

Woodworking

Woodworking is a diverse craft with a long history in its own right, but it has also been a key component of crafts such as lacquerware and basketry. The importance of woodworking was formally recognized in 1970, when it was designated an Important Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The varied climate and geography of the Japanese archipelago support a wide variety of native timber suitable for woodworking, and archaeological excavations have uncovered artifacts of shaped wood dating back to the Jōmon period (10,000–400 BCE). Over time, as tools and techniques became more sophisticated, works of art and architecture grew increasingly complex. Today, woodworking is recognized as a major artistic discipline.

The four main techniques used are *sashimono* (nail-less joinery), *kurimono* (carving from a single block of wood), *magemono* (bending softwoods soaked in hot water), and *hikimono* (lathing). All of these techniques require the artisan to have an expert understanding of the wood's properties, since cut wood can warp or split when exposed to changes in temperature or humidity.

In Ishikawa Prefecture, woodworking has developed alongside the area's famed lacquerware, which commonly has a wood substrate (base). Finely formed bases are essential not only in traditions like Yamanaka ware, where the wood grain remains visible through thin layers of lacquer, but also in the more thickly lacquered and ornately decorated styles of Kanazawa and Wajima.

Several Holders of Important Intangible Cultural Heritage in woodworking have come from Ishikawa, including Himi Kōdō (1906–1975), Kawagita Ryōzō (1935–), and Haisoto Tatsuo (1941–2015).