

Transformation of Local Lacquerware Industry using *Melanorrhoea usitata*

2st year student

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Research Area : Thailand, Myanmar

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Background and objectives of this research

Lacquerware made of sap of *Melanorrhoea usitata* is found in Thailand and Myanmar. Lacquerware found in Thailand and Myanmar is different from lacquerware made of *Rhus vernicifera* in Japan, Korea and China.

For example, frameworks of lacquerware are usually made of wood in Japan, Korea and China. On the other hand, mainly bamboo is used in Thailand and Myanmar. Frameworks of bamboo are very light and strong. Decorating technique is unique in Thailand and Myanmar. Craftsmen depict painterly designs on lacquerware by styles. Incising decoration of lacquerware is highly developed in Thailand and Myanmar.

Probably, these characteristics of lacquerware found in Thailand and Myanmar are connected with properties of *Melanorrhoea usitata* and the local lifestyle. This research focuses detail of local craftsmen's practices for making lacquerware and management of natural resource. I think that these viewpoints are very important for understanding production and use of lacquerware made of *Melanorrhoea usitata* in Thailand and Myanmar.

Previous studies of lacquerware found in Thailand and Myanmar were mainly based on short-term field works. These studies were not enough to describe processes of making lacquerware and distribution of materials for making, because it is very difficult to comprehend the everyday life in local community without long-term field work. I think that local handicrafts are related to local lifestyle. This research emphasizes local lifestyle and indigenous knowledge of making method rather than artistic design or meaning. By long-term field work at the workshop of



Sap of *Melanorrhoea usitata* of a workshop in Bagan



A lacquer working place of Wat Nantharam in Chiang Mai

lacquerware, it is possible to understand the reason of development of lacquer craft using *Melanorrhoea usitata* in Thailand and Myanmar.

In my past research about workshops of lacquerware in Thailand, I had checked use of alternative materials for making lacquerware, distribution of Burmese lacquerware in Thailand.



A scenery of the Cameroon Field School



Baka people and members of the Cameroon Field School