



Viewing Stone Appreciation Glossary

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This glossary aims to help viewing stone enthusiasts gain a more in-depth knowledge of the terms used in stone appreciation practices. Chinese, Japanese, and Korean words are given with their appropriate characters for each country. For the Korean entries, please note that the Hanja (the Korean pronunciation of Hanzi/Kanji): is after the Korean characters to help understand the word's meaning.

This glossary is an ongoing project with new words and corrections added periodically. It is not an AI-generated list of words and definitions. Each word is based on original language publications and usage.

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

amayadori-ishi (雨宿り石): Japanese for a shelter stone. This term is used for stones with an overhang that can provide shelter for a person or animal from current weather conditions and the stone must have a bottom area under the shelter for a person or animal.

aware (哀れ): Japanese aesthetic term for refined aesthetic sensibility.

basalt: A common dark gray to black, mostly fine-grained volcanic or igneous rock composed of plagioclase, pyroxene, and olivine. Basalt is brought to the Earth's surface by volcanic activity and sometimes forms distinct four- to six-sided columns. The columns form as the molten basalt cools and shrinks. Many types of weathered or eroded excellent viewing stones are composed of basalt.

beseki (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.

bonki (盆器): Japanese word for a bonsai pot.

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.

botryoidal: A word used for mineral forms consisting of many rounded segments or resembling the form of a cluster of grapes. Some jade, grape agates, and malachite viewing stones occur in botryoidal form.

chaekgeori (책거): Korean word for a new genre of paintings that appeared in the late 18th century, grew in popularity, and contributed to the promotion of widespread consumerism. The chaekgeori are mainly unsigned, more Western-style still-life paintings of bookshelves lined with books, scholarly objects, such as ceramics, bronzes, brushes, inkstones, an occasional unusual rock, and other luxury items.

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

chou (醜): Chinese aesthetic term used for ugly or ugliness, referring to beauty found in ugly stones and first used by Shu Shi in the Song dynasty (960-1297).

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.

dai-shi (台師): Japanese word for the people who carve/make daiza.

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

daiza-ishi (台座石): Japanese for a stone displayed in a carved wood base.

dan-seki (段石): Japanese for a stone with features that suggest one or more clearly defined steps. Some stones have features that are intermediate between Dan-seki and Doha.

dō (道): Japanese word referring to a disciplined practice leading to the understanding of an activity. Suiseki-do means learning the art of Suiseki.

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.

doha (土坡): Japanese for a stone that suggests a plateau or plain in which the major part of the stone is flat or nearly flat. Some Doha stones may have a raised portion that could suggest a distance mountain. The height of a mountain should be balanced with the size of the flat area. A stone with a high plateau may be called Doha.

dojagi suban (도자기 수반 / 陶瓷器 水盤): Korean for a ceramic tray.

dokutsu-ishi (洞窟石): Japanese for a cave stone. A term used for a stone with a cavity that resembles a cave. The cavity does not extend to the far side of the rock.

domon-ishi (洞門石): Japanese for a tunnel stone or arch stone. This term is used for a stone with one or more holes that extend through the stone and evoke the feeling of a tunnel or tunnel. If the hole is more prominent, it may suggest more of an arch than a tunnel.

dongsuban (동수반 / 銅水盤): Korean word for a bronze tray.

gongshi (供石): Chinese term used to indicate the stones that suitable as an offering to the superior existence such as gods. Widely misused for all Chinese stones in western countries.

guaishi (怪石): Chinese word for unusual stones traced to the middle and late Eastern Zhou dynasty (about 771-256 BCE).

guanshangshi (觀賞石): Chinese for viewing stones.

hwamunseok (화문석 / 花紋石): Korean word for flower pattern stones, those stone that evoke a sense of flowers or flower patterns.

fengli (風力): 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.

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.

goeseok (괴석): Korean word for a strange or an oddly-shaped rock.

gyuhwamok: (규화목, 珪化木): Korean word for fossilized or petrified wood.

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.

hwaseok (화석, 化石): Korean general term for any fossil (plants, animals, trace fossils, etc.).

iwagata-ishi (岩形石): Japanese term for landscape stones associated with water, especially stones that suggest a rugged rocky outcrop or a weathered coastal scene.

jagi suban (자기수반 / 瓷器水盤): Korean word for a porcelain tray.

jiashan (假山): Chinese word for an artificial mountain constructed in a garden

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.

hwadae (좌대): Korean word for the carved wood bases used to hold and orient Suseok.

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.

kake-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.

kanshōseki (観賞石): Japanese word for viewing stones, referring to a broad category of natural stones collected and appreciated for their aesthetic, symbolic, and contemplative features (qualities). A broader term encompassing garden stones, Suiseki, Biseki, and other categories of stone. All suiseki are kanshōseki, but not all kanshōseki are suiseki.

karesansui (枯山水): Japanese for dry landscape gardens where stones represent mountains, islands, or other landscape forms

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.

kuzuya-ishi or **kayaya-shi** (茅屋石, 茅舎石): Japanese terms used for hut-shaped stones that resemble the thatched roof of traditional farmhouses found in rural areas of Japan. The term also refers to the stones resemble half run-down lonely house. The word Kaya means the materials used for thatched roof. The term Kuzuya-ishi is more commonly used among Japanese stone hobbyists.

kwaeseok (괘석): Korean aesthetic word used with Suseok and traditional garden culture for a rock that is displayed in a manner that suggests an elevated or precariously balanced stone. The literal translation is "hanging or suspended stone."

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

lou (漏): Chinese aesthetic word used for holes, referring to actual holes in stones. First used in Tang dynasty (618-907 CE).

meiseki (名石): Japanese word for an excellent stone.

meiseki (銘石): Japanese word for named stones, including rocks with a given poetic name.

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

miyabi (雅): Japanese aesthetic word for gracefully refined elegance.

mizutamari-ishi (水溜まり石): Japanese for a waterpool stone. This is a stone with a shallow depression that can hold water and evokes the feeling of a temporary pool, pond, or lake.

mono no aware (物の哀れ): Japanese aesthetic word for the pathos of things, a gentle sadness at the transience of life, poignant beauty of passing moments. Also defined as the emotional feeling evoked by things.

monyo-seki (紋様石): Japanese for a pattern stone. These are stones with distinct surface patterns. The patterns range from the presence of mineral deposits, unusual surface texture or colors, or tectonic-formed features such as folding. Covello and Yoshimura (1984): recognized several subcategories of pattern stones.

niwa-ishi (庭石): Japanese generic word for any rock or rock composition placed in a Japanese garden.

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.

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.

sansui (山水): Japanese word for landscape that typically includes mountains and rivers. Sansui can refer to the actual landscape, the painted landscape, or the garden that recreates it.

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.

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

seokgasan (석가산): Korean for an artificial mountain made of stones built in traditional Korean gardens.

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

shibui (渋い): Japanese word for simple or subtle beauty, modest and quiet beauty rather than showy.

shimagata-ishi (島形石): A Japanese term for landscape stones associated with water, especially those that resemble an island.

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.

shou (瘦): Chinese aesthetic word used for thin or slender, referring to a narrow vertically oriented stones. First used was in the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE).

suban (수반 / 水盤): Korean for a shallow tray.

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

suseki (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 (壽石): Korean word literally meaning “long life of stone” or “longevity stone” which places greater emphasis on rocks being enduring concepts of eternity. This word was first introduced by Kim Jeong-hui (1786-1856) for his studio, the Suseok Old Moss Pond Pavilion.

suseok (수석, 水石): Korean, literally meaning water stone, used for various types of ornamental or decorative stones associated with water.

taihu stones (太湖石): Originally referring to Chinese grotesque-shaped, water-eroded, limestone rocks, originally from Lake Tai in southern Jiangsu province in Eastern China. After the Lake Tai stones were depleted, the term “Taihu stones” has been used to refer to similarly appearing, water-worn stones from other areas of China. Taihu stones in markets are frequently enhanced by drilling holes, grinding, and sandblasting to shape, and altering the color.

taki-ishi (滝石): Japanese for waterfall stone. This term is used for dark-colored stones with a horizontally or near horizontally oriented inclusion of a whitish mineral, often quartz or calcite, that suggests falling water. The whitish mineral should reach the bottom of the stone and only on one side of the stone.

tanseki (探石): Japanese word meaning “stone hunting” in the context of going on a stone hunting trip.

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.

tou (透): Chinese aesthetic word used for transparent or openness, referring to cavities, hollows, depressions, and the appearance of a light airy feeling. Tou was first used in Tang dynasty (618-907 CE).

toyama-ishi (遠山石): Japanese for a mountain stone. This term is used for stones with soft shapes and surface features that suggest mountains.

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

viewing stone: A broader cross-cultural term for natural stones that are collected and appreciated for their aesthetic, symbolic, and contemplative features. This includes Suseok, Suseki, Gongshi, Meishi, and other stone categories.

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

xiu (秀): Chinese aesthetic word first used in the Song dynasty (960-1279): for a level of beauty, elegant.

ya (雅): Chinese word once used for a stone that reached the highest level of beauty or sublime beauty. Ya was first used in the Song dynasty (960-1279).

yamagata-ishi (山形石): Japanese for a mountain stone. This term is used for stones that suggest a mountain or mountain range. The stones may have inclusions that suggest a waterfall, snow, or clouds.

yangseok (양석 / 養石): Korean for cultivating a stone by sprinkling soft, powdery moss on the surface of a wet stone.

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.

yūgen (幽玄): Japanese aesthetic word for subtle beauty, or profound beauty.