

Selecting an Utsuri

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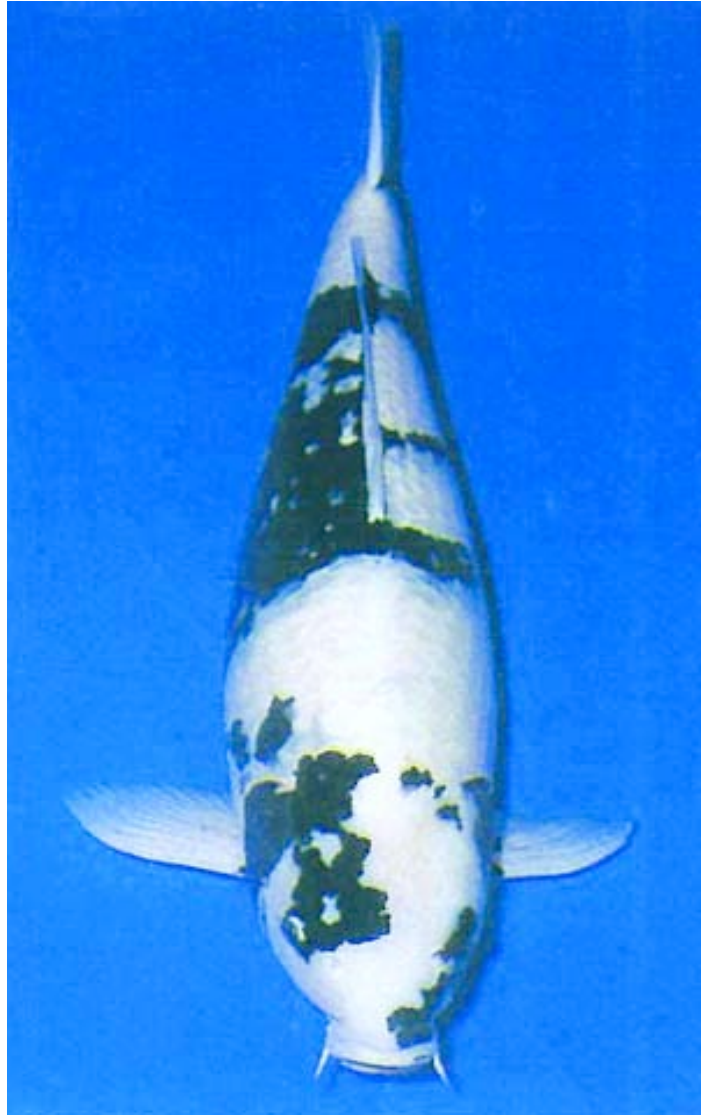
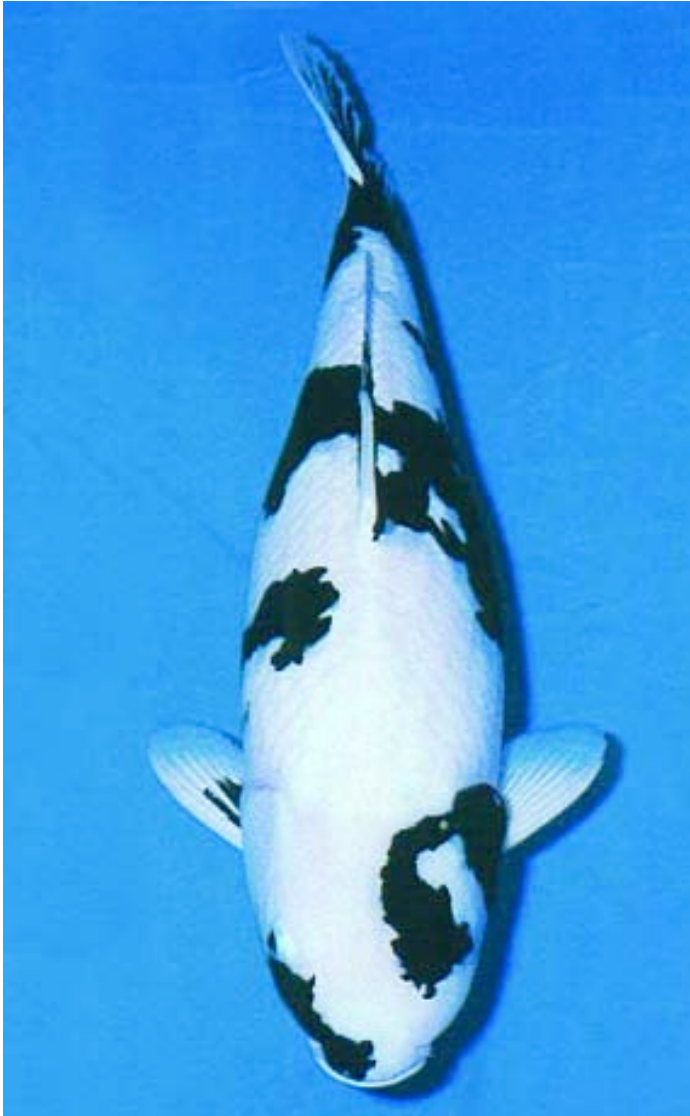
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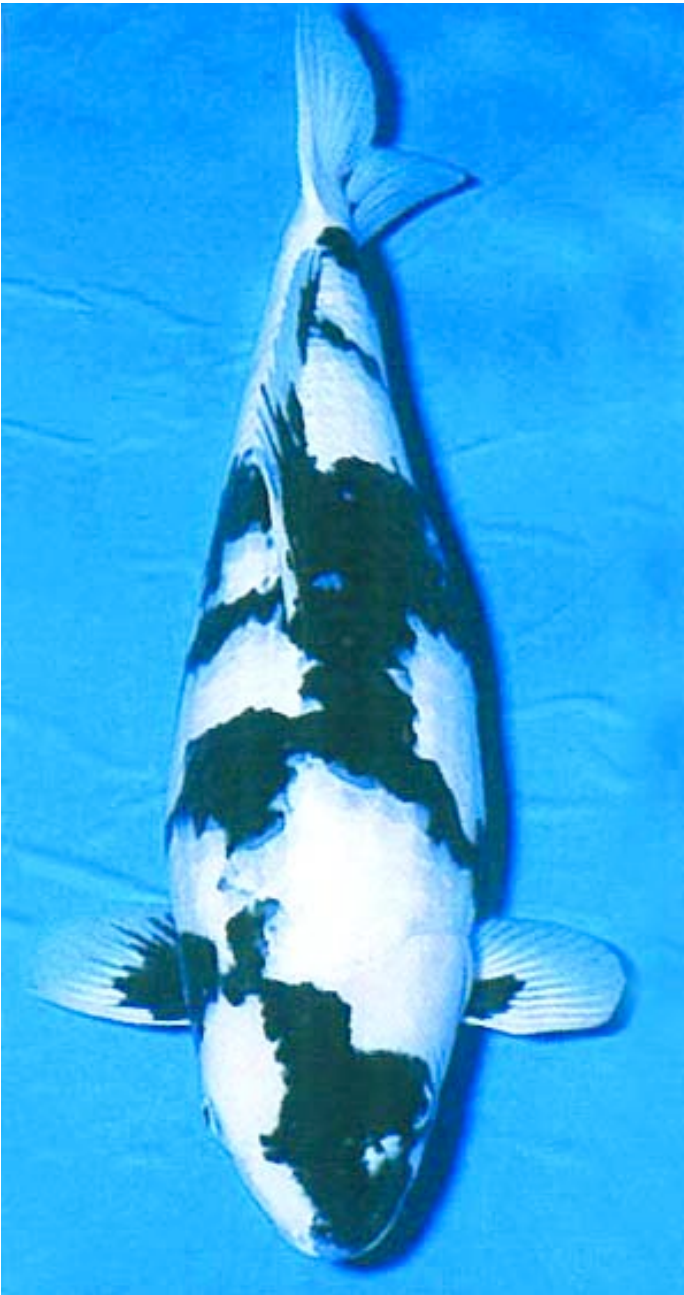
Whether you are looking for a Shiro Utsuri, Hi Utsuri, or Ki Utsuri, you look for the same basic characteristics. Tip: If you plan on showing the fish some day, you should choose a Shiro Utsuri, because they always do better in shows.

It is very important to start by looking for a good head. The head of a Shiro Utsuri should have both colors (black and white). Do not buy a Shiro Utsuri with an all black or an all white head. Look for an interesting pattern of black on the head with about 50% black and 50% white. Nose sumi is very important on Shiro Utsuri and it is preferred. A lightening pattern of black down the face, called Hachiware or a black "V" across the top of the head,

called Hitomoji are preferred, but any interesting pattern will do, as long as there is balance and both colors.

A body that is 50% black and 50% white is best, but a higher percentage of white is acceptable. Do not buy an Utsuri that has too much black. All of the black should be in large patches and the patches should wrap around to the bottom of the fish. This gives a feeling of strength. Do not buy an Utsuri with a lot of small black spots. Look for good quality white. A white shoulder region, I think, helps show off the color. The hard part in selecting a young Shiro Utsuri, is that much of the black is deep and not finished and the white may still be grayish. Look for these areas of Shita Sumi, which indicate later black and try to imagine it filled in.





The pectoral fins can be all black at Tosai or have a patch of black at the base. Make sure both pectorals match. Many Utsuri can have one black fin and one white fin. Stay away from these. Utsuri can have all black pectorals when 1 year old, but this should be moving into the center to form Motoguro by age two. Best type Motoguro does not cover the leading ray of the pectoral fin. A little yellow in the head of a Shiro is also possible, but this should turn white by age three. Not too yellow please.

The tail tube, or Ozutsu, should have both black and white. Not just white or not just black. It needs balance.

Make sure the Utsuri has only 2 colors; especially on the Shiro Utsuri, there should be no red spots.

After you find the right head, pattern, and fins, make sure you have a fish with a good broad body and large fins. This helps to assure good growth in the future. Also, check the fish in a tub to be sure there are no defects or signs of disease.

When selecting a Hi Utsuri or Ki Utsuri, the rules are the same. All the comments about white are the same for the red of a Hi Utsuri or the yellow of a Ki Utsuri. Good quality Hi Utsuri and Ki Utsuri are very hard to find because the Japanese prefer the Shiro Utsuri and more of these are bred in Japan. ❖

*Thank you to Taro Kodama, Japan Koi Online,
for providing the Utsuri pictures for this article.*

