

Producing *Interesting* Koi in *Limited* Space

Chiba prefecture: Gonjiro Kanshogyo - Mr. Suguru Takahashi. Gonjiro sanke and showa are attracting attention. In spite of only having modest facilities, the koi are showing interesting characteristics.



Mr. Suguru Takahashi

Sanke and showa from Gonjiro Kanshogyo attract much attention at the breeders' auction events. Although this farm has produced some All-Japan level prize winning kohaku, they now breed sanke and showa exclusively.

Even though the farm is on the small side, they seek out unique koi of excellent lineage with the aim to produce exceptional koi which are now gaining acclaim. Although they were a trusted and well-known reseller of koi, they shifted their focus to breeding 3 years ago. I spoke with Suguru Takahashi who is the managing director.

As I wanted to produce different koi from other varieties, the offspring of the 113 cm benigoï was in my sights as a parent.

Interviewer: I was told the tosai (figure ① and ②) that were entered into the a breeders auction received very high bids. Did you spawn them from the famous Higashi benigoï? (figure ①)

Takahashi: Yes, the sanke (fig ①) on the left are offspring of the benigoï. I am now jointly producing with Hiroaki Shono. Furthermore, the two of us have been planning this for a while, as our farms are small in size we do not want to be in the same situation as other koi breeders. We both agreed that the idea of producing unique koi with better traits would be more interesting than run-of-the-mill koi. In the past I think I saw some kohaku offspring of that benigoï at so I asked about them. Higashi bred the benigoï with the sanke for the first two years but the results

did not meet his expectations. Two of the female koi remained so we asked if we could have one of them, either one being fine. They were willing to give us one.



113 cm Benigo

(Figure ① Benigo). Shigeyuki Higashi is a koi hobbyist residing in Aichi prefecture. His benigo which exceeds one meter in size often take prizes at the ZNA All-Japan Show. He bred this jumbo benigo to produce kohaku. You can read more about him in *Koi-Bito* issue 9. He had already produced sanke from the Benigo by 1998. This Benigo was bred at Higashino Koi Farm in Awaji and in the end it grew to a size of around 113 cm.

(Note: Tanaka sanke) Currently used as a parent koi at Sakai Fish Farm in Hiroshima, offspring from this sanke won Grand Champion at the 32nd All-Japan Combined Show. The Tanaka sanke and Wakashoryu lines have become the major producers for the farm.

Interviewer: Aren't they quite valuable koi?

Takahashi: Yes. I heard they only started to producing sanke 8 or 9 years ago. I heard that there was a rare male koi that was a sibling of those sanke. I was also told that the look of the koi was not very attractive. Moreover, the body shape of the koi was more distinctive and I wondered what it would be like if I used this male koi to spawn with. When I told them about my ideas they conceded to let us have two of the koi and I was able to start my breeding project using them together with some of my own koi. We were successful last May (figure ③), but used a different combination this year (figure ④).

Interviewer: Which variety of koi did you breed with that female?

Takahashi: The koi is from Sakai and has large sumi. I heard it is one of the grandchildren of the Tanaka sanke and is now around 7 year old.

Interviewer: What about the other male koi?

Takahashi: I used a Marudo male this year (figure ④ in the middle). The one from last year (figure ③ on the right) came from Kondo and I was told the parent of this koi was rather silky and is Matsunosuke. It was bought as a jumbo tosai by Masamitsu Hayakawa. When it became 2 years old he found out that the koi was a male and asked me if I was interested in using it for breeding. Even though the size of the koi was not the size I would usually like, I was fascinated

by the tail tube and beni. I entered the offspring (figure ① on the left above) of the koi in to the breeder auction.

Interviewer: I heard the first of the offspring from the benigoi did not look as nice as they do now. But this female koi has a proper pattern, doesn't it?

Takahashi: It has a kohaku pattern but actually the beni is more orange than red. My thoughts are that to get the sumi to take hold that we'd have to breed over and over with a male having strong sumi.



Two year old Gonjiro sanke and showa harvested in Niigata on November 20

Interviewer: The Tanaka sanke line has strong sumi, but how about the Wakashoryu line?

Takahashi: Yes. I use this male when I want to introduce sumi. I've also used Wakashoryu line for sumi in a different pairing (figures ⑤ and ⑥) and I entered about 3 or 4 of these offspring into auction.

One other set is home-bred Matsunosuke The parents have the genes to keep growing.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about this female koi? (figures ⑤ and ⑥)

Takahashi: This koi was bred by us. When we were breeding in the outskirts of Kisarazu a long time ago, I knew a man named Teruo Yugami. He ran Yugami Koi Farm and liked finding young koi, but he now focuses mainly on goldfish. He would often buy Matsunosuke sanke from his good friend Sakai from Isawa. He gave us one of the koi, which was quite sizeable.

Unfortunately I didn't measure the size. He bred this female together with a male from Miyaishi in Niigata, and we received a few of the offspring. One of them became our original sanke parent. We then breed our original female with a male Matsunosuke and other males which came from Niigata and the resulting children grew quite large. However, either through bad water or poor keeping skills on our part, most of these came down with hikui and what we had kept as parent candidates didn't turn out so well.

Since I'm talking about these sanke, I heard that they'd grown quite big. Before my father died three years ago, he found two of the koi which I have been talking about. They were on the farm of an old acquaintance and now almost 20 years old. They had been kept only in a concrete pond and measured around 85cm, but a little on the thin side. I asked the farm if they could give us one of the koi, and we have two females that we kept from spawning her (see figures ⑤ and ⑥) which we now use as parents.

Interviewer: How big is the female koi?

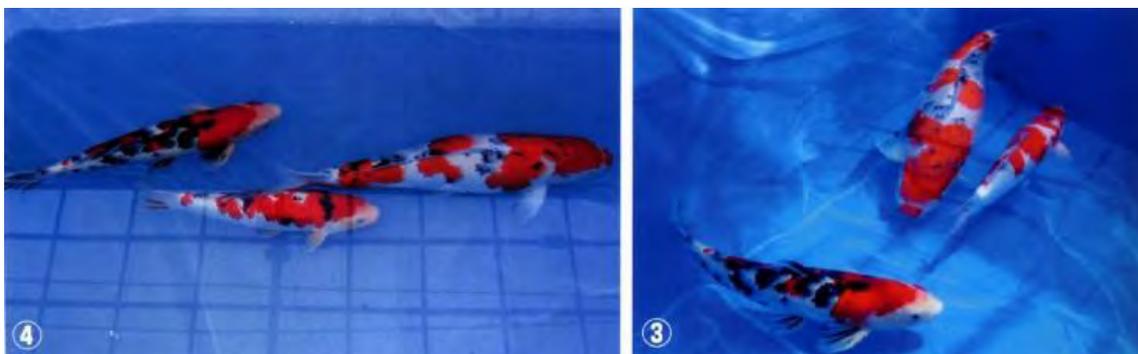
Takahashi: We have no mud ponds for the parent koi yet they still continue to grow. Now they are around 85 cm with rather dull beni and patterns. However, they have big heads and an extremely attractive shape so we kept them for breeding. Shono likes sanke and said there were no breeders around him. So we thought we'd give breeding sanke a try. At any rate, we thought that bigger is better, and for that very reason we decided to use this female koi. We named it "Shomatsu" after **Shono** and **Matsunosuke**.

Interviewer: The body has a very nice look to it, even from just the picture. What does it look like in the flesh?

Takahashi: It has beautiful sumi with sashikomi, but I wish the beni was just a tad brighter. However, we are using it for breeding because I like its body shape. We are hoping things will go well, but a lot depends on which male koi we pair it with in the near future.

Interviewer: So you breed Shomatsu with male Wakashoryu (figures ⑤ and ⑥ on the right) last year and again this year . Where is the other male from?

Takahashi: We used Shobu line (figure ⑤ on the left) from Sakai FF, which produced the prettiest patterns last year. But we spawned the Shomatsu with a Marudo male (figure ⑥ middle) this year which produced fascinating offspring.



③Parents: Benigoi no ko - Higashi sanke set spawned last year. From right to left: male from Kondo, female Higashi sanke, Tanaka sanke male. ④Higashi sanke parent set from this year. From the right to left: the female Higashi sanke, male from Marudo, male Tanaka sanke.



⑤Female Shochiku sanke (home-bred Matsunosuke) set from last year. From right to left: Male Wakashoryu, male Shobu, female Shochiku sanke. ⑥Parent koi for Shochiku sanke from this year. Female Wakashoryu on top right, male from Marudo on top left, female Shochiku sanke below.



Fifth sanke set for this year: Benigo no ko male and a home-bred Matsunosuke female

Interviewer: So did you also spawn the same Marudo male with the Higashi sanke?

Takahashi: Yes. I really like that sanke, so we used it to spawn with both. When I asked Marudo about this koi, he said it was the produced from a Matsunosuke female and Sadazo male.

Interviewer: Through natural spawning?

Takahashi: Indeed. If we employed artificial spawning and separate the eggs, then we would know the exact results. However, my first impression of the offspring is from my judgment of the parents. I could pretty much tell which koi came from the Marudo male. We noticed a difference this year in that the sumi was heavier and the beni was brighter than years past. We also spawned a female from Marudo last year with males from Momotaro and Matsunosuke. The offspring were sanke with strong sumi. Furthermore sanke with big sumi are all the rage now, and I thought this koi might be interesting. Nevertheless, the patterns produced didn't appeal to me so much.

Interviewer: So for the last two years, you've only spawned using the Higashi and Shomatsu sanke?

Takahashi: We spawned two sets sanke and two sets of showa. This year we also bred another sanke set: a male benigo from Higashi and an attractive female of our own three grew to 70 cm in size by sansai. This is the set here (see figure ⑦) with the male from benigo on the right. It's around 75 cm in size.

The difficulties producing sanke revolves around sumi. Higashi sanke have dull but unique patterns.

Interviewer: Many hobbyists lament that there are not enough sanke breeders. Do you feel the reason for this is that it is difficult to produce sanke?

Takahashi: Definitely. We still have much to learn about producing sanke. The body shape and character are just as hard to produce just like other koi varieties, but generating nice sumi patterns adds an additional level of difficulty.

With showa, if either the male or female have good quality sumi, then that trait usually gets passed on to the children. With sanke however, if both male and female have sumi that is mostly finished, then the children seem to get overwhelmed with sumi or develop it in undesirable places. Sanke with large sumi markings are trendy recently, but a sanke is pretty worthless if the sumi is good but overall quality poor. It looks graceless if the koi has an window in the sumi, and shallow sumi has no tsuya. Sumi should after all have sashi just as beni does. For me, I think getting the completion level of sumi just right to be the most difficult aspect of breeding sanke.

Interviewer: I see.

Takahashi: As you can see from tosai both sanke and showa have beni, but if they don't have dark markings we cannot tell whether they are sanke or just two-colored koi. Also, most of the people who like sanke want kata-sumi. The interesting thing about Higashi sanke is that they have less kasane-sumi than the others.

Interviewer: The offspring from the Higashi sanke that you entered in the auction have considerable tsubo-sumi, don't they?

Takahashi: These koi (figure ⑧), are offspring of the Higashi sanke, most of them have tsubo-sumi. I am wondering what kind of koi Mr. Higashi bred with the aka-muji. From my estimate he pays attention to genetics is quite selective in choosing the parents. The females he chooses tend to have tsubo-sumi.

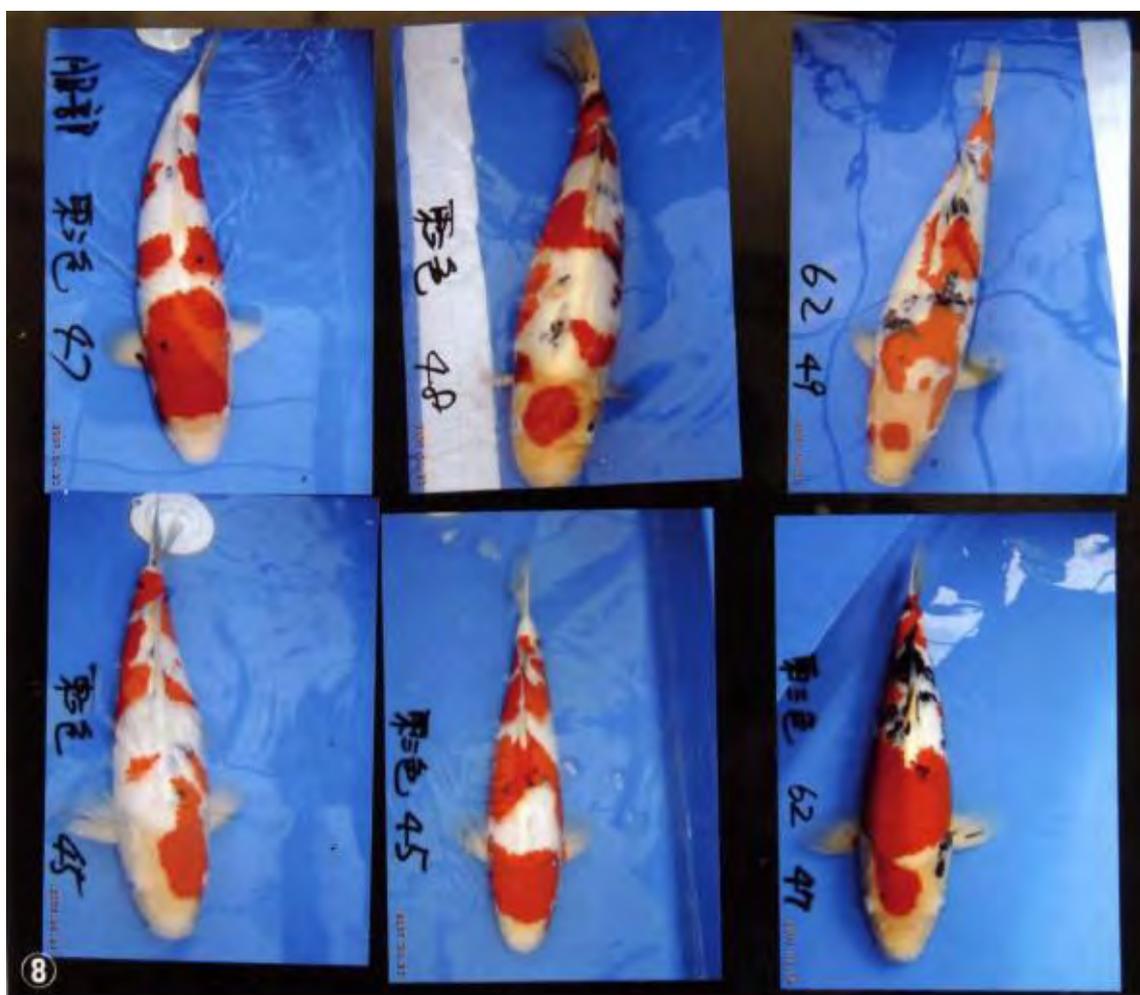
Interviewer: How about the patterns?

Takahashi: Most Higashi sanke have poor patterns, especially with regards to the hiban. Some children take the better beni from the male parent, which is an improvement. Some of the offspring have sloppy sumi, which makes me tend to believe that the genes are close those of wild koi.

By the end of September we had harvested a little less than a hundred koi that were in the mud pond of our farm. Shomatsu sanke were raised in six mud ponds and we harvested around two

hundred koi from one of those six. Two of those were taken to the store; we had around three hundred and fifty koi, which is the maximum number of koi we can keep at the store. The store is even smaller in size than one of the ponds we use for the Shomatsu sanke. When we were culling last year I had my doubts that there would be much of anything worth keeping until the harvest, but this year we are back to the culling level of a bad sanke spawning. The offspring are becoming more graceful, and the difference from last year is the new male parent from Marudo, which we feel has given our sanke a well-needed genetic lift.

Interviewer: From the picture (8) of the offspring from last year, there is tremendous amount of variation between siblings.



Higashi Sanke Ake-nisai photos in random order. Various body types and head shapes are present. Patterns are quite unappealing, but it's said that there is a tendency towards tsubo-sumi in this line

Takahashi: That's right. I attribute that to breeding with two different males and so on. As you can see from this picture, some look modest, some have long faces and some are long and rounded and even have a very big tail tube. From my experiences, long faced type of koi tends to grow bigger. The koi grown to about 45 cm or so by springtime, and the body doesn't seem to change that much at the harvest, but that's one of the interesting parts of koi breeding. However, it's only been a year and a half since we started breeding this type of sanke we don't know for sure how they'll turn out.

Even though we have started selling some of them already, we are planning to use one of them to establish this line with. The best situation for use would be if we could produce F_1 from benigo and then F_2 to sell. What we are hoping is to use procedure F_2 as a stepping-stone for future direction. Saying that, I owe Higashi thanks for helping us to make the base of our success up until now. This type of sanke is fascinating but I feel that we have to work harder to establish something more attractive going forward as opposed to merely fascinating.鯉人