

Katō Kōzō (1935–)

Potter Katō Kōzō is a Living National Treasure tasked with promoting Seto-guro ceramics, as well as a Living Treasure of Gifu Prefecture for Shino ceramics.

Katō began his career in 1954, working at a ceramics research center in Gifu. Although his job involved developing new ceramic techniques, Katō was more interested in traditional Mino ware. In 1970, he left his job and apprenticed with Arakawa Toyozō (1894–1985), who was then known for his revival of lost Mino-ware production methods.

In 1973, Katō began work on his own, dedicating himself to artistic expression through Seto-guro-, Shino-, and Kizeto-style ceramics produced using the original methods. He built *anagama* and *noborigama* kilns in the hills north of Tajimi, which he uses despite the additional time and effort they require. Katō also favors a nonelectric potter's wheel over an electric one. These labor-intensive methods limit his output, and it is limited still further by his exacting standards. Katō is known to fire as many as 220 pieces at a time, but he keeps only the 8 to 10 pieces that he deems acceptable.

The Seto-guro tea bowl on display here is one such piece. It has the deep-black color of the traditional style, as well as the cylindrical shape and rounded base that distinguish Seto-guro ware. Note the undulations of the rim, gently rising and falling like a mountain path, which give this piece a distinct character.