

Swords that we like: 1) Naka Kawachi (Kawachi (no) Kami Kunisuke) wakazashi

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1) Introduction

A recent article by Fred Weissberg (**Weissberg (2019)**) describes in great detail a sword by the famous *Kawachi (no) Kami Kunisuke* popularly known as *Naka Kawachi*. The article by Weissberg describes a magnificent (*Tokubetsu Hoson*) *katana* , with a *nagasa* of 71 cm

In this article we describe an exceptional *Wakizashi*, also *Tokubetsu Hozon*, by the same smith. So in a sense this augments the article by Weissberg . We also describe the *shirasaya* of this sword which has a *sayagaki* by Tanobe Michihiro Sensei and which contains his artistic appreciation of the sword and praise for its quality.

We also describe the *koshirae* of the sword which is *kawari* (very unusual) and expensive. We believe it complements the sword.

In section 2 we give an introduction to *Naka Kawachi* drawing heavily from the article by Fred Weissberg (**Weissberg (2019)**) and also an article by Ogasawara Nobuo (**Ogasawara(1982)**).

In section 3 we describe the sword in detail (dimensions, shape, *kitae* , *hamon* and *nakago*).

In section 4 we reproduce the *sayagaki* written on the *shirasaya* of the sword and provide a translation of it. This translation was done, in part, by Mr. Tsuruta Kazushige . It contains, as mentioned above, an artistic appreciation and praise of the sword by Sensei Tanobe Michihiro.

In section 5 we describe the *koshirae* and make some observations about it. We think it is interesting because the *koshirae* is unusual in its design and material usage.

2) A brief introduction to Naka Kawachi

Naka Kawachi is the name given to the second (*nidai*) generation of several generations of sword smiths working in Osaka, using the name Kunisuke. Naka Kawachi was active from sometime in Shoho to early Genroku (approximately 1644-1698). He passed away in the 11th year of Genroku (1698) Other than that, truly little is known of his personal history.

The Shodai Kunisuke was trained in the Horikawa school probably by Echigo (no) kami Kunitomo. The Shodai moved to Osaka together with Kunisada (Izumi (no) kami Kunisada). They both received the titles (Kawachi no kami and Izumi (no) kami, in about the ninth year of *Genna*.(1623)

Naka Kawachi is known as the inventor of a special type of *choji* , called *kobushi-gata* which is a *choji* variation that has the appearance of multiple fists put together in a lump.

His *jigane* is a most admirable fine *ko-itame* and he tempered primarily in *nioi deki.*, unlike his father who tempered primarily in *nie deki.*

3) Technical description

Measurements: *nagasa* 50.4cm, *sori* 1.0cm, *motohaba* 2.9cm, *sakihaba* 2.0cm, *Kasane* 0.72cm

Shape: *shinogi-zukuri*, *ihori-mune*, broad *mihada*

Kitae: *ko-itame*

Hamon: *nie deki gunome-midare* with “*kobashi-gata*” (tight *choji* clusters) with light sprinkling of *ko-nie* among the clusters.

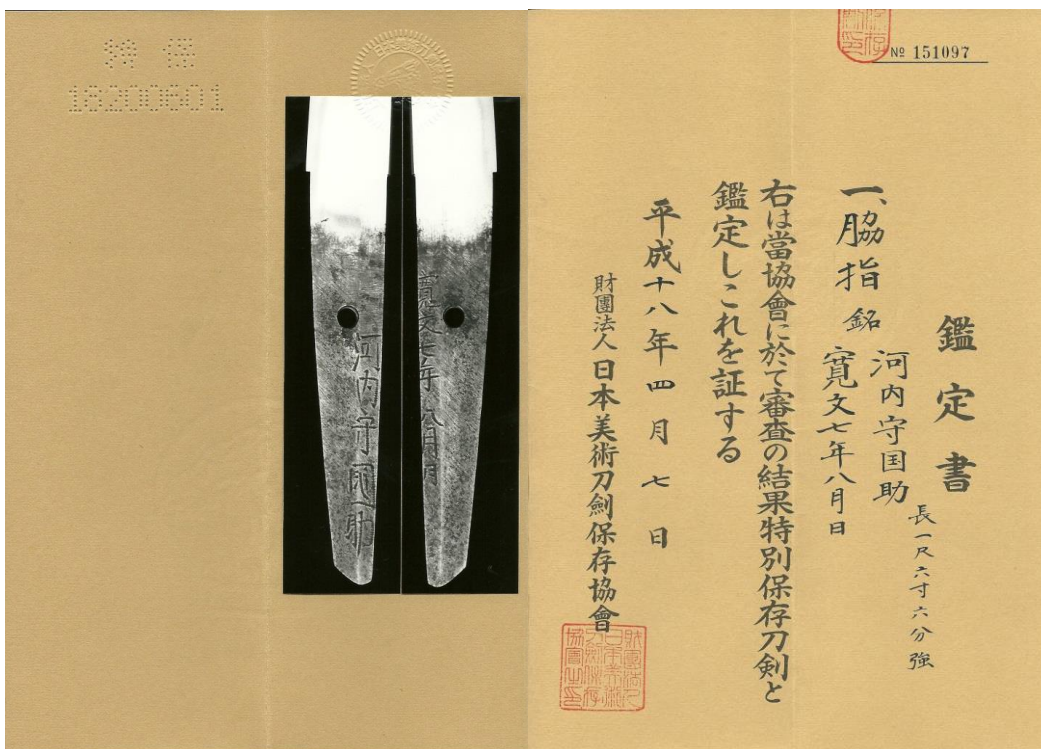
Boshi: *chu-kissaki*, *ko-maru*, *ko-kaeri*

Horimono: none

Nakago: *ubu* with one *mekugi-ana*, *Kasane* 0.82cm



The sword certificate is show below -



Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate issued by NBTHK 4th April, 2006;
Kawachi Kami Kunisuke – kanbun 7 nen 8 gatsu (August 1667)

4) Artistic appreciation from the Sayagaki on the saya



Sayagaki written by Sensei Tanobe Michihiro - The Translation (with help from Mr. Tsuruta Kasushige) is as follows: It is very rare to see [a sword] by Sensu kawachi Kami Kunisuke in this period, Kanbun 7, where the jigane and the hamon has strong nie and is full of spirit which is one of his characteristics. Signed**: Tanobe Michihiro (Tauji Michihiro) late September, Heisei 12 (year 2000)

5) Koshirae in Kawari-nuri style (The unusual sword mounts)



Detail of Saya with inlaid pieces of sliced and crushed Malachite.

The *saya* is composed of **Malachite** sliced and imbedded in the black *urushi* lacquer. Malachite is a [copper carbonate](#) hydroxide mineral which gives it a green coloration. The [formula](#) is $Cu_2CO_3(OH)_2$. Malachite is not commonly found in Japan and it is possible it was imported from China or Russia. However, there appear to be several *koshirae* from the late Edo era that have *saya* made in a similar fashion using malachite. I would guess that it was a popular style in the Bakamatsu era, particularly among wealthy merchants, due to the cost and unusual nature of the manufacture. Also, most of the *koshirae* I have found, were of *wakizashi* length, which was popular among merchants.



Examples of Malachite Koshirae
Left to right:
Christies, Aoi Art and Nihonto.AU

The *fuchi-kachira* are made of *shakudo* which has deeply engraved ocean waves and covered in gold. The dragon menuki is also *shakudo* with gold overlay. The *tsuba* is *shakudo* with engraving of waves.



The *tsuba* is dark bluish black *shakudo* with high relief engraving of waves. There are small gold overlays at the wave crests. The maker of the *tsuba* is unknown, but it is Edo era.



The *fuchi-kashira* are made of gold overlay *shakudo*. It has deeply engraved ocean waves motif. The menuki is a Dragon motif and *shakudo* with gold overlay.

6) Sword Overview

This sword is undoubtedly a quality work of Naka Kawachi, however, what makes it unusual is the construction of the *jigane* and rendering of the *hamon*. Most Naka Kawachi swords are forged in *nioi deki* (reference Weissburg, Ogasawara), but this example is forged in *nie deki*. This was pointed out by Tanobe Sensei as unusual and “full of spirit.” In close examination of the sword, the *nie* is prolific both regular size *nie* and *ko-nie*. It is not a *Koto* blade and the *Shinto* style of forging is apparent, but the subtleness of *ko-nie* scattered throughout the *hamon* is not typical of *Shinto* forging, nor of Naka Kawachi.



The *hamon* is highly active and possesses the typical *choji* clusters of *kobushi-gata* as well as *ashi*, *sunagashi*, what appear to be some *kinsuji*. In the typical Naka Kawachi style the *hamon* starts out straight and moves into a gentle undulation of *notare* before becoming wild *gunome midare* comprised of *choji* clusters and ending with a *ko-maru boshi*. However, the blade is also unusual since it is a rare, dated blade. It is dated to the later Kanbun period and has the *sugata* typical of that era.

6) Notes and References

Notes:

*For translation assistance and advise, we are grateful for the help of Sensei Yukihisa Nogami, Sensei Masafume Toyama and Sensei Kazushige Tsuruta. Any remaining errors are our responsibility.

** The dates used in the *sayagaki* utilize very ancient Japanese Kanji. The first two kanji 庚辰年 reads KANOE TATSU NEN and means the 17 year of the 70 year of sixty years cycle.(See Self(1987) page 177). It is the 17 year of the cycle (See attached table) and corresponds to the year 2000 or Heisei 12.

The next two kanji 長月 reads Nagatsuki and it means September

The next two kanji 下澣 reads Gekan and it means late "September"

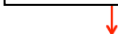
The next four kanji 田氏道宏 is Tauji (Tanobe) Michihiro

And finally the last kanji 識 reads Tsuki and it means written by

六十干支 These are used for years and months.

干支	音読み	訓読み	干支	音読み	訓読み	干支	音読み	訓読み
1 甲子	コウシ	キノエネ	21 甲申	コウシン	キノエサル	41 甲辰	コウシン	キノエタツ
2 乙丑	イツチュウ	キノトウシ	22 乙酉	イツユウ	キノトトリ	42 乙巳	イツシ	キノトミ
3 丙寅	ヘイイン	ヒノエトラ	23 丙戌	ヘイジュツ	ヒノエイヌ	43 丙午	ヘイゴ	ヒノエウマ
4 丁卯	テイボウ	ヒノトウ	24 丁亥	テイガイ	ヒノトイ	44 丁未	テイビ	ヒノトヒツジ
5 戊辰	ボシン	ツチノエタツ	25 戊子	ボシ	ツチノエネ	45 戊申	ボシン	ツチノエサル
6 己巳	キシ	ツチノトミ	26 己丑	キチュウ	ツチノトウシ	46 己酉	キユウ	ツチノトトリ
7 庚午	コウゴ	カノエウマ	27 庚寅	コウイン	カノエトラ	47 庚戌	コウジュツ	カノエイヌ
8 辛未	シンビ	カノトヒツジ	28 辛卯	シンボウ	カノトウ	48 辛亥	シンガイ	カノトイ
9 壬申	ジンシン	ミズノエサル	29 壬辰	ジンシン	ミズノエタツ	49 壬子	ジンシ	ミズノエネ
10 癸酉	キユウ	ミズノトトリ	30 癸巳	キシ	ミズノトミ	50 癸丑	キチュウ	ミズノトウシ
11 甲戌	コウジュツ	キノエイヌ	31 甲午	コウゴ	キノエウマ	51 甲寅	コウイン	キノエトラ
12 乙亥	イツガイ	キノトイ	32 乙未	イツビ	キノトヒツジ	52 乙卯	イツボウ	キノトウ
13 丙子	ヘイシ	ヒノエネ	33 丙申	ヘイシン	ヒノエサル	53 丙辰	ヘイシン	ヒノエタツ
14 丁丑	テイチュウ	ヒノトウシ	34 丁酉	テイユウ	ヒノトトリ	54 丁巳	テイシ	ヒノトミ
15 戊寅	ボイン	ツチノエトラ	35 戊戌	ボジュツ	ツチノエイヌ	55 戊午	ボゴ	ツチノエウマ
16 己卯	キボウ	ツチノトウ	36 己亥	キガイ	ツチノトイ	56 己未	キビ	ツチノトヒツジ
17 庚辰	コウシン	カノエタツ	37 庚子	コウシ	カノエネ	57 庚申	コウシン	カノエサル
18 辛巳	シンシ	カノトミ	38 辛丑	シンチュウ	カノトウシ	58 辛酉	シンユウ	カノトトリ
19 壬午	ジンゴ	ミズノエウマ	39 壬寅	ジンイン	ミズノエトラ	59 壬戌	ジンジュツ	ミズノエイヌ
20 癸未	キビ	ミズノトヒツジ	40 癸卯	キボウ	ミズノトウ	60 癸亥	キガイ	ミズノトイ

Pronunciation



庚辰 (Koushin)

17年(Nen) in 60 干支(Kanshi)

Pronunciation

Japanese names of months

和風月名

和風月名	読み	旧暦の月	新暦の日付
睦月	ムツキ	1月	2月10日～3月11日
如月	キサラギ	2月	3月12日～4月9日
弥生	ヤヨイ	3月	4月10日～5月9日
卯月	ウツキ	4月	5月10日～6月8日
皐月	サツキ	5月	6月9日～7月7日
水無月	ミナヅキ、ミナツキ	6月	7月8日～8月6日
文月	フミヅキ、フツキ	7月	8月7日～9月4日
葉月	ハヅキ、ハツキ	8月	9月5日～10月4日
長月	ナガツキ、ナガヅキ	9月	10月5日～11月2日
神無月	カンナヅキ	10月	11月3日～12月2日
霜月	シモツキ	11月	12月3日～12月31日
師走	シワス	12月	1月1日～1月30日

長月 (Nagatsuki) = September

Pronunciation

▪ 「新暦の日付」の列は、2013年2月10日～2014年1月30日の例です。

References:

Weissberg (2019) -Frederick Weissberg , *Nidai Kawashi No Kami Kunisuke* , TO-RON , December 2019, pages 11 to 18.

Ogasawara (1982) Ogasawara Nobuo , *SHINTO ,Kawachi No Kami Kunisuke* , Token Bijutsu, volume 12 (English Edition) , page 25.

Self(1987)- James Self and Nobuko Hirose, *Japanese Art Signatures* , bamboo publishing Ltda. London