

Rock garden

The rock garden built into a slope immediately to the east of the Shitoan Hall is another of Muso Soseki's masterpieces. It is known as the oldest and greatest "dry landscape" (*karesansui*) garden, and is considered a prototype of the more stylized rock gardens of carefully pruned trees and raked gravel that followed during the Muromachi period (1336–1573), when Zen Buddhism flourished.

It is thought that Soseki created this rock garden as a landscaped representation of his own tomb, although the graceful terracing more readily recalls a dry waterfall.

One of the rocks represents a carp jumping out of the water. The story goes that if this fish succeeds in reaching the top of the waterfall, it will turn into Ryu, the dragon god. The image is a metaphor for fighting against stiff odds.