

THE TO-KEN SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN
for the Study and Preservation of Japanese Swords and Fittings



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Fulham Conservative Club, 1 Shorrols Road, Fulham, S.W.6.

Next Meeting - Wednesday, 3rd March, 1965. 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME

Blade & Fittings
Theme

Early versus Late. A general debate among members present on the various aspects of collecting early or late blades or fittings. Bring your earliest and latest pieces for exhibition and comparison.

Film Slides

If the power is connected, if the projector doesn't fuse, etc., there will be a slide show.

Books

Dr. Torigoe's book has been dispatched from Japan. The Society have ordered six copies and they will go to the people who have ordered and paid first. The discount is still available so please get your orders in as soon as possible. Price £9. 10. Od., about 700 illustrations of tsuba.

Bulletin

We aim to produce our first Bulletin in April, and we welcome any articles or letters from all members with suggestions or material for publication. All correspondence to:-

John Harding,
5, Walpole Road,
Twickenham, Middx.

BOSHI

A summary of the talk given by Bon Dale at the Society's meeting on February 3rd, 1965.

Judging from the blade appraisal session we had at the last meeting it would seem that some members may be a little hazy as to what is meant by a GOOD Boshi. This is all that this talk is intended to cover; the estimation of a Good Boshi. No attempt will be made to cover the many kinds and styles of Boshi, many of which can be used as identification features for certain Schools and for individual swordsmiths.

First, to define what is meant by the word Boshi. B.W. Robinson's "Primer" says: "The tempered edge above the yokote". This is a little narrow perhaps, because it does not allow for blades without yokote, for example hira-dzukri blades. Yumoto in "Samurai Sword" gives the definition "Tempered lines on points, found in many styles".

This is better, in other words, Boshi is the pattern of Hamon within the point of a blade, and that includes blades of all types.

However, this is a deceptively simple statement, because what the definition leaves out is that this pattern or line of tempering, **MUST BE PRESENT.**

This may seem very obvious, but to illustrate the point: If one examines a blade, with say a view to buying in a shop or elsewhere, if one finds that the blade has no yakiba, there is no question, **OUT** it goes! What, no yakiba, no hamon? Hopeless, a fake! Finished. On the other hand, if the line of hamon is obvious, or fairly obvious, depending on the condition, but the Boshi is obscure or even non-existent, the tendency is to ignore this. The tendency is to find excuses for the lack of Boshi, to twist the blade about, hold it at different angles and to look for the Boshi. The Boshi should not have to be looked for, **IT SHOULD BE THERE WITHOUT QUESTION**, as well defined as the rest of the hamon.

Examine Oshigata drawings of blades in Japan, for example in Juyo Token Nado Zufu, ALL will be found to have Boshi. The Boshi is an essential part of a good blade, in fact, together with the Hamon work on the Monouchi, the most important part.

The blade illustrated in drawing 1 by Yamato no kami Yoshimichi, is a very simple and very good example of "the tempering line within the point of a sword". The blade has a very controlled simple Suguha style yakiba which continues with absolutely no falling off or obscurity into the Kissaki, to form a simple O-Marukoshi.

And this is the lesson, whatever the type of Boshi it should be clear and well defined like that, even if it is very complex. No looking, no excuses.

Drawing No.2 is not a good Boshi, it is a boshi gone wrong, a rice pudding boshi, no form, it is cloudy, misty, woolly and obscure. Difficult to draw in this medium, but too often seen in real life. It would not be an exaggeration to say that sixty-five per cent of all the blades we are privileged to collect in this country have Boshi of this type.

Poor Boshi of this kind must not be confused with Ichimai Boshi, Drawing 3, in which the whole, or almost all, of the point is solid tempering. The line of the Hamon may turn and cross on the Yokote line, this must be looked for carefully before dismissing a blade in a poor condition of polish. It is well to bear in mind however, that blades with Ichimai Boshi are not too frequently seen, but are by no means rare.

Not to be confused with Ichimai Boshi is no Boshi at all! This, as shown in Drawing 4, is when the line of Hamon enters the Kissaki, possibly attempts to follow the edge, and then fades away. This is very bad, even though the Boshi area may be clear and white, refer back to illustration 1, the edge of the Boshi should be defined, either in nioi or niye work, but it cannot be allowed to just fade away into nothing. Sometimes it will be found that the line of Hamon continues strongly enough but ignores the traffic

signals and goes straight off the edge of the Kissaki, about a third to half-way up. This obviously is also very bad, and one may suspect that the sword has been shortened at the wrong end, the point re-ground, the whole re-furbished, and quickly sold to the nearest Foreign Devil.

Drawing 4 illustrates the major fault on Boshi, and this leads to some other faults which may be found on blades even with well defined Boshi. Remember, even if the blade has a Boshi there are still a number of pitfalls to be looked for.

Drawing 5 shows:

1. TORI NOKUCHI. Fine crack in the extreme tip.
2. KITAE WARE. Crack in the cutting edge.
3. KARASUGUCHI. Crack across mune and down both sides, or just one side, or just in the mune.
4. TSUKI NOWA. Crescent (Moon) shaped crack in the grain, often slightly depressed at one end.
5. TATE WARE. Longitudinal splits following the line of grain, often crossing the yokote line or occurring where the grain turns into the Kissaki.
6. FUKURA. Blisters, or associated charcoal pit.
7. MUNEWARE. Crack lengthways down the mune, these may often be filled and difficult to see.

In conclusion, to illustrate the differences between good Koto and Shinto Boshi, (here greatly enlarged photographs of Boshi on three blades, taken by a member, were displayed*), here are three examples of excellent Boshi, typical of their School and period.

The first, a Katana blade by MORIMASA, Kongobei School, Chikuzen, dated in Japanese texts to Joji period 1362. An example of Kaen Boshi (flame) with hakikake and a considerable amount of

niye work. It is true to say that most good Koto blades have beautiful Boshi, this being a very good example. Even if the rest of the blade is quiet and not too active, the Boshi will be good.

The second, a Katana blade by SUKENAGA, Bizen Yokoyama School, died 1851. A Ko-maru Boshi, with some niye work and traces of hakikake, typical of Shinto Boshi which are usually far less active than Koto, even if the Hamon on the rest of the blade is fairly active or even florid, as is the case here. There are of course, exceptions, Hankei, some of the Yoshimichi's, Kiyomaro, to name a few.

The third example, a Wakizashi blade by YOSHIMICHI, Mishina school, Yamashiro, probably "Grandfather" Yoshimichi, mid 17th century. Again a Kaen Boshi, not so pronounced as the first example, but perhaps more typical of a normal Kaen style with again considerable niye work. The Kaeri here is long and eventually continues as patches of Muneyaki down the back of the blade.

* Two of the Boshi illustrations are reproduced here, the SUKENAGA on the left and the MORIMASA on the right. The original prints show great detail; if members would like copies they should write to the Secretary and they will be notified of the cost.

