



Viewing Stone Appreciation Glossary

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The purpose of this glossary is to help viewing stone enthusiasts to gain a more in-depth knowledge of the terms used in stone appreciation practices. Japanese terms are used more frequently than their Chinese counterparts. Since this is an ongoing project, we anticipate adding additional terms.

We encourage you to contact us with suggestions for future words to add or clarify if our definitions are not clear. Please send you questions and recommendation to tselias@vsana.org.

aiseki (愛石): Love of stones is the direct translation. The term is used as a general and holistic meaning of stone appreciation including but not limited to Suiseki.

agate: Stone composed of a banded form of fine-grained, cryptocrystalline variety of silica, mainly chalcedony. Agates are associated with igneous and metamorphic rocks.

biseki (美石): The term literally means beautiful stones. In Japan this term is used for beautiful and/or colorful stones often worked to show off the surface. In China, this term is pronounced meishi.

bonsan (盆山): The term **bonsan** was used to indicate viewing stones in Japan until the term suiseki began to be used.

bonseki (盆石): Also, **bonseki** means a tray landscape created in a dark tray with small stones and white sand since Edo period (1603-1867). Currently, there are still many schools of bonseki active in Japan. The term used to indicate viewing stones or suiseki in Japan until the term suiseki began to be used in the late 1800s.

chalcedony: Stone composed of cryptocrystalline form of silica, usually quartz and moganite, with a waxy appearance, may be semi-transparent or translucent, with many varieties.

chinseki (珍石): Japanese term to indicate rare stones and usually stones from China.

concretion: Hard, dense sedimentary rock formed in layers by mineral precipitation in the spaces between grains or particles; usually rounded to egg-shaped and embedded within a host rock.

ch'i (氣): See qi.

daiza (台座): Japanese term for the base of suiseki. In China it is called **dizuo** (底座).

dongtian (洞天): Chinese, refers to the Taoist literature and beliefs of a region where heaven and earth meet—the world of the immortals. Dongtians are typically associated with caves or tunnels high in the mountains.

doban (銅盤): Japanese term for shallow metal tray used for displaying stones, typically with sand. These are often made of copper alloys or bronze.

fengli (风历): Chinese term for the wind-blown viewing stones, usually found in Gobi Desert.

furoshiki (風呂敷): Japanese term for a square-wrapping cloth. Usually, furoshiki is used to carry things inside the wrapping.

gagongseok (가공석): Korean word for viewing stones that have been artificially enhanced or modified, such as a cut base.

gaseki (雅石): Literally, the term means elegant stone. In Japan the term was used to indicate Chinese stones. Chinese pronunciation of the term is yashi, and the term is used for viewing stones in Southern China and Taiwan.

gongshi (供石): Chinese term used to indicate the stones that suitable as an offering to the superior existence such as gods. In recent years, gongshi is used by some for all Chinese stones in western countries.

haeseok (해석): Korean word for viewing stones found on beaches.

hako gaki (箱書): Japanese for box writing, typically hand-written title, the suiseki inside, and other information. Information about the stone is given on the front of the sliding panel of the storage box. Additional information, including poetry may be found on the backside of the sliding panel.

hanko (はんこ): Japanese word for stamp or seal of the name, which has been used in Japan instead of a signature.

jiita (地板): Japanese for a flat piece of wood to display stones, flower arrangements, and other small accompanying objects. Combined and tied bamboo pieces in a mat may be used as jiita.

jwadae (좌대): Korean word for a wood base used to hold a viewing stone.

kaiseki (怪石): Japanese term used to indicate Chinese stones. The Japanese called Chinese stones kaiseki, kiseki, gaseki, and karaishi (唐石) until modern days.

take-jiku (掛け軸) Japanese for hanging scroll. In Japan, hanging scrolls are used as decoration for tokonoma, usually to illustrate the seasons. There are calligraphy scrolls that may not specify the seasonality.

kazari (飾): Japanese word for display

kiri bako (桐箱): Japanese storage box made from the light weight wood of Paulownia tomentosa and used to store valuable silk garments. Resin in the wood repels moths and other insects.

kiseki (奇石): Japanese term to indicate Chinese stones. In China it is pronounced as qishi and translated as fantastic stones. Also see kaiseki.

literati (文人): Word for scholars who understand and appreciated literature and culture, especially the classical Chinese literature and tea ceremony.

meishi (美石): Chinese word for beautiful stone, also see biseki.

miseok (미석): Korean word for a beautiful stone.

nuke saba (抜けサバ) is a Japanese term used to describe a natural chrysanthemum stone that has lost its mineral flower-like formations. It is literally a cast of mineral deposits.

omukae-ishi or **kangei-seki** (お迎え石、歓迎石). These Japanese terms are used for a usually large excellent stone that is displayed at the entrance of a suiseki exhibit to welcome visitors.

patina: a stable coating on the surface of a viewing stone. There are different types of patina depending upon how it was formed.

penjing (盆景): Chinese term for bonsai; however, this term in China includes not only tree bonsai but also tray landscape with trees and stones as well as tray landscape with stones. In China, the term bonsai means simply a tree in a pot; a stylized tree in a pot/tray should be called penjing in China.

qi (氣): Chinese term is used for the belief of a fundamental energy present in all natural elements, but especially concentrated in rocks.

saba (サバ): Literally, the term means untouched and natural. This term refers to three-dimensional or sometimes two-dimensional natural chrysanthemum stones when humans do not work the stone or the mineral formations.

sabi (さび): The word in the Japanese concept of aesthetics to express the feeling of tranquility, aloneness and oldness.

seok (석): Korean word for stone or rock.

shangshi (赏石): Chinese term meaning appreciation of stones.

sansui-seki (山水石): The term literally means mountain and water stones, meaning landscape stones. This term was used in Japan to indicate viewing stones until the term suiseki began to be used for viewing stones.

shibu (渋い): Japanese aesthetic concept used to express the feeling of simple, subtle or unobtrusive beauty.

shipu (石譜): Chinese word for stone catalog.

shoku (卓): Japanese term for display displays. These tables are used for displaying viewing stones, suiseki, flower arrangements, and some treasures (i.e., incense burners or bronze accompanying objects). Some display tables are high (30 to 35 cm), while others are low, usually 8 -15 cm high.

suiban (水盤): Japanese word for a shallow ceramic tray, glazed or unglazed, used to display stones typically with sand.

suiseki (水石): Japanese term for a stone viewed and displayed indoors with wood base or trays to remind us of natural landscape. This term began to be used after 1860s.

suseok (수석): Korean word for viewing stone. It can also be translated as a living or spirit stone.

tanseki (探石): Japanese word for stone hunting.

tenkei (添景): Japanese word literally translated as accompanying landscape. Tenkei and tenpai are used in the same meaning to refer to the small accessory objects such as lighthouse, horse, frog, crab, farmhouse to be displayed along with a viewing stone to give scale and to create a meaningful scene. These are often made of bronze or silver.

tenpai (添配): See the above tenkei. Literally, the term tenpai means accompanying arrangements.

tokonoma (床の間): Japanese word for the specially designed architectural space within a traditional home for the display of artwork.

ventifact: A stone, usually small, that has been naturally shaped and polished from long-term exposure to sand-laden winds.

wabi (わび): Japanese aesthetic concept used to express the feeling of understated beauty and austerity.

yashi (雅石): See gaseki.

yojuro-ishi (与十郎石): A landscape stone entirely manufactured from a two-toned stone dating back to the 1930s. Yojuro stones are an accepted category of Japanese suiseki and occasionally displayed in major exhibitions.

yoseki (養石): Japanese term to age stones by exposing them outside the house to rain, sun, snow, etc. to develop a patina.