

## Remodeling the Reizei House: The State of the Poetic Field in Eighteenth Century Japan

Miyabe Yoshihimasa 宮部義正 (1729-1792), also known variously as Chūhachirō, Genpachi, and so on, was a samurai who served as retainer in the Takasaki Han 高崎藩 (of Kōzuke Province 上野 — modern Gunma ken), which in his time was governed by a branch of the Ōkōchi clan. If he is remembered at all now, however, it is for his work in the world of *waka* 和歌, specifically for his service as tutor in poetry to the shogun, for his own collections of poetry, and for a *kikigaki* 聞書 he wrote in the late 1770s. Unpretentiously titled *Yoshimasa kikigaki* 義正聞書, the latter work records the substance of conversations he had over the years with his noble teacher, Reizei Tamemura 冷泉為村 (1712-1774).<sup>1</sup>

To some it may come as a surprise that a samurai in shogunal service during the eighteenth century, a samurai who spent most of his life in Edo or in his own domain, should have studied under a member of the ancient Reizei house. Indeed, it may come as a shock for many to learn that the Reizei house still existed as an active poetic house during an era we associate more readily with *kokugaku* 国学 poets such as Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697-1769) and Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801). The fact is, however, that during the time of Reizei Tamemura and his son Tameyasu 為泰 (1735-1816), the Reizei house was as prosperous as it ever had been in the past or ever would be again. One reason for this had less to do with the efforts of the house itself than with the labors of a string of very “literary” emperors — particularly Go-Mizuno’o 後水尾 (1596-1680), Reigen 零元 (1654-1732), and Sakuramachi 桜町 (1720-1750)—who sponsored a host of poetic activities; but one cannot discount the efforts of Tamemura

and his immediate predecessors to put the house on a sound footing after a period of relative decline in its fortunes. Whatever the reasons, Tamemura is said to have had 3,000 disciples, which must have meant that his house on Imadegawa Avenue in Kyōto was the site of a veritable cottage industry. For the role of the head of the Reizei house was not simply to produce poetry, or critical writings, or even teachings in any general sense, but explicitly to train disciples in poetic composition, which meant, first of all, correcting their work—acting essentially the role of *tenja* 点者 (“marker”) in the world of *haikai* 俳諧. One can only imagine what sort of effort was entailed in maintaining an active correspondence with 1,000 students, let alone 3,000.<sup>2</sup>

Exactly how or when Miyabe Yoshimasa became a disciple of the Reizei house is not clear. But we do know that he traveled to Kyōto often; and we also know that Tamemura visited Edo frequently, specifically to meet with his many disciples in the East Country, who numbered in the hundreds. Over the years, Yoshimasa recorded responses to some of the questions he asked his teacher, at least to those he was allowed to commit to written form. Sometime between 1764 and 1772, the first “edition” of Yoshimasa’s notes was lost in a fire; thereafter he recorded what he could from memory. The first of two volumes was produced in or around 1775, the next a few years later.<sup>3</sup>

The format of *Yoshimasa kikigaki* seems familiar to any student of medieval Japanese poetry and poetic culture. Like many similar medieval works, it is in the *mondō* form, in which a master responds to questions posed by a disciple. The content of Tamemura’s answers, on the other hand, comes somewhat as a surprise. For Tamemura’s declarations on poetic style, aesthetic ideals, and even poetic history, differ

<sup>1</sup> Text available in *Kinsei kagaku shūsei* 近世歌学集成, vol. 2 (Meiji Shoin, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> See Kubota Kei’ichi 久保田敬一, “Dōjō waka no dentō to bunkaen 堂上和歌の伝統と文化苑,” in *Nihon no kinsei* 日本の近世 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1993), pp. 79-118.

<sup>3</sup> *Kinsei kagaku shūsei*, volume 2, pp. 989-990.

decidedly from the traditions of the Reizei house as established in the late fourteenth century. For instance, in response to a question concerning the well-known friction between the Reizei house and the Nijō house, both of which descended from Fujiwara Teika, Tamemura has this to say:

Question: What was the cause of disharmony between Tameuji 為氏 and Tamesuke 為相?

Answer: One feels bad about having to say this, but it appears that Tameie 為家 and Tameuji were not on good terms, and Tameie's bequest therefore came to this house. Homes, books, and many estate rights were deeded to Tamesuke. For that reason, after Tameie's death, the nun Abutsu 阿仏 went down to the East Country to plead her case concerning the estate rights, and it appears that that is why the relations between the brothers became strained. One also hears that at that time, Tameuji was also not getting along with his young brothers Tamenori 為教 and Tamekane 為兼, who were very kind to Tamesuke. Of course, among Tamesuke's siblings by the same mother were Tamemori 為守, later called Kyōgetsubō 暁月房, and Dharma Eye Genshō 源承, and two or three girls. And then there were a number of other siblings of Tameuji, by the same mother. Now the lineage of Tameuji has died out; only the descendants of Tamesuke remain. That is why even those of Tameuji's lineage come here for instruction.<sup>4</sup>

Anyone who knows the history of the Mikohidari 御子左 house knows that indeed the original arguments that led to the division of the house into the Nijō 二条, Kyōgoku 京極, and Reizei sub-lineages were in fact over inheritance

— and not only the inheritance of *shōen* deeds but also books and other treasures, as Tamemura says. Yet it is also true that later on disputes arose between the two over stylistic and philosophical issues that are hard to dismiss as trivial. Even when a question by Yoshimasa allows him a clear opportunity to declare those differences, however, Tamemura demurs. In fact, in one passage, he nearly goes so far as to deny any connection of Reizei traditions to the poems of the *Gyokuyōshū* 玉葉集 (“The Collection of Jeweled Leaves,” 1313) and the *Fūgashū* 風雅集 (“Collection of Elegance,” 1347) — the imperial anthologies of the so-called Kyōgoku school that were by all accounts instrumental in defining Reizei traditions:

Question: Is it true that Tamesuke and Tamehide were actually involved as compilers at time of *Gyokuyōshū* and *Fūgashū*?

Answer: This is an unfortunate contention, a contention that comes from the later disciples of the Nijō house, who wish to speak ill of the Reizei. To be sure, Tamekane and Tamesuke were on very good terms, and Tamehide was called upon during the two reigns of Fushimi 伏見 — that is how the idea came to be. But Tamekane's style was one style, while the style of Tamesuke and Tamehide 為秀 were each different. The notion that the Mikohidari [Tameyo 為世], Bishamondō 毘沙門堂 [Tamekane], and Fujigayatsu 藤が谷 [Tamesuke] divided up into three separate styles is something the later disciples argue about. However, the late Major Counselor [Tamehisa 為久] wrote a poem:

All of one thread  
are the teachings of the way  
of Many Islands.  
Who was it that strayed away

<sup>4</sup> *Yoshimasa kikigaki*, section 83 (p. 700).

and began the division?<sup>5</sup>

*shikishima no / michi no oshie wa /  
hitosuji o / ta ga mayoi yori / wakare  
someken*

One can quibble here about the ambiguity of some of these lines, which do seem to admit the existence of ideological differences between the branches of the house. However, the position Tamemura is staking out is clearly one that puts distance between his own position and that of the long-defunct Kyōgoku House, de-emphasizing a historical reality that for some reason makes him uncomfortable. Even when he admits some differences, as in the following passage, it is within the context of a larger commonality.

Question: Are there any differences in the way the Nijō House and the Reizei House compose poems?

Answer: The Nijō House, the Reizei House — all descend from Tameie, and their teachings are not different. Long ago, however, there was disharmony, and so people think that their teachings were different. In recent times, all, including this house, have sought imperial recognition, and there is no difference between the Nijō and the Reizei in the proper way of composition (*shōfū* 正風). It is just that the various tenets of the houses have continued down from ancient times, and in this the Reizei and the Asukai 飛鳥井, for instance, are indeed different.<sup>6</sup>

The question, of course, is, Why would Tamemura want to emphasize commonalities rather than differences? The historical record makes it clear that in earlier times competition between the various branches for preference at

court had been constant and fierce, regardless of how much Tamemura wants to downplay it.

Japanese scholars who deal with Edo period *waka* have at least two answers to the question. The first points to the fact that Tamemura and his immediate forebears were instructed by teachers of the Nijō school their youth, arguing that he naturally followed the example of his own masters; the second tries to account for Tamemura's posture by reference to his "innate" proclivities as an artist.

The first of these contentions is accurate as far as it goes. Even within the pages of the *kikigaki* itself Tamemura gives homage to the members of the Nijō school who had lent the Reizei a hand in difficult times:

Question: It is said that Tametsuna 為綱 was a disciple of [Nakano'in] Michimochi 通茂—but is that true?

Answer: Because Tametsuna lost [his father] Tamekiyo 為清 at a young age, Tametsuna's mother asked Michimochi's help, and he provided assistance and trained him as a poet. Later . . . the house was returned to prominence, all thanks to Michimochi.<sup>7</sup>

As this passage indicates, Tamemura's grandfather, Tametsuna (1664-1722), was in fact tutored by Nijō adherents, whose tendency to dismiss the Kyōgoku style as unorthodox (*ifū* 異風) is well documented; Tamemura himself is known to have studied under the Nijō poet Karasumaru Mitsuhide 烏丸光榮 (1689-1748) in his youth and to have maintained friendly relationships with those families all of his life.

But this explanation leaves unanswered two questions, namely: Why, if there was nothing distinct in its traditions to preserve, Tamemura would want to maintain his own house at all? And why does his own poetry and that of his disciples *demonstrably carry on* the stylistic traditions of Tamesuke, Tamehide, and, even

<sup>5</sup> *Yoshimasa kikigaki*, section 182, p. 717.

<sup>6</sup> *Yoshimasa kikigaki*, section 51, p. 691.

<sup>7</sup> *Yoshimasa kikigaki*, section 82, pp. 699-700.

Kyōgoku Tamekane. This latter fact also challenges the validity of the second response above — that Tamemura’s position was simply dictated by his personal stylistic preferences. Why, then, if he still declares his identity as a descendant of the Reizei lineage and still continues to compose poetry that is recognizably Reizei in style,<sup>8</sup> should Tamemura want to gloss over these differences and enunciate an affiliation with his erstwhile opponents in the Nijō line?

I suggest that there is another way to answer to this question, which is, simply put, to consider more carefully the position of the Reizei house (and also the houses that had inherited the Nijō traditions) in the larger literary world of the seventeenth century, a world that was obviously different from the one that same house had occupied three hundred years before. Here the writings of Pierre Bourdieu can be useful, because those writings have the good sense to consider literary works and practices not only as the products of individual artists, genres, or even traditions but rather as products of agents operating within socio-economic and discursive constraints beyond the control of any individual — to, in his own words, replace “numberless individual histories” with “families of intragenerational trajectories at the core of the field of cultural production.”<sup>9</sup> Bourdieu’s concepts of the literary field, of various kinds of extra-financial capital, and of position-taking within the field on the basis of those kinds of capital are particularly valuable in understanding the position of the Reizei House in Tamemura’s day. To quote another relevant passage: Bourdieu contends that

“every position . . . depends for its very existence, and for the determinations it

<sup>8</sup> On the specific features of Tamemura’s style, see Kubota, “Dōjō waka no dentō to bunka’en 堂上和歌の伝統と文化苑,” 1993.

<sup>9</sup> Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, tr. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 257.

imposes on its occupants, on the other positions constituting the field; and that the structure of the field, i.e., the space of positions, is nothing other than the structure of the distribution of the capital of specific properties which governs success in the field and the winning of the external or specific profits (such as literary prestige) which are at stake in the field.”<sup>10</sup>

If this passage sounds a little abstract when quoted out of context, its reverberations become clear when applied to the case of the Reizei house in the 1700s. As any scholar of Edo literary history knows, the literary field at the time was undergoing rapid change, owing to factors such as increased commercial activity, a general trend toward urbanization, population growth and heightened mobility, rising literacy rates, and so on. One immediate sign of this is the emergence of new genres such as the *ukiyo zōshi* 浮世草子, *kibyōshi* 黄表紙, *jōruri* 浄瑠璃, and *kabuki* 歌舞伎, etc., that for the first time exploited the possibilities of a burgeoning popular market. But big changes were taking place in more traditional genres as well, as an analysis of the fortunes of the Reizei House makes clear. For certainly since the founding of the house in the 1300s, the socio-political situation had changed in ways that on the surface seemed detrimental to the future of the house; likewise, the market for their talents had changed, too.

There can be no doubt, in other words, that the need of *kuge* 公家 houses to protect their interests against forces inimical to them was so overwhelming that the choice to unite against outside competition was only rational. To be a *kuge* poet simply did not mean the same thing as it had in the 1200s, or even the 1500s. To begin with, the noble houses had clearly come down in the world economically, being reduced to small stipends provided by the Tokugawa.

<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 30.

Similarly, they were encouraged by law to focus their interests and activities to the cultural realm.<sup>11</sup> Until the beginning of the Edo period, competition was basically among various *kuge* families — the various branches of the Mikohidari house, to begin with; and later the Asukai, the Sanjōnishi 三条西, and the Nakano'in 中院 houses, all of whom had pedigrees at least as illustrious as that of the Reizei and all of whom sought preference in the imperial court and in the chambers of military leaders. In the mid-Edo period, on the other hand, the old courtly houses faced competition from the “outside,” so to speak, both in the literary field generally and in the field of *uta* specifically. I refer here specifically to the *kokugaku* poets and other *jige* 地下 (“commoner”) poets, who, for reasons also related to their positions, were moving toward a more public discourse and away from the particular rule of exclusivity that perforce dominated *dōjō* 堂上 (“aristocratic”) poetry and poetics.

The animosity of the “outsider” poets toward the old houses is apparent in any number of documents. One example is the famous *Kokka hachiron* 国家八論 (“Eight Treatises on National Poetry”) of 1742 in which Kada no Arimaro 荷田在満 (1706-1751) specifically attacks the *kanka* 官家 (“houses of court officials”) for their tendency to define themselves as unimpeachable authorities, for their practice of disallowing anything but their own highly rarefied vocabulary into poetic discourse, for unbending adherence to old forms of etiquette, etc. — in other words, for perpetuating an attitude toward Japanese poetry that can only be characterized as proprietary.

Looking at their poems, one sees that they are in a wispy style, as lacking in power as willow fronds. What fun can there be in composing such poems?

<sup>11</sup> The first set of regulations, titled *kuge shohatto* 公家諸法度, appeared in 1615. Additions were made to it later.

This may be my own stubbornness talking, but I think with a scribe to write for me I could produce several hundred such poems in quick order. Yet those who do nothing but turn out such bland efforts, when confronted with a poem of real power (*chikara aru uta* 力ある歌), say, “That’s in the commoner style (*jigefū* 地下風); it’s not a poem.”<sup>12</sup>

One can’t help but comment here upon how well this quote illustrates Bourdieu’s contention that what is ultimately at stake in struggles in the literary field is the authority to decide what “counts” as literature and who counts as a writer — what he calls “the monopoly of the power of consecration of producers and products.”<sup>13</sup> What is even more remarkable about Arimaro’s statement when taken in its own historical context, however, is that what he says about *dōjō* poets is what those poets would probably say about themselves, although perhaps in more delicate language. They *did* claim exclusive knowledge, special privileges, and so on — not publicly, of course, for that would have been to disobey the first law of privilege by entering into a debate with social inferiors. But in statements to students they sometimes spoke with great candor. As Tamemura’s noble contemporary Mushanokōji Sanetake 武者小路実岳 (1721-1760) unblushingly puts the matter, “Those born into the poetic houses have a natural excellence.”<sup>14</sup> Certainly their modes of practice and general aloofness amount to an admission of the accuracy of the *kokugaku* critique.

The same things is true in the case of the

<sup>12</sup> *Kokka hachiron*, ed. Fujihira Haruo, vol. 50 of *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shogakkan, 1975), p. 553.

<sup>13</sup> Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, pp. 224. See also Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, pp. 40-43.

<sup>14</sup> *Sanetake-kyō kuden no ki* 実岳卿口伝の記 (section 43, p. 633), in volume 2 of *Kinsei kagaku shūsei*.

well-known attack on the aristocratic houses by the Confucian scholar Dazai Shundai 太宰春台 (1680-1747) in his *Dokugo* 独語 (“Talking to Myself,” 1747). Here again, there are statements Tamemura would not readily consent to, such as Shundai’s claim that “the poetry of our nation has been in decline ever since the time of Teika 定家,”<sup>15</sup> or that it was lamentable how anyone who wants to get a little learning “unfailingly takes someone from one of the famed houses (*meika* 名家) as a teacher.”<sup>16</sup> Judging from both practice and statements made to students, however, the heir of the Reizei house would have to agree with his critic’s characterization of the *dōjō* tradition as being limited to composition on conventional topics (*dai* 題).<sup>17</sup> Virtually all poems written by the Reizei (or for that matter their Nijō counterparts) were indeed written on *dai*; indeed, the traditions simply did not allow the contemplation of poetic composition on any other terms.

In this sense, the position of Tamemura may be characterized as reactionary, a kind of retrenchment motivated by a desire to avoid, as Bourdieu says, being “pushed in the status of outmoded or of classic works.”<sup>18</sup> But saying that doesn’t get one very far in understanding the historical particularities of Reizei position-taking at the time. Another, more positive way to look at the issue is to consider the capital or resources the Reizei House had at its disposal in the constant struggle that is the field. In this regard, their distinction, their difference from their opponents on the outside is as clear as is their natural affinity for other poetic houses at court.

The first resource of the Reizei House was of course noble lineage itself, a form of capital

that was both social and symbolic. As any number of scholars have recently shown, proximity to the emperor still meant a great deal in Edo period Japan, and the Reizei could claim a proximity going back to the Heian period. Even the shogunate, which was careful to restrict the power of the court, economic and otherwise, sought identification with noble families through intermarriage and acts of patronage. In this sense the Reizei House, along with their contemporaries in the Asukai and Nakano’in lineages, could claim a kind of symbolic power — with both social and economic ramifications — that was the envy even of other court families. Specifically, the Reizei House could document unbroken descent from Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原の道長 (966-1027) and the northern branch of the Fujiwara that had dominated politics the Heian period, the golden age in the narrative of Japanese cultural history. Of even more importance in the literary field was their descent from Fujiwara no Shunzei 藤原の俊成 (1114-1204), his son Teika (1162-1241), and the latter’s son Tameie (1198-1275) both seminal figures in the history of Japanese poetry and poetics. In the status-conscious society of the Edo period, such connections constituted a position of almost unassailable authority — at least within certain social strata. Certainly it was for this reason, among others, that men such as Miyabe no Yoshimasa sought out contact with Tamemura, or for that matter with other heads of old aristocratic lineages.

Another of the resources of the house was more tangible: From their illustrious forebears the Reizei had inherited a library, called the *obunko* 御文庫, housed in its own quarters on the family lot in Kyōto. Within were antiques, paintings, furnishings, memorabilia, and texts in the hands of the masters of old — and not just any texts, but texts treated as holy, such as the *sandaishū* 三代集 (the first three imperial anthologies), in Teika’s own hand, no less. Needless to say, access to these resources had to be limited if they were to retain their value: to remain sacred, they had to be secret. To bona fide disciples, however, they could occasionally be displayed. Thus when Yoshimasa asks his teacher how many volumes of Teika’s famous

<sup>15</sup> *Dokugo*, in volume 1 of *Meika zuihitsu shū* 名家隨筆 (Tokyo: Yūhōdō Shoten, 1928), p. 318.

<sup>16</sup> *Dokugo*, p. 318.

<sup>17</sup> *Dokugo*, p. 322.

<sup>18</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 32.

diary, *Meigetsuki* 名月記, are contained in the house collection, Tamemura replies with an answer that must have excited his student considerably:

Answer: The journal was kept by Lord Teika from his sixteenth year until his old age. It is a national treasure, and a mirror to this house. More than sixty fascicles in Teika's own hand have been passed down to this house. Soon I will show them to you.<sup>19</sup>

When Tamemura fulfilled his promise Yoshimasa doesn't say, but one can only imagine the excitement of anyone interested in traditional poetry when confronted with a text in Teika's own hand — and other texts by Shunzei, Tameie, and others, as well as artefacts (section 76) and even local gravesites (sections 39-47), which were also shown by Tamemura to his disciple from Edo. To be honored in this way meant a kind of prestige that enhanced Yoshimasa's own position in the field while at the same time reaffirming his dependence on the Reizei house. This was common practice. This is why the family continued to collect material for the library throughout the Edo period — again not just any material, but specifically sacred materials, such as *kaishi* 懐紙 (“pocket paper”; square sheets of paper upon which poems were recorded) and other documents written by members of the imperial family. To this day, many of the texts and other materials (including furniture, art works and articles of clothing with courtly connections that enhance their value, etc.) remain locked up in the library, unavailable even to scholars and thus maintaining the mystique that is part and parcel of their status as symbolic as well as “informational” capital.

A third kind of capital held in abundance by the Reizei came in the form of teachings. These included secret teachings (*kuden* 口伝) and historical facts primarily of symbolic value that Tamemura could not allow Yoshimasa to record. (“I'm afraid I cannot talk

with you about such things,” Yoshimasa reports him as saying about the secret teachings on *Kokinshū* 古今集, for instance.)<sup>20</sup> But there were other instructions that he could and did share — on composition and a host of practices involving everything from the proper organization of specific poetic events such as memorial services or various festivals to how to record names on pocket paper, or *kaishi* (section 29 of Yoshimasa's *kikigaki*), the proper posture when sitting before a desk (section 198), even how to properly wrap a *tanzaku* 短冊 (“poem strip”) around a flowering branch (section 58). At court, poetic composition was a ritual activity that demanded a knowledge of etiquette that only families like the Reizei and their cohorts in the Nijō tradition possessed—etiquette that students sought out as a way to legitimize their own practice. Indeed, I think it is useful to think of the courtly houses as having a kind of licensing authority over certain practices. To function at poetic meetings, as scribe, as lector, as chooser of *dai*, in a highly stratified society demanded knowledge that the Reizei had in abundance, knowledge with the imprimatur of centuries of precedent. In this sense the noble houses could claim to possess both practical teachings and what Bourdieu calls “consecratory” authority.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, I think it should also be emphasized that affiliation with the Reizei allowed students access to a social network that was itself of considerable value in itself. As I have argued elsewhere about Bashō and *haikai*, patronage was still of great importance, economically and politically, in the early to mid-Edo periods. Bashō's support came directly from patrons and not from publishing, putting him in contrast to workers in new genres such as *Saikaku* and *gesaku* 戯作 writers.<sup>22</sup> The same

<sup>20</sup> *Yoshimasa kikigaki*, section 52., p. 691.

<sup>21</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, pp. 121-125.

<sup>22</sup> Carter, “On a Bare Branch: Bashō and the *Haikai* Profession,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117.1 (1997).

<sup>19</sup> *Yoshimasa kikigaki*, section 16, p. 651.

was still true in the world of *uta*, at least as the dominant faction practiced it: connections were everything. The Reizei knew this, and pursued relationships with the political elite for that reason. In particular, this meant the shogunal house and its attendants, among the ranks of which Tamemura was able to gain numerous disciples — including even the most prominent of figures, such as Tanuma Okitsugu 田沼意次 (1719-1788), and Okun 阿薫 (1685-1752, wife of the shogun Ienobu 家宣 (1633-1712) and the mother of the shogun Ietsugu 家継 (1709-1716). Any disciple who kept his dues paid, so to speak, had some access to other disciples, who were usually people of privilege and whose acquaintance could be turned to good use.<sup>23</sup> Thus the network offered what Bourdieu calls a kind of “reinforcement” of the field by “external forces” of economic, social, and sometimes even direct political significance.<sup>24</sup>

This brief overview of the capital available to the Reizei House reveals many things. First, as Bourdieu would claim, to a great extent the resources of the house dictated their position-taking, or at least the nature of the position open to them, as well as the shape of their practices. Not surprisingly, for instance, the Reizei house insisted on an approach to teaching that required students to become paying disciples of a master, usually from the ranks of the nobility or the elite samurai class, usually the head of the house or a licensed surrogate who also owed fealty to the house that was specifically declared by oath. To teach in any way that allowed for broader

dissemination of their esoteric knowledge would have threatened the future viability of the house: what they were offering was esoteric knowledge and practices, not a rational “method” per se. For the same reason, the house favored an approach to poetic composition that required a knowledge of the court tradition, i.e., of the old poems recorded in books in the library and of *dai* (set topics) on which those poems had all been written and also of the proper conduct of social gatherings at which poems were produced. And finally, in a general way, it is also obvious that in Tamemura’s time the house was still actively investing in the maintenance of its mystique. Tamemura not only rebuilt the house on Imadegawa; he collected more manuscripts and other objects of courtly affiliation and even searched out gravesites and other historical sites of importance to the lineage, making them stops on tours with students, Yoshimasa among them (see Sections 39-47). In all this the Reizei were like their cohorts in the Nijō line, who operated in same market and whose resources were similar in nature although not identical in substance.

Obviously, all of this is in direct contrast to *kokugaku* and other *jige* poets affiliated with *kokugaku* or working on their own, such as Ozawa Roan 小沢蘆庵 (1723-1801). They too taught poetry to students, but whereas the Reizei and other court families emphasized ritual and memory-based composition (*daiei* 題詠), *kokugakusha* marketed rationality in the form of philology and ideals such as creativity and “direct expression of feeling” or the use of “plain words” (*tadagoto* ただごと). These outsider poets too taught students composition and claimed a fund of specialized knowledge, but that knowledge was already to a large part in the public domain, and they made little effort to restrict its dissemination. Certainly they too trafficked in manuscripts, but they had nothing like the *obunko* as a resource and therefore had no reason to restrict access in the same way. Finally, they too held poetry gatherings and could not help but mimic or parody many of the conventions of the aristocratic tradition in doing so, but at the same time they had a vested interest in arguing against excessive formality.

<sup>23</sup> Kubota Keiichi, “Reizei-ke no fukkō to Reizei mon no hitobito 冷泉家の復興と冷泉門の人々,” in Shimazu Tadao 島津忠夫, ed., *Kinsei no waka* 近世の和歌 (Tokyo: Benseisha, 1985). For a sense of just how numerous the disciples of Tamemura were in Edo, see the list of contributors to *Kakanshū* 霞関集, an eighteenth century anthology of Edo *dōjō-ha* poets. *Shin nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 67 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 234.



Another point revealed by an examination of the capital of the Reizei House concerns the nature of their retrenchment — which in some ways is clearly not retrenchment at all but a true “repositioning.” Bourdieu is very careful to point out the field is in fact constituted by struggle, a place where changes are constantly taking place. Thus “. . . a position-taking changes,” he notes, “even when the position remains identical, whenever there is change in the universe of options that are simultaneously offered for producers and consumers to choose from.”<sup>25</sup> In this sense, the advent of competition on the outside could not but have an effect on insiders, literally pushing them closer together, so to speak. Between themselves they still maintained distinctions, I should add—mainly distinctions that involved ritual and practices rather than poetic style, but still distinctions (regarding how to record poems on paper, how to conduct meetings, and so on). Nonetheless, they did have a common bond, albeit one less central to their self-conception than it had been in the past.

Finally, a close look at the Reizei House in its broader context opens up another revelation for anyone interested in larger questions of educational methods and institutions. An analysis of Reizei practices reveals why an old model of instruction, based in rote learning and ritual reinforcement rather than what might be called the empiricism of the *kokugakusha*, still survived in the Edo period—namely, because it had a strong social base and offered highly valued rewards to all concerned in social and symbolic capital. This older mode of education, which prevails in artistic discourses such as tea and flower arrangement to this day, should not be overlooked if we want to understand how “learning” has been defined over the past three centuries of Japanese history. It is not by happenstance that Tamemura teaches Miyabe Yoshimasa that the first and most important step in one’s *keiko* 稽古 (practice or training) is to “memorize old poems”:

<sup>25</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 30; see also *The Rules of Art*, pp. 231-234.

I was also told when asked about how young people should practice (*keiko*) that the main thing is to memorize old poems. Poems learned when one is young infuse one’s heart and are not forgotten. One should study carefully the *Three Collections*, of course, and also the *Three Collections* of this house, and Tameie’s personal collections. Even if one doesn’t understand them, one should first of all memorize them, he taught. And the poems one composes one should learn to do correctly from the very beginning, he said.<sup>26</sup>

This is an approach to learning that may be perplexing to modern readers, but one that, for that very reason deserves our attention. Memory, as codified in various teachings and practices and texts, was in fact the primary cultural capital of the nobility, whose assets were in that sense as prodigious as anything claimed by their competitors among the ranks of the Nationalist scholars. A steady and reliable memory, and skills honed by long years of *keiko*, would stand one better in a formal poetry gathering than any amount of imagination or even scholarly knowledge. Furthermore, shared memory is obviously crucial in building and maintaining a sense of community.

It is not surprising, then, that the old elite, faced with challenges to their authority from below, should respond by enunciating the importance of memory not only personally but in their professional practice. Or that Tamemura, when asked by Yoshimasa who among the Reizei disciples in — all from the *jige* or commoner ranks, of course — had truly become masters of the art, replied,

<sup>26</sup> *Yoshimasa kiki-gaki*, section 166, p. 714. The affiliation of poetic houses with memorization of canon goes far back. Nijō Yoshimoto 二条良基 states it explicitly in his *Kinrai fūteishō* 近来風体抄. See Hisamatsu Sen’ichi 久松潜一, ed., *Chūsei karonshū*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko, 1985), pp. 263-64.

“These people have been undergoing practice [*keiko*] for many years, of course; but if I am asked whether they have arrived at the level of true understanding, I am dubious.”<sup>27</sup>

That Tamemura should say such a thing so unapologetically to a disciple who was himself from commoner ranks is perhaps not entirely surprising; but that Yoshimasa should write it down without comment, accepting it in the way he did all the other teachings of the master is more remarkable. Some students, it would seem, even in an era that we generally associate with the vitality of the “lower” classes, were still impressed by the noble mystique and the position-taking that sustained it. In the end, the noble families had less to gain from competition than from solidarity with each other in their struggles to maintain a place in the new age.

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<sup>27</sup> *Yoshimasa kiki*, section 35, p. 685.