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Reaching Beyond the Manga: *A Samurai to the Ends of the World* and the Formation of National Identity

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Chapter Seven

Reaching Beyond the Manga

A Samurai to the Ends of the World *and the Formation of National Identity*

Michael Wert

From 2005 to 2008, the comic magazine *Comic Ran Twins* featured a monthly story, *A Samurai to the Ends of the World*, about the Tokugawa period (1603-1867) samurai bureaucrat, Oguri Tadamasu. As is common practice in the manga industry, the series was published quickly in bound form, four volumes total, but with a unique addition—each volume ends with commentary offered by a politician or scholar. The series follows Oguri's life during a time of national crisis, the mid-nineteenth century, culminating in the Meiji Restoration (1868). Unlike much popular culture concerning the Meiji Restoration, the story is not a paean to the victors of the Restoration nor does it celebrate the “men of high spirit” (*shishi*) who supported the pro-emperor cause. Oguri was a loser, executed by the emperor's troops in 1868 after roughly a decade of trying to strengthen the Tokugawa regime against Western pressures and domestic enemies.

The interest in this chapter is on manga as an historical source on two levels. The first is how manga act as a vehicle for representing the past within the context of contemporary Japan. In *A Samurai to the Ends of the World*, author Kimura Naomi offers Oguri as a model for Japanese living during the period following the “lost decade” (1990s) who still struggle with political and economic crises. Second, the manga as a site of historical dialogue is analyzed, not simply as one historical interpretation frozen in time, but manga as a process. Kimura's work is part of the long genealogy of memory about Oguri that began with the reporting of Oguri's death in 1868, to the 1990s, when his legacy became solidly entrenched as a feature of local histo-

ry in Gunma Prefecture. After completing the series, Kimura obtained legitimizing voices from commentators who supported his interpretations while also adding their own. This chapter progresses from past discourse about Oguri featured in popular culture to the major themes in Kimura's manga as it serves to support and qualify those discourses, and ends with an analysis of commentary added after the manga's initial publication in serialized form.

OGURI TADAMASA KŌZUKENOSUKE AND POPULAR CULTURE

Oguri was born in 1827 into a bannerman household, a title that belonged to middle-rank samurai who served the Tokugawa shogunate in various bureaucratic capacities. During the mid-nineteenth century, the Tokugawa shogunate faced pressures from two sources: Western countries that demanded treaties be established and protected by the Tokugawa, and powerful daimyō warlords who grew ever antagonistic towards the Tokugawa regime. Oguri worked to strengthen the Tokugawa regime on both fronts. He acted as one of the triumvirate leaders on the 1860 embassy to the West, negotiated with the Russians who threatened to occupy Tsushima Island in 1861, and cooperated with French allies to strengthen the Tokugawa military by restructuring its infantry and building an arsenal and iron foundry in Yokosuka. Oguri hoped one day to centralize the Japanese government by eliminating the 260 or so semi-autonomous domains. To this end, he advocated fighting against the coalition led by the Satsuma and Chōshū domains who claimed to fight in the name of the young Meiji emperor. The last Tokugawa shogun chose to surrender his forces during the Meiji Restoration, and Oguri was dismissed for his hawkish stance. Oguri left the capitol Edo in 1868 for his fief land Gonda Village, presently part of Kurabuchi ward in Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture. Only days after his arrival, Oguri faced an attack from local gangsters who believed that Oguri, as the last financial magistrate, brought Tokugawa money back with him. He successfully defeated the attackers by using local youths in a makeshift peasant militia, but was arrested weeks later and executed by imperial troops, because they believed he would use this same militia to resist the new Meiji government.

There are several reasons why, until recently, Oguri rarely appeared in popular culture related to the Meiji Restoration. First, Oguri was on the losing side of the Meiji Restoration. Much of the popular culture featuring the Restoration seems to be dominated by the victors, men such as Sakamoto Ryōma or Saigō Takamori who gave their lives to bring about the creation of modern Japan.¹ It is not suggested here that the losers have been completely ignored; in fact, pro-Tokugawa police groups such as the Shinsengumi or the Shōgitai (bands of young men who hunted down anti-Tokugawa zealots)

appeared in literature and film. This last point relates to the second cause of Oguri's general absence from popular culture—he lacked the qualities of an action hero. Regardless of their affiliation, young unmarried men from both sides shared in the adventure of the Meiji Restoration years. For example, Oguri, a middle-aged bureaucrat, could not capture the attention of a young audience during the decade of student activism in the 1960s as well as Sakamoto Ryōma could. While all Japanese are familiar with Saigō, Sakamoto, and the Shinsengumi, Oguri remained an obscure figure except among history buffs and commemoration activists in Gunma Prefecture and Yokosuka City.

Oguri's brief appearances in popular culture typically focused on either his work within the Tokugawa regime and/or the controversy surrounding his death. A 1901 youth reader about Oguri portrays him as stubborn, resolute, and able. Although a source of strength for his political successes, these qualities also earned him the hatred of his superiors who often held him back. "In this world there are politicians who try to be all things to all people but Oguri stayed his own course."² This opinion drew upon works by former Oguri colleagues such as Katsu Kaishū, Kurimoto Joun, and Fukuchi Gen'ichirō who wrote memoirs and histories about the Meiji Restoration.

The first Oguri boom in the popular imagination occurred in 1915 after the fiftieth anniversary of the Yokosuka Naval Base. The naval base was Oguri's only lasting contribution to modern Japan, especially helpful in the naval victories in the Sino-Japanese (1894-95) and Russo-Japanese (1904-5) wars, and became the source of his national rehabilitation. Officials in Yokosuka City and Gunma Prefecture cooperated to erect a bust to Oguri in Yokosuka in 1922. During the 1920s, Oguri-related articles appeared with increasing frequency in the Gunma Prefecture history journal *Jōmō and the Jōmō People (JOJ)*. Several new biographies were published, including a passionate two-volume hagiography by Ninagawa Arata, a law scholar and distant descendent of the family of Oguri's wife. Ninagawa popularized Oguri as a tragic figure while vilifying typical Restoration heroes, in particular Saigō Takamori. In his view, the dominant versions of Meiji Restoration history were lies propagated by the clique government, ruled by former Satsuma and Chōshū men who killed Oguri unjustifiably.³ His second volume contains letters from public figures who thanked Ninagawa for revealing the truth of Meiji Restoration history. Former Prime Minister Ōkuma Shigenobu's oldest daughter wrote to convey her joy that Oguri's hidden contributions had been publicized.⁴ Novelist Jūbishi Yoshihiko, inspired by Ninagawa's book, published a play *The Death of Oguri Kōzukenosuke* in 1929.⁵ So too did novelist and historian Itō Chiyū credit Ninagawa's book for helping him understand Oguri's full significance for the preparation of his own 1931 pro-Tokugawa history, *Great Supporters of the Shogunate*.⁶ Mikami Yoshio, historian of math and science, wrote to the *JOJ* editor about Nina-

gawa's book, expressing anger over the Satsuma deceits and satisfaction over the government's crushing of the Satsuma rebels in 1877.⁷ The editors of *JOJ* hoped that Ninagawa's book would rectify the public's misconceptions of the Meiji Restoration and restore honor to Oguri and Aizu domain men.⁸

Ninagawa's iconoclastic interpretation of the Meiji Restoration also changed how local people in Gunma Prefecture portrayed Oguri, especially in the village where he was executed. In 1931, villagers there formed an organization to create an Oguri monument and asked Ninagawa for suggestions regarding what to write on the stone. He sent them two epitaphs; the first simply read, "The final resting place of Oguri Kōzukenosuke, a great man during the last days of the Tokugawa." The second inscription, eventually chosen by the villagers, read, "Here lies the great Oguri Kōzukenosuke, killed without having committed a crime."⁹ Police in a nearby city with jurisdiction over the village tried to stop the villagers from erecting the stone, claiming that the emperor's forces would never have killed an innocent man. Ninagawa interceded on the villagers' behalf and they successfully erected the monument.¹⁰

During the post-war occupation, there was a Restoration boom in popular culture which briefly included Oguri. He became the subject of the 1958 movie *The Birth of Great Tokyo, The Bell of Great Edo* (*Dai Tokyo no tanjō, Ōedo no kane*) a film that marked the thirty-fifth anniversary of historical dramas by Shochiku studios. The filmmakers wanted to create a movie that focused on Oguri because his name had been maligned by victors of the Meiji Restoration who wrote the history books.¹¹ The film is typical of many historical dramas, and depicts Oguri's struggle to fight against Saigō's vigilantes. But fallen imperial stalwarts such as Sakamoto and Yoshida Shōin who did not survive the Meiji Restoration were the focus of much historical popular culture during the 1950s.¹² From that time until the 1990s, everything written about Oguri was locally published in either Gunma Prefecture or Yokosuka City. The only exceptions were a 1982 historical novel and a 1987 Oguri biography by economics historian Sakamoto Fujiyoshi, whose work draws from a broad range of primary sources and constitutes the most complete study of Oguri's life.¹³ It is, however, a popular history, one that emphasizes Oguri as father of the modern Japanese economy. Kimura Naomi acknowledges Sakamoto's book as both the inspiration for writing a manga about Oguri, and as the primary model for constructing his narrative.¹⁴

ORIGINS OF A SAMURAI TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD IN THE CONTEXT OF THE "LOST DECADE"

The origin of Kimura's desire to create a manga about Oguri, recounted in the final volume of the series, contextualizes the message about Japanese

identity and the Meiji Restoration illustrated in the series. Kimura discovered Sakamoto's book in a used bookstore in Tokyo and was struck by how different Sakamoto's version of the Meiji Restoration was from what Kimura knew of those events. Shortly after Kimura's discovery, so he tells his readers, Oguri's name became more widely known through treasure hunts depicted on television and promotion by Shiba Ryōtarō, Japan's most influential historical novelist and essayist of the latter half of the twentieth century. It was at this point, sometime in the 1990s, that Kimura and his editor traveled to Gonda to learn more about Oguri.¹⁵ Not until a decade later, however, did Kimura find a magazine editor willing to publish an Oguri story. The senior editor at the manga magazine *Comic Ran Twins* happened to be an Oguri fan, and a monthly run started in January 2005.¹⁶

Kimura's reference to Shiba Ryōtarō and treasure hunting refers to a boom in Oguri's legacy experienced in the 1990s. Oguri became a new kind of hero during the "lost decade" when Japan was rocked by political scandals, economic collapse, and natural disasters. Oguri, long portrayed as a staid bureaucrat, not a young swashbuckling samurai, struck a chord with audiences. Shiba characterized Oguri's reassessment best in his 1989 book *A State Called Meiji*:

Oguri was a patriot in every bone of his body, but he wasn't the type to talk about patriotism. Real patriotism is not about getting loaded and letting the tears flow while talking big. In such times, there are as many of those kinds of patriots as there are dogs in the mountains, fields, and towns barking so loudly it bursts my eardrums. Oguri was not that kind of patriot. He sent a new energy through the day-to-day [government] affairs.¹⁷

The Oguri boom was part of a larger growing interest in the Meiji Restoration as the uncertainty of the nineteenth century paralleled that of the twenty-first century.¹⁸ This echoed comments this author heard in Gonda, where one resident said of former Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō, a politician who ran on a platform promising to change the economic structure in Japan, "Koizumi is the Oguri of the twenty-first century."

Kimura follows the lead of Oguri supporters, especially local ones, who deny any validity to the buried treasure legends. During the 1870–80s, the 1930s, and the 1990s, times of economic instability, the countryside surrounding Tokyo witnessed a corresponding influx of treasure hunters looking for Tokugawa gold. According to the most common version of the legend, Oguri buried Tokugawa shogunate money in Mt. Akagi, Gunma Prefecture, to be used for a resurgence in Tokugawa power. National exposure to the legend peaked in the 1990s when the Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS) aired three digging expeditions to Mt. Akagi that took place in 1990, 1995, and 1999. The 1990 expedition, led by essayist Itoi Shigesato and featured on the appropriately named TBS program *Gimme a Break*, captured an impres-

sive twenty percent of the viewing audience.¹⁹ Would-be adventurers visiting Gunma prefecture libraries and asking local Oguri bus drivers for directions to Mt. Akagi in search of fortune became a source of embarrassment to local supporters in Gonda and the surrounding area where the subject is taboo.²⁰ Kimura referred to these gold digging events as a “foolish brouhaha” (*baka sawagi*), wanting instead to focus on Oguri’s legacy as a model for Japanese identity.²¹

The connection between local boosterism and national media concerning Oguri climaxed in 2001, the year of the Gunma Prefecture Oguri campaign. Oguri became the theme for the 2003 New Year’s Historical Drama produced by NHK (Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai), Japan’s national television station. The impetus for this television show started in 1999 when the mayors of Kurabuchi and Yokosuka City, and the Gunma Prefecture governor, sent a letter to NHK requesting the creation of a yearlong drama about Oguri. Instead, NHK decided to create a short, hour and a half drama. According to the creators of the show, “Each historical drama is supposed to make one think. In this one, we wanted people to think about the issue ‘might makes right.’” The producers believed, echoing sentiments Ninagawa would have supported, that Oguri’s history embodied an alternative narrative to the dominant version of Meiji Restoration: “one will find historical fact that is not taught in school. Victors in war twist history to their own liking and hide that which does not help them.”²²

CREATING A NEW MEIJI RESTORATION HISTORY

Three major themes in the manga series characterize Kimura’s depiction of Oguri’s life while reinterpreting the Meiji Restoration. Typically, historians see Oguri’s career as attempting to strengthen the Tokugawa regime against domestic enemies; some label him a “Tokugawa absolutist.”²³ In this mode, Oguri’s projects, such as the arsenal and dry dock at Yokosuka, only tangentially benefit Japan; his primary focus was serving the Tokugawa regime.²⁴ Kimura, however, portrays Oguri as a Japanese citizen first, and only secondarily, a loyal Tokugawa servant. In so doing, familiar Meiji Restoration heroes and Oguri’s rivals, such as Katsu Kaishū and Saigō Takamori, seem more provincial. This overturning of familiar images about the Restoration is the second theme woven throughout the narrative. The third theme, connected to the first two, addresses Japan’s relationship to the Western powers. For Kimura, Oguri embodies twenty-first-century fantasies about a Japan that stands up to the West.

The first strategy to portray Oguri as a Japanese patriot is to characterize Oguri’s reforms as means to an end. To achieve this, Kimura juxtaposes Oguri with another Tokugawa retainer, Katsu Kaishū. Unlike Oguri, whose

family had ties to the Tokugawa shogun since the beginning of the Tokugawa period, Katsu's family became samurai only in his grandfather's generation. Katsu, who traveled with the 1860 embassy to the United States as captain of the escort ship, played an important role in the transfer of power during the Meiji Restoration. In 1868, he met with Saigō Takamori to negotiate the surrender of Edo Castle. Pragmatic, but vilified for abandoning the Tokugawa regime, Katsu is portrayed as wanting to modernize Japan but under a new government with a new ruler. Oguri, however, tells Katsu, "I am content to know that I was born a Tokugawa retainer and I will die one as well."²⁵ Here Kimura mirrors Shiba Ryōtarō's sentiment that Oguri's admirable quality lay in his working within the day-to-day affairs of the system to improve Japan, not to overthrow the established government.

This does not mean that Oguri wished to maintain the status quo, argue his supporters; he believed that the breakdown of status discrimination was necessary to create a unified Japanese state. Local historians, in particular Murakami Taiken, head of the Oguri research society based in Gonda, argue that Oguri's relationship with village youths was both deep and personal.²⁶ It illustrates Oguri's fatherly attitude towards his fief villagers and ignores much of the power inequality between Oguri and the villagers. As a bannerman retainer, Oguri drew a portion of income from his fief villages' produce. Like many bannermen, he also used fiefs for human resources, bringing Gonda village youths to Edo for training in military techniques. Kimura, who acknowledges Murakami at the end of the series, also supports this view of Oguri's relationship with commoners in general.²⁷ During one episode, the village youths are gathered at Oguri's mansion in Edo in preparation for their training in the newly restructured Tokugawa army, an effort led by Oguri. He tells them that at night, there are no status distinctions, and that they need to start thinking of themselves as Japanese. The young men are confused; "Japanese?" they ask. "Yes," Oguri replies, "The shogun, daimyō, bannerman retainers and you, are all equal as Japanese."²⁸

The breakdown of status distinction extends to the growing importance of financial know-how over military prowess. Narita Ryūichi notes that historical fiction portrayed money negatively; it was usually associated with villains. Samurai in particular prided themselves on not understanding money. The ideals of a Confucian society placed merchants at the bottom of the status system during the Tokugawa period, because they were perceived as seeking profit for self gain, not contributing to society. This changed in the 1960s, the age of high economic growth. Shiba Ryōtarō's bestselling historical novel *Ryōma Goes* depicts the protagonist, a young samurai Sakamoto Ryōma, as one who understood money and the role of commerce for the development of the country.²⁹

Since the 1960s, Japan's economic standing in the world has served to unify Japanese identity. Japanese economic nationalism ignores income dis-

parity. Oguri, the last financial magistrate in the Tokugawa regime, worked closely with merchants, especially the Mitsui merchant group, in order to create Hyogo Trading Company. Merchants doubted that the Tokugawa would last, and they refused to invest in Oguri's firm. The manga glosses over this failure; instead, Oguri is portrayed advocating a status-less economic country unified against foreign pressures. He tells Katsu, "foreign countries might not try to invade us militarily, but trying to take us over economically is the same."³⁰ Japan's defense is not a military one; therefore, the country cannot rely on samurai to develop Japan—the merchants and others with financial knowledge must lead, working together as one. Oguri confides to a merchant that even he suspects the Tokugawa shogunate may fall, but, the "big picture in the world today is the economy. This country will be supported by men like you."³¹ He then explains the English word "company" to the merchant in egalitarian terms: "It's an institution that does business comprised of capital from samurai, townspeople, and peasants, with no status distinction."³²

In Kimura's manga, this inability to see the bigger picture, an economically powerful and unified Japan, is what differentiates Oguri from Satsuma samurai like Saigō Takamori. Readers are so unfamiliar with this overturning of Meiji Restoration history that Kimura uses a fictional character, the only one in the series, as a cue to readers that their expectations about the putative losers and victors will be overturned. A young Satsuma samurai named Miyazato Danjūrō encounters Oguri through a mutual acquaintance, and learns about Oguri's vision for a modern Japan without status and where commerce dominates. Miyazato reports Oguri's activities to Saigō, but undergoes a conversion throughout the story, eventually supporting Oguri's view of Japan and abandoning Saigō. Miyazato faces an identity crisis; he mastered swordsmanship and married into a rustic samurai family, which allowed him to move up in social status, but does not know how he will fit into the world as Oguri has envisioned it. "Saigō," he says, "tell me, as a samurai, what am I to do in the future?" Saigō responds, "You don't have to think, you are a Satsuma samurai, and you must follow heaven's will."³³ Saigō's problem, as Kimura sees it, is that he thinks of himself as only a samurai. When Miyazato doubts Saigō's violence against the rival Chōshū domain, Saigō can only react as a samurai, "Today I've come to understand, warriors are warriors exactly because they fight."³⁴ Miyazato, however, recalls Oguri's words about samurai violence: "such fighting is not about Japan, it's just a quarrel among samurai."³⁵ At the end of the manga, which takes place after the Meiji Restoration and Oguri's execution, Miyazato works as a *rikisha* driver. He takes Saigō as a passenger and dumps him onto the ground, ordering him to apologize for killing Oguri. "Much of the Meiji civilization and enlightenment were the very same things Oguri talked about," yells Miyazato. To which Saigō asks, "What kind of world did Oguri want to create?" "He only

wanted to cooperate and create a country together with men like you.”³⁶ Magnanimous, farsighted, and conciliatory, Kimura’s Oguri is a model of patriotism in a Japan experiencing disorder.

For nationalism to work, it requires an “Other” against which it can define itself, and in Kimura’s manga, Westerners serve this function. The first diplomatic interaction between Oguri and Westerners occurred with the Russians at Tsushima Island. In 1861, Oguri was sent to Tsushima Island to oust a Russian captain who demanded to meet the local daimyō and presumably lease land for Russia. After Oguri failed to convince the Russians to leave, the Tokugawa shogunate sought help from the British who encouraged the Russians to leave with a show of naval force. In *Samurai to the Ends of the World*, the Russians are hulking, hairy figures. One of the rare moments when Oguri becomes violent occurs as he fights off Russian sailors who are in the midst of raping local women, an incident that never historically occurred.³⁷ Women’s bodies are a vessel symbolizing the purity of the nation; by protecting them, Oguri defends Japan’s sanctity. When the Russian captain threatens Oguri’s life with a gun, Oguri stands up to him and dares him to shoot. The captain backs down, telling Oguri, “I thought all Japanese had become too pacifist and weak.”³⁸ This statement reflects Japan’s growing desire to enhance its military profile in the world, as demonstrated by its struggle to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

The British are worse than the Russians throughout Kimura’s narrative, doubly damned for pressuring Japan over commercial treaties and assisting the Satsuma domain. Kimura draws the British diplomat, Harry Parkes, with a furled brow and threatening eyes. In one scene, Parkes looks demonic as he mentions to an assistant ominously that Oguri is “in the way.”³⁹ Parkes appears in Oguri’s dreams; holding a gun and about to shoot as he says, “Goodbye Mister Oguri.”⁴⁰ In their first meeting, Parkes tells Oguri that long years of corruption by the shogunate cannot be easily changed and that he remains unconvinced that it could truly reform. Oguri remains confident however, taking up the frame as if a camera zoomed in for a climactic speech, “I want you to know that our country has the ability to absorb [knowledge] and we’re flexible. We will learn what needs to be learned and change what needs to be changed.”⁴¹ Kimura’s underlying message, that Japan can find a solution to contemporary problems just as Oguri hoped to do in the nineteenth century, had its affect. The afterword commentary by a literary scholar uses this same quote to highlight Oguri as a model for Japanese today.

LEGITIMIZING VOICES

Kimura’s manga is unique because it includes legitimizing voices that support his interpretation of Oguri, the Meiji Restoration, and the lessons for

twenty-first century Japanese who live in similarly disorderly times. The first two volumes feature politicians of the then ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). These commentaries were not originally included in the serialized version, but were added at the suggestion of the book's designer who was friends with Iwaki Mitsuhide, the deputy chief cabinet secretary. Iwaki agreed to write a commentary, which appears in the second volume, and also contacted former Prime Minister Mori Yoshirō, who wrote for the first volume.⁴² Kimura himself contacted contributors for volumes three and four, both of them acquaintances: Shimizu Masashi, a literature scholar at Japan University, and Tanikawa Akihide, vice president of Tsukuba University and frequent manga essayist.

Mori and Iwaki's comments support Kimura's vision of Oguri's history as it relates to politics. Mori points out the necessity to study the losers to understand Meiji Restoration history, and, in particular, how contemporary Japan can learn from those samurai who created Japanese identity.⁴³ He accepts Oguri's depiction as noble and selfless, pointing out Oguri's fearlessness when serving the country. This last praise is not directed to all Japanese, however, but towards politicians, the modern-day samurai: "This story begins with Oguri on the ship in a storm, heading towards the United States, and Oguri tells the others, 'If we sink right now, well, living and dying, that is the will of heaven.' I think the samurai resolve has something to teach today's politicians."⁴⁴ Perhaps Mori believes that Japan is the boat in the storm, and politicians should strive to improve Japan without concern for political consequences. Mori wrote this in the political context of 2005, when rebels within the LDP challenged the status quo, but rarely threatened to leave the party. This reality is reflected in Mori's comment, "What makes this story so interesting is people like Katsu Kaishū, wild men who act as supporting cast, yet still work in the progressive faction."⁴⁵

Cabinet member Iwaki Mitsuhide also sees Oguri as a model for Japan's politicians. Oguri was "a Japanese before he was a retainer of the Tokugawa," one who thought of the country first and political loyalties second, and worked for the country every day.⁴⁶ Iwaki invokes a classic trope of Japanese identity, that of "honest poverty" (*seihin*), an idea, says Oguri to a Frenchman in volume two, "that is one of our beautiful virtues."⁴⁷ The concept long existed in Japan to refer to the honest, pure, and impoverished life of the intellectual and artist. In 1992, the Japanese rediscovered the value of *seihin* in the bestselling book, *The Philosophy of Honest Poverty*.⁴⁸ The work was part of an Edo boom, when early modern Japan was mined for solutions to contemporary problems. But *seihin* is not just a model to keep the masses content with being poor; for Iwaki, "it has something to teach us politicians in this time of reform."⁴⁹ Here Iwaki reminds fellow politicians that greed was the source of political corruption during the 1990s.

Much of Shimizu Tadashi's commentary focuses on the storyline, but he too emphasizes the political messages in the story. Shimizu acknowledges the story's portrayal of Oguri's great foresight, administrative skills, and efforts to unify Japanese merchants against the West, and argues, "this is not just a drama about the creation of a new country. It is a superb human drama [through its illustration of] Katsu Kaishū and Saigō Takamori's hatred and envy of Oguri."⁵⁰ Shimizu believes that men such as Katsu Kaishū were more dangerous than the shogunate's enemies: "In every era there are countless people with no talent who hold back those with ability . . . [I]t was these faceless people that Oguri had to fight before creating a new Japan."⁵¹ They block progress by collaborating with the enemy. Even this had a political meaning for readers, however, as the Liberal Democratic Party was itself split into factions as it tried to find a way out of the Heisei recession.

Tanikawa Akihide casts Oguri as a man of integrity during a year when integrity was lacking. "The key word that sums up 2007 is 'fakery.' From the world of politics to food companies, Japan has become a country where everything is in doubt. When did Japan become a 'country of fakery'?"⁵² This is not Tanikawa's invention; the word "fake" (*itsuwari*) was voted the Chinese character of 2007 by the Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation.⁵³ Regional food companies and national confectionary chains such as Mr. Donut sold products with falsified expiration dates or that were made of recycled materials. One meat processing company labeled as "100 percent beef" produce that was actually ground pork. These scandals were a blow to a nation that long prided itself on customer service, paid high prices for products assumed to be just a cut above the rest, especially better quality than those ever-suspicious foreign products. Integrity also meant being honest about the past. Oguri, Tanikawa argues, is a man of integrity, standing as far from "fakery" as possible, "and once we look past the 'might makes right' version of history, we can understand that time period [Meiji Restoration years] from another perspective."⁵⁴ He ties together fakery with the issue long argued by Oguri supporters, that Oguri's history has been blocked by a narrative of history dominated by Meiji Restoration victors: "When we look past the 'victor's history' we can see a different side of those who lived then."⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

Finally there is the issue of reception. Kimura told this author that 20-30,000 units of the first two volumes were printed, a large number for any manga. Unfortunately, they did not sell well, and the last two volumes had print runs of about 7-8000, not enough to be displayed in major bookstores. Nor did Kimura receive any feedback through readers and, as Allen and Ingulsrud

note, feedback is the key to creating a successful manga.⁵⁶ This does not mean that his work failed to popularize Oguri. First, publication of Oguri manga is proof that he has “arrived” on the national scene. Politicians, sports, and entertainment celebrities, even Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn, have their own biographical manga. But Kimura finally found an editor interested in Oguri after the “Oguri Boom” of the 1990s had fully unfolded locally and nationally, culminating in the 2003 NHK drama. Second, Kimura joined the discourse concerning Oguri and the Meiji Restoration, connecting him to an already established network for Oguri fans who can use the manga to promote Oguri to friends, family, and neighbors. This might seem like too small of a scale to affect national perceptions of Oguri, but it was these small, local networks interacting with national figures that initially made Oguri salient in popular culture. Moreover, this manga is a cogent reminder of how popular culture is not simply low-brow entertainment for the masses. Kimura’s manga shows how the artists can reach beyond their work and incorporate legitimizing voices in academia and politics to shape alternatives to national identity.

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NOTES

1. Miyazawa Seiichi argues that while Saigō dominated the pre-World War II popular culture scene, Sakamoto took over this spot in the postwar period. See Miyazawa Seiichi, *Meiji ishin no saisōzō: Kindai Nihon no kigen shinwa* (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 2005), 30.
2. Seta Tōyō, *Shonen dokuhon: Oguri Kōzukenosuke* (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1901), 3.
3. See Ninagawa Arata, *Ishin zengō no seisō to Oguri Kōzukenosuke no shi* (Tokyo: Nihon Shoin, 1928), 175-76. He followed this with a second volume published in 1931.
4. Ninagawa, *Ishin zengō no seisō to Oguri Kōzukenosuke no shi*, 326.
5. See Jūbishi Yoshihiko, *Oguri Kōzukenosuke no shi* (Tokyo: Daiichi Shuppansha, 1929), 127-28 for his praise of Ninagawa and his book. Ninagawa wrote the latter third of Jūbishi's monograph.
6. Itō Chiyū, *Sabakuha no Ketsujin* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1931), 435.
7. *Jōmō oyobi Jōmōjin*, 185 (1932): 51.
8. *Jōmō oyobi Jōmōjin*, 139 (1928): 61.
9. Ichikawa Yasō, "Oguri Jōshū 'kenshō no ayumi,'" *Tatsunami* 1 (1976): 15.
10. This story is famous among Oguri researchers and was retold most recently in the 2001 special edition of monuments in Gunma Prefecture. The story is according to Ichikawa Yasō, whose grandfather Motokichi encountered trouble with Takasaki police over the epitaph. *Jōshūfū* 8 (2001): 60-61.
11. *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 6, 1958, 4. Interestingly, the writers asked Ninagawa for information on Oguri, but decided to abandon his advice because they felt it was too extreme for people to understand.
12. Carol Gluck, "The Past in the Present," in *Postwar Japan as History*, ed. Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 81.
13. Kiya Takayasu, *Bakushin Oguri Kōzukenosuke: Maizōkin yue ni tsumi nakushite kiraru* (Tokyo: Tairyūsha, 1982) and Sakamoto Fujiyoshi, *Oguri Kōzukenosuke no shōgai: Hyogo shosha wo tsukutta saigo no bakushin* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1987).
14. Personal communication between Kimura and author, August 6, 2009.
15. Kimura Naomi, *Tengai no bushi: Bakushin Oguri Kōzukenosuke*, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Riido-sha, 2008), 252.
16. Personal communication between Kimura and author, August 6, 2009.
17. Shiba Ryōtarō, *Meiji to iu kokka: Jo* (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1994), 38.
18. Miyazawa, *Meiji ishin no saisōzō: Kindai nihon no kigen shinwa*, 13.
19. Kawaguchi Sunao, *Tokugawa maizōkin kenshō jiten* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 2001), 120. TBS aired a fourth expedition in 2008.
20. Kawaguchi, *Tokugawa maizōkin kenshō jiten*, 114-21.
21. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 4, 252.
22. Nakamura Kazuo and Sasaki Kishō, "Shogatsu jigeki 'Matamo yametaka teishu dono' no seisaku: Bakumatsu no meibugyō Oguri Kōzukenosuke," *Eiga terebi gijutsu* 605 (2001): 25.
23. See, for example, Kitajima Masamoto, *Edo bakufu: Sono jitsuryokusha tachi*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1964), 250.
24. See, for example, Kanakura Masami, *Furansu koshi Rosesu to Oguri Kōzukenosuke* (Tokyo: Daiyamondo Shuppansha Kabushiki Kaisha, 1935), 140-42.
25. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 1, 52.
26. Ichikawa Kōichi, Koitabashi Ryōhei, and Murakami Taiken, *Oguri Kōzukenosuke* (Maebashi: Miyama Bunko, 2004), 90.
27. In my conversation with Kimura, he stated that he never consulted with Murakami when writing the manga. He hoped that Murakami approved of the manga's storyline, but decided to

write this on his own. Murakami approves of Kimura's story, stating as such on his website, and invited Kimura to speak at the "Oguri Festival" held every May.

28. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 1, 158.
29. Narita Ryūichi, *Shiba Ryōtarō no bakumatsu-Meiji: "Ryōma ga yuku" to "Saka no ue no kumo" wo yomu* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 2003), 40.
30. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 1, 151.
31. *Ibid.*, 189.
32. *Ibid.*, 190.
33. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 2, 40.
34. *Ibid.*, 55.
35. *Ibid.*, 54.
36. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 4, 230–34.
37. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 1, 79.
38. *Ibid.*, 80.
39. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 3, 26.
40. *Ibid.*, 126.
41. *Ibid.*, 13.
42. Personal communication between Kimura and author, August 6, 2009.
43. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 1, 205.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 2, 201.
47. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 2, 134.
48. Nakano Kōji, *Seihin no shisō* (Tokyo: Sōshisha, 1992).
49. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 2, 201.
50. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 3, 255.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 4, 255.
53. Nihon Kanji Nōryoku Kentei Kyōkai, <http://www.kanken.or.jp/kanji/kanji2007/kanji.html> (accessed November 7, 2010). The third most voted character was "lie," followed by "doubt" coming in at number four.
54. Kimura, *Tengai no bushi*, vol. 4, 255.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Kate Allen and John E. Ingulsrud, *Reading Japan Cool: Patterns of Manga Literacy and Discourse* (New York: Lexington Books, 2009), 33.