



The Holiday Party

Let's celebrate our show and the new year and the fellowship our club brings to each of us on [January 24th](#) in the downstairs auditorium of the Nakaoka Center. We set up the party at 5:30 and the festivities begin at 6:00. We eat at 7:00 and the drawing begins after that. Please bring a favorite dish to share... this is a pot luck and based on years past, it is outstanding! The club provides all the drinks, plates, napkins, flatware, etc, so just come with a serving utensil for your dish and an appetite. This is a very special time for all of us so don't miss it!



Party Drawing

As you know, the dues do not even cover the cost of the newsletter and we have many other expenses throughout the year. Our annual drawing is the only fundraiser we have so give generously. Bring in whatever you think might be appreciated by your fellow club members and please be prepared to buy a whole bunch of tickets to help support our club.



Dues Are Due

We certainly hope you have enjoyed your membership in Aiseki Kai and that you will wish to continue with us. We think you get a lot of bang for your 8 bucks!

We have a two tiered membership. You may wish to be an *esubscriber*, pay \$8.00 annually and we will notify you by email when the newest issue of the newsletter is available on line. This is quite a savings to the club since the \$8.00 does not pay the cost of the newsletter and you are supporting Aiseki Kai.

For those members who come to club meetings and would prefer a hard copy of the newsletter, the dues are the same, \$8.00 Just let us know to which tier you wish to belong.

Please send your \$8.00 (payable to Aiseki Kai) to:
Nina Ragle, P.O. Box 4975, Laguna Beach CA 92652.
Be sure to include your email address, mailing address, and phone number.



Buried in a Landslide of Yugen Part 10

Yugen in Japanese art implies mysterious skills that can be felt but not put into words.

The Many Mysteries of Suiseki. Why Aiseki Kai?

I hope you are enjoying this series as much as I enjoy writing it. I'm revisiting the history of our club, particularly our first year of programs by reading old newsletters. It's astonishing! We had a room full of "viewing stone icons" each night; **Watson, Sato, Uchida, Hirao, Johnson,** and **Naka** all in our first year. December, 1983 was the capper of all cappers. I'll tell you about that night next month.

Harry Hirao was our June program, sharing a variety of stones from his collection, primarily "Eel River Stones". In 1972, while returning from a trip to Northern California, **Harry** and his wife, **Alyce**, took the time to explore some of the bends in the Eel, discovering what would seem to be an endless supply of black, brown and dark green natural stones. **Toy Sato** critiqued them describing all as viewing stones, the larger as *niwa ishi* and the smaller landscape shapes (under 14") as *suiseki*.

Harry is one of the most generous men in the world. He has taken hundreds of people to his private juniper digging areas and dozens to the Eel. However, in the early days he wasn't exactly open to telling where these green stones could be found.



Harry and his treasures at one of his secret spots, circa 1979.

In Part 3 of this series I told the story of how I found **Harry's** cache in 1977. From then on, **Harry** allowed me to drive him to the river and he showed me several other secret places. Although I was sworn to never "tell" anyone about any of **Harry's** spots, to complete the program that night, I "showed" slides of a trip to **Harry's** hunting grounds. I included numerous landmarks that any astute viewer could follow, from north on the I-5 right up to the exact place to park one's car. I heard a few complaints that night that some of the slides were out of focus or over exposed. **Harry Hirao** is, after all, my best man!

Next: Our Christmas surprise

Larry Ragle

Our Show

The hard facts of our 17th show at the Huntington: 16 members helped with the set up, 38 members displayed 131 stones, 47 members participated in docent/security duty. We have 15 new members and 2 returned after a years absence.

Marge and her crew got us started, **Jim** made us look good, **Linda** kept us out of trouble and on the last day, **Jack** made sure we went home with a happy tummy. We think we have a lot to feel good about and we thank you all for being part of it. Perhaps now we can let the show speak for itself:



Jack & Sachiko



Ken McLeod



Bruce McGinnis



Hanne Povlsen



Tokonoma, detail at right



Joe James, Year of the Dog



John Palmer



Jim & Alice Greaves



Paul Vasina



Jim & Alice Greaves



Marybel Balendonck



Linda Gill



Richard Aguirre



Sam Suk



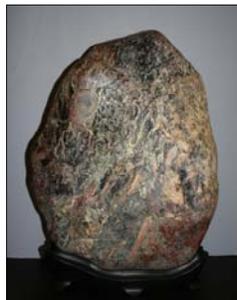
Ann Horton



Jim & Alice Greaves



Mary Bloomer



Ken McLeod



Ralph Johnson

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





Jim & Alice Greaves, detail at right



Harry Hirao



Cliff Johnson



Larry Ragle



Peter Bloomer



Peter Bloomer



Ki Soon Um, close up at right



Don Kruger



Mary Bloomer



Ki Soon Um



Flash Partch



Hatsumi Kitani



Ralph Johnson



Ralph Johnson



Linda Gill



Nina Ragle

[More next month]

Ask GuyJim

Dear GuyJim,

I recently purchased a cut stone with a daiza. Unfortunately, after getting it home I discovered that the stone had been mended with adhesive on one end where a small section must have broken during the cutting process. How does this affect the value of the stone?

Miffed in Mar Vista

Dear Miffed,

The cheap answer is that the dollar value of any stone, or for that matter any distinctive piece of art or oddity, is ultimately only determined by what someone is willing to pay for it. That said, I have heard that all other things being 'equal', a natural stone is worth 10 to 100 times its cut equivalent. An experienced collector who seeks stones in the outdoors (a primary collector) knows from experience how difficult it is to find a natural *suiseki* and will likely find this premium to be quite reasonable. To most others such a question is moot, as the finer natural *suiseki* will seldom reach the public marketplace. It is almost a certainty that in the general marketplace, a cut viewing stone representing a nice, well-defined mountain will outsell a good natural stone that has a less obvious 'wow' factor.

Now to answer your question: For the purist the acceptance of such a mended stone is the proverbial 'last straw'! The stone's integrity already was violated by the cut and it has now proven itself to be inherently weak as well!

However, once a stone has been cut one must admit that all spiritual and philosophic objections to the initial cutting of the stone have already been removed from the value equation. One then might take the viewpoint that the stone has already been devalued by cutting so the existence of a common edge break or even a larger split along a natural cleavage line, if carefully mended, would not further diminish the value significantly. In the abstract it would seem that a mended stone would inherently be worth less, but in the real world a collector has to have another available stone that he would consider as interchangeable before this devaluation could be validated; otherwise, you are only saying that it would be worth less than itself if not broken. Somewhere down the line, if stones were to become mere collectibles, condition might play a bigger role in estimating value, but my feeling is that with regard to that kind of collector, who cares!

One must remember that with a cut stone the image is paramount, so that if the image is not visibly affected there is really 'no harm, no foul'. Certainly, if

stones have been fractured and repaired that information should be brought to your attention by the sellers, assuming they are aware of the fact themselves. My experience has been that most sellers do discount stones known to be broken as a matter of good business practice. Therefore, your stone may have already been discounted. Even if not, you liked the stone and were not initially aware of the break, so any lessening of value may best be considered arbitrary and insignificant.

On a personal note, I have happily purchased such discounted 'mended' stones when there was no visible adverse effect on the image. Breakage during cutting, especially the uneven snapping of ends is an unfortunate, but not uncommon experience. I have mended many of my own stones and enjoy them no less for the break... Heck, once a stone has been violated by cutting one might perversely argue that the act of mending finally shows the stone a bit of respect!

GuyJim

GuyJim promised there would be more...

Suiseki (sooey-seki) – the finest quality viewing stone traditionally rooted out by a pig trained in the manner of seeking truffles.

Sosome-seki – a stone presented with attitude: 'you no lika my rock, so sue me!'

Suya-seki – any stone reluctantly accepted for exhibition to avoid a nasty lawsuit.

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 GuyJim to jimgreaves@adelphia.net or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

Mike Smith's Amazing Adventure

I just had the trip of a life-time. My river-running friends in Fairfax called me to say that after 14 years on the waiting list, we got our permit to run the maximum allowable private trip on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon: 18 guys, in 18 days. [We could have brought women, but this was the ultimate GUY trip!] Even though most of these dudes have traded their surf trucks for kids and mini-vans, all but two of the original guys got their act together, and hauled their flabbier selves and ill-fitting gear to the trip organizer in Flagstaff, and we put in August 26 at Lee's ferry to a Sept 15 take out at Peach Springs. This is the world's largest stone sculpture, and we passed 225 miles of Pagodas, shrines, arches, caves, stupas, cathedrals, columns, gargoyles, guardians, elves, fairies, gems, rock flowers, rock vegetables, universes and microcosms. It is truly unbelievable, because there is no human way to gauge the scale or perspective. From the microscopic to the telescopic, one's own self disappears in the vast scale of beauty of form, and majestic timelessness of forces beyond our comprehension. Add to that finding the hand of man from pre-contact days who made their pilgrimages in days also beyond any understanding. Add to that the suspense of finding the most majestic suiseki the world can know, in a protected environment that allows no collecting. Also, when the water drops, marvelous pieces the size of a large country estate are exposed, leaving one to wonder what treasures the bed of this mighty river hides, scours, and grinds to nothing every day of the year for 1.4 billion years that we know of.

As we dropped into the canyon [2,000 vertical feet of drop in the 225 miles], we passed the "Great Unconformity." [A perfect metaphor for our motley crew], What it means is that they know that the layers of sandstone and shale from alternating periods of deep and shallow seas that is now Arizona have been deposited for 500 million years. At the base of which is – get this – the Zoroaster Granites, and the Vishnu Shists... the bedrock below the layers that make up the upper foundation of the state of Arizona. What is missing is 800 million years of deposit, because in one dramatic seam, there is the continuous unconformity. This underlying rock is so hard and dense, that even the mighty Colorado grit and scouring abrasives dull at this layer, and can only polish, barely carving a dent in the semi-precious mass of Garnet, basalt, and gem-quality stone that make up this lower seam.

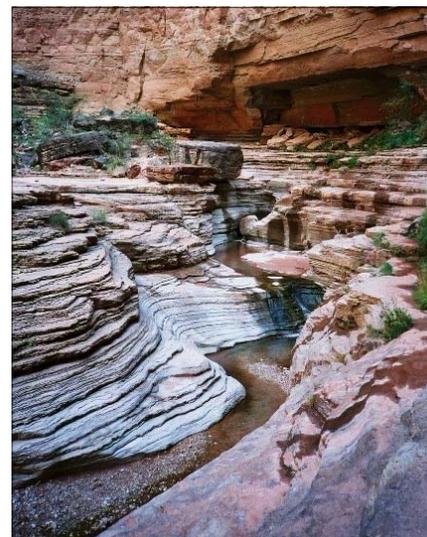
What happened to the intervening period of Earth's history? Some believe it was carved away, and washed to the sea once, and perhaps twice before, in the same

processes that are now carving away at this upper plateau. Where did it go? Most likely it has filled in the gaps of mountain remnants that make up the Baja peninsula. These great plateaus of the Early Pliocene and before, are now just sand deposits off the coast of Mexico [unless they have already been subducted again, coming back up as lava in various periods as a result of the plate tectonics that lifted the Rocky Mountains and the Arizona Plateau... the largest scale recycling project that I know of!]

What is exposed is just unbelievable. Polished limestone faces with fossils, wave-patterns from the early seas, stains, colors and patterns; shocking contrasts of art from the hand of the Great Spirit that would defy any Jackson Pollack, or Andy Goldsworthy. The beauty brings tears to the eyes, and makes you want to hug giant polished land-masses that are tightly wedged below 5,000 feet of vertical sandstone cliffs above them. The side canyons are littered with a million dump-truck loads of the most precious and valuable stones from the Great One's collection, all being unceremoniously washed to the sea in a never-ending chore of His bidding. We are merely spectators in the largest museum gallery on earth. I would dream at night of walking the bed of the river on some miraculous day that the water stopped it's churning, so I could see and feel the treasures that are hidden from us in what must be the greatest display never seen by human eyes.

Forgive me for my ravings, but I thought of you, and all your collector friends, knowing that I would have a kindred spirit in sharing the joys of this experience that is so rare, and guarded, difficult to accomplish, with many dangers and risks which to even attempt meant sure death to all the early inhabitants. It is only recently, with giant rubber donuts, that we can carry our gear through the self-sufficient voyage needed to go see this marvelous land.

[see another photo and both captions on pg 7]



Ed note: Mike Smith is a member from Napa, CA. His letter was just too wonderful not to share!

A RESPONSE TO A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

BY LARRY RAGLE

Dear Jack,

As I read your letter, I recognize 4 issues you raise:

1. Have I departed from a “previously stated position” that a cut stone is still a *suiseki*?
No.
2. Is Aiseki Kai using the Murata/Naga classification exclusively in place of Covello-Yoshimura?
No.
3. Does the book by Murata and Naga really exist?
Yes.
4. Did the classification chart really come from their book? Yes.

Answer 1. I have not suggested that a cut stone, a *biseki*, is a *suiseki*. That was my primary point in the editorial. A *biseki* is just one of the 5 groups of viewing stones. *Suiseki* is another group.

There is something very special, beyond mere beauty, about a *suiseki*. A cut stone may, indeed, be more attractive to the average viewer. Certainly a cut stone can be more explicit but I don’t think that is what this art form is all about. Further, as I described in paragraphs 5 and 6 of my editorial, I stopped cutting stones in 1982. I accepted wholeheartedly, that a *suiseki* has to be natural, unaltered – no cuts.

It is not demeaning to classify a worked stone as a *biseki*, it is just its name. I have said that the beauty is in the stone, not in its name. I have not said that the beauty is in the stone regardless of whether it has been cut and is therefore still a *suiseki*”. By the way, I didn’t throw away any of my *biseki*. They are as beautiful today as they were in 1982.

Answer 2. Aiseki Kai does, indeed, follow **Covello** and **Yoshimura**’s nomenclature to distinguish subgroups of landscape shapes, for example, mountain or island classifications. **Murata** and **Naga**’s flow chart complements **Covello** and **Yoshimura**’s work by placing viewing stones in one of their 5 major groups, *suiseki*, *chusho suiseki*, *biseki*, *chinseki* and *niwa ishi*. These groups are exactly what **Toy Sato** learned from her lessons in Japan from Japanese masters of *suiseki*. How much better can it get than that? There is no conflict here. They mesh.

This has been Aiseki Kai’s mission from day one, to learn how to classify stones and not to re-invent the art form. I have distributed copies of the flow chart at Aiseki Kai meetings for several years and at the viewing stone conference in Hershey, Pennsylvania. It is not new to the club. Further, we now include *Unkon Fu, Soul of the Stone*, **Nanjo** and **Morimoto**, GSBF 2005, as a source for additional nomenclature.

Answer 3. I really believe this book exists, although I don’t have a copy. The chart came in 1980 from a very reliable source, **Horace Hinds**. **Hinds** was a student of **Yukikichi Hirotsu**, the founder of Kashu *Suiseki Kai* in 1966. Even before 1982 the word got out that **Nina** and I were forming a study group and we received considerable input from interested contributors.

Answer 4. I have no reason to doubt Mr. **Hinds**. His type written text read in part, “The diagram appears on page 86 in *Shumi no Suiseki Nyumon* (Introduction to the Hobby of *Suiseki*), **Murata, Keiji**. editor and **Naga (Ei) Saburo**, author, *Nippon Bugei Sha*, Tokyo, 1968. There is an old notation dated 1973 that it is a “perhaps clumsy translation” and asks for corrections and suggestions.

All the Japanese to English matched later reference books but most importantly, as I said, it was exactly what **Toy** had taught us in 1983. Any questions on the accuracy of the chart were removed in 2005. While visiting the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., I was scanning a Japanese stone publication (for pictures) and noticed what looked suspiciously like a flow chart. The staff at the library arranged to have it translated. It was basically the same information.

So why do I classify my cut scenic landscape stones as *biseki*? *Biseki* includes colorful stones and worked stones. If I cut a stone, what do I have? A piece of a stone. A piece of a stone is a *biseki*. The chart **Hinds** sent includes in the *biseki* group, *ikko mo ishi*, a piece of stone. **Ben Nanjo**, also a student of **Hirotsu**, refers to the same classification in one of his articles in *Golden Statements*.

According to the **Murata/Naga** chart, *chin seki* [rare stones] are figure stones, crest pattern, flower design, Chinese stones and fantastic crag stones. To be a *chin seki*, the stone must be one of these.

The beauty of the **Murata/Naga** chart is that all 5 groups are equal in importance.

Meiseki [masterpiece] and *yuraiseki* [historic] are not listed on the chart as I received it. This makes sense. These stones can be in any of the 5 groups and is an honor bestowed by an authority(s) as when John designated your stone a masterpiece.

Regarding **Uhaku Sudo**: **Sudo** is perhaps the foremost authority in the world in the area of viewing stones and display. I respect everything he says.

[Ed note: See the October issue for Larry’s editorial and the November issue for Jack Dennis’ reply. Thank you, Jack, for participating in the process and encouraging discussion.]

Kemin Hu Comes to Aiseki Kai February 28

Kemin Hu is the author of three books: "The Spirit of *Gongshi*: Chinese Scholar's Rocks", "Scholar's Rocks in Ancient China - *Suyuan* Stone Catalogue," and her new book, "Modern Chinese Scholar's Rocks- A Guide for Collectors". All her books have successfully helped spread the appreciation of Scholar's Stones to the West.

Kemin's passionate interest in Scholar's Stones or *Gongshi*, came from her father, **Hu Zhao-Kang**, who was a noted connoisseur of Chinese Bonsai, *Penjing*, *Gongshi* and Chinese antiquities for 50 years of his life.

Kemin's own vast collection of Scholar's Rocks has been featured in numerous exhibitions, including a 100-piece Exhibit in the New York Chinese Scholar's Garden at the Staten Island Botanical Garden in 2002. She has given a number of talks and lectures at the Asia Society in New York City, at MIT's Boston Club Event in 2004, and at The Office for the Arts at Harvard University in 2006. In 2003, she was invited by CCTV (Chinese Central Television) to be interviewed on Scholar's Rocks as part of an expert forum on the popular TV program, "Art and Collection."

This evening at the Huntington will be held in the Ahmanson Classroom at the Botanical Center.

Kemin's power point program will include:

- The Collection and Appreciation of Scholar's Rocks
- The Philosophy of Scholar's Rocks
- Judgment of Scholar's Rocks
- Type of Stones
- Positioning the Stone
- Choosing the Stand Style

Refreshments

Thanks to **Everyone** because we know you will bring awesome goodies to the yummy potluck for our holiday party! Please bring a serving utensil for your delicious dish. Bring plenty to share. The club will provide the rest.



Mike's Amazing Adventure

continued from pg 5

The photo on pg 5 shows the layers of limestone that make up the bulk of the cliffs at the Grand Canyon. As it is eroded, it is either polished to look like marble, or scoured so that you can see the individual layers of deposition. If it flakes vertically, you can barely see the layers, and if it flakes horizontally, you can often see the delicate wave shapes of the sandy, calcium rich sediment patterns from the ancient sea bed.

The weaker shale deposits are richer in fossils from all the bottom dwellers of this ancient ocean. The pattern of steep cliffs [limestone] and angled sand-piles [eroded shale] that are so characteristic of the views of the Canyon show the difference between sea life depositions from deep or shallow seas.

The photo below shows a 'rock flower' ... a rare instance of columnar basalt that cools in a radial pattern. Most cases form straight columns like the Devil's Post-pile. This is some of the lava that extruded into the gorge most likely because the weight of material above was removed so rapidly [in geological time].

[Ed note: This looks like a giant *saba kikka seki* to me!]



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Mailing: Flash Partch

Editor: Nina Ragle

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

Next Month

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P.O. Box 4975
Laguna Beach CA 92652**

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Leaves no stone unturned

See us on the web

aiseikikai.com



Coming Events

BAIKOEN BONSAI KENKYUKAI

43rd Annual Bonsai Exhibit "Winter Silhouettes" Jan 20 -21, Ayres Hall, LA County Arboretum, 301 North Baldwin Ave, Arcadia. 9:30-4:30. Demos 1:00 both days. Sales area. Reception Saturday 6PM, potluck dinner, *taiko* drummers and a great benefit drawing. **Aiseki Kai** will be represented. Don't miss this unique show!

BONSAI-A-THON XI

GSBF Collection at the Huntington Fundraiser, Feb 24 -25, Huntington Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino. 7:30-4:30. Repeat, it's a fundraiser. Bring donations. Early bird specials, breakfast, lunch, auctions, raffles, vendors, children and adult novice workshops. Demonstrations both days and demo material will be auctioned. Please continue to support the Southern California Bonsai and Suiseki Collection. Contact **Marge Blasingame** for information: 626.579.0420 or email: blasmrjr@aol.com

SAN JOSE BETSUIN BONSAI CLUB

37th Annual Spring Exhibit, March 31-April 1, San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, 640 North Fifth St., San Jose. Sat 12-5, Sun 11-4. Benefit drawing and sales area.

CALIFORNIA BONSAI SOCIETY

The Golden Anniversary Show and Convention , May 31-June 3, Crowne Plaza Anaheim Resort, 1202 Harbor Blvd., Anaheim/Garden Grove. Featured demonstrators will be **Hiroshi Takeyama**, Chairman, Nippon Bonsai Association, and **Hirotohi Saito**, internationally known teacher. For more information, call registrar **May McNey** 714.738.0879 or email **Lindsay Shiba** ljshiba@juno.com. Hotel: 866.888.8891. This promises to be a fun packed event. For even more information see their website: california-bonsai-society.org.

News Flash

**We have a rock trip planned for March 3-4.
Save the dates, more info next month.**

CA Aiseki Kai meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Nakaoka Community Center located at 1700 162nd St, Gardena, CA. Second floor.