



February Program

Larry Ragle will show pictures from our show and we will discuss our displays on February 24th. We will discuss plans for a field trip this spring.

Stone of the Month

We never had a chance to show off our stones from the Kern River Trip last October 30-31. Those of you who have them, please bring some to the meeting. If you did not go with us, bring in another Kern stone. OK, if you don't have a Kern stone, bring in another stone you really like!

While wandering the Kern, John and Carol Mortensen of Northern California found this striking viewing stone which they have placed in their yard.



Dues are Due

Is there an **X** on your address label? That means this is your last newsletter.

This is a request to you folks who get the hard copy of our newsletter who have a computer and could be e~subscribers to please rethink your membership needs. The more of you who are e~subscribers, the better for all. We hope you will consider going green. Save a tree. We really appreciate your support. Thank you.

Please send \$10 to California Aiseki Kai
c/o Nina Ragle
P.O. Box 4975
Laguna Beach CA 92652-4975

Mas Moriguchi

May 5, 1916 - February 8, 2010



Our dear friend, Mas, with his daughter, Janet Shimizu, last August.

The Final Cut – Keep it Natural

During the California Shohin Society's convention last week, I overheard a conversation between one of our members and a stone merchant. Our member had shown the vendor an Eel River stone, a *doha* or plateau shape. It was of the high quality dark green material, flawless and about 5" w, 5" d, 9" h. The well defined peak was about 1/2" of the height and covered less than a third of the flat width, ideal, as I remember it. As I entered the conversation the vendor was covering about half of the stone with one hand and saying, "Cut it here to get the 1/3 – 2/3 ratio to make it perfect."

Really! It looked perfect to me as it was, natural. The vendor insisted that his ratio was the rule for perfect suiseki. He had studied in Japan and belonged to one of the oldest suiseki clubs in California, he said the first club in California. He was sure of the rule.

I have heard of the 1/3 – 2/3 horizontal ratio for the peak location, so perhaps he is correct regarding the height. My question is, by cutting a near perfect unspoiled stone, do you make it more perfect? I don't think so. **In Japanese art, natural always trumps perfect.** Any authority in this art form should know that. **Arishige Matsuura**, Chairman of the Japanese Suiseki Association, stated in 1992, "Cutting a stone reduces the value by 70%".



Three stone photos from two Nippon Association Catalogues, 1980's

There are, perhaps, some legitimate reasons for cutting a stone; to remove a chipped bottom of an otherwise ideal stone or to remove the un-polished bottom of a desert stone, that is, making something out of nothing. It's insane to cut a otherwise show worthy stone trying to make it look like a real mountain. The stone suggests – the viewer imagines.

That's a suiseki.

Larry Ragle

Holiday Party

It was all the fun! As usual, we had an excellent turn out and the best food.... We are always about the food. Members brought loads of items for the raffle and we sold lots of tickets. **John** and **Carol Mortensen** came from the Bay Area and **Peter** and **Mary Bloomer** came from Arizona. We were delighted to see **Lee Roberts**, **Tom** and **Hiromi Elias**, recently relocated from the East, came to their first holiday party. **Wanda Matjas**, our newest member, joined on her way to the festivities!

We celebrated the end of a successful year and the beginning of a new one. We honored, with gifts, those members who went that extra mile for the club; **Joe James**, **Bill** and **Lois Hutchinson**, **Marge Blasingame**, **Linda Gill** and **Jim Greaves**. The club thanked **Larry** and yours truly with lovely gifts, a club logo necklace and a Kathy Boehme *suiban* in a proper box. That was awesome!

We hope the new year will bring a lot of club participation in presenting programs, a couple of field trips and some lively debate. Most of all, we hope that we will keep learning about what constitutes a high quality viewing stone and improve our knowledge of display.



The 1 inch wide inner margins are designed for use with a 3 hole punch.



American Viewing Stones Exhibition~ Reynolds Gallery, Westmont College
Selections from The American Viewing Stone Resource Center – James and Alice Greaves Collection
(Exhibition continues through March 11)



Ask Guy Jim

Dear GuyJim,

I was really awed by the wide selection of bridge and arch stones on exhibit at the recent Huntington show. What distinguishes a bridge stone from an arch or tunnel stone?

Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

Coincidentally, with our influx of new members, **Nina** recently asked if I might revisit a few basic concepts so you have just pried open the proverbial can of worms! Your short question makes for a surprisingly long answer as it raises many unstated, related questions, many without clear resolutions. Besides being anonymous, your question is also a bit ambiguous in that it might be asked/answered from the standpoint of classification terminology or that of technical distinctions between the geomorphologic forms, themselves. As I began answering your question it quickly became apparent that it cannot be done in the space of one issue – this answer may take another two or three months.

Let me begin with the ‘bridge’ stone. Of those Japanese terms of classification that deal with stones having some form of hole or ‘open space’, the one term that seems to be specific is *hashi-ishi* (bridge stone). The term is found and treated the same in all general references. *Hashi-ishi* are consistently considered as a subgroup under the more general category of *keisho-seki* (object stones). **Covello & Yoshimura** succinctly state: “Bridge-shaped Stones (Hashi-ishi): These stones suggest a wooden or stone bridge.” Thus, the bridge in question is manmade and uniquely distinguishable from any stone suggesting a natural landscape formation. Except for occasional usage within our own club, I have never encountered *hashi-ishi* being applied to a natural landscape formation such as the spectacular ‘natural bridges’ found in our Southwest and indeed, in one form or another, all across our continent. It should also be noted that although most common ‘texts’ list the category of *hashi-ishi*, few illustrate it.

I believe that most true *hashi-ishi* would have to take one of two basic forms. The first would suggest a simple footbridge as would be found along a garden path or over a village stream. It might consist of a minimal horizontal span of stone or wood that is barely raised above ‘stream’ level, perhaps with a slight arching curvature. Conversely, a bridge stone might have the more obviously artificial look of a manmade structure, either a substantial stone bridge or an elaborate garden arch as found in the Japanese Garden at the Huntington Library. [As they are manmade, I

guess we could technically include the ‘Bridges of Madison County’ – but, then, a covered bridge would require an interior tunnel!] If we are to respect the initial Japanese recognition of *hashi-ishi* as one of the few human elements found in Chinese and Japanese landscape painting, then we should forgo Westernization of the image.

To be classified as a bridge stone, the bridge, itself, must be the prominent visual feature of the stone, not simply a minor occurrence that happens to fall somewhere on the stone. If a bridge exists as a secondary feature of the stone, one should label the stone for the main form (i.e. near mountain stone) and addend ‘with bridge’ or use a general term such as ‘scenic landscape stone with footbridge’. If the bridge in question is not immediately apparent, it is not a bridge stone! With that observation, might I add that I have seen few examples of plausible *hashi-ishi*.

A bridge stone does not require the presence of any rock ‘foundation’ beneath the opening of the bridge because it would customarily be situated over water or a chasm. Both the span and the width of ‘path or road’ on the bridge should be in proportion to human scale and purpose. For instance, a very thin, very long expanse would have to be explained as a precarious footbridge, perhaps over a chasm. It would have to be horizontal, even a sagging concave, rather than a soaring convex arch that would be impossible to build – although one might fudge the latter with a title such as ‘Floating Bridge to Heaven’. The “Setagawa River Jet-black Bridge-shaped Stone” (see below) is arguably the best example of a *hashi-ishi* that I have seen. It has



"Kasasagi Bridge" (Kasasagi-no-hash), a Setagawa River Jet-black Bridge-shaped Stone. Note the thin, flat-curved span and supporting ends that form a transition to the earth. [Photo from Suiseki - II, An Art Created by Nature by Sen-En-Kyo], page 76.]

a long, thin span that can be understood as a large river-crossing bridge seen from a great distance as encountered in Japanese paintings and woodblock prints. However, even in this case, notice that the stone was named “Kasasagi-no-hashii” referring to the legendary bridge across the Milky Way in the *Tanabata* (Star Festival) story, thereby removing it a step from representation of a realistic image!

Once found, a *hashi-ishi* may prove difficult to display in a manner that presents a convincing image of an actual bridge. The problem is that the ends are seldom shaped to provide logical ‘approaches’ – desert stones, in particular, often seem to be abruptly truncated. At first thought, bridge stones would seem to argue for presentation in a *suiban*. However, using a *suiban* either filled with sand (below) or with its interior



Hashi-ishi, Yuha Desert (Nina Ragle). This stone has a well-proportioned, gentle curve with a fine approach on the right and an acceptable one on the left. The presentation would be perfect for a boat stone of identical size, but is not as successful because the bridge has no context when presented on the broad flat surface of the sand. There is a visual dichotomy in which the stone is diminished as an object in favor of an overall presentation that remains somewhat abstract.

exposed (either dry or with water) may result in the stone resting incongruously in the ‘water’ it is supposed to be bridging! [For me, the idea of considering the sand as an endless, abstract space simply does not work when considering an object stone.] Although I would advise restraint and do not approve of the practice, others have abandoned austerity to create environmental settings, suggesting a watercourse beneath the bridge by either depressing the sand beneath the span or by mounding sand at both ends and leaving the bare, usually bright blue glaze of the *suiban* visible. Such an approach could get totally out of hand with dioramas including moss covered stream banks and even paths of sand [**Chuck Kantzer** R.I.P.!] A *daiza* is likely to present a better solution by isolating and concentrating on the bridge as an object, with the viewer providing any necessary setting from his or her imagination. One sometimes sees a *daiza* where the thickness of wood under the span is reduced or extra supports are carved at one or both ends to accentuate the space beneath the bridge, but I find that such manipulations usually draw too much attention to the *daiza* and become distracting. If you have the good fortune to find a bridge stone that



Stone Footbridge. Malachite, Zaire. On a small-scale bridge, can we accept the unevenness as natural building stones?

supports itself in the correct orientation, the best solution may be to simply display it on an austere *ji-ita*.

Whether representing a bridge arching to heaven, a simple horizontal garden slab, or a more massive stone edifice, a *hashi-ishi* suggests the presence of man – a sense of purposeful placement and of artificial, balanced proportions and forms reprising gentle curves and/or buttresses rather than an offset hole with irregular conformation and edges.

A further discussion of what distinguishes a *hashi-ishi* from stones representing similar landscape forms – natural bridge stones and natural arch stones – will be continued next month. Once we leave the concept of the manmade, the ‘bridge’ gets slippery!

Guy Jim

The views expressed in this column are personal, perhaps irreverent, irrelevant or just plain wrong and do not reflect the consensual view of California Aiseki Kai. Send your viewing stone questions (or comments) for Guy Jim to jimgreaves@roadrunner.com or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

Westmont College Coming Event March 6

In conjunction with the current exhibition of American Viewing Stones, Westmont College in Santa Barbara is holding a *Japanese Family Festival – A Celebration of Arts & Culture* on Saturday, March 6 (free admission). Besides the usual Japanese foods, *taiko* drumming and karate, there will be less often encountered activities including print making from real Japanese woodblocks, fish rubbings, and mask making. The Bonsai Club of Santa Barbara will be participating, **Ken McLeod** will have stones for sale, and **Jim Greaves** will lead one or two *suiseki* (viewing stone) workshops for children. The 1 1/2 to 2 hour workshops will cost \$5.00 to cover materials. Any members interested in participating in the workshop or serving as guides to the exhibition should contact **Jim** – you can excite some children, enjoy the festival and see over 80 stones presented in two atypical installations.

Westmont College Exhibition

continued from page 3



Page 3, Reynolds Gallery installation, 2 views.

This page:

- 1. View of Reynolds Gallery installation
- 2. 'Nightfall' – A Selection of Celestial Stones – 'Starry Night' (Steve Yong), 'Luna de Baja' (Jim Greaves,) 'Sunset Off Jindo' (Steve Yong)
- 3. Traditional Japanese Display – Yamagata-ishi (Shiro Iwahashi), Kinzan-seki (Frank English), Doha-ishi, Taki-ishi , Kuzuya-ishi , Funagata-ishi (Jim Greaves)
- 4. Library Installation – Desert Vista Stones: 'The Divide' (Cliff Johnson), 'Wild Horse Mesa' (Jim Greaves), 'Early Man Cave' (Cliff Johnson), Desert Mountain Range (Jim Greaves), Hoodoos (Bob Watson), Volcanic Fin (Larry Ragle)
- 5. Overview of a section of the library installation.
- 6. Library installation– 'Mediterranean Memories': Shwabi (Ken McLeod), Acropolis (Dennis Freeman), Ancient Frieze (Bob Watson), Turkish Tile Fragment (Jim Greaves), Cuneiform Tablet (Alice Greaves) , 'Ancient Ivory' (Jim Greaves)
- 7. Autumn stones – "Fire Storm at Black Butte" (Frank English), 'Rainy Morning, October' (Steve Yong)
- 8. Spring Stones – "Spring Runoff" (Frank English), 'The Matriarch' (Steve Yong), Turtle (Alice Greaves)

Keido Katayama Ryu Textbook

As many of you know, there are 3 text books by **Katayama Ichu** published in 1986, one on bonsai display, one on suiseki display and one on kusamono display. Until now, there was no English translation. **Peter Warren** is translating these books and making the translation available as an insert that will fit nicely inside each book. We will have specific information available next month on ordering these affordable books with the translation. The following is an example of what you may expect.

Main Stone: Toyama-Ishi (Yase-Maguro)
 Suiban: Iron Oxide Glazed Rectangular by Tosui.
 Table: Rosewood with outward curving legs
 Accent: Antique Copper Nesting Crane
 Scroll: Morning Sun (Nishino Shinsen)

A mountain, hazy and gentle, can be seen in the distance. This is a superbly refined and restrained display of the highest elegance. The Tosui suiban is incredibly thin, at the limit of what is possible to create. It is almost surprising to think that this suiban was not created specifically for this stone as the balance is so perfect. The selection of this suiban and its careful use create an outstanding feeling. The table top is made from one piece of wood, giving it a simple and unadorned appearance which is perfectly matched to the gentleness of the stone. The choice of the stone, suiban and table is a very good example to follow. In relation to the season of New Year, both the heavenly appearance of the morning sun and the nesting crane are symbolic, almost as if there was water dripping down from heaven onto the stone. When one pursues Suiseki to this level, the depth and profundity of the artistic nature becomes apparent.

Please check **Peter's** website for ordering instructions:
www.saruyama.co.uk

Peter hopes to have the translations ready by next month. Patience... This will be worth the wait!

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Thank you, **Peter**, for making these important books more meaningful for the English readers among us!



**California Aiseki Kai** meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Nakaoka Community Center located at 1670 W. 162nd St, Gardena, CA. Second floor. We do not meet in Nov-Dec.

### Contact People

|                                         |              |                           |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
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| <b>Treasury/Membership:</b> Nina Ragle  | 949.497.5626 | ragle@cox.net             |
| <b>Annual Exhibit:</b> Jim Greaves      | 310.452.3680 | jimgreaves@roadrunner.com |
| <b>Exhibit Set Up:</b> Marge Blasingame | 626.579.0420 | margeblasingame@att.net   |
| <b>Refreshments:</b> Lois Hutchinson    | 714.964.6973 | wlhutch@verizon.net       |
| <b>Historian:</b> Ray Yeager            | 760.365.7897 | ryeager890@aol.com        |
| <b>Webmail:</b> Bill Hutchinson         | 714.964.6973 | hutch@aisekikai.com       |
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### Newsletter Committee

**February Contributors:** Jim Greaves and Larry Ragle.  
**Mailing:** Flash Partch  
**Editor:** Nina Ragle

We hope you will participate. Please send any submissions to [ragle@cox.net](mailto:ragle@cox.net) no more than 10 days following our monthly meeting. Thank you!

Ragle  
P.O. Box 4975  
Laguna Beach CA 92652

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



*Leaves no stone unturned*

See our website:

[aisekikai.com](http://aisekikai.com)



## Coming Events

### BONSAI-A-THON XIV

GSBF Collection at the Huntington Fundraiser, Feb 27-28, 2010  
Huntington Botanical Center, 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino,  
7:30-4:30. This is a fundraiser so bring donations!  
Please continue to support the Southern California Bonsai and  
Viewing Stone Collection. Contact **Marge Blasingame** for  
information: call 626.579.0420 or email her at:  
[margeblasingame@att.net](mailto:margeblasingame@att.net)

### JAPANESE FAMILY FESTIVAL EVENT

*A Celebration of Arts & Culture*, March 6th. Westmont  
College, 955 La Paz Road, Santa Barbara. Please see page 5,  
column 2 for details. For driving directions, go to:  
[www.westmont.edu/\\_visitors/directions\\_to\\_campus.html](http://www.westmont.edu/_visitors/directions_to_campus.html)  
For more information call 805.565.6162

### CALIFORNIA BONSAI SOCIETY

53rd Bonsai Exhibition, March 27-28, Friends  
Hall, Huntington Library and Botanical  
Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino.  
10-4:30 both days. Reception on the Garden  
Terrace outside Friends Hall, March 27th,  
7-9pm. All Aiseki Kai members are invited to  
this special Appreciation Event.



Happy Birthday Harry Hirao

93 on March 12th.

## Stone Sales

**Ken McLeod**

**209-605-9386 or 209 586-2881**

**[susekiken@sbcglobal.net](mailto:susekiken@sbcglobal.net)**

**[californiasuseki.com](http://californiasuseki.com)**

## Refreshments

Thanks to **Everyone** who participated in  
the potluck at our holiday party. You are  
what made it a gourmet's delight.

February Foodies are **Linda Gill, Hanne Povlsen** and  
**Larry & Nina Ragle**.

