raw lacquer that is packed, sealed, and prepared for shipping at the Jōbōji Lacquer Competitive Exhibition (Jōbōji Urushi Kyōshinkai). October 20th, 2022. Photograph by author.



Fig. 4.10: Jōbōji Lacquer Brand Mark. 2008. Iwate Prefecture, Ninohe City, Jōbōji Branch of City Hall, Lacquer Village Promotion Division (Urushi no Satozukuri Suishinka). https://urushi-joboji/kokusan#ninsho.



Fig. 4.11: Lacquered vessel (*oyama-wan*) for sale at Tekiseisha. 2024. Lacquer on wood. 7 x 11.8 (cm). Jōbōji, Iwate Prefecture. https://tekiseisha.shop.

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