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"RAKU - EAST AND WEST"

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TABLE OF CONTENTS PAGE

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks - Mum and Dad

INTRODUCTION

This essay aims to trace the development of Raku from its discovery in the East around 1580 to its relatively recent introduction to the West. The differences between Eastern and Western Raku will be discussed in relation to both cultural and religious influences. This will lead to an assessment of the position of Raku today which will endeavour to include the most significant aspects of its history for the modern ceramist.

It must be stressed at this point, that this essay has been written from a personal interest in the subject and reflects the level of thought at which I have arrived at this point in my studies of and practice of Raku. It has undertaken the examination of some Eastern ideas and philosophies which it must be conceded lack the fundamental knowledge and understanding that one has of the subtleties of one's own culture. A rather general approach has therefore been undertaken.

The essay begins with a practical definition of Raku. Ceramics in Japan up to the point when Raku was invented will then be discussed. This will help to discover the type of work that was being produced and underline the fact that Raku is the only technique in ceramics that came into being with a specific religious purpose. The religious significance of Raku will then be examined in more depth and this will include a brief discussion of the importance given to the tea ceremony in the East.

The essay will then focus on how Raku came to the West, initially to England through Bernard Leach in the 1920's. The ideals of Leach and their importance in relation to the change which he promoted in ceramics in England will be discussed. There will also be a brief examination of modern pottery in Europe.

Chapter Three will focus on the introduction of Raku to America in the 1950's. This will begin with a review of the history of ceramics up to the point when Raku became popular. The significance of the Expressionist Art movement of the 1950's will be discussed. This will include a review of the work and ideals of an expressionist artist, Jackson Pollock. The Chapter will then turn to Raku and Paul Soldner, the ceramist who is generally regarded as being directly responsible for the development of the technique in America.

Finally, an overall review of the position of Raku in the nineties will be undertaken. This will begin with a brief examination of two modern ceramists who have selected different aspects of Raku in their own work. The existence of cultural divisions within the technique today will then be discussed. This will lead to an examination of the meaning of contemporary Raku. The dissertation will conclude with a personal viewpoint.

CHAPTER ONE -EASTERN RAKU

WHAT IS RAKU?

Raku is a very fast technique of firing dried clay, taking approximately one hour as opposed to a six to eight hour conventional firing. The main difference between Raku and ordinary pottery lies in the fact that in Raku, the pots are introduced to a red hot kiln. The dried pots are usually given an initial bisque firing to mature the clay so that it will be able to withstand the rapid rise in temperature which takes place. The glaze is applied to the bisque and is allowed to dry completely before the pot is introduced to the kiln. Raku glazes are not fundamentally different from other glazes but they are generally separated because they have a character and potential of their own. They are characterised by a high quantity of frit which allows the glaze to melt quickly. The pots remain in the kiln for between 20-30 minutes until the required temperature is reached (1000 C approximately). The potter judges the correct temperature by the appearance of the pots which should have a liquid cherry-red surface. At this point, they are removed from the kiln using long tongs and protective gloves. The ware is left to cool in the open air or can be plunged into cold water to create a crackled glaze surface. Reduction may also take place here, a Western addition to the process which will be discussed later.

Japanese Raku consists of two types of glazes; Red Raku and Black Raku. The former is low fired and takes its colour from the ocreous slip which is applied underneath the glaze. Black

Fig.1 Removing pots from the Kiln.

Raku is high fired. It takes its colour from iron and manganese (originally obtained from stones found in the Kamo river in Kyoto, Japan) which are part of the glaze mixture. Today the range of Raku decoration is much wider as it is used in combination with many other decorative ceramic techniques.

The main characteristic of the Raku process is the immediacy of the effects. As the process is such a fast moving one, spontaneity and intuition can play an important part. There is often a sense of risk, or uncertainty in a Raku firing but this is usually combined with excitement and a great sense of experiment and exploration. The experienced Raku potter is able to control effects more easily but even the master will admit to at least some deliberate reliance upon chance.

Fig.2 Map of Japan.

JAPANESE CERAMICS AND RAKU

Ceramics have always flourished in Japan. It is important to note that a difficulty arises when discussing Japanese ceramics because of the existance of contrasting styles from region to region. A general approach will therefore be adopted in order to present the main trends. The earliest pottery belongs to the prehistoric Joman tribes. Joman means rope pattern, a characteristic of the coil constructed ware. Vessel forms were the main types of ware produced, for functional as well as decorative purposes. (The Joman tribes also produced a number of figurative pieces).

From Ancient to Medieval times, Japanese ceramics were greatly influenced by developments which took place in neighbouring Korea and China. Korea developed new ways of firing at higher temperatures and using glazes from about the sixth century. The Koreans also invented the foot kick wheel and the potters kiln. Early forms were quite simple but with time, became more elaborate and refined. The earthenware burial urn (Fig 3) dates from the eight century and is a good example of early Korean pottery. The elegant ewer (with cover and bowl) is from the 11th century and shows the development that has taken place within ceramics. This type of ware was very popular among the higher classes; the aristocrats and the samuri. The ordinary people tended to use simple, low fired unglazed ware.

The Zen priest, Dogen is said to have brought Chinese glazed ceramics to Japan around 1230. Chinese ceramics were similar to

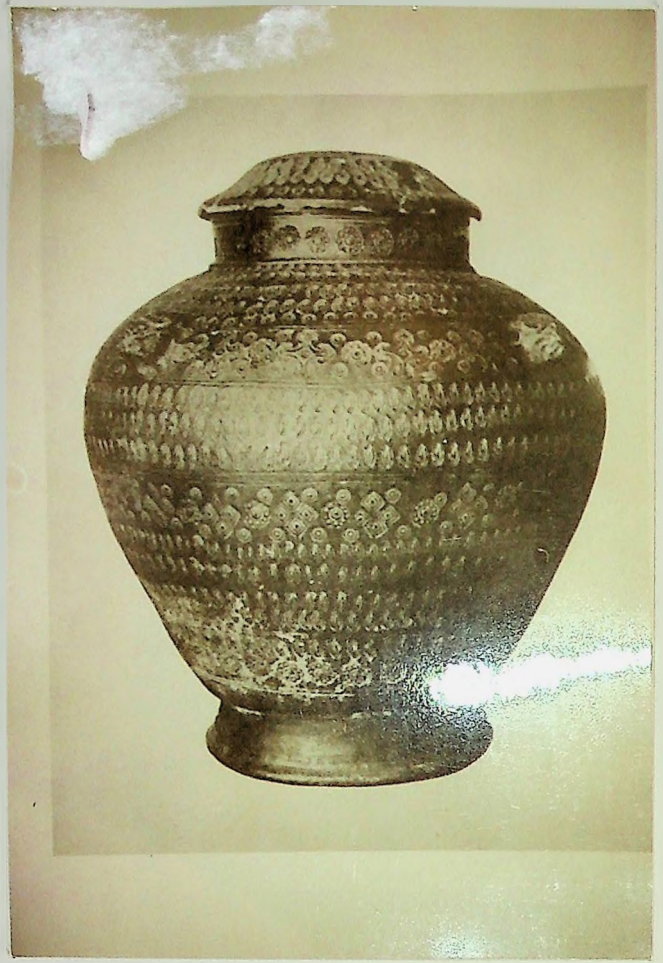

Fig.3 Korean Buriel Urn (Kim,1961,p.30)

Fig.4 Korean Ewer with Cover and Bowl (Kim,1961,p.68)

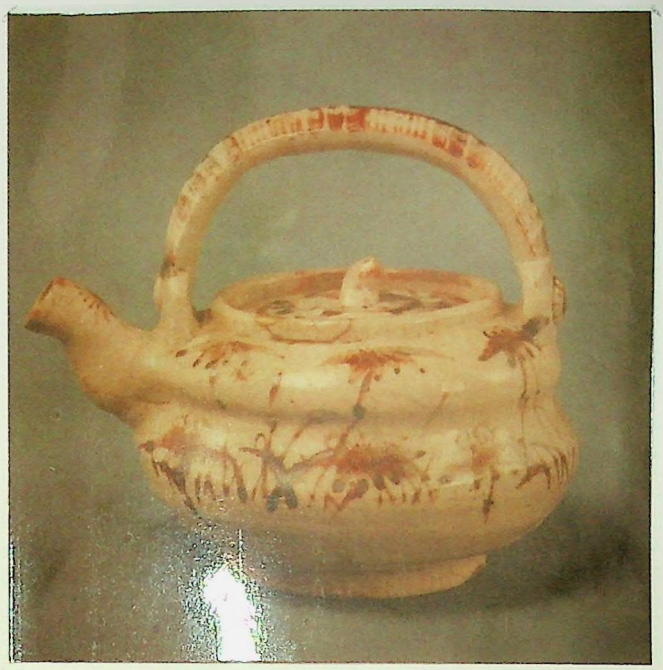

Fig.6 Shino Ewer with Motif of Gentians
(Fujioka,1977,p.64)

Fig.7 Faceted Incense Burner
(Fujioka,1977,p.134)

Korea led another development in ceramics in the 16th century. This was the Karatsu ware, a type of pottery made over a period of three hundered years in the Southern island of Kyushu. This ware was roughly made on the wheel and was designed for utilitarian purposes. Karatsu pottery possessed a rustic charm which appealed to tea lovers and led to the adoption of the technique for the making of tea bowls. "Hideyoshi" the infamous Japanese warlord is thought to have brought this style of pottery to Japan. He led an attack on Korea and brought back as spoils, a number of potters. He settled these potters all over Japan and in doing so, brought pottery to the people. What had previously been a small scale functional craft or an elaborate art for the wealthy, was now a part of everyday life.

The Kyoto ware was the next step in Japanese ceramic history. These were made in the Edo period (1615-1867). They include Awata (characterized by the use of blue and green glazes as well as gold enamel), Kyomizu (blue and white porcelain with enamel decoration) and Raku. The two former periods produced ceramics of a highly refined and exquisite decorative quality. The two vases (Fig 8) show the precise, confident application of geometric and figurative pattern on crisp, classical forms.

These are the historical precedents to Raku. Ceramics had reached a summit of technical brilliance and had evolved into a highly developed skill. While simple, utititarian ware was still being produced, the bridge between this and 'art' ceramics was a wide one. When Raku was discovered, it closed this gap to some

Fig.8 Two Vases (Jenyns,1971,pl.81A/81B)

extent because it brought about a completely new approach to the craft. The main reason for this was the serious purpose for which Raku was created, a subject which will be discussed later on. Chojiro, a Korean potter, was the discoverer of Raku. He made roof tiles using hand building techniques and fired them in the centre of a charcoal fire. As the legend is told, Chojiro was commissioned by Sen No Rikyo (a great tea master) to make a tea bowl using the same techniques. Rikyo was delighted with the ancient smoky appearance of the bowl and brought Chojiro to Kyoto (the centre of Zen culture) to develop this new technique. He is said to have begun his work here in 1580. Chojiro adopted the Japanese word Raku (literally translated to mean 'enjoyment') as his seal. In accordance with tradition, the name was passed down through generations of potters to the best student of each master. Since Chojiro, there have been fourteen generations in the Raku 'family'. The present head is Kichizaemon, the fourteenth Raku master. The most revered Raku potters are Choji, Jokei and Donyu. They are said to have exhausted every possible tea bowl shape between them. Until very recently, Raku ware has been entirely confined to the vessels of the tea ceremony. These include the tea bowl, tea caddy, water jar, food bowl, incense burner and incense container and dishes.

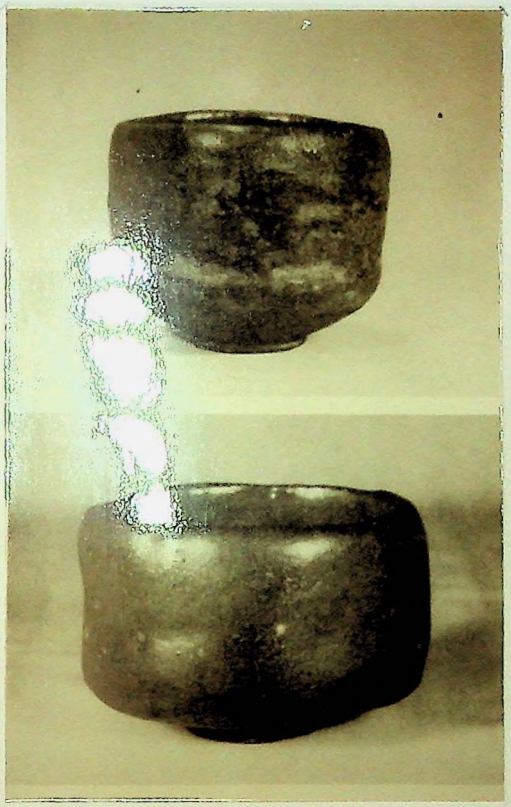

Fig.9 Tea Bowls by Chojiro
(Jenyns,1971,pl.107A/107B)

All of the early Raku wares were modelled by hand and great importance was given to the physical and functional aesthetic of the form. According to Mr. Yosaku Imaizumi, a Japanese potter, there are five points to be considered in judging Raku chawan. They are;

1. The mouth or lip of the bowl.
2. The shape of the pool of tea - the concave shape of the inside of the bowl.
3. The base - its shape and texture.
4. The finish of the base - the appearance of the base which shows the manner in which it has been formed
5. The place where the tea whisk rests.

The two other qualities by which tea masters evaluate Raku chawan are;

6. Glaze and colour - the texture, colour and application of glaze.
7. Shape - the tactile and practical qualities of form. (Jenyns, 1971, pp.254-255)

Jenyns sums up these points in a description of the ideal qualities of a Raku tea bowl;

> The lines must give an exhibition of feeling like a carving; when one drinks tea, it must rest safely in the bowl without movement and the touch of the bowl must not give an unpleasant feeling - it must not be too cold or too hot. Only the temperature of the tea should be transmitted through the chawan to the hand. Also, the touch of the edge of the chawan to the lips must be pleasant. (Jenyns, 1971, p.257)

The red and black colours of Raku glazes were specially adapted to bring out the shade of the tea which was pale green. Masatoshi Okochi has written that 'the appreciation of the colour of Raku is not complete unless the chawan is filled with green tea to the brim. Then you can realise that the colour blends with the

glaze' (Jenyns, 1971, p.257). The Raku bowls (Fig 11) show the variety of forms and decoration produced. The black teabowl was made by Chojiro (Raku 1 1516-1592). It has a rough quality to it which is complimented by the thick runny appearance of the glaze. The red Raku bowl is a much finer example. This piece was also made by Chojiro. The subtle tones in the glaze suggest the Autumnal colours of nature.

RAKU AND RELIGION

Raku holds a unique position in Japanese ceramic history because it is the only technique which has come to acquire a very specific religious significance; the creation of the most beautiful bowls possible for the tea ceremony. The Japanese tea ceremony is also unique because of its religious associations. A prerequisite to any discussion covering world religions must point out that while a general approach has been adopted in this essay, it does not allow for the enormous variety of opinions within any one religion or part of a mass culture.

Japan is said to be a 'living museum of religions'[1] because of the range and diversity of religions there. This 'living museum' can be divided into two kinds of belief systems; The first is a 'little tradition' which is made up of a variety of folk or traditional religions which have developed as a result of ancient geographic and cultural circumstances. The Shinto cults for example, are completely separate from Buddhism and are more readily observed in the everyday life of the people than in any formal philosophy or set of beliefs. The 'Great tradition' is made up of several highly developed religions which have been imported from other countries. These are Buddhism (which originated in India and came to Japan in the sixth century), Confucianism and Taoism. These two kinds of belief systems eventually became intertwined to produce other new sects. Zen or Chan Buddhism for example, is a synthesis of Taoism and Buddhism. This religion is the one most closely associated with the Japanese tea ceremony.

Art and nature are an important part of Zen and its philosophy. There is no fixed dogma and any existing writing is anecdotal, consisting largely of riddles and stories from monks and sages. It is said that Zen is;

> 'scarcely distinguished from an aesthetic experience in which shrines, gardens, mountains, woods and streams reveal a mysterious beauty and in which the exercise of the intellect is at a minimum'[2]

There are four basic moods which represent the 'atmosphere' of Zen art. The original terms are;

1. Wabi - The sentiment that expresses nature. It is comparable perhaps to English understatement; deliberately simple and direct.

2. Sabi - This represents a peaceful quality, a deep solitude. It often comes with age.

3. Aware - A nostalgic sadness for the vanishing world. Aware is the spirit of nature, of life, of constant change.

4. Yugen - This hints at unknown mystery, never to be discovered.

The West is a culture dominated by Christianity which has in fact become the largest of the world's religions. Christianity is, in essence, concerned with the one eternal truth and the one universal salvation and is said to have always had 'a certain tendency toward emphasing the didatic or theoretical basis'[3]. Christa-Maria Hermann has examined the differences between these two religions;

> The Christian would have to convince a disciple that there is a God to save his and the disciples soul. It is inconceivable that a Taoist would convert anyone to his way by use of force, even death, as history records of Christianity. He is a person who would rather sit under a beautiful tree in the

garden of his home, watching an insect crawl up the bark or listen to a bird singing in the branches than to convince anyone of what the Tao is or is not. He is much too busy enjoying the Tao, living the Tao, to worry over its existence.(Herrmann, 1988, p.4)

TEA CEREMONY

Let us now turn our attention to the tea ceremony with which Raku has such a strong connection. It must be noted that Raku is not exclusively associated with the tea ceremony as tea bowls and utensils have been made by other means since the beginnings of tea. Tea masters did however find in Raku particular characteristics which reflected the philosophy of their ceremony. These characteristics could perhaps be summed up as an appreciation for the aesthetics of spontaneity, instinctual behaviour and a regard for the irregular or imperfect alongside the regular. Boger describes the tea ceremony in The Traditional Arts of Japan as 'a cultural institution of aesthetic appreciation and philosophical enlightenment' (Boger, 1964, p.209).

Let us examine the history of this ceremony. Tea drinking has a long history in Japan. It dates back as far as the Heian period (794-1185) where it was used among the upper classes as a social pastime. The tea leaves were pounded into a paste and shaped into lumps which were then brewed.

Powdered green tea evolved during the Kamakura period (1185-1336). It was originally used as a stimulant by the monks in the Zen monasteries. They discovered that its properties prevented them from falling asleep during long hours of meditation. They treated the tea with great respect and would gather together before the image of Bodhidharma and drink from a single bowl. This act was always performed in a solemn, formal manner,

comparable perhaps to the Christian Holy Sacrament or Communion.

From about the fourteenth century, tea spread from the Zen monasteries to Samuri society and rural communities. It retained the formalities that the monks had given it however and continued to maintain a close relationship with Zen Buddhism. The Japanese tea ceremony is imbedded with formalities, following rules and codes of proper conduct and behaviour.

Tea drinking in China is quite different. They are great lovers of tea but they do not see it as a direct reflection of Zen. They are more interested in the poetic associations of tea, 'jade green buds, cloud-capped mountains, gushing springs, curious legends, delectable ceramics cunningly wrought by master craftsmen' (Blofeld, 1985, p.91). They do not see formality as being an important issue and believe rather that tea is best enjoyed restfully, without rigid forms or codes of behaviour. John Blofeld has said that Chinese tea drinking is only spiritual to the extent that 'all forms of art express the higher aspirations of the human spirit and are therefore uplifting'. (Blofeld, 1985, p.96)

Korean tea drinking is similar to its Chinese counterpart in that there is no insistence on ceremony. According to a tea expert, Popchong Sunim;

> Tea is drunk to quench the thirst, savour the taste or simply to spend a quiet hour appreciating the pottery and the general atmosphere that accompanies tea drinking. There is no need to have any special attitude while drinking it, except one of thankfulness. The nature of the tea itself is that of no-mind. It does not discriminate or make differences. It just is.(Blofeld, 1985, p.96)

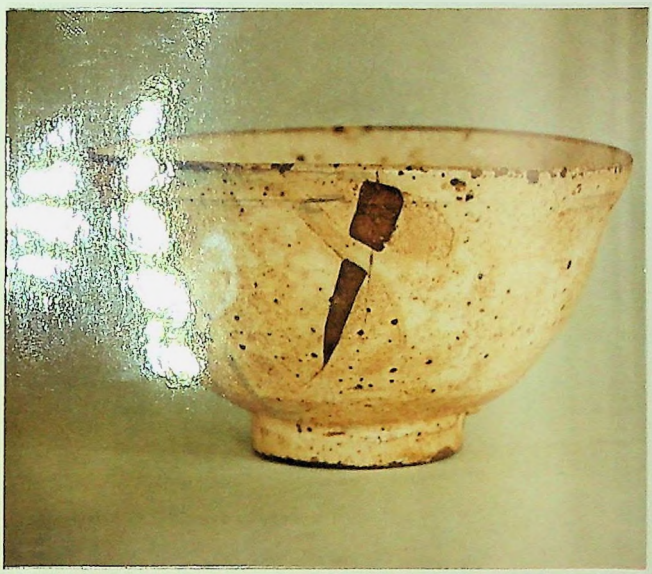

Fig.10 Korean Tea Bowl
(Hayashiya,1974,pl.36)

The formality associated with tea drinking in Japan is therefore unique to this country. Shuko, a Zen monk (1422-1502) is said to be the founder of the Japanese tea cult in its regulated form.

A formal tea ceremony, (in Japan) or cha-no-yu, is always initiated by the host who sends out invitations to his guests, usually a week or so in advance of the meeting. There are set times during the day when it is proper to have tea. 'Yogomi' (overnight) for example, at 5 a.m. summertime. This time is suitable because morning glory and similar flowers can be freshly plucked to decorate the tea room. There are many different types of tea rooms; some are attached to the house, others are simply a partitioned part of a room. Others consist of a completely independent room separate from the house. The duties of the host include the choosing of a suitable Kakemono (hanging scroll) and floral arangement as well as preparation of the food and the tea. The guests are expected to attend in particular dress. Men, for example, wear a black silk Kimono. Guests are also expected to bring with them a small folding fan, one or two fukusa (square pieces of silk) and a pad of Kaishi (white paper to put the cakes on).

A regular formal tea ceremony lasts about four hours. Guests arrive a quarter of an hour or so before the appointed time. They assemble in a small waiting room while the host is busy with the final preparations. Before entering the tea room, guests wash their hands and rinse their mouths. They also leave their sandals outside. When they go inside they spend some time

Fig.11 Tea Room Interior
(Hayashiya,1974,pl.44)

admiring the decor before they take their places (which may be pre-arranged by the host or mutually decided while in the waiting room).

The first session of a formal tea ceremony consists of a light repast called Kaiseki. The host serves his guests but he does not eat with them. When this is over, guests retire once more to the waiting room, where they wash again. Meanwhile the host replaces the Kakemono with a floral arrangement. When the guests re-enter, the second session begins. This consists of Koicha (a thick green tea). The host sits with all the tea utensils in front of him. He whisks the powdered tea and hot water with the chasen (bamboo whisk) and places the bowl before the head guest. He takes a couple of sips, wipes the bowl, compliments the host and passes the bowl to the next person.

The final part of the tea ceremony is the Usucha (a thin foamy green tea). When this is over, the guests admire the tea bowls and other utensils, an important part of the ceremony. The event if finally concluded by a letter of thanks, or a personal visit the next day.

RAKU AND RELIGION - SUMMARY

Raku has been closely associated with religion since its discovery because the Zen Buddhists found in it qualities which seemed to parallel their philosophy. The result of these associations are that even in the present day, Raku is considered in terms of ceremony in Japan, separate from ordinary ceramic techniques. This attitude to Raku manifests itself as an attitude in making which is as significant as and inherent to the quality of the finished piece itself. This attitude is best described in terms of spontaneity and naturalness. To draw a parallel with Zen one could compare the Japanese Raku attitude with the aim of the Zen monks in grasping 'thusness'. This state of mind of 'just being' is not preconceived or calculated. It is characterised by its celebration of the unconscious and the natural. Soetsu Yanagi describes 'thusness' in The Unknown Craftsman with a story recorded in a book by a Zen monk;

> Once there were three people who took a walk in the country. They happened to see a man standing on a hill. One of them said, "I guess he is standing on a hill to search for lost cattle". "No", the second said, "I think he is trying to find a friend who has wandered off somewhere". Whereas the third said, "No, he is simply enjoying the summer breeze". As there was no definite conclusion, they went up the hill and asked him. "Are you searching for strayed cattle?" "No", he replied. "Are you looking for your friend?" "No", again. "Are you enjoying the cool breeze?" "No", yet again. "Then why are you standing on the hill?" "I am just standing", was the answer. (Yanagi, 1972, p.123)

The final response from the man on the hill captures the sentiment of naturalness not guided by reason which is part of the Raku attitude in Japan.

Another consequence of Raku's religious associations is the confinement of forms made by the process to the vessels of the tea ceremony. This is because the solemnity and respect given to Raku would not allow the technique to be used in any casual way for any other means.

The fundamental characteristic of Raku in Japan as a result of these religious and ceremonial traditions are that since its discovery, the technique has remained relatively unchanged in Japan for more than 400 years.

CHAPTER 2 - RAKU GOES WEST

BERNARD LEACH AND MODERN POTTERY

Bernard Leach was the man who brought Raku to the West. Born in Hong Kong, Leach was educated in England. He attended two art schools (The Slade School of Art and The London School of Art), where he studied drawing and etching. At the age of twenty one, he returned to Japan bringing his etching press with him. (He is said to have been the first person to introduce etching into Japan). In 1911, two years after his arrival, Leach turned to pottery. He was seized with the desire to become involved in the craft while attending a garden party at which some pots were being Raku fired. He recounts this story beautifully in his own words in A Potter's Book;

> 'as a result of this experience, a dormant impulse must have awakened, for I began at once to search for a teacher and shortly afterwards found one in Ogata Kenzan, old, kindly and poor....By him I was taught to make Raku and stoneware according to the Japanese tradition' (Leach, 1945, pp 29-30)

Leach proved to be an excellent student and was subsequently honoured with the representation of the seventh generation of the Kenzan tradition in accordance with Japanese custom. While working, Leach became involved with a group of artists and writers; Kenkichi Tomimoto and Shoji Hamoda were two of these, both of whom he inspired to become potters.

When Leach returned to England in 1920, he was accompanied by Shoji Hamada. Together, they set up a pottery at St. Ives in Cornwall. This event was to mark a dramatic change in English

Fig.12 Covered Raku Pot by Bernard Leach (Leach,1967,pl.3)

ceramics.

In the early years, Leach found that he was in a difficult position as a craftsperson in an Industrial England. He wanted to retrieve personal expression in the making of pottery (as had once existed in the West and which still existed in the East), yet still be able to make things that people could use and afford. His aim was to combine all he had learnt in Japan with old English craft traditions to create a well-crafted product. It was also important for Leach that some evidence of the personality of the maker be imbedded in the work, in contrast to the often alienated ceramics of Industrialization.

In 1920, Leach published a small pamphlet explaining his work and his aims for the pottery. In this he suggested that the solution to his problem might be found in the creation of a 'team'. Each member of the team would be a craftsperson unto himself yet work as part of the group to produce as economically as possible, a common line of work. This system he suggested would also allow more special 'once-off' pieces to be made from time to time. Leach had nothing against technology once it did not detract from the work, so he used modern kilns and machinery in his workshop.

Leach did not make Raku for very long in England, but concentrated instead on stoneware and slipware. The most significant aspect of Leach's work in St. Ives was its novelty as it was the beginning of Modern or studio orientated pottery for England. The introduction of Raku did not pioneer change but it did become an important part of this modern movement which

1 **Raku Ware Jar** Height 10 in.

This pot was made by me in my Master's kiln in Tokyo as early as 1912. I copied a Delft drug pot which had probably been brought to Japan in the seventeenth century. I had not yet found my own feet as a potter, but I was evidently looking over my shoulder to see what European potters had done in the past, whilst going through my studentship in Japan. 'Playing the solitious ape' as Robert Louis Stevenson called ... In the *Leach Pottery permanent collection*. *Made in Tokyo*, 1912

Fig.13 Raku Ware Jar by Bernard Leach (Leach,1967,pl.1)

changed the history of ceramics in England, moving away from industry and towards personal expression.

A contempory of Leach, William Staite Murray, was exploring ceramics in this way. He did not venture towards Raku, but he is a character worthy of some discussion, as his ideals (which incidentally Leach oposed) were to be taken to the extreme in later years in America.

Staite Murray exhibited his work successfully in England as an exponent of Modern ceramics. He was frequently commended for his expressionism, his originality and his extraordinary skill.

> 'The gift of Staite Murray in catching this magic and of expressing through it the emotion he feels from music, from a flower, from moonlight or actually a philosophical abstraction not only raises pottery to its place among the arts, it also ranks him among the masters of song - it is his clay that sings' (Wingfield Digby, 1952, p.35)

Malcom Halam speculates that Murrays view of pottery as a fine art was derived to some extent from Eastern aesthetics. He states that in the East 'the difference between fine and applied arts is as minimal as that between art and religion'(Haslam, 1984, p.71). Perhaps this was becoming the case in England where potters were beginning to choose Modern pottery in favour of Industrial ceramics and its concerns with uniformity and symmetry.

ENGLAND BEFORE LEACH

From the eighteenth century, English ceramics were increasingly orientated towards industry. The change from small-scale craft workshops to large industries was a gradual one. It was strongly influenced by the work of one man, Josiah Wedgewood (1730-1795). He was the first person to produce high-quality, mass-produced ceramics in Britain. It has been said of him that he 'converted a rude and inconsiderable manufactory into an elegant art and an important part of National Commerce' (Honey, 1946, p.1)

A number of developments had already been achieved in manufacturing before Wedgewoods time. Among these was the introduction of the slip casting process whereby hundreds of identical forms could be made from a mould. Wedgewood however, was responsible for some technical advances of his own. He was very interested in the production of coloured clays and in 1768, he produced a fine black body he called black porcelain. His 'Jasper Ware' is his most original and successful discovery. This makes use of coloured, unglazed clay with white relief designs. The forms are classical and elegant and the figurative motifs are typical of the neo-classical style. Wedgewood was obsessed with the standards of the Neo-classical movement in the eighteenth century. This style followed the elegance and symmetry of the ancient Greek arts. It was ideally suited to mass production because of the accuracy possible with new mechanisation.

Although the firm of Wedgewood is generally regarded as being producers of very high quality ceramics in England, a criticism

Fig.14 Wedgewood Vase - Jasper Ware
(Honey,1945,p.68)

of the ware is that it is rather unsympathetic to the natural qualities of clay. It could be said that they have the appearance of stone or metal which is a result of the mechanical means by which they have been formed. This point is a characteristic of the machine age which was responsible for the replacement of hand-crafted products by machine made products. Industry also replaced the craftsman designing his own work with the external artist who designs for mass production.

Craft pottery had of course once existed in England prior to Industrialization, but it had been dormant for a long time by the time Bernard Leach came back to England.

MODERN POTTERY IN EUROPE

Europe experienced Modern pottery much earlier than England. Modern Ceramics are said to have evolved in France as part of the Art Nouveau movement and as a result of the 1867 Exhibition in Paris at which there was a showing of Japanese Applied Arts. Art Nouveau was a reaction against the preciseness of Industrial design, and the resulting alienation between the maker and his work. It was also a move away from the Classical tradition or 'the slavish imitation of the past' (Hettes & Rada, 1965, p.12). As an artistic movement, it embraced all the arts from architecture to the fine arts and was characterized by the use of figurative and organic motifs and forms. It fostered a new understanding for the special properties of materials, for example Emile Galle's glass work and Rene Lalique's jewellery. Both of these artists are sensitive to the qualities of their materials, in that they exploit their natural properties. Galle, for example, uses the viscous, fluid quality of glass rather than trying to make it appear hard and metallic.

Hettes and Rada see the French contribution to ceramics as having a threefold contribution to the modern movement. First, they helped to revive good craftmanship by rediscovering old techniques and inventing new ones. Secondly, they helped to establish ceramics as an art form in relation to the other arts and in relation to contemporary life as a whole. Thirdly, it was through ceramics that they tried to break down the barriers between fine art and applied art. Although these effects were not immediate, they were very progressive and having gradually

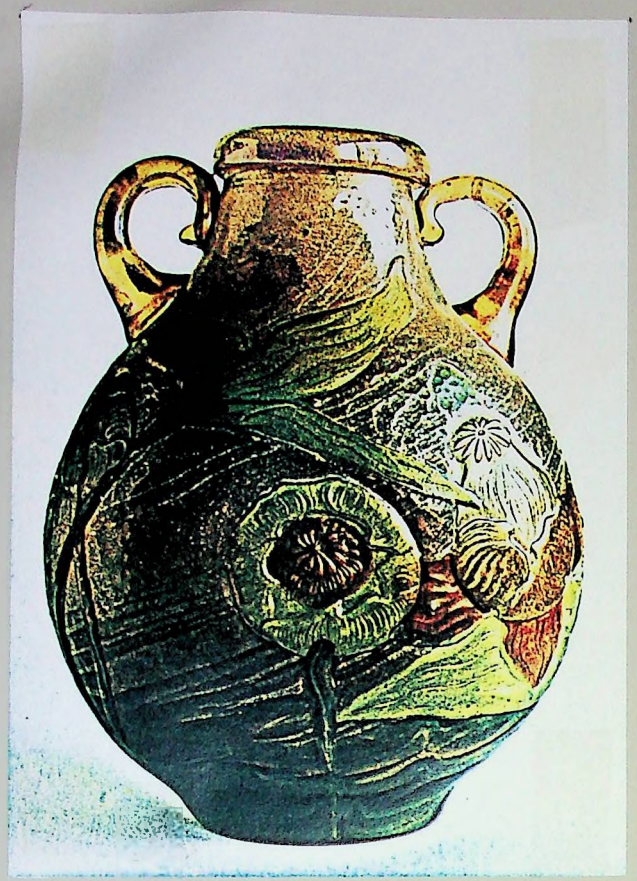

Fig.15 Glass Vases by Emile Galle
(Garner,1977,p.57)

spread worldwide, affect us even today. It is strange therefore to discover that there are no outstanding names in ceramics from this period in France. Bernard Leach does give credit to some potters in A Potter's Work. These include; Theodore Deck, August Delaherche, Ernest Chaplet, Jean Charles Cazin and later on Emile le Noble and Emile Decour.

In order to see the significance of Raku's move West, let us look at it in the context of the events we have just discussed. First it is important to note that one man, Bernard Leach, initiated a change in ceramics in England in the 1920's. This change had been going on in Europe much earlier (from 1867). Raku happened to be a technique that Leach had learnt in the East and brought back with him. It did not take off immediately, but it was none the less being used for the first time in a completely different context to the manner in which it had been used in Japan for hundreds of years.

The most significant change for Raku was the fact that it immediately lost its religious significance. Leach used Raku under his own ideals of good craftsmanship and the strength of tradition but it would no longer be practised as a ceremony. It had now become a pure technique.

This occured because of the differences between Eastern and Western cultures. The manner in which we adopted the tea habit from the East is a good example of just how different the two societies are. It is also analogous to the manner in which we adopted Raku from the East. When tea came to England via the Dutch merchant fleets, it was treated as a novelty beverage and was used initially among the higher classes as a mark of social distinction. Initially we gave it some importance by creating beautiful utensils for its use but now even this tradition has largely faded out. Today Western tea drinking if often reduced

to the non-gustatory and unaesthetic convenience of the tea bag and the plastic cup. Let it be emphasized that a comparison is not being made between the quality of Western Raku and the tea bag! The main point here is that the West adopted the use of tea as a habit as opposed to a ceremony. Similarly, when Raku came to the West, it lost its ceremonial function and was used as a pure technique.

CHAPTER THREE - RAKU GOES TO AMERICA

There are two main achievements for which America is responsible in the development of Raku. Both of these took place in the middle of this century. The first is the use of Raku as a technique for pure expression. The second are the technical advances which American ceramists have developed. Both of these achievements and indeed the very fact that Raku was accepted and popularized in America, happened as a result of changes which were occuring within the ceramics movement in general in the 1950's.

HISTORY OF AMERICAN CERAMICS

Ceramics developed in America with the arrival of settlers from England, France and Germany in the seventeenth century. Each group of people brought with them techniques from their homelands so there was a wide diversity of styles. These styles became more stylish and refined as the merchant class developed and the colonies became more sophisticated. The native Americans, the Indians, were making pottery much earlier. Their pottery was both ceremonial and functional and was as diverse as the pottery of the settlers because of the variety of tribes and traditions. Relationships between the Indians and the Europeans varied and gradually became more antagonistic as territorial wars broke out. As a result, American native culture was not fully recognized until the West was settled at the end of the nineteenth century.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, America imported a lot of fine quality ware from Europe. This was because it was cheaper and because there was a National tendency to look to Europe for 'artistic inspiration and legitimacy' (Strong, 1983, Introduction). In 1876, there was a display of American ceramics at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. The bad reviews which followed the show were attributed to this over-dependence on Europe which resulted in 'a lot of imitation and a lack of confidence in any national Ceramics'. (Strong, 1983, p.x) This was borne out by the art world who ignored all locally made utilitarian earthenwares and stonewares until the 're-discovery' of folk art in the twentieth century.

The Arts and Crafts movement began in America in the second half of the nineteenth century. It came about as a result of a general dissatisfaction with the 'monotonous labour and debased artistry' (Strong, 1983, Introduction) which accompanied the industrial revolution. This led to the formation of small craft workshops and guilds and was strongly influenced by the English arts and crafts movement and its exponents. William Morris, the English designer and writer, inspired many with his belief that a union between the fine and applied arts would bring about the reforms necessary to an overly industrialized society.

American ceramics did not form an identity of its own until the 1950's. This delay in the affirmation of a national spirit in ceramics has been attributed to the lack of any great tradition with which to identify. Bernard Leach has said that America

'lacks a cultural taproot' (Perry, 1989, p.200). The significance of any cultural taproot is a reference to the strength and influence of the ancient Japanese tradition and the European craft traditions. However, the lack of such great traditions need not be regarded in a negative light. America proved this in the middle half of this century when ceramists created an identity completely free from the imitation which often shadows the homelands of the traditional ceramic doctrines.

PETER VOULKOUS AND THE ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST MOVEMENT

The 1950's are said to be the decade of revolution for American ceramics. This dramatic change was largely affected by the work and teachings of one man, Peter Voulkous. He did not make Raku, but he did lay the groundwork on which Raku was to be taken up and used in a completely new way. It is significant that Voulkous was impressed by the work of Leach and Hamada when they visited the United States in the 1950's. While not particularly interested in their ideas about the craft tradition, he admired the relationship they had with the material which seemed finely balanced between command and subservience.

Voulkous and others also learnt about the philosophies of Zen through the tours and writings of Leach. The Zen concept of beauty (sabi) appealed to the Americans because its values offered different aesthetic opinions to those of the West. Those values were based on expression and risk. They accepted and encouraged asymmetry and randomness and broke away from the European obsession with the 'objet d'art'.

In 1954, Voulkous set up a ceramic department in the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. His teaching methods were unconventional bordering on the outrageous and included manic working sessions carried out in the middle of the night. The atmosphere was aggressive and exciting and this was reflected in the work. Clay was being used as a medium for expression, as opposed to a medium for the creation of beautiful objects for the

first time. One of Voulkous' main sources of influence came from the Abstract Expressionist painters of the time who used their material in a similar way; 'I really got turned on to what the painters were doing. It was a special kind of time, a necesary kind of time..... all the energies came together' (Levin, 1988, p.201)

Fig.16 Demonstration by Peter Voulkous at Super Mud Conference, Pennsylvania State University,1976. (Slivka,1978,p.89)

JACKSON POLLOCK - AN EXPRESSIONIST ARTIST

Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) was an expressionist painter who 'lived fast and died young' (Namuth, 1980, Introduction). It is said that his expressionist painting style was 'involved not only with the violence of his own death but also with the volatile American ethos itself' (Namuth, 1980, Introduction). Contemporary critics labelled Pollock a 'drip' painter because of his technique of pouring paint straight from the tin and guiding it with sticks and brushes without actually touching the canvas. This style was very radical in the 1950's when Pollock's work came to the attention of the public and was received with mixed reactions. Hans Namuth, a photographer who spent much time working with Pollock, describes how the artist works;

> The paint flows from the can onto the whiteness. Next, a pause, as if Pollock were at a loss about what to do. He stirs the paint for a moment, and then, suddenly, returns to the picture on the floor and his dance becomes quicker and more erratic. There seems no end to the dance as the fever of painting takes hold of him (Namuth, 1980, p.8).

Namuth's photographs and documentary of Pollock in action were significant as historical events because they tore away the mystery and secrecy which had surrounded the artist and his work for the first time. This focus of attention on the actual process of art making instead of the static object is said to have 'changed the course of art criticism and even art history in a way Namuth himself could never have forseen or intended' (Namuth, 1980, Introduction). Pollock's own reasons for painting were centered around personal expression; 'I want to

Fig.17 Painting by Jackson Pollock
(D'Offay,1989,p.21)

express my feelings rather than illustrate them. Technique is just a means of arriving at a statement' (Namuth, 1980, p.89).

Voulkous identified strongly with the work and ideas of Pollock and his contemporaries - Mark Rothko, Clifford Still and Franz Kline - who were working in a similar mode. He used clay as energetically as they used paint and gave it an identity which was unmistakably American. Voulkous own work consists largely of assembled wheel thrown forms. It is often difficult to imagine that much of his sculpture began as symmetrical forms made on the wheel, when looking at a finished piece. This is because he uses the wheel in such an anti-traditional fashion allowing it to function only as a starting point from which the building blocks are made. Voulkous then cuts, beats and assembles the clay sections into sculptures which often reach life-size proportions. Much of his work is painted in bold colour using oxides and stains. The most striking effect of Voulkous' ceramics is the manner in which they blatantly defy tradition and craftsmanship. He has stated himself that he believes that craftsmanship is secondary to the personality of the maker;

> To make an idea good or bad, it takes not only craftsmanship but a sense of identity. (Most hand-crafted objects) are made according to a narrow set of rules, and too little feeling. How is it possible to create without excitement? (Levin, 1988, p.202)

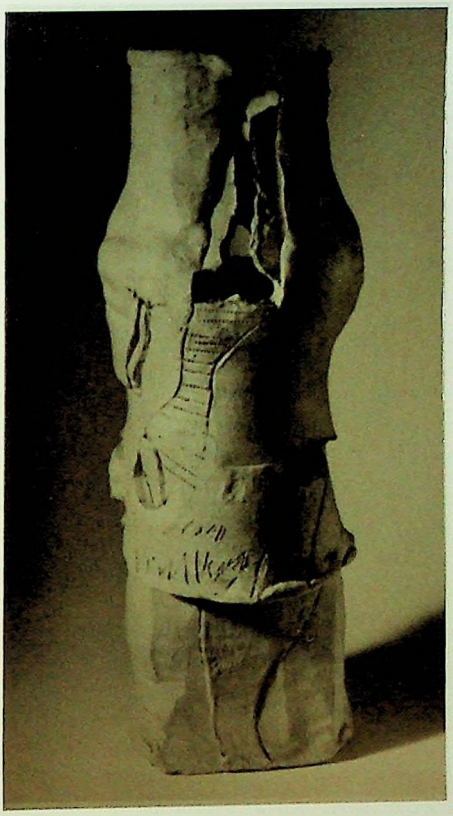

Fig.18 Vase by Peter Voulkous
(Slivka,1978,p.94)

The 'sculptural vase' (Fig 19) shows some of this excitement and vitality and reminds us of the expressive manner in which it was made. This feeling of energy is missing from most Industrially made ceramics, a Wedgewood vase for example, because of the mechanical way in which ceramics are produced in industry. Thrown in stoneware with added porcelain 'pass-throughs' and slab sections, the Voulkous piece defies the traditional vase in every respect. The bold red and blue colour is in fact epoxy paint and the result is more like nail varnish than ceramic glaze.

Fig.19 Sculptural Vase by Peter Voulkous (Slivka,1978,pl.15)

PAUL SOLDNER AND RAKU

Paul Soldner was Voulkous' first M.F.A. student and the first successful exponent of Raku in the United States. He describes the mood of those days working with Voulkous and the other students; 'All the elements we needed were in evidence. We were feeling the Oriental influence, Zen, we were swept up in the Beatnic period' (Slivka, 1978, p.27) This period blossomed in America in the late 1950's. The feeling of the time was one of dissatisfaction and dispute which repudiated the old style radicalism of the 1930's and the new conservatism of the 1950's. Soldner continues;

> Pete didn't have his own studio at that time and he worked in the classroom alongside his students. People began dropping in. They did not enroll. They just worked. It was dynamic. It never happened before... It was an explosion peculiar to the time, and the energy was down in that cellar at Otis in the ceramics studio (Slivka, 1978, p.27).

Soldner graduated in 1957, and went on to teach at Scripps College, Claremont. He is generally regarded as being directly responsible for the introduction of Raku in America as well as some significant technical advances within the process. There were a number of earlier Raku attempts in the United States; Warren Gibertson for instance, learned about it while visiting Japan and held a show of his work in 1941. Hal Riegger, Carlton Ball and Jean Griffith were all teachers who experimented with the Raku process in the 1940's. Soldner was the first Raku artist to receive notable public attention. He first attempted Raku in 1960. Having read Leach's A Potter's Book and following

'minimal directions', he prepared some of his own glazes and tried out the technique at a demonstration. He was initially disappointed with the results but unwilling to give up, he plunged his next batch of pots into a nearby pile of leaves to see what would happen. The richer, more attractive surface decoration was much more encouraging. Soldner had discovered the now common practice of post-firing reduction. The bright colours are possible because the metallic oxides in the glaze are reduced or starved of oxygen when the pot ignites, surrounded by combustible material.

Raku appealed to Soldner at once as a technique which allowed a very exciting means of expression. He had a very limited amount of technical knowledge to begin with and was made more aware of this later on when he visited Japan. Initially, Soldner made tea bowls in response to Eastern Raku but found that because the West had no knowledge of tea as a religious ceremony, this way of making had no real significance in America. Soldner solved the problem by using Raku the way Jackson Pollock used paint and the way Voulkous threw pots; as a means of expression. An enormous change had taken place within the technique. For four hundred years it had been an exclusive part of the tea ceremony in the East. Now suddenly it was part of everyday ceramic language, free to be explored and experimented with. In England, Raku had succeeded in rippling the waters of the modern ceramic movement. The openness of the American culture and its artists succeeded in launching the technique into modern ceramics and modern art.

Soldner's early work was large in scale, constructed from an assemblage of thrown cylindrical forms which were glazed by pouring slips and glazes over the entire surface in a loose asymmetrical pattern. His later work also begins on the wheel but is smaller in scale and is deformed to a greater extent so that it often becomes as flat as a 'wallpiece'. The de-forming of a Soldner piece can involve dropping it onto the floor and marking it with various objects as bizarre as his own tennis shoes. He decorates the work with oxides and stains which are splashed or brushed on. Soldner's approach to ceramics embraces asymmetry, uneveness, deconstruction and reconstruction and this approach carries through to the chance and discovery of the Raku firing and post-fire reduction.

The two forms illustrated (Figs 20,21) are typical of Soldners contemporary work. The top-piece has retained something of the traditional vessel shape, although quite flattened. It is made in earthenware and has been decorated with coloured stains before the Raku firing. The surface marks vary from wide areas of pattern (shoe prints) to nail and tool gashes. The lower piece is constructed with more sections and is fan-shaped (a feature of many of Soldners forms). Although there is a strong feeling of randomness about both pieces, they are 'pulled together' by the small feet on which they stand. The foot piece on the top form is defined by finger markings whereas the base of the lower form is more an integral part of the whole shape. The strong feeling of spontaneity about both pieces relates as much to that particular aspect of Japanese tradition as to the abstract

Fig.20 Ceramic Piece by Paul Soldner
(Ceramic Review No.124, p.9)

Fig.21 Untitled Piece by Paul Soldner
(Clarke,1981,p.46)

expressionist movement in which Soldner developed.

CHAPTER FOUR - RAKU TODAY

Having traced the history of Raku from its origins in Japan over four hundred years ago to its Americanisation or modernisation in the second half of this century, it has become very apparent that people in different parts of the world have treated Raku in different ways. This brings us to the question of how ceramists use Raku today. Let us look at the work and philosophies of two modern ceramists;

CHRISTA-MARIA HERRMANN

Christa-Maria Herrmann, born in Germany and living in England is a Raku potter. Her approach to Raku is close to the original Japanese philosophy as she looks to the Zen religion for her inspiration for Raku making as well as for living. In her book, The Way of Raku she states that her aim is to show how the philosophy of Raku is present in each technical detail. She carries this out by the alignment of almost every aspect of the Raku process to the Zen arts. In the section on decorative techniques for example, she discusses the possibilities of impressing, incising and scratching with the annotation that 'these techniques are appropriate to Raku if we keep in mind that a principle of the art is simplicity' (Herrmann, 1988, p.84). Here she is referring to 'Wabi', the Zen principle which conveys natural simplicity and unpretentiousness.

Herrmann states in her introduction that her account is personal and that she has not set out to write the definitive textbook on

how Raku 'ought to be done'. However, the tone of her book is informative bordering on the didactic and she goes on to speak about 'setting a standard' for Raku. In her discussion on the forming of pots, she deems the wheel to be 'inappropriate' because she believes that it is 'contradictory to the natural spirit of Raku' (Herrmann, 1988, p.69). She lists 'points to look for' when making a pot;

> ...that the base is neither too thick nor too thin.
>
> ...that the base is not an end in itself. Think of how to continue from the rim and to get the joint with the rising walls to an even thickness.
>
> ...that the clay is not so stressed or pulled that cracks develop (Herrmann, 1988,p.73)

This formal, principled approach to the subject is very different to the 'anything goes' attitude of the contempory American ceramists. Herrmann's feelings towards the modernisation of Raku under the influence of Paul Soldner are somewhat reserved and she suggests that these innovations cannot come under the heading of Raku; 'the innovative method of post-firing, smoking and local reduction have been introduced as novel and separate' (Herrmann, 1978, p.143).

Herrmann's own work is best compared with the ancient Japanese Raku she admires. It is simply made with traditional hand building techniques. Much of her work is based around the vessel form, but she does stretch beyond the limits of ancient tradition by the inclusion of some purely decorative pieces. The tile picture (Fig 22) is a decorative wall piece made in four sections.
The waves grow from an incised line into relief which gives the

Plate 20: Title picture, 50×60 cm.

Fig.22 Tile Picture by C.M.Herrmann (Herrmann,1988,pl.20)

piece animati on and life. She has used colour to effect, illuminating the crests of the dark waves with a white glaze and keeping the mid-tones in the background.

Herrmann photographs much of her work in a natural background to emphasize that her Raku can be viewed as part of nature, a Zen/Taoist philosophy. The driftwood bowl (Fig 23) seems at home on the rocks beside this cove. Its edges are uneven and its surface appears clean and smooth like the washed surface of a beach pebble or a piece of wood.

The glazed tea bowl is a much more traditional piece. It bears all the characteristics of original Raku - rich glazed surface, thick walls, uneven rim - and could possibly be mistaken for the real thing to the unlearned eye.

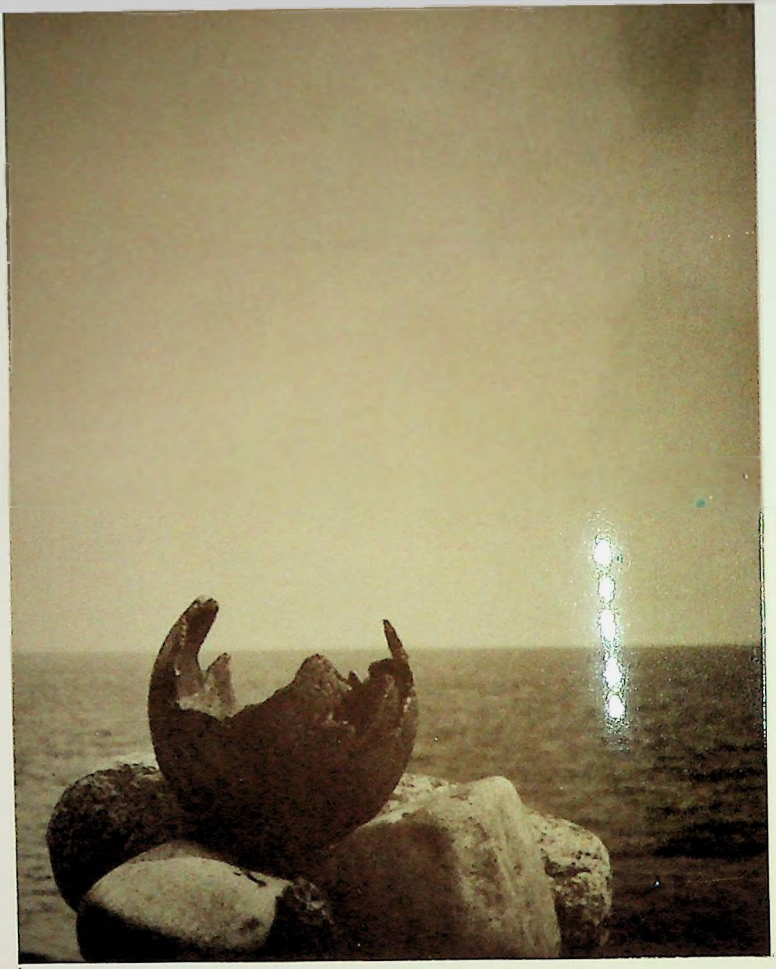

Fig.23 Driftwood Bowl by C.M.Herrmann
(Herrmann,1988,pl.3)

Fig.24 Raku Tea Bowl by C.M.Herrmann
(Herrmann,1988,pl.1)

DAVE ROBERTS

Dave Roberts is a British ceramist with quite a different attitude to Raku. He became involved with the technique when he was shown some slides of American potters making large size Raku pots. The American influence on Roberts was immediate. He had found the Raku technique boring after seeing it demonstrated in the traditional oriental manner. The work of ceramists such as Paul Soldner showed him that Raku could be an exciting approach to decorative and sculptural ceramics. Unlike Christa-Maria Herrmann, Roberts is not directly concerned with Zen philosophy (although he does concede that the ideas and context in which he works must have been influenced by its teachings). He has avoided contact with the Japanese Raku tradition, preferring to discover his own interpretation of the subject. One of his definitions of Raku is; 'drawing pots from the kiln and then doing something to them' (Byers, 1990, p.77). This deliberately detatched, simplistic view underlines Roberts personal position on the subject which has selected pure aesthetic as a primary concern.

Robert's work is decorative as opposed to functional. He is unconcerned with the aesthetics of function describing himself as a worker in 'the decorative arts' (Byers, 1990, p.76). He uses this framework or set of limitations as a basis for exploration of his own subject which deals with 'universal concerns of form, order, proportion and harmony' (Byers, 1990, p.76). His vessel forms are neo-classical in style and reflect some of the elegance of nineteenth century Wedgewood ware.

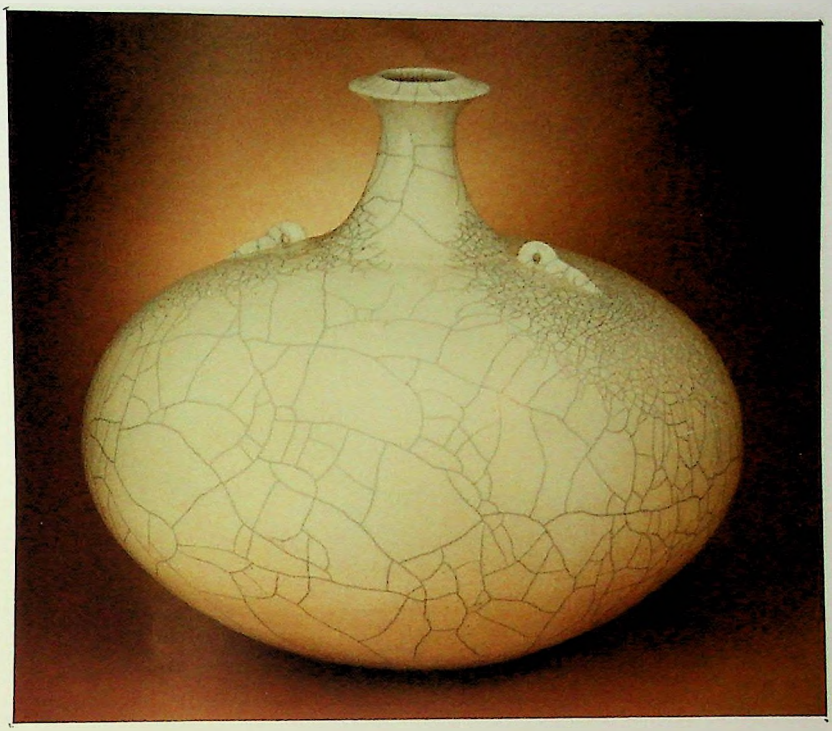

Fig.25 Coil Built Bottle by Dave Roberts (Byers,1990,p.77)

Roberts uses coiling to construct the pieces which is an unusual route to the construction of a precise classical shape. Traditionally, coil builders make organic forms and precise shapes are cast or thrown on the wheel. His method of rotating the pots on a banding wheel and smoothing the surface with a metal kidney achieves symmetry surprisingly well.

To date Roberts has concentrated on the dark blues and greys of carbonization under white glazes rather than using oxides to give a richer colour. The Raku bottle (Fig 25) shows the precision of Roberts working methods. The finely pinched flange at the top of the neck and the undefined base gives the piece a light feeling so that it almost seems to hover. The cream coloured glaze is even in colour and texture and is given interest with the strong crackle. The inherent sense of balance and symmetry in the piece is arguably contrary to the natural qualities of the material and the potential of Raku. However, this type of work also underlines the fact that there are many differen possible approaches outside the usual or traditional in both ceramics and Raku.

These two artists demonstrate the variety of contrasting attitudes to Raku today. Two questions must follow from such a diversity of approaches. The first centres around the Eastern/Western division - does it still exist? The second follows on from this and asks whether or not the loss of the original meaning of Raku in the West has affected the standard of Raku today.

The answer to the first question would appear to be a simple one; Yes, there are divisions between Eastern and Western Raku. As we have discussed in this essay, Eastern Raku is saturated with religious significance. It is treated with respect as a ceremony and has close associations with the Japanese tea ritual. As a result of this, production has been confined to the vessels of the tea ceremony. The most fundamental characteristic of Eastern Raku is that it is static in that it is treated today in much the same way as it was four hundred years ago when it was discovered.

Western Raku has little traditional religious significance. When first introduced to Europe, it was developed by Leach based on ideas of good craftsmanship and tradition. When it moved to America, it was used for the first time as a means of expression. From there, it spread rapidly and came to be used in many different contexts by a wide varity of people.

This fundamental division between East and West, like the differences in attitude towards the tea ceremony and the differences in religion, are culturally based. In order to

illustrate this point, where the two extremes could be viewed together, let us imagine a gallery with two exhibits. The first contains a simple Raku tea bowl with a backdrop of Japanese prints. The second; an abstract piece by Paul Soldner with a painting by Jackson Pollock in the background. The show is about Raku and about two different cultures. The first exhibit is reserved and unobtrusive. The quality of simplicity of form seems to echo the simple yet confident brush strokes in the print. The feeling one senses is of serenity and restrained emotion. The atmosphere is peaceful and meditative.

The Soldner piece stands out and demands one's attention. It is unsympathetic to an eye trained to appreciate qualities of symmetry, elegance and good craftsmanship. The coarseness of its appearance and its aggressive marking are a reminder of how the piece was made. There is a sense that the material has been pushed to its limits which suggests that the artist was not afraid of intuitive action for the sake of experiment. The painting in the background reflects the mood of the piece. The bright colours echo the coloured stains on the ceramic and the application is similar in that both are confident and extravagant.

Fig.26 Japanese Print - 'The Sixth Patriarch Cutting Bamboo' (Hisamatsu,1971,p.146)

Fig.27 Tea Bowl - Red Raku Ware (Hayashiya,1974,pl.8)

The main difference between the two exhibits is that the first would appear to be stationary where the second is not. The Eastern exhibit is the result of a lifetime of skill and hundreds of years of tradition and influence. It exists as an entity unto itself in an exclusive position, as part of a particular category of ceramics. The Western show is the work of experimentors; it is progressive, moving and exploring.

We have now arrived at the second question; Has the loss of the original meaning of Raku in the West affected the standard of Raku today. Christa-Maria Herrmann believes that it has, to the detriment of original standards. She describes the modernization of Raku in rather negative terms;

> Increasingly over the last ten years, Raku has been tried in nearly every pottery evening class, adult education institute and hobby group. The result has been a certain lowering of standards for the art in the popular mind...(Herrmann, 1988, p.120).

Have we the right therefore to call an abstract piece of sculpture Raku? Soldner's assessment of this is a humerous but rather humbling one. He suggests (like Herrmann) that what the West calls Raku is in fact nothing of the sort. It cannot be associated with its source because it is so far removed from it.

> American Raku is so different how did we come to call it Raku? In retrospect it was probably a mistake. A mistake that I must confess to being part of (Soldner, 1990, p.10).

Soldner's solution is with the use of an anástrophe; 'Ukar', he suggests should be the name given to Western Raku because it is

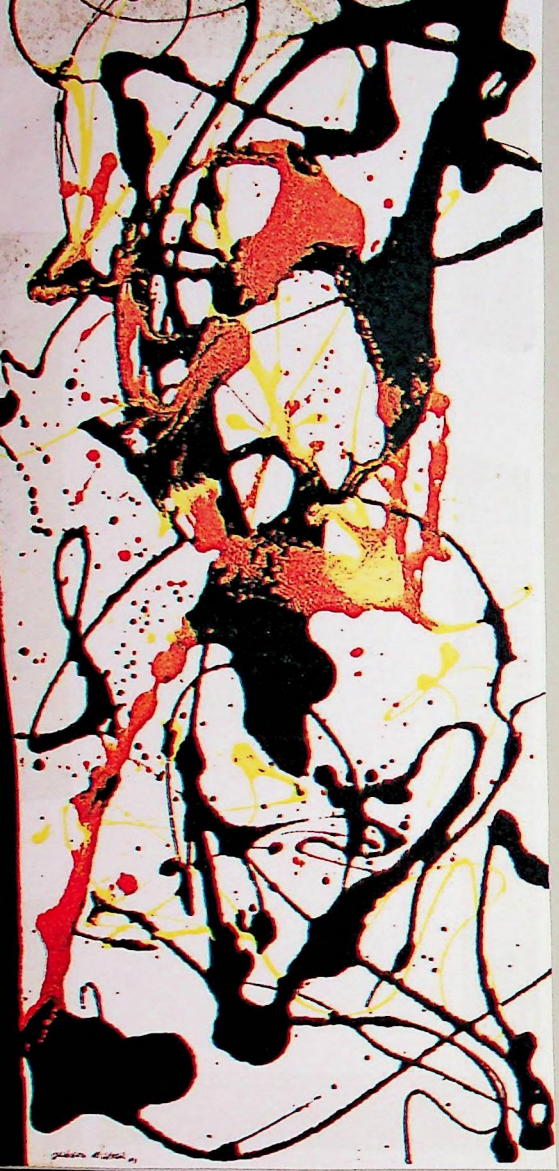

Fig.28 Painting by Jackson Pollock (D'Offay,1989,p.20)

Ceramic Piece by Paul Soldner (Byers,1990,p.34)

the complete opposite.

I believe that the implications of this are negative since it is implied that the enormous developments achieved within the subject in the West are not worthy of being associated with Eastern Raku. I think that it is unrealistic and counter-productive to dismiss this broadening of knowledge and the products of this knowledge as being of a subordinate standard. The growth of knowledge must be a positive, productive action where stagnancy is not. As regards standards of work, I think that it is unreasonable to suggest that Western Raku is of a lower standard than its Eastern counterpart. It is impossible to have a common standard of excellence covering two different cultures and hundreds of years - there must exist good and bad in both continents.

The exponents of Raku in the West are in my opinion, entitled to work under the heading of Raku because of the significance of the history of Raku in the West and also because it is unpractical to discuss it as being part of something other than what it is part of. One could use the analogy of a defection to the West, where the defector transfers his allegiance to another country where he then creates a new identity for himself. In the analogy, the defector will always have a strong association with his native land.

I think that Raku today and the standards of Raku ceramics must be seen in a universal context in order to be beneficial. The best approach would be an open-minded one to Raku in all its

forms. In this way Eastern standards cannot be lowered because they still exist for those who chose them. Similarly, Western standards exist for those who chose them. The point is that one is as important or valid as the other.

MY RAKU

I was introduced to Raku two years ago while working with two Raku potters in the south of France. The technique appealed to me at once as an exciting one which seemed to encompass so much more than the word technique suggests. Barbara Weibel and Patric Rouby treat Raku as part of the whole creative process which is a way of life for them.

Their work varies from classically thrown vases (by Weibel) to the more ethnic creations of Rouby - his large egg shapes and his platters are made roughly in press moulds. Their studio is ideal in that it is possible to move in and out of doors conveniently, which facilitates the reduction process well. The kiln is located near the exit and the hot pots are brought outside where the bins are already prepared. They mostly use sawdust but occasionally vary the technique with dried grass or leaves. Once the pots have been reduced, the smoking bins are dragged away from the house and are covered with damp towels to prevent them from re-igniting. This sometimes occurs in the intense summertime heat (35 C). The pots are left to reduce for about half an hour before they are cleaned using water and sea sand to remove the carbon.

The unpredictable nature of Raku is an appealing aspect because one can never predetermine the exact results of any firing. The percentage of failure is relatively high in Raku compared with traditional firing methods, particularly in initial learning stages. One learns to accept this however as part of the process

and it is discounted when a particularly interesting web of crackle or depth of colour is revealed unexpectedly.

I use Raku today because it allows me to be more directly involved with my work than with traditional firing processes. I draw a parallel between Raku and throwing, my method of making, because the physical contact and immediacy of effects allow the processes to serve as a means of expression.

My work is based around the vessel form - I try to maintain the natural loose feeling of the clay in the finished pieces. I make sure that the throwing rings are visible as evidence of how the piece was made and I distort the shapes from the inside while still wet.

I decorate the pieces with a combination of two glazes - a yellow and a copper (which varies between green and turquoise to red and gold depending on the length of reduction time).

I feel that the appearance of the Raku glaze surface suits my work because it does not detract from the strength of form and because it gives the pieces an ancient, ancestral quality which I like. Raku has become an important part of ceramics for me and while I recognise and draw from its Eastern and Western history, I like to approach the subject in a fresh modern context. This creates for me a sense of the undiscovered and unknown in each new firing.

Fig.30 Showcase - Barbara Weibel and Patric Rouby.

Fig.31 Gallery - Egg Forms by Rouby.

Fig.34/35

Placing the Pots into Prepared Bins

Fig.32/33 Removing Pots from the Kiln

Fig.36 Covering a Pot with Wood Chippings

Fig.37 Cleaning

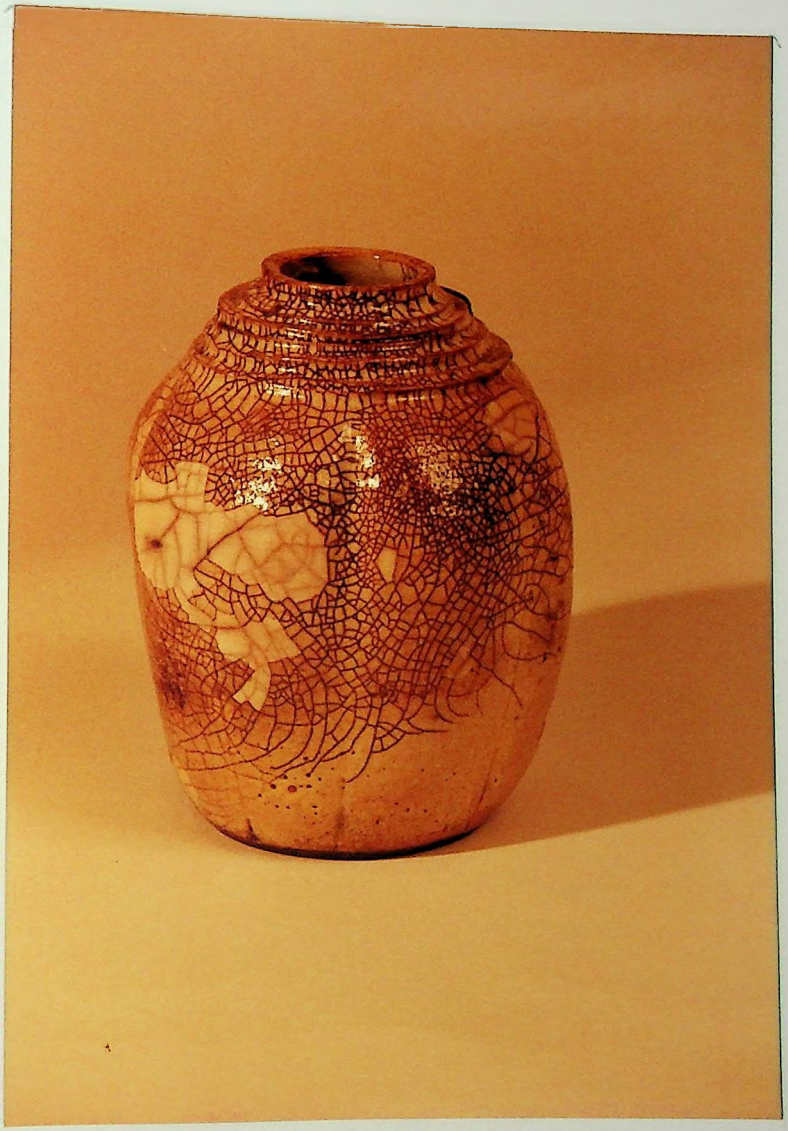

Fig.39 Raku Pot by the Author

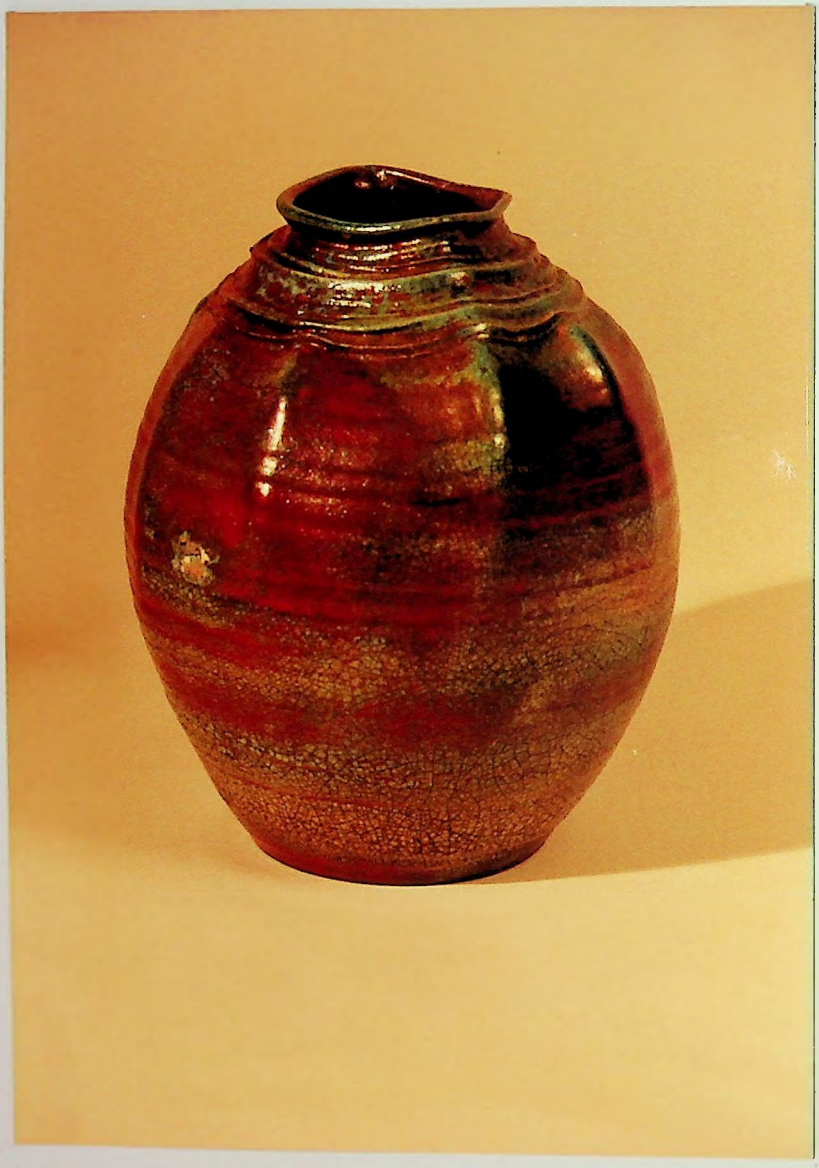

Fig.38 Raku Pot by the Author

GLOSSARY

BISQUE FIRING:	This is a slow firing also known as biscuit firing. It takes approximately eight hours during which all water is extracted from the clay which is rendered to a brittle, porous state. Biscuit ware takes its name from its grainy texture.
BODY:	The type of clay of which a particular ware is made. Also, the main part of a vessel, as opposed to the glaze and any added features.
CELADON:	The colour produced by adding a small amount of iron oxide to a glaze fired in reduction. Celadon glazes are characterised by their transparent quality.
CHAWAN:	Tea bowl.
COILING:	The technique of handbuilding using 'snakes' of plastic clay. The process is generally regarded as being one of organic construction.
EARTHENWARE:	Pottery made of a porous body which is water-proofed, if necessary, by a covering of glaze.
FRIT:	A glaze conponent consisting of any glassy mixture that has been fused and ground to a fine powder.
GLAZE:	A vitreous coating designed to make pottery impervious to water and also serving as decoration.
OXIDES:	A chemical combination of oxygen with another element. Metal oxides are used as fluxes, colouring agents and opacifiers in clays and/or glazes.
REDUCTION:	The action of taking oxygen away from metal oxides present in the clay or glaze. It is achieved by controlling the atmosphere surrounding the pots during the firing and/ or cooling.
SLIP:	A creamy dilution of clay, often in a different colour to the clay body, which is used to coat it, to decorate it or to join parts together.

STONEWARE: A hard, strong and vitrified ware, usually fired above 1200 C, in which the body and glaze mature at the same time and form an integrated body-glaze layer.

THROWING: The action of making pots on a rotating wheel using only the hands, and for lubrication, water.

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