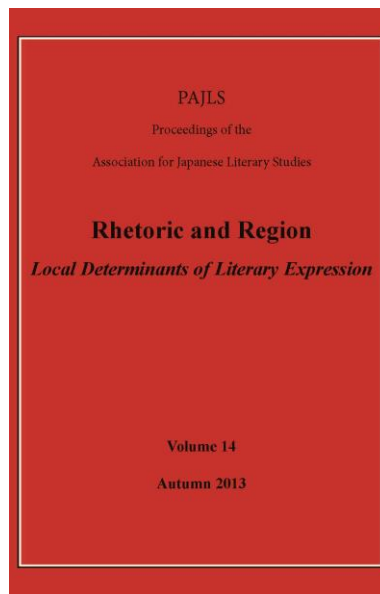


“Gion in Early Meiji: Narushima Ryūhoku’s *A Glimpse of the Capital’s Cats*”

Matthew Fraleigh 

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Gion in Early Meiji: Narushima Ryūhoku's *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* (1874)

Matthew Fraleigh

Brandeis University

In February 1874, Narushima Ryūhoku (1837–1884) published the second volume of *Ryūkyō shinshi* (New Chronicles of Yanagibashi), his humorous and sometimes satirical *kanbun* account of the Yanagibashi geisha district as it was transformed in the immediate aftermath of the Restoration. Two months later, the text's first volume—which had actually been completed nearly fifteen years earlier but had thus far circulated only in manuscript and in pirate editions—was released by the same Tokyo publisher, Yamashiroya.¹ Though the Meiji regime intervened in various ways to restrict their publication, the two volumes quickly became favorites of the reading public, a status they enjoyed even into the next generation. As Nagai Kafū (1879–1959) would later reminisce about his youth at the turn of the century, “there wasn't a student around who was unfamiliar with Ryūhoku's *New Chronicles of Yanagibashi*.”² At the very same time that these two installments, one depicting Yanagibashi in early Meiji, the other featuring Yanagibashi in late Edo, were first becoming widely commercially available, Ryūhoku left the eastern capital behind and headed to Kyoto, where he was employed as the director of Higashi Honganji's Translation Office. Ryūhoku's stay in Kyoto began in late March 1874, the month between the publication of his two volumes about Yanagibashi. He resided there into the summer of that year, a stay of several months' time that gave him the opportunity to write a similar sort of account about the customs and manners of the old capital's Gion entertainment district: *Keibyō* (*Kyōbyō*) *ippan* 京猫一斑, or *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats*.

While *New Chronicles of Yanagibashi* is a canonical work that has received extensive scholarly attention, Ryūhoku's 1874 piece about Kyoto is much less studied. Literary and biographical dictionaries inevitably list it among Ryūhoku's representative works, and it has even been reprinted in three *zenshū*: the original *kanbun* text appeared in the 1897 *Ryūhoku zenshū*, and two other anthologies from 1925 and 1969 provided *kundoku* renditions of it.³ In addition, an 1874 manuscript of the original *kanbun* text written in Ryūhoku's own hand is now held by the Kyoto Prefectural Archives and a photo-reproduction of this manuscript has also been published.⁴ Yet so far no annotated edition of the text has appeared. Over the years, several scholars of Ryūhoku have

¹ For complete annotated translations and discussion of the two extant installments of *Ryūkyō shinshi*, see Narushima 2010. The publishers' colophons of the second and first installments are dated February 1874 and April 1874, respectively, and each volume became commercially accessible shortly thereafter. An advertisement announcing the publication of the second volume can be seen, for example, in the *Yūbin hōchi shinbun* of 14 March 1874. While the text of the first volume (written between 1859 and 1860) had circulated in various forms previously, it was first published a few months after the second volume; an announcement of its publication appears in the 10 June 1874 edition of the same newspaper.

² Nagai Kafū 1927, 283.

³ See Narushima 1897, 270–282; Narushima 1925, 129–180; and Narushima 1969, 83–95.

⁴ See Shinsen Kyōto Sōsho Kankōkai 1986, 209–64.

mentioned the work in passing, but there is to my knowledge just one article that focuses anything more than cursory attention upon *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats*: a brief piece by Ishikawa Iwao published in 1928.⁵

The Tokyo-centrism of the modern literary canon is no doubt in part to blame for this relative lack of critical scrutiny. Another factor is surely that, in contrast to *New Chronicles of Yanagibashi*, *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* does not seem to have been published as a monograph. While some sources suggest that Ryūhoku's Tokyo publisher, Yamashiroya, published *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* in 1874, I have been unable to locate any evidence that this publication actually took place.⁶ To be sure, Ryūhoku clearly intended to do just that, for in June 1874 he sent a letter from Kyoto to Yamashiroya stating that the manuscript of *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* was complete, that he was pleased with how it had turned out, and that he looked forward to sharing the text with his publisher upon his return to Tokyo. The following year, Ryūhoku did in fact seek permission from the authorities to publish the work, informing them in a February 1875 letter cosigned by Yamashiroya that the text was slated to be published the following month and attesting that “the work records various matters concerning the western capital and there is not a single passage that in any way contradicts the press laws,” yet upon reviewing the manuscript, the authorities denied his request to publish it.⁷ Similar evidence of Ryūhoku's frustrated attempts to publish *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* appears opposite the opening page of the hand-written version of the text held by the Kyoto Prefectural Archives; an inscription there states, “The publication of this manuscript was not permitted. Meiji 7 [1874].”⁸

Though Ryūhoku's plans to publish the text as a book do not appear to have come to fruition, he remained undeterred. Less than two years later, he circumvented the government's prohibition with a simple strategy: giving it a new title. Reborn as *Ōtō shinshi* (*Keibyō ippan bassui*), or “New Chronicles of Gion (selections from *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats*),” the work began to appear in serialized installments in the literary magazine Ryūhoku had launched early in 1877, *Kagetsu shinshi*. The parenthetical subtitle of the work proclaims the version of the text printed in the literary magazine to comprise excerpts of the original. In truth, however, the

⁵ See Ishikawa 1928. While Ishikawa's article is the only focused scholarly treatment of *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* that I have come across, Nagai Kafū quotes extensively from the work in a 1922 essay for *Chūō kōron* that concerns his recent trip to Kyoto; see Nagai Kafū 1922, 54–56. Sugiyama Jirō also has a brief discussion of the passages from Ryūhoku's text that Kafū quotes; see Sugiyama 2010, 85–88.

⁶ For example, Gao 2005 (p. 35) states that *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* was published in 1874. A brief note included in the photo-reproduction of the Kyoto Prefectural Archives manuscript likewise acknowledges such theories that Yamashiroya published the text in 1874 but also states that this publication has been neither identified nor confirmed; see Shinsen Kyōto Sōsho Kankōkai 1986, 3–4.

⁷ The letters from Ryūhoku as well as the officials' terse denial of permission to publish *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* are reproduced in Ishikawa 1927, 16–17.

⁸ The inscription reads 此稿本出版不許可 明治七年.

published text is a nearly complete rendition, differing from the 1874 manuscript in only a few significant ways.⁹

This paper aims to situate Ryūhoku's early Meiji account of Gion in relationship to his writings on Yanagibashi as well as in connection with earlier *kanshibun* texts concerning Gion. *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* was written in the spring and early summer of 1874, just as its author was poised to embark upon a new role as a leading journalist. The text thus offers us a look at Ryūhoku's evolving authorial persona and foregrounds many of the themes that would preoccupy him in his career as the head writer of the combative *Chōya shinbun*, which was launched in September of that year. Moreover, by comparing the version of the text serialized in *Kagetsu shinshi* in 1877 with the 1874 manuscript held by the Kyoto Prefectural Archives, I hope to identify a few slight variations that speak to the question of how Ryūhoku, a former shogunal vassal, came to terms with his public role in the new Meiji order, and also to shed light on how the site of Kyoto, and his account of his stay there, played a role in these negotiations.

In addition to the similarities in subject matter, there are several obvious formal aspects that link *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* to Ryūhoku's previous writings on Yanagibashi. Both are written in hybridized *kanbun*: a basically orthodox form of literary Chinese leavened by liberal use of playful Japanese glosses and occasional incorporation of vernacular Chinese locutions. *Kanshi* written by both Ryūhoku and others are woven into the prose of both texts, each of which also features *kanbun* translations of popular Japanese songs. The phrasing of the alternative title Ryūhoku gave the Kyoto text, *Ōtō shinshi* 鴨東新誌 (*New Chronicles of Gion*, or more literally “the area east of the Kamo River”), links it even more closely to its Edo/Tokyo antecedent, *Ryūkyō shinshi* 柳橋新誌 (*New Chronicles of Yanagibashi*). Likewise, just as he had in writing the Yanagibashi texts, Ryūhoku adopted the sobriquet Kayū Senshi 何有仙史 (*The Immortal What-of-It*) when he authored *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats*, a somewhat curious title that he explains in the opening of the text's preface:

A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats (one spot of the leopard)

What does ‘capital’ mean? It means the seat of the western capital [of Kyoto]. Because it is the city where the Emperor once dwelt, it has the distinction of being called the ‘capital.’ What about the ‘cats’? They are its geisha. It is because they

⁹ The first installment of *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* appeared in *Kagetsu shinshi* no. 2 (14 January 1877) and the serialization continued in consecutive issues through no. 19 (8 August 1877). The letters introduced by Ishikawa, the inscription in Ryūhoku's manuscript, and the subsequent nearly-complete serialization in *Kagetsu shinshi* all suggest instead that this attempted publication of the text as a monograph was forestalled. That said, the text does seem to have eventually become available in some sort of book form, for in his 1922 travel essay, Nagai Kafū writes: “As I prepared for my westward journey this time, I put a small volume called *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats*, a playful work by Narushima Ryūhoku, in my luggage” (55). It is unclear what Kafū's “small volume” was: whether he meant the text as it appeared in *Ryūhoku zenshū*, or referred instead to an as-yet-unidentified commercially published volume, a compilation of the *Kagetsu shinshi* installments, or a privately produced manuscript copy. In any event, unlike both the *Ryūhoku zenshū* version of the text (*kanbun* with minimal *kunten*) and the *Kagetsu shinshi* serialization (*kanbun* with more generous *kunten*), Kafū's quotations are in *kundoku*, differing only slightly (and in largely inconsequential ways) from the readings that would result from the *kunten* marks in the *Kagetsu shinshi* serialization.

pluck and beat upon cat skin [shamisen]. And what about ‘one spot’? There are many different varieties of cat. Some are black, some are red, some have patterns like a tiger or leopard. I use ‘one spot’ in the title because I am still unable to glimpse the full feline. In the western capital, the areas that are rich in geisha are Yasaka, Shimokawara, Ponto, Miyagawa, Nijō, and Sanbongi. In each of these places, the sounds of strings and song well up all around, and fine silken garments are shown off splendidly. But the diverting charms of each site are distinct, and with the passage of time, these places flourish or fade, cooling off or heating up.¹⁰

There was of course a longstanding association of geisha with ‘cats’ (for cat skin was favored as a material for binding the shamisen that they played). The term *ippan* in the title plays upon this well-known metonymy with an additional allusion to the phrase *ippan o mite zenpyō o bokusu* meaning “to surmise the entirety of the leopard by looking at one spot.”¹¹ The title thus serves as an admission by the authorial figure that his account, both in its brevity and in its focus on a single district, Gion, can only be partial.

Such self-effacing assertions of limited and imperfect knowledge of the subject at hand echo those of the authorial persona in Ryūhoku’s Yanagibashi texts. In the preface to the first volume of *New Chronicles of Yanagibashi*, for example, the narrator states:

I am a foolish and empty-headed student. With my worn-down inkstone and my bald brush, I am just barely able to get enough to eat... I have never spent so much as a single day playing in the quarter to investigate the actual conditions there. How could I possibly be qualified to write about it? I have, however, eagerly listened to the tales told by the playboys and have looked at the maps of the city, and these have given me a general glimpse of the quarter’s workings.¹²

In crafting the authorial persona he would adopt in *A Glimpse of the Capital’s Cats*, Ryūhoku closely followed the tone and structure of the Yanagibashi narrator’s self-introduction, and even identified himself specifically as the author of the earlier texts; the preface quoted above continues:

I am a lodger, a traveler here. Moreover, my wallet is empty, so I cannot go out much to learn more. But since my lodgings are located adjacent to the flower and willow quarter, I sometimes see and hear things, and thus am able to glimpse one spot of the full leopard. And so I shall evaluate the black ones and appraise the red ones, gathering my depictions of this lot of tigers and leopards into one book, to which I give the name *A Glimpse of the Capital’s Cats*. Previously, I playfully wrote *New Chronicles of Yanagibashi*. It was extremely mocking and satirical, and

¹⁰ *Kagetsu shinshi* 2 (14 January 1877), 9a; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 84.

¹¹ The phrase, rendered into *kundoku* as 一斑を見て全豹をトす, can be found in the biography of Wang Xianzhi in the *Jin shu*.

¹² Narushima Ryūhoku 2010, 6.

ultimately made me the target of the Yanagibashi geishas' scorn. While I personally regretted this, I have not yet been cured of my foolish tendencies. My eyes observe, my tongue speaks, I perk up my ears and move my body; I find myself compelled to take up ink and paper to continue the project. I of course know that I will only be running afoul of the western capital's geisha.

With the phrase “continue the project,” the preface specifically situates *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* as an extension of the Yanagibashi works, and the narrator also employs here the same first-person pronoun 余 (Jp. *yo*; Ch. *yu*) he had earlier chosen in *New Chronicles of Yanagibashi*. Moreover, his description of himself as an impoverished observer of the urban spectacle also recalls the opening to the earlier text.

In spite of these numerous points of correspondence, however, the reader can also discern a gradual evolution in Ryūhoku's authorial persona. Whereas the narrator of *New Chronicles of Yanagibashi* describes himself as a student dependent largely upon hearsay for his description of the customs of Yanagibashi and his recounting of episodes that take place there, the narrator of *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* is much more clearly an embodied presence in its textual world, as his explicit statement “I am a lodger, a traveler here” as well as the corporeal emphasis upon his motion in the last lines of the passage quoted above suggests. Rather than simply hearing stories and poring over documents to compile his tale, the narrator of *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* goes on excursions to the temples dotting Higashiyama, enjoys cooling off along the banks of the Kamo river, and is led on journeys into Gion.

The narrator of the first volume of *New Chronicles of Yanagibashi* had taken pains to portray himself as a poor student, and what's more to repeatedly imagine that his work might be “spat upon” by fusty “Confucian scholars” for its bold treatment of amorous matters. A similarly self-referential stepping outside the bounds of Confucian propriety is evident in *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats*, where near the end of his preface, the author alludes to an anecdote from *Mencius* that cautions against committing such transgressions. The story in *Mencius* (VIIB: 23) features Feng Fu, a man who once earned a reputation for his skill at seizing tigers with his bare hands, but who eventually put such rough behavior behind him. Yet in spite of having become “a Gentleman,” Feng Fu ultimately returns to his former ways when a tiger appears; by baring his arms in preparation to subdue the beast, Feng Fu earns the approval of the assembled throng but the disdain of the discerning. With its fitting invocation of engaging felines, the Feng Fu story works in Ryūhoku's preface to position its author as something of a latter-day Feng Fu, playfully mindful of his own recidivism:

Long ago, Feng Fu showed awesome bravery in skillfully seizing tigers bare-handed. Yet he could not escape the derisive laughter of gentlemen. How much the more should this be true about my stubborn foolishness, for I vainly wield my brush

and tongue to ridicule the cats; surely I shall be unable to avoid being laughed at by the wise.¹³

The allusion to Feng Fu functions to forge a connection with Ryūhoku's own earlier writings and their departure from expectations of proper content. Yet there is an important distinction. The authorial persona employed in the first volume of *New Chronicles of Yanagibashi* stood in sharp contradistinction to the historical Ryūhoku, who was at the time an elite Confucian tutor to the shogun. Many contemporary readers of the earlier texts would have known this fact and could therefore enjoy the author's donning of such a manifestly transparent guise. By contrast, the authorial persona Ryūhoku began to develop in *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* increasingly came to resemble what readers knew about Ryūhoku the aspiring journalist. While *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* employs the familiar sobriquet The Immortal What-of-It and specifically references the authorship of the earlier Yanagibashi texts written in the Immortal's persona, *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* also claims authorship of other texts that had recently been written and published by Ryūhoku under his own name.

While explicitly linked to the earlier works, the narrator of *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* is, in short, one much more clearly identifiable with Ryūhoku's emerging persona: a traveling journalist and a specific writer and commentator who sought an active role in public discourse. Take, for example, the closing couplets of the first poem included in the text.

季鷹豈獨思蓴鱸	Surely Jiying craved more than water-shield soup and sliced perch;
故園松菊戀舊主	Back home, the pines and chrysanthemums long for their old master.
唯爲東山遇我深	It is only because Higashiyama favors me so, that
十旬滯留西京府	I linger for one hundred days in the western capital. ¹⁴

The first line quoted here turns on the story of the early fourth-century official Zhang Han (i.e., Jiying), who while posted in Luoyang becomes nostalgic one autumn day for the specific delicacies of his Suzhou home, prompting him to suddenly resign his post and return.¹⁵ The second line echoes the theme of homesickness with its reference to “pines and chrysanthemums:” terms drawn from Tao Yuanming's famous depiction of his homestead, *The Return*. Yet many readers would also have realized that this term had also have realized that this term had an additional

¹³ *Kagetsu shinshi* 2 (14 January 1877), 9b; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 84.

¹⁴ *Kagetsu shinshi* 4 (5 February 1877), 9a; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 85.

¹⁵ The story is contained in Liu Yiqing's fifth century *Shishuo Xinyu* (translated as *A New Account of Tales of the World* by Richard Mather). This story (which also appears in the *Jin shu*) is the source of the four character idiom 蓴羹鱸膾 (Jp. *junkō rokai*; Ch. *chun geng lu kuai*). Zhang Han uses homesickness to justify his decision to leave office and return home (which turns out to have been a prescient move when the Prince of Qi whom he serves is killed the next year).

significance specifically connected to Ryūhoku, whose Tokyo residence was called the Shōkikusō or “Cottage of Pines and Chrysanthemums.”¹⁶

Ryūhoku wrote *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* just one year after returning from a world tour, and these more recent authorial experiences were also reflected in the Kyoto text. While the travelogue he kept during his journey around the world would not be published until the 1880s, selections from the Chinese poems he had composed abroad would soon be published in anthologies such as the 1875 *Tokyo saijin zekku*, helping to establish Ryūhoku's reputation as one deeply steeped not only in traditional Japanese and Chinese culture but conversant with Western culture as well.¹⁷ Even prior to the anthologization of his overseas poems, Ryūhoku was beginning to publish essays in newspapers like the *Yūbin hōchi shinbun* and to give public lectures that drew upon his experiences abroad to make spirited arguments about cultural and social policies at home.

This stance is already apparent in *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats*, where at one point in the course of ruminations about what he sees as the folly of recent attempts to restrain sexual desire with legal codes, he makes reference to his experience seeing an “item on exhibit in a Parisian museum: . . . a belt used by an old Roman emperor to lock up his consort's femininity.”¹⁸ Ryūhoku facetiously suggests that the device offers a novel means by which officials inclined to regulate sexual matters might better achieve their aims. His ironic invocation of this particular view of a Western past had special bite in these days when Westernization was often superficially equated with enlightenment and progress.

In the autumn of 1874 Ryūhoku was invited to become the head of the *Chōya shinbun*, which published its first issue on 24 September 1874. While this marked Ryūhoku's full entry into the world of newspaper journalism, he had already taken steps in that direction by maintaining an informal association with the *Yūbin hōchi shinbun* as an occasional correspondent. When Ryūhoku first departed Tokyo for Kyoto in March of 1874, for example, the newspaper published an essay documenting his travels that included several of the *kanshi* he had composed en route, and such occasional reports continued to appear in subsequent issues of the newspaper.¹⁹ Among the items that he published in the pages of the *Yūbin hōchi shinbun* during the course of his stay in Kyoto was a lengthy *kanshi* commemorating the construction of a new bridge over the Kamo River at Shijō and describing the splendid ceremony held to commemorate the bridge's opening on 1 April.²⁰ Ryūhoku also makes reference to the events of that day in *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats*, where he writes:

¹⁶ Ryūhoku's affinity for Tao Yuanming was longstanding, multifarious, and well-known to his readers. *Kanshi* addressed by readers to Ryūhoku and published in the *Chōya shinbun* newspaper in the mid-1870s, for example, frequently play upon this association. Two prose texts Ryūhoku wrote in 1868, just after he had lost his post with the shogunate's collapse, are particularly well-known for establishing the link with Tao Yuanming: the autobiographical “Biography of the Sumida Recluse” (*Bokujō inshiden*) and “Shōkikusō ki” (An Account of the Cottage of Pines and Chrysanthemums); see Narushima Ryūhoku 1897, 1–2, 285.

¹⁷ Mori Shuntō 1875, I: 3b–4b.

¹⁸ *Kagetsu shinshi* 5 (16 February 1877), 9b; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 86.

¹⁹ See the 26 March 1874 *Yūbin hōchi shinbun*.

²⁰ Ryūhoku's poem appears in the 16 April 1874 *Yūbin hōchi shinbun*.

While I was resident in the western capital, the construction of the iron bridge of Shijō was completed. On April 1 (of Meiji 7), an official order came down commanding that a bridge-opening ceremony be held. Officials and priests all came to the bridge in their formal garments. An elderly couple who had been selected in advance were the first allowed to cross. This was in accord with old customs. Moreover, the singing and dancing girls of Gion were summoned to march in procession, adding to the grandeur of the occasion. On this day, the men and women of the whole capital region descended in packs, thronging the bridge to watch the spectacle. I too was present, surveying the scene from atop an establishment to the east of the Kamo River. This splendidly elegant event had a certain refined charm that cannot be found in Tokyo. I therefore whimsically wrote a poem on the topic of “Seeing the Shijō Bridge completion ceremony.”²¹

A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats goes on to quote the lengthy poem, which had appeared in the April 1874 newspaper under Ryūhoku's name, in full. The text's citation of this earlier published work by Ryūhoku the newspaper correspondent and the narrator's claim of authorship of it shows the increasing identification between the narrator's persona and the public figure of Ryūhoku the journalist.

Ryūhoku was of course not the first *kanshi* poet to take an interest in Gion. And so, in writing his chronicle of Gion, Ryūhoku situated himself in relation not only to his own previous works about Yanagibashi, but in relation also to earlier *kanshibun* texts about the district. In particular, Nakajima Sōin (1779–1855) was a clear inspiration. Sōin first composed *kanshi* about Gion during the vogue in “bamboo branch” style poems (Ch. *zhuzhici*; Jp. *chikushishi*) that swept through Japanese *kanshi* circles from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century.²² While several earlier versions of Sōin's poems on Kyoto in this mode were published in the early 1800s, his 1826 *Ōtō shiji zasshi* was a monumental and influential collection of 120 seasonally arranged *kanshi* about Kyoto's urban diversions that obviously informed Ryūhoku's perceptions and language.

The opening sentence of Ryūhoku's *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats*, for example, makes use of an unusual term for an entertainment district:

西京之銷金鍋以祇園爲唱首矣

Chief among the “crucibles for coin” of the Western capital is Gion.²³

²¹ *Kagetsu shinshi* 16 (12 July 1877), 8b–9b; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 92–93.

²² The genre of “bamboo branch songs” is a style of quatrain that typically focuses on the description of local customs, often with a dash of eroticism. First appearing in the early ninth century and associated in particular with Liu Yuxi, “bamboo branch songs” were inspired by folk lyrics. From the form's inception, poets composing in it did not always strictly observe typical tonal regulations.

²³ *Kagetsu shinshi* 3 (26 January 1877), 9a; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 84.

The first poem in Sōin's collection likewise draws upon this image of a thriving destination almost miraculous in its capacity to relieve its patrons of their money:

水明山媚夾名區	The river's shimmer and the hills' charms embrace the famed quarter;
一帶煙嵐入畫圖	A strip of hazy mist makes the view picturesque.
也是銷金鍋上景	Yes, the scenery surrounding this "crucible for coin"
不妨呼作小西湖	Might well be called a "little West Lake." ²⁴

That *shōkinka* (Ch. *xiaojinguo*) was a somewhat novel term in nineteenth-century Japan is clear from Sōin's extensive prose notes on the poem, in which he identifies the source of the term in Ming and Yuan texts. For Ryūhoku to use the term so prominently at the outset of his text, just as Sōin had, thus created an implicit link to this predecessor. Numerous other instances could be adduced of points where Ryūhoku's diction is informed by Sōin's precedent and Ryūhoku in fact paid homage to Sōin more directly by citing him on more than one occasion: praising Sōin's descriptions of Kyoto, for example, and even using the fact that "80% or 90% of what Sōin wrote was about Gion" as a justification for his own decision to "follow this practice" and confine his depiction of Kyoto largely to the Gion district.²⁵

Ryūhoku and Sōin had much in common. Both were successors to distinguished lines of Confucian scholars: Ryūhoku the eighth in a line of shogunal tutors and Sōin the fifth in a line of *machijusha*. They also read and responded to similar texts. Ryūhoku's *New Chronicles of Yanagibashi* is clearly indebted to Terakado Seiken's *Edo hanjōki* (Account of the prosperity of Edo, 1832–36), and shortly after Seiken's satirical kanbun account of Edo's flourishing urban culture was published, Sōin published a Kyoto version entitled *Miyako hanjōki* (Account of the prosperity of the capital, 1837). Ryūhoku and Sōin also both make repeated reference to Chinese texts about courtesan culture, notably *Ban qiao za ji* (Miscellaneous Records of the Wooden Bridge) by the Qing literatus Yu Huai (1616–1696), in the course of their depictions of Japanese demimondes.

Yet one distinction between their approaches may be cited. As we see in this first poem, Sōin describes the natural setting of Gion, specifically the clear waters of the Kamo river to its west and the verdure of the Higashiyama hills rising to its east, in terms that see it as a miniature analogue of a Chinese site: Hangzhou's West Lake, which became a particularly celebrated leisure spot for literati from the Southern Song onward. Such comparisons to Chinese places run throughout Sōin's text, and while this gaze is not completely absent from Ryūhoku's *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats*, the comparisons he deploys in his depiction of Gion are more often with Japanese domestic sites.

Indeed, discussion of the distinctive culture of Kyoto in terms of its difference from other Japanese sites animates the work. Ryūhoku makes a point of cataloging the distinctive local terminology of Kyoto's geisha district, beginning with the fact that its geisha are actually called

²⁴ Nakajima Sōin 1826, 1a–b (SNK reprint, XII: 153).

²⁵ *Kagetsu shinshi* 3 (26 January 1877), 10b; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 85.

“geiko.” He also notes that in contrast to the practice familiar to him from Tokyo, the youthful counterparts of the geiko, the maiko, are not looked down upon and slighted by their elders but rather just the opposite. Ryūhoku offers his opinions on Kyoto geisha in comparison to Tokyo geisha throughout the text: the dances of Kyoto geisha are more elegant and graceful than those of the eastern capital, he finds, but their music is more plodding and indeed soporific. He writes approvingly about how the geisha of Kyoto preserve their traditional customs while their Osaka counterparts have recently sought to model themselves on the fashions of Tokyo. On another occasion, however, he points to how this indifference to Tokyo fashions makes Kyoto geisha seem a little out of date when it comes to popular entertainments such as the game of *ken*. Yet even as the narrator of *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* describes how he bursts out laughing when some Kyoto geisha invite him to join them in playing their own slow local variant of the popular parlor game, he also narrates how they turn the tables on him, rebuking him as a wet blanket. Chastened, the narrator realizes that superiority and inferiority cannot be imposed on what is fundamentally a simple difference in customs: “Each one of us laughed at the other, each like a dog from [the tropical state of] Yue barking at snow.”²⁶ Similar exchanges occur in regard to various other cultural differences in the course of the text, most ending, as this one does, with a summary judgment that resists placing the author and the Tokyo culture he represents in a position of normative superiority. While such authorial self-mockery had occasionally figured in *New Chronicles of Yanagibashi*, we see with *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* the narrator's greater willingness to poke fun at himself and also a closer, more level relationship between the authorial persona and the subjects he describes.

Recall the text's earlier mention of Zhang Han, the fourth-century official who grows nostalgic for the cuisine of his hometown and promptly leaves his position to return. At the outset of *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats*, this allusion framed Ryūhoku as an outsider to Kyoto, unfamiliar with its customs and longing for his Tokyo home. Yet toward the end of the text, Ryūhoku deploys Zhang Han again in his description of one element of Kyoto's local culture that he came to appreciate during his time there: *matsutake* mushrooms and the pleasures of hunting them in the eastern hills. He writes:

The matsutake of the western capital are the most delicious. I once went to Osaka and ate matsutake there, but the flavor was deficient. Matsutake arrive in Tokyo preserved and not at all fresh, and yet the people in the east gleefully eat them. But their flavor has changed: they are matsutake only in name, so how can their true value be appreciated? Every time autumn comes around, I always think of the western capital, drooling with feelings of craving, no less than Zhang Han for his water-shield soup and sliced perch.²⁷

²⁶ *Kagetsu shinshi* 5 (16 February 1877), 8b–9a; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 86.

²⁷ *Kagetsu shinshi* 15 (4 July 1877), 9b; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 92.

That Ryūhoku could here invoke Zhang Han's homesick hankerings to describe his own fondness for the fungi of Kyoto illustrates the narrator's more developed capacity for affinity with the subjects of his prose.

The text of *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* that Ryūhoku began serializing in 1877 in *Kagetsu shinshi* is virtually identical to the 1874 manuscript held by the Kyoto Prefectural Archives. Both versions include the extensive commentary of Kikuchi Sankei (1819–1891), a poetic associate of Ryūhoku's who like him, had served the Tokugawa shogunate as an official tutor. Sankei's comments on Ryūhoku's manuscript are reproduced almost verbatim in the serialized version, with a few noteworthy exceptions. In discussing the joys of cooling off in the summer along the banks of the Kamo river near Shijō bridge, for example, Ryūhoku writes:

Even if it is hot enough to melt metal and stone, one can take a bath in the evening and stroll along the riverbank by the bridge, calling for wine and inviting out geisha; when one sings out in a serene place with mountain scenery and the sound of the river, his whole body is overcome with a cool and refreshing sensation that makes him forget the blazing heat altogether. What is truly indispensable in this world is the written word. But literary diversions are no fun if one doesn't have wine. Once one has wine, he must have geisha too. This is a settled matter as far as all great men of past and present are concerned. But if all one has are wine and women, then the affair might not escape being pedestrian and mundane. There must be pure and exquisite natural beauty to complement the joys of wine and women: only then is one left without any regret.²⁸

While Sankei's exclamation "These are great words for the ages!" is preserved in the *Kagetsu shinshi* serialization, the other comment he makes about this section, "We see here the emergence of a new Xie Dongshan" has been omitted. Xie Dongshan, better known as Xie An (320–385), was a Jin statesman who was known for consorting with courtesans during an extensive period of seclusion on Eastern Mountain. The enjoyment of wine, women, the written word and the natural world that Ryūhoku celebrates here were features embodied in the reclusive lifestyle Xie An undertook after removing himself from society. At different points in his career, Ryūhoku himself identified with Xie An and indeed left instructions at his death that his posthumous name incorporate Xie An's own name. Moreover, Sankei's comparison of Ryūhoku to Xie An is particularly inspired because Xie An's style Dongshan 東山 doubles as the Kyoto toponym Higashiyama. It is thus curious that this comment, which would have framed Ryūhoku as one contentedly removed and disengaged from the affairs of the day, has been dropped from the published version.

There are very few such discrepancies in Sankei's comments, but another instance is similarly suggestive. At one point in the text, the charms of the riverside in the late evening are celebrated and Sankei writes:

²⁸ *Kagetsu shinshi* 14 (26 June 1877), 9a; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 91; Shinsen Kyōto Sōsho Kankōkai 1986, 249.

The late evening scenery along the western banks of the Kamo River is depicted with such vividness. It was my friend Shinmi Kisan who was good at writing these sorts of poems. But now we are separated east and west. I put down my brush and am overcome with grief.²⁹

Shinmi Kisan was a shogunal retainer who was an associate of both Ryūhoku and Sankei. Kisan's father, Shinmi Bōzan, had worked alongside Ryūhoku's father and grandfather editing the official historical chronicles of the Tokugawa shogunate, the *Tokugawa jikki*. The earliest extant *kanshi* by Ryūhoku, composed when he was just nine years old, was actually part of an exchange with Bōzan. And yet these fond references to individuals tied to the former shogunate are also missing from the published version.

The published version of *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* includes also a postface written by Kunii Tadao, a disciple of Ryūhoku's, indicates a similar effort on Ryūhoku's part to transcend former associations and allegiances. Kunii first tells of how he accompanied Ryūhoku from Osaka to Kyoto in 1873. As the two passed by the Toba-Fushimi battleground along the way, Ryūhoku bitterly recalled the defeat of Tokugawa forces there in 1868, declaring his intent to some day write about a military treatise that would ensure such losses could be avoided in the future. One year later, Ryūhoku returned and Kunii asked him about how the promised military treatise was coming along, but Ryūhoku simply smiled and said that he had abandoned the plan: "Now I am sober. And don't want to write about military matters... I have given myself over to the natural world and the flower and willow world; so why prattle on about wins and losses."³⁰

Many critics, led chiefly by Maeda Ai, have seen Ryūhoku's founding of the literary journal *Kagetsu shinshi* in 1877 as a symbolic rejection of the Meiji order: a moment when he turned his back on society and withdrew into sensual pleasures. While the affirmation of sensual pleasure is clearly a consistent theme in Ryūhoku's writing, it is simply not the case that he retreated from society in the final decade of his life. Rather, he remained a committed journalist, actively offering his idiosyncratic and often trenchant commentary on contemporary affairs. Coming to terms with his status as a former shogunal official was an important part of his transition into the world of engaged journalism. Many of his early newspaper columns show Ryūhoku attempting to transcend his former status and pointedly rebuking those who would see him first of all as a former vassal of a deposed dynasty. In this light, the elisions in the published version of *A Glimpse of the Capital's Cats* of Sankei's comparison of Ryūhoku to a famed recluse who turned his back on society, as well as his nostalgic invocation of a figure who like the two of them was a former shogunal vassal carry an additional significance. Alongside the postface depiction of Ryūhoku as someone ready to move beyond the battles of the past, they seem of a piece with

²⁹ *Kagetsu shinshi* 5 (16 February 1877), 8b; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 86; Shinsen Kyōto Sōsho Kankōkai 1986, 224.

³⁰ *Kagetsu shinshi* 19 (8 August 1877), 8b–9b; Narushima Ryūhoku 1969, 94–95.

Ryūhoku's efforts to reshape himself as one whose active critical engagement with contemporary affairs would not be dismissed simply as sour grapes.

In the wake of the Restoration, the geisha districts of Tokyo had seen some specialization in terms of the factional alliances of their patrons: Yanagibashi became associated with former shogunal officers and Shinbashi became associated with the rising Meiji elite. The Gion district of Kyoto, however, stood outside these tensions: embodying traditions while not being identified with either the losing or the winning side of the Restoration conflict. Perhaps his travels through this and other neutral positions helped Ryūhoku to transcend the tensions of the past.

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