

Period of preparation for mass production

(Taisho/Early Showa period)

In the Meiji period, pieces were manufactured entirely by hand using saws and hatchets. However, making individual pieces by hand is a time-consuming process of chopping, splitting, rough cutting, and cutting into small pieces. For this reason, attempts to mechanize this manufacturing process have been promoted since the end of the Meiji period. Aspiring to increase production, piece making entered the prototype stage using machines, and foot-operated and powered machines were invented one after another. In addition, carved pieces and stamped pieces were introduced, and the demand for new products spurred an increase in production. In this way, woodwork was gradually mechanized thanks to the ingenious efforts of industry pioneers, but calligraphy work continued to be an apprenticeship system. Under the supervision of a calligrapher, a disciple uses a fine maki-e brush and writes in lacquer cursive or square script on the pieces. Starting with the pawns, and then learn to draw the gold and silver generals, rooks and bishops takes from five to ten years. At that time, the pay was cheap, but it was said to be good pocket money, so many students became disciples to calligraphers from around the second or fourth grade of elementary school and acquired skills. At that time, it could be said that the ones in charge of decorating lower-grade pieces were schoolchildren.