

The production of wooden implements in ancient Japan

IZUKA Takeshi

Abstract: In this paper, the author reconstructs the production system of wooden implements centering turnery, and discusses its position in the history of ancient handicraft in Japan. The production sites of wooden implements in eastern Japan were divided into four types: A, B, C and D. While types A and B show governmental control over the production, types C and D relate to local lords. The author examined the types A and B, which dominated from the middle 8th to the early 10th century from the following five angles: 1. acquisition of raw material, 2. specialization, 3. continuity of techniques and factories, 4. production system and organization of labor force, and finally, 5. standardization and consumption of the products. As a result, the author considered that not only wooden vessels made by lathe work but also other luxury goods such as lacquered ware and utilitarian goods such as furniture, horse equipments, agricultural tools and wooden tablets for use in government offices had been produced year-round in this type of sites, and concluded that they should be regarded as specialized government-controlled production factories.

Keywords: Turnery; wooden vessels made by lathe work; artisans; specialization; government-controlled factory.