

Foreign Ceramists in Japan

Liliana Granja Pereira de Morais

1. Introduction

This paper is the result of a preliminary research conducted between January 20th and February 10th during my visit to the Research Center for Nonwritten Cultural Materials in Kanagawa University, Japan.

The goal of this research was to locate and interview foreigners who were studying or working with ceramics in Japan, in order to understand how Japanese traditional culture was represented through ceramics in their discourse.

In the interviews I deliberately focused on the potters' life-story, in order to comprehend their motivations to leave their homeland and practice ceramics in Japan. I also wanted to know how Japanese styles, techniques and aesthetics influenced their ceramic work. In order to achieve that, I prepared qualitative interviews following the ethno-sociological method of life-story (Daniel Bertaux, 1997).

2. Research Plan

Besides identifying and interviewing ceramic artists and students, I had also planned to visit ceramic galleries and museums, where I talked with the owners, curators and other specialists, not only to help locating the foreigner potters who were working in Japan, but also to deepen my knowledge about the art world of Japanese ceramics and crafts in general. As such, I visited seven museums: The Japan Folk Crafts Museum (Tokyo), Toguri Museum of Art (Tokyo), Crafts Gallery (Tokyo), Tokyo National Museum, Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum, Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art and Mashiko Reference Collection Museum (Photo 1); as well as six galleries,



Photo 1 Mashiko Reference Collection Museum

all in Tokyo: Kurodatoen (Shibuya), Japanese Traditional Craft Center (Aoyama), Kandori Gallery (Akasaka), Kogei Murata (Ginza), Koransha (Ginza), and L'essentiel (Meguro).

I identified a total of nineteen ceramic artists and two ceramic students living in Japan and managed to schedule interviews with nine of them, six on live and three through e-mail. The majority of the interviews took place in Mashiko (Tochigi prefecture) and some field

research was also developed in Kasama (Ibaraki Prefecture), countryside areas fairly close to Tokyo where many foreign ceramists live and work (Figure 1). Two other interviews were conducted in Tokyo and in Minakami (Gunma prefecture). I also had the opportunity to interview two people responsible for ceramic museums, Mister Yanagida Takashi from Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum and Mister Yokobori Satoshi, vice-director of The Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art.

2.1. Location of the interviews

As said above, I identified a total of twenty-one potters and ceramic students living in Japan during the three weeks of field research in Japan and its preparation in Brazil. However, I only managed to contact sixteen of them, from whom I received twelve answers. Unfortunately, because of my schedule and the geographic dispersal of the potters, I could only interview nine, six on live and three by e-mail. The six interviews which weren't made by e-mail demanded my visit to the artists' studios and workplaces, four in Mashiko (Tochigi), one in Minakami (Gunma) and one in Tokyo. Below is a list of all the identified ceramists.



Fig. 1 Mashiko, Tochigi (1), Kasama, Ibaraki (2) and Minakami, Gunma (3). Credits: Google Maps.

List of interviewed ceramists working in Japan	List of non-interviewed identified ceramists working in Japan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regina Goto (Mashiko) • Andrew Gemrich (Mashiko) • Matthew Sovjani (Mashiko) • Douglas Black (Mashiko/Motegi) • Euan Craig (Minakami) • Steve Tootell (Tokyo) • Jesualdo Fernández-Bravo (Mashiko & Awaji-shima, Hyogo) – e-mail interview • Karina Hamaguchi (student in Kochi) – e-mail interview • Mpindi Ronald Kibudde (student at Tokyo University of Arts) – e-mail interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvey Young (Mashiko) • Genevieve Navarre-Hales (Mashiko) • Kim Youngman (Mashiko) • Jose Farromba (Mashiko) • Graham McAllister (Kasama) • Juan Maldonado (Kasama) • Roland Sache (Kasama) • Randy E. Woosley (Kasama) • Kristina Mar (Kyoto) • Angnes Husz (Nagano) • Richard Truckle (Tokoname) • Christopher M. Gaston (Komono, Mie)

2.2. Mini-biography of non-interviewed ceramists

From the total of twenty-one foreign ceramists living in Japan identified, I wasn't able to interview more than half of them. Nonetheless, I managed to get some basic information about seven, either by e-mail (in the case of Kristina Mar and Harvey Young), through their website (Agnes Husz) and with the help of Mister Yanagida Takashi from Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum (all the others). The age of all potters was calculated as in February 2013.

Name	Nationality	Age	Date of arrival in Japan	Motive to come to Japan	Location
Gerd Knapper	German	70 *	1967	Study ceramics	Kasama
Roland Sache	German	71	1972	Study ceramics	Kasama
Juan Maldonado	Spanish	48	1996	Study ceramics	Kasama
Harvey Young	American	68	1969/1984	Study ceramics/Open a studio	Mashiko
Randy E. Woosley	Canadian	69	1990	Study ceramics	Mashiko
Agnes Husz	Hungarian	52	1993	Marriage	Nagano
Kristina Mar	Portuguese	49	1993	Study ceramics	Kyoto

* Gerd Knapper passed away in the summer of 2012.

2.3. Mini-biography of interviewed ceramists

Below is a table with some basic personal information about the nine potters I managed to interview on live and by e-mail. Their ages were calculated as in February 2013, at the time of the interviews.

Name	Nationality	Age	Date of arrival in Japan	Motive to come to Japan	Location
Steve Tootell	English	59	1984	Teach in high school	Tokyo
Andrew Gemrich	American	45	1988/1991	University interchange/ Teach English	Mashiko
Douglas Black	American	45	1990	Study ceramics	Mashiko
Euan Craig	Australian	48	1990	Study ceramics	Minakami
Regina Goto	Brazilian, <i>nisei</i>	NI *	1991	Study ceramics	Mashiko
Jesualdo Fernández	Spanish	55	1991	Turism/study ceramics	Awaji-shima/ Mashiko
Matthew Sovjani	American	43	1993	Study ceramics	Mashiko
Mpindi Kibudde	Ugandan	32	2009	Study ceramics	Tokyo Un. of Arts
Karina Hamaguchi	Brazilian, <i>sansei</i>	29	June 2012	Scholarship in physiotherapy	Kochi (student)

* NI=Not informed

3. Concentration in Mashiko and Kasama

As we can see in the list above, from the six live interviews, four were made in Mashiko area. Also, most of non-interviewed ceramists live in Mashiko and Kasama, about 100 km north of Tokyo. This concentration happens for various reasons, one of them being the fact that both centers are

close to the capital city, largest purchase market of ceramic products in Japan. Besides this proximity to the capital, both regions are still in the countryside, allowing the ceramists to have direct access to the materials they need for their production and enabling them to build large wood fired kilns that wouldn't be allowed in highly urbanized areas. Because they are surrounded by mountains, both areas are rich in clay and natural materials necessary for ceramic production. However, to understand the concentration of foreign potters in Mashiko and Kasama we also need to know the history of the establishment of pottery production there.

Kasama ware started being produced in the *Anei* era (1772-1781), after the construction of a climbing wooden kiln *noborigama* by farmer and potter Kuno Hanemon, in the area which was called Hakoda at the time, under the instruction of Shigaraki potter Choemon. With the help of another potter from Shigaraki named Kichisaburo, Hanemon's son-in-law Sehee put the kiln in operation under the name of Kuno-gama, with support from the local *daimyo*. In 1861, the kiln was placed under *han* administration together with six other and, in the following period, pottery production became the most important trade product in Kasama region. The ceramics made in this period were mainly storage jars, mortars and other objects for daily use influenced by Shigaraki ware. In the *Meiji* period (1868-1912), with the abolishment of the feudal system, Kasama kilns were privatized and the market spread throughout Japan. However, with the economic depression of the *Taisho* era (1912-1926) and the drastic changes that followed the end of the Second World War, Kasama-*yaki* entered in decay. On the contrary, Mashiko-*yaki* started gaining fame with the *mingei* movement and the establishment of the studio of Living National Treasure Hamada Shoji (1894-1978) there in 1930.

In 1957, after becoming wealthy from exporting electricity, Ibaraki prefecture started recruiting designers and ceramists to encourage ceramic production in the local, where an institute for material development and a large ceramic's center with exhibition and sales areas were built. This began to attract potters from all over Japan and also foreigners to work there, making Kasama an open center for any potter from any region and any ceramic tradition. Because of this, Kasama-*yaki* does not have specific regional aesthetic features, which has encouraged the establishment of independent artists with their own individual styles. In 1993, potter Matsui Kosei (1927-2003), who started making ceramics in 1960 while he was chief priest at Gessouji temple in Kasama, was designated Living National Treasure. He created a new and innovative technique called *neriage* (marbling), which basically consists of mixing and combining different colored clays to produce complex patterns.

Similarly, Mashiko-*yaki* began in the end of *Edo* period (1603-1868) through the influence of Kasama, when Otsuka Keizaburo, who had learned ceramics in the neighboring region, built his kiln there in 1853. Four years later, under the patronage of lord Kurobane, the *han* administration took responsibility for the distribution of Mashiko pottery, consisting mainly of domestic ware. Like Kasama, after 1871 the kilns were privatized and potters from other regions such as Shigaraki

moved there. With the high demand for domestic ware from Tokyo in the beginning of the *Meiji* period, Mashiko became the largest pottery center in the Kanto area with the production of teapots. But its pottery truly gained fame after the establishment of Hamada Shoji's studio and kiln there in 1930, who was designated Living National Treasure in 1955.

Hamada Shoji played an important role in the creation of the *mingei* (folk craft) movement in 1929, together with Kawai Kanjiro (1890–1966) and philosopher Yanagi Soetsu (1889–1961). This movement, which had Yanagi as its head, sought the appreciation of the traditional anonymous artisan's craft, as a reaction to the rapid industrialization and urbanization of Japan. Some authors (Moeran, 1997; Faulkner, 2003; Kikuchi, 2004) have pointed out the similarities between the *mingei* and the arts & crafts movement created in England at the end of nineteenth century by William Morris (1834–1896) as a reaction to the social changes caused by the industrial revolution. Social anthropologist Brian Moeran (1997: 21) points out the importance of Japanese potter Tomimoto Kenkichi (1886–1963), who studied interior decoration in England between 1908 and 1910, and British potter Bernard Leach (1887–1979), who spent many years in Japan, in the spreading of the ideas from arts and crafts movement to their fellow friends Yanagi and Hamada in Japan. Media and cultural specialist Kikuchi Yuko (2004: 12) also focuses on the importance of Bernard Leach in the foundation of *mingei* theory through his close relationship with Yanagi. According to Kikuchi (2004: 13), Leach met Hamada in an exhibition in Japan in 1918 and after that they became lifelong friends. The following year, Leach went back to England to set up a pottery in St. Ives, Cornwall, and Hamada went along to help him. Together they built the first traditional Japanese wood fired kiln *noborigama* in the West.

Today, Bernard Leach is considered the father of British studio pottery, which differs from traditional local production because it is usually made by only one artist or a small group of artists who work in their individual studios to make unique pieces in small quantities. Studio pottery emphasizes more artistic individuality than technical reproducibility and tradition. In 1940, Leach published *A Potter's Book*, considered as the “potter's Bible”, a compulsory reading for any potter and craft aspirant. In this seminal book, Leach preaches the aesthetic standards of Oriental pottery, which strongly influenced modern studio pottery and contributed to the international development of *mingei* movement after the Second World War (Kikuchi, 2004: 14). Through his studio in St Ives and his internationally acclaimed book, Leach taught and influenced a whole generation of potters until today.

It was through Leach's close relationship with Hamada that Mashiko-*yaki* became an international reference for folk pottery and a destination to potters' from all over Japan and the world. After spending three years with Leach in St Ives, Hamada returned to Japan and, in 1925, held the first of many annual one-man shows in Tokyo (Wingfield-Digby and Birks, 1998: 95). In 1930, he established his home and studio with a wood fired kiln *noborigama* in Mashiko (Photo 2), which was visited by Bernard Leach in 1934. The kiln opening of their joint firing was a very successful event and



Photo 2 Replica of Hamada Shoji's *noborigama* in Mashiko.

received hundreds of visitors mostly from Tokyo. Hamada received numerous cultural honors in Japan, United States and Britain, amongst them the title of Living National Treasure in 1955. From 1946 to 1949, Hamada formally taught Shimaoka Tatsuzo as his apprentice, who would become the second Living National Treasure from Mashiko in 1996. In turn, Shimaoka Tatsuzo taught Japan-based Australian potter Euan Craig, which was interviewed for this research.

Because of its history of international exchange resulting from the relationship between Hamada and Leach, Mashiko is, like Kasama, an open center for potters from different regions and traditions. However, due to the fact that two Living National Treasures in ceramics emerged there, Mashiko ware is, unlike Kasama, usually associated to a specific tradition, mainly *mingei*, even though many potters who work there have their own individual style.

Today, Mashiko has approximately 380 traditional workshops, which produce mainly domestic tableware and more than 100 studio potters, consisting in the largest folk-art pottery center in eastern Japan (Creuger, Ito, 2006: 226). *In the Kasama-Mashiko region, there are almost 1000 working potters, many of whom are studio potters (idem)*. Unfortunately, it's not possible to estimate how many of these potters are not ethnically Japanese.

4. The interviews

I managed to visit the studios and make live interviews with only six of the nine ceramists, with whom I spent at least one to five hours each. I traveled to Mashiko and Kasama between January 29th and 31st, where I interviewed Nikkei-Brazilian potter Regina Goto and three American potters, Andrew Gemrich, Douglas Black and Matthew Sovjani. There, I also visited the Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum, where I talked to Mister Yanagida Takashi, the Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art, where I met Vice-director Mister Yokobori Satoshi, the Mashiko Reference Collection Museum and the Mashiko-*yaki* Kyosan Center, where I was able to visit some ceramic shops.

In February 2nd I traveled to Minakami to interview Australian potter Euan Craig and in February 6th I visited the International School of Sacred Heart in Tokyo to meet British potter Steve Tootell.

I also did an e-mail interview with Spanish potter Jesualdo Fernández-Bravo, who still has a studio in Mashiko but has moved to Awaji Island (Hyogo Prefecture) after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake.

Finally, I interviewed two ceramic students by e-mail, Ugandan Mpindi Ronald Kibudde from

Tokyo University of Arts and Nikkei-Brazilian Karina Hamaguchi, who studied ceramics for one year in Nankoku (Kochi prefecture).

4.1. Questionnaire

For all interviews, I prepared a set of sixteen open questions. I wanted to understand the life-story of these ceramists, especially their motivations to leave their homeland and study or practice ceramics in Japan. I also wanted to know the influence of Japanese aesthetics and ceramic styles and techniques in their work. For that, I focused solely on their discourse and, even though I visited the studios and got to know the work of some of them, the intention was not to make an aesthetic analysis of the ceramic objects *per se*. As it was mentioned before, the main goal of the study was to understand their representations of Japanese culture through ceramics in their discourse. However, in my PhD, I also intend to approach the agency of the pots as art objects, following the theory of British anthropologist Alfred Gell (*Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 1998).

Questionnaire

1. Name
2. Nationality
3. Year and place of birth
4. When did you come to Japan?
5. What did you do professionally before coming to Japan?
6. Did you come to Japan to study/work with ceramics? If not, why did you come.
7. Why did you choose Japan?
8. Did you have knowledge about Japanese ceramics and traditional arts and crafts before coming to the country? If yes, did you like them? Why?
9. What is the main difference between the ceramic art of your home country and the one of Japan?
10. What is the main difference between working as a ceramic artist (or studying ceramics) in your home country and in Japan?
11. Which Japanese techniques do you use in your own ceramic work?
12. Do you speak Japanese fluently? If not, what is your fluency level?
13. Was it difficult for you to adapt to Japanese culture? Do you feel you like you “fit in”?
14. How does Japanese ceramic art reflect the Japanese culture and mind?
15. Do you plan to stay in Japan? What are your plans as a ceramic artist (or ceramics student) for the future?
16. What inspires you?

4.2. The ceramists

4.2.1. Regina Goto, Brazilian, age not informed, Mashiko

Regina Goto, *nisei*, was born in São Paulo, Brazil. She arrived in Mashiko in the year of 1991 during the *dekasegi* boom, when there was a big demand for foreign labor in Japan. In Brazil, she worked with fashion and sales and studied ceramics with Nikkei-Brazilian potter Yamada Shoichi at the Brazilian Society of Japanese Culture in São Paulo.

Although ceramics started as a hobby, the wish to become a professional made Regina travel to Japan to study, since she still had some relatives living there. She was introduced to a Mashiko potter by her uncle and became an apprentice for two years. This provided her enough money to cover the accommodation expenses and make her stay worthwhile. She states that, during the first months, her job was to prepare the clay in order to learn the right texture and density needed to work on the potter's wheel. Then, she spent one more year just to become skilled at kneading the clay and only after she was finally able to start working on the wheel. She recalls that it took her two weeks to make the first ceramic piece.

Regina Goto got married to a Japanese potter from Mashiko and, after giving birth to her son, stopped making ceramics for ten years. However, five years ago she has restarted to work and is practicing hard to find her own new ceramic style (Photo 3).

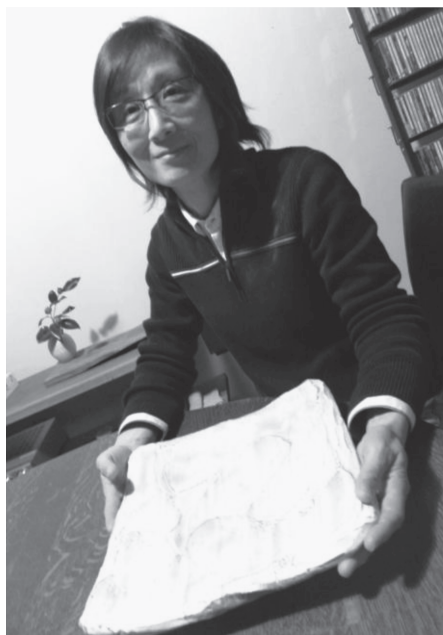


Photo 3 *Nikkei* Brazilian potter
Regina Goto, Mashiko

The Goto family was the one who received me in their house for two nights while I was doing my field research in Mashiko. Besides interviewing Regina for more than two hours, I had the pleasure to eat a very typical Nikkei Brazilian dinner which included *sushi* and *feijoada* (traditional Brazilian dish with meat and black beans). During the day, while her husband Yoshikuni worked at their own studio at home, Regina took me around by car to visit the other potters' studios. In the evening, after dinner, Yoshikuni showed me lots of books about Japanese ceramics and we managed to discuss different styles and techniques with the help of Regina as improvised translator.

4.2.2. Andrew Gemrich, 45, American, Mashiko

Andrew Gemrich was born in Michigan, USA, in 1967. He graduated in Arts and English Literature from Kalamazoo University, Michigan, in 1990, after coming to Japan for one year as an interchange student in Waseda University, where he met his current wife. He then returned to Japan in 1991 as an English teacher and established in Iwate Prefecture. There, he met a potter

with whom he started studying and finally decided to come to Mashiko to focus on ceramics in 1993. Andrew worked at the Kyohan Center during the day, giving assistance to people who wanted to learn ceramics at a visitors' pottery school, and in exchange he could use the school's studio to work in his ceramics by night.

Between 1994 and 1995, he studied under the apprenticeship of potter Chikaraishi Shunji and, after that, he finally rented his own studio and started working as an independent artist. In 1996, Andrew won the first prize in ceramics at the Hamada Shoji Award and the following year he built his own kiln in Mashiko, which he moved to Motegi, a city neighbor to Mashiko, in 2004, where he has been working until today.

Unfortunately, I didn't have much time to chat with Andrew besides asking the questions for the interview, which lasted a little less than an hour. He and his wife looked very busy with their children, but still he took the time to take me around his studio and show me his ceramic works and I felt very welcomed.

4.2.3. Douglas Black, 45, American, Mashiko

Douglas Black was born in 1967 in Lawrence, Kansas, USA. He concluded his Bachelor in Fine Arts at the Columbus College of Art and Design (Ohio) in 1990 and was awarded with an artist's visa by the Foreign Ministry of Japan in the same year. His interest in ceramics started during college, when he had a Japanese teacher who used to invite Japanese artists to give lectures at the university. It was one of these lecturers who invited him to come to Japan.

Douglas initially stayed in Nagoya for six months learning ceramics within the traditional Japanese master-apprentice system. However, he didn't adapt to this rigid structure and was invited by a friend, who was concerned about the image he had gotten of Japan, to learn with another ceramist in Kasama. After helping the Kasama potter for a month, Douglas went to work under the apprenticeship of yet another ceramist in Motegi. Douglas states that their relationship was more ruled by friendship and partnership than by the rigid traditional system of apprenticeship and they worked together for one year and a half. In 1991, he moved to his current house in Motegi, where little by little started developing his own work and finally built a gas ceramic kiln the following year. Since then, he has made various exhibitions in galleries in Tokyo and Mashiko.

In 2012, Douglas traveled to Korea to take part in the Mungyeong Teabowl Festival and in the Namiseom International Ceramic Festival. In the same year, Douglas Black, Andrew Gemrich and another Japan-based foreign ceramist, Christopher M. Gaston, showed their works at an exhibition untitled *Three Roads to Mashiko*. In 2013, he returned to Korea to participate in Gyeonggi International Ceramic Bienalle, traveled to Thailand for the 6th International Ceramic Exhibition at Silpakorn University and stayed in Nasu (Tochigi Prefecture) for a three months artist residency in Art Biotop.

Unfortunately, when I visited Douglas' studio it was already a dark winter evening, so I didn't

have the chance to visit his workplace and kiln or see any of his ceramic works on live, even though I have seen them in photos. I spent close to an hour with Douglas and, even though he answered all the questions briefly, he showed me and the Goto family some pictures from his trips to Korea and Thailand, where he was really impressed by the local ceramic techniques.

4.2.4. Matthew Sovjani

Matthew Sovjani was born in New York, USA, in 1969 from a mother who was a potter and a father who worked as an illustrator. Being born in a family of artists, he entered the Columbus College of Art and Design, where he had Douglas Black as *senpai* (senior), graduating in Arts and Illustration.

During the college years, he decided to take a course in ceramics and, like Douglas, he was invited by a Japanese professor to come to study in Japan, where he arrived in 1993. After staying as apprentice of a potter in Ibaraki for one year, an experience he didn't really enjoy, Matthew went to work in a factory in Mashiko and afterwards established a home and studio in Motegi in 1995, where he built a gas kiln. He now lives and works in Mashiko, where he has his own wood fired kiln (Photo 4). Matthew has participated in various exhibitions in Mashiko, Tokyo, Mito (Ibaraki prefecture) and Iwaki (Fukushima prefecture).



Photo 4 American potter Matthew Sovjani and his wood fired kiln, Mashiko.

I think I spent more than an hour with Mathhew while drinking Japanese tea and eating cookies under the *kotatsu*. During the interview, we would always fly away from the questions in the questionnaire and ended up chatting about different subjects related to Japan, especially Japanese society and its views on outsiders. Matthew is a fun and open person, so our conversation flowed really well. His wife, who also makes ceramics, was equally nice and talkative and I had a really good time with them.

4.2.5. Euan Craig

Euan Craig was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1964. At the age of 12, he moved to Bendigo, a city with a ceramic tradition that goes back 150 years ago. At the age of 14, already knowing that he wanted to become a potter, he worked in part-time jobs at several ceramic studios. He then got a Bachelor in Arts and Ceramics Design at Latrobe University, Bendigo, in 1985 and established Castle Donnington Pottery in Swan Hill the next year, which he ran for four years before coming to Japan.

His interest for Japanese ceramics started during his college years, when Mashiko potter Seto

Hiroshi (1914–1994) gave a lecture at the university and built a Japanese traditional wood-burning kiln *anagama*, where Euan had the opportunity to fire some of his works while still a student. He also pointed out the history of interchange between Australia and Japan in the field of ceramics, which started after the end of the Second World War, when Australian soldiers that were participating in the occupation of Japan started learning ceramics there. Euan also stated that, starting in the 1950's but reaching its peak in 1970's, there was a movement of Japanese potters coming to Australia to teach. This was precisely the period he first became interested in ceramics.

By the time his pottery started to grow, instead of expanding the business to accept more orders, Euan decided to accept the invitation to join a friend in Mashiko, who had been studying there for two years. He arrived in Japan in 1990 and started working at a small pottery factory as a wheel production manager, an experience that, he states, was more useful in learning Japanese language than ceramics. He was then introduced to Living National Treasure Shimaoka Tatsuzo, by the time Euan was helping one of the master's former apprentices building a Japanese traditional wood kiln *noborigama*. By coincidence, Shimaoka needed a turning wheeler for his studio since one of his own had just left to become an independent artist. As I mentioned before, Shimaoka was the first apprentice of Hamada Shoji, who was responsible for turning Mashiko into one of the most famous center for folk-ceramics in Japan.

During 1991, Euan experienced all the traditional Japanese pottery techniques and processes at Shimaoka's studio. He turned pots on the foot wheel for the first time; practiced the Japanese way of kneading the clay, called *kikumomi* (spiral form) and *ashimomi* (feet form); and learned a type of decoration called *Jomon zogan* (inlay), which was typical of Shimaoka's work and inspired in the pottery decorations from the *Jomon* period (10,500–300 BC). Euan recalls the master's studio has a very traditional place, with traditional architecture, water well, wood stove and so on. In 1994, he established his own independent pottery in Mashiko and developed his own style of kiln, which he calls *euangama* (Photo 5).

After having his studio and kiln destroyed with the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, Euan Craig relocated to Minakami, in Gunma Prefecture, after staying in Mashiko for over twenty years. In 2012, he presented his works from the new kiln at a solo exhibition at Ebiya Gallery in Nihombashi, Tokyo.

Even though I took the four-hour local train to get to Minakami, Euan and his family picked me up at the station and offered me a delicious lunch made by Euan himself in their wooden stove. His wife and children were adorable and I really felt at



Photo 5 Euan Craig and his wood fired kiln *euangama*.



Photo 6 Euan Craig's studio and show room.



Photo 7 Australian potter Euan Craig's foot wheel.



Photo 8 Euan Craig's pots before and after.

home. Our interview lasted for hours, since Euan has a lot to say about his experience with Japanese ceramics and his views on Japanese culture and society. One of the main differences in relation to the other foreign potters is that he stated not feeling as an outsider in Japan, since he regularly participates in the local community and speaks, reads and writes fluently Japanese. Euan also showed me the wood fired kiln he projected and explained me very carefully how the pottery firing process works. Afterwards, he showed me his traditional Japanese studio (Photo 6) and made a demonstration on the kick wheel (Photo 7). He also showed me the drawings he makes before starting to throw the pots (Photo 8) and I was able to see his extensive utilitarian work. In the end, besides taking me back to the station for my four-hour train ride back home, he offered me a beautiful ceramic piece to drink *sake*.

4.2.6. Jesualdo Fernández-Bravo

Jesualdo Fernández-Bravo was born in Daimiel, Ciudad-Real, Spain, in 1957. He studied Law at the Complutense University of Madrid between 1974 and 1979. From 1981 to 1985 he worked as a commercial director at a company in Equatorial Guinea and returned to Spain in 1986, where he developed different artistic and commercial projects.

In 1991, Jesualdo traveled to Japan on vacations for a few months and started becoming interested in Japanese culture, especially ceramics and *kyudo* (way of the bow). From 1992 to 1998, he studied porcelain with Itabashi Hitomi and ceramics with Hoshino Ryosai.

Since the year 2000, he has been working as an independent artist near Mashiko, where he built a wood fired kiln. He has split his time between Awaji-shima, in Hyogo prefecture, and his studio in Mashiko after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake.

Unfortunately, I couldn't meet Jesualdo in person since he was staying at Awaji-shima by the time I visited Mashiko. But we talked on the phone before I sent him the e-mail with the questionnaire. He was very considered and even invited me to visit him and his family in Hyogo prefecture if I had the time.

4.2.7. Steve Tootell

Steve Tootell was born in the United Kingdom in 1953. He graduated from Liverpool University with a degree in Education and taught in Britain for 10 years before coming to Japan in 1984, to fill a teaching position at the International School of Sacred Heart, where he has been Head of Creative and Performing Arts since 1986.

He sees himself as a creative artist and art educator, with experience on pottery, painting, printmaking, film, graphic arts and music. He has been responsible for coordinating the 10 World Art Educator Workshops in Japan featuring International Master Potters. He has also coordinated Artscape International Student Art Exhibition in Tokyo for the past 26 years.

Steve's connection with Japan comes from his studies in the United Kingdom, where he was taught by professors who were taught by Bernard Leach. Leach, as we have seen before, established a strong connection with Japan through his relationship with Hamada Shoji. Steve also studied with British potter David Firth, Japan-based Australian potter Euan Craig and Japanese potters Kusakabe Masakazu and Matsuzaki Ken. Besides his work as an art educator in Tokyo, Steve Tooteell has also a home, studio and several kilns in Denbigh, North Wales.

I met Steve on a very rainy day at the International School of Sacred Heart. He was very attentive even after I changed the date of the meeting the day before. I interviewed him at the school's art studio where he teaches his students, while eating Japanese cookies.

4.3. The students

Mpindi Ronald Kibudde was born in Wakiso, Uganda, in 1981. Before coming to Japan in 2009, he

worked as an artist and teaching assistant. He came to Japan to study ceramics, especially wood kiln firing, in the Tokyo University of Arts.

Karina Hamaguchi was born in 1983 in Suzano, São Paulo State, Brazil, and is the third generation of Japanese immigrants that established in the country after 1908. She worked as a physiotherapist in the city of Salvador, Bahia State, northeast of Brazil. Because of her ascendance, she has always had a strong interest in Japanese culture and studies eastern medicine. During her free time, she also teaches Japanese culture to poor communities of Japanese and Nikkei-Brazilian seniors who lost all contact with Japan. In June 2012, she went to Japan for six months with a scholarship in physiotherapy and decided to take a course on ceramics near Kochi city, in Shikoku. There she learned the *raku* technique and glass ceramics. She came back to Brazil in 2013, where she is still working as a physiotherapist.

4.4. Transcribed answers

From those sixteen questions, there were three who rendered very important results for my research, because of the common answers given by the interviewees. Those questions and answers are transcribed below.

1. *What distinguishes Japanese ceramics?*

Steve Tootell	"Japan is one of the leading countries which celebrates ceramic art as a high art form and not just as a craft as people do in UK and USA. In Japan people are well educated about ceramic art and it has a reverence that does not exist in Europe."
Andrew Gemrich	"In Japan people value more the functional ceramics. They value what is handmade, what is not perfect." "Here, people do all the process themselves and use local materials while in the USA they buy them ready-made." "Because the Japanese value food so much, ceramics are very important."
Douglas Black	"Japanese ceramics are closer to nature, there's a greater simplicity to it, people value the aesthetics of the imperfection." "The Japanese care more about the function while the Americans care more about the decoration, the visual part." "In Japan people give value to the use."
Euan Craig	"The importance of the process, that comes from <i>Zen</i> philosophy. There's an awareness of the participation of the forces of nature in the process of making ceramics. In contrast, in the West, there's a greater tendency to control." "The Japanese have greater awareness of the seasons, their lives follow the rhythm of the seasons, so there are specific foods for a specific season and the same happens with ceramics." "Japanese cuisine sees ceramics as an ambience for the food, while western cuisine tends to treat ceramics as a white canvas where the food is decorated on the top of it." "The importance given to the use of an object."
Regina Goto	"In Japan, potters accept a lot of apprentices, so you don't have to pay for learning ceramics like it happens in Brazil." "In Japan, learning ceramics is a task for a lifetime; it takes a lot of time." "The Japanese value a lot the set 'food/season/pottery'. "Japanese and nature are connected. The Japanese understand seasons, the changing of seasons, their lives revolve around it. And Japanese cuisine and ceramics follow that passage of time." "In Japan ceramic is valued as art."
Jesualdo Fernández	"Japanese people value the presentation of the dish and they value their ceramics a lot."
Matthew Sovjani	"Japan has a long history of valuing things that are handmade." "Here people study a lot to find their own space and style, while in the USA they look for money and instant success." "In Japan people use ceramics in every-day life." "Here it is very important to let nature be part of the process."

Mpindi Kibudde	"The quality of clays and firing modes". "The chance to experiment with the various techniques you learn".
Karina Hamaguchi	"Simple forms, strict learning process-like a ritual, importance of nature, the sentiment that you put in something by making it with your hands."

2. Which Japanese techniques do you use?

Steve Tootell	<i>Hakeme/neriage/wax resist-ronuki</i> (Mashiko style)/chattering-tobiganna/ <i>kasuri mon/hidasuki</i> using <i>tatami</i> straw/marbling- <i>suminagashi</i> /sgraffito- <i>kakiotoshi</i> .
Andrew Gemrich	High-temperature wood firing, ash glazing.
Douglas Black	Shino and Seto styles, celadon, black clay, ash glazing, <i>hikidashi</i> .
Euan Craig	Clay kneading- <i>kikumomi</i> and <i>ashimomi</i> , kick wheel, <i>Jomon zogan</i> , ash glazing, high-temperature wood firing, <i>mingei</i> philosophy.
Regina Goto	Uses universal ceramic techniques (plaster moulds and tiles).
Jesualdo Fernández	Plaster mould and liquid porcelain (<i>ikomi</i> technique).
Matthew Sovjani	High-temperature wood firing, ash glazing.
Mpindi Kibudde	"Throwing for forming a variety of firing modes especially reduction firing and some <i>raku</i> and combine these with Ugandan techniques".
Karina Hamaguchi	<i>Raku</i> and glass ceramics.

3. What inspires you?

Steve Tootell	"Other Japanese potters, tea ceremony, <i>ikebana</i> (flower arrangement), fabulous restaurant pieces and great museum pieces."
Andrew Gemrich	"Doing something with my own hands", "the destruction of nature", "the interaction between man and nature".
Douglas Black	"The beauty of nature, extraordinary things, things we can't explain".
Euan Craig	"The gentle beauty of nature, the joy of living".
Regina Goto	"Nature, rocks, leaves, the culinary use of a ceramic piece."
Jesualdo Fernández	"I live close to nature so I search in it for my inspiration".
Matthew Sovjani	"The excitement of being able to do anything".
Mpindi Kibudde	No answer.
Karina Hamaguchi	"Nature, especially water and stones".

4.5. Data analysis

Before analyzing the answers transcribed above, I would like to present some relevant statistic data. First of all, from the twenty-one identified ceramists, sixteen are male and only five are female. I still can't point out clearly the reasons for this discrepancy since this is only a preliminary research, but it's worth to mention that in Japan ceramics are traditionally a male activity, mainly wood-fired ones. Even though this is a very interesting subject that I would like to explore in the future, I chose not to approach it in this article.

Secondly, from the nine interviewed ceramists, five came to Japan specifically to learn ceramics

and two of them started learning ceramics only after coming to Japan. However, even though some had studied ceramics in their home countries, only Australian Euan Craig was already a professional potter and British Steve Tootell was a professional art educator, before coming to Japan. So, a common point between these nine interviewed ceramists is that most of them learned the most about ceramics in Japan.

Also, from the seven potters working in Japan that I interviewed, six of them are married to Japanese nationals. With exception of Steve Tootell, who has a British wife, all of the other ceramists have Japanese spouses. Interestingly enough, this fact was even mentioned by Spanish potter Jesualdo Fernández-Bravo, who said the following: *I feel like a stranger in Japan. If you pay attention, there is a common fact amongst all the foreigners you met in Mashiko: all of them are married to Japanese. I believe it is impossible [for a foreigner living in Japan] to move forward by his/her own means. I don't know any potter who has done it, if you do, please let me know.* Like the gender issue, I intend to explore the marriage question in a future analysis.

Lastly, most of the identified foreigners working with ceramics in Japan established in the country in the beginning of the 1990's, when the economic bubble preceded by the 1980's boom demanded for foreigner labor. However, these ceramists are not included in this type of low-skilled workforce migration that came mainly from the South hemisphere and which has as the most discussed case the *Nikkei* Brazilians (*dekasegi*), who were allowed to enter and stay in the country without any restrictions because of their Japanese ascendance (Debnar, forthcoming). This was only the case of Regina Goto, who came under this system to study ceramics, since all the other Japan-based potters identified are from Western Europe and The United States.

According to Debnar, foreign population in Japan represents less than two percent of the total population of the country, being 120,000 North-American and European nationals, that is, less than 0,1%. According to the author, despite their historical presence and recent growth, the migrant populations have been left largely unaddressed by scholars and, in the rare cases they're approached, they are often seen as "transnational cosmopolitan elites" (Willis 2008 in Debnar). Thus, the case of these foreigners represents *a different aspect of contemporary migration to Japan, which still tends to be dominated by theories of economic motivation*, showing, on the contrary, *its increasingly complex and diversified face* (Debnar, forthcoming)

4.6. Discourse analysis

From the analysis of the answers transcribed above, we identified a set of common points in the ceramists' discourse about Japanese ceramics and culture. Some of the distinctive features of Japanese pottery and culture mentioned by the potters' were: the acceptance of ceramics as art, contrary to the West, which sees them only as crafts; the importance that Japanese people give to the use of pottery and to handmade objects; the use of local materials by Japanese potters; the close relationship between food, season and pottery in Japan; the Japanese proximity to nature,

which is reflected on the ceramics making, allowing nature to be part of the process; the Japanese aesthetics of simplicity and imperfection; the strict and long system of learning ceramics in Japan; the important given to the process of making, as much as to the result. Furthermore, most ceramists use high-temperature wood fired kilns, ash glazing and other Japanese ceramic techniques and the majority of them have nature as the main source of inspiration (most of them also live surrounded by it).

The Japanese relationship with nature has been a current subject of analysis by several Japanese scholars and it seems to be a primordial part in understanding Japanese culture. Physicist Yukawa Hideki (1968) highlights the importance of this relationship, arguing that the Japanese excellence in crafts is related to their preference for tangible things, instead of an abstract way of thinking, dominant in the West. According to him, this is due to the fact that the Japanese relationship with its natural environment, far from being an adventurous attitude of confrontation, conquest and dominion like in the West, it's distinguished by the adoption of a passive and contemplative behavior and by the search of a union and maintenance of the existing stability. This tendency to conciliate and co-exist with the natural world would be expressed in the traditional arts and crafts, like ceramics.

This union with nature could be seen in the use of natural materials and especially in the wood firing process, where nature is allowed to be part of the ceramics' making because of the "accidents" that happen inside the kiln. Euan Craig stated that:

Once the pottery is inside the kiln, we surrender the process to the forces of nature; the result is the collaboration between the potter and nature. This is a characteristic of Japanese culture. (...) In the West, there is a greater tendency to control. (...) It is a very egocentrically thought. On the other hand, Japanese culture recognizes that human beings are part of an environment. This is a feature of Japanese traditional culture as a whole: in the conscience of seasons; in their lifestyle, that follows the rhythm of the seasons; in architecture, ceremonies, food; in the pleasure that the Japanese have in eating foods from the season.

Regina Goto also mentioned this awareness of the seasons, which is related to the proximity with nature:

Japanese and nature are connected, they are one. The Japanese understand the changing of seasons, their lives revolve around it. (...) And Japanese cuisine and ceramics follow that passage of time.

Furthermore, art critic Kaneko Kenji (2007: 10-11) argues that the Japanese conceive new ideas from the material and through the relationships established with it and not from a conceptual way

as in the West. Hence, while to most Western people the shape is born from individual creativity; to the Japanese ceramists it flourishes from their intrinsic relationship to the material, which is a fragment of nature. In this process, the work of art arises from a state of no-mind (*mushin*), that is, from emptying the mind for everything to become natural, simple, with no premeditated idea, which comes from Zen Buddhist concepts. In fact, Regina Goto stated that, because of her Japanese ascendance, the process of making ceramics comes to her naturally and spontaneously. And Euan Craig also asserted:

Let the clay be the clay. Let the materials be the best they can be. Don't try to make them what they're not. (...) The vessel is the result of a whole process. That comes from traditional Japanese philosophy, from Zen Buddhism, that values the present moment.

Zen Buddhism acquires, thus, an important role in understanding Japanese ceramics mainly because of its relation with two other Japanese traditional arts that developed with the expansion of Zen in Japan in the 16th century: the tea ceremony (*chanoyu*) and flower arrangement (*ikebana*). According to museum curator Rupert Faulkner (2003), tea ceremony bowls produced in the *Momoyama* period (1568-1615) became not only a powerful symbol of Japanese culture but a metonymy of it. This is due to, in great part, Okakura Kakuzo's studies of *chanoyu*, which became a metaphor of Japan's cultural identity in the West. Also, the development of *chanoyu* by Japanese Zen monks implied the flourishing of a new "Japanese taste" that valued ideals like the *wabi-sabi* (simplicity and imperfection) and that was reflected, for example, in changing the Chinese ceramics, more exuberant, for the more simple Korean ones. This aesthetics of *wabi-sabi* became an epithet of Japanese traditional culture in the contemporary world, receiving the *status* of high-culture. Douglas Black mentioned that:

Japanese ceramics have a more imperfect and natural aesthetics. There is a greater proximity to nature, a greater simplicity, which is common to Japanese culture and which comes from Japanese history and the development of Zen.

The importance of use, the value given to handmade objects and the acceptance of ceramics as art are related to the development of the *mingei* movement in 1929 by Yanagi Soetsu, which we approached in point 3. Influenced by Buddhist concepts, Yanagi sought the appreciation of the traditional crafts made by common people for the use of common people in everyday life. In the next point, we will see how the discourse of these ceramists derives from specific historical and cultural background.

5. Analysis and theorization

One of the main goals of this research is to show how the aesthetical and conceptual traits that usually define Japanese traditional ceramics and which are reflected in the discourse of these foreign ceramists living in Japan, are not the result of a Japanese innate and fixed character, like it is supported by the *nihonjinron* (theories of Japanese uniqueness), but a result of two main historical and cultural processes: the romantic orientalist discourse of the nineteenth century and the construction of a Japanese national identity after the *Meiji* period.

5.1. Culture as a construct

National culture is made of institutions, symbols and representations. According to post-modern anthropologist Stuart Hall, it is a discourse, a way of building senses that affects our actions and our own conception of us (1992: 13). It produces senses about the nation, which we can identify with, thus, it constructs identities (Hall, 1992: 13). Nation is, then, an “imagined community”, politically constructed through the manipulation of elites that can invent traditions, symbols, history and culture to instill national consciousness in the common people. In this process of creating a national culture, certain values and preexistent practices are selected and modified, usually of the dominant culture, while others are depreciated or dismissed (Tai, 2003: 6).

The construction of national identity is generally associated with the building process of modern nations in the 18th and 19th centuries and in Japan it was no different. The creation of a national culture developed in the country during the *Meiji* period (1868–1912), when Japan opened itself to the world after a long period of isolation and began a vast program of reforms that intended to modernize the country. The construction of a Japanese collective identity happened, at the time, as a need of assertion towards Western supremacy.

The processes of building national, ethnic and cultural identity are usually based on the relationship between the “self” and the “other”, that is, on the establishment of frontiers and the selection of certain values to define the culture of the “self” in contrast to the culture of the “other”. In this sense, Japan chose certain cultural values and traditions that could define its difference towards the West.

It was during that period of constructing a national consciousness after the *Meiji* Restoration that Japan actively participated in the international exhibitions that took place in Europe and in the United States. Also, with the opening to Western nations, Japanese art was “discovered” by the West and came to be so appreciated that incited the emergence of Japonism in France, influencing artists like Vincent Van Gogh, Edgar Degas, Gustav Klimt and many others. But, more than Japanese painting, it was *ukiyo-e* (Japanese wood block prints) and the Japanese traditional crafts that impressed westerners the most.

The first international exhibition in which Japan took part was the 1873's Vienna International

Exhibition and it was then that Japan first showed to the world its works in the crafts category, which were greatly applauded for its high technical quality. At this time, Western crafts were already in decline due to the Industrial Revolution, situation that instigated the rise of the arts & crafts movement in England (1860–1910) led by William Morris. This movement affirmed itself as a reaction to the mechanization imposed by industrialization and the resulting decline of the artisan's role. According to Japanese philosopher and literary critic Karatani Kojin (1998: 152), the romantics started to praise the traditional crafts of the past at the moment they became obsolete by the mechanical reproduction. However, differently from the West, that had met the extinction of its traditional artisans after the Industrial Revolution, in Japan, because of the late modernization, the traditional hand-manufacturing was never abolished. In this sense, the romantic West saw in the Japanese crafts a past that it had already lost.

The traditional hand-made crafts, thus, became a symbol of this newly-formed nation, something that Japan was better at than the West. Having a high level of hand technique was something to be proud of and it should be promoted. The Japanese crafts “became widely influential and even laid the foundation for the advent of *art nouveau*” (Karatani, 1998: 152).

Consequently, in the *Meiji* period, the Imperial House of Japan implemented laws to protect the traditional crafts, by nominating artisans of the Imperial Court and giving them monthly pensions. Those procedures, into force between 1890 and 1944, meant an important support to artisans and an attempt to preserve the traditional arts. Therefore, Japanese artists made an effort to incorporate elements of the traditional crafts in their work, by recovering techniques and styles that were practically extinct. This process of protecting traditional culture in face of the supremacy of the Western model was no different from what happened in other non-hegemonic countries around the world.

British potter Edmund De Waal (2002: 188–189) states the similarities between the process of protecting national culture through the promotion of traditional crafts both in Japan and England. In fact, many other authors (Moeran, 1997; Faulkner, 2003; Kikuchi, 2004) point out the analogies between the British arts and crafts movement and the Japanese *mingei* movement. Through the work of the artisan, Yanagi sought a peculiarly Japanese lifestyle and means of production, in a need to assert the cultural identity of the country over the supremacy of the western model. In fact, Brian Moeran (1997: 21) purposes that “the mingei philosophy is the sort of moral aesthetic that tends to arise in all industrializing societies that experience rapid urbanization and a shift from hand to mechanized methods of mass production.”

According to Faulkner (2003), “the Japanese Folk Craft Movement was formulated as an instrument of social and artistic reform that looked to the past as a model for the present”. The beauty of the objects created by the collective work of unknown craftsmen, using traditional styles and techniques, was glorified by Yanagi and pointed out as a social and artistic model. The work of these artisans was, thus, presented in opposition to the capitalistic and industrialist logic and the

mass-production, and related to the original Buddhist precepts. In combining Japanese art and its Buddhist ideas, “Yanagi began to develop the idea of preaching his ‘Buddhist aesthetics’” (Kikuchi, 2004: 1999).

With the help of Zen Buddhist rhetoric and tea aesthetics, Mingei theory presented the strong nexus between the beauty of crafts and esoteric ‘Oriental’ spirituality and ideas. It greatly mystified and ‘orientalised’ the identity of ‘crafts’ and has remained as the factor which underpins the modern philosophy of studio crafts both in Japan and in Britain, where the ‘Leach tradition’ was established as a British version of Mingei theory (Kikuchi, 2004: 206).

In fact, the 1920’s and 1930’s also saw the rise of the folklore studies and the proliferation of archaeological excavations in regions of traditional ceramic production. The conjugation of these factors led to a revival of the tea ceremony ceramics used during the *Momoyama* period (1568–1615), which became a powerful symbol of the traditional Japanese culture. It was also at this time that the Zen Buddhist philosophy started spreading in the West, especially due to Suzuki Daisetsu’s publications and lectures in Europe and The United States. This contributed to the growth of a stereotype of Japan as Zen country, where intuition and connection to nature were opposed to the rational and scientific Western model, and this was visible in the arts that flourished in the *Momoyama* period and related to the aesthetics of *wabi-sabi*.

With the reconstruction of Japan in the post-war period, the theories of Japanese uniqueness (*nihonjinron*) of the 1930’s were recovered in a new context of reaffirming national identity after the occupation. This period, marked by the growing dissemination of North American values and consumption patterns, saw the rebirth of a discourse of affirming and celebrating Japanese culture that tried to identify once again an immutable and unique essence to it (Oda, 2011: 109). It was also during the post-war era that Japanese authorities established several measures to protect traditional culture, such as the Important Intangible Cultural Properties. This title, best known as Living National Treasure, is given to craftsmen that possess knowledge and techniques considered precious and important, promoting the traditional values.

5.2. The internationalization of Japanese traditional culture

Anthropologist Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni argues that the concept of Japanese culture promoted in the cultural ventures related to Japan abroad “is strongly influenced by the way Japanese culture is presented by Japanese both in Japan and in the framework of organized international contacts. What is put on exhibit as ‘Japanese culture’ is mostly an officially endorsed ‘traditional’ culture” (Goldstein-Gidoni, 2005: 157). It is this essentialized image of Japanese culture, which emphasizes the hand-craft traditional knowledge, that is widely consumed in Japan and abroad.

Japanese culture thus became, in the West and in Japan itself, an essentialized product, promoted,

marketed and consumed. And, as Ernani Oda argues, “as all consumed objects, this notion of Japanese culture is clearly inserted in a global market. Then, it must be attractive not only to the internal consumer of Japan, but also to other countries, whose approval becomes determinant to the status and value of that ‘Japanese culture’” (Oda, 2011: 112).

This officially endorsed discourse is, however, an extension of the “mysterious” and “exotic” image of Japan, which spread in the West since the world fairs of the 19th century and through several Western scholars that lived and wrote about the countries’ tradition, culture and arts, such as the American art historian Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) and American writer Lafcadio Earn (1850–1904), who was a major influence to British potter Bernard Leach.

On point 3 I mentioned the importance of the relationship between Bernard Leach and Hamada Shoji, who contributed to the spreading of Yanagi’s aesthetical discourse in Japan and in the West. During the 1960’s and 1970’s, Bernard Leach, considered as the father of studio ceramics in the West, wrote several books in which he propagated Yanagi’s ideas.

The Unknown Craftsman, along with Leach’s A Potter’s Book have been widely regarded as the Bible of craft theory by craft-makers and students at art and design colleges. The perfect combination of Yanagi’s ‘Buddhist aesthetics’, its adaptation by Leach and Hamada’s demonstration which literally make Mingei theory visible, has almost created its own cult movement (Kikuchi, 2004: 198).

Kikuchi Yuko, who specializes in cross-cultural and transnational issues in relation to non-western modernities in art and design, wrote a central book about this double mechanism which she calls “Reverse Orientalism” (Kikuchi, 2004: 197). In this book, Kikuchi (2004: 198) shows how *mingei* theory has been redressed as an ‘authentic’ Oriental theory and how the Oriental mystification has been effectively integrated into British studio pottery.

The ‘Leach Tradition’ was gradually constructed since the interwar period after Leach came back from Japan in 1920. Together with English Arts and Crafts ideas and Modernist ideas, the Oriental ideas became a major source for the British studio pottery movement. (...) The ‘Leach Tradition’ is, in short, a British derivative of Mingei theory which was constructed by Bernad Leach. Leach was a loyal spokesman for Yanagi, reinforcing the mystification of Mingei theory. The ‘Leach Tradition’ is defined by his style and philosophy expounded in A Potter’s Book published in 1940 which has become the Bible for British potters since (...). During the 1960’s and 1970’s Leach further propagated his ideas through major writings including A Potter in Japan (1960), Kenzan and his Tradition (1966), A Potter’s Work (1967), Unknown Craftsmen (1972), Hamada, Potter (1975), A Potter’s Challenge (1976), Beyond East and West (1978). Leach reshaped Yanagi’s abstract concept into more concrete and digestible ideas to suit the Western audience. (Kikuchi, 2004: 233–234).

6. Conclusion

The propagation of Yanagi's ideas in Japan contributed to the expansion of folk crafts centers such as Mashiko and the creation of new kilns during the 1960's and the first half of the 1970's, which Moeran (1997: 27) defines as '*mingei* boom'. By coincidence or not, this was the same period as the foreign potters identified first established in Kasama area: Gerd Knapper in 1967 and Roland Sache in 1972, both from Germany.

Also, it was through 'Leach's Tradition' that Yanagi's "Buddhist aesthetic" ideals expanded in the West. As a formative book for any crafter aspirant, Leach's *A Potter's Book* influenced many ceramic artists who are currently developing their works in different countries, especially in the West. As the interviewed British potter and art-educator Steve Tootell stated, his connection with Japanese ceramics comes from having been taught by professors who were taught by Bernard Leach himself. Also, Australian potter Euan Craig frequently mentioned the importance of Yanagi's *mingei* theory in the conception of his ceramic work. And, even though none of the other potters talked about Yanagi or Leach, the influence of the ideas associated to Japanese traditional culture and Buddhist aesthetics that Yanagi appropriated to create his *mingei* theory are visible in their discourse, as seen on point 4.6.

Interestingly, the only interviewee who didn't mention any of these concepts usually associated with Japanese crafts was Ugandan ceramic student Mpindi Kibudde. His answers focused more on the technical aspects of Japanese ceramics than on the aesthetical and conceptual ones. This may be related to him coming from a non-hegemonic and non-western country, where Bernard Leach's pottery teaching might not have had so much influence in the formation of craft makers and ceramic students. This is only a supposition, since it would be necessary a second and preferably on live interview to understand this differences in his discourse.

However, we mustn't ignore the ceramists own individual choices of technical processes and artistic expression. Even though their discourse is heavily influenced by the mystified and orientalist discourse of Japanese traditional crafts and aesthetics, which were synthetized by Yanagi in its *mingei* theory and propagated through 'Leach's Tradition' in the West, their ceramic artworks are the result of their own appropriation and re-signification of these cultural representations in relation to their own life experiences, artistic choices and individual expression. This complex dialectic process is what I wish to explore in a future research.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank everyone from the Research Center for Nonwritten Cultural Materials in Kanagawa University for giving me the opportunity to go to Japan for the first time to develop this research, especially: Hikosaka Aya, for taking care of all the logistic related to my coming and stay at the university, searching for possible interviewees amongst the people who were studying ceramics at an arts university in Tokyo area, organizing my visit to the Sophia University and Tokyo Geijutsu University libraries and arranging meetings with museum directors and curators at Mashiko and Kasama; Professor Torigoe Teruaki, for advising me in the research and borrowing his books about Japanese ceramics; Professor Isaka Seishi, for taking me to his pottery class, allowing me the opportunity to have a real experience on making Japanese ceramics with Master Shimizu Kazuko and showing me around Kita-Kamakura; Curator Nagai Miho from Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation, for making herself available to help me and making the effort to talk in Portuguese; and student Tomuro Satomi, for meeting me at the station, taking me to the university's dormitory and translating all the rules and recommendations to English, accompanying me to Tokyo Geijutsu University library and helping me understand how it worked, translating some of the interviewed potter's biographies which were in Japanese and being a patient and excellent interpreter in my final presentation at the Research Center for Nonwritten Cultural Materials.

I would like to give my sincere thanks to all the ceramic artists I interviewed, for their time and consideration, for allowing me to visit their homes, showing me patiently around their studios, answering all my (sometimes intrusive) questions and, most of the times, even giving me food or drink and a warm *kotatsu* to sit under. Especial thanks to Regina and Yoshikuni Goto for hosting me at their house, picking me at the station, taking me around Mashiko and Kasama for two days, cooking me a delicious typically Japanese-Brazilian dinner and teaching me about Japanese ceramics. Without them, this research would have been pretty much incomplete.

My acknowledgements also to Mister Yanagida Takashi from Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum and Mister Yokobori Satoshi, vice-director of The Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art, for receiving me at their workplaces and taking the time to show me around and helping in my research.

Finally, I would like to thank the people from all the ceramic galleries I visited and who, even with my insufficient Japanese language skills, took interest in my research and tried to help me locating the foreign potters who were working in Japan.

Bibliography

- BERTAUX, Daniel. *Les Récits de Vie*. Paris, Éditions Nathan, 1997.
- CREUGER, Annelise; CRUEGER, Wulf; ITO, Saeko. *Modern Japanese Ceramics: Pathways of Innovation & Tradition*. New York, Lark Books, 2004.
- DEBNAR, Milos. *Globalization and diversity in migration to Japan: Migration, whiteness and cosmopolitanism of Europeans in Japan*. Ph.D, Kyoto University, forthcoming.
- FAULKNER, Rupert. "Cultural Identity and Japanese Studio Ceramics". In _____. *Quiet Beauty: Fifty Centuries of Japanese Folk Ceramics from the Montgomery Collection*. Virginia, Art Services International, 2003.
- GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI, Ofra. "The Production and Consumption of 'Japanese Culture' in the Global Market". *Journal of Consumer Culture*, London, number 5, p. 155-179, 2005.
- HALL, Stuart. *A Identidade Cultural na Pós-Modernidade (The Question of Cultural Identity)*. Rio de Janeiro, DP&A Editora, 1992.
- HALL, Stuart. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London, Sage Publications, 1997.
- HIDEKI, Yukawa. "Modern Trend of Western Civilization and Cultural Peculiarities in Japan". In *Philosophy and Culture, East and West*. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1962.
- KANEKO, Kenji. "Modern Craft, Kōgei, and Mingei: Learning From Edmund de Waal's Study of Bernard Leach". In WAAL, Edmund de. *Berunarudo Richi Saikō: Sutajio Potari to Tōgei no Gendai*. Tokyo, Shibunkaku Publishing Co., 2007.
- KARATANI, Kojin. "Uses of Aesthetics: After Orientalism". *Boundary 2*, Duke University Press, volume 25, number 2, p. 145-160, 1998.
- KIKUCHI, Yuko. *Japanese Modernisation and Mingei Theory: Cultural Nationalism and Oriental Orientalism*. London/New York, Routledge Curzon, 2004.
- MOERAN, Brian. *Folk Art Potters of Japan: Beyond an Anthropology of Aesthetics*. Surrey, Curzon Press, 1997.
- ODA, Ernani. "Interpretações da "Cultura Japonesa" e seus Reflexos no Brasil." ("Interpretations of "Japanese Culture" and its reflections in Brazil"). *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, São Paulo, volume 26, number 75, p. 103-117, 2011.
- TAI, Eika. "Rethinking Culture, National Culture and Japanese Culture". *Japanese Language and Literature*, Association of Teachers of Japanese, number 37, p. 1-26, 2003.
- WALL, Edmund De. "Altogether elsewhere: the figuring of ethnicity". In GREENHALGH, P. *The Persistence of Craft: The Applied Arts Today*. London: A & C Black Publishers Ltd., 2002.
- WINGFIELD-DIGBY, Cornelia; BIRKS, Tony. *Bernard Leach, Hamada and Their Circle*. Yeovil Somerset, Alphabet & Image Ltd., 1998.