Shinto and Buddhist Ceremonies and Round Chip Vessels
—Fragment of a Folk Craft Study on Round Chip Vessels—

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The round chip vessel is a type of wooden receptacle, together with the hollowed vessel, turned vessel, sectional vessel, tied vessel, and so on. Its wide range of applications extends from clothing, food, housing, industry, and transportation, to ceremonies in daily life and religious life; in other words, it has been widely used in all aspects of human life. Various sizes of round or oval chip receptacles were used as early as the Asuka and Fujiwara periods. In the Nara period, square or rectangular receptacles appeared. Thus, there are many examples of its usage in the Ancient times.

Tied vessels such as pails or barrels, which are wide-spread today, appeared from the later Kamakura to the early Muromachi periods; but it was in the Early Modern period that they actually became widely used in the everyday life of the common people. Therefore, pails before the Early Modern Period can all be considered as round chip vessels.

These round chip vessels were much used in Shinto and Buddhist ceremonies as well. Shinto ritualistic implements include Mihishiro, Honō Kagami Bako (mirror boxes), Hioke (fire pails), Imioke, Sanbō (offertory stands), Oshiki (plates), Oribitsu (boxes), Hokai, and other various types of receptacles for food and wine offered to the gods. Buddhist ritualistic implements include Kyōzutsunaiyōki (cylindrical cases for sutras), Fusatsu Tarai Akaoke (water pails), Jyōsaibō (trays for vegetables), and other various cases for Buddhist implements. Since there is a tendency in Shinto or Buddhist rites to respect the ancient manner and to hand down the original styles, many of the Shinto or Buddhist implements used for these rites retain their ancient usages and shapes.

Therefore, while studying the existing round chip receptables, excavated articles and materials seen in philological documents or picture scrolls were investigated to clarify the stylistic transition of round chip receptables, as a result of which, the following process came to light. 1) At first, the bottom board was not fixed, but the side board was put on a flat bottom board. 2) Then, the bottom board was cut larger than the
side board, and holes were pierced at appropriate positions for stitching the side board together with the bottom board, using a cord or bark string. 3) The bottom board was made thicker in the part where it touched the inner diameter of the side board, and the outside of the side board was thinned starting from where it touched the bottom board, so that the bottom board would fit well to the side board. This is similar to the specification for Kakiirezoko. 4) Finally, the round chip receptacles were improved into the form we see today.