

People
Connected
to Ashimori

A Central Figure in the Shirakaba Literary Circle

A Leading Poet of the Meiji and Taisho Eras



In 1871, the abolition of Japan's domain system and the establishment of prefectures brought an end to the rule of Kinoshita Toshimoto, the Ashimori domain's final ruler, marking the end of an era in Japan's feudal governance. After Toshimoto died without an heir, his nephew Rigen succeeded to the Kinoshita family line. At the time, former lords of the abolished domains lived in Tokyo, and Rigen also relocated there. His formal court attire, likely worn at imperial New Year's events, is still preserved today. In Tokyo, Rigen became fond of tanka poetry and studied under Sasaki Nobutsuna. While enrolled at the University of Tokyo, he co-founded the literary magazine *Shirakaba* with long-time friends like Mushanokoji Saneatsu. He came to be known publicly as a poet of the Shirakaba group. Although Rigen energetically continued his creative work, he died young at the age of 40.

木下利玄

Kinoshita Rigen

(1886–1925)

Learn More! Kinoshita Rigen

1

Traces Left in Ashimori

In Ashimori, you can visit the site of Rigen's birthplace (a prefectural historic site) and stroll the path known as "Rigen-michi." Near the birthplace site lies Omizuen (a daimyo garden), where a monument inscribed with one of his poems now stands.

2

A Central Figure in the Shirakaba Literary Circle

Kinoshita Rigen co-founded the arts and literature magazine *Shirakaba* with figures like Shiga Naoya, Mushanokoji Saneatsu, and Arishima Takeo. Those involved in the founding became known as the Shirakaba group, shaping an entire literary era.

3

A Poet Who Left His Mark on Modern Literary History

The second Ashimori domain lord, Kinoshita Katsutoshi, spent the latter part of his life in seclusion as a poet. He wrote under the name Choshoshi. Roughly four hundred years later, his descendant Rigen took up tanka poetry and became known for his distinctive four-four rhythm and natural use of the spoken language. This came to be called the "Rigen style," and it brought fresh vitality to the world of tanka poetry.