

INTRODUCTION



A lone stone, *Eternal Pirouette*, appears left—just beneath the chapter title. Its solo position might suggest that it is the subject of this book. But it is actually only one stone chosen at random from the fifty presented in Chapter VIII, Gallery. The purpose of its prominence here is to illustrate how easily solitary placement can create a misconception about an item's significance.

Beyond Suiseki spotlights the global jolt propelling ancient Asian stone arts into the twenty-first century. Chinese and Korean stone arts are acknowledged along with Japanese suiseki—according all three heightened respect for their long history—while flourishing stone arts now developing in the West are also recognized and all the viewing stone arts are opened to the rest of the world. Ideally, this wide-open affinity group might revitalize the ancient art form as it never has been before.

However, for the time being an obstacle stands in the way of such revitalization. Much of the West remains under the misconception that Japanese suiseki is, if not the sole representative of ancient Asian stone arts, at least the superior representative. Many loyal suiseki devotees tenaciously defend suiseki's absolute entitlement to primacy. From the 1960s until the 1990s, suiseki reigned supreme in the West, while Chinese and Korean stone arts remained invisible. But China's and Korea's belated appearance dramatically changed these circumstances. The misconception about suiseki's significance excluded Chinese and Korean stone arts from equality and relegated rapidly developing Western stone arts to the rank of mere aspirants.

Beyond Suiseki's central text could be whittled down to a brief report about the impact of China's and Korea's stone arts on the West were it not for much of the West's insistence on suiseki's preeminence. Therein lies the inspiration for the title, *Beyond Suiseki*. The misconception about suiseki's rank among other credible stone arts is an issue that postpones and distracts from what might otherwise be a series of harmonious moves toward consensus allowing all enthusiasts to proceed to the more gratifying appreciation of beautiful stones.