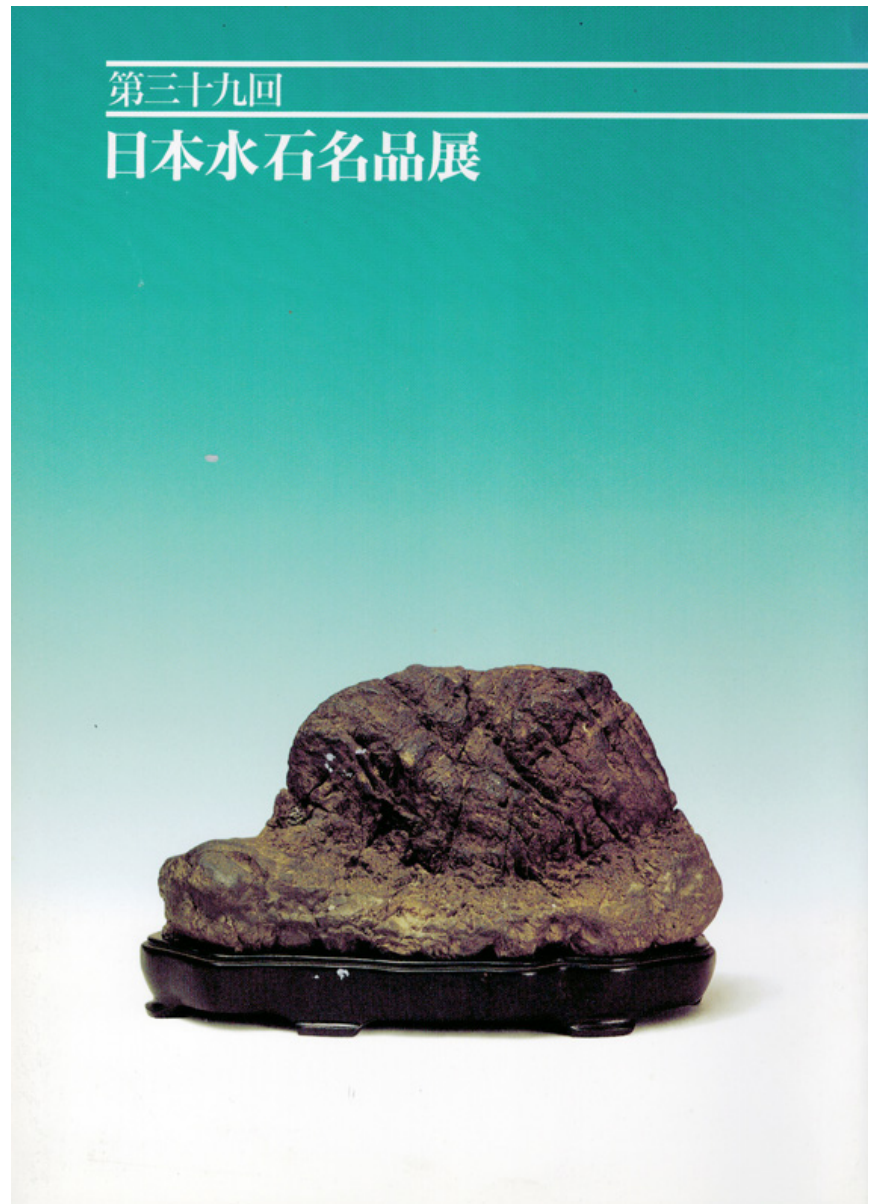


On the Career of Suiseki

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During the years that I have been dealing with Suiseki and stones, it was not always comprehensible to me how and why a stone becomes a Suiseki and which arguments and criteria are decisive that stones have become "Yûraiseki" "famous" and priceless.

Long study of books and catalogs, getting to know members of the Nippon Suiseki Kyôkai, their names and position in society finally brought me in the right direction.

The Nippon Suiseki Association, in addition to being an institution for the care and management of traditional cultural property, is also a "bourse" for finding the best stones in the country. It is often seen that members of rather low rank, search and find high quality material all over Japan and bring it to the various annual events and exhibitions.

Scouts like Mr. Matsuura Arishige and others recognize the quality of the stones and buy them from the owners.

They in turn - as gallerists do in our countries - recommend this or that piece to their customers, usually very wealthy collectors.

On the following pages I will present some stones which have found their way into the possession of high standing and important collections in Japan.

Some Suiseki were even purchased by the Suiseki department of the Meiji Jingu, the memorial temple of the Meiji Emperor, who had to renounce his status as an untouchable son of heaven after the World War.

Kamogawa-Ishi

Here you can see a beautiful Kamogawa ishi shown by Mr. Furuda at the 36th Meihin Ten exhibition. The picture of the stone is in the exhibition catalog listed as the last entry at the very end, according to the value that the judges have given it No. 113.

The second picture shows the same Suiseki but now as an exhibit of the collection of the Meiji-Jingu during the 37th Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten. In the catalog it is the first stone with the number 1.

The Meiji Jingu is one of the most influential institutions for Suiseki and the annual Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten Exhibition has been held in their covered courtyard for quite some time.

For illustrative material, I relied on the catalogs of the annual Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten.

In the catalogues, the best stones are found at the very front of the catalog with low numbers, while those with high numbers are consequently at the very back of the catalog. Between 90 and 120 stones are displayed in the Exhibitions every year.



113 加茂川石 Kamogawa-ishi 16×12×12 松戸市 古田恒男



1 特別出品 加茂川石 銘「晩」 Kamogawa-ishi 25×11×10 和椿円水盤 明治神宮

The measurements of the stones also become somewhat more accurate with the "improvement" of the position. At the 40th Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten the collection of the Meiji-Jingu was given the special honor to exhibit an extensive part of the collection. The discussed stone is rated 21st within the exhibition of Meiji stones. The stone has thus had a lightning career in a hurry

Sajigawa/Kamogawa-Ishi

This Sajigawa Ishi caught my eye many years ago when the Suiseki Society was still integrated into the Bonsai Society and stones and bonsai were exhibited together. This stone had also wandered from collection to collection for many years until it was first exhibited at the 37th Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten and shown in the catalog as Sajigawa Ishi No. 96.

During one of my visits to Mr. Matsuura, I saw the beautiful stone displayed in his Tokonoma room. Unfortunately, I had already bought so many things that year and could not afford to buy this stone.

Two years later, at the 39th exhibition, the Suiseki was displayed in fantastic Kowatari Suiban, on a bamboo table of equal quality. Kowatari means ancient crossing and refers to ceramics imported from China to Japan in the Edo period or earlier by Japanese emissaries.



The stone is now part of the Sugii family collection. After closer investigation it turned out, that it is a Kamogawa Ishi rather than a Sajigawa Ishi. Mr. Matsuura Arishige introduced me to Mr. Sugii a few years ago and said that he probably has the largest suiseki collection in Japan. The Sugii family collection has been built up over many hundreds of years

Kobi-Ishi

This Kobi-Ishi was first exhibited at the 13th Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten in 1974 by Mr. Yamamoto. The catalog shows it as number 41. The powerful stone is not very beautiful and neatly displayed.

At that time, no measurements were given. Kobi-Ishi are stones found in the sea. There are only a few places in the sea where good stones can be found.

This Stone was displayed on Exhibitions once a while

On the following pictures you can see the stone in catalogs of the exhibitions 36 and 40 as exhibits of the collection of the Meiji Jingu, in whose possession, however, the stone has been for a long time.

Strangely enough, the measurements differ again and again, which is inexplicable to me.



Kamogawa-Ishi

This small Kamogawa ishi is also an interesting case. First exhibited at the 24th Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten and listed in the catalog with number 86.

Years later it appears exhibited at the 39th Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten, listed in the catalog as number 16 and also makes it to the cover of the exhibition catalog.

The dimensions have changed somewhat here as well, and the text behind the description Kamogawa-Ishi states that the stone was once owned by a highly respected collection.



86 加茂川石 9×6×4.7 川瀬真洞



16 加茂川石(岩崎家旧蔵石) Kamogawa-ishi 13×13×12 東京都 閑 栖庵

Kamogawa Ishi

This little Kamogawa-Sudachi-Maguro-Ishi is also an interesting case. The rise was not as striking as the other stones but still.



56 加茂川巢立真黒石 Kamogawa-Sudachi-Maguro-ishi 39×16×7 東京都 白石進悦

First exhibited at the 35th Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten by a member of the society, it is listed in the catalog as number 56. Later it ends up in one of the most important collections in Japan and is exhibited at the 43rd Nippon Suiseki Meihin Ten, in perfect style in a precious bronze doban and listed in the catalog as number 7. It was also given the name of a mountain it represents: eastern Long Mountain, the Ônagayama. You can also find the stone in some books with the best stones of Japan. However, it is not very old.



7 加茂川矗立真黒石 銘「比良山」 Kamogawa-Sudachimaguro-Ishi 38.0×15.0×10.0 峯雲作楕円水盤 東村山市 東原賞典

Nippon Suiseki Association

was established in May 1961, and the head priest of Meiji-jingu, Kanroji Ukenaga, was named as its first president. Successive presidents have also come from Meiji-jingu.

In July 1961, the Association held the first Nippon Suiseki Meihinten exhibition (sponsorship by the Japanese Agency of Cultural Affairs began with the 32nd Meihinten).