

Stones and Seeds

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Maurice HT Ling

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122 photographs featuring 60 stones and seeds

<https://mauriceling.github.io>

Dedication

To my family and friends.

Thank you for the patience when you are forced to see endless photos of my stones.

To other stone lovers.

I do not know who you are but you are there to share this interest.

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Introduction

古人云：“山无石不奇，水无石不清，园无石不秀，室无石不雅。”
又云：“赏石清心，赏石怡人，赏石益智，赏石陶情，赏石长寿。”

Each piece of stone is nature's work of art, lying there for millions of years bathing in the rays of the sun, moon and stars from above, and supported by the ground, water and wind from below; all waiting for the fated person to nourish it. Thereby, completing its transformation into a treasure. It reminded me of the Orb in Belgariad series by David Eddings where God Aldur picked up an ordinary looking stone at the creek and through centuries of playing and handling it, polished it into a magical object. Isn't this the shared dream of a stone and its owner? I have a fascination for stones since young and one of my childhood dreams was to be a geologist but there is no market or career prospects for it in Singapore. Hence, it can only be a hobby, which was buried for a long while until I went Taiwan with my family in March 2016.

每一块石都是大地的创作，在千万年吸取日月星辰之精华，山川风水之辅润，只为等待有缘人的呵护与盘玩。我在念初中时读过一部神幻小说。小说中有尊大神在溪边捡一块看似普通的石头。但在几百年不断的盘玩中负于灵气而成为小说中的无尚法宝。这不是一个玩石者与一块石头共同的梦吗？我其中的童年志愿是地理学家，但在新加坡没市场或就业机会。因此玩石已成为消遣，一个埋没依旧的消遣，直到在 2017 年三月我与家人到台湾旅游。

On the second day of the trip, we went to Rainbow Village (彩虹眷村) in Taichung where I saw a stones merchant selling a type of jade, called 年糕玉. In its raw form, it looks pretty ugly – far from my impression of what jade supposed to look like. From then on, I asked myself, what makes a stone a jade? On a larger scale, this incident resurrected my interest in stones and it progresses into seeds. I tend to view them as together and treat them synonymously.

行程的第二天，我们到台中的彩虹眷村。那有个石商在卖一种玉，年糕玉，台中特产。对我而言，年糕玉原石相当不美。与我认识中“玉为美石”的定义偏差很多。因而自问，何为玉？这也掀开尘封已久的兴趣，因而延伸到了种子。我也常把石和种子一概而言。

To me, stones reminded me of endurance – it is there for millions of years enduring the natural elements. When I am disappointed, the stone in front of me reminded me of the years it endured. When I get ahead of myself or lose perspectives, the stone reminded me of the years it had been and the insignificance of the matter at hand in the long scheme of things. Yet, the human touch of a stone gives it age and maturity – when layers after layers of oil from the skin, or sebum, coat and oxidize on its surface; it forms a nice gloss of age (包浆). This is a timely reminder that we all need the support of friends and close ones.

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对我而言，石表达了“耐”，在千百年中受尽风吹雨打。在我低落时，眼前的石以自身磨炼安抚我。在我迷失观点时，眼前的石提醒了我，以漫长的岁月看待这一切。但一块石必须经过长时的盘玩才能包浆。这也充分提醒了我，亲友的呵护。

Only by this can the age and maturity be exhibited. Can you tell which teapot has been hand nourished?

石不盘玩不得包浆。您可看得出哪个茶壶已被盘玩过？



Source: <https://kknews.cc/collect/b6rjym.html>

This photo book is to document my favourite seeds and stones, and to share this interest with the likeminded.

此相谱记录我喜欢的石与种子，借此分享我的兴趣。

Chapter 1: Shiva Lingam (灵感石)



Plate 1-1.

Shiva lingam stones are cryptocrystalline quartz and supposedly sacred in Hinduism. It originates from Narmada River where villages picked it up and polished into pointed egg-shaped, symbolizes both male (pointed) and female (egg-shape). I found this piece in a shop in Bugis. It was at the back of the counter and caught my eye when I was talking to the shop owner and bought it almost without hesitation, despite being shown a few other pieces. I like the red-brown streak spanning across both poles. That was when I was also reminded of something I heard previously – 玉选人, 不是人选玉 (it is the jade that choose the person and not the person choosing the jade).



Plate 2-1.

There is no English name for this stone. 大湾石 is named from the location it originates – stone from 广西大湾河 (Da Wan River in Guang Xi, China). My guess is that it is basaltic in nature. I bought these 2 pieces online. Over time, they exude an aura of gentle strength.

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Plate 2-2.



Plate 3-1.

I came a few pieces of these jade stones in one of the shops in Bugis. Over time, I bought a few pieces there but my main bulk were bulk purchased online. These stones originated from Gobi Desert in Xin Jiang; hence, they are also known as Gobi jade or 戈壁玉, other than 金丝玉。They are predominantly yellow; some are white; and even fewer are red; but most are mixtures or varying shades of different colours. The uniqueness is that most of these stones are not perfectly smooth like quartz but with minute sandblasted craters as a result of sand erosion in the desert.

Gobi jade is a relatively new form of jade stones. The story goes that in 2003, a jade merchant from Guangdong, China, was shopping and bought a piece of stone that he could

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not identify from a stone store for RMB 50. After handling, he found that this stone has jade-like qualities to it and subsequently spent RMB 200 to buy up about 5 kg



Plate 3-2.



Plate 3-3.



Plate 3-4.

When I first bought online in June 2016, they were sold at about SGD 15 per parcel of 800 grams, including shipping. Each parcel has about 5 to 10 medium sized stones (about 50-100 grams each). By about October 2016, they were sold at about SGD 18-25 per parcel. By mid-2017, many merchants online were selling at SGD 5 to 25 per piece. From the words of several merchants, most of the easily accessible stones in Gobi Desert had been

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picked. I was lucky to have purchased a fair bit (more than 100 pieces) before October 2016.



Plate 3-5.



Plate 3-6.



Plate 3-7.

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Plate 3-8.



Plate 3-9.



Plate 3-10.

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Plate 3-11.





Plate 4-1.

Corozo nut is also known as Tagua nut or vegetable ivory. It is a very hard resinous endosperm of a native South American palm tree, which is also found in Africa. Due to its hardness and resistance to scratch, it is very difficult to be carved with a knife and was used to make into buttons and chess pieces. Despite its density and hardness, Corozo nut is very light in weight. When ripened, Corozo nut is dark brown with a rough surface but when the exterior is partially filed off and polished, each nut has a unique pattern of dark brown lines and patches on a milky yellow surface. This patterning gives each nut a distinct personality. I came across it during my walk along Chinatown. Its handy size, shape, and patterning intrigues me. After playing for a few weeks, it yield a beautiful gloss.



Plate 5-1.

Like corozo nut, thousand-eye bodhi seed is also an endosperm. However, it is not from bodhi tree but from bamboo palm, also known as West African brass fibre (酒椰). Hence, “bodhi seed” is more of a glamourous term. When ripen, this seed has a rough outer husk. Similar to corozo nut, each seed has a unique stripe pattern when the exterior husk is partially removed, giving it individuality. Another unique feature is that each seed has an “eye” – a round darkened spot. This eye may eventually break open into a cavity. When that happens, a gemstone can be sealed in.

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Plate 5-2.



Plate 5-3.



Plate 6-1.

Basalt are very common type of igneous rock that made up most of river pebbles and beach pebbles. It is said that native American shamans will ask children to go to the river to pick up a stone that calls to them as a form of protective talisman. Most ended up with basaltic pebbles because they are so common. Hence, basaltic pebbles are the original spirit stones. Various sizes of tumbled basaltic pebbles are used for landscaping. Despite so, I like very fine grained, smooth basaltic pebbles as they are very earthy and grounding.



Plate 6-2.



Plate 7-1.

Petrified wood is fossilized wood where the carbon has been replaced with silicon but the wood grains have been preserved. Depending on the surrounding conditions, different elements can be incorporated, resulting in different colouration. Holding a piece of petrified wood reminds me that this piece of stone was a living tree before. It has both the strength of the tree and the stone; yet, reminding me that difficult changes are inevitable and may sometimes be necessary for the betterment – just as the tree must die and fossilized in order to transform into something that is more durable and stronger.

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Plate 7-2.



Plate 7-3.



Plate 8-1.

If petrified wood signify transformation and accepting tough changes, tree jade must signify the long and strenuous road from good to excellent. Tree jade is essentially petrified wood metamorphosing into jade. It may take as short as a hundred years for dead wood to fossilize into petrified wood, it will take millions of years for petrified wood to turn into tree jade. The petrified wood must be pressurized and heated by earth to recrystallize the quartz crystals into chalcedony. If the temperature is too low, recrystallization will not take place. If temperature is too high, the quartz melts and loses the wood grain structures. Hence, only the outer-rims of a tree trunk can turn from petrified wood into tree jade. The process of recrystallization takes a very long time – current tree jades are from trees living between 3500 million years ago (carboniferous period, 古生代石炭纪) to 65 million years ago (cretaceous period, 中生代白垩纪), making it a prehistoric treasure.

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Plate 8-2



Plate 8-3



Plate 9-1.

Agate is a banded chalcedony, making it a member of the quartz family. Therefore, it has a very smooth glass-like texture. The uniqueness of agate is the banding patterns and a large variety of colours, making it one of the most brilliant stones.



Plate 10-1

Hetian jade (和田玉) is one of the four famous jade types in China. The other three being Xiuyan jade (岫岩玉), Dushan jade (独山玉), and Lantian jade (蓝田玉). Hetian jade is highly priced in Imperial China and wars had been fought to gain control of the jade sources. Way before the time of Silk Road (丝绸之路), there was already a Jade Road (玉石之路). In fact, Yumen Pass at the west of Dunhuang (敦煌玉门关) in Gansu province in China got its name as the entry point of jade, specifically Hetian jade, from the western

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reaches during Han Dynasty. Even in Qing Dynasty, the harvesting of Hetian jade is imperically controlled. It will take a lifetime of study to really learn about Hetian jade.



Plate 10-2



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Plate 10-3.



Plate 10-4.

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Plate 10-5.



Plate 10-6.



Plate 10-7.



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Plate 10-8.



Plate 10-9.



Plate 11-1.



A distinct feature of Guilin bloodstone is its redness – it is very red compared to other bloodstones. There are two types of bloodstones – 鸡血石 and 鸡血玉。The difference is what makes the red colour. In 鸡血石, it is mercury sulphate (朱砂) but in 鸡血玉, it is iron. Therefore, 鸡血玉 can be magnetic.



Plate 12-1.

Carnelian is like half way between transparent quartz and agate. It has the banding patterns distinctive of agate and yet, has the translucency of a milky quartz. This gives carnelian a hybrid feature.



Plate 13-1.

Labradorite is treasured for its remarkable play of color, known as labradorescence. These colors are not mineral colors as most labradorite are translucent. Instead, labradorescence is the result of varying refraction. The Inuit people see labradorite as frozen Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights.



Plate 14-1.

Xiu Yan jade, like Hetian jade, is one of the four famous jade types of Chinese history (中国历史上的四大名玉). It originates from Liaoning (辽宁), China, and is mainly green in colour. Unlike Hetian jade, which is hard and difficult to work with, Xiu Yan jade is much softer.



Plate 15-1.

Bamboo jasper is a member of the jasper family, which is a member of the quartz family. Different from other quartz, jasper is opaque. Bamboo jasper got its name from the strip-like pattern. It is called 女娲石 in Chinese due to its multi-colours but each colour is distinct. This reminded many people of the legend of Goddess Nu Wa gathering stones of different colours and fuse them to seal the hole in heaven to ease the Great Flood (女娲炼五彩石补天).



Plate 16-1.

Aventurine or sometimes also known as Indian jade, is actually a translucent and predominantly green quartz, often with shimmering inclusions. Depending on the shades of green and its inclusions, each aventurine has its own personality.



Plate 16-2.



Milky peach quartz.



Quartz with amethyst-like veiny inclusions.



Clear quartz with orange-red veins.

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Clear quartz with blue veins.



Clear quartz with blue veins.



Brown-streaked carnelian.

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Smokey quartz with amethyst-like inclusions.



Smokey quartz with purple-red veins.



Banded amethyst.

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Looks like amethyst but it is more red than purple.



Banded amethyst.



Smokey quartz with some milky tones.



Smokey quartz with some inclusions.



Clear quartz.



Smokey quartz.

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Tourmaline quartz.