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Hybridity and the Oriental Orientalism of *Mingei* Theory

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Journal of Design History, Volume 10, Issue 4, 1 January 1997, Pages 343–354,
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/10.4.343>

Published: 01 December 1997

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Abstract

Orientalism is not a rigid one-way phenomenon projected on to the Orient from the Occident. It is an infectious phenomenon, open to appropriation by ‘others’, at least in the case of modern Japan. This article presents a case study of Mingei (folk crafts) theory created by Yanagi Sôetsu and evaluated

in the Occident as an 'Oriental' theory for what is deemed to be its greatest merit — 'traditional authenticity'. The intention of this article is firstly to demystify the essential 'Orientalness' of Mingei theory by showing its 'hybrid' nature and the process of hybridization involved in the course of its formation; and secondly to show the strategic significance of 'hybridity' in the context of Japanese cultural nationalism in the dichotomic framework of Orient and Occident.

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Online ISSN 1741-7279

Print ISSN 0952-4649

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