Editors' Preface
Benjamin Penny & Remco Breuker

“Crossing Over” to Immortality in the Daoist Ritual
Regulations of Highest Purity
Valentina Georgieva

Flows of Time in the Centres and Peripheries of Tang Experience
Oliver Moore

Within or Without? Ambiguity of Borders and Koryŏ Koreans’ Travels During the Liao, Jin, Song and Yuan
Remco Breuker

Reflections on the Tower of the Crimson Clouds and the History of the Private Library in Late-Imperial China
Duncan M. Campbell

Taikun’s Zen Master From China: Yinyuan, the Tokugawa Bakufu, and the Founding of Manpakuji in 1661
Jiang Wu

Vassal of a Deposed Regime: Archetypes of Reclusion in the Poetry of Former Shogunal Official Yaguchi Kensai
Matthew Fraleigh

Preface to A.R. Davis Reprints
Su Shih, Poems

Su Shih’s “Following the Rhymes of T’ao Yüan-Ming” Poems: A Literary or a Psychological Phenomenon?

“The Good Lines of the World are a Common Possession”: A Study of the Effect of Tu Fu Upon Su Shih

On Such a Night: A Consideration of the Antecedents of the Moon in Su Shih’s Writings
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VASSAL OF A DEPOSED REGIME: ARCHETYPES OF RECLUSION IN THE POETRY OF FORMER SHOGUNAL OFFICIAL YAGUCHI KENSAI

Matthew Fraleigh

Histories of the Tokugawa–Meiji transition have tended to focus on the young heroes of Japan’s southwestern domains who toppled the shogunate and established the new Meiji state in 1868. The Tokugawa officials who were on the losing side of the conflict have been given comparatively short shrift, in spite of the significant contributions many of them made to early Meiji life as intellectuals, journalists, academics, and statesmen. Yet alongside the former Tokugawa retainers who fashioned a variety of new public roles for themselves in the emerging order were some who chose instead to withdraw from the Meiji realm. Central to this paper is Yaguchi Kensai (1817–79), a Tokugawa retainer who attracted particular attention from his contemporaries for what they saw as his uncompromising integrity in choosing such a path of reclusion. Kensai was a distinguished scholar, poet, and official in the years leading up to the Restoration, but he descended into nearly total obscurity in its aftermath. There is virtually no scholarship on Kensai, and so here I attempt to reconstruct Kensai’s career before and after the Restoration, as well as to explore the significance that his example held in the minds of his contemporaries. In particular, I examine Kensai’s Sinic poetry with the goal of shedding light on the construction of reclusion and the lenses through which certain canonical reclusive figures were viewed in nineteenth-century Japan.

Tokugawa Retainers in the Wake of the Restoration

The collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate dispersed the men who had served in its central institutions on an array of different paths. The new world of Meiji initially brought dejection and uncertainty to many of them; not least of whom the final shogun himself. Having renounced his title in Osaka at the close of 1867, Tokugawa Yoshinobu (1837–1913) expressed his contrition and subservience to the Meiji Emperor by going into domiciliary confinement: first in Edo, then in Mito, and finally in Fuchū, the castle town I presented my initial work on Yaguchi Kensai at the European Association for Japanese Studies conference held in Tallinn in August 2011, where I benefited from comments offered by Richard Bowring, as well as Kawai Kōzō, Peter Kornicki, Ivo Smits, and Jason Webb. I subsequently presented portions of this study at Harvard and Yale, and I would like to thank the audiences at those talks for their input. The anonymous reviewers of this paper also provided suggestions for which I am grateful. Finally, Seth Jacobowitz, Yanagimoto Katsumi, and Tateoka Hiroshi at Ren’eiji Temple graciously facilitated my access to some of the rarer texts I discuss.

1 Suruga province was 天領 (directly controlled shogunal land) for almost the entire Tokugawa period; its castle town Fuchū (Sunpu) was where the first shogun, Ieyasu, had retired after yielding the shogunate to his son, Hideyoshi. While the circumstances of the last shogun’s ignominious retreat could not have been more dissimilar to those of his illustrious predecessor, Yoshinobu would likewise spend several decades at Fuchū, continuing to live there even after his enforced domiciliary confinement was rescinded in 1869.

2 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author. This quotation appears in Katsu Kaishū’s memoir Hikawa seiwa [Pure Talks at Hikawa];
cited in Yamashita Tarō, Meiji no bunmei kaisha to sakigake: Shizuka Sataemonjo to Namashima Heigakki no kyōjutsushi [The Frontier of Meiji Civilization and Enlightenment. The Professors of the Shizuoka School and the Numazu Military Academy] (Tokyo: Hokkaido Shuppan, 1995), pp.25–26. According to a statistical summary that Katsu made, the number of Tokugawa vassals transplanted to Shizuoka was about fifteen thousand; see Katsu Kaishū senshi [Complete Works of Katsu Kaishū], べんkan 2 (Tokyo: Keisō shobo, 1982), p.590. The ‘eighty thousand’ figure given in his reminiscences may include their dependents or may simply be exaggeration.

3 Yamashita, pp.37–39. The new name for Fuchū was introduced in the summer of 1869. Sugiuha Yuzuru, a Tokugawa retainer who was teaching there, records the change to ‘Shizuka’ in diaries he kept at the time; see Sugiuha Yuzuru senshi [Complete Works of Sugiuha Yuzuru], ed. Tsuchiya Takao (Tokyo: Sugiuha Yuzuru Zenshi Kankōkai, 1978–79), II:203 (06.22 entry); II:249 (06.20 entry).

4 Takahashi Zenshichi, Shobai ebitte no kami Sugiuha Yuzuru aru bahashin kara mita Meiji ishin [Sugiuha Yuzuru: The first Postal Director. The Meiji Restoration From the Perspective of One of the Edo Period Postal Directors] (Tokyo: Hokuju Shuppan, 1995), p.129. According to Takahashi, the most common path pursued by Tokugawa vassals after the Restoration was entering commerce or agriculture. At least according to the aforementioned records of Katsu Kaishū, the most common path was relocation to Shizuoka, though the two are not mutually exclusive.

5 This request was made by Iesato’s regents, Matsudaira Kakudai and Tayasu Yoshiyori; see Takahashi, p.128.

6 For a discussion of the events of the Meiji Restoration from the perspective of American consular officials posted in Hakodate and Yokohama, see William Steele’s ‘The United States and Japan’s Civil War’, chapter 6 of Alternative Narratives in Modern Japanese History (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.88–109. In spite of the Hakodate government’s name and the use of democratic voting practices to choose its officials, it was stipulated that the head of the ‘Republic of Ezo’ would be of Tokugawa descent; see Kikuchi Akira, Ueno Shōgai to Hakodate sensōshi [Complete History of the Ueno Shōgai and the Battle of Hakodate] (Tokyo: Shin jinbutsu Ōraisha, 2010), pp.140–45.

7 Yamashita, pp.108–17. The best-selling text was later reprinted in Tokyo in movable type.

of Suruga province. This area (in modern Shizuoka prefecture) had longstanding connections to the Tokugawa house, and many of its retainers had already begun to relocate there in early Meiji. While Yoshinobu had ceased to be the shogun, an agreement arranged between his former vassal Katsu Kaishū 勝海舟 (1823–99) and representatives of the victorious southwestern domains passed the clan’s headship to Yoshinobu’s adopted son, Iesato 家達 (1863–1940), who was brought to Fuchū just a few weeks after his predecessor. There, thousands of newly transplanted Tokugawa retainers welcomed the five-year-old Iesato as the daimyo of a newly constituted domain. So sudden and sweeping was the post-Restoration influx of Tokugawa men to Suruga’s castle town that it led Kaishū to later reminisce: “With these eighty thousand men descending upon Shizuoka, the takuan pickles were gone in three or four days, and we were out of toilet paper after four or five”. A more lasting disruption prompted by the arrival of these multitudes of Tokugawa retainers was the abandonment of the castle town’s very name, Fuchū 府中, the designation by which it had been known for centuries. Soon after relocating there, Confucian scholar Mukōyama Kōson 向山黄村 (1826–97) proposed the new name “Shizuka” 静岡 in order to eliminate the infelicitous implications that the old name produced by its phonetic proximity to the word fuchū 不忠, meaning disloyal. That the long-established “Fuchū” was suddenly judged to be an objectionable name in 1869 reminds us of just how fraught the issue of loyalty was for these transplanted Tokugawa retainers in the immediate aftermath of the imperial Restoration: a conflict in which their former lord had been designated an “enemy of the court”.

While Shizuoka was thus a principal post-1868 destination for shogunal retainers, the Tokugawa house’s sharply reduced holdings were simply insufficient to support all of its vassals. Many Tokugawa men would instead remain behind and attempt to establish themselves, with varying degrees of success, in new lines of work, including farming, commerce, and industry. Others cast their lots with the new Meiji government, accepting offers of employment in its administration, a course of action that Tokugawa officials overseeing the transition actively encouraged as a means of culling surplus men from house rosters. Still other Tokugawa vassals refused to accept defeat and instead ventured to Ezo 喬州 with the forces of Enomoto Takeaki 恩物竹四郎 (1836–1908) to establish a Tokugawa bastion there: one they hoped would become the basis for developing the northern island. Though their efforts earned them fleeting diplomatic recognition as the island’s “authorities de facto” by Western consular officials stationed at Hakodate 南館, these holdouts’ short-lived “Republic of Ezo” came to an end with their defeat in battle at the hands of Meiji government forces in the summer of 1869.

In this way, the paths followed by Tokugawa vassals in the aftermath of the Restoration varied widely and were furthermore subject to sudden change. Even Shizuoka proved to be only a temporary destination for many transplants, for the fledgling Meiji government was eager to avail itself of the former shogunate’s human capital. During the first several years after the Restoration, more than a few of the most capable vassals who had initially followed the Tokugawa clan leaders to Shizuoka ended up assuming posts in the new administration. For example, several of the faculty of the Shōheikō 昌平寮, the shogunate’s pre-eminent center of Confucian higher learning in Edo, had founded a new school in the province in 1868. Sinological scholars such as the aforementioned Mukōyama Kōson, as well as Nakamura Kei 中村敏子 (1832–91) and others, were joined there by former faculty from two shogunal institutes for Western learning, the Kaisei 尚成所 in Edo and the Collège franco-japonais in Yokohama. Together, they created
a school that became known as the Shizuoka Gakumonjo 静岡学問所 (see Figure 1). Inasmuch as this Shizuoka school was inextricably associated with the newly deposed Tokugawa, one might suppose that it was no more than the last stronghold of a lapsed regime, all but irrelevant now in the new world of Meiji, but in fact quite the opposite was true. Many of the early Meiji period’s foremost intellectual figures — including Nishi Amane 西周 (1829–97), Tsuda Sen 津田仙 (1837–1908), Katô Hiroyuki 加藤弘之 (1836–1916), Toyama Masakazu 外山正一 (1848–1900), and Sugi Koji 杉亨二 (1828–1917) — initially taught at this school or at the Numazu Military Academy 沼津兵学校, another Tokugawa educational institution established in Shizuoka immediately after the Restoration. These schools, which offered a range of coursework in Sinological, French, English, Japanese, mathematical, and scientific subjects, represent one important legacy of the Tokugawa shogunate and its vassals in the early years of Meiji. As Yamashita Tarō has argued in his study of these two schools, they amounted to nothing less than the “frontier of Meiji-era civilization and enlightenment”. He points out, for example, that it was while teaching kanbun at Shizuoka Gakumonjo that Nakamura Keiu 宍牟牟見喜院 completed his supremely influential Saikoku risshi hen, a translation of Samuel Smiles’ Self-Help. This bestselling book, which inspired a generation of Meiji Japanese with its success stories of Western self-made men, in fact first bore the imprint of a local Shizuoka publisher, and the financing necessary to bring it to press was in turn secured by Shizuoka domain government officials who had formerly served the shogunate. Another historian of these Tokugawa-affiliated early Meiji schools, Higuchi Takehiko, highlights the fact that it was rare for domain schools to accept students from other domains, as both Shizuoka Gakumonjo and the Numazu Military Academy did, and stresses that this made them “meccas” in early Meiji, giving the schools and their advanced curriculum broad national impact.\footnote{Higuchi Takehiko, Shizuoka Gakumonjo [Shizuoka School] (Shizuoka: Shizuoka Shinbunsha, 2010), p.66; see also his Kyōkashō to sono gunzō [Former Shogunal Vassals in the Meiji Restoration: The Numazu Military Academy and its Figures] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2005), p.106.}

Yet the thriving success of these schools lasted only a few years before many of their talented faculty and students were wooed back to Tokyo by individual invitations and by more general Meiji administrative directives in the early 1870s. In particular, the haiban chiken 废藩置県 order of 1871, which “eliminated domains and established prefectures,” hastened the departure of the transplanted vassals; with their new lord Iesato no longer present and their new domain Shizuoka-han no longer in existence, the ties that bound the men to Shizuoka lessened considerably.\footnote{With the haiban chiken, Shizuoka-han became Shizuoka-ken; while Iesato remained the head of the Tokugawa house, he did not become the governor of Shizuoka prefecture and instead returned to Tokyo.} E. Warren Clark, the young and spirited American missionary recruited to teach science at Shizuoka Gakumonjo in 1871, recalls the exodus that came the following year in his memoir:

\textit{The loss of his brightest students to Tokyo suggests, Clark was particularly fond of his time in Shizuoka and his distress at the loss of his brightest students to Tokyo was sincere. Throughout the memoir, he repeatedly praises the students’ earnestness and ability: “These young men were nearly all about my own age, enthusiastic in their pursuit of science, and diligent in their studies to a degree that astonished me. They mastered with facility textbooks that had taxed all the energies of American college students, and were so thorough and devoted to their work that it was a pleasure to teach them” (p.47).}

\textit{The Numazu Military Academy had quickly earned a reputation as a leading educational facility not only in military subjects but in science, engineering, and mathematics after being founded in Shizuoka in 1868. Its faculty and student body were targeted for recruitment by the Meiji government in the early 1870s, and the entire school was transferred to central government jurisdiction shortly after the 1871 elimination of domains and establishment of prefectures. The following year, the school was closed

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Illustration of Shizuoka Gakumonjo from Edward Warren Clark, Life and Adventure in Japan (New York: American Tract Society, 1878), plate near p.44.}
\end{figure}

\footnotetext[9]{With the haiban chiken, Shizuoka-han became Shizuoka-ken; while Iesato remained the head of the Tokugawa house, he did not become the governor of Shizuoka prefecture and instead returned to Tokyo.}
\footnotetext[10]{E. Warren Clark, Life and Adventure in Japan (New York: American Tract Society, 1878), pp.128–29. As the passage suggests, Clark was particularly fond of his time in Shizuoka and his distress at the loss of his brightest students to Tokyo was sincere. Throughout the memoir, he repeatedly praises the students’ earnestness and ability: “These young men were nearly all about my own age, enthusiastic in their pursuit of science, and diligent in their studies to a degree that astonished me. They mastered with facility textbooks that had taxed all the energies of American college students, and were so thorough and devoted to their work that it was a pleasure to teach them” (p.47).}
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and its remaining students and faculty mainly relocated to Tokyo; see Higuchi, *Kyūhakushin*, pp.121–37.

12 Uchida Shūtei, *Yaguchi Kensai den; Ōbei shōwaishū* [Biography of Yaguchi Kensai; Collection of Poems Harmonizing with Ōbei] (Tokyo: Kokumon Shōa, 1932). This book was privately printed in 1932, but the portion concerning Kensai has an authorial preface by Uchida dated August, 1920. This biography was subsequently reprinted with some additional materials in *Shizuoka-ken kyūdo kenkyū* [Research in Shizuoka Prefecture Local History] 11 (1938): 45–49. A note there from Uchida Akira (Shūtei's nephew) explains that his uncle's biography of Kensai is an exceedingly rare volume and that the additional reprinted texts represent all known materials concerning Kensai. Curiously, while quoting his uncle's references to Yaguchi as 矢口, Uchida Akira uses the graphs 谷口 to write the Yaguchi family name.

13 Masahiro 正浩 also used the name Seizaburō 清三郎, which he later changed to Kōchirō 幸治郎. Some sources state that Yaguchi was born in 1816; see, for example, the entry for Yaguchi Kōchirō in Kunai Tamotsu, *Edo bakushin jinmei jiten* [A Biographical Dictionary of Edo Shogunal Vassals] (Tokyo: Shin Jimbutsu Ōrashī, 1997), p.1098.

14 A document in the Mori-ke monojo for 1871 lists Morita Ichisaburō 森田市三郎 as the hyakushōdai of Motomachi in Honjō, Kodama county, Musashi province.

15 The account given here is based upon Nakane Kiyoshi, *Kōtei gaden* [Refined Talks by Kōtei] (Tokyo: Kinkōdō, 1886), II.26a–29a. A few additional facts about Nakane’s biological father, Tokusai, can be found earlier in the text, where Nakane notes that Tokusai was named Nao 那. And had the polite name Jōkei 津軽. Nakane also describes his biological father as a committed devotee of the kobunjiha (‘ancient phraseology’) school that revered High Tang aesthetics, noting that Tokusai refused to abandon the school even after it had lost favor (I.27b–28a).

Nakane goes on to note that Tokusai’s writings were largely destroyed in a fire, but that some twenty years later Yaguchi Kensai presented him with an essay written by Tokusai. Nakane was Tokusai’s second son according to Nakane’s brief autobiographical essay in *Kōtei ibun* [Kōtei’s Posthumous Manuscripts], ed. Shinpo Banji (Tokyo: Kinkōdō Shoseki, 1916), pp.821–22.

16 Makabe Jin, *Tokugawa lōki no gakumon no seiji: Shōhetsuzaka Gakumonjo no bun 1872* [Late Tokugawa Scholarship and Politics: The Tycoon [that is, the Tokugawa shogun] … had retired with his retainers to Shidz-u-o-ka. But their successors at the Mikado’s capital found themselves unable to manage the affairs of government, hitherto left in the hands of the Tycoon. They had not the practical skill to guide the ship of state with steadiness through the troubled waters of political change. Therefore they sent to Shidz-u-o-ka and called away my friends and my brightest students, assigning them important positions in the capital."

Though Clark urged the Meiji government to reconsider, arguing strenuously for the importance of strengthening education in the nation’s interior, his appeals fell on deaf ears, and before a year had passed, he too would be transferred to Tokyo. A similar fate befell the Numazu Military Academy, which had its faculty and student body plundered before being shuttered in 1872. So eager was the government to recruit the most talented and experienced scholars and statesmen that even Enomoto Takeaki, Ōtori Keisuke 大島圭介 (1832–1911), and other commanders of the militants who fought against the Meiji forces in the last-ditch Battle of Hakodate found themselves taking up posts in the new government shortly after they were pardoned in 1872.

Yet amid this broad ebb and flow of Tokugawa vassals out of and then back into the capital during the first years of Meiji, there were some Shizuoka settlers who resisted the centripetal pull of government service and chose instead a different course altogether: the path of reclusion. Unlike those former retainers who opted to serve the Meiji state or otherwise remain engaged in public life, these men have not figured prominently in histories of the period, but they nevertheless constituted another important dimension of the Tokugawa legacy. Yaguchi Kensai was one such man who attracted particular attention from his contemporaries for what they saw as his uncompromising integrity. Though all but forgotten today, Kensai distinguished himself not only by refusing to consider service to the new government but by essentially severing all ties with the Meiji realm. In this paper, I trace the trajectory of one Tokugawa vassal who chose to withdraw entirely from a post-Tokugawa world. I devote particular attention to Kensai’s poetry and to how it addresses the topic of reclusion. Kensai is a fruitful individual to consider from this vantage point not only because reclusion is an important theme of his poetry, but because Kensai himself was celebrated by his contemporaries and by subsequent readers as nothing less than the definitive recluse. What can their portrayal of Kensai as an exemplar of reclusion tell us about how the topos was understood at the time? What particular significance did the theme of reclusion, and Kensai’s reclusion specifically, have to former Tokugawa vassals?

**Receding Figure: Kensai and his Reclusion**

The only work of scholarship I have been able to locate on Kensai is a short biographical essay written in kambun (literary Sinitic) during the Taishō period. The outline of his life that follows is based upon what I have been able to piece together so far—drawing on this 1920 essay, the scattered references to him in the prose and poetry of his contemporaries, as well as his own writings. Kensai was born Morita Masahiro 森田正浩 in 1817, the son of a commoner family dwelling in the village of Honjō, Musashi province. His natal family must have been somewhat prominent among the village’s peasantry, for his elder brother, Morita Ichisaburō 森田市三郎, served as one of their designated representatives, or hyakushōdai 百姓代, in the early Meiji period. At the age of seventeen, however, Masahiro was adopted by a low-ranking samurai family with the surname Yaguchi.

**Recent additions:**


**Recent publications:**

The Yaguchi household was located in close proximity to that of Sone Tokusai 萩生徳斎, a Confucian scholar whose affiliation was with the Ken’en 根園 school of Ogyū Sorai 萩生徂徠 (1666–1728), and it was under Tokusai’s tutelage that Kensai first acquired his competence in Chinese learning. According to a brief entry in Kōtei gadan, a fragmentary collection of short kanzun essays by Tokusai’s son, the scholar Nakane Kōtei 中根香亭 (1839–1913), Kensai appeared one day at Tokusai’s door and expressed his desire to become a scholar. Tokusai was at first reluctant to accept an older pupil, observing: “How few are those who begin their studies as adults and do not give up halfway”. Undeterred, Kensai ventured a question: “What if I don’t give up?” Tokusai could only respond, “Then you will master the Way”. To this, Kensai replied, “I am one who will not give up”. Struck by the young man’s determination, Tokusai agreed to teach him, prompting the young man to devote himself to Confucian study and abandon his earlier interest in painting (Figure 2). After several years of study under Tokusai, Kensai went to Edo to enter the Shōheikō 学問吟味institution in Edo but to serve as the headmaster of its branch academy in the province of Kai 甲斐(Yamanashi 山梨), the Kitenkan 徽典館. In Kaei 2 (1849), Kensai was also appointed to serve as an assistant to Hayashi Fuku-sai 林復斎 (1801–59) and Narushima Kadō 成島稼堂 (1802–53), Confucian scholars then employed in editing the official chronicles of the Tokugawa and earlier shogunates. After his one-year term of service at the Kitenkan academy in Yamanashi, Kensai resumed this post assisting in the compilation of historical records.

Yet Kensai’s sphere of activity extended far beyond the shogunate’s centers of learning and scholarship. When the arrival of Matthew Perry’s ships precipitated an unprecedented foreign policy crisis in 1853, for example, he submitted a lengthy memorial offering his recommendations for how the shogunate ought to proceed. When Russian incursions necessitated renewed attention to Japan’s northern periphery, he was dispatched to serve in Hakodate. This latter mission would place him on the very front lines of a large-scale effort to learn about and assert control over the island of Ezo. Before leaving Edo, his friend, neighbor, and poetical confere Narushima Ryūhoku 成島柳北 (1837–84), the son of Kadō, presented Kensai with a 44-line farewell poem, writing on a grand scale that inscribes Kensai’s mission as a matter of paramount national importance (see Figure 3). In the poem, Ryūhoku compares the expedition Kensai is about to undertake to those of heroic emissaries of Chinese antiquity before bringing the poem to a dramatic close:

![Figure 2](image)

Yaguchi Kensai, Painted scroll, dated autumn 1831 (when Kensai was fourteen years old). Thanks to Mr Ira Tyler for this photograph of the scroll.

Transformation of Shōheizaka Academy Scholars and Late Tokugawa Diplomacy [Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2007], p.370. As part of the Kansei reforms, the Shōheikō instituted examinations to assess students’ basic mastery of a codified canon. The sodoku ginmi, initially administered every year, tested basic command of the Confucian classics. The gakumon ginmi, by contrast, was offered only every few years, and demanded familiarity with a much broader array of historical and literary texts as well as the ability to compose essays in literary Sinitic. Yaguchi passed the latter exam at the “second-class” level. 17 The Kitenkan had been established in the late eighteenth century and had close ties to the shogunate’s central administrative and educational institutions. A system introduced in 1843 chose two scholars annually from Edo’s Shōheikō to serve one-year terms as headmasters of the school, an assignment Naruse Tetsuo has described as a “prize post for the up-and-coming” and as a means the shogunate used to further cultivate the talents of promising retainers; see his ‘Kansai Daigaku shozō’ in Kitenkan
While he may not have had occasion to use his sword in quite the way Ryūkoku had envisioned, Kensai did in fact display impressive heroism while posted to the north. Just a few months after he had taken up his post in Hakodate, he joined another official, Suzuki Shigehisa 鈴木重尚, in volunteering to carry out an exploratory mission of an even more remote realm: the island of Karafuto lying further northward. Kensai's bold actions on the journey with Suzuki earned him the recognition of contemporary commentators. Once his service at the northern periphery was complete, Kensai went on to serve in another contact zone, working for several years in the Nagasaki magistrate's office. He subsequently returned to the Shōhēikō in Edo, where he held a variety of administrative and professorial positions between 1864 and 1867. When the Tokugawa's demise finally came the following year, Kensai was among the holdouts who staged a last stand for the shōgunate at Hakodate; steadfastness for which he was arrested and incarcerated. Until the new government issued a pardon in 1870, he would be the prisoner of the Oka 岡 domain in Taketa 竹田, northeastern Kyushu.

In spite of his consistent engagement with the educational, political, and diplomatic affairs of the day under the Tokugawa, Yaguchi Kensai descended into obscurity in the post-Restoration era. If he was remembered at all in the reminiscences and other writings of Meiji literary figures, it was—somewhat paradoxically—for precisely this reason: his withdrawal from the Meiji world. Once the amnesty had been announced for those who had surrendered at Hakodate, Kensai was free to leave his domiciliary confinement in Kyushu, yet he made his way not to his former residence in Tokyo but toward Shizuoka, where he would dwell in the company of other former Tokugawa vassals, living out the remainder of his days in the pursuit of calligraphy, Sinitic poetry, and painting. At some point, he took Buddhist and diplomatic affairs of the day under the Tokugawa, Yaguchi Kensai

Concerning Kensai's Karafuto expedition, Uchida Shūhei 萩田修平 writes: "He crossed to Karafuto. Everyone was afraid to go to this barbarian land and wanted to turn back but Kensai would not permit it. He had a barbarian man carry a cask of wine and follow him. After several days of travel in the North, he returned having accomplished his task" (2a). Their journey is the subject of Suzuki's Karafuto nikki (Diary of Karafuto), completed in the seventh month of that year. When Matsuzura Takeshi 松原登美, one of the period's most noted northern explorers, prepared his annotated version of Suzuki's text, he was so impressed by its accounts of Yaguchi Kensai's bold actions on the expedition that he wrote "I

have not met this Yaguchi but when I read to this point I was struck by his spirit and wanted to smile and applaud"; see Suzuki, Karafuto nikki 信州旅行記 (Edo: Bun'enkaku, 1880), 1b–4b. 22 Kensai joined the Nagasaki magistrate's office late in 1857. He seems to have still been posted there in 1860, for Kondō Yoshinori mentions meeting him during a visit to the city that year; cited in Naruse, “Kansai Daigaku,” pp. 238–39. Kensai makes reference to these years he spent in Nagasaki in a poem he composed in 1869; see Yaguchi Yasushi, ed., Kensai ikebun 卡恩伊賀文 (Tokyo: Taihei Shōkō, 1997), pp. 73–74. 23 See the tables in Makabe, p. 356. 24 Uchida writes: “During the conflict of 1868, he joined [Nagai] Kaida and others aboard the Karaijō battleship, and fled to the north to take possession of Hakodate. While aboard the ship, the officers all wore Western dress, but Kensai alone wore a robe of Kihachijō silk, tying back his sleeves with strips of white cloth so that he could hold a gun. Everyone regarded this as unusual.” The Karaijō-maru was the mightiest and most advanced warship in Japan at the time, and it bore the rebellion’s leader, Enomoto Takeaki, in
Significantly, those who remembered his withdrawal saw it not as a meek retreat, but rather as a pointed rejection of the Meiji regime. Needless to say, one of the most symbolically important roles a central authority plays in the daily lives of its subjects is the regulation of time by the promulgation of an official calendar. Conversely, a basic way to register opposition to a new regime’s authority is to refuse to accept its calendar. The one poem by Kensai that I have seen anthologised in Japanese kanshi 漢詩 collections is the following, presumably written around New Year’s Day of Meiji 6 [1873], the first year that Japanese would celebrate the traditional holiday according to the newly instituted solar calendar. It reads:

山村冬暮同風岳柳村
Visiting a mountain village in late winter with Hōgaku and Ryūson

俄然改暦春來早
A sudden change of calendar makes spring come early;

強作新年尚未真
The autumn harvest is unfinished; there is no grain for food;

一月山村無醉人
The year’s first month in this mountain village, and no one is drunk.

In its juxtaposition of two dating systems and its highlighting of disjunction between such artificial schema and the natural world, Kensai’s kanshi may bring to mind the opening poem of the Kokinshū 古今集, but clearly none of the latter’s amusement at calendrical curiosities animates Kensai’s somber verse. In the same way that he was apparently reluctant to use the Meiji calendar, Kensai does not date his poems with any reference to the Meiji reign name, instead using the sexagenary cycle exclusively.

As the choice of this poem for anthologisation begins to suggest, there has been a tendency to read Kensai foremost as a “leftover vassal” of the Tokugawa house and to see his reclusion as a principled statement of unwavering dynastic loyalty to it. While this particular mode of reading Kensai’s reclusion certainly finds ample support in Kensai’s own poetry, I would like to argue that the “leftover vassal” reading is only one of many textual figurations of reclusion with which Kensai grapples in his kanshi. The diverse array of reclusive modes and models referenced in Kensai’s poems confirms the complexity of nineteenth century Japanese engagements with Chinese texts. That a single reading of Kensai’s reclusion should nevertheless emerge so overwhelmingly can help us understand his significance to his contemporaries and to later readers.
Nagai Kafū Some clutch their jewels teeming as they rush to the red gates of the powerful, offering up their name cards and presenting their rough jewels.


27 Kensai ibid. 12a-b. The men Kensai mentions here, Hōgaku and Ryōson, were his companions in recreation and versification in Shizuoka during the early 1870s. For example, the collection includes a quatrain titled simply “Following the rhymes of Hōgaku” (11b-12a), and an octave entitled “Fishing alone along a cold river, I copy the rhymes of Ryōson” (11a-b). Judging from the various writings of Sugiuira Yuzuru, another former shogunal official living in Shizuoka in early Meiji, we can deduce that Hōgaku refers to Ishino Hōgaku 石野寒江, who joined Sugiuira in participating in early Meiji poetry exchanges there; see “Shizuoka Nikki” entry for 05.14 of Meiji 2, and the “Tsuzurekin’u” entry for 02.09 of Meiji 3 in Sugiuira Yuzuru senshū II:199 and II:275. Many of the men who participated in these kanshi gatherings, which centered around Mukōyama Kōson, were also instructors at the Shizuoka Gakumonjō, and it is quite likely that the individual in question is Ishino Gengo 石野源吾, who joined Sugiuira in participating in early Meiji poetry exchanges there; see the faculty roster in Higuchi, Shizuoka, pp.160-61. The man whom Kensai calls Ryōson was Fukai Yuzuru 深井潤 (1837–1905), a former Tokugawa official who spent most of the remainder of his life teaching students at a Sinological academy in Azabu麻布. The account Kakuryū wrote about their meeting, part of a kanbun letter he later sent to Kensai, would have the most direct influence on subsequent views of Kensai, for the letter was included in a popular collection of Kakuryū’s prose published in the second decade of Meiji.30

Kensai’s Encounter With Hayashi Kakuryū

Following his surrender at Hakodate and his confinement in Kyushu, Kakuryū spent most of the remainder of his life in reclusive retirement in Shizuoka, but one rare trip he made to Tokyo had a lasting impact on how he would be remembered by posterity. At some point around 1875, Kensai paid a visit to Hayashi Kakuryū 林鶴梁 (1806–78), a former Tokugawa official who spent his post-Restoration days teaching students at a Sinological academy in Azabu 麻布. The account Kakuryū wrote about their meeting, part of a kanbun letter he later sent to Kensai, would have the most direct influence on subsequent views of Kensai, for the letter was included in a popular collection of Kakuryū’s prose published in the second decade of Meiji.30

Though Kakuryū’s name is unfamiliar to most readers today, he was considered an exemplary kanbun stylist during his lifetime and anthologies of his Sinitic prose in fact circulated widely among Meiji readers. In a brief 1906 interview entitled “Books that benefited my prose style,” Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916), for example, specifically mentioned Kakuryū’s prose anthology as a favorite text of his youth, and the scholar Mitamura Engyō (1870–1952), born just a few years after Sōseki, recalled how he and his peers read, recited, and even memorised Kakuryū’s prose.31 Nagai Kafū 永井荷風 (1879–1959), too, was fond of Hayashi Kakuryū’s writings, which were often included in kanbun textbooks.32 As such, Kakuryū’s anthologised letter to Kensai deserves close attention.

Like Kensai, Kakuryū had also taught at Yamanashi’s Kitenkan academy and according to his account of their meeting, he welcomed Kensai with especial enthusiasm, urging him to stay.33 Yet Kensai replied, “A recluse of the wooded hills does not wish to tarry long amid the clamor and dust of the capital. However, separated as we are east and west, my earnest desire to meet is simply unbearable, and the rare chance to see you has presented itself”. In the letter that Kakuryū sent to Kensai the following year, he fondly recounted his long-cherished wish to be reunited with Kensai, his joy at the unexpected fulfillment of it, and his resignation to the abruptness of Kensai’s peremptory exit: “scurrying away as though to take flight”. Kakuryū’s encounter with Kensai in Tokyo inverts the well-established topos of the urban poet’s venturing into the hills to visit the recluse, but in his bemused acceptance of the recluse’s stubborn elusiveness, Kakuryū echoes the convention that the recluse is seldom to be found lingering in his hermitage awaiting visitors.34 As Kakuryū summarily exclaimed in his letter to Kensai: “Ah, Kensai, you are a genuine recluse! You are a truly pure man”.

Kensai’s tantalising inaccessibility and willful withdrawal from the “clamor and dust of the capital” were surely fundamental to making him exemplary as a recluse, but something more specifically political was central to the view of reclusion that Kakuryū went on to elaborate in the letter. In the lines that followed, Kakuryū singled out Kensai for his adamant commitment to a life course that rejected the Meiji government and all that it represented: a firmness of conviction that Kakuryū underscored by proposing a contrast between Kensai and the erstwhile recluses who eagerly sought official positions in the first years of Meiji:

Now the Emperor is sagely and enlightened. The “men of the cliffs and caves” emerge in search of office at the foot of the imperial carriage, teeming as they rush to the red gates of the powerful, offering up their name cards and presenting their rough jewels.35 Some clutch their jewels and cry out, others weep droplets of blood after their tears have run dry. Though their ambition to serve the sovereign and bring peace to the state...
is intense, how dreadfully busy they are! But you have withdrawn to dwell in a village of idle ease. As you pursue the learning of the sages in carefree leisure, you ‘clutch your jewel’ and ‘preserve your intention’; high and pure, you are at peace with yourself.

How can you be anything but a rare man in the entire world? Twenty years ago, you and I together occupied positions in the government of the Tokugawa clan. We intended to relate to one another with uprightness. Who could have predicted that the state’s trajectory would be disrupted and that people’s feelings would also be transformed? Those who in the past entrusted themselves to the Tokugawa clan have now all rescinded their ties: forgetting their obligations and turning against righteousness. Their self-promotion is most unseemly. If one searches now for those who are, like you, nobly pure and at peace with themselves, he will find them to be as rare as stars in the morning sky.

One traditional view of reclusion saw it motivated by the statesman’s conviction that the present age was corrupt or its government benighted; when the Way was not being upheld, men might take to the hills, but under an enlightened sovereign, the recluses would emerge (or be summoned forth) from their cliffs and caves. Kakuryō nods to this view of reclusion only to put it aside in favor of the type of reclusion he sees in Kensai: a sense of loyalty that is unmoved by questions of the present sovereign’s enlightenment. Kakuryō celebrates Kensai’s fidelity to the Tokugawa through direct praise in this passage, but he also subtly conveys his own unchanged loyalty to his erstwhile lords through the way in which he writes the family’s name. At the time of Kensai’s visit, he very solicitously told me about your affairs. Everything he said to me was marvelous, but what I found particularly so was that in the fourth year of Meiji, when domains were eliminated and prefectures established, you have entrusted your house or used terms referring to the shogun, but is unusual in Meiji.

In this passage, Kakuryō also highlights a sharp contrast between Kensai’s leisurely contentment in his withdrawal and the flamboyant self-promotion of his contemporaries, former self-avowed recluses now venturing forth from their temporary places of concealment. Recluses are often imagined to have privileged access to esoteric wisdom, to embody purity, or to maintain noble ways of life, and that is surely why theorists of eremitism over the centuries have cast a cautiously suspicious eye upon the motives of individuals who seek to enter their hallowed company. Some commentators, such as the fifth-century Shen Yue, in the “Biographies of Recluses” chapter of the Song shu, question whether one who is known to others at all can fairly be called a recluse. Even those adopting a more moderate position scorn individuals who aspire to reclusion in the hope of some material gain or in cognisance of a contemporary or future audience. In this sense, Kakuryō’s attribution of crass self-aggrandisement to Kensai’s peers marks them as reclus-manqués and affirms the sincerity of Kensai’s motives.

Perhaps to reinforce the point that Kensai does not make a show of his integrity, Kakuryō records two additional testimonials to Kensai’s fidelity to the Tokugawa as hearsay. The first was reported to him by a visitor from Shizuoka, a certain Isogaya Kiyoshi, who came to stay at Kakuryō’s academy and brought news of Kensai:  

He very solicitously told me about your affairs. Everything he said to me was marvelous, but what I found particularly so was that in the fourth year of Meiji, when domains were eliminated and prefectures established, you submitted a statement that, “From the time of my forefathers, I have truly been a vassal of the Tokugawa house. Certainly I have received the benefit of its stipend. Now if suddenly I were to ascend and occupy a place among the officials at court, then I would be apprehensive and distraught. I reject...
share my perverse tastes and persist in their mistaken ways. And so, together we look at old texts and talk of the ancient way. It offers me some pleasure in my remaining years. These days, Confucian scholars thirst for tuition revenue. They want to establish their fame and seek profit: their schemes the same as crafty merchants. When I think what it means for this Way of ours’ (Chin. sidao 師道; Jap. shido), I knit my brows in conster-
nation.’


35 The phrase “men of the cliffs and caves” 戰穴之士 (Chin. yanxue zhi shi; Jap. ganketsu no shi) is a standard term for recluses; it is associated most notably with Sima Qian’s biographies of paradigmatic recluses Bo Yi and Shu Qi in the *Shi ji* (Records of the Grand Historian).

36 The metaphor of the “rough jewel” alludes to the story of Bian He, a Spring and Autumn period figure whose story appears in *Hanfeizi*. When Bian He presented a piece of jade to King Li, the King’s craftsman judged it to be a mere stone, and the King, wishing to make an example of Bian He, ordered his left leg amputated. Bian He presented the stone again to Li’s successor, King Wu, whose staff again judged it to be worthless, prompting the King to order Bian He’s right leg amputated. During the next reign of King Wen, Bian He was found “clutching his jewel and crying beneath Mt. Chu. When his tears ran dry he wept droplets of blood.” But King Wen ordered the stone polished, and it was revealed to be a rare piece of jade. This story of a vassal who suffers because the sovereign cannot discern the value of the jewels he offers is often used metaphorically in reference to the official whose talents go unrecognised.

37 The phrase translated “at peace with yourself” is 自甘 (Chin. zigan; Jap. mitsu-
kara amanetsu), which is used to indicate one’s contentment with his low station, lack of official employment, or strained circumstances.


the offer, along with the stipend. Even if you gave me more money, I would still decline and refuse to accept it.”

The political shift Kakuryō mentions here refers of course to the baibian chiken of 1871. If the designation of Iesato as the successor to the Tokugawa line provided former Tokugawa vassals with some degree of continuity in spite of the radically curtailed position their lord now occupied, the “elimination of domains and establishment of prefectures” that came in 1871 meant a complete end to even this diminished status.

The second testament in Kakuryō’s letter is a similar encomium to Kensai’s fidelity to his Tokugawa masters, but framed in terms of a dialogue with an interlocutor who is critical of Kensai’s insensitivity. We can understand this exchange as a consideration of two different models of reclusion: one that is sensitive to judgments of the present regime’s propriety and one to which such concerns are irrelevant:

Recently, there was someone who said about you: “he has not forgotten his former lord. This is truly good. But when it comes to declining official appointment and returning his stipend, I believe that such behavior approaches extremity.” Pondering this, I responded: “Though it may be extreme, Mr. Yaguchi is a rare man in the entire realm. How could I bear to click my tongue and fault him? I have dwelt in this world seventy-odd years, and I have seen millions of men. But I have never once seen a complete man. And now I have met Kensai. How could I not proclaim him?” With this, my interlocutor at last understood. But certainly this is not something worth mentioning to you. I merely wish to sing your praises to this generation and use your example to shame those in the realm who would be vassals and yet serve two masters.

While Kensai does not stoop to proclaim his own virtue, Kakuryō is eager to extol it on his behalf, and specifically praises him for not forsaking his ties to the deposed Tokugawa. The idea that a statesman who has served a certain dynasty should not serve another in the event the first perishes has the ring of a timeless truism, but in fact the notion that serving two masters is inherently unethical or disgraceful is of comparatively recent vintage in China. As Xiaohei Tian has discussed in connection with the poet and icon of reclusion Tao Yuanming 隊澄明 (365–427), this supposed prohibition on serving two dynasties would have been foreign to Tao’s milieu for it only became a commonplace many centuries later. Nevertheless, as we shall see, it was not uncommon for Japanese readers of Kensai’s time to understand Tao Yuanming’s reclusion principally in terms of dynastic loyalty.

At the close of Kakuryō’s letter, conveyed back to Kensai in Shizuoka by the courier Isogaya, Kakuryō makes several requests. While they may seem to be but a laundry-list of assigned chores, upon closer examination we see the direct role they play in augmenting Kakuryō’s exaltation of Kensai as the definitive recluse. Moreover, each request signals both Kakuryō’s interpersonal and temperamental affinity for Kensai and his desire to articulate this bond through the mediation of Sinitic texts. Kakuryō first explains that he has enclosed ten of his own “old Sinitic poems” on the topic of “Recording my feelings” and asks Kensai to respond by composing his own series in “harmony” 和 (Chin. he; Jap. wa) with them. It was common for Japanese *kenshi* poets to engage in this practice, in which one poet duplicates the rhyming characters of another’s poem, as a means of demonstra-
ing a sense of affinity, intimacy, friendship, or some other type of social or spiritual bond with either their contemporaries or with poets of the past. In this way, Kakuryō sought to forge a link with Kensai, his fellow
In such a view, Tao Yuanming comes to be seen first and foremost as a "vassal of a deposed regime," receiving an even more direct expression in the third request he makes of Kensai. He explains:

I once had a painting that you did in imitation of Zheng Suonan's Rootless orchid. Its thin brushstrokes and dry ink were suffused with a transcendent air. Yet much to my regret, it was recently stolen by someone. Might I entreat you to trouble yourself to wield your brush and make another for me? If I could receive such favor, I would be most fortunate. With it before me, it felt almost as though I was beside you, our knees touching as we sat in the same room. How could these feelings arise simply because of my respect for Zheng?

Zheng Sixiao (style Suonan, 1241–1318) was a Yuan-dynasty literatus known for his paintings of orchids, traditionally associated with the idealised purity of the scholar, especially the scholar in retreat. The specific work mentioned here (Figure 4), one of his best-known, is traditionally interpreted as being an allegory for the situation in China after the Southern Song fell to the Mongols. Ying Zhang describes its significance in relation to dynastic change as follows:

This aim makes Kakuryō's second request all the more noteworthy: he explains that he has recently written twenty poems harmonising with Tao Yuanming, and though he has no time to recopy them out for Kensai now, he promises to do so in the future. Tao Yuanming was, needless to say, a paragigmatic figure of reclusion, but the specific reading of Tao Yuanming that is surely being invoked here is the view that saw his reclusion in terms of loyalty to the Jin dynasty. In such a view, Tao Yuanming comes to be seen first and foremost as an yimin 追民 (Jap. inmin), a "vassal of a deposed regime": one who entered reclusion because he refused to serve two masters. Kakuryō's desire to forge a bond with Kensai that is mediated by their literary and artistic creations, and specifically through works that invoke kinship with Chinese literary figures who might be considered as "vassals of deposed regimes," receives an even more direct expression in the third request he makes of Kensai. He explains:

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that blooms unknown to others (and to metaphorically suggest a scholar-official whose talents are not properly appreciated). The term 使心 (Chin. bixin; Jap. kaishitsu) in this poem by Kensai alludes to a line in Zhuangzi describing a state of transcendent sellessness in which “the body is like a withered tree and the mind is like dead ashes”; see Burton Watson’s translation, The Complete Works of Chuang-tzu (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p.36.

46 Ying Zhang, Politics and Morality during the Ming–Qing Dynastic Transition (1570–1670), Ph.D. Diss., University of Michigan, 2010, p.385.

47 All of the poems in Kensai ikō are in the standard jutsushibō forms popularised in the Tang; heptasyllabic forms (46 quatrains, 17 octaves) predominate; accounting for a full 84% of the collection, with the remainder being pentasyllabic (4 quatrains, 8 octaves).

48 There are, for example, two explicitly dated poems that are obviously out of sequence; one dated to Meiji 6 [1873], “Writing of things in the tenth year of the cycle (Kensai ikō, 9b) appears in the collection several pages prior to the poem on the calendrical change (discussed above) that was surely written just as Meiji 5 became Meiji 6 (12a–b). Likewise, a poem explicitly dated to the winter of Meiji 5 [1872], “On a winter’s day in the ninth year of the cycle, I visit Abbot Tōzan at Ōjima Ryōshinji, but he is not there” 壬申冬日訪小嶋龍津寺唐山和尚不遇, appears even later in the collection (13a–b).

Zheng’s most remembered orchid painting was made in 1306 ... Famously his orchids are shown ‘ungrounded’ against the blank silk, because the “land” was occupied and ruled by foreigners. The orchid, the symbol of the junzi (noble gentleman), stubbornly thrives here on its own spirit, refusing to accept sustenance provided by the “illegitimate ruler”.

In this way, Kakuryō’s celebration of Kensai as the consummate recluse hinged upon the latter’s unwavering fidelity to the Tokugawa and his committed rejection of the Meiji order. Though he resists an explicit comparison, Kakuryō’s efforts to associate Kensai with Tao Yuanming and Zheng Suonan are clear, and in this context the genuine recluse’s principal motivation for withdrawal comes to be defined as fidelity to a deposed regime.

Kensai’s Posthumous Poetry Collection

Kensai’s sole extant poetry collection, the 1880 Posthumous manuscripts of Kensai (Kensai ikō謹齋遺稿), was published by his friends one year after his death. It includes seventy-five Sinitic poems that he wrote after his capture and arrest in the summer of 1869. The collection presents us with a view of his decision to withdraw from Meiji society that is more complex and nuanced than the picture of single-minded loyalty to the Tokugawa that Kakuryō’s letter leads us to expect. What made Kensai a “genuine recluse” to Kakuryō was that he had refused to serve the Meiji state. Kakuryō notes in particular that unlike other former shogunal officials who had rushed to receive appointments, Kensai remained a faithful vassal of the Tokugawa even after the baibai chiken decree brought an end to the house’s control over Shizuoka. Yet reclusion manifests itself as a theme from the very beginning of Kensai’s collection, long before the possibility of future service to the Tokugawa would be foreclosed by the elimination of feudal domains. Indeed, a firm conviction that he must at all costs remain loyal to his former Tokugawa masters seldom emerges so explicitly in Kensai’s poetry. While not completely absent from the collection, such political motivation was merely one of several visions of reclusion Kensai employed, alongside models influenced by Buddhism and Daoism. Moreover, a variety of recluse-paragons from both Chinese and Japanese literature and history appear in his verse: not simply the “vassals of deposed regimes” that Kakuryō and other contemporaries of Kensai would array him among.

Japanese kanshibi collections of the time were typically arranged in roughly chronological order, though occasionally they were further classified by formal characteristics. Internal evidence suggests that Kensai’s sequence is generally chronological, with a few minor exceptions. The first several poems were composed in the immediate aftermath of Kensai’s surrender at Hakodate, allowing us to glimpse his movement to Tokyo and thence to the Oka domain in Taketa, Kyushu, where he would be held captive until the following year. About twenty poems are included from the time Kensai spent in confinement there, followed by a dozen or so composed as he made his way toward Shizuoka after being pardoned. The remaining thirty-odd poems appear to have been composed after he had settled in Shizuoka.

In spite of the slight variations in sequence, Kensai ikō thus traces the unfolding of Kensai’s life in the post-Restoration world. Even in the collection’s opening poems, a distinctly Buddhist tinge colours Kensai’s representation of his circumstances. Take, for example, the following quatrain, with which it begins:
函館寄家兄  In Hakodate, to my elder brother back home

濛々雲霧漠無邊 Clouds and mist obscure the vast barren landscape;
異地幽囚亦宿縁 Prisoner now in a foreign land, this too must be a bond of fate.
一歳辛艱多少事 How much has happened in this year of bitter toils;
何時秋雨對床眠 When will I sleep across from you again, as autumn rains fall?49

The use of the explicitly Buddhist term shukuen (Ch. suyuan) in the second line merits our attention. Rather than railing against the injustice of his imprisonment or seeing it as evidence of the present regime’s benightedness, Kensai instead expresses resignation, envisioning the forces that have brought him to his present situation as part of a larger web of karmic causality. Kensai’s second couplet refers to a poem by Wei Yingwu 韋應物 (737–91), a Tang figure who shared Kensai’s fondness for Tao Yuanming, and who also took refuge in Buddhism while living through times of upheaval. Wei Yingwu served intermittently in a wide range of official posts over the course of the turbulent eighth century, but with almost equal frequency resigned these posts to go spend long stretches of time living in Buddhist temples.50 Significantly, the specific poem Kensai references here was composed just after Wei had chosen to leave office; the first two couplets of Wei’s octave express the poet’s joyful reunion with his nephews, whose service deprives them of their uncle’s freedom:

餘辭郡符去 I left, quitting my post in the commandery;
爾為外事牽 You are bound by external affairs;
寧知風雨夜 Who would have thought that on a windy and rainy night like this,
復此對床眠 I would again sleep across from you?51

While Kensai had clearly not chosen to “quit” his post in the same way that Wei Yingwu had, the poems that he wrote during his time in confinement often frame it as a period of disengagement, stressing his absence from office more than his condition of captivity. Whatever desire Kensai might have had to return to office finds little expression in them. On the contrary, he repeatedly uses the poems to explore the possibilities of life outside the fetters of government service. Moreover, it is not specifically service to the Meiji regime that he rejects, but government service in general.

In the second poem to appear in this posthumous anthology, Kensai makes the appeal to Buddhism even more explicitly than in the first, portraying his captivity as a kind of meditative practice:

岡邸偶作 Spontaneous composition in the Oka [domain] residence

瘦骨崚崚髮種然 My emaciated bones jut out, my hair gone bald;
樓頭日日坐如禪 Each passing day in this estate, I sit as though in zazen.
天恩豈為吾人吝 How could Heaven be chary in providing blessings to me?
更賜清閑二十年 For it has now bestowed twenty years of pure idleness!52

The term seikan 清閑 (Ch. qingxian), or “pure idleness,” forms something of a undertone for the entire collection. Located as the polar opposite of the official’s busy preoccupation with the “dusty” affairs of the mundane world, “pure idleness” is a phrase Kensai repeats on two occasions later in Kensai ikbō in reference to the realm of reclusion he ultimately constructs in Shizuoka. It is not surprising that corporeal confinement would prompt Kensai to turn to his poetry for spiritual liberation. But what is striking is the tonal consistency

49 Yaguchi Kensai, Kensai ikbō, 1a.
50 See Red Pine’s introduction in In Such Hard Times (Port Townsend: Copper Canyon Press, 2009).
51 The poem’s second couplet is sufficiently well-known as to be the source of the idiom 風雨對床 (Chin. fengyu dui chuang), indicating an unexpected reunion of close friends or relatives; Kensai incorporates the phrase with one small change. The original title of the Wei Yingwu poem is “Shown to Quanzhen and Yuanchang (Yuanchang’s surname is Zhao)” 示全真元常 (元常、趙氏生); some texts have “snowy” instead of “rainy” night. Red Pine gives a complete translation in In Such Hard Times, pp.284–85.
52 Kensai ikbō, 1a. My interpretation of 種然 as “bald” is provisional, based on one sense of 種 as “seed-like” or “infantile”.

VASSAL OF A DEPOSED REGIME 109
It seems likely that Kensai ikūō the term’s appearance here (particularly in the highlighted position) is not in fact changed the city’s proper name, “Edo”, at all, but had merely given himself as a traveler, tossed about by the waves of history, and unsure of his destination. At the Battle of Hakodate, while Enomoto and the other leaders of the militants were incarcerated in Tokyo, about five hundred of the men under their command were detained in Hakodate, and an additional 415 men, Yaguchi Kensai among them, were placed in the custody of various domains.55 It seems likely that when he wrote this poem, Kensai had been brought to the Oka domain’s residence in Tokyo. Some of his comrades who had been entrusted to other domains spent the duration of their confinement in the Tokyo residences associated with those domains.56 Yet Kensai soon departed Tokyo, as the fourth poem in his collection reveals:

已巳十月十三日與飯嶺星野長田及岡藩名塚後藤諸士發東京到橫濱舟中作

On the thirteenth day of the tenth month of the sixth year of the cycle [Meiji 2=1869], along with Iijima, Hoshino, and Osada, as well as Nazuka and Gōō from Oka Domain, I left Tokyo for Yokohama. Aboard ship I wrote this.57

蓬窗微雨歇 / By the porthole window, the faint rains cease;
斜日發東京 / The sun slants in the sky as we depart the “Eastern Capital”;
身豈辭天譴 / How can my body escape the censure of Heaven?
心絶要永貞 / Yet in my heart I sought only to remain true.
雲晴山尚暗 / The clouds have cleared, but the mountains are still dark.
風定汐初平 / The winds have settled, and the evening tide at last turns calm.
浮世何時了 / This floating life: when will it end?
白頭又遠征 / White hair on my head, I embark on another distant journey.58

While one of Kensai’s best-known poems expresses his disdain for the Meiji regime’s sudden adoption of the solar calendar, it is worth noting that he shows no hesitation in incorporating into this verse the new toponym “Tokyo,” which the Meiji Emperor had bestowed upon Edo just one year earlier.59 The term’s appearance here (particularly in the highlighted position it enjoys by contributing the first of the poem’s four rhyming characters) conveys the poet’s acknowledgment of the city’s new designation. At the same time, the natural images of cleared storms and settled waves serve to underscore his implicit acceptance of this new order. Yet uncertainty lingers both in the obscured mountains and in the distinctly Buddhist sense of ephemerality and worldly impermanence that emerges in the final couplet. While this poem literally describes a journey, Kensai celebrates while a prisoner and that which he fashions for himself after his release. We might expect that these early poems written during his confinement would have a sharper political edge, and yet instead we find a remarkable coherence throughout the collection in the depiction of “pure idleness” as Kensai’s greatest desideratum.

As this second poem indicates, Kensai was placed in the custody of the Oka domain after the final defeat of Enomoto Takeaki’s forces in the Battle of Hakodate. While Enomoto and the other leaders of the militants were incarcerated in Tokyo, about five hundred of the men under their command were detained in Hakodate, and an additional 415 men, Yaguchi Kensai among them, were placed in the custody of various domains.55 It seems likely that when he wrote this poem, Kensai had been brought to the Oka domain’s residence in Tokyo. Some of his comrades who had been entrusted to other domains spent the duration of their confinement in the Tokyo residences associated with those domains.56 Yet Kensai soon departed Tokyo, as the fourth poem in his collection reveals:

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It is unclear what mode of transport brought Kensai from Yokohama to Taketa, but this castle town of the Oka domain in northeastern Kyushu is where he would be confined for the next several months. Kensai occasionally describes his place of confinement in Taketa as a “prison,” but he often uses more neutral words. For example, in the following poem, the first to be explicitly situated within this new domicile, he calls it simply his “place of lodging”:

Aboard ship I wrote this.

蓬窗微雨歇 / By the porthole window, the faint rains cease;
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自数 Lamenting myself

寓舍萧萧与睡宜 All is still in this place of lodging; it is good for sleep;
園邊影落夕陽移 Shadows fall on the railing as the evening sun sets.
侵來白髪猶如釭 White hair creeps in, truly as if fated;
謝去青年不待期 I bid farewell to youth, and will not wait for my time.
傍倚魚蝦何可得 As one ’consorting with the fish,’’ what can I obtain?
心成灰燼斷應知 Once the mind is like dead ashes, one knows how to sever ties.
悠々世事向誰問 Whom shall be asked about the endless affairs of the world?
一任泥中曳尾龜 I resign myself to be a turtle dragging its tail in the mud.\(^{60}\)

In line five, Kensai compares himself to a fisherman, drawing upon language from Su Shi’s “Poetic Exposition on Red Cliff” to suggest his own status as an unencumbered wanderer.\(^{60}\) A similar celebration of disengagement, one even more pointedly configured as a rejection of government service, is evident in the final couplet, which alludes to a famous anecdote in Zhuangzi:

Once, when Zhuangzi was fishing in the Pu River, the king of Chu sent two officials to go and announce to him: “I would like to trouble you with the administration of my realm”. Zhuangzi held on to the fishing pole and, without turning his head, said, “I have heard that there is a sacred tortoise in Chu that has been dead for three thousand years. The king keeps it wrapped in cloth and boxed, and stores it in the ancestral temple. Now would this tortoise rather be dead and have its bones left behind and honored? Or would it rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud?” “It would rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud,” said the two officials. Zhuangzi said, “Go away! I’ll drag my tail in the mud”.\(^{61}\)

This anecdote contrasts the unfettered life of the fisherman Zhuangzi with the deadening constraints of public office. Needless to say, its humorous thrust does not depend upon posing any questions about who the King of Chu was, or what sort of administration he ran, or what Zhuangzi’s ties to other regimes may have been. Kensai’s allusion to the Zhuangzi anecdote thus frames his life in confinement in Taketa as an escape from the obligations of office: not from the particulars of a particular office.

In this poem’s opening lines, Kensai notes that his Taketa domicile is “good for sleep”. This observation would soon prompt Kensai to take the ironic step of actually assigning the place a name, styling it in the manner of a recluse’s hermitage, as we see in the following poem:

兀坐漫翻書一函 Sitting up, I leisurely leaf through a box of books;
晨昏賴有菜蔬甘 At dawn and dusk, I can count on sweet greens and vegetables.
三竿初起黃昏臥 Rising with the sun already high, and lying down at twilight;
呼作吾曹睡足庵 I call my bureau here the “Cottage of Sufficient Sleep”.\(^{62}\)

The term 曹 (Chin. cao; Jap. しょ) that Kensai uses in the final line typically indicates a government office or department; given the contrast he sketches elsewhere between his life thus far as an official and his present idleness, its use here has a wry, almost droll tone. Moreover, the particular name that Kensai assigns to his place of captivity (Chin. Shuizu’an; Jap. Suisokuan) carries additional significance for it was the name that Song-dynasty recluse Cui Xian gave to his hermitage on Mount Lu. A talented zither player, Cui Xian is perhaps best known in association with Su Shi, a figure of whom Kensai was particularly fond. As recorded in Su Wenzhong gong shi bezhu 蘇文忠公詩合註, the influential annotated edition of Su Shi’s poetry published in the late eighteenth century by Feng Yingliu 鳳應镏, Cui Xian (Chenglao 誠老) was also known as the “Jade Stream Daoist” 玉澗道人 and he collabo-
rated with Su to compose songs. The name of Cui Xian’s domicile, the “Cottage of Sufficient Sleep”, might seem an obscure and unlikely reference for Kensai to make, but just two poems later in _Kensai iko_, he composes a poem announcing that he has “finished” Feng’s annotated edition of Su Shi.

正月廿九日蘇詩合註卒業題巻末
On the 29th day of the first month, I finished The Collected Annotations of Su’s Poems and write this in its final volume

On this day, I open the book, perusing it until night comes.

The poem expresses Kensai’s sense of affinity with Su Shi in various ways. It describes his reading of Su’s poetry in ritualised, almost devotional, terms; while Kensai may have had access to nothing more than Feng’s annotated text of Su’s poetry during his detainment, it is almost as though Su is physically present to him, or perhaps represented iconically. Kensai further suggests a parallel between Su Shi being inspired by sculptures of and texts concerning the lay Buddhist figure Vimalakirti on the one hand, and his own inspiration by Su’s texts on the other. Moreover, by using the term “residence of the banished” (_zheju_, Jap. _takkyo_) in the poem’s final line, Kensai highlights the similarity between the exiled Su Shi’s life circumstances and his own.

In this way, the above poem adds another lens through which to view Kensai’s present circumstances of disengagement to the array assembled thus far. Alongside captive prisoner, Daoist wanderer, and delightedly idle retiree, we now have Kensai in the guise of political exile. Yet while this last lens stresses the political dimensions of his present withdrawal, we should not forget that dynastic loyalty is absent from the picture. The well-known demotions and exiles that Su Shi experienced in the course of his career (notably his lengthy banishment to the southern island of Hainan) came as the result of political factionalism and had nothing to do with dynastic collapse. The link that Kensai proposes here between himself and Su Shi as fellow statesmen who encounter political adversity, resonates with a poem that Kensai wrote during his captivity about an individual forced into reclusion closer to home: shogunal officer Iwase Senshū (1818–61). It reads:

憶舊遊 雲園
Recalling an excursion made long ago (Kiun’en)

A man with frosted temples is suddenly thrown into a dark prison; Unwavering stoutheartedness only produced enemies.

In sorrow, I idly gaze upon the Taketa moon; And dream: my spirit far away, along the Sumida in autumn.

Withered grasses along a worn-down path; insects singing in vain; The garden deserted, water spills sloppily at the secluded pond.

I recall those days when we gathered for poetry and wine; Wielding our brushes with easy verve, drunk in the high tower.
A notation written in half-size characters beneath the poem's title reads “Kiun'en,” which was the name of shogunal diplomat Iwase Tadanari (Senshū)'s residence in Mukōjima 向島. Kensai had befriended Senshū while both were teaching at the Shōheikō. There, Senshū’s talents were quickly recognised and he rapidly rose in the ranks of shogunal officials, becoming perhaps the staunchest advocate among their number for opening Japan to intercourse with Western states. At a time when even those who supported such a policy did so largely because they thought it was an unavoidable temporary expedient, Senshū was one of the few shogunal officials who instead argued strongly for the advantages Japan could gain through opening itself up to contact with the West. Early on, he came to think Japan ought to send students and officials abroad to learn about Western customs as well as Western technology, volunteering himself for the position.

The Kiun'en residence that Kensai recalls visiting in this poem had particular significance in Senshū’s life because it was where he was forced to spend his final three years. Senshū was permanently confined there in 1858 after running afoul of Ii Naosuke (chief councillor) Ii Naosuke. Senshū’s knowledge and self-assurance on issues of foreign policy were threatening to the less-informed Ii, and the two also found themselves arrayed on opposing sides in a factional dispute over shogunal succession.

In this poem, Kensai attempts to transcend his present confinement through imaginative armchair traveling to happier times and places, but he also suggests an analogy between his own circumstances as a political prisoner and those of Senshū. The first lines of Kensai’s poem are suggestively ambiguous: is the aging man who finds himself a prisoner Kensai or Senshū? Both could conceivably feel that their sincere and single-minded service unexpectedly earned them enemies. A voice distinctively Kensai’s emerges more strongly in the second couplet, as the poet compares his actual bondage in Takeita with his imagined flight to Senshū’s residence in Edo. The remaining couplets of the poem create a chronological juxtaposition of the present dilapidated state of Kiun’en with its past glories: leading the reader to realise the effect of its master’s absence. It is likely that Kensai had visited the Kiun’en after Senshū died and seen its condition firsthand, for he was asked to execute the calligraphy for Senshū’s memorial stele. We see in this poem Kensai’s identification with another Tokugawa vassal, but pointedly asked to execute the calligraphy for Senshū’s memorial stele. It is likely that Kensai had visited the Kiun’en after Senshū died and seen its condition firsthand, for he was asked to execute the calligraphy for Senshū’s memorial stele. We see in this poem Kensai’s identification with another Tokugawa vassal, but pointedly asked to execute the calligraphy for Senshū’s memorial stele.

At some point in the spring of Meiji 3 [1870], Yaguchi Kensai was pardoned, allowing him to leave his place of captivity in Takeita. His release presumably came because of the general order that had been issued in the second month of Meiji 3 to the domains that had assumed custodial responsibility for the militants who surrendered at Hakodate. Significantly, there is no poem in the posthumous collection that celebrates or even explicitly records his release from confinement. Instead, the successive headings of his poems simply indicate that he embarked upon another journey:

三月十九日將發岡城下旅亭題攪翠樓
On 03.19, I depart an inn in the castle town of Oka. I write this poem on the Kakusuirō.

一醉歡然萬事休 In drunken merriment, all things cease;
今朝初上此高樓 This morning, for the first time I ascend to this high tower.
百花撩亂春將盡 Hundreds of blossoms scatter wildly; spring is almost over;
四面雲山送客愁 Cloud-covered mountains on all sides send off the weary traveler.
From Kensai’s posthumous anthology, it is possible to retrace the route he took in the spring and early summer of 1870 by boat: departing Oka, calling briefly at the Inland Sea island of Aijima, then reaching the port of Tadotsu in the province of Sanuki. On 04.01, he arrived at Ushimado in Bizen, where he composed several poems, including the following, one of only two to make even indirect reference to his release: 

四月朔泊備前牛窪
On 04.01, we drop anchor at Ushimado in Bizen

置身浮世塵埃外
I have placed myself beyond the dust of this floating world;

路遥千山萬水中
A thousand mountains and myriad seas I have crossed.

歴落三年今得返
Three years of travel, and now I am able to return;

牛窪堤畔待西風
At the jetty in Ushimado, I await the western wind.72

After spending several days in Ushimado, he continued onward by sea and arrived in the city of Osaka on 04.05. It is unclear how long Kensai spent in Osaka, but one month later he had ventured further east to the town of Nanbu in Yamanashi. There, it seems that he taught briefly (or at least was slated to do so), at the Mōken Gakusha 蒙軒学舍, an academy founded by Kondō Yoshinori 近藤喜則 (1832–1901) in 1870.73 While Kensai’s stay in Yamanashi lasted less than one year, his own posthumous poetry collection and that of Kondō contain poems reflecting his time there.74 Perhaps connections Kensai had established through his earlier stint as headmaster of Yamanashi’s Kitenkan led him to this post. It is also possible that a certain Tokugawa vassal named Toyoshima Jūsaku 豊島住作 (b. 1847), who had taught at the Mōken Gakusha in its initial incarnation, may have played a role in bringing Kensai there.75 Like Kensai, Toyoshima had joined Enomoto Takeaki’s fleet as it departed Edo and headed toward the northeast in the summer of 1868, but his plans were scuppered when the ship he had boarded, the Mikabo-maru, ran aground in stormy seas. At a loss for what to do, Toyoshima and another former shogunal official, Hirayama Seisai 平山省齋 (1815–90), sought refuge in Yamanashi with Kondō, who knew Toyoshima’s father, and Kondō apparently arranged for them to stay at a temple where they set up a school for local children. Initially known as the Chōsūsui 朝すい水堂, the school was relocated and renamed the Mōken Gakusha in 1870. Both Toyoshima and Hirayama appear alongside Yaguchi Kensai on a list of the newly established school’s faculty.76 Each of these three men would later teach in Shizuoka. Sparse and contradictory documentation makes it difficult to be certain when Kensai, Toyoshima, and Hirayama began and ended their work in Yamanashi and Shizuoka.77 While these details elude us, we can nevertheless glimpse here the network of connections that continued to link Yamanashi and Shizuoka in early Meiji and that helped former Tokugawa retainers establish themselves in new occupations, especially as teachers in local academies.

By late 1870, or perhaps early 1871, Yaguchi Kensai appears to have settled in Shizuoka, where he would live the rest of his days. There is, however, no poem in Kensai ibō 7b that commemorates his arrival in Shizuoka, just the sudden occurrence of frequent references to fellow Tokugawa vassals with whom he interacted while living there. The first sign in the anthology that Kensai has taken up residence in Shizuoka comes when he begins composing occasional poems on topics assigned by Mukōyama Köson, who ran a poetry circle in Shizuoka that many former vassals attended.78 Kensai also mentions interacting with a Zen priest named Suigetsu 水月 who ran a Sinitic poetry and prose gathering at Rinzaiji Temple 臨済寺.79 In addition to these individuals, Kensai’s collection also notes his interaction
with several other former scholars of the Shōheikō who had relocated to Shizuoka, such as Hayashi Gakusai (1833–1906) and Hayashi Ōkei (1826–1905). As Imagawa Teizan (1826–1905), a scholar who had been the inaugural chair of the shogunate’s first official institute for Western learning,80 one source states that Kensai, along with two of these men, was appointed in an advisory capacity at Shizuoka Gakumonjo, but that the post was largely nominal.81 While Kensai’s poetry collection contains no direct mention of his employment by the school, it does indicate his interaction with many of the school’s current and former faculty.

One such Gakumonjo scholar with whom Kensai spent time was Nakamura Keiu, who presented a verse to Kensai shortly after the latter’s relocation to Shizuoka.82 Keiu’s composition gives us a glimpse of Kensai’s new dwelling: a residence on the periphery of Ren’ei’s 蔵永寺 temple, referred to in the poem by an alternative name, “Mimatsu-san”:

Mr Kensai invited me to a drinking party, and I composed this.

伏松山下掩翠扉
市遠村孤客至稀
堆案鑒編千卷富
映軒潺湲一池園
空於筆下騁雄俊
懶向人間問是非

Rippling patterns reflect on the eaves from the surrounding pond.
In vain, bold and fine words gallop forth from your brush;
Yet weary are you to face the world and ask right or wrong.
When old friends meet again, their feelings are tender:
Forgotten are roles of “host” and “guest,” and with them all contrivance.83

In noting the dwelling’s “rustic gate,” its distance from the city, the paucity of visitors to it, and the abundance of books that it contains, Keiu describes Kensai’s domicile in the conventional terms of a recluse’s hermitage.84 Yet the poem’s third couplet seems to express a certain disappointment that Kensai has chosen to withdraw and that his talents are not receiving the audience they deserve.

Kensai was not to be moved, however, and this hermitage near Ren’ei’s would be his final home; when he died in 1879, his remains were interred in the temple’s cemetery (see Figure 5). To Keiu, the lack of recognition was troublesome, but to Kensai, obscurity seems to have been one of the most attractive qualities of his new life. In many of his poems from this period, he refers to his residence with the term 幽居 (Chin. yoyū, Jap. yūkyō), meaning “secluded dwelling”.85 The following poem, which Kensai composed around the same time, echoes several of the conventions of reclusion we saw in Keiu’s poem while also expressing the poet’s firm sense of resolve:

Early summer in my secluded dwelling, I match the rhymes of Ryūson

Welcome resided in the study
Having made my return, I wash my feet and sit in my study;
A jumbled lot, but I have them still: these books that fill my chamber.
The rises and falls of ages past are like the passing of dawn to dusk;
Three years of meetings and partings, feeling heat and cool.

池頭水滿荷仍小

The pool is filled with water, but the lotus is still small;

屋角風輕柳漸長

A breeze blows lightly on the roof’s edge; the willows growing long now.

乘興濰來蘭竹石

Seizing inspiration, I paint an orchid, bamboo, and stone;

清閑此日却爲忙

The pure idleness of a day like today somehow seems busy.

86 Kensai ibid, 80–9a.

87 In particular, Kensai’s use of 歸來 here recalls Tao Yuanming’s “The Return” 歸去來辭.


89 It is worth noting that in one of the poems in his sequence on ‘Returning to the Farm to Dwell’, Tao Yuanming also alludes to the Fisherman’s song in the Chu ci, but with a twist: stating that the stream is clear and that he can use it can wash his feet; see the discussion in James Hightower, The Poetry of T’ao Ch’ien (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p.55.

90 See, for example, the sentence that concludes the brief biographical account of Kensai in Nakane Kôtei’s Kôtei gadan, which reads: “In a certain year in the Meiji period, he went into reclusion in Ashiarai-mura of Suruga where he lived the remainder of his days” 明治某年隱于駿之濯足村以終焉 (II:28b).

The fisherman, with a faint smile, struck his paddle in the water and made off. And as he went he sang: “When the Cang-lang’s waters are clear, I can wash my hat-strings in them; When the Cang-lang’s waters are muddy, I can wash my feet in them”.

88 Kensai ibid, 80–9a.

89 In particular, Kensai’s use of 歸來 here recalls Tao Yuanming’s “The Return” 歸去來辭.


90 See, for example, the sentence that concludes the brief biographical account of Kensai in Nakane Kôtei’s Kôtei gadan, which reads: “In a certain year in the Meiji period, he went into reclusion in Ashiarai-mura of Suruga where he lived the remainder of his days” 明治某年隱于駿之濯足村以終焉 (II:28b).
This anecdote, which also appears in *Mencius*, suggests how a scholar-official should respond to shifting circumstance: if the Way is being upheld and the Cang-lang stream is clear, he should wash his hat-strings and serve at court; if the Way has fallen and the stream is turbid, however, he should wash his feet and go into seclusion. By stating that he has "washed his feet," Kensai implies that he has made the choice to withdraw after judging contemporary political conditions to be less than pure. The concept of fate figures prominently in Kensai's collection, and if any doubts lingered in his mind about the propriety of his decision, they may have been slightly lessened by the very name of the place he had chosen to retire, for the Shizuoka hamlet on the periphery of Ren'eiji where he settled was called "Ashiarai-mura" 足洗村 (lit. “foot-washing village”). Whether the etymology of this toponym could ultimately be traced to the *Songs of the South* or not, surely Kensai savored a smile as he incorporated the polysemous term into this poem about his "secluded dwelling". The orthography of the "wash" character in Ashiarai-mura is 洗 (Chin. xǐ; Jap. sen), but some contemporary accounts of Kensai exploited the significance of this toponym as Kensai's site of reclusion by writing "Ashiarai" with the 嶽 (Chin. zhuó; Jap. takai) character that appears in *Songs of the South*.

Much remains unknown about how Kensai spent the last years of his life. He clearly continued to teach, offering calligraphy lessons to youthful charges and sometimes taking his "disciples" on excursions to local temples. As indicated in the above poem, painting was another important occupation to which Kensai returned during his years of retirement. The sale of his paintings presumably provided Kensai with a supplemental source of income. There are also one or two scattered references in his poems to his wife and children, with whom he was reunited upon settling in Shizuoka, but the routines of domesticity do not figure prominently in *Kensai ikado*. There are other omissions. For example, the collection chronicles numerous visits to local temples and academies, but does not make any mention of a trip Kensai made to climb Mount Fuji. We know he made the trip because it is documented in the posthumous poetry collection of Hirayama Seisai, the shogunal official who taught at the Mōken Gakusha with Kensai and Toyoshima Jūsaku before moving to Shizuoka. Inasmuch as Mount Fuji is one of Shizuoka's most celebrated sites and a favorite topic for both *wakai* and *kanshi* poets (even those who have never seen, let alone climbed, Mount Fuji), it is difficult to imagine that Kensai did not compose any poems on the occasion.

The final third of Kensai's poetry collection in this way offers us no more than a set of isolated images—perhaps chosen by Kensai, perhaps selectively assembled by his friends, perhaps winnowed by time. In any case, they are linked by a consistency of tone and place: all of them present Kensai leading as assembled by his friends, perhaps winnowed by time. In any case, they are linked by a consistency of tone and place: all of them present Kensai leading groups of youthful charges and sometimes taking his "disciples" on excursions to local temples and academies. Uchida writes that in the spring of 1878, he visited the graves of the Tokugawa shoguns and also of his former teacher, Sone Tokusai, before stopping in to see Hayashi Kakuryō.

From a poem entitled "Written On a Painting" 題畫, we can get some sense of the sort of works Kensai created during this time; it describes the "subtly alluring feeling" he created by depicting "two stalks of sparse bamboo, a handful of stones, several fragrant orchids, and some Lingzhi mushrooms"; see *Kensai ikado*, 88.

According to Uchida (3a), Kensai's wife predeceased him; when he died in his academy in June 1879, he was survived by a daughter, Tatsu, skilled at *wakai*, and a son, Yaushi, who died ten years later. In one poem he mentions an excursion to “Ishino Kakudō’s academy in the town of Ikeshindō” (*Kensai ikado*, 14b). This surely refers to the Kyōwa Gakusha 協和学会, an academy in Ikeshindō where Ishino Gengo, a former Shizuoka Gakumonjo kantōnshū instructor, taught; see Higuchi, *Shizuokan*, p.161. I suspect that this Ishino is the same individual mentioned earlier in Kensai’s collection as “Hōgakū”.

According to interlinear notes in the sequence of three quatrains, Seisai's group ascended to the eighth station, the second from the summit, where they spent the night, rising at dawn to see the sunrise. Of the data available on *Kakuryō*’s letter, it seems that this visit took place around 1875, but Uchida Shūhei suggests that it occurred in the course of a later trip Kensai made through the Kantō area. Drawing upon the account in Nakane’s *Kōtetsu gaden*, Uchida writes that in the spring of 1878, Kensai "took his inkstone and brushes in hand and departed for the provinces of Kai, Shinano, Kōzuke, and Shimotsuke", presumably to teach calligraphy and sell his works. Uchida suggests that it was in the course of this 1878 trip that Kensai visited the graves of the Tokugawa shoguns and also of his former teacher, Sone Tokusai, before stopping in to see Hayashi Kakuryō.
path he had been travelling since he surrendered at Hakodate. Two years after the *haihan chiken* order was promulgated, for example, he wrote this poem about his “secluded dwelling”:

癸酉七月病小愈偶作

*A spontaneous composition from the seventh month of the tenth year of the cycle [Meiji 6=1873], when my sickness was slightly improved.*

一架琴樽一架書

Having made my return, I am fondest of this secluded dwelling.

栄枯有分花開落

Thriving and withering are fated, as flowers bloom and fall;

聚散無期雲卷舒

Meetings and partings cannot be predicted, clouds gather and disperse.

失馬塞翁還得福

The old man on the frontier lost his horse, but he gained fortune instead;

拔山壯士竟為墟

The stalwart man who could uproot a mountain in the end turned to dust.

思量四十餘年事

I ponder what has happened in these forty-odd years;

踈性應安儋石儲

With a temper lax as mine, I am content with a meager subsistence.

In the specific items that constitute the material components of Kensai’s hermitage, in the diction that references earlier reclusive figures, and in its overall tone, there is a striking similarity between this poem and others in the collection, especially those Kensai wrote immediately upon his arrival in Shizuoka, but also including those he wrote during his captivity in Taketa.

**Conclusion: Presenting Kensai**

As we have seen, Kensai’s life of disengagement is the consistent subject of the poems gathered in *Kensai ikō*. The collection shows the poet’s keen interest in reclusive themes from its very outset, and in these poems he adopts several ways of representing his life outside of office, proposing analogies between his own circumstances and those faced by others who exhibited a variety of reclusive modes. Nevertheless, the paratextual features of this collection—its inscriptions and illustrations, preface, and colophon—offer a much more specific vision. The authors of these paratexts were former Tokugawa vassals who were also Kensai’s friends. The elements of Kensai’s life and poetry that they called attention to shed light on the significance he held for them. On the whole, their presentation of Kensai resonates with the emphases of Hayashi Kakurō’s letter: both focus upon his refusal to serve the Meiji state and propose an analogy between him and reclusive figures such as Tao Yuanming who might be read with the “vassals of a deposed regime” paradigm. Needless to say, Kensai’s friends did not simply fabricate this view of him out of whole cloth; there are unquestionably elements of Kensai’s own poetry that lend themselves to such a reading. Yet out of the diverse visions of his post-Restoration life Kensai expresses in his poems, the editors of the collection chose to emphasise certain elements in their presentation while effacing others.

The volume *Kensai ikō* begins with an illustration of Kensai that clearly evokes the withdrawn lifestyle he led after taking Buddhist vows, depicting him with bald pate and in a plain robe (Figure 6). The portrait is inscribed “Master Kensai at sixty-three”, the age Kensai would have been in the final
year of his life, and seems to be the work of a former Tokugawa vassal named Udono Kashū. This portrait is followed by a daiji inscription by Mukōyama Kōson, former head of the Shizuoka Gakumonjo who along with fellow Tokugawa retainer Nagai Kaidō 永井介堂 (1816–91) prepared this posthumous collection of Kensai’s poems for publication. The two characters Kōson chose to inscribe Kensai ikō 心遠 (Chin. xinyuan; Jap. shin’en) and refer to a famous Tao Yuanming poem encapsulating the spirit of “the mind detached” that underlies the latter’s life of hermitage; its first two couplets read:

結廬在人境 I built my hut beside a traveled road
而無車馬喧 Yet hear no noise of passing carts and horses
問君何能爾 You would like to know how it is done?
心遠地自偏 With the mind detached, one’s place becomes remote.

While Tao Yuanming’s reclusion need not necessarily be understood as prompted foremost by a sense of dynastic loyalty, that interpretation was common in 19th-century Japan, as the enumerating of Tao Yuanming alongside the Song loyalist Zheng Suonan that we saw in Kakuryō’s letter demonstrates. Because of this latent association between Tao Yuanming’s reclusion and dynastic loyalty, by simply alluding to this famous poem of Tao’s, Kōson’s inscription helps attribute to Kensai a similar sensibility and presumed motivation for reclusion—particularly in the activated field that the other paratexts furnish.

99 The portrait is signed simply Kashū, but judging from the time period and the Tokugawa connection, I think it highly likely that Udono Kashū 鵜殿霞舟 was the artist. A bakufu bannerman, Udono had studied painting under Tachi Kahō 館霞舫 (d. 1853); see Kanō Sosen, ed., Honchō gaka jinmei jiten [A Biographical Dictionary of Painters From Our Court] (Tokyo: Ōkura Hogorō, 1893), II: 244. Kashū and Kensai clearly bonded over their shared interest in painting; the final poem in Kensai’s posthumous poetry collection (15a) is titled “On a landscape painting by Kashū”.

100 The role of Kōson and Kaidō in editing Kensai’s posthumous collection is noted in Uchida, 3a.

101 The poem is the fifth in the sequence “Twenty poems after drinking wine” 飲酒二十首, I have used James Hightower’s translation, pp.130–32.

On the surrender at Hakodate, see Kikuchi, pp.212–16.

Kensai was an accomplished calligrapher. According to Uchida’s biographical essay, he was particularly fond of an inkstone he possessed that was made with Duaxi stone, and treasured calligraphy copy books that he had obtained in Nagasaki. An example of Kensai’s calligraphy (a Gao Qi quatrain) is reproduced in Takeuchi Tandō, Zenji ibō [Calligraphy by People of Former Times] (Dairen: Mokugyoan, 1921), II: 359–60.

In his biography of Iwase Senshū, Kawasaki Shizan describes Nagai Kaidō’s friendship with Senshū as ‘closer even than brothers’, and explains that they agreed on a host of policy matters and shared many of the same life circumstances, including enduring punishment for these positions. While the two were confined in their respective domiciles, they had no means of interaction beyond written correspondence; and Kawasaki quotes some of the extensive kawabi sequences the two men exchanged. After Senshū’s death, Kaidō convened gatherings in memory of Senshū to which former bakufu officials such as Mukōyama Kōson were invited; see Bakumatsu sanshū [Three Great Men of Late Meiji] (Tokyo: Shun’yōdō, 1897), pp.192–204. As one of the foremost casualties of Ii Naosuke’s political purge in 1858, Senshū was among the seven principal militants who were arrested, interrogated in Tokyo, and then incarcerated by the Meiji government directly rather than being placed in the custody of a domain as Kensai was. Given their shared efforts on behalf of the Tokugawa in the north, it is not surprising that Kaidō’s preface focuses upon this moment that bound them together. The text begins by identifying Kensai first as a “leftover vassal” of the Tokugawa and emphasizes his enduring loyalty to his former masters. It further shows how Kensai’s loyalty manifested itself on a more immediate level: in the faithfulness with which he maintained certain practices acquired under the tutelage of the Hayashi, the family of Confucian scholars who presided over the shogunate’s official academy, the Shōheikō:

Nagai Kaidō’s preface to Kensai ibō, for example, strengthens this reading by unambiguously assigning the status of “leftover vassal” to Kensai. Kaidō was Kensai’s predecessor as the headmaster of the Kitenkan, and in the immediate aftermath of the Meiji Restoration, both went north to Hakodate to join Enomoto Takeaki’s forces. Kaidō in fact took a leading role in the resistance, and served as Kensai’s direct supervisor in Hakodate. When defeat came in the summer of 1869, Kaidō was among the seven principal militants who were arrested, interrogated in Tokyo, and then incarcerated by the Meiji government directly rather than being placed in the custody of a domain as Kensai was. Given their shared efforts on behalf of the Tokugawa in the north, it is not surprising that Kaidō’s preface focuses upon this moment that bound them together. The text begins by identifying Kensai first as a “leftover vassal” of the Tokugawa and emphasizes his enduring loyalty to his former masters. It further shows how Kensai’s loyalty manifested itself on a more immediate level: in the faithfulness with which he maintained certain practices acquired under the tutelage of the Hayashi, the family of Confucian scholars who presided over the shogunate’s official academy, the Shōheikō:

The old man [Kensai] is a remaining vassal of the deposed shogunate. In the past, he studied the scholarship of the Cheng brothers [that is, Neo-Confucian learning] under the Hayashi family. He also pursued the art of calligraphy, adopting the style of Wang Xizhi 王羲之 [303–61] and Yan Zhenqing 頜真卿 [709–85]. He rose up from common stock, but was recognised for his talents and attained a supervisory post. During the disturbance of the Keiō period [the Meiji Restoration], he occupied Hakodate along with three thousand comrades. But when his energies were expended and his spirits had been crushed, he became a prisoner. Though granted amnesty, he did not serve in official capacity again, but returned to farm in the village of Ashiarai in Shizuoka prefecture. He lectured and taught calligraphy, instructing disciples in his home. At the time, Western books were all the rage, and Chinese learning had fallen to the ground. Yet in setting the scope of learning at his academy, he preserved the old ways of the Hayashi family without changing them. On gathering to drink with friends, whenever talk would turn to the events of 1868, he would inevitably be seized with fiery ardor and cry out with abandon. He lived for sixty-three years, and passed away in his home academy in June of Meiji 12 [1879]. This year, several of his friends from the prefecture planned together to commemorate his spirit. They intend to print the manuscripts and calligraphy that he left behind and distribute them to like-minded individuals with the hope that they shall endure forever. Among his associates and upright comrades, it was I who was his most steadfast friend, and for this reason, they sent me his manuscripts and asked for me to comment upon them. Upon reading them, I find that they contain the poems he composed after being imprisoned in Hakodate. Although this is a small booklet, it is sufficient to enable one to discern his original intentions. Each
verse deserves to be read three times, and each line recited ten. They make one keenly realize the changes wrought by time. The old man had the family name Yaguchi. His name was Masaharu, and his style was Kensai. Written in the thirteenth year of Meiji, in the second month, at the Kiun'en Villa along the Sumida River in Tokyo.

The fisherman Kaidō

Kaidō notes here Kensai's fiery temperament surrounding discussion of the Meiji Restoration, yet the reader of Kensai's posthumous collection is instead struck by the absence of vitriol. Instead, one sees a sense of contented resignation and an attempt to discover in his predicament the possibilities for realising more spiritual goals.

Kaidō's preface clearly conveys the intimacy and camaraderie that developed between him and Kensai over the years. One aspect it does not touch upon, however, is how the two men's paths diverged after both had been pardoned. Shortly after Kaidō was released in 1871, he joined the Meiji government, where he served in a variety of posts, including as an official in the Hokkaido Development office (Kaitakushi goyōgakari) and later as a secretary for the Gennōn 元老院. Yet here he styles himself "the fisherman Kaidō" in the manner of reclusive former officials of the past. At the time he wrote this preface in 1880, Kaidō was in fact living in disengaged retirement in the Kiun'en villa along the Sumida River, the very same villa where Kaidō and Kensai's mutual friend Iwase Senshū had spent his final years. Kaidō took over the Kiun'en in 1876, where he built a shrine and carried out memorial services to Senshū twice yearly until he died, and like Kensai, Kaidō was also involved in the production of a memorial stele for Senshū.105 As the 64-year-old Kaidō assembled Kensai's post-Restoration poems in this site that had special resonance for both of them, recalled their shared experiences, and recounted his dear friend's choice not to serve the Meiji state, he surely reflected on the different path he had taken after his own release. Central to the interest Kensai held for former Tokugawa retainers like Kaidō was that he stood as an exemplar of a mode of being that many of them idealised though few had the wherewithal to actually put into practice.

According to Kaidō's account, the manuscripts that Kensai's friends sent to him in preparation for the publication of the posthumous collection "contain the poems he composed after being imprisoned in Hakodate". We might imagine that Kensai had simply been so preoccupied by the business of establishing the administrative apparatus of the "Republic of Ezo" or distracted by the upheaval that successive battles brought that he found no time to write poetry amid the chaos in Hakodate. Yet that is simply not the case. From the diary kept by fellow shogunal stalwart Sugiura Kiyosuke (1826–92) in his entry for 11.07, just a short time after the new government had been established. While Sugiura's diary entries over the next several months are somewhat telegraphic, they nevertheless suggest that one of the main activities undertaken by Sugiura, Kaidō, Kensai, and other officials working in the Hakodate office (in addition to drinking) was the composition of poetry.107 While Kaidō and the others who edited Kaisai ikō just over a decade later may have had no access to the presumably prolific body of poems Kensai composed prior to his capture in Hakodate, the effect of beginning the collection with Kensai explicitly a "prisoner" was to foreground his life in the wake of the Tokugawa's collapse.
The text of *Kensai ikō* ends with a colophon by Serizawa Zuiken (1824–1905), a former shogunal official who studied at the Shōheikō and followed the Tokugawa to Shizuoka. Zuiken taught *kanshibun* gatherings that Mukōyama Köson and others led in Shizuoka: regular meetings that brought Tokugawa retainers together to share their Sinitic prose and poetry compositions. In his colophon, Zuiken praises Kensai’s “solemnity and gravity” and compares him specifically to Tao Yuanning:

> “I secretly marveled at Kensai’s character \[Kensai’s\] remaining manuscripts, I find them to be limpid and leisurely, never superficial nor imprudent in his thinking … As I now read the old man [Kensai’s] remaining manuscripts, I find them to be limpid and leisurely, without the defects that come from a forced cobbled together of words. They very much manifest the ideas of Tao [Yuanning of] Pengze and Wei [Yingwu of] Suzhou. One can discern in them his manner of being.

These paratextual features of the poetry collection, all contributed by former Tokugawa vassals and friends of Kensai’s who associated closely with him after the shogunate’s collapse, reinforce the reading of him as a “vassal of a deposed regime”. In choosing to stress these elements of Kensai’s reclusion, Nagai Kaidō, Mukōyama Köson, and Serizawa Zuiken presented a vision of Kensai that would largely be echoed and in some ways even further amplified by Uchida Shūhei (1857–1944), the author of the 1920 biographical essay that seems to be the sole scholarly work about Kensai to date. On several occasions in this essay, Uchida borrows phrases and even entire sentences almost verbatim from Nagai Kaidō’s preface and Serizawa Zuiken’s colophon.

While *Kensai ikō* was clearly an important source for Uchida, Kakuryū’s letter was even more influential and inspiring to him. In the essay’s preface, Uchida explains that he had “long desired to ascertain the details of Kensai’s scholarship and accomplishments” after first learning of this former shogunal official whom Kakuryū had celebrated as a “genuine recluse,” but had been “unable to obtain” the necessary materials until recently acquiring Kensai’s posthumous poetry collection. Uchida’s competence in German was sufficient to enable him to write about, translate, and lecture on Kant, Schiller, and Hartmann (among others), but he also had deep Sinological knowledge and sincere antiquarian sensibilities. He composed *kanshi* under the sobriquet Enko 遠湖 and was also involved in editing one of the major venues for literary Sinicite in Japan during the Taishō era, the magazine *Taisōbō shihon* (1915–27). That even a prominent Sinologue such as Enko was long frustrated in his attempts to track down Kensai’s posthumous poetry collection suggests the limits of its circulation.

If Hayashi Kakuryū’s anthologised letter to Kensai was the main means by which the latter’s reputation as the consummate recluse endured into Meiji, Uchida’s brief biographical essay, which was published privately with another *kanshibun* work in a slim volume in 1932, served to reinforce this image. Not only does the text mention Hayashi’s key designation of Kensai as “a genuine recluse” and “a truly pure man” in its opening lines, but it even reprints an abridged version of Hayashi’s letter as an appendix. Uchida’s biography contains substantial content drawn from Hayashi’s letter, but one element in it concerning Kakuryū’s interaction with Kensai is absent from Kakuryū’s letter itself. Recounting the episode reported
in Kakuryō’s letter about Kensai’s visit to Kakuryō’s Tokyo home and the host’s unsuccessful attempts to detain the visitor longer, Uchida writes that as he bids goodbye, Kakuryō says to Kensai: “I would like to write a biography for you,” to which Kensai hangs his head and says, “I am the vassal of a deposed regime (亡国之臣). It is fortunate that no one knows about me. What would be the use in writing a biography?” At the same time that it strengthens the contention in Kakuryō’s letter that Kensai does not seek recognition for his reclusion, Uchida’s addition coincides with the increasingly explicit coding of Kensai’s reclusion as the conduct befitting a “vassal of a deposed regime”. Uchida goes on to compare Kensai to the Song patriotic figure—and in Uchida’s terms “leftover vassal”—Xie Ao (謝翺; also known as Xie Gaoyu 謝皋羽 1249–95), who fought in the resistance alongside paradigmatic Song loyalist Wen Tianxiang. Xie Ao is known for writing an essay in grief and commemoration of Wen after the latter’s death. Whether Uchida had this essay particularly in mind is unclear, for he simply says that Xie “wrote of the state’s demise.” Uchida concludes by saying “When people today discuss the leftover vassals of the shogunate, they speak of [Nagai] Kaidō, [Mukōyama] Köson, and others, but they do not mention Kensai. It is for this reason that I have taken the trouble to write this biography.”

Uchida’s aim to recuperate Kensai as an exemplary “vassal of a deposed regime” and to explain his reclusion foremost in terms of dynastic loyalty is unmistakable, but as we have seen, Kensai’s own poems are more ambiguous in their exploration of multifarious reclusive modes. An understanding of reclusion that sees it principally as the conduct befitting a “vassal of a deposed regime” does not figure prominently in the collection’s poems as a whole. That is not to say, however, that its poems cannot be read through that frame, nor is it to suggest that Kensai did not entertain this configuration of reclusion among the others we have examined. Consider the sample of Kensai’s calligraphy (Figure 7) that appears as the frontispiece of Uchida’s biographical essay. The calligraphy itself is a short passage from Wu za zu 五雜俎, a collection of miscellaneous essays by the Ming scholar Xie Zhaozhe 謝肇淛 (1597–1624). It reads:

A house with several rooms stands in a bamboo grove, with mountains behind, it faces a stream; sparse pines and tall bamboo wind and twist. Curiously shaped stones lie around, but do not seem to have been consciously placed there. Inside is a library of countless volumes, a long desk and a soft couch, a stick of incense and a cup of tea. With good friends of the same spirit, one can pass a day in leisure, sitting or lying down, laughing and chatting to one’s heart’s content. No worries about fancy clothes or food; no concerns about there being enough rice or salt. No need for trivial talk of the weather; no discussion of court or market. If dwelling amid hills and valleys is my lot, it is here that it reaches the ultimate.

Uchida’s friends contributed epigrammatic comments on his essay, and among these is Nakamura Ōkei 中村織水 (1852–1921), a Sinologist who lived in Taiwan for nearly a decade during the early colonial period, publishing extensively in kanbun while there; he writes, “Although Kensai refused Kakuryō’s request of a biography during his life, Enko [i.e. Uchida] has written a biography about him after his death”.

Uchida’s source for this episode was presumably Nakane’s 1886 Kötei gadan (2:33a–34a). Uchida’s use of similar locutions in reference to Xie Ao and Kensai further emphasises their connection. He states...
that the response of both Xie Ao and Kensai to the demise of the regime each served was to be “seized with fiery ardor and cry out with abandon”, and identifies both as “leftover vassals”, the former of the Song and the latter of the shogunate.

We may suppose that Kensai decided to create this work of calligraphy because he was struck by the passage’s encapsulation of the intrinsic delights of the disengaged scholar’s ideal habitat: in a secluded place lying far from the distractions of either court or marketplace and surrounded by natural beauty, he leisurely pursues communion with the great individuals of the past (through his books) and enjoys interaction with like-minded contemporaries. But what is especially interesting about this piece of Kensai’s calligraphy is its own paratextual wrapping. In addition to the passage itself, there are two stamps impressed upon the calligraphy: one at its head and the other beside Kensai’s signature. While all but impossible to make out in the reproduction that graces Uchida’s book, printed notations in its margins explain what these two stamps say: one reads “a disengaged man of Shizuoka” 静岡逸民 and the other reads “Forever cherishing a sense of obligation to the sovereign” 長懷聖主之恩.

With these stamps framing the calligraphy, the viewer is invited to read the world of reclusion that the text depicts in a different light. The retired gentleman in his reclusive idyll (whom we naturally identify with Kensai) comes to seem less generalised and more specifically politicised. The stamps seem to supply the motives for his reclusion, and as a narrative starts to take shape in the mind of the viewer, what had appeared to be mere elements of a pleasing scene may take on additional significance. Perhaps the bamboo suggests the gentleman’s sincerity or integrity; perhaps the pine signals his enduring virtue; perhaps those “good friends of the same spirit” are fellow “leftover vassals” of the Tokugawa. In the same way that the reclusive scene depicted in the text of this work of calligraphy by Kensai acquires a particular political thrust when framed by the “leftover vassal” stamp, so too are Kensai’s poems amenable to reading in the light of his status as a “leftover vassal” who entered reclusion out of an urgent sense of dynastic loyalty. As we have seen, Kensai’s poems present a diverse range of reclusive modes and his reclusion is hardly coded in the univocal terms of dynastic loyalty. Yet this was the dominant presentation of Kensai that Hayashi Kakurō articulated in his letter, that Nagai Kaidō, Mukōyama Kōson, and Serizawa Zuiken created through the paratexts they contributed to his posthumous poetry collection, that Uchida Shūhei offered through his biographical essay, and perhaps that Kensai himself ultimately settled upon.