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SASAKI, Chihiro. Material and Technical Innovation in Sanuki Lacquer Art: A Study of Joshin Isoi's Artworks Presented in Japanese Government Exhibitions

This paper discusses how Sanuki lacquer art developed in material and technical aspects after the end of the Meiji period under the influences of Joshin Isoi (1883–1964) and his artworks presented in Japanese government exhibitions. Isoi fulfilled important roles after Zōkoku Tamakaji (1806–1869), the founder of Sanuki lacquer art at the end of the Edo period, and made a significant contribution to material and technical innovations in the Sanuki lacquer art scene. Under his leadership, Sanuki lacquer art advanced in both the artistic and industrial fields.

Isoi's main innovations in Sanuki lacquer lay in his ability to create novel works by specialising in localized lacquer techniques. Moreover, the remarkable public art institution known as Kagawa Prefectural Crafts School greatly influenced a new phase of Sanuki lacquer art in modern times. It increased educational opportunities and provided students with both formal technical training and wide-ranging artistic instructions, in comparison with the older apprentice system. Isoi learned not only foundational lacquer skills but also the significance of artistic creativity through studying design and drawing at the school. After mastering various types of lacquer techniques and acquiring considerable experience as a lacquer artist at Yamanaka & Co. Ltd., in his later years he became involved in art education at the school. He had a seminal role in consolidating the close relationship between the school's administration and art education, and the substantial lacquer industry.

Historically, Kagawa Prefecture was originally called Sanuki, and it has a long tradition of lacquer art. Isoi's prominent lacquer skills were highly esteemed in Japanese government exhibitions such as the Teiten (Imperial Fine Arts Exhibition) and the Shin-Bunten (New Ministry of Education Fine Arts Exhibition). He brought innovations to three traditional techniques—*kinma* (an incised and colour-filled lacquer technique), *chōshitsu* (a carved lacquer technique) and *zonsei* (a decorative technique painted in coloured lacquer and incised outlines and details). These techniques were introduced to Japan from Southeast Asia and China and were first manifested in Japan as the style of Sanuki lacquer art by Zōkoku Tamakaji. The Tamakaji family were known as the successors of traditional Sanuki techniques for many generations. However, the Japanese crafts scene changed dramatically after the 1900 Paris Exposition. Artistic originality became more significant than traditional skills; against these new trends, the Tamakaji works with their technical emphasis were regarded as old-fashioned.

Importantly, Isoi developed a new style of *kinma* in which innumerable tiny dots of coloured lacquer were applied to create three-dimensional effects on a surface. Previous Sanuki lacquer art had been mainly monochromatic with limited colours such as black, red and yellow. Isoi introduced multi-coloured lacquer, such as white and purple, and inspired artists' to increase their range of colours for unique expressions of *chōshitsu*. Hence, tradition and modernity were integrated in Sanuki lacquer art under the influences of Isoi. The close relationship between tradition, public education and innovation has been significant factors for the formation of Sanuki lacquer art today.

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