

VOICE OF A VIOLENT AGE: A CONTEXTUAL READING OF
SHOTETSU'S POETRY IN *SHOTETSU MONOGATARI*

by

Penelope Anne Shino

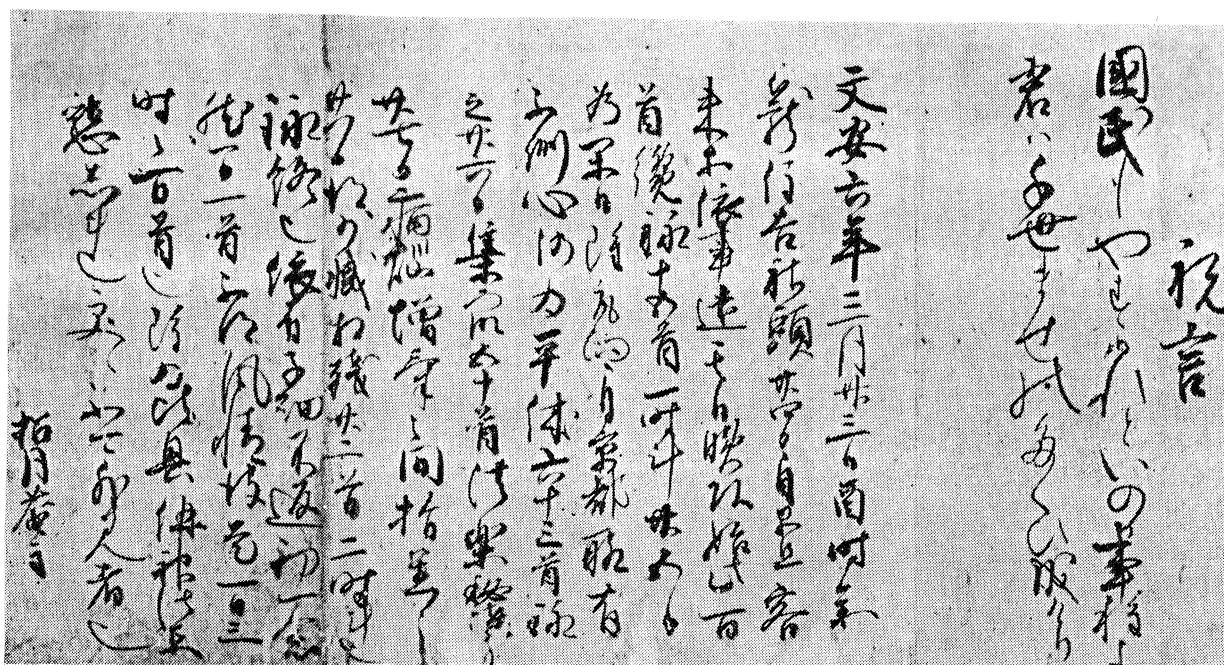
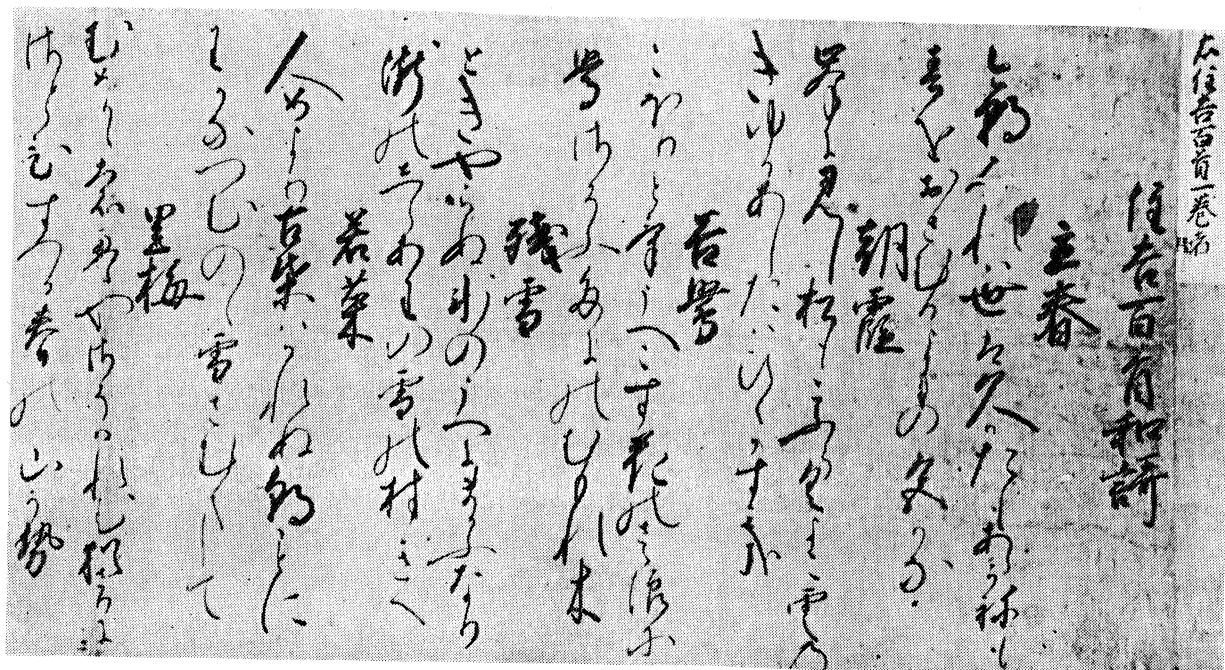
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ABSTRACT

This work comprises an in-depth study of *waka* poetry by Muromachi poet-monk Shōtetsu (1381-1459) included in his poetic treatise *Shōtetsu Monogatari* (ca. 1448). His compositions are appreciated in the context of his own life experience and the external environment in which he lived, with particular emphasis placed on understanding and attempting to resolve the apparent paradox existing between Shōtetsu's detached, rarified, highly aesthetic poetry and the turbulent age in which he lived, a contradiction which appears to challenge the prevalent theory of the essential contextuality of all literature.

Chapters describing Shōtetsu's life and the historical, political, social, cultural and spiritual currents of his era constitute the first part of this dissertation, providing a detailed picture of the 'context'. The second part of the dissertation is dedicated to an analysis of Shōtetsu's poetry as described above. An overview of Shōtetsu's poetry is provided, in which we attempt to explain the thematic and imagistic range of his poetry in terms of the poet's simultaneous exercise of both conservatism and innovation. The role of *yūgen* ('mystery and depth') and its interchangeability with *yōen* ('ethereal beauty') in Shōtetsu's poetic is singled out for particular discussion in view of its paramount importance to Shōtetsu. A detailed annotated translation with interpretation of all poetry by Shōtetsu contained in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* follows. The dissertation concludes with an evaluation in which we determine the extent to which we believe a contextual interpretation can be applied to Shōtetsu's poetry.



正徹自筆住吉社奉納百首和歌卷物（住吉大社所蔵）

Illustration 1. Shōtetsu's autographed 'Hundred-Poem Sequence Offered to Sumiyoshi Shrine' (*Osaka no Rekishi*, No.13, 1989). This sequence was written in 1449, at approximately the same time that *Shōtetsu Monogatari* was completed. The original document is held in the collection of Sumiyoshi Shrine, Osaka.

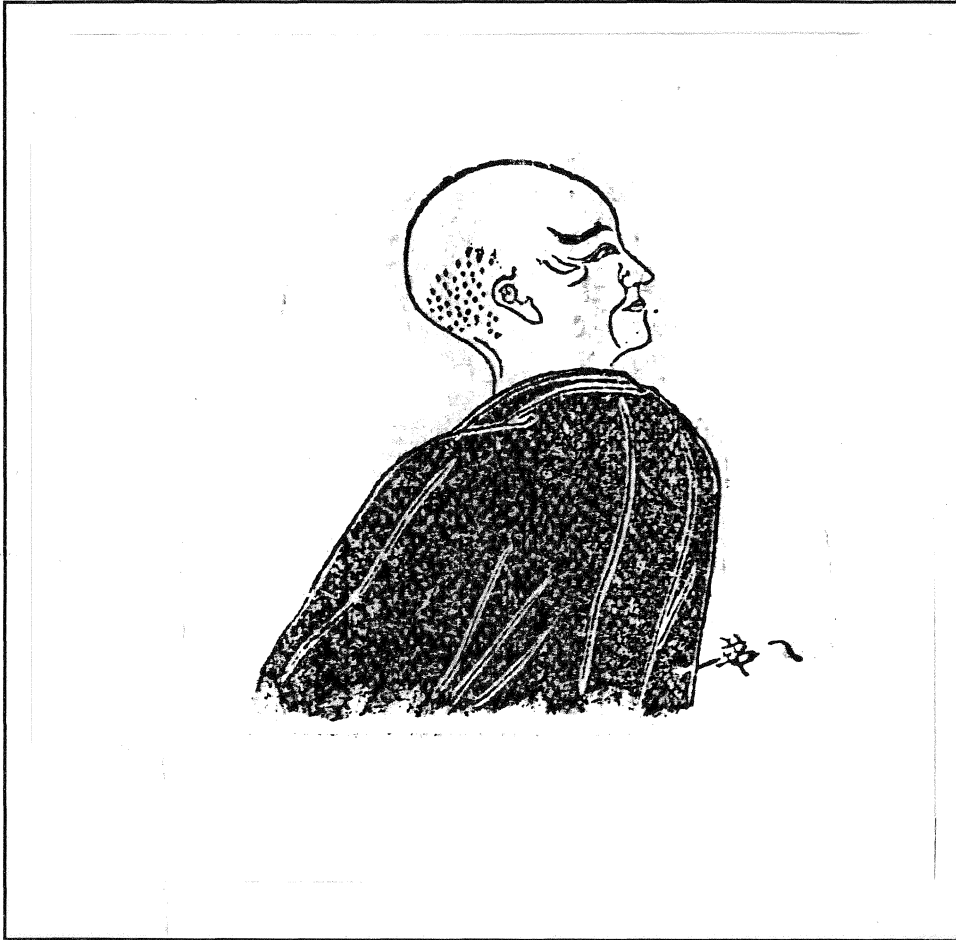


Illustration 2. Portrait of Shōtetsu (*Teikoku Jinmei Jiten*, p.1629. Photocopy obtained with the kind assistance of the National Diet Library, Tokyo.)

PREFACE

I stumbled upon the work of Muromachi poet-monk Shōtetsu (1381-1459) almost by accident, while puzzling over the question of why and how such an overlap existed between the aesthetics of the tea ritual, especially *wabicha* (a way of tea embracing the ‘beauty of the plain’¹) and the aesthetics of medieval *waka* poetry. The tea master and originator of *wabicha* Murata Jūkō’s² famous remark, ‘I have no taste for the full moon’, seemed curiously poetic.

However, this issue, which I discovered had already been discussed in excellent detail by other scholars,³ was quickly sidelined by an intensifying interest in the *waka* poetry of the Muromachi period, when *wabicha* was evolving. Murata Jūkō led me to *waka* and *renga* poet Shinkei (1406-1475),⁴ a major source of his aesthetic inspiration, through whom I became aware for the first time of Shōtetsu, his teacher. It was finally Shōtetsu who captured my attention, not so much for his oblique connection with *wabicha*, but for the exquisite beauty of the few poems of his which I had read at that stage. Not only this, but Shōtetsu also possessed the bizarre appeal of an exceptionally great *waka* poet in an otherwise mediocre and stagnating age : the *waka* of the Muromachi period is usually dismissed in this way. In addition he was endowed with the added attraction of having been relatively under-researched, despite his alleged importance. In short, he presented as a near-perfect choice for a dissertation topic. In this fortuitous way therefore my lengthy and at times thorny relationship with this exceptional poet commenced, culminating in the dissertation which follows.

Originally the dissertation was envisaged as an annotated translation of Shōtetsu’s poetic treatise

¹ Murai, ‘The Development of *Chanoyū*’, in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p. 28.

² Also known as Shūkō (1422-1502).

³ For example, Haga Koshirō. See his chapter ‘The *Wabi* Aesthetic through the Ages’, in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, for a discussion of the interrelationship between poetic and tea ritual aesthetics.

⁴ Shinkei is noted as both a *waka* and a *renga* poet, becoming one of the leading figures in the *renga* world of his day. His works include the treatise on the art of *renga*, *Sasamegoto* (1463) which is said to rank with ‘Ze’ami’s writing on the *Nō* as one of the twin peaks of artistic criticism of medieval Japan’ (Hisamatsu, *Biographical Dictionary of Japanese Literature*, p.149). Other works include *Tokorodokoro Hentō* (1466- 1470), *Oi no Kurigoto* (1471) and his personal anthology *Shibakusa*. Shinkei and other contemporary poets were chief catalysts behind a ‘revival’ of *renga* (*Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.22, n.49) as a serious art form (*Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.4, n.4). Shinkei became Shōtetsu’s pupil from about 1430.

Shōtetsu Monogatari (ca. 1448). Much to my dismay, however, my draft translation was just a few pages away from completion when I discovered that a complete annotated translation with introduction was hot off the printer's press in the U.S.A. This was Robert Brower and Steven Carter's work, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, published by the University of Michigan in 1992. I re-appraised my situation in view of this apparent disaster, and decided that I would instead focus upon the poetic compositions of Shōtetsu which are dotted throughout the work. Although they had been already translated in *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, a re-translation seemed academically justifiable in view of possible variant translations or alternative interpretations of some of the poems. It also appropriate to provide more in-depth poetic annotation and commentary on the poems, as *Conversations with Shōtetsu* inevitably focussed more on the treatise as a whole with less detail given to the individual poems therein.

In addition, out of a conviction that an adequate appreciation of a literary product requires considerable insight into the context in which it was composed, I determined that this dissertation should also provide more comprehensive background material than was provided in the 'Introduction' of *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, detailing the circumstances and environment, including the philosophical and religious milieu, in which Shōtetsu composed his *waka*.⁵

It was from research into the 'context' of Shōtetsu's poetry that I became sharply aware of the enormous dichotomy between many aspects of Shōtetsu's era and experience and the intense aestheticism of his poetry. This awareness finally determined the ultimate orientation of my dissertation which is concerned above all with signalling and attempting to resolve the paradox inherent in the poetry of Shōtetsu in the light of its context.

* * * * *

Throughout the many years that it has taken me to bring my work to this stage, I have benefitted enormously from the wisdom, advice and encouragement of many people, in particular, my supervisor, Mr Toshio Akima, Professor Paul Clark and Dr Richard Phillips of the Department of Asian Languages and Literatures (now School of Asian Studies), the University of Auckland, and

⁵ On the other hand, the Introduction of *Conversations with Shōtetsu* does contain an admirably detailed biography upon which I was able to draw extensively.

to my colleagues in my own workplace, the Department of East Asian Studies, (now East Asian Studies Programme, School of Language Studies), Massey University, Palmerston North, especially the late Ms Hiroko Asano who replaced me in my teaching duties during one year of leave, enabling me to make considerable progress with this thesis. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable contribution made to my understanding of Shōtetsu by Professor Ii Haruki and Professor Emeritus Shimazu Tadao, both of Osaka University, established experts in the field, who put aside time for me during periods of research leave in Japan.

Finally I wish to express my thanks for the material support which I have received over the years, especially to the Massey University Research Fund (MURF) which subsidized my visits to Japan and also provided me with the means to purchase valuable and expensive reference material, and to the University Grants Committee who awarded me with a Postgraduate Scholarship for the first three years of my registration.

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EDITORIAL NOTES

Romanization

Japanese words have been romanized according to the modified Hepburn system used in *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary*. Classical Japanese is romanized according to the modern Japanese pronunciation.

Macrons

Macrons are indicated for long syllables, with the exception of words which have now been borrowed into English, such as 'shogun', and well-known placenames such as Kyoto or Kyushu.

Italicization

Japanese words retained in Japanese are written in italics, with the exception of words which have now been borrowed into common English usage or Japanese placenames and proper nouns. Italics are also used for the romanized versions of *waka*, their headnotes and their English translation.

Kanji Transcription

As a rule kanji transcription has not been provided for romanised Japanese common nouns and proper nouns, except in Figure 2, Appendix I (a short list giving kanji transcription of Shōtetsu's various appellations) and Appendix IV (the Japanese script version of Shōtetsu's poems in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* with kanji usage following the *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* version). The only other exception is where the kanji symbol itself is the focus of the discussion.

Name Order

For Japanese names, the traditional style of surname followed by given name has been retained.

Shōtetsu's Name

For convenience and consistency the name Shōtetsu has been used throughout this study, although it was just one of several appellations given the poet throughout his lifetime.

Principal Editions Consulted

Unless otherwise indicated, our principal reference edition for *Shōtetsu Monogatari* has been the *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* version, to be found in Volume 65, *Karonshū Nōgakuronshū*. This we refer to simply as ‘*Shōtetsu Monogatari*’. Our principal reference edition for *Sōkonshū* has been the *Shinpen Kokka Taikan* version, denoted ‘*Sōkonshū*’.

NOTE ON PERIODIZATION

There is a wide degree of variance among sources over the years encompassed by the so-called Muromachi period. Starting dates are given as 1333, 1336, 1392 or even 1473, while closing dates are proposed as either 1568 or 1573.¹ It is known as the Muromachi period because it was in the Muromachi district in Kyoto that the Bakufu was located after 1387.²

The Muromachi period is also alternatively called the Ashikaga period, for it corresponds with an era when government, to a lesser or greater extent, rested in the hands of a shogun of the Ashikaga house.³ For this reason it seems logical to demarcate the Muromachi period as beginning with the assumption of shogunal powers by the first Ashikaga shogun Takauji (1308-1358) in 1338, and the resignation of the last Ashikaga shogun Yoshiaki (1537-1597) in 1573, that is, a period lasting about two hundred and thirty-five years, from the first half of the fourteenth century into the second half of the sixteenth century.

Within the Muromachi period, three divisions are generally acknowledged: early Muromachi, also identified as the Kitayama period;⁴ mid-Muromachi, also known as the Higashiyama period;⁵ late Muromachi, or the 'Warring Countries' period.⁶ To this, and partly overlapping with the Kitayama period, should be added the Northern and Southern courts (Nanbokuchō) period (1336-1392).⁷

The terms Kitayama period and Higashiyama period tend to be used in discussing artistic and cultural developments. A variety of opinions exist over their respective spans, but for the purpose of

¹ Nelson, *Japanese-English Character Dictionary*, p. 1017.

² Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p. 175.

³ See Figure 1 for a list of dates for the shoguns who held power during Shotetsu's lifetime, Yoshimitsu, Yoshimochi, Yoshikazu, Yoshinori, Yoshikatsu and Yoshimasa.

⁴ The name Kitayama refers to the Kitayama estate Yoshimitsu acquired from the Saionji family in 1398 (Hayashiya, 'Higashiyama Bunka', in Ienaga, *Nihon Rekishi v.7: Chūsei 3*, p.313), the location of the famous Kinkaku-ji, or Golden Pavilion.

⁵ Higashiyama refers to the estate established by Yoshimasa in the Higashiyama district of Kyoto, the location of Ginkaku-ji, the Silver Pavilion.

⁶ Hayashiya, 'Higashiyama Bunka', in Ienaga, *Nihon Rekishi v.7: Chūsei 3*, p.305.

⁷ The period during which a Southern Court was established by Go-Daigo (1288-1339) and his heirs in the mountains of Yoshino, and a Northern Court in Kyoto under Emperor Kōmyō (1321-1380) backed by the Ashikaga shogunate.

this study, we shall identify the Kitayama period as lasting from 1368, when Yoshimitsu became shogun, until 1441, when Yoshinori was assassinated and Bakufu power consolidated by Yoshimitsu went into decline.⁸ We shall demarcate the Higashiyama period as commencing in 1443, when Yoshimasa succeeded to the headship of the Ashikaga family, and ending in 1490, the year Yoshimasa died.⁹ Shōtetsu's life (1381-1459) thus extends from the early to mid-Muromachi period, that is, the Kitayama period through to the early years of the Higashiyama period.

⁸ Hayashiya, 'Higashiyama Bunka', in Ienaga, *Nihon Rekishi v.7: Chūsei 3*, p. 313.

⁹ Hayashiya, 'Higashiyama Bunka', in Ienaga, *Nihon Rekishi v.7: Chūsei 3*, p.306.

ASHIKAGA SHOGUNS DURING SHŌTETSU'S LIFETIME

<i>Order</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Birth</i>	<i>Became Shogun</i>	<i>Resigned</i>	<i>Death</i>
1	Yoshimitsu	1358	1368	1394	1408
2	Yoshimochi	1386	1394	1423	1428
3	Yoshikazu	1407	1423	1425	1425
4	Yoshinori	1394	1429	1441	1441
5	Yoshikatsu	1434	1442	1443	1443
6	Yoshimasa	1436	1449	1473	1490

Figure 1. Ashikaga Shoguns during Shōtetsu's lifetime (adapted from Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance: The Politics of the Muromachi Bakufu*, Appendix A).

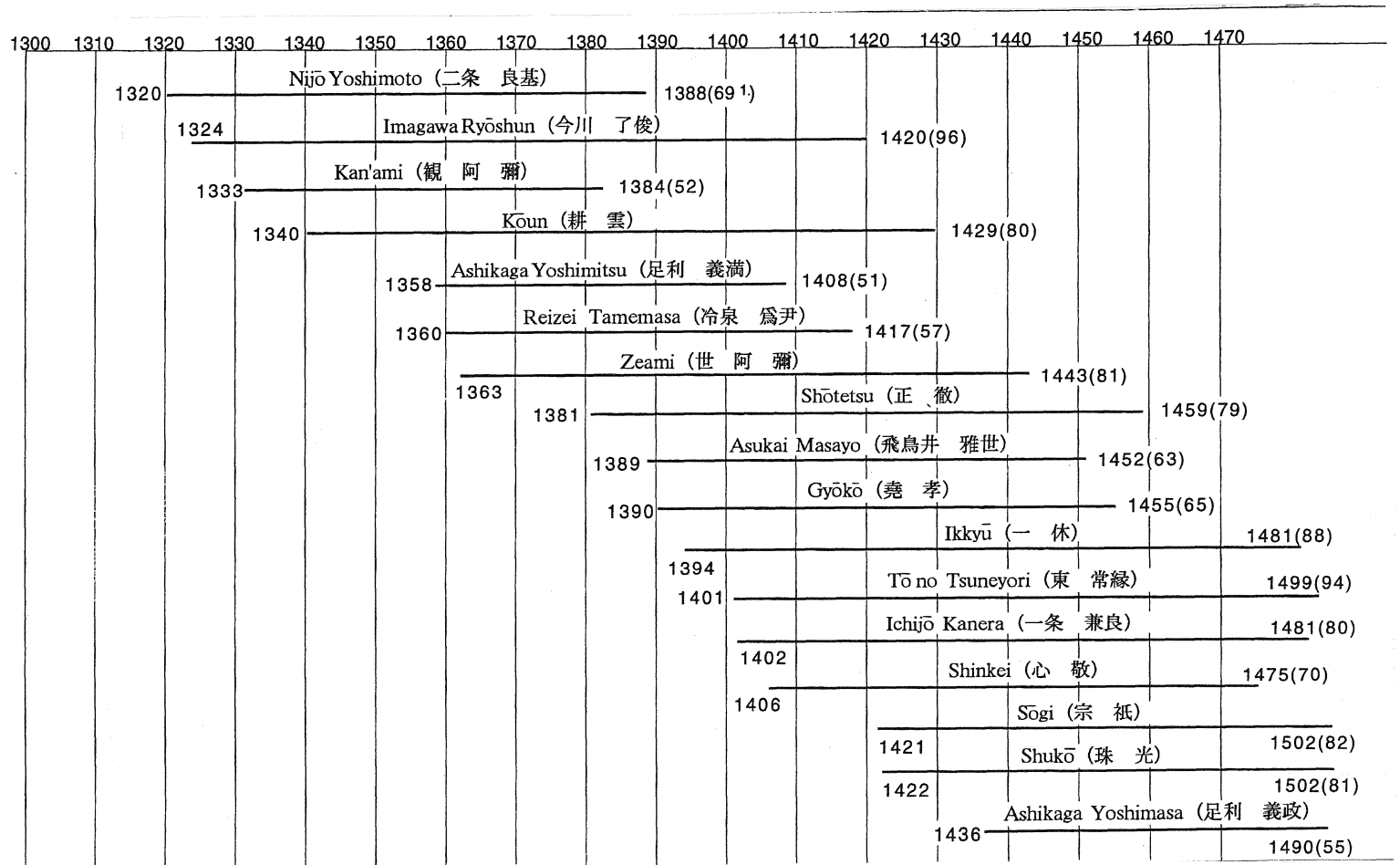


Figure 2. Lifespans of literary and political figures contemporaneous with Shōtetsu. Age at death indicated in parentheses. (Adapted from Shirai, *Kajin Shōtetsu Kenkyū Josetsu*, p. 311.)

NOTE ON TRANSLATION APPROACH

In pre-emptive defence of my translations of the *waka* of Shōtetsu and other poets, I would like to cite two observations made by veteran translators of classical Japanese. Edwin Cranston, discussing the nature of poetry *per se*, implies that a translator of poetry must also, impossibly, be an alchemist: ‘a poem has an inner life that is more than the sum total of its words and cadences, a vital essence that must metamorphose into a new language in translation.’¹ Ivan Morris stresses the intractability of *waka* poetry: ‘There can be no literature in the world less suited to translation than classic Japanese poetry.’² To these comments inspired specifically by Japanese poetry can be added the famous words of Robert Frost, that poetry is what gets ‘left behind in translation.’

Given this discouraging situation, it should not be surprising to learn that Shōtetsu’s poetry has been difficult to translate and ‘transform’ into English. Even among *waka* poetry it is surely among the most challenging: cryptic, abstruse, grammatically perturbed, elliptical, highly allusive, condensed, multivalent and crammed with word plays, subtle innuendoes and cultural references which would have made instant sense to the contemporary cultivated audience but are bereft of meaning for us, possibly even gibberish, at this enormous chronological, geographical, cultural and linguistic distance. Such problems make literal or direct translation of Shōtetsu’s *waka* out of the question. Given the situation, I have opted for a fairly free approach to translation, focussing on conveying as clearly as possible the core content and concepts of the original, at the same time as attempting to recreate in English at least some of its imagistic and sensory impressions and resonances. This approach has meant that the English version is often considerably more substantial in terms of explicit content and imagery than the original.

In practical terms I have attempted to tease out and make specific in my translation as many word plays as possible, clarifying for the modern reader implied imagistic details which would have arisen spontaneously in the conditioned imaginations of the contemporary audience. Thus the translations more often than not specifically articulate the dual and usually radically disparate

¹ Cranston, *A Waka Anthology v. 1: The Gem-Glistening Cup*, p.xx.

² Morris, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*, p. xix.

meanings of *kakekotoba* (pivot-words) and the semantic patterning produced by *engo* (word associations) which are often hidden beneath homonyms. *Makurakotoba* (pillow-words) and *jo* (imagistic prefaces) find their way into the translations as simile or metaphor. Some culturally-specific terms have been made more meaningful by including a short gloss within the poem. Otherwise the notes which follow the translation have been obliged to step into the breach. Notes have also generally been necessary to explain the imagistic and emotional resonances of *utamakura* (placenames with prescribed imagistic connotations).

The rich extra dimension Shōtetsu often brings to his poetry by the technique of *honkadori* (allusive variation) has not been amenable to translation. Thus the use of this technique is signalled in the commentary, where the source poem is provided, and whose translation utilises identical or similar words to Shōtetsu's allusive variation.

In retrospect I believe my translations have perhaps been more explicit than is aesthetically desirable, and that the terser style of translation favoured for example by Brower and Carter in *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, and more recently, Carter in *Unforgotten Dreams: Poems by the Zen Monk Shōtetsu*, on balance may be truer to the original. On the other hand, the verbosity of my translations, even to the point of imagistic and content overload, may be more helpful in revealing the extent and particular character of Shōtetsu's craftsmanship and the enormous potential he tapped in the tiny thirty-one syllable *waka*.

The more observant reader may notice that some of my translations are less florid than others. Some translations have been revised at a later date, and reflect a growing preference for a more restrained style of translation.

The issue of form in my translations has been approached in an orthodox fashion, based closely on the approach found in Brower and Miner's *Japanese Court Poetry*, and subsequently in Brower and Carter's *Conversations with Shōtetsu*. My translations follow a five-line schema, each line marked by an initial capital, with punctuation used in the body of the poem, especially the colon, semi-colon or dash, but not at the end of the poem, with the exception of an occasional question mark or exclamation mark. Punctuation in the body of the poem is used to recreate the caesura of the original, while the absence of punctuation at the end suggests I hope its lingering afternotes.

No attempt has been made to mimic in the English translation the thirty-one syllable length of the original, let alone its 5/7/5/7/7 prosody. However it is hoped that the varying line lengths of the translations, emphasised by indentations, may to some extent evoke the alternating 5/7/5/7/7 schema.

The order of the lines, and thus the controlled flow of images into the reader's mind, play a vital role in any poem's aesthetic and emotional impact: as far as viable English syntax has allowed I have attempted to preserve the sequence of lines and images of the original. In particular 'noun-ending' (*meishidome*) poems are translated as such, or else the noun is brought to the top of the poem to achieve an equivalent emphatic effect.

Similarly I have tried to simulate, though not necessarily using the same sounds, the phonological patterning which makes so many of these *waka* a pleasure to read aloud and listen to. The euphonies available to Japanese poets are mainly restricted to alliteration and assonance, due to the extreme syllabic simplicity of Japanese. English has more techniques available, and I have also called some these into play, experimenting not only with alliteration and assonance in my translations but also the effects of consonance, and consonant augmentation and diminution.

Technical effects such as parallelism and inversion have generally been preserved

I have preceded each translation with a transliteration of the original, using Hepburn romanisation based on the modern pronunciation of the Japanese. The transliterations are provided primarily in recognition of the fact that these poems are first and foremost Shōtetsu's creation, and are the seedbed on which my possibly mutant translations were raised. The transliterations may also be of value to scholars who wish to refer back to the original Japanese without having to search out their copy of *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* or non-readers of Japanese language who will be able to hear the music of Shōtetsu's poetry even without understanding the meaning of the Japanese.

All translations are original unless indicated otherwise.

INTRODUCTION

1. Aims and Approach

This study has a two-fold purpose: firstly to explore in depth one specific body of Shōtetsu's poetry, the poetry composed and quoted by Shōtetsu in his celebrated poetic treatise, *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. Although an introductory discussion and brief notes on the poems can be found in Brower and Carter's pioneering translation of *Shōtetsu Monogatari (Conversations with Shōtetsu, 1992)*, this study takes Brower and Carter's work a step further, by providing these poems with detailed annotations and commentaries.¹ The poems have also been completely re-translated: the fact that some poems have turned out quite differently from those translated by Brower and Carter may suggest the richness and complexity of meaning in Shōtetsu's originals and their huge potential for variant interpretation.

The second aim of the study relates to an apparent paradox arising from the distinctive nature of Shōtetsu's poetry. For the poetry of Shōtetsu presents as something of an enigma. On the one hand recent literary scholars of new historicist inclination impress upon readers the theory that 'the study of literature [is] the detailed analysis of an archive where nothing can stand in isolation'² and reject 'the view that a literary world is a world unto itself unaffected by other things... a tidy, hermetic environment'.³ They argue 'that writers are also people with concerns other than writing and that these concerns will inevitably find a place in what they write'.⁴ In this attitude and emphasis upon contextuality they refute the purely aesthetic interpretation of Japanese literature which had hitherto prevailed among both Japanese and Western scholars.⁵

¹ With respect to individual poems in *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, although some annotations are included, these are mostly restricted to details of source, headnotes, or information about the poem's allusive origins. Aspects of poetic analysis with regard to theme and rhetoric are little discussed. On the other hand, the Introduction to *Conversations with Shōtetsu* does include nine insightful pages discussing Shōtetsu's aesthetics, concerned mostly with *yūgen*.

² Marra, *The Aesthetics of Discontent*, p.6.

³ LaFleur, *The Karma of Words*, pp.10-11.

⁴ LaFleur, *The Karma of Words*, 10-11.

⁵ Michele Marra for example contends that an aesthetic 'cover-up' of the possible political interpretations of the great classics has taken place since the days of Motoori Norinaga, 1730-1801, who maintained, according to Marra, that 'the purity of the literary act consists in defying all moral, didactic, and pragmatic issues. Literature puts one in contact with the sublime'. Marra goes on to observe how Western scholars have perpetuated this distortion: 'In introducing the Japanese classics to the West, Western scholars have inevitably been guided by the aesthetic assumptions of Kant's philosophy that, to a certain degree, were reinforced by the contemporaneous development of Norinaga's nativist theories...this tendency has promoted the notion of a literature disengaged from any purpose aside

However, at a cursory reading, the poetry of Shōtetsu appears to defy this contextual way of thinking. Shōtetsu's poetry was born of an era lurching towards the violence and chaos of Japan's darkest period of civil war,⁶ and yet from this incipient nightmare his poetry of rare delicacy and haunting beauty stands coolly aloof. When we learn how close Shōtetsu was to the mighty power-brokers in the land, and gain information about his own lifetime experiences, the sense of dislocation, unreality and the achievement of pure aestheticism created by his poetry intensifies further. Shōtetsu is indeed described as the 'voice of a violent age' by his contemporary Tō no Tsuneyori (1401-99),⁷ but this epithet seems ill-matched with his poetry of elegance and ethereal beauty. That is, the 'voice' and the 'violent age' seem to bear little, if any, resemblance to one another. This therefore is another challenge which we face in this study: to penetrate beyond the facade of aestheticism in Shōtetsu's poetry and discover what points of rapprochement, if any, exist between Shōtetsu's poetry, his personal experience and historical reality. We seek to appreciate Shōtetsu's poetry contextually as well as aesthetically, in the light of the 'exchange'⁸ it represents with its environment.

In order to reach this outcome, we must first of all gain an understanding of the life of the poet himself and a clear picture of the world which engendered Shōtetsu's poetry in its historical, social, cultural, literary and spiritual aspects. That is, we must 'attempt to understand...the text with which we began by restoring the context from which we extracted it'.⁹ Then, needless to say, we must investigate the poetry itself. Only then can emerge an awareness of the extent of the paradox in Shōtetsu's poetry, and, ironically, a way of seeing if his poetry can be reconciled in any way with its context.

Despite its seeming dislocation from its context, the historical or contextual approach is arguably the most appropriate way to tackle Shōtetsu's poetry in any meaningful fashion. Shōtetsu's poetry

from the text's ability to provide pleasure and appeal to the tastes of its consumers' (*The Aesthetics of Discontent*, pp. 1-3).

⁶ The Sengoku ('Warring Countries') period, 1467-1568. This period dates from the commencement of the Ōnin War in 1467 until the collapse of the Ashikaga shogunate when Oda Nobunaga (1534-82) drove away Ashikaga Yoshiaki (1537-97).

⁷ This description of Shōtetsu's poetry, which also provides the title of the present dissertation, is found in *Tōyashū Kikigaki* (ca.1456), the writings of his one-time pupil, Tō no Tsuneyori, in *Nihon Kagaku Taikei* v. 5, pp.340-1, quoted in Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.35. Tō no Tsuneyori in turn is borrowing this expression from the *Shih Ching*, 'The Book of Odes' (*Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.35).

⁸ The term 'exchange' as well as 'negotiation', 'transaction', 'circulation' are used frequently in the discussions of new historicists to denote 'the two-way, oscillatory relationships among the components of a culture' (Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, p.250).

⁹ Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, p.119.

was written in a time, setting, civilization and environment vastly removed from the one in which we now find ourselves, with allusions to many customs, beliefs and practices which can only be interpreted on the basis of our knowledge of his world. Without this contextual information, much of his poetry would be almost unintelligible.

From our need to use the context to understand Shōtetsu's poetry better, and our desire to discover the extent to which context is a factor in his poetry, this study therefore assumes the following structure: Chapter One will focus upon Shōtetsu himself and trace his major life experiences. Chapter Two will place Shōtetsu's life in its context of fifteenth-century Kyoto, sketching the main political, social, aesthetic and spiritual characteristics of his milieu. Chapter Three provides an overview of Shōtetsu's poetry in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, and after an exploration of Shōtetsu's theory of *yūgen* ('mystery and depth'), examines in depth a sample of Shōtetsu's poetry, providing translation, annotation and commentary. The Conclusion will evaluate the extent to which Shōtetsu's poetry can be integrated into its contemporary context despite its apparent incongruity.

We have selected as a sample of Shōtetsu's poetry the forty-eight poems by Shōtetsu contained in his treatise *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. Although this is by no means a large number of poems, given that his personal anthology *Sōkonshū* comprises well over ten thousand, we feel confident that they show Shōtetsu at his best and most quintessential. For, in effect, they are poems hand-picked by Shōtetsu himself to pass on to his students as examples of his art at its finest¹⁰ or as exceptional and worthy of comment for some reason. They are also the poems which he most fondly recalls and those which have remained vividly imprinted in his memory. In addition they are mainly compositions of his maturity, written in his fifties and into his late sixties. Thus they may be considered the *creme de la creme*. Regrettably it is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether they are 'representative' or not.

At this point, in order to justify our choice of Shōtetsu for this study, we need to turn our attention to two key matters. Firstly, we need to stake out clearly Shōtetsu's significance in Japanese literary history and his legacy to the Japanese literary tradition. Secondly we must address the issue of the present status of Shōtetsu research in the West and Japan. It should become obvious that this most deserving and fascinating area of research has been somewhat neglected until quite recently,

¹⁰ Although on rare occasions he includes poems which provoke on retrospect his own criticism.

especially by Western scholars.

2. Shōtetsu's Significance in Japanese Literary History

The mere fact that Shōtetsu was a *waka* poet of the early to mid-Muromachi period in itself may cast doubts over his poetic 'worthiness', since it has been common practice, especially among Japanese scholars, to denigrate the *waka* poetry of the Muromachi period as poetry 'in decline' or 'stagnation'. A graphic example may be found in Hisamatsu Sen'ichi's work *Chūsei Wakashi* where the chapter discussing the poetry of the Muromachi period bears the title 'Waka in an Age of Stagnation'.

It is probably impossible to refute this view of Muromachi *waka* poetry. The vitality of *waka* poetry was closely tied to the vitality of the court and the aristocracy, which was undoubtedly in decline, a process which had commenced as far back as the fall of the Taira in 1185. Generally speaking, the *waka* poetry of the Muromachi period was chronically undistinguished, largely as a result of the paralysing influence of the deeply conservative Nijō school of poetry and the counter-productive factionalism of vying poetic circles.

By 1400, the Nijō bloodline itself had died out, but its poetics were perpetuated by the Asukai family¹¹ and disciples of the Nijō school such as Ton'a (1289-1372) and his followers.¹²

The one flicker of life lay in the more liberal poetics of the Reizei school of poetry,¹³ espoused and championed by respected poet and scholar of poetics, Imagawa Ryōshun (1326-c.1417),¹⁴ who

¹¹ The Asukai established a firm bond with the Nijō through marrying their daughters to Nijō sons (Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.68, n.53). Shōtetsu generally holds the Asukai in low esteem, scorning their lack of poetic documents (*Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:11). He does however manage to praise after a fashion a poem by an earlier Asukai, Asukai Masaari (1241-1301), which he finds fit to quote in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:37: *Oriori wa/Omou kokoro mo/Miyuramu o/Utate ya hito no/Shirazugao naru*. 'At times I cannot disguise/My love for you/You must have noticed/How infuriated I feel/By your look of feigned ignorance!' Shōtetsu states this poem 'is held to be the best in the *Gyokuyōshū* (1313 or 1314)'. Note that Shōtetsu stops short of stating this as his own opinion, acknowledging it as a received judgement ('held to be').

¹² Ichiko, *Nihon Bungaku Zenshi* v. 3: *Chūsei*, pp. 335-6.

¹³ The Reizei school of poetry, founded by Reizei Tamesuke (1263-1328), was descended from Teika's son Tameie (1198-1275). Although it was as a rule overpowered by the influence of the Nijō school which favoured blandness and simplicity in poetry, the experimental and innovative Reizei school manage to produce two imperial anthologies, the above-mentioned *Gyokuyōshū* (1313 or 1314) and the *Fūgashū* (1344-6). The Reizei school favoured detailed imagery with a very intense, narrow focus, accurate and precise observation of phenomena caught at one specific moment and fresh, often startling imagery, especially in the way images interacted with one another. They were also masters in synaesthetic techniques (Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, pp. 383-5).

¹⁴ Apart from his considerable literary talents, Ryōshun was one of the most important and powerful political and military figures of the last decades of the fourteenth century. The head of an Ashikaga branch family, in 1371 he was posted to Kyūshū as the direct representative of the shogun to reestablish the authority of the Bakufu there and gain

became the de facto head of the Reizei school after the death of his mentor Reizei Tamehide (d.1372) when the new head Reizei Tamemasa (1361-1417)¹⁵ was still a young boy. Supporters of the Nijō school and the Reizei school were engaged in interminable polemic battles of poetic theory in which Imagawa Ryōshun took a leading role.¹⁶

The greatness of Shōtetsu's poetry lies in the fact that he managed to ignore and transcend this destructive factionalism. Although he commenced his career as a Reizei poet under the influence of Ryōshun, later in life he became less active in the support of the Reizei cause, to the extent of expressing extreme impatience with poetic factionalism per se. He is alleged to have said of the Nijō- Reizei feud, 'Both factions are tiresome. I myself have no respect for those degenerate houses. I study only the essence of Shunzei [1114-1204]¹⁷ and Teika [1162-1241].'¹⁸ Through the influence of these earlier great poets, and his own genius, Shōtetsu succeeded in reviving, if only

the capitulation of the Southern Court armies. He retained this position for twenty-five years. Although he never managed to quash the Shimazu of south Kyushu, in other respects he was brilliantly successful: 'through his efforts, the rebel [Southern Court] forces were vanquished and Ashikaga influence in Kyushu reached its zenith' (Mass, *The Bakufu in Japanese History*, p.81). Ryōshun also 'functioned as a sort of foreign affairs representative for the Ashikaga' (Mass, *The Bakufu in Japanese History*, p.88-9) and virtually controlled foreign policy with Korea. Over the years, Ryōshun 'became' a considerable power in his own right' (Mass, *The Bakufu in Japanese History*, p.89), acquiring substantial personal wealth and eventually inciting the jealousy of the shogun (Hall et al., *Cambridge History of Japan* v.3: pp.427-9). In 1395 Yoshimitsu dismissed him from his post as Kyushu commissioner (Hall et al., *Cambridge History of Japan* v.3: p.432), perhaps from envy, perhaps because it was risky to allow anyone to become too powerful, perhaps on account of Ryōshun's advancing years (Mass, *The Bakufu in Japanese History*, p.89). Ryōshun provides a perfect example of the ideal medieval gentleman, in his mastery of both the sword (*bu*) and the literary arts (*bun*).

¹⁵ Reizei Tamemasa was the son of Tamekuni (precise dates unknown) and grandson and adopted son of Tamehide. Because his natural father Tamekuni had 'abandoned the world', on the death of Tamehide in 1372 Tamemasa inherited the headship of the Reizei house and poetic line, aged just eleven years old. Due to Tamemasa's extreme youth, Ryōshun was able to take his place as the de facto head of the Reizei school of poetry (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.22).

¹⁶ His works *Nigonshō* (1403), *Gonjinshū* (1406) and *Rakusho Roken* (1412) were written in defense of the Reizei cause.

¹⁷ Fujiwara no Shunzei was the founder of the Mikohidari school of the Fujiwara family (*Kōjien*, p. 1939). He was a pupil of the conservative poet Fujiwara no Mototoshi (d.1142) and deeply influenced by the progressive poet Minamoto no Toshiyori (1055-1129). Shunzei was also a close friend of Saigyō (1118-90). He himself became respected as leader of the world of poetry and played a major role in the adjudication of poetry competitions. Apart from his own collections, and inclusion of his works in other anthologies, he was also the editor of the imperial anthology *Senzaishū*, completed circa 1188. His dissertation on poetics, *Korai Fūtaishō*, written at the age of eighty-three, cites *yūgen* ('mystery and depth') as the 'highest contemporary ideal of beauty and the ideal for the *waka*'. 'The Hōgen war that broke out when he was forty-two and the downfall of the Taira clan that occurred when he was around seventy both heightened his sense of the impermanence of all things, influencing his outlook and giving a new dimension to his verse.' (Hisamatsu, *Biographical Dictionary of Japanese Literature*, p.107.)

¹⁸ From *Tokorodokoro Hentō*, quoted Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.33. Teika, son of Shunzei, like his father was an illustrious and outstanding poet of the early Kamakura period. Chief compiler of the *Shinkokinshū* (completed 1206) and compiler of the *Shinchokusenshū* in 1235, he also wrote works on poetic theory, such as *Kindai Shūka*, *Eika Taigai*, *Maigetsushō* and left a diary, *Meigetsuki* (Hisamatsu, *Biographical Dictionary of Japanese Literature*, pp. 115-16). Several spurious works were also accredited to him, probably by his poetic rivals seeking to legitimize their own poetic theories, for example, *Guhishō* (Secrets of a Fool), *Sangoki* (Record of Thrice Five Nights), *Gukenshō* (Notes on my Foolish Views), *Kirihioko* (The Paulownia Brazier), *Miraiki* (Record of the Future) (*Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.53). He was the 'ultimate source of all subsequent authority in poetic matters' (Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p. 271).

temporarily, *waka* poetry in an age of decline, and moreover infusing it with an aesthetic spirit strong and influential enough to be passed into *renga* poetry through his disciple Shinkei (1406-1475) and thence via Sōgi (1421-1452) into the *haiku* of the Edo period. Thus Shōtetsu can claim as his poetic heirs Shinkei and Sōgi, two outstanding *renga* poets, and also eventually Bashō (1644-1694), the celebrated seventeenth-century *haiku* master.¹⁹

And so Shōtetsu, through inspiring and instructing Shinkei, managed to keep alive and liberate into the new and vibrant poetic genre of *renga* the core aesthetic of Japanese poetry, ensuring its survival even into the present, at a time when its very existence was threatened by overwhelming blandness and mediocrity. He forms therefore a vital link in the history and continuity of Japanese poetry and its aesthetic.

Shōtetsu's other major role in the course of Japanese literary history was his contribution to the debate on the aesthetic *yūgen* ('mystery and depth'). His interpretation of *yūgen* has been described as the final metamorphosis of *yūgen*, its transitional phase before the theory moved away from *waka* poetry into the realm of *renga* and the Nō drama.²⁰ More detail is given on this topic in Chapter Three.

Although Shōtetsu had many detractors in his day, especially among the Asukai family who barred him from inclusion in the only imperial anthology to be composed in his era, the *Shinzokukokinshū* (1438), he was also highly praised by his contemporaries. Legend even claims that he was the reincarnation of no less than Fujiwara no Teika,²¹ arguably the greatest of all Japanese poets. Shōtetsu himself appeared to encourage this giddy perception.²²

Shinkei eulogizes him in the following way in his *renga* treatise *Sasamegoto* (1463):

¹⁹ Karaki, *Mujō*, p.259.

²⁰ Kazamaki, *Kazamaki Keijirō Zenshū* v. 7: *Chūsei Waka no Sekai*, p.358.

²¹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.73-6.

²² Note the significance of the opening paragraphs of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, where he evokes consecutively the memory of both Teika and the great Manyōshū poet Hitomaro (fl. ca. 690-710), and the fact that the first poems to be quoted in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* are works by these two poets (even if Hitomaro's second poem is probably a forgery). Shōtetsu thereby appears to be making a purposeful association between these two great poets and his own poetic mission. Shōtetsu even relates a legend about Hitomaro that 'if ever a time comes when the *waka* form seems doomed to perish, he will be reborn among mankind and re-initiate us in the art of the *waka*' (*Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:8). One could infer from this that Shōtetsu considers himself to be the reincarnation of Hitomaro, and the present-day incumbent of the true art of *waka* poetry. Be this as it may, Shōtetsu's evocation of the names of Teika and Hitomaro, two of the greatest poets in *waka* history, at the outset of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, seems deliberately engineered to imbue his own treatise with credibility and authoritativeness.

The brilliant bonze Shōtetsu lived at the same time as Ryōshun, and he, from his childhood until his maturity probed the depths of language, reached to the bottom of the spring of poetic lyricism, and like the wondrous ice formed upon the water, progressed from shallowness to great depth. His elucidation penetrated the most obtuse minds. Once again the poetic sentiments and expressions of the earlier golden age of poetry came to be known in the world at large, it is said.²³

Among the many students of poetry who flocked to Shōtetsu's hermitage to benefit from his wisdom numbered the warrior chieftain Hosokawa Katsumoto (1430-73).²⁴ The shogun Yoshimasa (1436-90) also placed himself under Shōtetsu's tutelage.

The respect accorded Shōtetsu was also manifested in other ways. For example, the great statesman and scholar Ichijō Kanera (1402-81)²⁵ who was engaged in 'the re-enunciation of the classical courtier vision of beauty'²⁶ chose to compile an anthology of one thousand poems by Shōtetsu (*Shōtetsu Senshū*). He also wrote the introduction for Shōtetsu's monumental anthology *Sōkonshū* in 1473. Further appreciation of the high regard in which Shōtetsu was held can be gathered from the fact that one extant manuscript of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* was copied from a manuscript allegedly 'in the imperial writing'.²⁷ Moreover, in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, Shōtetsu informs us that he has been initiated into the secret transmission (*denju*) of two *Manyōshū* (ca.770) poems,²⁸ a special privilege and honour reserved only for the most worthy of poets. He also received from Ryōshun a copy of a valuable treatise on the *Manyōshū* composed by Shunzei, *Manyōshū Jidaikō*, copied in Reizei Tamehide's hand.²⁹

²³ Ijichi, et al. *Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū* v. 51: *Renga Ronshū Nōgaku Ronshū Haironshū*, pp.67-8.

²⁴ Katsumoto became *kanrei* (shogunal deputy) first in 1445 and again in 1452. In 1464, he was appointed *hosa* (tutor) to Yoshimasa's brother and heir, Yoshimi, and Yoshimasa's *shitsuji* (steward). In the disastrous Ōnin War (1467-1477) Katsumoto sided against Yamana Sōzen (1404-73), who was also his father-in-law, in support of Yoshimi's succession. Sōzen supported the succession of Yoshihisa, Yoshimasa's son who was unexpectedly born in 1465 and displaced Yoshimi as Yoshimasa's heir. The dispute became further complicated by parallel succession struggles of other *daimyō*, the Hatakeyama and the Shiba. Katsumoto died of illness before the war reached its inconclusive end. Katsumoto was also a devout follower of Zen, establishing Ryōanji in Kyoto.

²⁵ His name is also read Kaneyoshi. He became Regent and Minister of the Great Council (*sesshō dajō daijin*) at the age of thirty-one and by thirty-six he became *kanpaku* (the chief advisor to the Emperor). He was an exceptionally erudite classical scholar as well as a poet of some note (*Shinchō Nihon Bungaku Jiten*, pp.84-5).

²⁶ Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan* v.3: *Medieval Japan*, p.477.

²⁷ Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p. 40.

²⁸ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:10.

²⁹ Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p. 91, n.181. This episode is described in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 60.

Twentieth-century scholars hold Shōtetsu in similar esteem. Carter claims that Shōtetsu alone distinguishes himself among the *waka* poets of the Muromachi period.³⁰ Donald Keene asserts that

the priest Shōtetsu was the last important *waka* poet of the Muromachi period. It might even be argued that he was the last major poet before the twentieth century who chose to express himself in *waka*.³¹

On another occasion Keene comments,

the work of one poet in particular, Shōtetsu, is of exceptional interest, not only because of the intrinsic quality of his *waka*, but because he helped to formulate aesthetic ideals that are still valid today.³²

Shirai Tadanori describes him as 'probably the most distinguished poet of his era.'³³ Hisamatsu Sen'ichi salutes him as 'the most outstanding poet of his era; on him the focus of Muromachi *waka* is fixed'.³⁴

Shōtetsu's significance moreover extends beyond *waka* and even beyond *renga*. As Donald Keene signals above, his aesthetic influence was far-reaching. It can be argued that through his students Yoshimasa and Shinkei, Shōtetsu exerted no small influence, albeit indirect, over the evolution of the tea ritual into *wabicha* (tea shared according to the aesthetic of frugality and simplicity), one of the most aesthetically significant developments of the late Muromachi period. We have touched upon this briefly in the Preface. Yoshimasa is regarded by some to rank alongside tea master Murata Jūkō (1422-1502) as an early formulator and practitioner of *wabicha*. 'An originator of *wabicha*...Yoshimasa is probably best regarded as a representative of the transition of *shoin chanoyu* to *wabicha*.'³⁵ There can be little doubt that Yoshimasa's aesthetic preferences were

³⁰ Carter, 'Waka in the Age of Renga', *Monumenta Nipponica*, v. 36, 1987, pp.425-44.

³¹ Keene, *Seeds in the Heart*, p.728.

³² Keene, *Some Japanese Portraits*, p.44.

³³ Shirai, *Kajin Shōtetsu Kenkyū Josetsu*, p.125.

³⁴ Hisamatsu, *Chūsei Wakashi*, p.291.

³⁵ Material evidence which directly links Yoshimasa with *wabicha* is to be found in the Tōgūdō on Yoshimasa's Higashiyama estate. In the Tōgūdō, there is a room called the Dōjinsai, constructed in the *shoin* architectural style with *shoin* writing desk and *chigaidana* asymmetrical shelves, but only four-and-a half mats in area. At one point it had a sunken hearth constructed in it. The name on the plaque to the room, Dōjin, meaning 'all people the same' is an early articulation of the ethic of equality in *chanoyu*. The size, the hearth and the sentiment all anticipate the *wabicha* style of *chanoyu* that evolved in the next century (Ichiko, *Nihon Bungaku Zenshi v. 3: Chūsei*, p.24).

considerably influenced by Shōtetsu, having been exposed to his values in his formative and impressionable adolescent years, in 1452 and 1453 when Shōtetsu composed *waka* for him and lectured to him on *The Tale of Genji* (ca.1008).³⁶

Shōtetsu's pupil Shinkei exerted a direct and documented influence over the aesthetics of Murata Jūkō, famed for his remark, 'I have no taste for the full moon'. In his *Kokoro no Fumi* (Letter of the Heart, c.1488), Murata Jūkō describes the 'cold and withered' and 'cold and emaciated' qualities of Bizen and Shigaraki pottery, at that time becoming increasingly sought after as tea ceremony ware. In these words we can find the direct imprint of Shinkei's aesthetic.

The point to note in the development of the aesthetic sense of *wabi* and *wamono* is the great influence exerted upon it by the works of poetic criticism. We have observed that the points made in Shūkō[Jūkō]'s 'Letter of the Heart' were almost identical with those of *Shinkei Sōzu Teikin* (Bishop Shinkei's Instructions, a text about *renga*). This is because Shūkō was influenced by Shinkei, and the 'Letter of the Heart' is, conceptually at least, almost a product of Shinkei's critical writing on poetry.³⁷

This document in turn carried deep traces of Shōtetsu's aesthetic.

It is also significant to note that another early tea master experimenting with *wabicha*, Takeno Jōō (1502-55), was also a *renga* master,³⁸ suggesting another direct link between Shōtetsu-influenced poetics and the aesthetic of *wabicha*.

3. Shōtetsu's Literary Legacy

Shōtetsu's major works comprise his monolithic personal anthology *Sōkonshū*, the miscellany cum poetic treatise *Shōtetsu Monogatari* and one work in the travelogue genre, *Nagusamegusa*, completed in 1418. In addition he also composed many shorter works of *waka* poetry.

Shōtetsu Monogatari

³⁶ Ichiko, *Nihon Bungaku Zenshi v. 3: Chūsei*, p.339.

³⁷ Murai, 'The Development of *Chanoyu*', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p.23.

³⁸ Murai, 'The Development of *Chanoyu*', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p.23.

This work of prose interspersed regularly with poetry (almost entirely *waka*) is made up of two volumes, which we call here Part One and Part Two. The first volume is sometimes called *Tesshoki Monogatari* (The Tale of Tetsu the Scribe) while the second volume sometimes bears the title *Seigan Chawa* (Teatime Talk with Seigan³⁹). The whole work covers sixty-eight pages in the printed *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* version which we have used as our primary source for this study. Each volume is made up of separate paragraphs. Part One contains one hundred-and-seven paragraphs, while Part Two contains one hundred-and-three. These paragraphs vary from just one or two lines to extended discourses one to two pages in length.

Shōtetsu Monogatari is generally regarded as a poetic treatise, but in fact it cannot be called pure in genre, comprising not only his writings on poetic theory and exemplary compositions, but also miscellaneous jottings on a wide range of subject matter. However, Shōtetsu himself no doubt intended the work to constitute primarily a miscellany centering upon his various thoughts regarding *waka* poetry,⁴⁰ and for this reason ‘poetic treatise’ is probably the most accurate genre description of the work. Indeed, in comparison with other poetic treatises of the era, *Shōtetsu Monogatari* is comparatively strong in its flavour as a poetic treatise.⁴¹ It is believed that the work *Ryōshun Isshi Den* (Biography of Ryōshun for his Son, 1409), which likewise contains a mixture of autobiography and poetic criticism, may have provided a model for *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.⁴² In addition, Shōtetsu’s familiarity with the miscellanies *Makura no Sōshi* (Sei Shōnagon's famous *Pillow Book*, early eleventh century) and *Tsurezuregusa* (*Essays in Idleness*, ca.1330, by Yoshida Kenkō, 1283-1350)⁴³ probably further affected the way *Shōtetsu Monogatari* was written. The influence of *Zen goroku* , 'a series of fragmentary records of the sayings and doings of a Master in daily circumstances',⁴⁴ can perhaps also be discerned.

Although *Shōtetsu Monogatari* is counted among Shōtetsu’s works, and rightly so, in fact the

³⁹ Another of Shōtetsu's sobriquets.

⁴⁰ Shirai, *Kajin Shōtetsu Kenkyū Josetsu*, p.142.

⁴¹ Fukuda, Shimazu and Itō, *Kanshō Nihon Koten Bungaku v. 24: Chūsei Hyōronshū*, p.103.

⁴² Keene, *Seeds in the Heart*, pp.730-1.

⁴³ This collection of miscellaneous essays was Kenkō’s most celebrated work , although in his day his chief fame was as a poet in the conservative Nijō school. The *Tsurezuregusa* is considered ‘not only as a masterpiece of the medieval period but as the finest example of the *zuihitsu* (miscellany form) in all of Japanese literature’. It covers a range of topics, for example contemporary events and the traditional customs of the past and explores the beauties of nature (Hisamatsu, *Biographical Dictionary of Japanese Literature*, p. 156).

⁴⁴ Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, p.96.

actual authorship of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* has not yet been categorically established. A strong possibility exists that the entire work may not have been written by Shōtetsu himself, but instead comprises verbatim notes recorded by one of Shōtetsu's pupils. The use of the expression *un un* ('so he said') suggests reported speech and verbatim notes⁴⁵ while the use of the word *monogatari* in the title usually indicated a verbatim work.⁴⁶ However, in general it is considered that the first volume of the work was written by Shōtetsu himself while the second volume is usually regarded to comprise verbatim notes by Ninagawa Shin'emon (d.1448),⁴⁷ another of Shōtetsu's pupils, recorded during actual conversations held with Shōtetsu about poetry. Also, one manuscript exists which bears the title *Shōkō Hikki* (Shōkō's Notes), indicating that Shōtetsu's pupil Shōkō (1412-94) may have undertaken the task.⁴⁸

No less than the problem of authorship, academic controversy also surrounds the completion date of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. This is compounded by the fact that that it is composed of two discrete volumes perhaps by different authors, neither of which includes a date. Early commentators, and even recent scholars such as Shirai Chūkō, proposed the date 1430 for Part One, *Tesshoki Monogatari*, but according to Kyūsōjin Hitaku this is unverifiable.⁴⁹ The date 1450 was proposed as a likely date for Part Two, *Seigan Chawa*,⁵⁰ on the basis of one poem and its commentary in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* where Shōtetsu describes himself as seventy years old.⁵¹ But if *Seigan Chawa* was written as verbatim notes by Ninagawa Shin'emon who is documented as dying in 1448, the date 1450 for the completion of Part Two becomes untenable.⁵²

⁴⁵ Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.129, n.376.

⁴⁶ Fukuda, Shimazu and Itō, *Kanshō Nihon Koten Bungaku v. 24: Chūsei Hyōronshū*, p.104.

⁴⁷ Also known as Ninagawa Chikamasa or Chiun. He was from a warrior background serving Ashikaga Yoshinori in the shogunal central administration. He studied *waka* with Shōtetsu and *renga* with Asayama Bontō (Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.119, n. 338).

⁴⁸ Fukuda, Shimazu and Itō, *Kanshō Nihon Koten Bungaku v. 24: Chūsei Hyōronshū*, p.104. Shōkō was Shōtetsu's closest disciple. He was reared by Shōtetsu from the age of twelve and eventually inherited his property and the appellation 'Shōgetsu-an', the name given to Shōtetsu's hermitage. Shōkō was Shōtetsu's favorite pupil, and served his master faithfully all his life (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.121-2). His particular literary significance is as compiler of *Sōkonshū*; it appears he never managed to throw off the overwhelming greatness of his master and establish a reputation in his own right (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.129). The domestic life together of master and disciples appears to have been quite agreeable: in late spring 1452 for example Shōtetsu, Shōkō, Shōhan (another of Shōtetsu's hand-reared pupils) and others went on an excursion to Yunoyama spa (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.124).

⁴⁹ Quoted in Hosoya, 'Shōtetsu Monogatari Seiritsu Nendai Kō', in *Chūsei Karon no Kenkyū*, pp.354-5.

⁵⁰ Matsubara, 'Mizugame', July, 1938, quoted in Hosoya, 'Shōtetsu Monogatari Seiritsu Nendai Kō', in *Chūsei Karon no Kenkyū*, p.355.

⁵¹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari 2*: 59. Hosoya, 'Shōtetsu Monogatari Seiritsu Nendai Kō', in *Chūsei Karon no Kenkyū*, p.355.

⁵² Hosoya, 'Shōtetsu Monogatari Seiritsu Nendai Kō', in *Chūsei Karon no Kenkyū*, p.356-7.

The most plausible theory has been proposed by Hosoya Naoki. He maintains that both Parts One and Two were written at about the same time, on the basis of duplication of certain comments almost word for word in both parts, virtually unthinkable if they had been written at different times.⁵³ If the first part is believed to be verbatim notes like the second part, the overlap in contents of some sections of the work raises the possibility of Shōtetsu having discussed similar matters with two different individuals on two different occasions.⁵⁴ Hosoya Naoki also establishes dates for poems in both Part One and Part Two through tracing them back to *Sōkonshū* where their dates can be ascertained.⁵⁵ On the basis of other internal evidence he argues that both Parts One and Two were probably written when Shōtetsu was aged about sixty-seven or sixty-eight, that is in 1447 or 1448, and most likely 1448. This has become the generally accepted completion date, and this study likewise will abide by it.

The earliest extant manuscript of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* dates from the late Muromachi or early Edo period. The oldest is the Tō no Sosan manuscript, which is based on a manuscript penned by Tō no Sosan, the nephew of Tō no Tsuneyori, who was Shōtetsu's pupil. It is likely to be fairly close to the original and it forms the primary source for the *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* version of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. The Tō no Sosan manuscript in fact bears the title *Shōtetsu Nikki* but other manuscripts of the same lineage are headed with the title *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.⁵⁶ Also, separate and independent manuscripts and woodblock print editions of 'Tesshoki Monogatari' and 'Seigan Chawa' have circulated over the centuries, adding weight to the theory ascribing different authorship to Part One and Part Two of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

Shōtetsu Monogatari discusses matters of poetic style, information about poetic composition, interpretation of famous poems, anecdotes about poets, explanation of difficult diction, and praise of Shōtetsu's own compositions.⁵⁷ Some entries are autobiographical, while some describe niceties of poetic etiquette. Apart from the light it sheds upon the life of Shōtetsu and his contemporaries, and its store of valuable yet fragmented socio-historical detail, it is valued above all as the most

⁵³ See Hosoya, 'Shōtetsu Monogatari Seiritsu Nendai Kō', in *Chūsei Karon no Kenkyū*, p. 357, for details of which expressions.

⁵⁴ Fukuda, Shimazu and Itō, *Kanshō Nihon Koten Bungaku v. 24: Chūsei Hyōronshū*, p.104.

⁵⁵ The poems he uses are *kuru haru ni* (Poem 15, *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 100) and *sakeba chiru* (Poem 40, *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2:77). See Hosoya, 'Shōtetsu Monogatari Seiritsu Nendai Kō', in *Chūsei Karon no Kenkyū*, p. 359-63.

⁵⁶ See Appendices for reproductions of manuscripts and early printed editions of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

⁵⁷ *Nihon Koten Bungaku Daijiten* v. 3, p.366.

important source of information about Shōtetsu's poetic theories and aesthetic attitudes. It is distinguished by a yearning for the glories of the poetry of the past, particularly the era of the *Shinkokinshū* (1206).⁵⁸ Shōtetsu assumes a quasi-messianic status as the saviour of the *waka* in an era of serious artistic decline.

Most conspicuously, the treatise is a monument to Shōtetsu's cult of Fujiwara no Teika, articulated in *Shōtetsu Monogatari's* famous opening paragraph:

In this Way [of poetry] any individuals who might belittle Teika should be denied divine protection and should burn in Hell...Although it may not be possible, I believe we should yearn after the style and spirit of Teika's poetry and seek to emulate it.

In *Shōtetsu Monogatari* Part Two, Shōtetsu describes the depth of his obsession with Teika: 'Upon awakening, when I recall Teika's poems, I feel as though I am about to go mad.'⁵⁹

Above all, the treatise singles out the role of the style of ethereal beauty (*yōjō yōen*) in Teika's poetry, showing the deep influence of this style in Shōtetsu's own work, where *yōjō yōen* is clearly identified as synonymous with *yūgen* ('mystery and depth'). This articulation of Shōtetsu's theories of *yūgen* is one of the recurring topics of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

Although a number of motives no doubt prompted Shōtetsu to put together his various ideas on poetry in a miscellany, above all *Shōtetsu Monogatari* is didactic in purpose. This didacticism is especially obvious in Part Two which according to Shirai is written chiefly with the instruction of his pupils in mind. It shows a consciousness on Shōtetsu's part that he is writing/lecturing for the benefit of his pupils, to give them the best possible training to ensure they will survive in the world of artists. Above all he speaks from his own personal experience as a poet.⁶⁰ In particular it shows a solicitude towards the least experienced of his pupils, giving them concrete advice based on his own experience about how to become successful at poetic composition. Shōtetsu's advice is to compose prolifically, stick to one's original conception, avoid setting one's standards too high at the outset and adopt a relaxed approach.⁶¹ Like many other treatises of the period, 'a modern reader

⁵⁸ Shirai, *Kajin Shōtetsu Kenkyū Josetsu*, p. 124.

⁵⁹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 67.

⁶⁰ Shirai, *Kajin Shōtetsu Kenkyū Josetsu*, p. 115.

⁶¹ Shirai, *Kajin Shōtetsu Kenkyū Josetsu*, p. 116-18.

will find this older criticism quite practical in nature and often surprisingly contemporary in feeling.⁶²

Apart from the obvious didactic purpose underlying *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, it should also be placed in its context of a highly competitive artistic environment, where it can be regarded both as a defense of Shōtetsu's own poetic theories and as an advertising instrument intended to draw pupils to his tutelage rather than to the Nijō opposition. Shōtetsu's invocation of the infallible Teika in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* has been interpreted as a device to shore up his own poetry against his conservative poetic rivals, especially Gyōkō (1391-1455),⁶³ who resented Shōtetsu's celebrated status.

Poetic Content of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*

Although in this study we are specifically concerned with Shōtetsu's own poetry in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, in addition to his own forty-eight poems, the work also quotes and/or comments upon fifty-six poems by other poets, including six from the age of the *Kokinshū* (ca. 905), thirty-four from the age of the *Shinkokinshū*, and sixteen from later ages, excluding his own era. Predictably, apart from himself, the most often-quoted poet is Teika, represented by thirteen poems. Next is Fujiwara no Ietaka (1158-1237) with five poems.⁶⁴ These are all *waka* poems, that is, lyrical poems of thirty-one syllables on standardized topics written in Japanese⁶⁵ which had maintained their position as the dominant and most flourishing form of poetic expression among the ruling classes since Heian times. Four Chinese poems are also included, one by Tu Fu (d.770), two by Po Chū-i (772-846) and one by Minamoto no Tamenori (d.1011) but attributed to Po Chū-i.

In terms of subject matter and content, the majority of Shōtetsu's poems in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* are either descriptive odes to the beauty of nature or love poems. They are all *waka*.

Shōtetsu's poetry, conservative insofar as it respects the constraints of the classical poetic tradition in terms of theme and diction, is heavily influenced by the style of Teika's poetry and by the poetry

⁶² Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and its Traditions*, p.9.

⁶³ Heir of Ton'a (1289-1372), who had become the 'chief exponent of the Nijō school' upon the death of Nijō Tamesada, 1293- 1360. Gyōkō was one of Shōtetsu's principal rivals, as were other heirs of Ton'a, known collectively as the Jōkō-in (Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.68, ns. 49 and 52).

⁶⁴ Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, pp.47-8.

⁶⁵ As opposed to Chinese which was used for writing *kanshi* (Chinese poems) which also enjoyed considerable popularity.

of the Reizei school, and was thus considered innovative and radical. Shōtetsu, like Teika, was regarded as an iconoclast by his poetic rivals. Indeed, Tō no Tsuneyori's condemnation of Shōtetsu as the 'voice of a violent age' specifically refers to his perceived violation of poetic rules especially cherished by the conservative Nijō faction to which Tō no Tsuneyori eventually defected, despite having commenced his career as Shōtetsu's pupil. Teika-like qualities are to be found in Shōtetsu's use of startling juxtapositions of conventional imagery, free use of metaphor and his polished, minute and concentrated poetic expression which are regarded as typical of *Shinkokinshū* style.⁶⁶ In his figurative language, he successfully experiments with disturbing synaesthetic and even surrealistic techniques. An imprecise, ambiguous symbolism, open to interpretation by the reader, seems to hover behind much of his poetry. Many of his poems are tortuously complex, abstruse and ambiguous, with poetic expression often pushing syntax beyond its limits.

The adjective most often used, and justifiably, to describe Shōtetsu's poetry is 'ethereal'.

Shōtetsu's poetry unfolds in a hazy, moonlit, almost hallucinatory world, a drifting, twilight dreamscape of illusion and exquisite 'faerie' beauty. This is the realm of Shōtetsu's *yūgen*, far removed from the distasteful and offensive 'real' world and its crass, opportunist, belligerent inhabitants, an illusory aesthetic world distilled and purified by Shōtetsu's imagination and transfiguring and transcending the real world which he observed and apparently rejected.

Sōkonshū (A Gathering of Grassroots)

Shōtetsu's major poetic composition is *Sōkonshū*, compiled and edited by Shōtetsu's disciple and heir Shōkō on the basis of poetry accumulated over many years by Shōtetsu. It was completed in 1473. The work contains 11,237 poems.⁶⁷ Various theories exist over the significance of this title, including that it may allude to the fact that Shōtetsu is attempting to get back to the 'roots' of *waka* poetry in advocating a return to poetry in the style of Teika. Over sixty different manuscripts of *Sōkonshū* are extant, a fact which testifies once again the respect accorded Shōtetsu among scholars in earlier eras. The *Shikashū Taisei* edition of *Sōkonshū* to which we refer in this study, is a reproduction of the Shōryōbu manuscript.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Inada, *Chūsei Bungaku no Sekai*, pp. 12-15.

⁶⁷ It will be observed that the last poem in the work is numbered 11,236 but the actual total is 11,237 as two poems are entered under poem 3973 (*Shikashū Taisei*, v. 3, p.924).

⁶⁸ *Shikashū Taisei*, v. 3.

The many manuscripts of *Sōkonshū* fall into two categories: manuscripts which follow a chronological format reflecting the original form of *Sōkonshū* (such as the Shōryōbu manuscript), and manuscripts which have organised and classified the poems of the chronological version under topic headings. Printed editions of *Sōkonshū* are similarly divided, for example, the *Shikashū Taisei* edition of *Sōkonshū* preserves the chronological format of the original *Sōkonshū* while the most recently published edition of *Sōkonshū*, in the *Shinpen Kokka Taikan* series,⁶⁹ is classified according to topic. The classified version of *Sōkonshū*, however, lacks the informative headnotes and diary-like entries, which enrich the chronological *Sōkonshū*. Eleven of the fifteen volumes of *Sōkonshū* in chronological format are in journal form. The volumes with no diary entries are Volumes Four, Five, Six and Fifteen.⁷⁰

Shōtetsu's Other Poetic Works

In addition, Shōtetsu's poetic legacy comprises several other shorter works: *Shōgetsu Shōtetsu no Eika* (Poetic Compositions of Shōgetsu Shōtetsu, 1433), 206 poems, located in Tenri Library; *Shōtetsu Eisō* (A Draft Version of Shōtetsu's Poetry, 1437), 116 poems, located Daitōkyū Kinen Bunko; *Tsukikusa* (Dayflowers, composed from 1434 until Shōtetsu's death in 1459), 327 poems, located in Yōmei Bunko. These works overlap to some extent with *Sōkonshū*, but also include a significant number of new poems. In particular, *Shōtetsu Eisō* is of significance as it is judged to be in Shōtetsu's own hand. Since it is a chronological draft covering from New Year 1437 until the seventh month following, it sheds light on some obscurities in Shōtetsu's biographical background.⁷¹

Mention must also be made of *Shōtetsu Senshu*, commonly held to have been compiled by Ichijō Kanera, which comprises approximately one thousand poems selected from *Sōkonshū*, arranged in the manner of the imperial anthologies, with seasonal, love and miscellaneous volumes.

* * * * *

In view of Shōtetsu's undeniable literary significance and legacy, we would expect a considerable

⁶⁹ Kadokawa Shoten, 1983-1990.

⁷⁰ Shirai, *Kajin Shōtetsu Kenkyū Josetsu*, p. 145.

⁷¹ *Shikashū Taisei*, v. 3, pp.922- 8.

body of Shōtetsu scholarship to exist. Surprisingly this is not the case. The present situation of Shōtetsu scholarship in the West and in Japan will be reviewed below. Through this we shall be able to ascertain the extent to which the works of Shōtetsu have been studied and what research to date relates to the particular problem with which this thesis is concerned.

4. Research in the West

Western resources on Shōtetsu are not numerous, though gradually increasing. In 1978 Donald Keene devoted an entire chapter to a sketch of Shōtetsu in his collection of essays *Some Japanese Portraits*. Shōtetsu was also included in Carter's monograph *Waiting for the Wind : Thirty-Six Poets of Japan's Late Medieval Age* (1989). But no dedicated study of Shōtetsu emerged until 1992 with the publication of Brower and Carter's *Conversations with Shōtetsu*. This was a publication of considerable significance in that it was the first monograph in the West to focus exclusively on Shōtetsu and provide a translation of his most famous work. However, despite two favourable reviews in *Monumenta Nipponica*⁷² and the *Journal of Japanese Studies*⁷³ and the proffering of many ideas about possible future research in the study of Shōtetsu, there appear to have been no specific published follow-up studies until 1997 and the publication of Carter's *Unforgotten Dreams: Poems by the Zen Monk Shōtetsu*. This work should be applauded not only as the first monograph anthologising in English translation a selection of Shōtetsu's poetry, but also on account of the truly inspired translations which it contains, more experimental in prosody than Carter's earlier translations of Shōtetsu's poetic works.

It could be argued that one factor which has possibly deterred, discouraged and deflected many other prospective researchers in tackling Shōtetsu has been the sheer volume of work to confront, especially his major anthology *Sōkonshū*, 'the single largest personal anthology in the classical canon'.⁷⁴

All told, with the above exceptions and apart from a handful of passing references and entries in biographical dictionaries and reference books,⁷⁵ Shōtetsu has therefore tended to be somewhat

⁷² 47:3

⁷³ 19:2

⁷⁴ Carter, *Unforgotten Dreams: Poems by the Zen Monk Shōtetsu*, p.xxi

⁷⁵ For example, one passing reference can be found to Shōtetsu in Brower and Miner's canonical work *Japanese Court Poetry* (1961) - where he is surprisingly described as a *renga* poet (p.420), while a short discussion of Shōtetsu's definition of *yūgen* takes place in Tsunoda Ryūsaku's publication *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, v.1, p.279.

overlooked until recent years.

This situation should not be interpreted to mean an overall lack of interest in the poetry of the Muromachi period among Western scholars: on the contrary the phenomenon of *renga* (linked verse) has proved to be particularly popular. Interest in *renga* gathered momentum in the nineteen-eighties, after the publication of Earl Miner's *Japanese Linked Poetry* in 1979. In the collection of essays *Warlords, Artists and Commoners : Japan in the Sixteenth Century* (1981), Donald Keene presaged the imminent *renga* research trend with his chapter 'Jōha, A Sixteenth Century Poet of Linked Verse'. In the same year, Steven Carter produced his doctoral thesis on 'Mapping Tsukuba: A Conventional Reading of the Hyakuin' to be followed in 1984 by Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen's doctoral thesis on 'Shinkei: Poet-Priest of Medieval Japan'. The research of the same scholars was further refined in their respective monographs *Three Poets at Yuyama* (Carter, 1983), *The Road to Komatsubara: A Classical Reading of the Renga Hyakuin* (Carter, 1987) and *Heart's Flower: The Life and Poetry of Shinkei* (Ramirez-Christensen, 1994). This work should in particular be noted as it contains some quite detailed information about Shōtetsu in the context of Shinkei's career. Carter and Ramirez-Christensen's activity also bore fruit in journal articles such as Ramirez-Christensen's 'The Essential Parameters of Linked Poetry' (*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, December 1981) and Carter's 'Rules, Rules and More Rules: Shōhaku's Renga Rulebook of 1501' (*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, December 1983).

On the other hand, the field of Muromachi *waka* poetry, as opposed to *renga*, its more popular cousin, has only quite recently begun to attract attention. Steven Carter's article 'Waka in the Age of Renga', (*Monumenta Nipponica* 36:4, 1981) signalled the potential of this area of scholarship, before long leading to a magnificent succession of works by Carter in the same field: *Waiting for the Wind : Thirty-Six Poets of Japan's Late Medieval Age* (1989), *Conversations with Shōtetsu* (jointly authored by Robert Brower, 1992) and *Unforgotten Dreams* (1997), already mentioned above.

Interest in the Muromachi period should be seen in the context of a broader fascination with the medieval period in Japan over recent years, seen by some, especially from the 1970s, as a

The entry for Shōtetsu in Hisamatsu's *Biographical Dictionary of Japanese Literature* is quite informative.

'medieval history "craze"'.⁷⁶ This was first evidenced by support for a major conference on 'Japan in the Muromachi Age' (held in Kyoto in 1973) but also apparent in the scholarship of such brilliant researchers as Michel Marra (*The Aesthetics of Discontent: Politics and Reclusion in Medieval Japanese Literature*, 1991 and *Representations of Power*, 1993), Hall and Mass (*Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, 1974), K.A. Grossberg (*Japan's Renaissance*, 1981), Jeffrey Mass, *The Bakufu in Japanese History* (1985), William LaFleur (*The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan*, 1986) and Sanford, LaFleur and Nagatomi (*Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan*, 1992). Western research in the medieval period was admirably consolidated in the 1990 publication of Volume Three of *The Cambridge History of Japan* dedicated to medieval Japan, edited by John Hall et alia.

Examples of works evincing an interest specifically in the history and society of the Muromachi period include John Hall and Toyoda Takeshi's *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, 1977 (based upon papers presented at the above-mentioned 'Conference on Japan in the Muromachi Age') and Paul Varley's *The Ōnin War: History of its Origins and Background with a Selective Translation of the Chronicle of Ōnin* (1967).

5. Research in Japan

Early manuscripts from the late Muromachi period and wood block prints of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* from the eighteenth century⁷⁷ attest to a continuity of interest in Shōtetsu in Japan.

In the twentieth century, while it cannot be said that Shōtetsu and his literature have ever commanded a large research following in Japan, articles in journals and the occasional monograph have been published sufficiently regularly to suggest that research of a low-key sort has been sustained.

The most prominent and prolific scholar has been Inada Toshinori, my chief secondary source for information about Shōtetsu in Japanese. His canonical tome *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, approximately 1,300 pages in length, and providing a detailed description of every possible facet of Shōtetsu's

⁷⁶ Steenstrup, 'The Middle Ages Survey'd', *Monumenta Nipponica* 46:2, p.251.

⁷⁷ For example, *Shōtetsu Monogatari* (Part Two only) in Volume Three of the *Shinobazu Sōsho* series by 'national studies' (*kokugaku*) scholar Yashiro Hirokata (1758-1841) in the collection of the National Diet Library.

life, and meticulous study of his poetry, was published in 1978.⁷⁸ He had already published journal articles in the same field, for example, 'Muromachi Zenki no Kajin to Rengashi' in *Kokugo Kokubun* in 1977, and 'Ōeiki no Shōtetsu' in *Kokugo Kokubun*, v.44:9, 1975. In 1981 and 1982 Inada published papers successively on the poetry of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* ('Shōtetsu Monogatari Keisai no Shōtetsu Uta no Hyōshaku'⁷⁹) in the journal *Okayama Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Kenkyū Shūroku*, and drew upon his specialized knowledge of this era to edit *Chūsei Bungaku no Sekai*, published in 1984.⁸⁰ After this date however, his interest has apparently shifted elsewhere.

Other scholars who have actively pursued the study of Shōtetsu have been

1. Okazaki Gikei, who contributed a chapter called 'Shōtetsu no Fūtai' in the publication *Nihon Bungeigaku*, 1935.⁸¹
2. Koyama Takashi who published a monograph *Shōtetsuron* in 1942.⁸²
3. Murata Noboru who contributed an article 'Shōtetsu' to the journal *Nihon Bungaku Kenkyū* in 1950.
4. Hosoya Naoki who published 'Shōtetsu Monogatari Seiritsu Nendai Kō' in 1951 in *Kokugo Kokubun* and much later, in 1976, wrote a chapter in his work *Chūsei Karon no Kenkyū* on 'Shōtetsu Monogatari no Chosaku Katei ni tsuite'.
5. Hisamatsu Sen'ichi, who annotated the version of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* included in the *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* series (v. 65, *Karonshū Nōgakuronshū*, 1961).
6. Miura Mitsuo who contributed a chapter 'Shōtetsu' to the work *Waka Bungaku Kōza*, v.7, Ōfūsha, 1976.
7. Tanaka Shin'ichi who wrote 'Shōtetsu no Koi' for *Kokugo to Kokubungaku* in 1966. In 1977, he

⁷⁸ Inada is now remarkably dismissive about the monumental study on Shōtetsu he produced. Indeed, during a telephone conversation in 1990, he appeared to have very nearly forgotten about it!

⁷⁹ Parts One and Two were published in 1981, and Part Three in 1982, in *Okayama Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Kenkyū Shūroku*, vs. 54-6.

⁸⁰ Kyoto: Sekai Shisōsha.

⁸¹ Iwanami Shoten.

⁸² Sanseidō.

contributed an article to *Kokugo Kokubun* on 'Shōtetsu no Shukke Nenji' and in 1978 he published a review article on Inada Toshinori's study *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū* in *Kokugo Kokubun*.

8. Sasaki Katsue who published the article 'Shōtetsu Monogatari Zakkan Shō' in the journal *Karon Kenkyūkai Kaihō* in 1977. In 1978 he published 'Shōtetsu Karon ni Okeru Teika Juyō no Han'i' (*Kokushikan Tanki Daigaku Kiyō*), 'Shōtetsu Teikashū no Kōfuku', 'Watarikane Kumo mo Yū nao Tadoru' (both in *Karon Kenkyūkai Kaihō*). In 1979 he published 'Koi no Uta wa Teika no Hodo Naru Wa Mukashi Yori Arimajiki Nari' (also in *Karon Kenkyūkai Kaihō*). Professor Sasaki died in 1990.

9. Inoue Muneo who published chapters titled 'Shōtetsu', 'Gyōkō to Shōtetsu', 'Ōeiki ni okeru Shōtetsu' in *Chūsei Kadanshi no Kenkyū*, Kazama Shobō, 1984.

10. Ishiwara Kiyoshi whose *Chūsei Bungakuron no Kōkyū*, 1988⁸³ examines the poetic treatise of Shōtetsu along with those of Kōun⁸⁴ and Shinkei.

11. To the best of my knowledge, the most recent published research on Shōtetsu in Japan is Shirai Chūkō's monograph *Kajin Shōtetsu Kenkyū Josetsu*, which appeared in 1994.

In addition to the above research, the publication of both *Shōtetsu Monogatari* and *Sōkonshū* in prose collections or anthologies over the last three decades complements the above studies and highlights a significance accorded Shōtetsu and his oeuvre in Japanese literary history. For example, in 1961 the above-mentioned publication *Karonshū Nōgakuronshū* appeared in the *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* series, placing *Shōtetsu Monogatari* alongside other famous treatises such as Teika's *Maigetsu-shō* (1219?) and Zeami's *Fūshikaden* (1400). A full version of chronologically-organised *Sōkonshū* was published in full in 1974 in *Shikashū Taisei*.⁸⁵ 1978 saw the publication of *Nihon Kagaku Taikei* Volume Five which included *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.⁸⁶ In 1990 *Shinpen Kokka Taikan* (New Edition of the Great Canon of Japanese Poetry) carried as part of its radical revision the full version of topically-organised *Sōkonshū*.

⁸³ Rinsen Shoten.

⁸⁴ d. 1429. A Nijō poet and rival of Shōtetsu.

⁸⁵ v.5.

⁸⁶ Kazama Shobō.

With Shōtetsu thus positioned in general terms from the point-of-view of his oeuvre, his literary significance and the academic attention he has attracted, we must now move forward, or more precisely backwards, to provide a description of the biographical context from which his poetry emerged.

CHAPTER ONE

AN OUTLINE OF SHŌTETSU'S LIFE EXPERIENCES

1. Introductory comments

In this chapter, we seek to piece together information which will provide us with some insight into the personal and life experiences against which Shōtetsu's poetry was composed.

We are fortunate in having accurate birth and death dates for Shōtetsu: the fourteenth volume of *Sōkonshū* carries a postscript recording that 'on the ninth day of the fifth month of this year [1459] Shōtetsu died, aged seventy-nine years'. This postscript was probably written by the compiler of *Sōkonshū*, Shōtetsu's pupil Shōkō, or some other pupil with whom he associated closely. We thus know with certainty that he was born in 1381.¹ In the context of world history this makes Shōtetsu an approximate contemporary of Joan of Arc.

During his lifetime he was known by several names. As a child he was called Sonmyō-maru then Masakiyo or Nobukiyo. Later, when he took Buddhist orders he assumed the name Shōtetsu and was nicknamed Tesshoki or Tetsu the Scribe, on the basis of his one-time service as scribe at Tōfukuji temple in Kyoto. His professional pseudonym was Seigan.² For much of his poetic career he was also known as Shōgetsu-an, 'moon in the pinetrees hermitage', or 'inviting the moon hermitage', depending on the character used to write the first syllable. This name strictly speaking referred to his hermitage but also signified the poet himself.³ For clarity, we use the name Shōtetsu through this study, regardless of the period of his life to which we refer.

Shōtetsu's life experiences until middle-age, or more precisely until 1432 when his hermitage was destroyed by fire, are hazy, but after that date they are fairly well-documented thanks to the diary-like entries in *Sōkonshū*. But unfortunately, these entries fall short of providing a complete picture, as they focus chiefly upon his poetic activities or events in his life as they affected his poetic

¹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.20. This information is confirmed by the contemporary journal *Hekizan Nichiroku* written by fellow Zen priest Hekizan, also of Tōfukuji, and Shōkō's personal anthology *Shōkashū*.

² According to Kazamaki Keijirō, the name Seigan, meaning 'verdant cliff', was quite common and popular among Zen priests at the time and not all references to Seigan in contemporary records signify Shōtetsu. 'It appears to have been a name extremely typical of the times' (*Kazamaki Keijirō Zenshū* v. 8: *Chūseiken no Ningen*, p.404).

³ *Kazamaki Keijirō Zenshū* v. 8: *Chūseiken no Ningen*, p.403.

activities. Some great traumas in his life which we shall touch upon presently are not mentioned, or at best tersely alluded to, and we are not permitted many insights into Shōtetsu's deepest emotions and concerns. Even his poetry is begrudging of insight: unlike predecessors such as Saigyō (1118-1190), he was not a poet who concretely and directly depicted his own experiences in poetry. This is not to say nothing can be gleaned about his personal situation from his poetry, though care must be taken to separate his actual experience from conventional, time-honoured poetic posturing.⁴ In short, save what we learn about his activities from *Sōkonshū*, Shōtetsu presents as a very private individual.

2. Birthplace and Lineage

Although variant theories do exist, the dominant theory since the end of the Muromachi period to the present day has been that Shōtetsu was born in Oda county, in the province of Bitchū (the western part of present-day Okayama Prefecture). This theory is validated by Muromachi and Edo records of the region and given additional weight by the various legends about Shōtetsu which abound in Oda.⁵ Shōtetsu's natal link with Oda seems further substantiated by the fact that he owned a hermitage and lands in Oda.⁶ In Imagawa Ryōshun's work *Gonjinshū* (1406), he is identified as Oda Shōtetsu, that is, Shōtetsu of the Oda clan who were the hereditary lords of Oda.⁷ Theories about his lineage are closely linked with those of his birthplace. Most scholars agree that he was born as a second son into the family of the lord of Castle in Odanoshō (the Oda estate), Bitchū province. Some disagreement exists over whether he was the second son, or the younger brother, of Komatsu Yasukiyo (died 1400), the second lord of Kōdoyama castle. Yasukiyo's father Komatsu Hidekiyo had been the first generation of his family to inhabit Bitchū province as lord of Kōdoyama. He had received an appointment as *jitō* (estate steward)⁸ from the Ashikaga shogun,

⁴ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.77.

⁵ qv. Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp. 22-6 for detailed information and historical documents supporting this theory and others.

⁶ Mentioned in an entry for 1456 in *Sōkonshū* v.12.

⁷ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.24.

⁸ During Kamakura times the *jitō* was the 'major local figure' appointed by the Kamakura Bakufu (Hall and Mass, *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, p.256). He was a managerial appointee to the land answerable only to the Bakufu, although actual ownership rights were usually in the hands of 'a traditional noble or religious institution', that is an absentee landlord (Hall and Mass, *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, p.157). To this proprietor was paid a guaranteed income (Hall and Mass, *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, p. 211). After the formation of the Ashikaga Bakufu, however, real power in the provinces steadily moved into the hands of the *shugo*, the provincial military governor (Hall and Mass, *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, pp. 182-3).



Photo 1. Shōtetsu's grave at Tōfuku-ji Temple, Kyoto.



Photo 2. Shōtetsu's hermitage, Rikkyoku-an, at Tōfuku-ji Temple, Kyoto.

and had taken up residence in Oda in 1368, governing four villages.⁹

It is worth noting that in the medieval period, Bizen and Bitchū provinces were of considerable strategic and commercial importance due to iron ore resources and the consequent manufacture of swords,¹⁰ a major commodity in trade with Ming China. We can assume therefore that there was some honour, and perhaps even a financial benefit, attached to Shōtetsu's grandfather's appointment as *jitō* in Oda.

His grandfather's appointment by the shogun was no doubt due to a mutual association with the Iwashimizu Hachiman shrine. Hachiman was the tutelary god of the Ashikaga house and the Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine¹¹ was the place of their deepest veneration. Shōtetsu's paternal ancestors, of the Yamashiro-Ki clan, served as priests at this shrine and apparently gained the recognition and favour of the incumbent shogun for their services.¹²

The only other feature of note in Shōtetsu's geneology is a claimed connection with a previous emperor, either Emperor Kōgen (r. 214-158 B.C.) or Emperor Kōkō (r.884-887).¹³

Thus, socially, Shōtetsu started out in life as a commoner (*jige*) in the middle echelons of the provincial landed gentry, with a very remote imperial connection. It is remarkable to consider how by the end of his lifetime he had become lionised by some of the highest figures in the land including Hosokawa Katsumoto and Shogun Yoshimasa. Even as early as 1421, he was privileged to be received in audience by Shogun Yoshimochi.

As Inada comments, not only does this ascent reflect Shōtetsu's outstanding ability as a poet, but also the highly mobile nature of the times in which he lived.¹⁴ It must be agreed that Shōtetsu was indeed born at a fortuitous time, since in the Kitayama period, under the patronage of Yoshimitsu and Yoshimochi, and later in the Higashiyama period under Yoshimasa, one's birth and original station in life did not bar one from acceptability as an artist and aesthetic leader in the highest cultural circles. This indeed was a distinguishing and revolutionary feature of the era.

⁹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.22-3.

¹⁰ Satō, *Nihon no Bunka Chiri: Hyōgo, Okayama, Tottori*, p.134.

¹¹ In Yawata-chō, Tsuzuki-gun, Kyōto-fu.

¹² Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.22.

¹³ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp. 22-3.

¹⁴ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p. 73.

Shōtetsu's provincial start in life should not however infer that he came from an uncultured background. His father (or brother) Yasukiyo is said to have had an appreciation of poetry¹⁵ and probably first fostered this interest in Shōtetsu. Moreover, in his capacity as the local feudal lord, the *jitō* was expected to be the most civilised and accomplished figure in the district, the representative of the high culture of the capital, and to entertain and play host appropriately to high-ranking personages should they have business in the area. Some expertise in the arts of poetry, calligraphy, music and dance was a requirement of the office.¹⁶ It seems reasonable to assume that although Shōtetsu grew up in the provinces, his immediate environment was neither rustic nor boorish.

3. Shōtetsu's Youth

Shōtetsu's family's actual residency in the provinces was relatively short-term, for according to early sources¹⁷ at the age of about ten Shōtetsu accompanied his parents back to the capital. This re-location would appear to be part of the movement which saw provincial lords returning, under shogunal duress, to the capital and establishing their households there on a semi-permanent basis.¹⁸ Shōtetsu's family took up residence at one point in Sanjō-Higashi no Tōin, a major avenue running south to north through Kyoto, living opposite the great retired general and statesman Imagawa Ryōshun.¹⁹ This was at the time a fairly prestigious suburb, only about half a mile from the quarter between Ichijō Avenue and Sanjō Avenue in which were concentrated the residences of the military elite, the Hatakeyama, the Shiba, the Hosokawa, the Yamana and the Isshiki, not to mention the imperial palace and the Ashikaga headquarters.²⁰

It is probably from this time that Shōtetsu's first experience of poetry composition dates: in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* he recalls how he composed a poem and inscribed it on a leaf:

My first experience of writing poetry was as a child, when as an offering to the stars in the seventh month, I would compose a poem and tie it to the leaves of a tree. As time went by I

¹⁵ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.22.

¹⁶ Dr. Fumio Kakubayashi, Department of East Asian Studies, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. Discussion September 1996.

¹⁷ For example the Edo biography *Nihon Jinbutsushi* (c.1668).

¹⁸ Hall, 'Kyoto as Historical Background', in Hall and Mass, *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, p.27.

¹⁹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:104. This avenue is now called Higashi no Tōin-dōri.

²⁰ See Hall, 'Kyoto as Historical Background', in Hall and Mass, *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, Figures 1.2 and 1.7, pp. 11 and 29.

became aware of the benefits bestowed by the stars and until last autumn would compose seven poems and tie them to seven leaves and make an offering to the stars in this way.²¹

Shōtetsu is obviously recalling the Tanabata festival as observed in the capital, celebrated on the seventh day of the seventh month. Tying seven poems on seven leaves is highly appropriate to that date.

At the age of twelve, we learn from an entry in *Sōkonshū*, he saw a huge chrysanthemum at the palace of retired Emperor Fushimi and was so struck by its beauty that he was moved to plant an identical chrysanthemum in his own garden over forty years later. These experiences reveal an early interest in poetry and unusual responsiveness to beauty.²²

Two years later in 1394, aged about fourteen, Shōtetsu attended his first poetry monthly meeting, held by a group of Reizei school poets which according to Shōtetsu included Reizei Tamemasa, Tamemasa's father Tamekuni and Imagawa Ryōshun. This event also clearly left a deep impression upon him, for he recalls it vividly and nostalgically over fifty years later: in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, he singles out the occasion as his first meeting with Ryōshun, who soon became Shōtetsu's deeply respected teacher.

...in those days in the past when I was not used to composing poetry, I unashamedly appeared at public poetry gatherings and accustomed myself to composition. I was living at Sanjō-Higashi no Tōin. Monthly meetings were held at the residence of the official [Ryōshun] from the Ministry of Civil Administration which was situated opposite my dwelling. Many people attended, over thirty in all: Reizei Tamemasa, Reizei Tamekuni, the former commissioner, as well as their attendants. When a monk of the Ritsu sect from Ontoku - in temple offered to take me to Ryōshun's house opposite if I wanted to compose poetry, I felt embarrassed, since at that time my head was unshaven. Nonetheless, accompanied by the Ritsu monk I went to the official's house. The official at that time was over eighty and a very senior monk. White-haired, he emerged and came to meet me. 'At present, no novice whatsoever is involved in writing poetry. Now, when I, Zen'on,²³ was in my youth, I heard about that kind of thing. It is an easy thing to do. We have a meeting

²¹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:104.

²² Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.32-3.

²³ Assumed to be another name for Ryōshun. *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, p.197, n.15.

here every month on the twenty-fifth. Please feel free to attend. The topic for this month is such-and-such.’ With these words, the civil administrator wrote down the topic for me himself ... Well now, on the twenty-fifth, I duly attended the poetry meeting. At the front on one side were Reizei Tamemasa and Tamekuni, and on the other side the former commissioner, with their entourage behind them. Zen'on's circle numbered over thirty. They were all dressed in their best clothes, and sitting neatly in rows. Since I arrived late, I was invited to the front row, and although it was a little inconvenient for them, a seat was found for me in the reception room. The commissioner was a monk aged over eighty at the time, and was wearing a charcoal robe without formal skirt, tied with a waist sash with long tassels....At the time I was fourteen years old. ²⁴

It was probably in the same period that the seeds of Shōtetsu's famous cult of the poet Teika were sown. Teika and his father Shunzei were highly respected in Reizei circles²⁵ as much for their innovative and radical approach to poetry as for their poetry itself.

4. Shōtetsu's Temple Service in Nara.

No sooner had Shōtetsu began to frequent Reizei poetry circles, than he was sent off to become a temple server at an important temple in Nara (probably the Hossō sect headquarters, Kōfukuji).²⁶

In 1396 during this period of service, aged about sixteen, it is surmised Shōtetsu participated in a major service at Enryakuji, the powerful temple of the Tendai sect on Mt Hiei.²⁷ These years of his youth spent in cloisters probably paved the way for Shōtetsu's later interest in Zen.²⁸ Shōtetsu's close involvement with Kōfukuji also bears witness to the changing times: it shows the extent that

²⁴ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:104. There is some doubt over whether in fact Ryōshun was present at this gathering, as Ryōshun cannot have been eighty years old, and Shōtetsu fourteen as is claimed in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. Ryōshun was fifty-seven years older than Shōtetsu, which would mean that he must have been about seventy-one on this occasion, or else Shōtetsu about twenty-three. Also, Ryōshun may not have been back in Kyoto at this particular time. Shōtetsu may have confused two separate memories (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.34-5).

²⁵ Haga, 'The *Wabi* Aesthetic', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu*, p.205.

²⁶ The Hossō sect had entered Japan from China in 653. Its Buddhism was intellectual in focus, and popular among the highest elite, distinguishing them from the lower nobility who could not cope with its intellectualism (Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan*, p.417).

²⁷ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:104 refers to this service as taking place at Muroyama but Muro is possibly a copyist's error. *Yama* would refer to Mt. Hiei. A service at Enryakuji took place in 1396, the Sanmon Daikōdō Kuyō, and this event is also recorded in the records of Kōfukuji as if this temple participated in some significant way (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.36).

²⁸ *Waka Bungaku Daijiten*, p.511.

the old religious institutions, which had previously been aristocratic preserves, were falling under *bushi* influence²⁹ and how Shōtetsu as a young member of the warrior class was drawn into the vortex.

Inada Toshinori implies³⁰ that one reason Shōtetsu was sent off to Nara as a temple server may have been his father's opposition to his son's deepening interest in poetry. If so, his father's strategy, if strategy it was, was evidently successful for a time: Shōtetsu recalls how after becoming a temple server he had no time for poetry.³¹

Inada's theory of Shōtetsu's father's opposition to his interest in poetry is partly based upon the poem below in *Sōkonshū*, which according to Inada's interpretation suggests his father admonished him against becoming 'addicted to the Way of poetry':³²

On the topic 'Reminiscences':

Ika bakari

Ko araba ware ni

Somukamashi

Oya no isameshi

*Michi naranu michi*³³

If I had children

How much would they have rebelled against me?

²⁹ By the time Shōtetsu entered Kōfukuji, both Kōfukuji and its tutelary shrine, the Kasuga Shrine, were subject to close shogunal control: after the Kōfukuji and Kasuga complex were largely destroyed by fire in 1381, Yoshimitsu oversaw and financed the reconstruction of the Kasuga complex. In effect, he took over a role which had previously been held by the Fujiwara, who regarded both Kofukuji and Kasuga as their clan temple and shrine. Later, after 1396, he 'became increasingly involved in monk appointments within the Hossō center [Kōfukiji]... even minor offices such as overseers of maintenance, recording officers, and scribes were appointed based on the specific advice of Yoshimitsu' (Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan*, p. 338-9). He visited Kasuga in 1385, 1391, 1394, 1397 and 1399, when he celebrated the reconstruction of Kōfukuji with auspicious ceremonies (Adolphson, p.340.) At this same time, Yoshimitsu had also established a close relationship with Enryakuji : the very year after he had taken Zen vows, he was initiated into the Tendai teachings at Enryakuji. and funded many reconstructions of destroyed buldings there (Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan*, p. 340-1). The service that brought Shōtetsu to Enrakyuji in 1396 was probably celebrating the reconstruction of one of these buildings.

³⁰ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.31.

³¹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:104.

³² Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.31.

³³ *Sōkonshū*, Poem 11,196.

This Way which is not the Way

Forbidden

*By my father*³⁴

From another angle, the fact that Shōtetsu was sent to Kōfukuji is also indicative of a certain sense of prestige and upper-class self-awareness which existed in his family. For it was the practice of the 'ranking families' of the capital to send their 'surplus sons and daughters'³⁵ to the great temples. Shōtetsu's despatch there thus indicates that his parents considered themselves part of the class in which this custom prevailed. Also, sending a son to the cloisters was a common strategy for those of some rank who wished to give their child a basic education. Or perhaps his parents simply intended him to follow a career in holy orders, as a younger son. As intellectual historian Ōsumi Kazuo points out, 'those who would enter formally into the priesthood during the Heian and Kamakura periods typically lived in a temple from childhood ...and took the tonsure on reaching adulthood.'³⁶ This would still be the case in Shōtetsu's day.

After his father died in 1400,³⁷ Shōtetsu, aged twenty, clearly felt free to resume his interest in poetry: he left the temple in Nara at the first opportunity, returned to Kyoto and started composing again.³⁸ Ten or so years were to pass before he once again considered committing himself to a religious life.

5. Consolidation of his Poetic Position

³⁴ The meaning of the paradoxical last two lines of the original *Oya no isameshi / Michi naranu michi* is highly ambiguous. They can mean either that Shōtetsu, obediently, has followed the Way which is not the one his father forbade him to follow, the Way of poetry. In other words, he has become a Buddhist priest. Or these lines can mean the opposite, that he has defied his father and followed 'the Way/Forbidden/By my father', which was the Way of poetry, but not the [True] Way. To understand this interpretation, it is necessary to appreciate the debate that had been going on since earlier medieval times over the relationship between the Way of poetry (and other secular artistic vocations) and the Way of the Buddha. However, when the great poet Shunzei received a divine message that 'the Way of poetry and the Way of the Buddha were not two Ways' (an incident described in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:58), poets were able to breathe a collective sigh of relief and devote themselves to poetry without consigning themselves to eternal damnation. Shōtetsu in any case hedged his risks by pursuing both careers simultaneously, like many other medieval poets.

³⁵ Hall, 'Kyoto as Historical Background', in Hall and Mass, *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, p. 28. From the late Heian period, Kōfukuji had enjoyed a close relationship in particular with court families (Hall, 'Kyoto as Historical Background', p.22). In Muromachi times it was more the practice for the ruling elite to send children to the great Zen temples. For example, Yoshimitsu sent his sons to Daikakuji and his daughters to Ninnaji (Hall, 'Kyoto as Historical Background', pp.28-30).

³⁶ Quoted in Mezaki Tokue, 'Aesthete-Recluses during the Transition from Ancient to Medieval Japan', in Miner, *Principles of Classical Japanese Literature*, p.152.

³⁷ Some sources state 1403.

³⁸ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.38.

In the years after his father's death, Shōtetsu poured his whole energy into polishing his poetic art: this period can be seen as his novitiate in poetry when he associated closely with Ryōshun and Tamemasa. Many of the anecdotes described in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* and *Sōkonshū* about poetic advice he received from Ryōshun and excursions with Ryōshun and other prominent Reizei poets also can be traced to this period.³⁹

Shōtetsu's profound respect for Ryōshun is indisputable, but it is difficult to ascertain how Ryōshun felt about Shōtetsu. The fact that Shōtetsu does not specifically figure at all in Ryōshun's numerous writings⁴⁰ perhaps indicates that to Ryōshun, Shōtetsu was just another pupil. The anecdotes in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* which portray Ryōshun as being deeply moved by Shōtetsu's poetic acuity⁴¹ and appreciative of Shōtetsu's precocious interest in poetry⁴² may be coloured by Shōtetsu's wishful thinking or desire to impress his audience and are not therefore especially reliable.⁴³

By the same token, it is also difficult to gauge the extent to which Ryōshun's own poetic style influenced Shōtetsu. Ryōshun's extant poems are surprisingly few, with his complete collection numbering only 112 poems,⁴⁴ insufficient to make a valid comparison.⁴⁵

Perhaps Ryōshun's interest in Shōtetsu was more lukewarm than we are led to believe. Still, there can be little doubt that Ryōshun recognised sufficient poetic talent in Shōtetsu to wish to accord him special favours, including special instruction in *Genji Monogatari*, and gifts of valuable manuscripts, including his own poetic treatise *Gonjinshū* in 1406.

The precise sequence of events over the next decade, when Shōtetsu was in his thirties, is unclear, but it was during this period that the deaths of both Ryōshun and Tamemasa occurred and Shōtetsu took Buddhist orders. Ryōshun's death probably occurred no earlier than 1414 and no later than

³⁹ For example, a flower-viewing trip to Higashiyama in 1402 with Ryōshun, Tamemasa and Tamekuni and a trip with Ryōshun to Ishiyama Temple in 1403. See Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.179-80 for a detailed chart depicting further documented contact between Shōtetsu and Ryōshun.

⁴⁰ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.161.

⁴¹ For example, 1:18.

⁴² For example, 1:104.

⁴³ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.161.

⁴⁴ See *Imagawa Ryōshun Zenkashū*, an appendix to Kawazoe Shōji's 'Kyūshū Tandai Imagawa Ryōshun no Bungaku Katsudō', in *Kyūshū Bunkashi Kenkyūjo Kiyō* No. 10.

⁴⁵ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.178.

1418,⁴⁶ while Tamemasa died in 1417. The year in which Shōtetsu took the tonsure cannot be precisely established, but evidence suggests that he took his vows as early as 1414. A poem written on *kaishi* (loose leaves of paper) which refers to his 'charcoal monk's robes' (*sumi no koromo*) is dated 1414: from this we can adduce that he had already taken the tonsure by this time.⁴⁷

Soon after taking his vows, Shōtetsu entered the great Rinzai Zen temple Tōfukuji⁴⁸ on the southeastern outskirts of the capital. Upon entering Tōfukuji, he assumed the name Shōtetsu and served as scribe (*shoki*). Shōtetsu owes his nickname Teshhoki, or 'Tetsu the Scribe' to this period in his life. His quarters at Tōfukuji comprised one room of the Rikkyoku-an hermitage which he named Shōgetsu-an ('moon in the pinetrees hermitage', or 'inviting the moon hermitage'), depending on the characters used to write the first syllable.⁴⁹ Shōtetsu's artistic name, Shōgetsu-an, derives from this abode.

Tōfukuji's atmosphere is said to have been particularly conducive to artistic pursuits: 'the temple complex of Tōfukuji, one of the earliest sites of genuine Zen practices in Japan, fostered cultural activities together with an ardent religious training.'⁵⁰ This temple also had a deep connection with Imagawa Ryōshun.⁵¹ Entering a monastery also freed Shōtetsu from mundane problems of income and enabled him to concentrate single-mindedly on his art.⁵² For this reason it is probably accurate to term Shōtetsu as a *suki no tonseisha*, a term used by Mezaki Tokue⁵³ to describe the type of

⁴⁶ The date of Ryōshun's death has yet to be firmly established. Comments made in Shōtetsu's travelogue *Nagusamegusa* (1418) indicate that it occurred no later than 1418, while an epilogue in Ryōshun's own *Gonjinshū* confirms he was still alive in 1414. Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.46.

⁴⁷ Tanaka Shin'ichi, 'Shōtetsu no Shukke Nenji', *Kokugo to Kokubungaku*, March 1977, p.19.

⁴⁸ Tōfukuji's population was probably around 2,000 in Shōtetsu's era, and indeed throughout the medieval period (Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p. 223-4).

⁴⁹ See p.27.

⁵⁰ *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, v.5, p.374.

⁵¹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.45.

⁵² As a monk he was well provided for (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.84).

⁵³ 'Aesthete-Recluses during the Transition from Ancient to Medieval Japan', in Miner, *Principles of Classical Japanese Literature*, p.153. Although Shōtetsu is often classified as an aesthete-recluse, along with such figures as Saigyō (1118-1190), Jakunen (tonsured 1155), Chōmei (1155-1216), Kenkō (1283-1350) and his own pupil Shinkei, his lifestyle was somewhat atypical. He certainly was never a wanderer like Saigyō, despite the travels of his youth to Mino and Owari. His life-style was distinctly urban-based: for most of his later life he lived in and around Kyoto, though he moved house numerous times (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p. 77). In fact, after leaving Tōfukuji he apparently moved house no less than seventeen times and sometimes twice a year. (Details of these moves may be found in Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.81-2.) But it is pertinent to note that the moves were caused by external reasons such as fire rather than any innate restlessness of spirit or desire to resist too great an attachment to any one location or abode. His favourite location appears to have been Kasuga-Nishi no Tōin, running from north to south in the western part of Kyoto, where he lived on several occasions. This was no mean hut, featuring a guest annex and a garden, and here Shōtetsu was able to hold monthly poetry parties for over ten guests (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.83), a concrete indication of Shōtetsu's prosperity and his enjoyment of social occasions. This propensity for partying further distinguishes him from the stereotypical aesthete-recluse living in solitary and impoverished seclusion.

aesthete-recluse who like Shōtetsu employed his freedom to distance himself from the obligations of secular society and give free rein to his artistic sensibility, in Shōtetsu's case, his passion for poetry.

Another advantage of monastic status was that it rendered Shōtetsu classless. It enhanced his social mobility to the extent that he was able to blend into whatever social milieu he found himself.

Shōtetsu thereby shed his class by entering Tōfukuji, but we can assume that many of the monks at Tōfukuji had similar class origins to Shōtetsu: in medieval times probably the majority of Zen monks were the younger sons of *bushi*⁵⁴ as was Shōtetsu in all likelihood. Zen monasteries formed a sort of 'career alternative'⁵⁵ for younger sons of warriors at the lower levels of warrior society who were being increasingly affected by the practice of unigeniture. Moreover, 'young samurai found in the Zen monastery rigid discipline, a high level of education and culture, the possibility of the eventual exercise of real authority, and the attainment of social prestige as well as, perhaps, spiritual enlightenment.'⁵⁶

There were also a notable number of monks with aristocratic or even imperial roots: children of lower-ranking consorts were sometimes placed in Zen monasteries as novices.⁵⁷ 'This infusion of imperial blood naturally affected the character of medieval Japanese metropolitan monasteries...accentuating their aristocratic tone and also the stress on literary and artistic pursuits.'⁵⁸

It is not clear how quickly Shōtetsu rose to the rank of *shoki* (secretary) in Tōfukuji. However it is accepted that one's family status and social connections had some relationship with a monk's rise in the hierarchy, and that appointment to any office in *gozan* monasteries required a fee. Shōtetsu's family, or some patron of means, may well have bought him his rank. Nonetheless, Shōtetsu had appropriate credentials to serve as *shoki* whose job description included responsibility for 'production of all official monastery documents, including the announcements of monastic functions,

⁵⁴Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.226.

⁵⁵Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.19

⁵⁶Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.226.

⁵⁷Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.18. Children of higher ranking consorts tended to be placed in the temples of the older Buddhist schools (Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.18).

⁵⁸Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.86.

reports to the abbot, letters, and official communications sent to patrons, government offices, and other monasteries.⁵⁹ The *shoki* also be familiar with various documentary styles and have ‘decent calligraphy’.⁶⁰

Shoki was an important rank in the temple hierarchy, as the second officer in the western rank of officers⁶¹ and eligible in due course for appointment as abbot.⁶² Whether Shōtetsu served as the only *shoki*, or whether the office was split among several monks, as was often the case in larger monasteries,⁶³ is not known. But the fact that he was nicknamed Tesshoki (‘Tetsu’ the secretary) suggests this role became an integral part of his public identity - even though his actual career at Tōfukiji appears to have been shortlived.

We should also note that ‘religious, intellectual, and cultural activities were the exclusive preserve of the western rank of prefects. They provided the supply of abbots, and their monks formed the coteries of poets and painters who contributed to the output of *gozan* literature and ink painting.’⁶⁴

All in all, from the point of view of Shōtetsu’s literary career, taking the tonsure was a highly successful ‘lifestyle choice’. From this period on, Shōtetsu’s involvement in poetry circles intensified. It cannot be fortuitous that his increased activity in poetic circles coincided remarkably with his entry into monastic life. By 1414, he had already acquired a considerable poetic reputation: for example, in the fourth month of 1414 he contributed sixty poems to a sequence of one thousand votive poems for Donshōji Temple (*Donshōji Ichinichi Senshu Waka*), composed at Hosokawa Mitsumoto’s (1378-1426) residence.⁶⁵ His involvement in this composition is regarded by scholars as the start of his professional career. The proportion of poems he contributed reflected the status he had already earned as a respected poet and the high position he had secured in poetic circles: in such sequences of prescribed length the quantity of poems per poet was determined by each poet’s relative standing, and there were apparently over twenty-seven other poets participating. This was a

⁵⁹ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.238.

⁶⁰ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.238.

⁶¹ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.238. The eastern rank of prefects were responsible for more practical aspects of monastic life.

⁶² Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.229.

⁶³ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.237.

⁶⁴ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.242.

⁶⁵ Like Shōtetsu, Mitsumoto, also known as Dōkan, had also taken Buddhist orders after retiring from the powerful office of *kanrei* (shogunal deputy) which he filled 1412-21.

great honour for Shōtetsu who was only thirty-four at the time.

Shōtetsu's peregrinations to Mino and Owari, documented in his travelogue *Nagusamegusa* (Grasses of Consolation, 1418) also took place in this period of professional consolidation, in 1418.⁶⁶ It is accepted among scholars that the motivation behind his journey was to alleviate the loneliness he felt at the deaths of Ryōshun and Tamemasa, but the travels are equally consistent with his training as a Zen priest in which monastic retreat was typically interspersed with periods of itineration. *Nagusamegusa* provides a very candid record of these travels, clearly not intended for the stern eyes of the senior clerics of Tōfukuji. It reveals Shōtetsu's serious shortfalls in piety and his preference for indulging in literary pursuits even to the detriment of his religious duties. *Nagusamegusa* also provides a poignant account of Shōtetsu's first documented romance: Shōtetsu, as far as we can tell, appears to have spent most of his life celibate, with two or possibly three exceptions. However, in 1418, during his trip to Mino and Owari occurred the first of these relationships when he became deeply involved with a boy in a fleeting homosexual liaison.

Shōtetsu probably travelled for about three months, and in late 1419 we have records of his renewed participation in poetic activities in the capital.⁶⁷ After his return to Kyoto, Shōtetsu exerted a huge influence in the poetic milieu, actively involving himself in poetry circles, holding his own monthly poetry meetings, taking on his own pupils whom he trained from boyhood (Shōkō became his pupil in 1424) and becoming very popular with poets from the warrior aristocracy,⁶⁸ a popularity which also ensured his financial security for the time being. He associated particularly closely with the Hosokawa house.⁶⁹ In about 1421 he was granted an audience with shogun Yoshimochi, while in 1429 he presented six poems to the retired emperor Go-Komatsu (1377-1433) who according to Shōtetsu was greatly impressed.⁷⁰

Shōtetsu's dynamism and confidence at this time suggests that he clearly perceived himself as the heir to the late Ryōshun and incumbent of the Reizei tradition. Predictably, and attesting to his role as the de facto Reizei heir, he managed to embroil himself in poetic disputes with the Nijō faction,

⁶⁶ Shōtetsu may have made a similar trip to the eastern provinces considerably earlier, in 1406 (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.40).

⁶⁷ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.48.

⁶⁸ Ichiko, *Nihon Bungaku Zenshi v.3: Chūsei*, p.339.

⁶⁹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.46-7.

⁷⁰ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 27.

in particular his rival Kōun (d.1429).⁷¹

By this time in Shōtetsu's life, his active connection with Tōfukuji appears to be over. Factual evidence is lacking, but it can be assumed that after completing his term of office as *shoki*, like many other former officers he moved into a private sub-temple.⁷² Possibly it was at this point that he took up residence in the Rikkyoku-an hermitage at Tōfuku-ji.

6. Shōtetsu's Official Disgrace

As long as Yoshimochi was shogun and hegemon,⁷³ Shōtetsu occupied a privileged and respected position in poetry and elite circles. However when the shogunate passed into despotic Yoshinori's hands in 1429, Shōtetsu's fortunes took a sharp downward turn. The following decade proved to be the bleakest in his entire life. He suffered severe blows to his social status, financial position, poetic reputation, heartbreak, bereavement and the loss of his own home and contents including poetic manuscripts to fire.

Yoshinori was the agent behind three of the misfortunes which assailed Shōtetsu. Firstly, from notes written by his pupil Shōkō after Shōtetsu's death⁷⁴ we learn that Shōtetsu at some point was legally challenged by Yoshinori and had his hereditary lands in Oda confiscated. The precise date has yet to be established, but it was probably either 1429, or some time after 1435. The lands were eventually returned to Shōtetsu in 1456.⁷⁵

Secondly, at about the same time, Shōtetsu is said to have been sent into exile by Yoshinori, although some scholars dispute the authenticity of this event.⁷⁶ Various alternative locales have been proposed as the place of his exile: Mt Kōya, Yamashina, Mino.

The suffering Shōtetsu endured at this time is vented in a headnote to a composition of 1437 in the

⁷¹ An acrimonious exchange with Kōun took place in about 1425. Shōtetsu had travelled on a retreat to Hasedera that year. Upon his return to the capital, shogun Yoshimochi had requested a copy of the poems Shōtetsu had composed during the retreat. Kōun criticised these poems but Shōtetsu promptly rebutted Kōun's comments (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.49-50).

⁷² Former officers were in fact expected to return to the monk's hall after completing their term of service (Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.169).

⁷³ Yoshimochi became shogun in 1394 and died in 1428.

⁷⁴ The event is referred to in notes following a poem by Shōkō written soon after the forty-ninth day memorial service for Shōtetsu, at a poetry gathering held at the residence of Hosokawa Katsumoto recorded in Shōkō's anthology *Shōkashū* (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.56).

⁷⁵ It is pertinent to note in this context that in 1436, Reizei Tameyuki likewise had his manor at Ono confiscated, a punitive act paralleling the confiscation of Shōtetsu's estate (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.62).

⁷⁶ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.51.

Eikyō Kyūnen Eisō (A Draft Poetical Composition of *Eikyō* 9 [1437]). He describes how 'rather than the years of my fast-approaching old age [fifty-six], it is the wretchedness of life which overflows in me'.⁷⁷

The third misfortune to which Yoshinori contributed related to the compilation in 1438 of the imperial anthology *Shinzokukokinshū*, a project engineered by Yoshinori and commenced in 1433. This was a major and felicitous event, many years having elapsed since the completion of the previous anthology the *Shingoshūishū* in 1383. Shōtetsu's expectations had been high.

However, when the anthology was finally completed under an editorial team headed by Nijō-aligned Asukai Masayo (1390-1452),⁷⁸ not a single work by Shōtetsu was included. Given Shōtetsu's poetic reputation his omission was grave and extraordinary: the prominent Nijō poet Gyōkō (1391-1455) was represented by seven poems, Masayo ensured that eighteen of his own poems were included, and Shōtetsu should have been represented by at least four or five.⁷⁹ If his personal liberty and financial security had been infringed by land confiscation and exile, exclusion from the anthology was the ultimate affront. Shōtetsu's reputation and honour as a poet were publicly and deliberately sabotaged. It was also presumably a severe financial blow with professional and practical implications: exclusion from *Shinzokukokinshū* (inclusion in which would have been the contemporary equivalent of a Booker or Pulitzer prize) would have lost him many pupils and commissions as the success of one's art was much more than a matter of personal satisfaction and aesthetic victory: it reflected directly on how much work and how many pupils one was likely to receive and having enough to eat and a roof over one's head each night.

With this in mind it is scarcely surprising that Shōtetsu lived in one of his most humble abodes, at Kuritsu-Nishigasaki⁸⁰ during this period of privation. He lived here from 1437 possibly for about three years. At this time Shōtetsu experienced first hand, though not by choice, the archetypal hermit's life of solitary wretchedness.⁸¹

Two months after the devastating presentation of the anthology, Shōtetsu and other poetic friends

⁷⁷ *Semikitsuru oi no kazu yori mo, yo no ukisa ga zo mi ni amarinuru*. Headnote to Poem 94, *Eikyō Kyūnen Eisō* (quoted Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p. 61).

⁷⁸ Son of Asukai Masayori (1358-1428), who had been one of Shōtetsu's rivals in the days of Yoshimitsu (Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.122, n.348).

⁷⁹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.70.

⁸⁰ Location unknown.

⁸¹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.81.

made a pilgrimage to the Tamatsushima Shrine in Wakanoura Bay, Wakayama, which enshrined a deity of *waka* poetry. Here Shōtetsu composed a series of ten votive poems and prayed for the support of the deity at this difficult time. The poems composed on this occasion poignantly express Shōtetsu's vexation and bitter disappointment. For example,

Koto no ha o
Erabu kazu ni wa
Irazu to mo
Tada ka bakari o
*Aware to mo miyo*⁸²

Although I do not
Number among those
Whose leaf-words were chosen,
O God
Feel moved by my plight!

Thus Shōtetsu was forever denied the eternal glory of becoming a poet of the imperial anthologies, as the *Shinzokukokinshū* was the last imperial anthology ever to be compiled.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason for Yoshinori's vicious and concentrated attacks on Shōtetsu, but there appear to have been two main factors. One was Yoshinori's overt patronage of the Asukai house, who composed in the conservative Nijō tradition and were traditionally antagonistic toward the Reizei school with which Shōtetsu was so closely associated.

Contemporary accounts reveal that Yoshinori particularly enjoyed the company of Asukai Masayo, the eventual selector of the *Shinzokukokinshū*, taking Masayo as a companion to a pilgrimage to Ise in 1432, and another trip to the eastern provinces later the same year. As a sign of his special favour, Yoshinori appointed Masayo in 1433 as the selector for the forthcoming imperial anthology, assisted by Gyōkō. Both Masayo and Gyōkō are said to have hated and envied Shōtetsu⁸³ and probably prejudiced Yoshinori against him, to the point of engineering his land confiscation and

⁸² *Sōkonshū*, Poem 2298.

⁸³ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.55.

exile, and ensuring his exclusion from the prestigious imperial anthology.⁸⁴

The other factor is deemed to be a handful of poems by Shōtetsu which can be interpreted as wickedly satirical. For example,

Dare mo miyo

Yagate miteru o

Kaku tsuki no

Izayoi no sora zo

*Hito no yo no naka*⁸⁵

O see everyone

How soon the moon waxes

Then wanes !

Just like the skies of the sixteenth night

Are these times we live in

It is not difficult to detect in this poem's imagery of the 'waxing' and the 'waning' moon a possible allusion to Yoshinori and a veiled prophesy of his fall. Perhaps as a consequence of his awareness of such satirical writings as the Nijō-kawara lampoons earlier in the fourteenth century (1334), it may have occurred to Shōtetsu that some political element of satirical criticism could be attempted in poetry. On the other hand, this may not have been Shōtetsu's intention at all: the 'skies of the sixteenth night' may be a more general metaphor for the self-extinguishing tendency which Shōtetsu perceived in the world around him at that time. In other words, the poem's comment may have been social rather than political, general rather than specific, and Yoshinori's hypersensitivity to possible treachery caused him to interpret it otherwise.

But given a negatively-prejudiced interpretation of these poems, it is not surprising that Yoshinori was ill-disposed towards Shōtetsu: Masayo was possibly deferring to the shogun's antipathy to

⁸⁴Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p. 62.

⁸⁵*Sōkonshū* 3630. Unfortunately this poem is from Volume Five, which contains no chronological or biographical information. This poem, with slight variations, is also quoted in the sixteenth century work *Tamon'in Nikki* (1534) as the reason for Shōtetsu's exile to Mt Kōya at Yoshinori's command (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.54).

Shōtetsu⁸⁶ in excluding him from the anthology as much as demonstrating his own and Gyōkō's professional jealousy. In all probability, the editors found it impossible to include Shōtetsu's poetry, however excellent they may personally have considered it, given the gravity of Shōtetsu's alleged affront to the shogun.

7. The Imakumano Fire

Of the succession of disasters which struck in the same period, one catastrophe is not normally linked to Yoshinori and his proteges' animosity. This was the destruction by fire of Shōtetsu's hermitage at Imakumano in the fourth month of 1432.

This was the first and worst of three fires Shōtetsu experienced at his various hermitages over a twenty-five year period. (The others were in 1448, to a hermitage which had only just been completed, and then in 1457 when his temporary hermitage was destroyed by fire.)

The most catastrophic aspect of the Imakumano fire was the loss of almost all of Shōtetsu's poetry to date. From *Sōkonshū*⁸⁷ and *Shōtetsu Monogatari* we learn that over thirty notebooks of poetry and 26,000 or 27,000 poems were lost, as well as his own copies of poetic works by other great poets and secret literary traditions which he had committed to writing.

Shōtetsu himself was unscathed by the fire, by chance having spent the night at the residence of a member of the Yamana clan.

Few events must have impressed on Shōtetsu more personally than this the bitter workings of the principle of *mujo*, the transitoriness, impermanence and inherent instability underlying all existence. As he himself lamented in *Sōkonshū*, his work of a lifetime had 'disappeared into the emptiness of smoke'.⁸⁸

Shōtetsu's initial reaction to the tragedy was to vow never to write poetry again, but his poetic impulse proved to be irrepressible: soon he was making appearances once more at poetry gatherings and composing anew. He perceived that poetry was 'the one consolation as long as I live'

⁸⁶ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.70.

⁸⁷ Preface to Poem 1734.

⁸⁸ *Sōkonshū*, headnote to Poem 1734.

(*ikeru kagiri no nagusame*⁸⁹) and that he could not exist in any tolerable state if he deprived himself of poetic activity.

8. The Kitano Lady and the Youth Kōbai

The timing of the conflagration at Imakumano was especially unfortunate in that it followed swiftly after another tragic loss in Shōtetsu's private life, the death of a personage known only as the Lady of Kitano Shōbai-in,⁹⁰ a nun. She first attracts our attention as a potential female romantic interest for Shōtetsu in *Sōkonshū* Volume Two although Inada questions, in rather killjoy fashion, whether this was in fact ever more than a platonic relationship of mutual respect and admiration.⁹¹

Whatever the true situation, the Lady is of considerable significance at least due to her status as the sole woman Shōtetsu refers to throughout the *Sōkonshū*.

Our first intimation of their relationship comes in 1429, when Shōtetsu was aged 49, in an entry in *Sōkonshū*:

At about that time [toward the end of the first month 1429], I received this poem from the Lady of the Kitano Shōbai-in accompanying a votive- bag to which a sprig of plum blossom

Saku ume no

Haru no tamuke no

Nusabukuro

Ge ni tagui naki

*Iro zo komoreru*⁹²

For you a votive bag

Adorned with spring's offering

A spray of plum blossom:

⁸⁹ *Sōkonshū*, Preface to Poem 1734.

⁹⁰ The Shōbai-in was the name of one of three residences belonging to the chief priest of the Kitano Shrine (now known as Kitano Tenmangū) and situated in the north-western part of Kyoto. No information exists to shed light on why the Lady dwelled there or the nature of her association with the place. The Kitano Shrine was a branch temple of Enryakuji.

⁹¹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.67. The following account of Shōtetsu and the Lady's relationship is based upon Shirai, *Kajin Shōtetsu Kenkyū Josetsu*, pp.263-82.

⁹² *Sōkonshū* 1173.

*You will find hiding within
Glorious hues quite beyond compare !*

This poem does seem to provide evidence that there was a physical aspect to their relationship, through its use of the word *iro* which in the above context means simultaneously 'passion; erotic love', and the 'glorious hues' of the plum blossom.

The intimacy between Shōtetsu and the Lady had originally blossomed from a teacher-pupil relationship. In the fourth month of 1429 diary entries from the *Sōkonshū* reveal that Shōtetsu had been initiating the Lady in the mysteries of *The Tale of Genji*. The overtones of the poetry Shōtetsu composed to the Lady at the time again suggest a relationship which went beyond pedagogic and professional boundaries. The following poem was composed in the fourth month of 1429 to accompany a postscript of Shōtetsu's secret teachings on *Genji* which the Lady had requested Shōtetsu to write :

*Tsutaeoku
Wakamurasaki no
Kumo no ue ni
Satori harukeki
Chigiri tagau na⁹³*

*Like the young lady Murasaki
Whose lore I have passed on to you
May you be true
To your vows of deep
Enduring understanding*

Here Shōtetsu is romantically addressing the Lady as his own Lady Murasaki, the epitome of feminine perfection and fidelity in *The Tale of Genji*.

In the seventh month of 1429 a lengthy exchange of fourteen poems⁹⁴ provides further evidence of a

⁹³ *Sōkonshū* 1228.

⁹⁴ Seven poems by Shōtetsu and seven poems in reply from the Lady (*Sōkonshū* 1254-60).

thriving relationship. This time the exchange evokes the 'star-crossed' lovers of the Tanabata legend, the Weaver Maiden and the Herdsman who, even more so than Lady Murasaki, stand as powerful archetypes of fidelity and unflagging love.

The regular affectionate contact between the two continued until early 1432, with visits, gifts, letters and literary exchanges. Then in a shock entry in *Sōkonshū*⁹⁵ dated the eighth day of the second month, Shōtetsu relates a visit to the Lady, and how he found her desperately ill and close to death. But after this episode her name disappears from all further mention. We can only conclude that she did not survive her illness. The fact that she is never overtly mentioned again in Shōtetsu's writing is perhaps the most eloquent sign of the deep grief Shōtetsu felt at losing such a kindred spirit. Like the other misfortunes which assailed Shōtetsu, he seems to have buried the loss deep within himself and sublimated his suffering in an ever keener pursuit of beauty through poetry.

Cruelly, it was just two months later, in the fourth month of 1432, that the conflagration of his Imakumano hermitage occurred and Shōtetsu suffered his second great loss in the space of two months.

In 1434, two years after Shōtetsu's involvement with the Kitano Lady, Shōtetsu's passion was kindled anew by a youth named Kōbai (Pink Plum Blossom), thus named for the branch of pink plum blossom he brought to Shōtetsu's hermitage in the second month of that year. Shōtetsu would have been aged about 54. Kōbai is referred to about sixteen times in Shōtetsu's *Eikyō Rokunen Eisō* (1434). To outward appearances Kōbai was visiting Shōtetsu in the capacity of a pupil, but his poetic interest is suspect as no trace remains of his poetry or poetic exchanges with Shōtetsu.⁹⁶ But this relationship was also short-lived: the youth travelled away later in the year. Shōtetsu's grief and sense of unreality about the parting is touchingly expressed in the following poem:

One rainy night, spent in wakefulness or sleeping fitfully, on the topic of first love:

Mi ni sou o

Omokage to dani

Mada shirade

Toeba kotaenu

⁹⁵ Headnote to Poem 1699.

⁹⁶ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.67.

The way you nestle close to me

So real and recent

I still do not realize it is just a memory ;

When I call to you there is no reply

Sleeping fitfully through the night

Parenthetically, it is from this same period that evidence surfaces revealing that Shōtetsu suffered considerable chronic health problems. He describes what is clearly a migraine-type headache in an entry of the third month, 1430, as 'the headache I always suffer from', so bad that he was forced to take to his bed. Shōtetsu's susceptibility to this type of severe headache is said to be a further indication of his delicate nervous disposition.⁹⁸ Shōtetsu also suffered from asthma which became particularly acute in his later years.

9. Shōtetsu's Return to Public Life : His Final Years

After the assassination of Yoshinori in 1441, Shōtetsu was able to become openly active once more in poetry circles, appearing at poetry competitions and enjoying the status of respected elder in poetry matters. These were the years of his greatest fame as a poet,⁹⁹ enabling him to put behind himself his years of shame and humiliation. Ample evidence exists both in *Sōkonshū* and other works by Shōtetsu's contemporaries that 'Shōtetsu attended all the important gatherings in Kyoto at the time ... a measure of both his fame and his activity'.¹⁰⁰ Included among his students were not only the rising *renga* poets Shinkei, Sōzei (d.1455),¹⁰¹ Chiun and Ninzei (fl.1429-1455) who were destined to great fame, but also the powerful general and shogunal deputy (*kanrei*) Hosokawa Katsumoto.¹⁰² Hosokawa Katsumoto became Shōtetsu's official pupil in 1450, having submitted a

⁹⁷ *Eikyō Rokunen Shōtetsu Eisō*, Poem 354.

⁹⁸ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.87.

⁹⁹ Kubota and Kitagawa, *Nihon Bungakushi v.3: Chūsei no Bungaku*, p.252.

¹⁰⁰ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.122.

¹⁰¹ Takayama Sōzei. He achieved a reputation as a fine *renga* poet, becoming one of Shinkei and Sōgi's (1421-1502) teachers. Sōzei was originally from warrior stock in the service of the Yamana house. He learnt *waka* from Shōtetsu and *renga* from Asayama Bontō. He had the temerity to suggest to Shōtetsu a way to improve upon one of his own compositions (*Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:36).

¹⁰² Ichiko, *Nihon Bungaku Zenshi v.3: Chūsei*, p.339.

written contract establishing their relationship.¹⁰³ Shōtetsu and his pupils, known collectively as the Shōgetsu-an School exerted a great deal of power and influence in poetry circles in the 1440s and 1450s.¹⁰⁴

Shōtetsu also mixed socially with high-ranking members of the other great *daimyō* families, the Hatakeyama¹⁰⁵, the Yamana including Katsumoto's future arch-enemy Sōzen (or Mochitoyo, 1404-1473), the Isshiki, Takeda, Ise, Akamatsu and Shiba clans.¹⁰⁶ However his oldest and closest association was with the Hosokawa house.¹⁰⁷

Interestingly, Shōtetsu's relationships with the court and the aristocracy were less conspicuous. The fact that he received the patronage and praise of ex-Emperor Go-Komatsu is recalled in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* although they possibly never met.¹⁰⁸ The main aristocratic family with whom he consorted was, not surprisingly, the Reizei house.¹⁰⁹ Shōtetsu in his younger days had deeply respected Reizei Tamemasa, regarding him as his teacher and mentor.¹¹⁰ It is significant to observe that contact with Reizei Mochikazu (1401-1454), Reizei Mochitame(?) and Reizei Tameyuki (?-1439) is recorded in about 1429, at the time when Shōtetsu was experiencing the disfavour of the shogun.

There is predictably no indication of friendship with the Nijō house, although he had some infrequent association with members of the Nijō-aligned Asukai family, Masayori (1358-1428), Masayo (1390-1452) and Masachika (1416-1490).

Shōtetsu also had great esteem for Ichijō Kanera, sending submissions of his own poetry to Ichijō Kanera's monthly poetry gatherings.

¹⁰³ Shōtetsu, for reasons unknown, was apparently quite reluctant to take in Katsumoto as his pupil, but Katsumoto was adamant, citing the fact that Shōtetsu had taught his forbear Mitsumoto as his grounds for being accepted. Fifty meetings are recorded between Katsumoto and Shōtetsu in *Sōkonshū* and other contemporary sources (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.116).

¹⁰⁴ Ichiko, *Nihon Bungaku Zenshi v.3: Chūsei*, p.339.

¹⁰⁵ Shōtetsu was particularly close to Hatakeyama Yoshitada, also known as Kenryō, with one hundred and seventy or more references to their meetings in *Sōkonshū* and other contemporary sources (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.116).

¹⁰⁶ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.115-17.

¹⁰⁷ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.46-7 and 116.

¹⁰⁸ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.118.

¹⁰⁹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.119.

¹¹⁰ Evident in his defence of Tamemasa's controversial poetry in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:18: *Kakete uki/Isomatsu ga ne no/Adanami wa/Wagami ni kaeru/Sode no urakaze*. 'I am loath to say this/But how you resemble the wanton breakers/Crashing at the roots of the pine trees on the shore/Or the bay breeze turning my sleeves inside out/Whipping them back against me!'

Judging from the frequency of his association with the warrior elite, as opposed to members of the aristocracy, we can adduce that Shōtetsu was somewhat hesitant about breaking into the latter circle as an outsider. Conversely he appears to have been very confident in his associations with the military leaders, who for their part were only too pleased to rub shoulders with such a skilled practitioner of the ancient literary tradition who could transmit to them his prestigious expertise in the aristocratic arts.

The ultimate accolade for Shōtetsu came in 1452 from the shogun Yoshimasa himself, at the time a mere youth of sixteen. In the first month of 1452, Shōtetsu had already attracted the attention of the shogun and was requested to compose poems. His poems evidently convinced the shogun of his talent and in the eighth month of 1452 Shōtetsu was requested to undertake a reading of *The Tale of Genji* with Yoshimasa. Over his lifetime Shōtetsu had built a considerable reputation for his erudition in *The Tale of Genji*, having originally been instructed in *Genji* by Ryōshun.¹¹¹ During his period of travels in the provinces earlier in his life, in 1418, he had evidently given lectures on *Genji* to literary aficionados at a Zen temple in Kiyosu (near Nagoya), and as noted above in 1429 he lectured the Kitano Lady on various aspects of *Genji*. In 1440 he consolidated his scholarship in a commentary of his own, *Genji Ittekishū*. In 1443 he completed a manuscript copy of 'Kiritsubo' and in 1446 a transcription of 'Yume no Ukihashi'.¹¹² Such were his credentials for serving the shogun. Shōtetsu made frequent visits to tutor Yoshimasa after his first visit until the reading was completed in 1455.

Two parties Shōtetsu held at his hermitage to celebrate the successful conclusion of this service to the shogun are recorded in *Sōkonshū* Volume Twelve¹¹³ and illustrate the relief felt by Shōtetsu at having competently discharged this enormous responsibility.

In 1456 his hermitage at Oda was restored to him, probably as a gesture of appreciation from the shogun for his efforts as a teacher.¹¹⁴

Thus Shōtetsu was able to live the last years of his life enjoying the patronage and acclaim of the

¹¹¹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.71. *Nagusamegusa* recounts how Shōtetsu had received instruction in *Genji Monogatari* under Ryōshun for over ten years.

¹¹² Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.71.

¹¹³ Headnote to Poem 9070.

¹¹⁴ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.73.

most powerful figures in the land.

Financially, we can assume that by this time Shōtetsu enjoyed considerable security. Even though his lands were restored to him, apparently the income was no longer of life-sustaining importance to him for he was able generously to transfer the income from the Oda estate to Shōkō. It seems likely that by this stage Shōtetsu could depend upon a reliable income from elsewhere, in all probability from patronage of his poetic activity. Shōtetsu would have received remuneration for such activities as poetic instruction and criticism, lending his own manuscripts of other works for copying and composing poetic epitaphs for statues. Unfortunately, *Sōkonshū* provides little detail of these worldly transactions, though there is mention of a gift of white charcoal from Hatakeyama Yoshitada in the first month of 1459¹¹⁵ and gifts of *nori* seaweed and *funori* (glueplant) from nine provinces in 1457.¹¹⁶ In *Shōtetsu Monogatari* passing reference is made about Shōtetsu having been 'rewarded' by Lord Asukai and others for a poem.¹¹⁷

10. The Toll of Popularity

Shōtetsu's popularity and acclaim as a master poet and teacher in the 1440s and 1450s was to some extent a mixed blessing. We know from *Sōkonshū* that in the last years of his life, when he was one of the most sought after poets and literati, his chronic asthma became severe and life-threatening, to the point that in 1455, in the sixth month, Shōkō made a pilgrimage to the Gion Shrine¹¹⁸ to pray that Shōtetsu might be given some relief from his attacks.¹¹⁹ But Shōtetsu was so busy that he had little time to rest and regain condition that would render him less susceptible to the attacks. He fulfilled requests for specific poetry writing from his sickbed and forced himself to attend poetry gatherings.¹²⁰ Evidently he found it extremely difficult to refuse requests and disappoint his admirers, a facet of his personality which led the priest Hekizan to describe him as mild, gentle, refined, polite and graceful.¹²¹ His admirers for their part were so desirous of his poetry that they

¹¹⁵ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.85-6. *Sōkonshū*, Headnote to poem 10,640, dated the fifth day of the first month 1459.

¹¹⁶ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.86. Headnote to poem 9707, dated the middle of the third month 1457.

¹¹⁷ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2:28. The word *hōbi* can mean either 'praise' or 'material reward'. Brower translates it as the former in *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.129.

¹¹⁸ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.88-9. The Gion Shrine refers to the Yasaka Shrine in Kyoto, in Gion-chō, Higashiyama-ku.

¹¹⁹ Shōkō's prayers had some effect it would seem, as in the autumn of that year, when the attacks typically occurred, Shōtetsu was miraculously free from asthma (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp. 88-9).

¹²⁰ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p. 87-8.

¹²¹ *Hekizan Nichiroku*, quoted in Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.91.

clamoured for it regardless of Shōtetsu's physical distress.¹²²

Shōtetsu's worst recorded attack took place in the second month of 1457:

I had a bad attack of my chronic illness from the morning of the fourteenth day; on about the sixteenth or the seventeenth day people who had come to visit me said that I looked as if my hour had come; I was unconscious and unaware of them.¹²³

Shōtetsu miraculously survived this attack, indeed living on for another two years, but it was asthma which eventually appears to have claimed his life.

* * * * *

We have singled out in this chapter what most scholars believe to be the key experiences of Shōtetsu's seventy-nine years. We have seen in Shōtetsu's life an extraordinary carousel of obscurity, fame, poverty, prosperity, catastrophe, adulation, revilement, privilege, accompanied by all the normal pains and joys of human existence. As we shall see in the next chapter, the paradoxes and contradictions which thus characterise Shōtetsu's passage through life were by no means unique to him: viewed against the broader canvas of his Muromachi era we see that his life indeed mirrors the contradictions of the period itself, its opportunities for meteoric fame and glory, its injustices and suffering, its paradoxes and unpredictability. It is to this background that we will now direct our attention.

¹²² Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.90.

¹²³ *Sōkonshū*, Headnote to Poem 9707.

CHAPTER TWO

SHŌTETSU'S ERA

1. Introductory Comments

As with Shōtetsu's life itself, it is no easy matter to single out any one quality as the overriding characteristic of the Muromachi era. It was an age of bewildering and enormous contrast and contradiction: exquisite beauty and ugly intrigue, aestheticism and militarism, metaphysical searching and crass materialism, leisured hedonism and violent rebellion, opulence and poverty, privilege and deprivation. Perhaps we capture most accurately the spirit and character of the era by calling it an age of paradox.

In this chapter we will seek to gain a deeper insight into this era by exploring its historical and political developments, its social and cultural tendencies, and its prevailing religious and philosophical currents, all of which provide the external context for Shōtetsu's poetry. We will then be better placed to determine what links, if any, exist between Shōtetsu's seemingly 'detached' poetry and its environment.

We will be particularly concerned with the period from 1391, the date of Shōtetsu's arrival in Kyoto aged about ten, until about 1448, the likely composition date of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* and thus the outermost boundary of the poetry which it contains. Events beyond that date cannot be linked with the poetry of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. In 1448, Shōtetsu was aged sixty-seven. Historically therefore this covers the early to mid-Muromachi period (that is, the Kitayama period and the early years of the Higashiyama period) spanning six shogunates, those of Yoshimitsu, Yoshimochi, Yoshikazu, Yoshinori, Yoshikatsu and Yoshimasa.¹ In terms of their length and for other reasons which will be dealt with subsequently, the shogunates of Yoshimitsu, Yoshimochi and Yoshinori probably exerted the greatest influence over Shōtetsu's poetry.

2. Political Problems of the Day

Politically, with some conspicuous exceptions, stability under the autocratic rule of the shogun

¹ See Figure 1 for dates relating to these shoguns.

prevailed. In 1392, the year after Shōtetsu came to the capital, Yoshimitsu succeeded in engineering an agreement to alternate the throne between the Northern and Southern lines, thus ending the conflict between the two rival courts.² Through skilfully balancing the interests of the shogunate, the court and the provincial lords,³ Yoshimitsu and his heirs until the time of Yoshimasa were able to provide a half-century of relative calm in which the shogunate enjoyed near absolute power and attempts overthrow the Ashikaga hegemony were violently and effectively suppressed.

However, this stability was built upon an inherent fragility. As long as the balance was maintained and central authority was vested in a politically astute and engaged ruler, backed by loyal advisors, and able to call upon military support to assert his hegemony when necessary, the Ashikaga shogunate could survive. But once the shogun became isolated from the political arena, his advisors became more concerned with their self-furtherment than with loyalty to the shogunate, and even the legal succession to the shogunate was disputed by two rival camps made up of ambitious provincial lords, as occurred during Yoshimasa's shogunate, the regime crumbled and collapsed. During the years we are concerned with here, 1391-1448, the first cracks were beginning to appear, presaging the massive destruction of the Ōnin War (1467-77). They merit our mention, not only for their political and historical implications but also as possible sources of that aspect of fragility and tenuousness which runs so deeply and consistently through Shōtetsu's poetry.

In the first place, the dispute over imperial succession continued to simmer, backed by rival chieftains with their own agendas of self-interest and aggrandizement,⁴ re-erupting each time an emperor died or abdicated.⁵ The Ashikaga shogunate acted to preserve the status quo and supported the Northern Court in Kyoto, regardless of the pact of 1392, violently repressing attempts by the Southern line to assert their claim to the throne. For example, in 1443, when the Northern court was challenged by the Southern court, which seized from it two items of the Imperial regalia, the bakufu responded by attacking Southern supporters at Mt Hiei and killed the Southern Pretender.⁶ The Ashikaga shogunate correctly perceived that its own fate was tied to the Northern dynasty and that the Southern Court was deeply antagonistic to it as well as to the

² The agreement was in fact never honoured, a source of festering discontent among the Southern supporters (Turnbull, *Samurai Warriors*, p.51).

³ Hall, 'The Muromachi Bakufu', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v.3: Medieval Japan*, p.201.

⁴ Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, p. 351.

⁵ For example, in 1413 after the abdication of Go-Komatsu (1377-1433), and again in 1428 upon the death of Emperor Shōkō (1401-28) and the accession of Go-Hanazono (1419-70) (Turnbull, *Samurai Warriors*, p.52).

⁶ Turnbull, *Samurai Warriors*, pp.52-5.

Northern court: in 1428 the Southern Court had been involved in a plot to assassinate shogun Yoshinori,⁷ while in the 1443 incident, an Imperial prince of the Southern line was pronounced shogun by the exiled court, challenging the legitimacy of the Ashikaga shogun in Kyoto.⁸

The succession dispute highlights one of the earliest weaknesses of the Ashikaga regime: the question of its legitimacy and legal authority to rule. This can be traced back to the first Ashikaga shogun, Takauji. Takauji set up Kōmyō as Emperor in 1336, and then had Kōmyō appoint him as shogun. However, if Kōmyō was not the rightful Emperor, and many still considered him an imposter, then the Ashikaga shogunate likewise was illegitimate. If the 1392 agreement between the rival courts had been honoured and put into effect, the Ashikaga shogunate could have redeemed itself, but regrettably that was not to be the case. Instead it involved itself in partisan acts of violence and indeed regicide to keep its puppet Emperor, and itself, in power.

The second major political threat to the regime came from ambitious, increasingly powerful and disgruntled vassals.

Uprisings of the Toki and Yamana clans against the regime took place in 1390 and 1391.⁹ Within the Ashikaga house itself, there were kinsmen envious of Yoshimitsu's power and title. The 'Shogun of the East' (Kanto *kubō*) Ashikaga Mitsukane (1376-1409) coveted the supreme shogunal power held by the senior branch of the family. He gained the support of Ōuchi Yoshihiro (1355-1400) who had previously been a staunch supporter of Yoshimitsu and chiefly responsible for defeating Yamana in 1391. Both through conquests and rewards, Ōuchi's domains now numbered six,¹⁰ a real threat to Yoshimitsu especially since Ōuchi's domains in Izumi and Kii provinces were so close to the capital. In 1399 Ōuchi Yoshihiro unsuccessfully took up arms against Yoshimitsu in a rebellion known as Ōei no Ran¹¹ (the Ōei insurrection). Ōuchi was vanquished in Sakai in 1399, an outcome of great economic advantage to the bakufu as it gave them control of the ports in Izumi and Kii, including Sakai, and opened up the possibility of easy trade with Ming China.¹²

⁷ Turnbull, *Samurai Warriors*, p. 51.

⁸ Turnbull, *Samurai Warriors*, p. 52.

⁹ Varley, 'Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p. 200.

¹⁰ Papinot, *Historical and Geographical Dictionary of Japan*, pp.503-4.

¹¹ Thus named because it took place in the years of Ōei (1394-1428).

¹² No doubt Yoshimitsu was attracted as much by the financial advantages to be gained by suppressing Ōuchi's rebellion and gaining these strategic territories as by the desire to retain political equilibrium. It is no coincidence that so soon after, in 1401, the Bakufu sent a delegation to the Ming court to seek a trading relationship, marking the beginning of the Japanese-Ming commerce (Hayashiya, 'Higashiyama Bunka', in Ienaga, *Nihon Rekishi 7*:

After the Ōei Insurrection, an understanding that their best interests were served by cooperating with the shogunate appears to have prevailed among possible challengers to shogunal authority. It was not until 1438, ten years into the despotic shogunate of Yoshinori, that the next major politically-inspired insurrection the Eikyō Insurrection¹³ (Eikyō no Ran) occurred. Once again, the catalyst of the uprising was the Kantō *kubō*, now Mitsukane's son, Ashikaga Mochiuji (1398-1439). At the death of Yoshimochi in 1428, Mochiuji had 'tried in vain to be nominated shogun' and 'swore to take revenge' when Yoshinori's nomination succeeded.¹⁴ The rebellion was suppressed by Yoshinori in 1439, and Mochiuji died by his own sword. His uncle and his eldest son did likewise and his two sons aged thirteen and eleven, who had managed to flee, were executed in Mino two years later.¹⁵ Thus Yoshinori attempted to annihilate completely possible rivals to his authority from the cadet branch of the Ashikaga. Only the five-year old son of Mochiuji, Shigeuji(1434-1497) survived and remained a source of nagging disquiet and eventually the cause of major hostilities during the shogunate of Yoshimasa.¹⁶

The next political revolt, the Kakitsu Rebellion¹⁷ (1441) was ignited by the territorial ambitions and alienation of a member of the Akamatsu clan, which for generations had provided the *shugo* (provincial military governor appointed by the Muromachi bakufu) of Harima province (Hyōgo prefecture).¹⁸ In many respects it succeeded insofar as it commenced the process by which the central authority of the shogunate was irreversibly undermined. The rebellion had its origins in events of many years earlier: in 1427 Harima had been confiscated from Akamatsu Mitsusuke (1381-1441) who until that year had been the *shugo* of Harima, Bizen and Mimasaka. The shogun Yoshimochi, who had ordered the confiscation, then awarded the domain in a blatant gesture of favoritism to his own vassal and cherished companion,¹⁹ Akamatsu Mochisada, a rival member of the same Akamatsu clan.²⁰ In protest, Mitsusuke burned his mansion in Kyoto, a provocative act of defiance. Surprisingly, Yoshimochi then pardoned Mitsusuke and Mochisada committed suicide to

Chūsei 3, p.314).

¹³ Thus named because it took place in the years of Eikyō (1429-41).

¹⁴ Papinot, *Historical and Geographical Dictionary of Japan*, p.37.

¹⁵ Papinot, *Historical and Geographical Dictionary of Japan*, pp.37-8.

¹⁶ In fact, an entire civil war was waged in Kantō from 1454 until 1478 between forces supporting and opposing Shigeuji. For more details see Papinot, *Historical and Geographical Dictionary of Japan*, p.38.

¹⁷ Thus named because it took place in the years of Kakitsu (1441-4).

¹⁸ Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance*, p.53.

¹⁹ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p.67.

²⁰ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p.67, n.3.

atone for his responsibility in the affair.²¹

A remarkably parallel situation fed the Kakitsu Rebellion fourteen years later. This time rumours circulated that Yoshinori intended to transfer the Akamatsu domains of Harima, Bizen and Mimasaka from Mitsusuke to his favourite who happened to be Mochisada's son, Sadamura. This rumour was compounded with Mitsusuke's deep antipathy for Yoshinori arising from a series of other incidents: Yoshinori's confiscation of some of his younger brother's land, his installation of Mitsusuke's sister as his concubine whom he subsequently executed, and his ridicule of Mitsusuke's physique (said to be a 'dwarfish figure'²²) by releasing monkeys in his presence.²³

Mitsusuke plotted to assassinate Yoshinori before the transfer of domains could take place, and issued a treacherous invitation for Yoshinori to visit his Kyoto mansion. There the shogun was lavishly regaled, culminating in a programme of *sarugaku*. In the midst of the entertainment a force of three hundred men swept in and decapitated the shogun. None of the guests attempted to save the shogun, concerned only for their own safety.²⁴

For some reason, suggesting perhaps quite a widespread conspiracy, Akamatsu Mitsusuke was able to escape to Harima, and some time elapsed before a punitive strike from the shogunal army was launched.

That a prominent *shugo* could murder the shogun who was a guest in his own house was disquieting enough but that the murderer could survive the incident and return to his provincial base without suffering an immediate punitive attack implies that there were strong feelings of sympathy for the Akamatsu leader's action.²⁵

Akamatsu Mitsusuke was finally vanquished in the ninth month of 1441, some three months after Yoshinori's assassination, by forces under Yamana Sōzen, and committed suicide.

There can be little doubt that there were many elements in the Kyoto power structure who were profoundly relieved to be rid of Yoshinori. He had gained many enemies by his merciless and harsh

²¹ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p.67.

²² Varley, *The Ōnin War*, pp.67-8.

²³ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, pp.67-8.

²⁴ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, pp.67-8.

²⁵ Hall, 'The Muromachi Bakufu', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v.3: Medieval Japan*, pp. 210-11.

rule. For example, in 1434, tension arose between the powerful temple of Enryaku-ji on Mt Hiei and the shogunate.

[Yoshinori's] response was to launch a bloody campaign against Enryakuji ...which ended in the mass suicide of the resisting monks. Merchants suspected of criticizing his actions were summarily beheaded, and his dictatorial stance created tension with the Kyoto aristocracy as well.²⁶

Not all of Yoshinori's violence was military and corporal: some of his violence took the more subtle forms of banishment from the capital and appropriation of lands. Both Nō master Zeami (1363-1443) in 1431, and Shōtetsu in about 1429 were sent into exile for possibly quite trifling reasons which remain obscure to this day. Shōtetsu also had his lands confiscated. Similarly it was the threat of confiscation of the Akamatsu domains which triggered the Kakitsu rebellion when the tables at last turned on Yoshinori.

The Kakitsu Rebellion and Yoshinori's death is often regarded as 'the beginning of the Bakufu's downward slide',²⁷ hastened no doubt by the fact that the next two shoguns, Yoshikatsu and Yoshimasa were both just eight when they became shogun, and lost the initiative of effective involved control which Yoshimitsu, Yoshimochi and Yoshinori had enjoyed. Instead, exercise of real power fell into the hands of the *kanrei* (shogunal deputy), an office which came to alternate between the head of the great Hatakeyama clan, Mochikuni (shogunal deputy 1442-44 and 1449-51), and the head of the Hosokawa clan, Katsumoto (shogunal deputy 1445-48 and 1452-63),²⁸ who became, we recall, Shōtetsu's pupil.

Instead of concentrating their efforts on shoring up the Bakufu, the shogunal deputies used their positions of power to 'interfere arbitrarily in the affairs of other families'²⁹ and thereby to enhance and strengthen their own situation. Eventually Hatakeyama Mochikuni came to be eclipsed by Hosokawa Katsumoto, who assumed a role as one of the chief protagonists pitted against Yamana

²⁶ Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance*, p. 48.

²⁷ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p.65. Shinkei makes this observation: 'Year after year since then [the 1441 incident], the country has merely tottered along with no help in sight.' From *Hitorigoto*, translated in Ramirez-Christensen, *Heart's Flower: the Life and Poetry of Shinkei*, p.20.

²⁸ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, pp.84-5. In the period of consolidation of the Ashikaga shogunate during Yoshimitsu's shogunate, the office of shogunal deputy had also been shared with the Shiba family, but their influence declined after about 1410 (Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p.97).

²⁹ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p. 79.

Sōzen, in the disastrous Ōnin War(1467-1477) which almost completely ravaged Kyoto and destroyed any vestiges of prestige or authority that the shogunate might have retained, plunging a now fragmented nation into a century of bitter civil war in which the institution of the shogunate became largely irrelevant and the provincial lords acted all but autonomously.³⁰

The Ashikaga Bakufu, never a very powerful institution, was entering the final stages of its effectiveness as a central government. By the time of Yoshimasa, large areas of the country, including Kyushu and the Kanto, were almost entirely beyond Bakufu control...the Bakufu was engaged in a continuous series of military operations. Many of these operations were skirmishes of a very minor nature, but their frequent occurrence was a clear indication of the Bakufu's own inability to control the country.³¹

3. Civil Revolts

It was not only the military elite who disturbed the peace of the capital during Shōtetsu's day with their jockeying for power and lands. With increasing frequency, acts of civil disorder known as *ikki* rocked the capital, sparked by leagues of like-minded individuals mostly from the peasant class. Usually these riots stemmed from an inability to pay debts, or their dues on their land, and were directed at extortionist usurers or at merchants with desirable commodities in their warehouses.³² In particular, the *ikki* targeted the sake merchants and pawn brokers or the great temples and shrines which were also 'estate proprietors and commercial agents'.³³ For example, in 1426, *bashaku* (teamsters engaged in the freight business) from Sakamoto on the shores of Lake Biwa attacked Kyoto and burned down the Kitano Shrine.³⁴ The Kitano Shrine, with which as we have noted Shōtetsu enjoyed a very close association, acted as patron of sake-malt merchants.³⁵

Moreover, *ikki* tended to follow natural disasters, famines and epidemics, and occurred opportunistically. 'The most violent uprisings seem to have taken place during years of exceptional political unrest.'³⁶ For example, one large early revolt, the Shōchō no Doikki, occurred in 1428,³⁷

³⁰ Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, pp.369-70.

³¹ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p.82.

³² Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, p.363.

³³ Ramirez-Christensen, *Heart's Flower: The Life and Poetry of Shinkei*, p. 23.

³⁴ Oda and Hayashiya, *Nihon no Bunka Chiri v.10: Kyōto Shiga*, p. 343.

³⁵ Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, p.362.

³⁶ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p.198.

³⁷ The first year of Shōchō (1428-9).

the year of Yoshimochi's death and also an imperial succession dispute.³⁸ This was also the year that Akamatsu Mitsusuke had his domains confiscated and entrenched himself in his stronghold at Harima after defiantly burning his mansion in Kyoto.³⁹ Also, in 1427, major floods had occurred, washing away both bridges at Shijō and Gojō in Kyoto.⁴⁰ The Shōchō rebellion also 'coincided with a year of nationwide famine and epidemic'.⁴¹ A second major riot occurred in 1441 in the turmoil following Yoshinori's assassination.⁴²

The anarchy accompanying such *ikki* is described thus:

A typical uprising might occur in the following manner. Some time during the harvest season, between the seventh and eleventh months, a group of peasants in estates near Kyoto or Nara would rise up, form into a body, and spread to the city. There they would receive the support of a number of townspeople, as well as that of certain undesirable elements who would commence burning and looting. If the insurgents were well organized, they might establish headquarters in a great monastery... After making preliminary attacks on the brokerage houses and destroying some pawn receipts, they would demand issuance of a general cancellation of debts. The Bakufu might try to deal with rioters by despatching troops, but on most occasions the military found themselves singularly unsuccessful in restoring order without yielding to at least part of the peasant demands.⁴³

As can be seen, the shogunate was not always successful and often had to capitulate to the *ikki*:

Sometimes the mob was so threatening that the Bakufu, urged by the great temples, which feared incendiarism, gave way and proclaimed a general cancellation of debts. This was called *tokusei* [literally 'virtuous administration'] ... a concession to popular feeling and dictated by fear...that the military dictators should have thus surrendered to demonstrations by hungry peasants shows how weak was the central government...⁴⁴

Some of these acts of civil disorder were carried out by rival merchants opposing and defending

³⁸ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p.198.

³⁹ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p.67.

⁴⁰ Oda and Hayashiya, *Nihon no Bunka Chiri v.10: Kyōto Shiga*, p.343.

⁴¹ Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance*, p.44.

⁴² Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p. 198.

⁴³ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p. 198.

⁴⁴ Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, p.363-4.

monopolies, and propelled to their violent conclusion by troops despatched by the shogunate, for example, the so-called 'malt incident' of 1444-1445, which resulted in the death of over forty, and a major conflagration in Western Kyoto 'which reduced much of the western half of the city to ashes.'⁴⁵

In the context of these uprisings it is pertinent to observe that Shōtetsu's hermitage, although he moved house with relative frequency, was often located in the vicinity of Nishi no Tōin,⁴⁶ which was one of the areas of greatest concentration of sake merchants and brokerage houses. In the block formed by Higashi no Tōin, Nishi no Tōin and Sanjō and Shijō avenues, for example, no less than twenty-six brokerages or sake merchants had their premises in 1425 and 1426.⁴⁷ Shōtetsu was already resident in Kasuga Nishi no Tōin in 1425.⁴⁸ It is not unreasonable to surmise that the move he made to Ichijō-Muromachi in 1427 to a temporary abode⁴⁹ may have been occasioned by some minor uprising in this quarter, foreshadowing the major riot of 1428, Shōchō no Doikki. He did not return to this part of Kyoto until 1432, establishing himself instead at Imakumano⁵⁰ which itself was destroyed in a major conflagration, cause unknown, in the same year.

Many disturbances also occurred over the proliferation of toll gates which had sprung up at entry points into Kyoto, a lucrative source of revenue for both the Bakufu and other establishments especially monasteries due to the increase of commercial traffic into Kyoto. They became an festering focus of discontent for those forced to pay the tolls, especially peasants bringing their goods into the capital.⁵¹ Tōfukuji, the temple with which Shōtetsu was closely affiliated, became the object of one of the toll-provoked uprisings, in 1454. This incident reminds us of the strong commercial involvement of the monasteries in Muromachi times, and gives us pause to wonder whether Shōtetsu's responsibilities as a scribe at Tōfukiji might have also involved aspects of accounting among his other clerical duties.

In short, it seems that no sector of society failed to become involved in rebellion and disturbances of various degrees. Indeed, even the monasteries had their own notorious forces of soldier-monks

⁴⁵ Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan* v.3: *Medieval Japan*, pp.390-91.

⁴⁶ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.80-1.

⁴⁷ Suzuki, *Muromachi Bakufu*, p.160.

⁴⁸ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.80.

⁴⁹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p. 80.

⁵⁰ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.80.

⁵¹ Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, pp. 362-3.

who would swoop into the capital to defend the interests of the parties for whom they acted as patrons. The soldier-monks of Mt Hiei were particularly feared, executing raids on the capital in support of their clients, the warehouse-keepers.⁵²

Fighting and bloodshed were almost daily occurrences in one part of the country or the other as lawlessness mounted with the Bakufu's decline. On every level of society, from the lowest peasant struggling against an oppressive landlord to the greatest warrior chieftain contending for power in the Bakufu, conditions of chaos and near anarchy were at hand.⁵³

4. Social and Economic Changes

The civil disorder described above was symptomatic, as is often the case, of the great social and economic changes which had commenced in the previous century and were gathering momentum in Shōtetsu's day.

Kyoto had become the centre of a vigorous and flourishing commercial economy, stimulated by such factors as improved transportation necessitated by the military campaigns of the Northern and Southern courts;⁵⁴ increased agricultural productivity;⁵⁵ the monetization of the economy;⁵⁶ the trade with Ming China; the growth in the population of Kyoto. (This was more than 200,000 by the time of the Ōnin War. For its period, it is estimated to have been one of the largest cities in the world. London's population was only about 50,000 at the time.⁵⁷) The avid consumerism of the new military aristocracy and 'Kyoto's burgeoning plutocracy',⁵⁸ which will be discussed in more detail below, was also a major factor. Kyoto had become 'Japan's first early modern city and ... a powerful magnet for all segments of Japanese society'.⁵⁹

Trade guilds (*za*) and monopolies proliferated, sometimes extending well beyond Kyoto into the provinces. In the Muromachi period, apart from the powerful guild of sake brewers and purveyors, guilds existed in such commodities as 'salt, silk, cotton batting, dyed cloth, fresh fish, dried fish, salted fish, dyes, candies, leather, sickles, lamp oil, lumber, bamboo, noodles, a few types of

⁵² Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, p.362.

⁵³ Varley, *The Ōnin War*, p.82.

⁵⁴ Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, p.358.

⁵⁵ Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v.3: Medieval Japan*, pp.376-7.

⁵⁶ Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v.3: Medieval Japan*, pp.366-7.

⁵⁷ Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p.377.

⁵⁸ Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance: the Politics of the Muromachi Bakufu*, p.79.

⁵⁹ Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance: the Politics of the Muromachi Bakufu*, p. 38.

clothing, various vegetables, and a dozen other products'.⁶⁰

An entire new class evolved 'halfway between the farmers and the samurai and priests, a class of townfolk engaged in a craft or trade'.⁶¹ An 'independent merchant -artisan class...a definite commercial section of the city, along Shijō avenue was now in the making'.⁶²

The greatest fortunes were to be amassed by those acting as middlemen:

The most prosperous among [the Kyoto merchants] were the *dosō* who were pawnbrokers and moneylenders and who were also engaged in warehousing and other commercial ventures [and] the *sakaya*, who sold sake and used their earnings for moneylending; and other merchants who accumulated wealth by importing luxuries from the continent and controlling profitable *za*.⁶³

In 1425, there were 342 sake merchants in business in Kyoto.⁶⁴

The effect of trade with Ming China on Kyoto's prosperity was immeasurable. It was a highly lucrative business: not only were the merchants able to sell Chinese wares at exorbitant prices, but in China their own products could be sold at more than four times their value on the domestic market. Goods exported to China included gold, silver, pearls, sulphur, mercury, wood, lacquerware, screens, fans, articles in gold and silver, and weapons including a huge quantity of swords. For their return voyage to Japan, the merchants loaded their ships with copper coins, perfumes, medicaments, peacocks, parrots, sheep, Chinese dogs and cats, horses, cotton, silk, sandalwood, bamboo, books printed in southern China, particularly religious and philosophical treatises, porcelains, paper, ink-stones, ink sticks, tiger and panther skins, jade, paintings, tea and spices.⁶⁵

The flood of coins from China was one of the main reasons for the monetization of the economy which had a very positive impact on various aspects of economic life.

Trade with China was another aspect of Muromachi economic life in which the monasteries and

⁶⁰ Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p.379.

⁶¹ Frederic, *Daily Life in Japan at the Time of the Samurai, 1185-1603*, p. 150.

⁶² Hall, 'Kyoto as Historical Background', in Hall and Mass, *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, p.26.

⁶³ Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v 3: Medieval Japan*, p.378.

⁶⁴ Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance: the Politics of the Muromachi Bakufu*, p.78.

⁶⁵ Frédéric, *Daily Life in Japan at the Time of the Samurai, 1185-1603*, pp.151-2.

shrines had a pecuniary interest. The proceeds from a Ming trading venture were often partially used to finance the building programmes of great temples,⁶⁶ while 'the great temples owned entire ports (Hyōgo...belonged to the Kōfukuji monastery of Nara [the first temple where Shōtetsu served], Sakai to the Sumiyoshi shrine)'.⁶⁷ Naturally these institutions also benefitted from harbour charges and customs dues.

Assiduously nurturing and milking this thriving economy was the bakufu, using monopoly dues, tolls, direct taxes on sake merchants, warehousekeepers and other merchants,⁶⁸ tax farming and import duties to support an increasingly lavish and extravagant lifestyle.

...the Muromachi bakufu came to see in the merchants, moneylenders, *sakaya*, textile and oil manufacturers, and other industries of the Kyoto region a convenient and plentiful tax base, and the policies it pursued in tapping that base influenced both the development of the commercial economy and its own day-to-day operations.⁶⁹

5. Cult of Aristocratic Culture by the *Bushi*

Perhaps the most conspicuous evidence of radical social change in Shōtetsu's Kyoto lies in the influx of the military class into the capital, and their intermingling and integration with the old court aristocracy. Shōtetsu's family's move back to Kyoto was part of the same trend.

Until the establishment of the Ashikaga shogunate, the capital had been the preserve of the 'civil and religious nobility',⁷⁰ and the military had been kept at a distance from the enervating temptations of the capital, as a deliberate policy of the Kamakura shogunate. However, under Takauji, in 1338 the Bakufu was set up in Kyoto, and by the start of Yoshimitsu's shogunate in 1368, a great number of *shugo* had established themselves more or less permanently in Kyoto.

Although unlike the *sankin-kōtai* requirement of the Tokugawa shogunate, *shugo* residence in Kyoto was not mandated by written precept, by the end of Yoshimitsu's rule such residence had become compulsory in practice. If a *shugo* left for his home province without

⁶⁶ For example, Tenryū-ji was financed by a treasure trip to China in 1342 (Sansom, *Japan A Short Cultural History*, p.357).

⁶⁷ Frédéric, *Daily Life in Japan at the Time of the Samurai, 1185-1603*, p.150.

⁶⁸ See Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance: the Politics of the Muromachi Bakufu*, p.79.

⁶⁹ Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance: the Politics of the Muromachi Bakufu*, p.76.

⁷⁰ Hall, 'The Muromachi Bakufu', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v.3: Medieval Japan*, p.216.

the shogun's permission, it was considered tantamount to an act of rebellion.⁷¹

Shugo of more remote provinces, such as the Kantō and Kyushu had no such residence requirement in Kyoto, but nonetheless 'most of the *shugo* of the Kyushu provinces built residences in Kyoto, both to keep in touch with affairs at the center and to participate in the cultural life of the capital.'⁷² Imagawa Ryōshun was one such figure.

Not only were the military now a force to be reckoned with numerically in the capital: they also began to assert themselves socially and culturally. The newly-arrived military elite soon came to dominate social life in the capital,⁷³ with a new and not altogether tasteful predilection for extravagant and ostentatious entertaining.

The provincially based shugo, now obliged to live in Kyoto...were especially conspicuous for their frequent and munificent parties. At such gatherings, we are told, seating places were adorned with leopard skins, tiger skins, and precious cloths, while exotic sweets and delicacies, as well as sake, were provided in lavish quantities.⁷⁴

A voguish term denoting such behaviour was *basara*, and the military lords who practised this behaviour were called *basara daimyō*.⁷⁵ The *basara* lords also had a taste for the exotic, as evident from the items mentioned above, not to mention imported art works from China (*karamono*) which included painting, calligraphic scrolls, ceramics and lacquerware.⁷⁶ These were grossly displayed, as many as possible, as status symbols at their gatherings. For example, Chinese picture scrolls would be displayed hung over decorated folding screens.⁷⁷ This taste was known as *karamono suki*.

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⁷¹ Hall, 'The Muromachi Bakufu', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p.208.

⁷² Hall, 'The Muromachi Bakufu', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p.208.

⁷³ Varley, 'Cultural Life in Medieval Japan', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p.459.

⁷⁴ Varley, 'Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p. 188.

⁷⁵ Varley, 'Cultural Life in Medieval Japan', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p.459. The word *basara* is derived from Sanskrit *vajra* meaning 'diamond', and also has connotations of discord and disharmony, traceable to the strength and destructive properties of the diamond (Moriya, *Nihon Chūsei e no Shiza: Fūryū, Basara, Kabuki*, p.8).

⁷⁶ Varley, 'Cultural Life in Medieval Japan', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, pp.460-1.

⁷⁷ Murai, 'The Development of *Chanoyu*', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p.16.

⁷⁸ Murai, 'The Development of *Chanoyu*', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p.15.

Significantly, one consequence of the mania for artistic display and the deluge from China of arts and crafts was the need and desire to distinguish between the authentic and the spurious. This in turn encouraged profound inquiries into the nature of beauty and its criteria.⁷⁹ The various artistic treatises of the period, including *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, should be understood in this light. Artists such as Shōtetsu and Zeami fulfilled an immensely valuable social role as arbiters of official taste, and their judgements were codified in their treatises.

By the start of Yoshimitsu's shogunate in 1368, a process of tempering had taken place in the *basara* gatherings, and the term *basara* itself had changed to mean 'essentially a love of things exotic (particularly foreign objects of art) and a kind of showy elegance'.⁸⁰ The leading exponent of *basara* which had evolved in this way was Yoshimitsu himself 'whose construction [in 1397] of the Kinkaku, or Golden Pavilion, at his Northern Hills Villa in Kyoto marked the culmination of the *basara* trend'.⁸¹

Yoshimitsu's pursuit of elegance was motivated in the first place not only by his own genuine love of art and beauty, but by his keen assessment of the nature and locus of real power in his world. He perceived that real and complete authority not only depended upon political and military power, but also upon cultural ascendancy and influence. In other words, he realized a true autocrat need to have merged and mastered in himself both *bu* (the military) and *bun* (the cultural). Thus, in order to acquire the cultural qualifications of a true ruler, ironically he had to 'court' the courtiers and develop and perfect in himself a genuinely aristocratic lifestyle. He also encouraged his chief vassals to follow suit, and emulate and socialize closely with members of the old aristocracy.

Yoshimitsu was not, it should be noted, the first of warrior leaders to evince an interest in the aristocratic tradition. In fact, this trend began in the early days of the Kamakura shogunate, with the third shogun of the Kamakura bakufu, Minamoto no Sanetomo (1192-1219). Sanetomo was tutored in the aristocratic tradition of *waka* poetry by Teika himself.⁸² Sanetomo became a poet of considerable talent, producing many masterpieces in the style of the *Manyōshū* in his own

⁷⁹ Hayashiya, *Japanese Arts and the Tea Ceremony*, p.15.

⁸⁰ Varley, 'Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p. 202.

⁸¹ Hayashiya, *Japanese Arts and the Tea Ceremony*, pp.13-14

⁸² Teika's poetic treatise *Kindai Shūka* was in fact composed for the benefit of Sanetomo (Inada et al., *Chūsei Bungaku no Sekai*, p.17).

anthology *Kinkaiwakashu*.⁸³ Thus Yoshimitsu in a sense was following the tradition of his forerunners, although none had ever reached the extremes of aristocratization that Yoshimitsu achieved.

Close fraternizing between the shogunate and the court not only gave the shogun the cultural 'right to rule'.⁸⁴ It also conferred on the shogunate an aura of legitimacy, which philosophers of the day acknowledged ultimately emanated from the imperial line, and nowhere else. In Kitabatake Chikafusa's (1293-1354)⁸⁵ words, the imperial line was ' "a transcendent source of virtue in government, which was above criticism" '.⁸⁶ (The actual legitimacy of the incumbent Emperor was beside the point.) 'Even though the emperor personally might be a creature of the military hegemon, having been assisted to the throne by a victorious military leader, investiture as shogun was an act that only the emperor and his courtiers could perform.'⁸⁷ Thus the aristocratization of the Ashikaga shogunate was also a tacit acknowledgement of the ultimate authority of the imperial line.

In terms of cultural conservation, the decision by the bakufu to adopt aristocratic culture was a propitious one: the 'cultural forms of aristocratic society ... had been jeopardized by the decline of imperial court influence since the Kamakura period',⁸⁸ but now they were nurtured and reshaped into a form that would ensure their survival even into the twentieth century. In preserving and promoting these values among the new military elite, poets such as Shōtetsu played a most valuable role.

As indicated above, the most spectacular example of assimilation and fraternization with the court aristocracy was Yoshimitsu himself. His tutor in the ways of the court culture was Nijō Yoshimoto (1320-1388):

a leading Fujiwara and imperial regent...the compiler of the *renga* anthology *Tsukubashū*. Yoshimoto personally tutored the young shogun in courtier customs, etiquette, and art and was frequently at his side to guide him in the conduct of cultural affairs.⁸⁹

⁸³ *Kōjien*, p.2127.

⁸⁴ Varley, 'Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p. 203.

⁸⁵ A scholar and loyalist of the Northern and Southern courts period.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Hall, 'The Muromachi Bakufu', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p.190.

⁸⁷ Hall, 'The Muromachi Bakufu', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p.19.

⁸⁸ Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance*, p. 20.

⁸⁹ Varley, 'Cultural Life in Medieval Japan', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval*

During the course of his rule, Yoshimitsu moved rapidly up the ladder of ancient court offices, and in 1394 he was made *dajō-daijin* (Minister of the Great Council), the first warrior to have held this highest civil office since Taira no Kiyomori,⁹⁰ delegating shogunal office to his eight-year-old son Yoshimochi.⁹¹ Yoshimitsu also linked his bloodline with the courtiers, choosing both his principal wife Nariko and later consort Yasuko from the noble Hino family, descended from the Fujiwara. This was in contrast with the previous two shoguns who had married into military families. This ploy also gained him 'special entry at court'.⁹²

So successful was his strategy that Yoshimitsu came to overshadow the emperor completely. The magnificent shogunal residence built in 1378, Hana no Gosho (Palace of Flowers), was twice the size of the Imperial palace. In 1381, under Nijō Yoshimoto's instructions, he entertained the Emperor for a six-day extravaganza of 'music, dancing, *waka* poetizing, football, and boating. On the day of his departure the Emperor issued a special decree bestowing promotions in courtier rank upon Yoshimitsu and his mother and wife.'⁹³ After having passed on shogunal office to his son Yoshimochi in 1394, he conducted himself in the manner of a cloistered emperor from his Kitayama estate⁹⁴ whose construction he had commenced in 1397, where he continued to delight in regaling the emperor with lavish programmes of entertainment. In 1408, for example, Emperor Go-Komatsu was the recipient of twenty days of 'gala entertainment' at Kitayama.⁹⁵

One of Yoshimitsu's enduring architectural triumphs at Kitayama was its Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion). Nothing better depicts better than this structure the synthesis of the aristocracy and the military that took place in the Kitayama period. It is a potent symbol of the merging of the two classes and cultures: the lower two storeys of this three-storey gold-sheathed pavilion were built in *shinden-zukuri* or 'palace-style', while the top storey possessed the characteristics of Zen

Japan, p. 462.

⁹⁰ Taira no Kiyomori was appointed *Dajō-daijin* in 1168. The Taira were a clan of the military class, but integrated themselves into the court structure through marriage into the imperial family in much the same way as the Fujiwara clan had done. As the fourteenth-century *Tale of the Heike* so vividly depicts, from their custom of tooth-blackening to their artistic accomplishments of flute-playing, the Taira were to all intents and purposes aristocrats. They were overthrown by the Minamoto clan at Dannoura in 1185.

⁹¹ Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance*, p.39.

⁹² Varley, 'Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p.198.

⁹³ Varley, 'Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p.199.

⁹⁴ Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, p.355.

⁹⁵ Varley, 'Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p. 203.

architecture, echoing the lifestyle preferences of the military class.⁹⁶

So comprehensively had Yoshimitsu captured both the institutions and accoutrements of power that 'by the turn [sic] of the fourteenth century, the shogun had become a king in everything but name.'⁹⁷ Even that would change: in 1402, Yoshimitsu was designated 'King of Japan' by the Ming Emperor. It is also claimed by some scholars that Yoshimitsu aspired to have his own son named heir to the Emperor.⁹⁸

One sure sign of the usurpation of court culture by the military, or conversely, the curious tenacity of the court culture to survive through supplying the military with the symbolic trappings of power, is evident in the continued compilation of the imperial anthologies after the establishment of the Ashikaga shogunate. Four anthologies emerged: *Shinsenzaishū* (1359), *Shinshūishū* (1364), *Shingoshūishū* (1384), and *Shinzokukokinshū* (1439). These distinguish themselves from previous anthologies in one important respect: although ultimately the Emperor ordered their compilation, the initiative, and to be sure, the budget as well, came from the shogun.⁹⁹ For some reason, no doubt the intervention of the Ōnin War, no anthologies were compiled after the *Shinzokukokinshū*.

After Yoshimitsu's death the same policy of assimilation with the aristocracy and cultural patronage was continued by Yoshimochi, Yoshinori and Yoshimasa. All three were confident practitioners of the court culture, internalizing the acculturation process commenced by Yoshimitsu to the point where they truly earned the 'cultural right to rule'. Yoshimochi has been described as the most artistically outstanding of all the Ashikaga shogun, and a 'leading figure among the "literary monks" [this would include Shōtetsu] and new intellectuals of the day.'¹⁰⁰ Yoshinori, although he has received a bad press as a despot, 'was also exceedingly interested in the arts.'¹⁰¹ Indeed, it was Yoshinori who instituted the monthly *waka* and *renga* meetings attended by Shōtetsu and his contemporaries, and requested the compilation of the *Shinzokukokinshū*.¹⁰² Yoshimasa 'has been

⁹⁶ Hayashiya, 'Higashiyama Bunka', in Ienaga, *Nihon Rekishi 7: Chūsei* 3, p.315.

⁹⁷ Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance*, p.15. From the longer context it is clear that Grossberg is referring to the 'end' of the fourteenth century, not the 'turn', which would be 1301: 'On the ruins of Go-Daigo's ill-fated *imperium* [1333-1336] the Asikaga family established itself as the ruling dynasty and, by the turn [end] of the fourteenth century, the shogun had become a king in everything but name. Grossberg, *Japan's Renaissance*, p.15.

⁹⁸ Varley, 'Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p. 203.

⁹⁹ Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p.486.

¹⁰⁰ Awakawa, *Zen Painting*, p.173.

¹⁰¹ Murai, 'The Development of *Chanoyu*', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p.18.

¹⁰² Varley, 'Cultural Life in Medieval Japan', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan* v. 3: *Medieval Japan*, p. 471.

labelled as a failure as a ruler, but he possessed exceptional talent of an artistic kind...[the Higashiyama estate] was itself achieved by means of his authority as shogun'.¹⁰³

One step down in the echelons of power, the warriors followed the shogun's example in attempting to emulate the aristocracy. 'Military leaders avidly competed for apparently hollow court ranks and functionally meaningless court titles'.¹⁰⁴ Like the shogun, they sought to gain proficiency in the courtier arts, associating closely with the nobility and recognised practitioners, mostly tonsured like Shōtetsu, of the aristocratic culture. The military chieftains also acted as patrons and sponsors of artistic events. There became obvious 'a growing interest in the arts within elite warrior society. Gatherings for *waka* and *renga* (linked verse) poetry, *chanoyu* and other activities were frequently held by the samurai chieftains.'¹⁰⁵ Thus for example, as documented in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, the residence of Imagawa Ryōshun became a popular venue, among others, for social and cultural gatherings, attended both by members of old aristocratic families and the new military elite, not to mention the ubiquitous Buddhist clergy who managed to blend chameleon-like into any conceivable setting.

A special venue was created for these gatherings of the Kyoto elite, the *kaisho*.

During the early Muromachi period, structures called *kaisho* began to appear in the shogun's palace and at the residences of powerful warrior chieftains...they were situated in gardens and intended mainly for purposes of entertainment...from the period of Yoshimitsu to Yoshimochi the number of *kaisho* at the shogunal palace proliferated, and by Yoshinori's time they were abundant.¹⁰⁶

Various social events took place in the *kaisho*: they were

regularly used for such special occasions as *tanabata* festivities, flower-arranging and vase competitions, *sarugaku* and *nō* performances, tea-guessing, the monthly Chinese and Japanese linked verse meetings, moon-, flower- and snow-viewing parties, and even on

¹⁰³ Murai, 'The Development of *Chanoyu*', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁴ Hall, 'The Muromachi Bakufu', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p. 191.

¹⁰⁵ Murai, 'The Development of *Chanoyu* ', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p.18.

¹⁰⁶ Murai, 'The Development of *Chanoyu* ', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p.18.

occasion for Buddhist ceremonies.¹⁰⁷

In 1431, a *kaisho* in readiness for a reception was described in the following way in *Kanmon Gyoki*:¹⁰⁸

The splendour of the articles and treasure on display astonished the eye. the magnificence of the garden was something beyond description. Surely the splendour of Paradise must be something like this.¹⁰⁹

This therefore was the environment in which Shōtetsu circulated and socialized, as valued purveyor of *waka* poetry, the most highly sought-after cultural commodity, and the most consummate expression of aristocratic heritage. In many respects, and more glaringly obvious as military rebellion, civil disturbances, and natural disasters occurred with increasing frequency, it was a totally artificial and illusionary world which Shōtetsu's social set inhabited. Indeed, it has been claimed that 'it was during this age that the concept of artificiality first arose.'¹¹⁰ This impression especially deepens in the second half of the fifteenth century during the shogunate of Yoshimasa, obsessed with ever more elaborate building projects culminating in the Higashiyama estate, while the 'real' world convulsed and crumbled.

6. The Decline of the Aristocracy

It is valid to enquire how the old aristocracy reacted to the unprecedented changes taking place around them in the capital. Social and class distinctions appeared to have completely broken down. Murmurings of anxiety at the disintegration of the social fabric can be found as early as 1334 in lampoons posted at Nijō-Kawara in Kyoto: 'The world is marked by confusion and lack of order. All authority is lost, and the possession or lack of inherited rank counts for nothing anymore.'¹¹¹ Although it is unlikely that the writer of this lampoon was a member of the aristocracy, it succinctly articulates their probable concerns.¹¹² Another insight into the social fragility of the

¹⁰⁷ Itō, 'The Development of Shoin-Style Architecture', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p.237-8.

¹⁰⁸ Written by imperial prince Gosukō-in, this valuable resource covers in diary form the years from 1416-48.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Itō, 'The Development of Shoin-Style Architecture', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p.238.

¹¹⁰ Murai, 'The Development of *Chanoyu*', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p.26.

¹¹¹ *Nijō-gawara Rakusho* (Scribblings at Nijō-gawara), quoted Hayashiya, *Japanese Arts and the Tea Ceremony*, p.12.

¹¹² This sort of lampoonery is also indicative of the climate of social change which prevailed: 'it is the advent

aristocracy can be found in the following conversation which took place many decades and experiences later, between Yamana Sōzen and a court noble during the Ōnin War:

My Lord, what you say appears to be reasonable, but you cannot continue to rely on precedents...I cannot understand why precedents must be drawn to explain other matters. We have witnessed the declining fortunes of many great families who adhered too strictly to precedents and without taking heed of the signs of the times. They lost most of their family incomes, and competed for available official positions without regard to knowledge or integrity. In this manner they had to suffer the humiliation of losing the control of the nation to the samurai, and had to be placed in the position of ingratiating themselves to the samurai. If we should follow the age-old precedents, I, Sōzen, as lowly born as I am, could never address your Lordship as an equal as I am doing now. Where can you find a precedent for this?¹¹³

Shōtetsu Monogatari provides a telling description of the kind of status-based tension which existed between the aristocracy and the military:

The piling-up of poem cards is of the utmost importance ... It is difficult to know how to pile them up when it is a gathering of court nobles and warriors. During the shogunate of Yoshimochi, when a poem by Asukai, who held the court post of Middle Counsellor, and ranked in lower second position, was placed above that of Hosokawa Mitsumoto,¹¹⁴ the Deputy Shogun, the Shogun pronounced that his poem should be placed above that of Asukai, for reasons of actual service in the kingdom. However, someone else declared that since the Deputy Shogun was equivalent to an Imperial Advisor, his poem should not be placed above that of the Middle Counsellor. No agreement was reached.¹¹⁵

There can be no doubt that in Shōtetsu's time, the aristocracy, and in particular the court establishment, was in grave decline, a process which had commenced with the demise of the Taira in 1185 and the establishment of the Kamakura Bakufu.¹¹⁶

of social flux and rising expectations among less privileged classes that is most likely to produce derisive witticizing of this sort.' (Varley, 'Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p.185.)

¹¹³ Lu, *Sources of Japanese History*, v. 1, p. 170.

¹¹⁴ As we have noted, one of Shōtetsu's pupils.

¹¹⁵ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2:13.

¹¹⁶ 'It was...in the twelfth century that the power of these feudal forces became fully manifest in the bloody

Even the legal immunity of the aristocracy had been lost: for example, from the second half of the twelfth century, capital punishment was reintroduced for courtiers after a three-hundred-and-fifty year respite.¹¹⁷ Many of the aristocracy were heavily in debt to the great pawnbrokers of the capital. 'The Kyoto nobles who had hitherto managed to derive some revenue from their provincial manors were now often reduced to poverty, because the former stewards had appropriated all the rights in their lands.'¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, the extent to which their economic base had been undermined by Shōtetsu's time is debatable. There is evidence that some members of the aristocracy did manage to involve themselves profitably in the mercantilism of the day, in particular receiving recompense for lending their prestige as patrons of merchant guilds. 'Increases of *za* continued in the Muromachi period under the protection of a dozen high-ranked nobles and the Hachimangū, Gionsha, Tōdaiji, and other temples.'¹¹⁹ 'The Kyōto paper makers depended upon the Bōjō, the gold-leaf makers on the Konoe family, and even the courtesans had a guild which was protected by the noble house of Kuga.'¹²⁰ Courtiers also managed to involve themselves profitably in the sale of court titles and offices to the military elite.

Due credit must also be paid to the aristocracy's intangible monopoly over culture, which they likewise often successfully bartered against their survival.

The narrow circle of the imperial court, however, was undeniably on the brink of penury. One scholar has claimed that one reason for the popularity of *hakubyō* ('plain sketches') in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was 'the waning fortunes of the imperial court [which] no doubt caused a curtailment ... of costly painting materials such as mineral pigments'.¹²¹ The court was deeply dependent on the bakufu for material support. 'The court community became almost totally reliant on military government to preserve its livelihood.'¹²² The imperial palace, for example, owed its existence to the shogun's largesse, having been built by Ashikaga Takauji as 'a grand gesture of

struggles for military ascendancy between the Taira and Minamoto clans, climaxed by the establishment of a military government in Kamakura which effectively terminated rule by the old Kyoto court' (Lu, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, v.1, p. 181).

¹¹⁷ LaFleur, *Mirror for the Moon*, pp.xviii-xix.

¹¹⁸ Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, p.352.

¹¹⁹ Kozo, 'The Growth of Commerce in Medieval Japan', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v.3: Medieval Japan*, p.379.

¹²⁰ Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, p. 362. These were all noble families. The Kuga, or Koga, family are mentioned twice in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, suggesting that Shōtetsu may have been acquainted with some of its members.

¹²¹ Pekarik, *Ukifune: Love in the Tale of Genji*, p.187.

¹²² Hall, 'The Muromachi Bakufu', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p.191.

patronage'.¹²³ Moreover, as mentioned above, as if to drive home to the court the fact of its diminished political standing the imperial palace occupied just half the space taken up by Yoshimitsu's Hana no Gosho (Palace of Flowers), built in 1378.¹²⁴ Let it also be noted that the Daigokuden (Great Audience Hall) of the ancient Heian imperial palace, 'symbolic of imperial prestige' was destroyed by fire in 1177 and had never been rebuilt.¹²⁵ The desperate impecuniosity of the court is also vividly illustrated by events of the civil war period which followed the Ōnin War, in 1500, when the emperor Go-Tsuchimikado (1442-1500) remained unburied for six weeks because there was no money left in the Treasury. The enthronement ceremony of his successor was postponed for twenty years for the same reason.¹²⁶

7. Nostalgia for the Heian Past and Escapism

Given the declining situation of the court and aristocracy it is not surprising that the literature of the medieval period - and Shōtetsu's era is no exception - is deeply permeated with a sense of 'nostalgic yearning for the courtier past'.¹²⁷ Although in real terms the splendour, sophistication and refinement of the Heian court was now but a beautiful memory, scholars and literati of the day toiled to interpret, preserve and proliferate this proud memory, an antiquarian activity known as *wagaku* ('Japanese scholarship'). '*Wagaku* reached its peak of development in the mid-Muromachi period in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', the very period that Shōtetsu was busy transcribing *Ise Monogatari* (1425, 1439, 1442, 1450, 1458), chapters from *The Tale of Genji* (1443, 1446, 1459)¹²⁸ and lecturing in the provinces on *The Tale of Genji* (1418). Furthermore, in view of this near obsession with the Heian past we should be well prepared for the observation that 'the main aesthetic terms of the medieval age —*yūgen*, *sabi*, *wabi*— had their roots in the Heian period or earlier',¹²⁹ and the discovery that many of Shōtetsu's poems are highly allusive of classical works.

¹²³ Hall, 'The Muromachi Bakufu', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p.191.

¹²⁴ Hall, 'The Muromachi Bakufu', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p.191.

¹²⁵ Hall, 'Kyoto as Historical Background', in Hall and Mass, *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, p.10.

¹²⁶ Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, p.369.

¹²⁷ Varley, 'Cultural Life in Medieval Japan', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p. 488.

¹²⁸ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.112-14.

¹²⁹ Varley, 'Cultural Life in Medieval Japan', in Hall et al., *The Cambridge History of Japan v. 3: Medieval Japan*, p. 488.

Accompanying this mood of nostalgia, which in effect constituted a rejection or denial of contemporary reality in its various facets—whether this be the new ascendancy of the military, the sporadic outbreaks of violence, rampant commercialism or treachery, infidelity, poverty, famine, exile — the age-old yearning to escape re-emerges. Urban retreats, called *sōan* ('grass huts'), appeared in Kyoto, among which numbered Shōtetsu's Shōgetsu-an. The 'hermits' however were quite different from earlier recluses like Saigyō or Kamo no Chōmei. Although the posture of the Muromachi anchorites was likewise one of rejection of the world, in fact they were very much servicing the needs of the real world in providing a place not only for themselves but for others to escape away from the tumult and anarchy of contemporary life, conveniently located within easy reach of the corridors of power. The Kitayama and Higashiyama complexes fulfilled the same function,

8. Spiritual and Philosophical Currents

No discussion of Shōtetsu's era or Shōtetsu's poetry can disregard their spiritual and philosophical dimension, especially the role of Zen, but also the older Buddhist sects, the new evangelical Buddhist sects, as well as the ancient beliefs in the native *kami*. The influence of all kinds of religion in Shōtetsu's period was enormous and all-pervasive, while Shōtetsu's personal experience itself, as we have seen, was heavily coloured by a lifelong association with monasticism, firstly serving as an acolyte at Kōfuku-ji Temple in Nara as a boy, and then entering the *gozan* Rinzai Zen temple Tōfuku-ji in Kyoto in his thirties.

Zen in the Muromachi Period

Zen is generally singled out as the most influential school of religious and philosophical thought in the Muromachi period. It reached its peak in the first half of the fifteenth century,¹³⁰ thus overlapping with most of Shōtetsu's poetic career. Zen Buddhism had in fact existed in Japan for centuries, having been introduced to Japan from China as early as the Nara period,¹³¹ but it had not existed as a separate and independent school. 'It was incorporated within the Tendai tradition as one element in the fourfold Tendai practice of sutra study, esoteric rituals, the Vinaya, and

¹³⁰Collcutt describes the first half of the fifteenth century as the 'apogee of [Kyoto *gozan*] prosperity' (*Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.287).

¹³¹Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, p. 122-3.

contemplation. It remained in this subordinate position until the thirteenth century'.¹³² Zen began to assert itself as an independent sect in the early Kamakura period through the activities of the monk Eisai (1141-1215). Eisai had trained as a Tendai priest but became interested in Zen during periods of study in China in 1168 and 1187-91. Upon his return to Japan he taught and practised Rinzai Zen, in combination with Tendai teachings, and established a special rapport with the new warrior government in Kamakura¹³³ who were more amenable to the continental teachings than the resistant and conservative Kyoto aristocracy. It was the patronage that Zen received from the bakufu that in time enabled Zen to step free from other sects and become an independent branch of Buddhism by the mid-fourteenth century.¹³⁴

The close bond between the bakufu and Zen sect, especially the Rinzai sect, was mutually expedient. On the one hand, Zen had to contend with the obstructiveness of the old sects of Buddhism as well with the allure of the new populist Amidist and Lotus sects.¹³⁵ To survive, powerful secular patronage was critical.¹³⁶ This was forthcoming, from both the Hojō regents and the Ashikaga shogun, in the form of invitations of Chinese monks to Japan, the building and endowment of monasteries and the promotion of the spread of Zen.¹³⁷ The bakufu, for its part, was motivated to support Zen for complex reasons. Chief among these was the desire and need to 'create a new religious hierarchy that it could control'¹³⁸ in order to counterbalance the power and aristocratic connections of the old established schools.

There were other factors too which propelled the bakufu into its embrace with Zen, not least of all the bakufu's awareness of its pressing need to equip itself with 'cultural credentials appropriate to their new-found military and political power'¹³⁹ arising from a sense of cultural inadequacy. For

¹³² Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.4.

¹³³ Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, p.123-4.

¹³⁴ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.30.

¹³⁵ Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Pre-modern Japan*, p.21.

¹³⁶ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.26. It should be noted that Zen was not without patronage from Kyoto nobles and members of the imperial family (Collcutt, p. 26). For example, the establishment of the Zen temple Tenryūji in 1344 was due to the combined efforts of Ashikaga Takauji, his brother Tadayoshi, Retired Emperor Kōgon and Zen monk Musō Soseki (Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Pre-modern Japan*, p. 307). Tōfuku-ji, Shōtetsu's Zen temple, enjoyed an 'intimate' relationship with Kyoto *kuge* (noble) society, and was 'lavishly patronised' by the aristocratic Kujō family (Collcutt, p.48), the abbot of Tōfukuji until the late fourteenth century being determined by the Kujō (Collcutt, p. 228).

¹³⁷ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.293.

¹³⁸ Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Pre-modern Japan*, p. 307.

¹³⁹ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.26.

Zen brought to the warrior elite the 'cultural and intellectual achievements of Sung China and the Chinese gentry and aristocracy'.¹⁴⁰ We should also not underestimate the 'attraction of the forthright personalities, mental alertness, wide learning, and physical vigor of Zen monks; admiration for the strict discipline of the Zen monastic life and rule; curiosity about the intellectual horizons reopened through Zen to continental secular culture',¹⁴¹ nor the 'Zen stress on active meditation, man-to-man debate, physical self-discipline, and practical, rather than bookish, experience [which] appealed naturally to the warrior spirit'.¹⁴²

Ideas germane to adroit political husbandry also boosted Zen's appeal to the shogunate, chiefly in the form of Neo-Confucianism whose ideas were widely propagated through the Zen temples.¹⁴³ The Zen institution also came to provide vital personnel for the conduct of diplomacy and trade. For example, Yoshimitsu allowed Zen monks to play a major secular role, especially in foreign policy. This was because the Zen monks themselves were frequently Chinese expatriates, or fluent in Chinese through having spent time there studying. 'Yoshimitsu in effect instituted a department of foreign affairs with a Zen monk at its head, and from his time onwards every delegation sent overseas by the government was led by a Zen monk.'¹⁴⁴ Zen monks played a crucial role in the Ashikaga tally trade with Ming China: they were proficient in Chinese, familiar with the Chinese bureaucracy and business methods, and able to put this expertise to work in translating and drafting documents, and entertaining and negotiating with Chinese delegations.¹⁴⁵ 'Zen monks acted as the envoys-in-chief of most, if not all, of the 19 trading missions sent to China by the *bakufu*, the Ōuchi, and the Hosokawa between 1401 and 1547.'¹⁴⁶ The Zen monks were not mere diplomats or guides — they 'were actively engaged in the Ming trade as merchants...profits were used to acquire Chinese luxury items (*karamono*); others provided capital for money-lending ventures'.¹⁴⁷ Collcutt argues that it was this wealth gained through the Ming trade that enabled the *gozan* temples to flourish culturally and materially, in terms of their architecture, gardens, paintings, tea ceremony

¹⁴⁰ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.59.

¹⁴¹ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.26.

¹⁴² Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p. 61.

¹⁴³ Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, p.125-6.

¹⁴⁴ Tsunoda et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, v. 1, p.256.

¹⁴⁵ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p. 101.

¹⁴⁶ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p. 284.

¹⁴⁷ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p. 284.

rooms and ceramics.¹⁴⁸

Although Zen was at the height of its influence under Ashikaga patronage and had virtually become the state religion, with a Zen temple established in every province,¹⁴⁹ a question mark hangs over the extent to which the successive Ashikaga shoguns can be described as true practitioners of Zen. On the one hand some scholars attest to Yoshimitsu's 'devotion to Zen,' and his custom of practising Zen austerities into the small hours while others were long in bed.¹⁵⁰ Yoshimitsu took orders according to Zen traditions after his retirement as shogun in 1395.¹⁵¹ Yoshimochi is described as 'especially ardent in his [Zen] studies'¹⁵² and as having gained a deep understanding of Zen. Under his influence many warrior lords took on Zen names, built simple Zen-style annexes at their residences and in their fiefs, and practised *zazen* (Zen meditation).¹⁵³ However more recent scholars are sceptical about the depth of the Ashikaga shoguns' spiritual engagement with Zen:

They discussed Zen, attended exotic and elaborate Zen ceremonies, sponsored vegetarian feasts, and organized literary gatherings at Zen temples and sub-temples. None, however, sat consistently in meditation or engaged very seriously in *mondō* or *kōan* practice...the interest of the Ashikaga shoguns in Zen...was cultural rather than religious.¹⁵⁴

Given the intense interest of the warrior rulers in the artistic dimensions of Zen, and their ability to patronise Zen monk artists, it was scarcely surprising that the arts and culture of the Muromachi period became suffused with Zen aesthetic preferences and the Zen metaphysical outlook.

The backing of the shoguns gave unprecedented prestige, wealth, and influence to *gozan* monasteries. Shogunal influence also fostered the development in Japan of ink-painting, calligraphy, poetry, architecture and garden design, the tea ceremony, domestic etiquette, printing and other Zen-influenced arts and crafts which made the Muromachi period one of the most brilliant and fertile cultural epochs in Japanese history.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p. 287.

¹⁴⁹ Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, p. 126.

¹⁵⁰ Varley, 'Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and the World of Kitayama', in Hall and Toyoda, *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, p. 196.

¹⁵¹ Adolpson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Pre-modern Japan*, p. 340.

¹⁵² Awakawa, *Zen Painting*, p. 173.

¹⁵³ Fukuo Kyoju Taikan Kinen Jigyokai, *Nihon Chūsei Shironshū*, p. 179.

¹⁵⁴ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p. 98-99.

¹⁵⁵ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p. 99-100.

Zen temples have been described less as places for practising religious austerities than as 'parks of art and literature'.¹⁵⁶ In fact, it has been argued that as Zen's cultural ascendancy rose, Zen's spiritual energy waned, and that the Zen monasteries were becoming increasingly secular in their orientation by the mid-fourteenth century: spirituality was surrendering to a more worldly preoccupation with 'Buddhist ceremonies, feasts, appointments of abbots, gifts from patrons, temple domains, literary gatherings, political happenings, social events, and climatic changes'.¹⁵⁷ This was the environment chosen by Shōtetsu to support his poetic career, circa 1414 when he was in his thirties and decided to enter Tōfukuji, one of the most important *gozan* temples. It seems reasonable to assume that Shōtetsu recognised in Tōfuku-ji a very promising platform from which to launch his poetic career, and we must accept the possibility that his lifestyle choice was perhaps dictated less by spiritual concerns than by a strong sense of realism.

With this caveat however, a brief review of some of the basic principles of Zen philosophy is necessary to contextualise Shōtetsu's poetry, even though the appeal of Zen to Shōtetsu was possibly more cultural than religious, and less philosophical than fashionable.

Outline of Zen Thought

Daruma (Bodhidharma, 470-543), the Zen patriarch who introduced Zen to China from India in the fifth century, is attributed with these words which sum up the intuitive Zen approach and its main objective of enlightenment:

A special transmission outside the scriptures,
Not founded upon words and letters;
By pointing directly to [one's] mind,

It lets one see into [one's own true] nature and [thus] attain Buddhahood.¹⁵⁸

According to the great Zen scholar Suzuki Daisetz, 'the desire of the Zen believer is to become one with the world about him so as to experience directly the great truth of the universe — that everything is one...'.¹⁵⁹ This is the experience known as *satori* ('enlightenment'): '*satori* is not a mystery or secret or anything intellectual...It is a new view of life and of the universe which must

¹⁵⁶ Hayashiya, 'Higashiyama Bunka', in Ienaga, *Nihon Rekishi v.7 : Chūsei* 3, p.330.

¹⁵⁷ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.100.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Dumoulin, *Understanding Buddhism*, p.113.

¹⁵⁹ Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Buddhism*, p. 23.

be felt'.¹⁶⁰ Depending on sect, *satori* could be attained instantaneously (Rinzai Zen) or gradually (Sōtō Zen).

Above all Zen is an attitude to life in which any act or experience can act as the vehicle of enlightenment, removing all differentiation between minor deeds or great acts: 'Zen was in the monk's moving his limbs, carrying food to his mouth, responding to the calls of nature...Zen was not beyond his ordinary life, it was in great events as well in minor deeds. The monks never despised menial labor; nothing was below their dignity for Zen is life itself'.¹⁶¹

One discipline especially linked with Zen was the practice of meditation and deep contemplation as a means of attaining enlightenment. This method was also adopted by artists: through entering a state of intense concentration on the subject they were trying to depict, artists attempted to capture not so much its physical form as its true spirit and essence, the primordial 'is-ness' of the object. This was no less the case in poetic composition than in the visual arts: The poet 'observes nature not with the physical eye but with the eye of the soul'.¹⁶² \By the same token,

On hymning their scenery, Oriental artists and poets frequently used it as a medium through which to give expression to their own enlightenment. At the same time they sought to help the individual to find himself reflected in a natural scene and thereby attain to something profoundly and limitlessly spiritual.¹⁶³

Running deep in Zen thought was also an awareness of 'the essential meaninglessness of the relative', the idea pithily expressed in this poem by Su Tung-p'o:

From one side the mountain looks rounded;
From another it is pointed.
Because one is on it, it is never the same.
One cannot know the 'true aspect of the mountain',
All one can know is that one is there.¹⁶⁴

This perspective in turn could in turn foster a dangerous and potentially anarchic attitude to all

¹⁶⁰ Eliot, *Japanese Buddhism*, p.49.

¹⁶¹ Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Buddhism*, pp.34-5.

¹⁶² Awakawa, *Zen Painting*, p.24.

¹⁶³ Awakawa, *Zen Painting*, p.20.

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Awakawa, *Zen Painting*, p.25.

aspects of life, a 'devil-may-care' attitude: 'armed with the Zen outlook, one has nothing to fear however the wind may blow or the rain may fall...'.¹⁶⁵ This attitude was no doubt of some psychological comfort to those such as Shōtetsu at certain times in his life when he was sidelined by fate. Perhaps it even fostered his famous iconoclasm. Most typically however awareness of the relativity and thus the meaninglessness of all phenomena led to a desire to escape in pursuit of some *modus vivendi* which could contain true existential meaning.

Older Buddhist Sects in Muromachi Japan

Notwithstanding its influence in the upper echelons of warrior society, Zen did not enjoy a total monopoly over culture, society and spirituality in Shōtetsu's day. Older sects of Buddhism were still powerful, politically and economically, as well as spiritually and culturally. According to Kuroda Toshio, the older traditional sects, namely the Nara sects (especially the Hossō teachings), Tendai and Shingon, 'continued to provide the general [religious] framework and identity until the fifteenth century'.¹⁶⁶ Predictably, gestures of favouritism shown towards Zen establishments by the warrior regime¹⁶⁷ triggered swift and sometimes violent reactions from the older institutions.¹⁶⁸

One of Yoshimitsu's chief political advisors was a Shingon abbot, Mansai (1378-1435), whose 'advice was constantly sought by Yoshimitsu, who was his uncle, and in time by Yoshimochi. He has been described as the Black-robed Prime Minister'.¹⁶⁹ We have already noted in the previous chapter how Yoshimitsu involved himself in the affairs of both the Tendai sect temple Enryakuji and the Hossō sect temple Kōfukuji. The old Buddhist institutions thus still had a powerful role to

¹⁶⁵ Awakawa, *Zen Painting*, p.28.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Pre-modern Japan*, pp.10-11. Even the high-ranking Zen temple Tōfukuji, Shōtetsu's temple, included halls for Tendai and Shingon observances alongside its Zen buildings (Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.43). Many of the Tōfukuji monks had a Tendai or Shingon background (Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p. 45).

¹⁶⁷ For example, the bakufu would fund construction and repairs of Zen temples, but would not extend the same support to the Tendai stronghold, Enryakuji: in 1350, Enryakuji was denied taxes to which it was entitled. The Hie shrine, closely affiliated with Enryakuji, was forced to bear the expenses of the Kamo festival (Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Pre-modern Japan*, pp.311-312).

¹⁶⁸ The Nanzenji incident is probably the most famous example of the power struggle between the traditional sects and Zen's rising influence. In this incident, which in its various ramifications lasted from 1367-1369, the shogunate eventually yielded to the demands of Enryakuji that the tollgate of Nanzen-ji, a *gozan* Zen temple heavily patronised by the shogunate, be torn down. But this was not before the abbot of Nanzenji had managed to call the monks of Tendai 'monkeys and toads'. For more details of this incident, see Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Pre-modern Japan*, pp.310-313.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted from Sansom, *A History of Japan, 1334-1615*, p.160, in Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, p.106.

play that the shogun could not afford to ignore completely in favour of Zen.

Even in terms of the arts, the continuing influence of esoteric Buddhism was not negligible:

to [the medieval arts] Esoteric Buddhism has contributed, not so much the conventions themselves, as the essential concern for proper form ... Seami's [sic] conception of mastery in the Nō, his insistence on prolonged training in orthodox disciplines and in imitation of one's teacher... all attest to the formative influence of this earlier tradition.¹⁷⁰

Shōtetsu's comments in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* often tread remarkably similar ground.

Zen itself had developed to a large extent from the esoteric Tendai sect, especially in the value it placed upon deep concentration and contemplation as a means of attaining enlightenment. 'There is a good deal of continuity between the Tendai Buddhism of the Heian period and the much more famous Zen Buddhism of the Kamakura and Muromachi periods.'¹⁷¹

New Populist Sects of Buddhism

Another major current in Muromachi religious and spiritual life flowed from the new, populist and evangelical sects of Buddhism, especially the Pure Land (Jōdo), the True Pure Land (Jōdo Shin) and the Nichiren sects, which after their emergence in the Kamakura period under such charismatic figures as Hōnen (1133-1212), Shinran (1173-1262) and Nichiren (1222-1282), had gained a strong following by Shōtetsu's era.¹⁷²

Kitagawa claims that by the end of the fifteenth century, the Jōdo sect, which was established in Kyoto in the mid-fourteenth century, had become 'sufficiently strong to rival the power of the Tendai school'.¹⁷³ The True Pure Land (Jōdo Shin) sect was also gaining popularity during Shōtetsu's lifetime. In the early fifteenth century the Jōdo Shin temple Bukkōji in Kyoto enjoyed 'crowds of worshippers, as dense as clouds or mist'.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰Tsunoda et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition* v.1, p.291.

¹⁷¹Konishi Jin'ichi's comments paraphrased in William LaFleur, 'Symbol and Yūgen: Shunzei's Use of Tendai Buddhism', in William LaFleur, *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan*, p.82.

¹⁷²These 'new' teachings had, like Zen, been distilled from the teachings of the older Buddhist schools. Hōnen, Shinran and Nichiren were all originally 'sons' of Tendai (Konishi Jin'ichi, 'Symbol and Yūgen: Shunzei's Use of Tendai Buddhism', in William LaFleur, *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan*, p.83).

¹⁷³Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, p.114.

¹⁷⁴From the sixteenth-century historical account of Bukkōji's origins, *Hompuku-ji Atogaki*, quoted in

The new, simple, non-intellectual teachings of the evangelical sects appealed especially to the common people and the lower-ranking warriors who found the 'no questions asked' Amidist guarantee of instant salvation highly attractive.¹⁷⁵ The simple teaching and militant faith of the Nichiren sect understandably attracted 'warriors and simple folk in the provinces'.¹⁷⁶ The new religions also appealed by default, as the old schools had 'neglected the laymen and laywomen who, as a result, were driven to the simple teachings and cults of Amida pietism'.¹⁷⁷ In fact, part of the increasing assertiveness of the lower classes during the medieval period has been attributed to Amidism and its confident, egalitarian, non-elitist teaching that anyone, regardless of standing, could be admitted to the Pure Land.

Amidism also had its devotees among the elite: Yoshimasa himself, despite taking the tonsure and the name of a Zen monk, had a keen interest in the Jōdo sect,¹⁷⁸ while his Higashiyama estate, although better known for its inspiration in Zen, also maintains a strong Jōdo element.¹⁷⁹ One social principle underlying the Amidist sects, as we have noted, was egalitarianism, and Yoshimasa practised this philosophy to some extent, especially in his patronage of the outcast class as artists whom he welcomed into his salons.¹⁸⁰ Significantly his tea room in Tōgūdō at Ginkakuji was named Dōjinsai ('all people the same').¹⁸¹

The great Nō playwright Zeami, generally associated more with Zen than Amidism, nonetheless comments in similar fashion: 'Although their positions in society differ [those of high or low birth, man or woman, priest, rustic, beggar, or outcast], the fact that they can all appreciate the beauty of flowers makes flowers of them all.'¹⁸²

Kasahara, *A History of Japanese Religion*, p. 203. The popularity of the temple lay in its teaching that its teachers and priests were incarnations of Amida himself, and held the salvation or damnation of their worshippers in their own hands (Kasahara, *A History of Japanese Religion* p.202).

¹⁷⁵ As Collcutt concedes, despite Zen's popularity and influence in the Muromachi period, it 'probably had still not replaced devotion to Kannon, Jizō, the Lotus Sutra, or the Pure Land of Amida in the hearts of most ordinary, and many high-ranking, Japanese samurai. Zen in the Kamakura and Muromachi periods can be called "the religion of the samurai" only in the sense that most patrons of Zen were samurai, not in the sense that it was practiced assiduously or exclusively by all, or even perhaps the majority, of those who would be described as warriors' (Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p.80).

¹⁷⁶ Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, p. 122.

¹⁷⁷ Kitayama, *Religion in Japanese History*, p.104.

¹⁷⁸ Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, p. 99.

¹⁷⁹ Hayashiya, 'Higashiyama Bunka', in Ienaga, *Nihon Rekishi v.7: Chūsei 3*, p. 329.

¹⁸⁰ Hayashiya, 'Higashiyama Bunka' in Ienaga, *Nihon Rekishi v.7: Chūsei 3*, pp. 330-1.

¹⁸¹ Murai, 'The Development of *Chanoyu*', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p.24. There is an obvious paradox here, for Yoshimasa was also notorious for his unconscionable extravagance and excesses which impacted disastrously on the lower classes.

¹⁸² Quoted in Tsunoda et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, v. 1, p.284.

In Shōtetsu's poetry of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, there is little which directly indicates any great interest or concern on the part of Shōtetsu with the lives of those outside the elite, or the egalitarian spirit, but in his other works we do find such evidence. For example, in *Sōkonshū* common people such as cormorant fishers, peasants harvesting rice, travellers drinking sake as they travel, and mountain dwellers carrying firewood appear not infrequently on its pages, and are depicted with some sympathy.¹⁸³ But in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* there is just one poem reflecting a similar interest in other classes: Poem 39¹⁸⁴ which describes the songs in the paddyfields of the peasants planting rice.

Shinto in the Muromachi Period

No mention has been made so far of the position of Shinto in Shōtetsu's era. In fact, as Kuroda Toshio has cogently argued, the extent to which it is even valid to discuss Shinto, or the worship of native deities, as if it were an independent and discrete religion in medieval times is questionable, so completely had it coalesced with Buddhism.¹⁸⁵ 'During medieval times Shintō was generally interpreted as one part of Buddhism...Shinto was drawn into this Buddhist system as one segment of it, and its religious content was replaced with Buddhist doctrine, particularly *mikkyō* [esoteric teachings] and Tendai philosophy.'¹⁸⁶ The rationale which had enabled this syncretism to evolve was the ingenious concept of *honji suijaku* ('manifestation of the prime noumenon'¹⁸⁷), which had matured from the mid-Heian period. According to *honji suijaku*, which was based on Tendai doctrine,

the kami are simply another form of the Buddha, and their form, condition, authority, and activity are nothing but the form and the acts by which the Buddha teaches, guides, and saves human beings. Shinto, therefore, was independent neither in existence nor in system of thought. It was merely one means among many by which the Buddha guides...and converts...sentient beings.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ Inada et al., *Chūsei Bungaku no Sekai*, p.69.

¹⁸⁴ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2:74

¹⁸⁵ See Kuroda Toshio, 'Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion', in Tanabe, *Religions of Japan in Practice*, pp.451-467.

¹⁸⁶ Kuroda Toshio, 'Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion', in Tanabe, *Religions of Japan in Practice*, p. 460.

¹⁸⁷ *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary* definition .

¹⁸⁸ Kuroda Toshio, 'Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion', in Tanabe, *Religions of Japan in Practice*, p. 461.

In the earlier stages of syncretism, the kami were very much the junior partner, depicted as ‘secondary’ emanations (*suijaku*) of ‘primary’ Buddhist divinities (*honji*), but as syncretism matured new views of the kami emerged accompanied by sects attempting to secure a more significant place for their deities within the Buddhist paradigm. In the Kamakura period sects such as Ryōbu Shintō, Sannō Shintō and Ise (Watarai) Shinto had emerged, finally culminating in Yoshida Shinto in the Muromachi period, founded by Yoshida Kaneyoshi (1435-1511). Yoshida Shinto turned earlier syncretic Shinto sects on their heads by claiming that kami were the prime entity and buddhas and bodhisattvas were merely manifestations of the kami.¹⁸⁹

Although further research may prove to the contrary, there is no evidence in Shōtetsu’s works of any particular interest or involvement in the new Shinto sectarian teachings. This is notwithstanding the fact that one of his patrons and contemporaries, the great statesman, poet and scholar, Ichijō Kanera (1402-1481), who wrote the preface to Shōtetsu’s *Sōkonshū* as well as compiling Shōtetsu’s 1,000 poem anthology *Shōtetsu Senshu*, was also a prominent Shinto apologist contributing to contemporary debate. Shōtetsu’s religious behaviour appeared to follow a more conventional form of syncretism wherein his status as a Buddhist monk formed no impediment to his frequent worship at shrines such as the Kitano Shrine, the Hie Shrine or the Sumiyoshi Shrine, or his presentation of *hōraku* (*waka* compositions to bring pleasure to the gods), of which abundant examples exist in *Sōkonshū*.¹⁹⁰

Thus regardless of the various debates of the day surrounding the native kami, these appear to have had little effect on the vitality and continued popularity of shrine cults in general. The references to religious behaviour we find in Shōtetsu’s writing support this impression of a deep, unabated faith in the native deities which even the popular new forms of Buddhism could not dent. In fact, it is argued that the increasing popular appeal of Buddhism in the medieval era may have been partly because of the appropriation of Buddhism by Shinto: ‘people eventually came to accept Buddhist *bodhisattvas* on the same level as their Japanese *kami*.’¹⁹¹

One significant facet of Shinto in Shōtetsu’s era, already touched on in Section 4 of this chapter, is

¹⁸⁹ Matsumoto Shigeru, ‘Introduction’, in Tamaru and Reid, *Religion in Japanese Culture*, p.19.

¹⁹⁰ *Hōraku*, which were later taken over by Buddhism, had originated in a Shinto cult of offering songs at sacred places (*tamuke*). Plutschow, *Chaos and Cosmos*, p.157.

¹⁹¹ Earhart, *Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity*, p.107.

the considerable commercial power and influence enjoyed by many of the major shrines in and near the capital. These shrines were generally linked with powerful temple complexes in the vicinity. For example, the Kitano Shrine in Kyoto, a branch shrine of Enryakuji and often frequented by Shōtetsu, acted as patron for the highly profitable sake malt guild, which had 'exclusive right to supply malt to the sake brewers of Kyoto'¹⁹², receiving taxes and dues in return for its protection. The sake malt guild's monopoly lasted from 1379 to 1444 when it lost the support of the bakufu, and also ironically Enryakuji. Upon the loss of the monopoly, the Kitano Shrine 'had to be subdued with force'¹⁹³.

The shrines also participated actively in the political power structure, lending their weight to support the major temples of the capital region such as Enryakuji and Kōfukuji in their numerous conflicts with the bakufu.¹⁹⁴ The divine demonstrations (*gōso*) staged by the temples relied very heavily on the participation of symbols of the kami, usually *mikoshi* (portable shrines) on behalf of Enryakuji or *shinmoku* (branches of the sacred *sakaki* tree festooned with mirrors) on behalf of the Kasuga or Kumano shrines. The disapproving presence of the kami in the capital could be guaranteed to produce the desired effect for the aggrieved parties: the native kami had a dramatic influence that could not be matched for example by Buddhist images: 'the influence of the native deities was simply more widely felt [than that of the Buddhist deities] throughout Japanese society...the kami can be viewed as more malevolent than the Buddhist deities...more capable of inflicting curses and creating misfortunes for the living'.¹⁹⁵

* * * * *

This therefore is the extraordinary scene in which Shōtetsu participated and composed his poetry. The time has now come to scroll out his poetry alongside that scene, and scan it for signs of an 'exchange' with its environment or, conversely, total detachment in the spirit of pure aestheticism.

¹⁹² Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan*, p.329.

¹⁹³ Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan*, p.329.

¹⁹⁴ For a comprehensive and detailed account of these conflicts see Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan*.

¹⁹⁵ Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan*, p.267.

CHAPTER THREE

SHŌTETSU'S POETIC WORLD

1. An Overview of Shōtetsu's Poetry in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*

Some observations have already been made in the Introduction concerning the characteristics of Shōtetsu's poetry. In the present chapter we will attempt to elaborate a little further as a prelude to presenting the poetry itself.

Shōtetsu's poetry in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* comprises forty-eight poems in *waka* genre. While over half of these poems have their source in *Sōkonshū* and Shōtetsu's other collections, twenty are unique to *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. The existence or absence of other sources for poems is signalled in footnotes following the Japanese version of each poem. Reference to these sources provides further information about the circumstances of their composition; conversely, absence of other sources may indicate that the poem was composed specifically for *Shōtetsu Monogatari* and is therefore datable to Shōtetsu's later years, copied from other materials now lost, or written from memory. Above all the existence of these twenty poems unique to *Shōtetsu Monogatari* illuminates *Shōtetsu Monogatari*'s significance not only as a poetic treatise but also as a discrete record of some of Shōtetsu's poetry duplicated nowhere else.

Of the twenty poems only to be found in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, some are not positively identifiable as Shōtetsu's but may be regarded with considerable certainty as such on the basis of their context and the commentary accompanying them.¹

With the exception of a handful of poems which are quoted in isolation and have no accompanying commentary, almost all the poems by Shōtetsu in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* are explicitly exemplary poems perhaps composed specifically for his students' instruction, or quoted from a previous occasion, and resurrected to illustrate some point of poetic theory or practice. Therefore, regardless

¹ When in doubt I have deferred to the opinion of the scholar Inada Toshinori, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.1162-5. As some indication of the degree of dissent among scholars over which poems belong to Shōtetsu, it is interesting to observe that the scholar Shirai Chūkō attributes just thirty-nine to Shōtetsu (*Kajin Shōtetsu Kenkyū Josetsu*, p.143). The conservative *Shinpen Kokka Taikan* ascribes authorship positively to Shōtetsu in just twenty-six poems (v. 5, pp.1115-17).

of the circumstances under which the poems may originally have been composed, in the context of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* the poems by Shōtetsu comprise poetry composed or quoted for pedagogical, instructional purposes.

With regard to poems which he has quoted from an earlier occasion, many were originally composed for parties or poetry gatherings. These situations are clearly documented in some cases, for example Poem 1, composed at a party held at the residence of a member of the military elite, or Poem 18, composed at a gathering at Imagawa Ryōshun's residence. We can surmise that the primary purpose of many of these 'social' poems was not so much to express Shōtetsu's own private feelings and perceptions as to impress his audience by their skill, ingenuity and aesthetic appeal. Written to impress, such poetry was also therefore in a sense strategic and propagandist. As a demonstration of his particular poetic style, it was intended to defend and enhance his own position and also hopefully to attract pupils to his instruction, an activity directly related to his livelihood. As pointed out on Chapter One, during his years of greatest popularity, his income was dependent completely upon the munificence of his patrons and pupils. The fact that he was so active in poetic circles is thus not only a sign of his extraordinary creative energy, but also, we suspect, his awareness of the importance of making frequent 'publicity' appearances. This therefore is one mundane, rather sordid aspect of the reality against which many of the poems which we discuss in the present study were probably originally composed.

On the other hand, the poems which yield no details of the original circumstances in which they were composed may well be Shōtetsu's private, personal works written purely for his own pleasure, self-expression and solace, jotted down in his numerous notebooks, or scored in his memory, which he has decided to share with his pupils.

Since the original circumstances of composition of many of the poems in our sample are unclear or speculative, in our present overview of Shōtetsu's poetry we will make no distinction between his social and private poetry, and will concern ourselves chiefly with the poetry itself.

Like Teika before him, Shōtetsu's poetry, ironically in view of its possibly rather pragmatic motivations, was founded on purist aesthetic principles of 'art for art's sake' and detachment from the real world, whether this was the real world of bitter poetic rivalries or rebellious warrior lords. Teika had written in his diary *Meigetsuki* (1180-1235), 'although the din of war and subjugation

fills my ears, I will make no comment on this. The conquests of the red flag [of the Taira] have nothing to do with me.² Shōtetsu's poetry shows the same deliberate withdrawal from reality and the creation of an imaginary, illusory world of beauty, emanating in part from his own nostalgic vision of the aristocratic Heian past, which offered respite and release from the many intolerable aspects of the real world.

The fact that Shōtetsu appears to have modelled his aesthetic attitude on Teika's is not merely a function of his adulation of the earlier poet. It reflects, we speculate, the impact of similar external circumstances on similar artistic sensibilities, for the political and military upheavals of Shōtetsu's day closely resembled those at the beginning of Teika's Kamakura period when the old aristocratic order as a political force was experiencing its death throes.³ It was this reality which seems to have exacerbated both Teika and Shōtetsu's desire to escape into the rarified world of their imagination. Here the only function of the real world was to provide raw materials which were then refined and purified by their artistic sensibility to create an aesthetic world of transcendental beauty.⁴

Seen from one angle, however, Shōtetsu's retreat into the world of the imagination was paradoxically the ultimate act of acknowledgement through repudiation of the real world and its ghastliness. Its exclusion from his poetry tacitly yet powerfully affirmed its existence as well as its total unacceptability to Shōtetsu. The following observation which was made about Jane Austen's work seems strangely pertinent in this context:

No fictional landscape has ever been more strategic, more expressive, in a constant if undeclared mode, of a moral case. What is left out is, by that mere omission, acutely judged.⁵

Despite these observations, we cannot say that vibrant elements of Muromachi reality do not creep into Shōtetsu's poetry from time to time. Although Shōtetsu's real contemporary world is generally barred from his poetry in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, we can glimpse occasional images of travelling pilgrims (Poem 44), aspects of contemporary folklore and folk practice, for example, the *chinowa*

² Quoted in Inada et al., *Chūsei Bungaku no Sekai*, p.3.

³ Teika's above-cited comment, written in 1180, shows the Taira clan in the ascendant at this point in their struggle with the Minamoto, but this position was rapidly undermined.

⁴ Inada et al., *Chūsei Bungaku no Sekai*, p.66-7.

⁵ Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, p.9.

(‘hoop of purification’) in Poem 7, or imagery of the architecture and carpentry which were flourishing in Shōtetsu’s era (Poem 16). These images remind us with a jolt that Shōtetsu was after all a real person inhabiting a real world, which despite his efforts he could not totally exclude from his poetry.

Having established the overriding aestheticism of his poetry, let us now turn our attention to some of its other notable features. In the first place, Shōtetsu’s poetry can be seen as deeply conservative and retrospective, evident in its overall adherence to the standardized themes, restrictive diction and conventional rhetorical techniques⁶ established over the preceding centuries in the imperial *waka* anthologies and adjudications of poetry competitions. Our assertion of conservativeness may be confirmed firstly by analysing the thematic range of our sample. We find that it differs little from the variety of themes to be found in the great *waka* works of preceding eras.

The themes occurring in Shōtetsu’s poetry in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* may be analysed as follows. Of the forty-eight poems, nineteen may be classified as descriptive odes to the beauty of nature.⁷ Eighteen of his poems concern love and its vicissitudes and variations.⁸ The remainder, as well as some poems which also overlap with the above two categories, deal with themes such as the mortality of all life forms (Poem 4), the wretchedness of existence (Poem 6), the passage of time and the relentlessness of the seasons (Poems 7, 24, 28, 32, 35), the self-perpetuating forces of nature (Poem 8), the ephemerality of all phenomena (Poems 8, 30, 40), the dual nature of reality (Poems 9, 41), old age (Poems 18, 35, 48), solitude (Poem 19), Fate (Poems 2, 27), the universality of human activity (Poem 39), pilgrimage (Poem 44), the piety of poetry (Poem 45). Most of these themes had gained currency since Heian times and earlier. Others are more distinctly medieval, especially themes more transcendental in inspiration, such as the dual nature of reality and the piety of poetry.

In his range of imagery and poetic diction, Shōtetsu followed a similarly conservative line. His creativity in this area is constrained by tradition and precedent. Indeed, it could not have been

⁶ Time-honoured devices as pivot words and puns (*kakekotoba*), semantically associated imagery (*engo*), pillow words (*makurakotoba*), anticipatory prefaces (*jo*).

⁷ Poems 6, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37, 40, 42, 47 fall into this category.

⁸ Poems 1, 2, 27: separation of lovers; Poems 5, 13, 14, 22, 25: unrequited love; Poem 12: impossible love; Poem 16: new love; Poems 21, 36: unfulfilled love; Poem 26: wariness of love; Poem 29: betrayal in love; Poem 31: love's rebuffs; Poem 38: stolen /forced love; Poems 43, 45: unconfessed love.

otherwise: E.H.Gombrich makes the following perceptive observation:

Even the greatest artist...needs an idiom to work in. Only tradition, such as he finds it, can provide him with the raw material of imagery which he needs to represent an event or a 'fragment of nature'. He can re-fashion this imagery, adapt it to its task, assimilate it to his needs and change it beyond recognition, but he can no more represent what is in front of his eyes without a pre-existing stock of acquired images than he can paint it without the pre-existing colours which he must have on his palette.⁹

With regard to its imagery and diction, therefore, Shōtetsu's poetic lexicon is rich in the language of the canonical imperial anthologies, although with an expected bias towards the preferences of the period of the *Shinkokinshū*: dusk, snow, mountains, autumn breeze, spring breeze, dew, blossoms, moon, dreams, tears, wild geese, frost, pine trees, cuckoo, sleeves, waves, scarlet leaves and wisteria adorn Shōtetsu's *waka*. Within these constraints, however, Shōtetsu exercised his own aesthetic preferences to produce his own distinctive poetic flavour, an important aspect of his poetry which will be discussed in more detail below.

Shōtetsu's poetry also reveals its retrospective, conservative qualities in its profound intertextuality. Shōtetsu was extremely erudite and literate in the great classics of the past including *The Tale of Genji*, *Sagoromo* (c.1070), *Tales of Ise*, *Makura no Sōshi*, *Tsurezuregusa*, the *Manyōshū*, the *Kokinshū* and the *Shinkokinshū*. References to these works abound in the text of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. In his poetry his familiarity with the classics was reflected in his deft and confident use of *honkadori* (allusive variation)¹⁰ and his deliberate evocation of famous episodes in classical romances.¹¹

Conservatism therefore provided Shōtetsu with the essential materials and tools of his poetry. What interests us now, and what has endowed Shōtetsu's poetry with its uniqueness, is the original way in which he manipulated these materials and tools to special aesthetic effect, quite outstripping the poetry of his contemporaries. He was putting into practice Teika's famous dictum articulated in his

⁹ Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and other Essays on the Theory of Art* quoted in Steiner, *After Babel*, p.461.

¹⁰ For example, Poem 13, based on one of Teika's love poems, or Poem 28, echoing a *Shinkokinshū* poem by the priest Nōin (b. 988). *Honkadori* is said to be a technique which came of age with Teika's poetry (Inada, *Chūsei Bungaku no Sekai*, p. 17).

¹¹ For example, Poem 38, alluding to Prince Niou and Ukifune's affair in *The Tale of Genji*.

poetic treatise *Kindai Shūka* (1209): *kotoba wa furuki o shitai, kokoro wa atarashiki o motome* ('old words, new spirit'). In counterpoint with his conservatism, his poetry shows an innovative and experimental spirit¹² of which he was shamelessly proud:

We are told not to be imitative in our composition, and so, in my attempt to be original, I have thrown myself into the jungle of new ideas.¹³

This attitude has often been interpreted as iconoclastic,¹⁴ not surprising in view of his own provocative comments such

the content of poems in the *Kokinshū* is superb, but their diction is antiquated and not suited to modern day poetry. Just because a poem is to be found in the *Kokinshū* does not mean all *Kokinshū* poems are suitable for allusive variation.¹⁵

Probably the main barb of contention lay in Shōtetsu's idiosyncratic style and its complexity and abstruseness. This defied the ideals of simplicity and clarity favoured by Nijō poets. This complexity is especially evident in syntactically-contorted poems such as Poem 20 where the subject and its predicate are inverted and separated by the body of the poem in a most un-Japanese fashion, or in poems which are pieced together so tightly and intensely that they are cryptic and almost impenetrable (for example, Poems 29 and 38). When challenged on this aspect of his poetry, Shōtetsu defended himself by invoking the precedent of Teika's poetry: 'absolutely none of his poems are simple and straightforward' argued Shōtetsu.¹⁶

The scholar Shimazu Tadao has contended that the abstruse quality of many of Shōtetsu's poems in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* is because Shōtetsu has used this treatise to single out and interpret what he considers to be his most difficult works in *Sōkonshū*.¹⁷ Further study of a broader sample of Shōtetsu's poetry is necessary to confirm or refute this theory.

Iconoclastic complexity is one facet of the uniqueness of Shōtetsu's poetic compositions, but

¹² Since Shōtetsu was in fact modelling his poetry on poetry written two hundred years earlier, we may be challenged for calling it 'innovative'. Nonetheless, it was regarded as such both by himself and his audience.

¹³ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 59.

¹⁴ For example *Waka Bungaku Daijiten*, p. 511, describes him as a 'heterodox poet' (*ishoku kajin*). He is described in similar terms in Kitagawa and Kubota, *Nihon Bungakushi* v. 3: *Chūsei no Bungaku*, p. 253.

¹⁵ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:24

¹⁶ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:22

¹⁷ Discussion with Shimazu Tadao, Prof. Emeritus, Osaka University, 31.6.90.

overall we would argue that it is overshadowed by the distinctive aesthetic effect which Shōtetsu creates through his imagery. As we have pointed out above, Shōtetsu's imagery is selected from the conventional *waka* repertoire, but in his choice and his predilection for certain images, he is able to exercise his own aesthetic preferences from which emerges the characteristic aura of his poetry. In particular, we suggest that the images analysed below play a major role in creating the atmosphere which typifies Shōtetsu's poetic world, its dreamlike, even hallucinatory quality, its hazy, twilight beauty, its pale radiance, its cold austerity, its interplay of stillness and turbulence. In addition, and of direct relevance to the argument of the contextuality of Shōtetsu's poetry, we contend that the same images through the qualities which they embody - fragility, violence, disruption, turbulence, chaos, ephemerality, mortality, nostalgia - serve as powerful links between the inner world of Shōtetsu's poetry and the outside world, windows through which we can glimpse the aspects of the world, and existence itself, which particularly preoccupied Shōtetsu.

One property common to these images, as we shall discover when we study the actual poems in which they occur later in this chapter, is the indeterminateness and ambivalence of their symbolic connotations. Examples could be cited such as the image of 'autumn dusk' (*aki no yūgure*, Poem 6) which while intensely beautiful also carries powerful, grim reverberations of the passage of time, transience and mortality. Likewise, 'cloud', so often suggestive of the fleeting beauty of cherry blossoms (Poem 40), also carries negative overtones of cremation and death, as in Poem 22 where 'cloud' is in fact used as a metaphor for crematory smoke. In this way, Shōtetsu seems to be recognising that no image can be relied upon to express unequivocally just one quality or concept, because reality itself exists in a perpetual state of self-contradiction, instability or *mujō*.

And now let us identify the images, or types of image, which we maintain draw attention to themselves by their recurrence in our sample of Shōtetsu's poetry and the strong aesthetic impression which they create:

Images of haziness and cloud. These occur in nine poems: *kumo* 'cloud' (3, 22), *kumoru* 'to grow cloudy' (9), *ukigumo* 'floating cloud' (31), *shirakumo* 'white cloud' (40), *kasumu* 'to be misty' (12, 17, 28), *kemuri* 'smoke' (43).

Images of the dark or dusk: These occur in nine poems: *yūbe* 'early evening' (3, 28, 42), *yoi*

'night' (18), *yūgure* 'dusk' (6), *yūmagure* 'obscurity of dusk' (12), *yo* 'night' (19, 40), *yowa* 'dead of night' (30). Note that many poems also implicitly evoke darkness or the night through their situation, for example, Poems 1, 8, 10, 25, 36, 46.

Images of the moon and moonlight. These occur in four poems: *yūzukunfto* 'crescent moon' (10), *ariake no tsuki* 'moon at dawn' (12), *kage/tsukikage* 'moonlight' (19, 30).

Images of frigidity. These occur in six poems: *yuki* 'snow' (3, 9, 15), *usugōri* 'thin ice' (10), *asashimo* 'morning frost' (21), *shigure* 'sleety rain' (9). In these images, Shōtetsu seems to be anticipating the chill beauty of Shinkei's poetic.

Wind imagery. This occurs in eight poems: *arakikaze* 'wind' (13), *hatsukaze* 'first breeze of spring' (11), *akikaze* 'autumn wind' (5), *matsukaze* 'wind through the pines' (20), *okitsukaze* 'onshore breeze' (23), *yamakaze* 'mountain wind' (33), *urakaze* 'wind from the bay' (47), *arashi* 'storm' (31).

Images of waves, in three poems: *nami* 'waves' (29), *fujinami* 'waves of wisteria' (34), *shiranami* 'white waves' (38). (Wind imagery and wave imagery can also be considered as a combined category, depicting qualities of turbulence and incessant movement.)

Water imagery and imagery associated with bodies of water, in seven poems: *kakikomoru mizu* 'hidden water' (8), *mizunaki sora* 'waterless skies' (10), *nagisa* 'water's edge' (17), *Yasukawa no ukise* 'shallows of the Yasukawa' (29), *mizu asaku* 'shallows' (30), *namida no taki* 'cascade of tears' (37), *yuku mizu* 'moving waters' (41).

Precarious, fragile imagery, in seven poems: *yuki no kakehashi* 'snow-ladder' (3), *semi no tsuyu no mi* 'body of the cicada as fleeting as the dew' (4), *tsuyu* 'dew' (5), *awa* 'bubbles' (8), *yūgao* 'moonflower' (8), *yūzukunfto* 'crescent moon' (10), *usugōri* 'thin ice' (10), *isago* 'sand' (23), *koke no ito* 'strands of hanging moss' (33).

Dreams, in three poems : 18, 36, 40.

Singing/crying creatures, in nine poems: *semi* 'cicada' (4), *tori* 'birds' (10), *hatsukari* 'wild

geese' (20), *hototogisu* 'cuckoo' (24, 35, 37, 42), *mozu* 'shrike' (32), *kawazu* 'frog' (41)

Human 'music' in four poems : *kane* 'temple bell' (28), *tauta* 'rice-planting songs' (39), *suzu* 'pilgrim's bell' (44), *nori* 'sutras' (46).

Flowers, in six poems: *yūgao* 'moonflower' (8), *kokoro no hana* 'flowers in the heart' (11), *haru no hana* 'flowers of spring' (17), *fuji* 'wisteria' (34), *hana* 'blossom' (40), *hitoeda no hana* 'spray of blossom' (48).

Imagery of journeying, in fourteen poems: *okuru* 'to farewell' (1), *yukusue* 'place for which one is bound' (2, 22), *watarikane* 'cannot cross' (3), *seki no to* 'barrier gate' (15), *wataru* 'traverse' (20), *karu* 'move away' (21), *yadori* 'shelter' (27), *wakareji* 'parting of ways' (27), *ikuramu* 'will go/depart' (28), *koekanete* 'cannot traverse' (31), *yama koete* 'crossing mountains' (38), *tabi yukeba* 'when I travel' (39), *kono tabi* 'this journey' (44).

Special attention must also be paid to the sensory appeal of Shōtetsu's imagistic choices. Visually, the world of Shōtetsu's poetry is a monochrome, chiaroscuro world. The colour associations of the images he prefers are predominantly black (crags), white (snow, clouds, white waves, sand), brown (wild geese) or deep green (pines). The monochrome effect is reinforced when images are combined with one another as in Poem 9, where the white snow-covered slopes of a mountain are scattered with stark black trees whose boughs have broken under the weight of the snow. The aesthetic similarity between such poems and Zen charcoal ink paintings needs scarcely to be pointed out.

Aurally, many poems in our sample show a preference for eerie sound effects. The sounds which echo through the poetry of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* are not the cheerful noises of the bustling medieval market-place or even the chatter of court ladies: instead we note the relentless cry of the cicada (4), the mournful song of the *hototogisu* (24,35,37,42), the cry of the marshbirds unable to nest (10), the calling of the wild geese (20), the moaning of autumn gales (13), the sigh of the wind in the pines (23), or the wind at the seashore carrying the sound of the waves (23). In general the sounds are created by phenomena of the natural world, but the sound of a lover's bitter sobbing (5, 25, 36, 37) is audible in some poems, another poem reverberates with the knell of a temple bell

(28) and yet another with the mystic chant of the sutras (46) or the jangling of a pilgrim's bell (44).

Another prominent characteristic of Shōtetsu's imagery in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, inherited from Teika and latterly the Reizei poets, is his experimentation with startling and unexpected imagistic juxtapositions, often involving synaesthetic effects. Sometimes his poems contain images of overt synaesthesia, such as the combination of aural and visual imagery in the line *iriai no kane no kasumu ka na* describing the 'misty' knell of the evening temple bell (Poem 28). Sometimes the synaesthetic effect is more subtle, but no less effective, involving the concentration and interpenetration of different sensory impressions in one brief poem. For example, in Poem 10, Shōtetsu combines visual imagery (the crescent moon in the night sky) with tactile imagery (the cold film of ice which will not shatter) and auditory imagery (the cry of the marshbirds). Such techniques move the reader from the plane of normal experience to a dimension in which all rational barriers appear to have dissolved and sensations can move and blend freely with one another. Shōtetsu achieves a similar disturbing effect through startling, surrealistic, figurative language, for example, Poem 11 where the first breeze of spring is depicted as blowing through the hearts of man. Physically this is impossible, but in the emotional sense, and due to the suspension of reality which occurs when we read Shōtetsu's poetry, we understand almost perfectly what the poet is trying to express.

Shōtetsu's predilection for detailed, concentrated imagery can likewise be traced to his poetic apprenticeship in the Reizei school, with its

tendency to use detailed imagery and especially images with a very narrow focus ... This tendency seems to grow from a desire to treat the moment with complete accuracy ... as if the closeness of their observation drew the poets ever nearer to what they chose to describe. Both the temporal and spatial dimensions of the natural scene are often reduced in order both that observation may be as accurate as possible and that perception may be comparably intense.¹⁸

This drive was not unrelated to the Zen desire to penetrate to the 'suchness' of a phenomenon. One of the favourite Reizei images of this type was *kozue* ('tree-tops'),¹⁹ an image which also appears in

¹⁸ Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p.383.

¹⁹ Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p.383.

our sample (Poem 4 where cicadas singing in the tree-tops are described). Other narrowly focussed imagery punctuates our sample of Shōtetsu's poetry, for example, the dangling branches of trees after a snowstorm in Poem 9 or the wind stirring tendrils of hanging moss in Poem 33.

* * * * *

In this section we have outlined the most important aspects of Shōtetsu's poetry. We have discussed its aims and purpose, its consciously aesthetic orientation and its innovativeness within the restraints of the conservative waka tradition. We have especially focussed on its imagistic characteristics. We have, however, avoided discussing arguably the most quintessential aspect of Shōtetsu's poetry, its expression of *yūgen*, which lies at the heart of Shōtetsu's poetic vision. For its complexity and importance, this merits an independent section.

2. Shōtetsu's Interpretation of *Yūgen*

Yūgen is of paramount significance as an aesthetic ideal in Shōtetsu's poetic: the term occurs nine times in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*²⁰ and must be regarded as one of Shōtetsu's major preoccupations. It is also one area in which the rich intertextuality of Shōtetsu's poetic is most apparent.

Yūgen is not an aesthetic property which is easy to grasp, especially for Westerners, being unavailable in Western poetic criticism, despite the excitement it aroused in some twentieth-century writers such as W.B. Yeats.²¹

Even among Japanese scholars, *yūgen* has gained notoriety as an abstruse quality which is almost impossible to define.²² This is partly on account of its history of constant metamorphosis and reinterpretation. The term *yūgen* always existed in a fluid state, ever since it was first appropriated by Japanese poetics in the Chinese preface of the *Kokinshū* (commissioned 905).²³

By the time *Shōtetsu Monogatari* was completed (about 1448), the term *yūgen* had been

²⁰ 1: 25, 41,42, 69, 82, 90; 2: 7, 77,100.

²¹ Yeats had encountered the concept of *yūgen* through his interest in the Nō drama: he had occasion to read English translations of Nō drama being edited by Ezra Pound and was so inspired that he produced dramatic works of his own in imitation of the Nō.

²² This is no recent phenomenon. As early as the thirteenth century scholars were at a loss to explain the term. For example, Kamo no Chōmei in his treatise on the theory of poetry, *Mumyōshō* (1209), described *yūgen* as a style 'whose very name is enough to confound one' (Quoted from *Mumyōshō*, in Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p.269).

²³ Kazamaki, 'Shōtetsu no *yūgen*', in *Kazamaki Keijirō Zenshū* v.7: *Chūsei Waka no Sekai*, p. 357. The *Kokinshū* had both a Chinese and a Japanese preface.

circulating and modifying its meaning for well over five hundred years. Various major literary figures, including Fujiwara no Shunzei, Fujiwara no Teika and Kamo no Chōmei, all contributed to the formulation of the *yūgen* aesthetic, and the situation was further complicated by the entry of the Nō drama into the debate in the fourteenth century. Shōtetsu's interpretation of *yūgen* has been described as the final metamorphosis of *yūgen* before the theory moved into the realm of renga and the Nō drama.²⁴ For this reason it can also be called the transitional phase of *yūgen*.

Definitions of *yūgen*

Despite the difficulties, both Japanese and Western scholars have made valiant and convincing attempts to elucidate the term *yūgen*.

Regardless of century or context, the connotations of *yūgen* can be traced back (sometimes the connection is rather tenuous) to the original meanings of its constituent characters. The meaning of its first constituent character *yū* (幽) is 'faint, dim, vague, indistinct, deep, profound, abstruse, recondite, coming from a great depth'. Its second constituent character *gen* (玄) indicates a 'state existing in the depth of all things which is not easily understood, subtle and mysterious'.²⁵ As the compound *yūgen*, its primary meaning is given as

being deeply moving in effect, but intellectually unfathomable; deep, recondite and unknowable. In ancient China it indicated the realm of the shades.²⁶ Latterly it was used by Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu²⁷ to express the abstruseness and subtlety of the state of Buddhist and metaphysical enlightenment.²⁸

It is pertinent to observe that in their original Chinese usage, the characters for *yūgen* had definite colour connotations: *yū* suggests a bluish-black or greenish-black hue. *Gen* is black with ocre in it.²⁹

²⁴ Kazamaki, 'Shōtetsu no *yūgen*', in *Kazamaki Keijirō Zenshū* v.7: *Chūsei Waka no Sekai*, p. 358.

²⁵ *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, v.19, p.636.

²⁶ *Yūmei no kuni* (the 'realm of the shades, the after-life').

²⁷ Founders of Taoism from the sixth century B.C.

²⁸ *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, v.19, p. 636.

²⁹ Dr Rosemary Haddon, Dept. of East Asian Studies, Massey University, a scholar of Chinese literature, provided this information, 14.3.1996.

Secondary dictionary definitions of *yūgen* take their lead from its primary definitions, either in the intellectual direction of 'being indeterminate , unknown' or in the aesthetic direction of 'being full of artistic effect; charming' or 'refined and gentle; elegant and gentle with a refined beauty'.³⁰

The scholar Konishi Jin'ichi further explores the early metaphysical and initially Taoist connotations of *yūgen* :

yūgen (Ch. *yu-hsuan*) was originally used to describe Lao Tzu's and Chuang Tzu's perception of the profundity of the Tao. Both components of the word, 'yu' and 'hsuan' signify 'reddish-black.' The association with concepts of darkness and obscurity led to the words acquiring a more abstract sense: they came to mean 'uncertain,' 'unclear,' 'difficult to understand.' Eventually 'yu' and 'hsuan' were used in reference to philosophical depth. During the Six Dynasties period, San-lun Buddhism [J.Sanron ...] used Taoist terms to explain the doctrine of emptiness (Skt. *sunyata*); 'yu-hsuan' was used as a compound from this point. In the Sui dynasty T'ien-t'ai [J. Tendai] Buddhism, also centered on the emptiness doctrine, frequently used 'yu-hsuan.' In later centuries , Ch'an [J. Zen] employed the term to express the profundity within non-being (Ch.wu, J. mu...).³¹

What is fascinating about Konishi's discussion here is its treatment of *yūgen* as a metaphysical or philosophical concept equated with the 'profundity of non-being' in its Taoist, Tendai or Zen sense. Moreover this understanding, we contend, lies at the core of *yūgen*'s interpretation in medieval waka, including Shōtetsu's.

In *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, the usage which commands the most extensive array of examples and the one which should particularly concern us here is the definition of *yūgen* as a concept in literary theory and poetics:

The sense of *yūgen* meaning recondite and unfathomable was appropriated and the term used to express an aesthetic idea sought after in poetic expression in early medieval times . It was a development of the principle of *mononoaware* [the beauty and pathos of perishability]. At first it was considered to be one form of *yojō* [the rich and complex

³⁰ *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, v. 19, pp.636-7. Examples of all the above usages include those pre-dating or contemporary with Shōtetsu.

³¹ Konishi, *A History of Japanese Literature v. 3: The High Middle Ages*, pp. 185-6.

overtones of a poem] in poetry, both Chinese and Japanese. It seems to have meant a hushed and tranquil beauty intended to hint at and subtly evoke a sense of mysterious profundity aloof from the trivialities of the ordinary world. Thereafter the term gave rise to a variety of interpretations, both as an artistic principle or as jargon used in waka criticism. It was used to signify beauty with a symbolic sort of artistic impact based upon an underlying tone of *yūen* [refined charm³²] or was thought to refer to a beauty which harmonised various other kinds of beauty such as *en* [a sublime, romantic dreamlike beauty³³], *yūbi* [elegance], and *aware* [the beauty and pathos of perishability]. Also some contended it took *en* a step further and indicated a tranquil beauty of refined simplicity. This evolved via the *Nō* drama into Bashō's ideal of *sabi* in the Edo period.³⁴

This lengthy definition demonstrates not only the complexities of *yūgen* but also the gradual shift in the meaning of *yūgen* away from a sense of profound and mysterious depth to an aesthetic term signifying elegant, sublime and perishable loveliness.

Brower and Miner in *Japanese Court Poetry* translate *yūgen* as 'mystery and depth' and define it thus:

The mid-classical ideal of tonal complexity conveyed by the overtones, or *yojō*, of poems typically in the mode of descriptive symbolism...normally characterised by sadness, imagery of a veiled, monochromatic nature, and an atmosphere of rich, mysterious beauty.³⁵

Despite...historical, critical, and semantic vicissitudes, the core of *yūgen* remained the ideal of an artistic effect both mysterious and ineffable, of a subtle, complex tone achieved by emphasizing the unspoken connotations of words and the implications of a poetic situation...The principal vehicle for *yūgen* ...was descriptive poetry...; its typical imagery was calm, quiet, and muted...; and its characteristic tone was one of sadness or wistful melancholy.³⁶

³² Translation of *yūen* in Konishi, *A History of Japanese Literature v. 3: The High Middle Ages*, p.185.

³³ Interpretation by Kindaichi Haruhiko in *Shinmeikai Kogo Jiten*, p.161.

³⁴ *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, v. 19, p.637. It is pertinent to note that among the plethora of original textual examples of *yūgen* which follow the above definition in this dictionary, one of Shōtetsu's own definitions of *yūgen* from *Shōtetsu Monogatari* is included (*Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2:77). Thus Shōtetsu's contribution to the evolution of *yūgen* is formally recognised by this authoritative dictionary.

³⁵ Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p.514.

This is a helpful and enlightening analysis which captures succinctly some important aspects of *yūgen*.

Yūgen as Symbolism

As the above definitions reveal, scholars have presented *yūgen* as an ineffable, unfathomable quality which defies specific description. It can, however, be contended that the term has been over-mystified, and that it is, after all, a concept not too alien even to Western scholars. For, as the scholar Kazamaki Keijirō cogently argues, no word in modern language succeeds in expressing the effects of *yūgen* better than the modern term 'symbolism', which he further defines as 'the meaning beyond the meaning of the words, a hovering shadow'.³⁷ This surely is close to what Shōtetsu means when, in an attempt to explain *yūgen*, he observes that 'the quality *yūgen* exists in the heart and is not stated in words',³⁸ or when he discusses the special effect of Teika's poetry: 'There hovers an intangible presence (*kage soite*) beyond the words of Teika's poems, and when I read them, I feel somehow immensely moved.'³⁹ This evocation of an indeterminate, emotionally-charged presence hovering just beyond the poem is uncannily close to what is understood in modern poetics by the term 'symbolism'. Moreover, both styles of *yūgen* and symbolism constitute, it can be argued, an invitation to the reader or audience to explore the depths of their imagination and subconscious. William LaFleur has written in the following way about Shunzei's aesthetic:

It is clear that Shunzei's view of poetry included what has recently been called 'the indeterminacy of meaning' ... For him, the 'dimension of depth' in poetry had nothing to do with a determinate 'meaning' that had been coded into a poem by the poet to then be decoded by the sensitive hearer or listener ... The openendedness of both phenomena and interpretation are very important for understanding Shunzei... in Shunzei's view the depth of poetry is not a place but a process ... It is not a determinate point at which the interpreter arrives after doing a certain amount of linguistic homework to solve conundrums built into the poem by its author. It is much closer to what George Steiner calls the 'rich undecidability' aimed at by a poet.⁴⁰

³⁶ Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p.265-6.

³⁷ Kazamaki, 'Shōtetsu no *yūgen*', in *Kazamaki Keijirō Zenshū* v. 7: *Chūsei Waka no Sekai*, p.364-5.

³⁸ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2:77.

³⁹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 68.

⁴⁰ LaFleur, 'Symbol and *Yūgen*: Shunzei's Use of Tendai Buddhism', in Sanford, LaFleur and Nagatomi,

This perhaps explains how poems by Shunzei, Teika and Shōtetsu have the ability to strike a deep affective note even in Western readers oblivious to any reverberations from elsewhere in the classical tradition. Poetry in the *yūgen* style entices the reader or audience to enter the zone of 'rich undecidability', triggered by the imagery and substance of the poem and limited only by the imagination of the reader. The poem therefore points to an indefinable and infinite depth beyond itself - the plenitude of symbolic potential.

Yūgen and *Mu*

The above comments lead us to ponder a little more deeply the relationship between *yūgen* and *mu*. *Mu* denotes here 'Nothingness' or 'the Void' in the Oriental, Buddhist understanding of the term,⁴¹ that is, not the absence of existence, but paradoxically, the 'plenitude of being':

the world of multiplicity with its infinitely divergent things and events is seen to be ultimately reduced to the state of unity, in which things lose their ontological differences and become submerged in an absolute undifferentiation. This state of undifferentiation is technically designated by the term 'Nothing' or 'Nothingness'. It will be obvious that the Nothing thus understood is the plenitude of being [italics mine], for it is the *urgrund* of all existential forms ... Every single thing, while being a limited, particular thing, can be and is any of the rest of the things: indeed it is all other things.⁴²

If the aesthetic experience of *yūgen* entails a journey into the infinite and limitless, it does not seem unreasonable to see an equivalence between experiencing the effects of *yūgen* and the experience of *mu*.

This link between *yūgen* and *mu* is by no means coincidental, since Shunzei, one of the early formulators of theories of *yūgen*, was profoundly interested in Tendai doctrines⁴³ and sought to compose poetry which mirrored the Tendai contemplative process. In Tendai jargon this was called *juke-nyūkū* and *jukū-nyūke* or 'leaving the provisional and entering into the empty' and 'leaving the

Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan, pp. 32-3.

⁴¹ An enlightening article exists on the difference in perception of Nothingness between the West and the East in Abe, 'Non-Being and Mu: The Metaphysical Nature of Negativity in the East and West', *Religious Studies*, June, 1975, pp.181-192.

⁴² Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, pp.127-8.

⁴³ Readers are referred to LaFleur's 'Symbol and *Yūgen*: Shunzei's Use of Tendai Buddhism' in Sanford, LaFleur and Nagatomi, *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan* for a detailed study of the

empty and entering into the provisional'.⁴⁴ Shunzei suggested that a successful poem should have a similar effect. It will firstly release the reader into 'the beyond', into a dimension of infinite depth and possibility, a super-reality. However, ultimately the reader will be brought back to the phenomenal world and the immediate scene described. In the end it is the phenomenon which prevails: it is the phenomenon which provides the key to enter the infinite realm of associations and reverberations, and once again, at the end of this process, the existence of the phenomenon is asserted. The ultimate destination of the *yūgen* style in Shunzei's poetry is therefore the immediate imagery of the poem itself. Yet this phenomenon will now be perceived in a heightened, enlightened fashion, in the same way that a room may look when the lights are switched off, then on, with a dazzling new clarity. The same effect is on occasion also achieved in Shōtetsu's poetry, probably as a result of Shōtetsu's absorption of Tendai ideas via Zen as well as Shōtetsu's own admiration for Shunzei's poetic techniques.

With this preamble, it is necessary now to attempt to identify what *yūgen* signified to Shōtetsu and how his interpretation conformed with or differed from that of his literary predecessors.

Shōtetsu's *Yūgen* and Teika's *Yojō Yōen*

Shōtetsu's *yūgen* crystallised from pre-existent interpretations of *yūgen*, including some spurious sources, with which he had come into contact over his lengthy literary career. His *yūgen* is conventionally bracketed with Teika's. This is hardly surprising in view of Shōtetsu's ardent cult of Teika. For Teika, *yūgen* signified a complex band of poetic qualities, where overtones, the use of allusion to earlier poetry and literary masterpieces, and an atmosphere of romantic, gentle and mysterious beauty all intermingled.⁴⁵ It appears to have been almost interchangeable with *yojō yōen*, a style of richly-nuanced, ethereal loveliness especially favoured by Teika in his younger years, 'poems of depth and resonance in the manner of *yūgen* and with the sorts of subtle overtones prized by Shunzei but presented in a dreamy atmosphere and with ...greater rhetorical ingenuity'.⁴⁶ *Yojō* refers to an aesthetic quality of deep resonance and reverberation evoking a sense of a

impact of Tendai doctrine on Shunzei's poetics.

⁴⁴ La Fleur, 'Symbol and *Yūgen*', pp.30-1. In Tendai doctrine this process is called *santai* or the 'three stages of truth'. The third stage was 'the perfectly balanced co-dependence of the void (*kū*) and the provisional (*ke*), that of the middle (*chū*)' (La Fleur, 'Symbol and *Yūgen*: Shunzei's Use of Tendai Buddhism', in Sanford, LaFleur and Nagatomi, *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan*, p.31).

⁴⁵ Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p. 268.

⁴⁶ Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.55.

presence beyond the immediate situation of the poem. *Yōen* signifies an ethereal beauty evoking ‘a romantic other worldly beauty like that of “a heavenly maiden descending to the earth on a hazy moonlit night in spring”’.⁴⁷ Teika’s admiration of poetry in the *yojō yōen* style is made explicit in his treatise *Kindai Shūka*, where he criticizes Ki no Tsurayuki's (ca.868-945) poetry for its lack of qualities of *yojō yōen*. Instead he praises the poetry of the generation before Tsurayuki, especially the poetry of Ariwara no Narihira (825-880) and Ono no Komachi (early Heian period, precise dates uncertain).⁴⁸

So deep was Shōtetsu's admiration of Teika’s *yojō yōen* style that he came to treat it as completely synonymous with *yūgen*, even though Teika himself never bracketed the two styles quite so blatantly. Shōtetsu provides unwitting evidence of his identification of *yojō yōen* with *yūgen* in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, where he quotes, or rather, misquotes from Teika’s *Kindai Shūka*. He allows a most revealing inaccuracy to creep into his quotation, exposing the extent to which *yojō yōen* and *yūgen* overlapped in his mind. In his quotation, he unconsciously substitutes Teika's original words *yojō yōen* for the term *yūgen* :

Lord Teika wrote, ‘the poet Tsurayuki wrote poems of great power but nothing showing outstanding qualities of *yūgen*’.

Teika in fact had written, ‘the ancient poet Tsurayuki...did not write poems in the style of *yojō yōen*’ and no mention of *yūgen* is made!

The association in Shōtetsu's mind between *yojō yōen* and *yūgen* is made doubly clear by the poems he chooses to quote in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* as exemplary works by other poets in the *yūgen* style. For example Shōtetsu describes the following poem by Shunzei's Daughter (ca. 1175-1250) as ‘an extremely fine example of *yūgen*’,⁴⁹ but it also has distinct characteristics of the *yojō yōen* style in its romanticism, suppressed passion, delicacy and its fusion of dream and reality:

Aware naru

Kokoro nagasa no

⁴⁷ Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p.513. They do not identify the source from which they quote.

⁴⁸ *Karonshū Nōgaku Ronshū*, pp.100-3, and p.255, nn. 2 and 6. Shōtetsu is likewise a fan of Narihira, and has occasion to quote one of Narihira’s most famous poems in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 20.

⁴⁹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 42.

Yukue to mo mishi
Yo no yume o
*Tare ka sadamemu*⁵⁰

Our dream-like night together -
The outcome of year upon heart-breaking year of patient waiting -
Would others merely dismiss it
As the sad hallucination of a love-crazed mind
That has waited too long?

[Shunzei's daughter's poem] provides an extremely fine example of *yūgen*. No one but the speaker and her lover know about the intimacy of that night. If others knew how she had waited patiently all alone for so long, they would say she had just dreamt of the vows they had exchanged. This is the idea around which the poem revolves.

Shōtetsu also quotes a poem by Teika as a 'fine example' of the *yūgen* style, which again Shōtetsu appears to have interpreted in terms of *yojō yōen* :

Yasurai ni
Idenishi mama no
Tsuki no kage
Wa ga namida nomi
*Sode ni matedomo*⁵¹

He slipped out just for a moment
Never to return
Like the moon's rays
And yet my tears wait in vain on my sleeves
Yearning to sparkle again!

⁵⁰ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 42.

⁵¹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 90.

In this poem, as in the above example, the powerful emotions of the speaker are unmistakable, yet sublimated in the best tradition of *yojō* in the imagery of tears ‘waiting’ in vain to sparkle again. The delicate, ethereal imagery of moonbeams and teardrops sparkling in the moonlight and the courtly atmosphere of the romantic situation, which would not have been out of place in *The Tale of Genji*, would have appealed to Shōtetsu’s sense of *yōen*, which he nonetheless calls here *yūgen*.

The identification which Shōtetsu made between the *yojō yōen* style and *yūgen* is further demonstrated by the poems Shōtetsu selects from his own compositions to illustrate the *yūgen* style.⁵² For example his poem on ‘spring love’, exceptional for its hazy, dream-like qualities and deep romanticism:

Yūmagure

Sore ka to mieshi

Omokage no

Kasumu zo katami

*Ariake no tsuki*⁵³

In the gathering dusk

I thought for a moment I saw you my beloved

Now at dawn

I treasure a haunting keepsake of your misty form —

The moon cloud-hazy in the brightening sky

The poet has a brief encounter with his lover in the dusk, at the time of day when the mists come down. He wonders if it is in fact the lady he loves whom he sees. He carefully stores the memory of her looks in his mind’s eye. Because the memory of her face comes to mind when he gazes at the moon in the dawn sky the next morning, he declares that is something vague and indistinct which serves as a memento of her looks. The scene of thin wisps of cloud veiling the moon, or cherry blossoms half visible in the mist is so beautiful that it transcends poetical language and its content, existing in a state of *yūgen* and soft elegance

⁵² Shōtetsu holds up three of his compositions as exemplars of the *yūgen* style: Poems 3 (*Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:19), 12 (*Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:69) and 40 (*Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2:77).

⁵³ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 69.

beyond the realm of language.⁵⁴

The final sentence of Shōtetsu's above commentary on his poem has become one of Shōtetsu's most famous articulations of his interpretation of *yūgen*, revealing the close correspondence between Shōtetsu's version of *yūgen* and the qualities of *yojō yōen*.

The Influence of Apocryphal Texts

Quite apart from the example and influence of Teika's own poetic style, it is not difficult to understand how Shōtetsu came to identify *yūgen* with *yojō yōen*. There were in fact apocryphal treatises purportedly written by Teika circulating at the time which explicitly defined *yūgen* in terms of *yojō yōen*.⁵⁵ It is claimed that the innovative Reizei school with which Shōtetsu closely associated played a role in the preparation of such manuscripts.⁵⁶ Moreover, and this may perhaps serve to mitigate Shōtetsu's unintentional foolishness, it is believed that even these forgeries had some element of authentic Teika input. Of one forgery, the *Sangoki*, for example, it was said that there were 'still many of the master's words in the book'.⁵⁷ As an example of how such texts reinforced the identification of *yojō-yōen* with *yūgen*, the apocryphal *Sangoki* subdivides *yūgen* into a style of 'drifting clouds' (*kōuntei*) and 'whirling snow' (*kaisetsutei*), styles which properly belong to the category of *yōen*, as the poems given as examples in *Sangoki* demonstrate.⁵⁸ Another apocryphal Teika treatise, *Guhishō*, analyses *yūgen* in similar fashion, and explains how *yūgen* in its sub-style of 'drifting clouds' is found in poems which are 'soft and elegant, refined, evocative of wisps of cloud lightly trailing the moon'. The substyle of 'whirling snow' (*kaisetsu*), the treatise continues, is to be found in poems 'elegant and graceful, and delicate, as in a scene of snowflakes whirling and fluttering in a light wind'. *Guhishō* depicts both styles as essentially feminine and charming in effect,⁵⁹ exhibiting qualities which Teika would have described as *yōen*.

⁵⁴ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 69.

⁵⁵ For example, *Guhishō* (Secrets of a Fool), *Sangoki* (Record of Thrice Five Nights), *Gukenshō* (Notes on My Foolish Views), *Kirihioke* (The Paulownia Brazier) and *Miraiki* (Record of the Future) (Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p. 53).

⁵⁶ Haga, 'The Wabi Aesthetic', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu*, p. 212.

⁵⁷ Thus commented Tō no Tsuneyori in his *Tōyashū Kikigaki*, quoted *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p. 53.

⁵⁸ Hisamatsu and Nishio, *Karonshū Nōgaku Ronshū*, p.172, n.6.

⁵⁹ *Guhishō*, quoted Kazamaki, 'Shōtetsu no Yūgen', in *Kazamaki Keijirō Zenshū* v. 7: *Chūsei Waka no Sekai*, p. 367.

The direct imprint of these apocryphal texts is readily discernable in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. In *Shōtetsu Monogatari* Part One, Paragraph 19, Shōtetsu comments:

A style evocative of snow whirling in the wind, or wisps of mist trailing across the cherry trees in bloom creates a poem which in some inexplicable way is arresting and hauntingly beautiful.

In Part Two, Paragraph 100, at the end of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, he unflinchingly defines such a style, which should properly be called *yōen*, as *yūgen*:

what can we call *yūgen* ?...Since the style of trailing clouds or whirling snow is called the *yūgen* style, should we call the effect of clouds trailing in the sky or snowflakes drifting on the wind the *yūgen* style?

He then quotes extensively verbatim from the apocryphal *Guhishō*. *Guhishō* uses a Chinese legend to illustrate the qualities of so-called *yūgen*, where the 'morning clouds' and 'evening rain' serve as keepsakes of a heavenly maiden beloved of the sovereign who must finally return to her celestial home. Shōtetsu concludes the paragraph by providing an image from his own imagination which he suggests evokes *yūgen* and its 'style of subtle, hazy profundity (*hyōhaku to shite aru tei*):

the atmosphere surrounding four or five court ladies clad in silk trousers gazing at the profusion of blossoms in full bloom at the southern palace.

This passage, which is literally Shōtetsu's last word on *yūgen*, succeeds in pinpointing the various ingredients which blend together in his conception of *yūgen*: a dreamlike quality and pervasive romanticism, nostalgia, a courtly elegance and sense of exquisite, feminine beauty, a 'subtle, hazy profundity', and an inherent symbolism. These qualities, needless to say, could be more properly described as *yojō yōen*. It is this wholehearted absorption of the lesser *yojō yōen* aesthetic into *yūgen* which can be seen as Shōtetsu's main contribution to the evolving *yūgen* aesthetic.

Influence of Shunzei, Chōmei and Kenkō

It would be wrong to belittle Shōtetsu's interpretation of *yūgen* on the basis of the role played by

apocryphal texts. On the contrary, there is also ample textual evidence in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* to reveal that Shōtetsu was well-acquainted with reputable, earlier explorations of the *yūgen* aesthetic engaged in especially by Shunzei,⁶⁰ Chōmei and Kenkō. For example, Shōtetsu's image of 'wisps of mist trailing across the cherry trees in bloom' cited above may have been influenced by apocryphal texts, but it also shows the distinct influence of Shunzei's words in *Jichin Oshō Jikaawase*, where lingering and subtle emotion like 'the haze that trails over the cherry blossoms in spring' is advocated:

If it is a good poem, it will possess a kind of atmosphere that is distinct from its words and their configuration and yet accompanies them. The atmosphere hovers over the poem, as it were, like the haze that trails over the cherry blossoms in spring, like the cry of the deer heard against the autumn moon, like the fragrance of spring in the flowering plum by the garden fence, like the autumn drizzle that drifts down upon the crimson foliage on some mountain peak.⁶¹

However, Shunzei's particular influence perhaps lies above all in the transcendentalism which marks some of Shōtetsu's poems in the *yūgen* style, for example:

Sakeba chiru

Yo no ma no hana no

Yume no uchi ni

Yagate magirenu

*Mine no shirakumo*⁶²

Flowering only to scatter

A dream of blossoms

In the space of the night into which

The white clouds on the peaks

⁶⁰ Shōtetsu was an enthusiastic admirer of Shunzei's poetry, and quotes or alludes to four of his poems in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* in 2:17, 36 and 44.

⁶¹ From *Jichin Oshō Jikaawase* in *Nihon Kagaku Taikei* v.2, p.358, quoted in Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p. 266. Jichin (1155-1225), also known as Jien, was head of the Tendai sect of Buddhism four times, and was also a prominent poet in the same circles frequented by Shunzei and Teika. He has ninety-two *waka* in the *Shinkokinshū* (Hisamatsu, *Biographical Dictionary of Japanese Literature*, pp.126-7).

⁶² *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 77.

This is a world of 'Being they are not. Not being, they are',⁶³ teetering on the very borderline of the real and the imagined, the Is and the Was, the present and the past, existence and non-existence. One is seduced by the possibility that Shōtetsu's special *yūgen*, for all its delicate Teika-esque ethereality, was perhaps not so far removed after all from the original metaphysical meaning of *yūgen*, in the Taoist-Tendai-Zen sense of the 'profundity within non-being'. If on the surface this poem provides a fine example of the role played by Teika's *yōen* in Shōtetsu's *yūgen* aesthetic, it also reveals a persistent influence of the older *yūgen* style practised by Shunzei. The poem shows that however greatly *yūgen* had evolved by the time of Shōtetsu, it still retained something of its original mysticism, demonstrating the durability of the link between the aesthetic and metaphysical experience.

A close correspondence can indeed be perceived between the process into which the reader is drawn by the poem above and the *santai* ('three stages') practice in Tendai doctrine which was espoused by Shunzei and inherited by Zen followers: affirmation (of the initial physical existence of the cherry blossoms); denial and vacuum (the cherry blossoms scatter and they may have been merely a dream in any case); finally reaffirmation (the previous phenomenon of blossoms has disappeared, only to be replaced by a new phenomenon from the emptiness, namely the clouds, which Shōtetsu is able to admire in their own right for their own intrinsic beauty). If the process is successful, enlightenment or *satori* into the true nature of reality should ensue. Thus through this poem Shōtetsu can be said to enable the reader to experience vicariously *satori* or an intuitive insight into the mystery and profundity which lies beyond our normal existence.

If the transcendentalism of the poem bears Shunzei's imprint, Shōtetsu's commentary which follows seems to bear a distinct resemblance to Kamo no Chōmei's aesthetic discourse on *yūgen* in his treatise *Mumyōshō*.⁶⁴ Shōtetsu writes:

This poem has qualities in common with the poetic styles of 'scudding clouds' or whirling snow'. A style evocative of snow whirling in the wind, or wisps of mist trailing

⁶³ Quoted from Haga, 'The *Wabi* Aesthetic', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu*, p. 204.

⁶⁴ This treatise on the theory of poetry was written around 1209.

across the cherry trees in bloom creates a poem which in some inexplicable way is arresting and hauntingly beautiful. A poem which is mutely suggestive, as if shrouded in haze, will be without equal. This sort of poem can be likened to a beautiful court lady, who is plunged deep in anxious thoughts, but speaks nothing. She says nothing and yet it is clear she is anxious. Or it is like a little child of two or three years old, who addresses you with something in his hand, saying 'This, this...'. Although he wants you to do something for him, he is not explicit about what he wants. And so there is great merit in poems which leave something unsaid.⁶⁵

Chōmei himself had written in *Mumyōshō*:

The qualities deemed essential to the style [of *yūgen*] are overtones that do not appear in the words alone and an atmosphere that is not visible in the configuration of the poem. When both conception and diction are full of charm, these other virtues will be present of themselves. On an autumn evening, for example, there is no color in the sky nor any sound, yet although we cannot give any definite reason for it, we are somehow moved to tears. The average person lacking in sensibility finds nothing at all impressive in such a sight- he admires only the cherry blossoms and the scarlet autumn leaves that he can see with his own eyes. Or again, it is like the situation of a beautiful woman who, although she has cause for resentment, does not give vent to her feelings in words, but is only faintly discerned - at night perhaps - to be in a profoundly distressed condition. The effect of such a discovery is far more painful than if she had exhausted her vocabulary with jealous accusations or made a point of wringing out her tear-drenched sleeves to one's face...How can such things be easily learned or expressed in words? The individual can only comprehend them for himself. Again, when one gazes upon the autumn hills half-concealed by a curtain of mist, what one sees is veiled yet profoundly beautiful; such a shadowy scene, which permits free exercise of the imagination in picturing how lovely the whole panoply of scarlet leaves must be, is far better than to see them with dazzling clarity before our eyes ... It is only when many meanings are compressed into a single word, when the depths of feeling are exhausted yet not expressed, when an unseen world hovers in the atmosphere of a poem, when the mean and common are used to express the elegant, when a poetic conception of rare beauty is

⁶⁵ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:19.

developed to the fullest extent in a style of surface simplicity - only then...will the poem be capable of softening the hearts of gods and demons.⁶⁶

Moreover, even in Chōmei's perception of *yūgen* there exists a quality of ethereal, somehow luminous and scintillating beauty which could account for the role of *yōen* in Shōtetsu's interpretation of *yūgen*. For example, in the work *Eikyokushū*,⁶⁷ Chōmei provides a metaphor for *yūgen* explaining how 'poetry which takes its form from *yūgen* [is] an uncertainty of heart and words like looking upon a mirage of shimmering heat waves in an azure sky'.⁶⁸ Thus *yōen* in Shōtetsu's aesthetic can be traced to sources other than Teika and apocryphal texts.

Shōtetsu was also closely acquainted with Yoshida Kenkō's aesthetic theories, articulated in his masterpiece *Tsurezuregusa*. Shōtetsu undertook two transcriptions of *Tsurezuregusa*,⁶⁹ both still extant, which provide proof of his familiarity. Indeed, in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* Part One, Paragraph 74, Shōtetsu quotes directly from one of the most famous passages in *Tsurezuregusa*, which we quote here in full:

Are we to look at cherry blossoms in full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless? To long for the moon while looking on the rain, to lower the blinds and be unaware of the passing of spring- these are even more deeply moving. Branches about to blossom or gardens strewn with faded flowers are worthier of our admiration....the moon that appears close to dawn after we have long waited for it moves us more profoundly than the full moon shining cloudless over a thousand leagues. And how incomparably lovely is the moon, almost greenish in its light, when seen through the tops of cedars deep in the mountains, or when it hides for a moment behind clustering clouds during a sudden shower! The sparkle on hickory or white-oak leaves seemingly wet with moonlight strikes one to the heart....And are we to look at the moon and the cherry blossoms with our eyes alone? How much more evocative and pleasing it is to think about the spring without stirring from the house, to dream of the moonlit night though we remain in our room!⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Quoted Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p.269.

⁶⁷ This work, a treatise on music, was completed between 1177 and 1181, when Chōmei would have been in his twenties. Chōmei was a talented musician.

⁶⁸ *Eikyokushū* in *Nihon Kagaku Taikei*, v.13, p.312. Quoted and translated Haga, 'The *Wabi* Aesthetic', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu*, p. 204.

⁶⁹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.113-14.

⁷⁰ Keene, *Essays in Idleness*, pp.115-18.

Shōtetsu's comment:

People who do not have an appreciation of *yūgen* will say 'the moon is most beautiful shining in the clear unobscured heavens', and this is only to be expected. *Yūgen* lies in the indefinability of what it is that is so appealing and awe-inspiring.

seems to echo Kenkō's aesthetic in *Tsurezuregusa*. Moreover, as with Chōmei's discourse, Kenkō likewise suggests a relationship between *yūgen* and qualities of *yōen* in his imagery of moonlight sparkling on the hickory or white-oak leaves, and the moon at dawn.

Shōtetsu's *Yūgen* and Zeami's *Yūgen*: A Twin Evolution

A discussion of other influences upon Shōtetsu's *yūgen* would not be complete without mentioning Shōtetsu's contemporary Zeami (1363-1443) who elevated the Nō drama to new heights of artistry. Zeami inherited and refined theories of *yūgen* expounded by his father Kanami (1333-1384), for whom it expressed 'a simplified, elegant expression of phantasm'.⁷¹ We have no evidence that Shōtetsu and Zeami ever met or even knew of one another's existence, despite the fact that they were circulating in the same artistic milieu. However, perhaps because they were both subject to the same tides of influence, Zeami's interpretation of *yūgen* is remarkably akin to Shōtetsu's. In *Fūshikaden* (1400), Zeami writes, 'the principal actor should be vivid (*hanayaka*). This constitutes *yūgen*.' He gives the following examples of *yūgen*: 'the fine bearing of a nobleman or woman' and 'the elegant manner of speech of a nobleman or religious dignitary.' He also says that 'a simple softening of form is the essence of *yūgen*'.⁷² In his *Nō Sakusho* (1423), Zeami mentions fitting subjects for the characterization of *yūgen*: These include Ariwara no Narihira and Hikaru Genji among men and Ono no Komachi, Giō, Gijō, Shizuka Gozen, and Hyakuman among women.⁷³ All these personages - both historical and fictional- convey a beauty tinged with a lingering emotion, an aristocratic, feminine beauty derived from the emotional aesthetic tastes of Heian court literature, a

⁷¹ Inoura and Kawatake, *The Traditional Theater of Japan*, p.83.

⁷² Quoted in Haga, 'The Wabi Aesthetic', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu*, pp. 208-9.

⁷³ Ariwara no Narihira and Genji were the epitomes of the ideal Heian nobleman and lover. Ono no Komachi was an important early Heian *waka* poet renowned for her beauty. Giō and Gijō were two *shirabyoshi* dancers/courtesans who gained the favour of Taira no Kiyomori (1118-81) at the height of his power, but later became Buddhist nuns. Shizuka was the courageous mistress of Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159-89). Hyakuman was a popular fourteenth century dancer. All figure in the Nō drama repertoire (Rimer and Yamazaki, *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*, pp.271-4).

vivid, gentle, elegant beauty.⁷⁴

* * * * *

Some scholars have denied that Shōtetsu ever managed to achieve *yūgen* at all in his poetry. Kazamaki Keijirō claims that he failed to attain his ideal, arguing that the sheer abundance of his poetry stands as a damning memorial to his dissatisfaction with his own compositions as evocations of *yūgen*.⁷⁵ This interpretation is difficult to accept. Whatever critics may have said, Shōtetsu himself evidently found *yūgen* in his own poetry. For example, he is able to assert confidently that Poem 40, 'Sakeba chiru'⁷⁶ is a poem 'in *yūgen* style'. The sheer quantity of his poetry must be acknowledged as evidence of his irrepressible creativity and desire to continue experimenting, not his dissatisfaction with his works to date.

Perhaps we should rather appraise Shōtetsu's *yūgen* on the basis of what it achieved and nurtured. Without doubt, Shōtetsu's *yūgen* provided the vital link in keeping *yūgen* alive when the tradition of *waka* poetry all but perished: his *yūgen*, crystallizing and synthesizing a wide range of earlier expressions of *yūgen*, was passed on into the poetry of his pupil Shinkei where its ceaseless metamorphosis continued, diversifying further into the aesthetics of renga, the Nō drama and *wabicha*. This tangible achievement must surely serve as the firmest empirical evidence of the existence of Shōtetsu's *yūgen*, and its ultimate valorization.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Haga, 'The Wabi Aesthetic', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu*, p. 208-9.

⁷⁵ Kazamaki, 'Shōtetsu no *yūgen*', in *Kazamaki Keijirō Zenshū* v. 7: *Chūsei Waka no Sekai*, p.375.

⁷⁶ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 77.

3. Annotation of Shōtetsu's Poems in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* Part One

The following two sections provide an annotated translation with commentary of all complete poems by Shōtetsu included in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. A total of forty-eight *waka* poems are discussed, with special emphasis on identifying, where appropriate, any features of the poems which show their contextuality. Other sources for each poem are cited in the footnote attached to the romanized version of the poem. *Sōkonshū* denotes the chronologically-arranged *Shikashū Taisei* edition.

Each poem is allocated a number (eg. Poem One) according to the order in which it appears in the *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* edition of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. The reference in square brackets indicates the poem's location in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. For example, Part 1 Paragraph 16 is expressed as [1:16].

Poem One [1:16]

[*A poem composed*] at a party held at the residence of Naitō Shirōzaemon alluding to clothing and love :

Chigiritsutsu

Okurishi hodo no

Toshi o heba

Koyoi ya naka no

Koromo naramashi ⁷⁷

If the same long years must elapse before our next meeting

As have already passed

Since we made our promises and I farewelled you

May we wear our middle gowns

In midnight's intimacy this midway night!

Naitō Shirōzaemon. No further information is available on the identity of this person, but the Naitō

⁷⁷ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

family were retainers of the Hosokawa clan⁷⁸ whose poetry gatherings Shōtetsu often attended.

Okurishi. Two meanings of *okuru*, 'to farewell someone' and 'to pass time', are intended here.

Naka no koromo. This is the punchline of the poem. Literally it means 'middle robe' and refers to the garment worn under the *naoshi* (ordinary Court outer robe) and over the *hitoeginu* (unlined slip). It was often used as a nightgown. Here however Shōtetsu also uses it as a metaphor for the brief meeting of the lovers which like the 'middle robe' sandwiched between two other robes is sandwiched between two long periods when the lovers cannot meet.

Commentary

This poem is not specifically indicated as one of Shōtetsu's compositions but the comments which accompany it, in which Shōtetsu relates the other guests' blank response to the poem, make it obvious that it is his own work: 'None of the guests understood the poem. They all asked one another whether it alluded in some way to the *Tale of Genji*. I did not compose the poem with the *Tale of Genji* in mind in the slightest.'⁷⁹ Moreover, the far-fetched poetic conceit centered on *nakanokoromo* is typical of Shōtetsu's poetic style, as are the paradoxical lines *Okurishi hodo no/Toshi o heba* (lit., 'if we pass the years to the extent that we have already passed them').

An excellent commentary explaining the central concept of the poem is provided by Shōtetsu himself:

... the garment worn when lovers spend the night together is called a night robe, or a 'middle' robe. I have built the poem around this word in a novel way, expressing the idea that when two lovers meet again one night after many years, and are faced with the prospect that as many years must pass again before they can meet once more, then they should meet that night in the intimacy of their middle gowns. The pun on 'midway' night and 'middle robes' comprises the essence of the poem. I am astounded that people nowadays do not understand something as simple as this.⁸⁰

This poem provides our first example of the 'dangerous' dash of innovation in Shōtetsu's poetry. As Shōtetsu himself points above, the key phrase in the poem is *naka no koromo* ('middle robe').

⁷⁸ Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.69, n.59.

⁷⁹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:16.

⁸⁰ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:16.

It was an image rarely used in poetry, but when it was used, a pun was usually made on the homophone *naka* with its meaning of an 'intimate relationship'. However Shōtetsu is not particularly concerned with this meaning in his poem. He is using *naka* for its spatial sense, meaning between two objects, and in its temporal sense meaning the interval between two periods of time, an innovative variation on the image *naka* in the *waka* context.

Although Shōtetsu appears at pains to stress the originality of conception of this poem, and he protests that he had no thoughts of *Genji* in mind when he composed this poem, the poem does seem to bear a strong imprint of at least one poem from *Genji* containing the same image:

Katami no zo

Kaubekarikeru

Au koto no

Hikazu hedatemu

*Naka no koromo o*⁸¹

Yes, let us exchange garments as mementos

Of our love!

Take this my middle robe

To help you through the days that must pass

Until we meet again

As with Shōtetsu's poem the image *naka no koromo* is closely identified with the separation of lovers. His audience could thus be forgiven for assuming a link at least between these two poems as their themes are the same. And whilst the *Genji* poem does not exploit the time connotations of the word *naka*, it does make a definite association between *naka no koromo* and awareness of the passage of time. It seems reasonable to conclude that the seeds of using the image of *naka no koromo* in a time context may have been sown in Shōtetsu's mind by the way it appears in *The Tale of Genji*.

⁸¹ Yamagishi, *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei v. 15: Genji Monogatari*, v.2, p.91.

Composed at the accommodation of Yamana, a vice-minister of the Treasury, on the occasion of a meeting with Lord Tsukinowa, on the topic 'Love the Morning After' :

Chigire kesa

Au mo omoi no

Hoka nareba

Mata yuku sue mo

*Inochi narazu ya*⁸²

Pledge yourself to me

This very dawn!

Just as our meeting was beyond our wildest dreams

Who else but Fate can know

What future lies in store?

Yamana. Probably Yamana Yukitomo, a member of the powerful Yamana clan.⁸³ **Lord**

Tsukinowa. Probably Fujiwara Tadakata, the contemporary head of the Tsukinowa branch of the Fujiwara family founded six generations earlier by Fujiwara Motoie, one of the editors of the *Shokukokinwakashū* (1265).⁸⁴ **Inochi.** Here, 'Fate.'

Commentary

Once again, this poem is not positively identified in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* as one of Shōtetsu's but is generally regarded to be his work.⁸⁵

This poem above all distinguishes itself by its compelling sense of urgency, evoked by the use of the imperative *chigire* ('make me a pledge!') in the opening line of the poem, by its expression of the poet/persona's attempt to establish some anchor of constancy, in this case a love pledge, against

⁸² To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

⁸³ *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, p.171, n.14.

⁸⁴ *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, p.171, n.15 and p.182, n. 8.

⁸⁵ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.1162.

the unpredictability and mutability of all that might follow. Whether this poem relates to a personal experience in Shōtetsu's life or not is a matter of mere speculation as we have no further information about the circumstances of its composition. However, whatever the biographical circumstances of this poem might have been, it is a poem which is profoundly evocative of the spirit of the times, reflecting the deep-seated insecurity in people's hearts in an environment teetering on the brink of civil war.

Poem Three [1:19]

I feel very satisfied with the way I handled the topic 'Dusk, Mountains and Snow' in this recent composition of mine:

Watarikane

Kumo mo yūbe o

Nao tadoru

Ato naki yuki no

Mine no kakehashi⁸⁶

Afraid to cross

The clouds still search their way

In the evening amidst the blank drifts of snow

No footprints remain to guide them

Up their snow-ladder of peaks

Watarikane. 'Hesitant to cross, having difficulty in crossing, unable to cross.' In attaching the suffix *-kane* (sentence final form *-kanu*) and thereby attributing emotions of fear and hesitation to inanimate clouds, Shōtetsu is personifying the clouds in a novel and unconventional way. Although personification in itself was a frequently employed technique in *waka* poetry, as Shōtetsu himself points out in the commentary which he attaches to this poem ('it is one of the conventions of poetry to assign human attributes to insentient objects'), this particular depiction of clouds 'hesitating' or 'afraid' may well be Shōtetsu's innovation. It is probably the novelty and potentially

⁸⁶ *Sōkonshū* 3986.

controversial nature of this personification that prompts Shotetsu to devote several lines in the accompanying commentary to its justification.⁸⁷ **Ato naki yuki no.** A pun occurs here on *yuki* which can mean 'snow' or 'going, travelling'. Thus the line literally means both 'snow which bears no footprints' and 'traceless going', the latter suggesting the clouds which leave no footprints as they pass over the ground. **Yuki no mine no kakehashi.** 'Snow-ladder of peaks.' No actual ladder (*kakehashi*) exists in the situation visualised by the poet: instead it is a metaphor for the ascending crags of the mountain peaks, like a ladder made of snow. *Kakehashi* normally indicated an arrangement of planks placed up a steep escarpment so that it could be scaled more easily. *Kakehashi* was also used as a metaphor for a perilous situation. This meaning is also latent in the present context, where it indicates the danger of the mountain peaks. Thus the phrase *mine no kakehashi* can also be interpreted as 'peaks as perilous as a snow-ladder'. The grammatical inversion of modifier (*kakehashi*) and modified (*mine*) which can be seen in this additional interpretation is a typical feature of Teika-esque poetry.⁸⁸

Commentary

As Shōtetsu himself points out in his preamble to the poem, it is one of his 'recent' compositions and therefore roughly contemporaneous with the writing of Part One of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

It is a highly imaginative poem in descriptive mode, capturing a mountain scene at dusk, where the clouds linger on the mountainside as if afraid or reluctant to make the crossing to the other side of the mountains with no footprints of former travellers to guide them in their dangerous passage over the peaks. The image 'snow-ladder of peaks' is striking both for the scene it evokes of craggy peaks piled one on the other as if in steps, and the inherent fragility and ephemerality of the image of a ladder wrought in snow. It is the first of many images in our present selection of Shōtetsu's poetry to embody these qualities.

This poem also serves as a positive example of intertextuality in Shōtetsu's poetic composition, for

⁸⁷ See *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:19, lines 3-8.

⁸⁸ As in Teika's famous phrase *yume no ukihashi*, meaning 'dreams as flimsy as a floating bridge' (*Shinkokinshū* 38).

it unites in one poem the other images which typically occur in combination with the image *kakehashi* in previous imperial anthologies, as well as in *the Tale of Genji* : clouds, dusk, footprints, snow, mountains.⁸⁹ It is difficult to claim that this excessive imagism is wholly successful: on the contrary an overfilled impression is created, crowded with images rather like a Victorian dining room. However, this criticism should be tempered by the realization that it is the value judgement of one late-twentieth-century Western reader, and for Shōtetsu's contemporaries with their delight in *basara*-style ostentation the effect may have been quite pleasing. In fact, the abundance of imagery demonstrated by this poem can be considered characteristic of Shōtetsu's poetic style throughout *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

This poem occupies a very significant position in Shōtetsu's aesthetic canon. He regards it as a paragon of his aesthetic ideal, an example of the ethereal and hauntingly beautiful effect he attempted to create throughout his poetry:

the style of scudding clouds or whirling snow — the style evocative of snow whirling in the wind or wisps of mist trailing across the blossoming cherry trees — creates a poem which in some inexplicable way is arresting and hauntingly beautiful.⁹⁰

Later in his treatise, as we have already pointed out in the preceding section, he specifically equates this effect with the quality of *yūgen*.⁹¹

Poem Four [1: 21]

On the topic 'Cicadas in Late Summer' :

Mori no ha mo

Aki ni ya awamu

Naku semi no

Kozue no tsuyu no

*Mi o kaenu to te*⁹²

⁸⁹ Precedents for various images used in conjunction with the image *kakehashi* and re-used by Shōtetsu can be found in *Shinkokinshū* 906 and 953, *Shinchokusenshū* 375, and *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei v.17: Genji Monogatari*, v.4, p. 370, in the chapter 'Shiigamoto' (Beneath the Oak).

⁹⁰ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 19.

⁹¹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 100.

⁹² To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

The summer leaves in the woods
Must wither and fall in the autumn:
How many more times this year can the cicadas
Shrilling from the dew-drenched treetops
Cast off their frail shells?

Kozue no tsuyu no mi. In this phrase, *tsuyu* acts as a *kakekotoba* ('pivot word'), and denotes in the first place the concrete image of the dew in the treetops where the cicadas are singing. It also suggests the approach of autumn when the dew falls at night. However, when *tsuyu* is read in the combination *tsuyu no mi*, it loses its immediate concrete connotations and preserves only the figurative sense of 'dew-like, ephemeral', meaning the 'body of the cicada fleeting as the dew'. *Tsuyu no mi* was a set phrase frequently used in *waka* poetry to evoke a sense of the ephemerality of existence.

Commentary

Thematically this poem reiterates conventional themes of mortality and ephemerality. The images of summer leaves and cicadas act as vehicles expressing the ultimate perishability of all life forms. To bring home with increased effectiveness the universal applicability of this natural law, Shōtetsu uses symbols of both inanimate life (leaves) and the animate world (cicadas). Although the cicadas seem to be a fraction better off than the leaves in that they can shed their shells and perhaps postpone their mortality a little longer, in the end they too will succumb to death as autumn advances. Therefore their bodies are referred to as *tsuyu no mi*, 'fleeting as the dew'. An ironic word play may be intended on *naku*: although the cicadas in late summer seem to be singing (*naku*) vigorously and full of vitality, at the same time they are weeping (*naku*) with inner grief at their imminent fate.⁹³

The poem at first seems to unfold in an antithetical fashion, with 'leaves' being presented negatively as doomed to perish in the autumn, and 'cicadas' being treated somewhat positively as a

⁹³ This interpretation is made possible by the fact that *naku* is written in kana not kanji in this poem, at least in the version we have used. When written in kanji, different characters are used to distinguish between the meaning 'sing' and 'weep'.

self-renewing phenomenon, able to shed their old shells. However, the abrupt ellipsis which closes the poem, indicated by the concessive conjunction *tote* ('even though') completely revokes the antithesis. The inference is that 'just because the cicadas have cast off their shells, does this really give them any defence against the death in autumn which follows summer, any more so than the leaves?' The 'leaves' and the 'cicadas' are finally treated as equally subject to the unrelenting law of the universe, that all phenomena must perish in the end.

The personification of the cicadas in this poem, especially through the image *tsuyu no mi* which more often describes the human condition, gives this poem its bitter human relevance. Although the first effect of the personification, as with any personification, is to make the cicadas seem like humans, the more subtle and disturbing consequence of the equivalence established is to insinuate that humans are like cicadas, which are in turn as ephemeral as leaves.

As is often the case in Shōtetsu's poetry, the rhetorical climax of the poem, in this case the pivot word *tsuyu*, also points to the poem's thematic focus: *tsuyu*, 'the dew', is a conventionally-accepted symbol of ephemerality and thus encapsulates the entire theme of the poem.

Poem 5 [1: 22]

On 'Praying for Love'

Yūshide mo

Ware ni nabikanu

Tsuyu zo chiru

Taga negigoto no

*Sue no akikaze*⁹⁴

Just like you, my love,

This votive gift of cloth streamers flutters away from me

And the evening dew scatters far and wide:

Whose malevolent prayers

⁹⁴ This poem is also to be found in *Renka Ichijiku* (A Scroll of Love Poems), a small collection of 325 of Shōtetsu's love poems (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.1165 and pp. 946-7).

Have ended in these autumn winds of surfeit?

Yūshide mo. Sacred streamers made of mulberry cloth used in shrine rituals. The particle *mo* carries an important semantic role in this poem: it implies that, like the votive streamers, neither does his lover show any leaning in his direction. **Nabikanu.** The verb *nabiku* in the first instance refers to the fluttering or streaming of an object in the wind or current of water. By extension it also meant a person yielding to the amorous feelings of another. Here, both meanings, expressed in the negative, are implied: the streamers are blowing in the opposite direction and the object of one's love is unresponsive. **Akikaze.** Thinly veiled behind the surface meaning of 'autumn wind' which drives the streamers in the opposite direction is the conventional pun on *aki* meaning 'surfeit' or 'loss of romantic interest'. It is the ill wind of surfeit which is causing the lover's interest to 'flutter away' from the persona.

Commentary

Superstition, and perhaps lingering influences of *ukehi* ('an oath in which one's veracity or the will of the gods is tested by the occurrence, or not, of a specified alternative between two possible outcomes of an event'⁹⁵) inform this poem. The persona interprets the fact that the streamers do not blow towards him and that the dew (in this case doubling as a metaphor for his tears) scatters far and wide as a divine omen that his affair is over. He concludes that this ill-boding wind of surfeit (*akikaze*) must in fact be the result (*sue*) of someone's malevolent prayers, perhaps his lover's, perhaps some other jealous party, willing an end to the relationship. An impression of wanton destruction penetrates this poem, especially in its imagery of tears/dew scattered afar by the autumn winds.

This poem with its word plays and conceits can give an impression of artificiality and lack of personal involvement. On the other hand, the persona's propensity to see his own plight reflected in the physical world around him (indeed the 'pathetic fallacy') indicates the intense sensitivity sometimes associated with a heightened emotional state. The psychologically authentic conception of the poem thus suggests that the sentiments, for all their artifice, may be genuine after all.

The commentary following this poem shows that Shōtetsu himself felt a little diffident and

⁹⁵ Cranston, *A Waka Anthology v. 1 : The Gem-Glistening Cup*, p.791.

defensive about the quality of this poem, trying to pre-empt and refute any criticism of his poetry:

It is likely that would-be critics of this poem will suggest, 'Write [instead], "Has my lover prayed not to meet me?" What is the point of using such difficult expressions?' This reasoning is correct, but I would refer these critics to Teika's private anthologies. Absolutely none of his poems are simple and straightforward.⁹⁶

Poem Six [1:27]

On an early evening in autumn:

*Ushi to te mo
Yomo itowareji
Wa ga mi yo ni
Aramu kagiri no
Aki no yūgure⁹⁷*

True this world is full of pain and suffering

But I can never shun it!

As long as I have life in my body

My heart will cry out

At the beauty of the autumn dusk!

Ushi. 'Wretched, full of suffering.' This adjective is steeped in Buddhist overtones of the suffering and wretchedness inherent in existence. **Yo mo.** A word play is probably intended here on the adverb *yomo* ('in no way') and *yo mo* meaning 'this world, this life'. **Itowareji.** Complex inflection expressing impossibility and negative resolve, based on the verb *itou* 'to dislike, despise': 'cannot and will not dislike'. *Itou* also has a secondary meaning 'to retire from the world, take religious orders'⁹⁸ which links it as an *engo* with the previous pun on *yo mo* ('this world') and subtly alludes to Shōtetsu's monastic status.

⁹⁶ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 22.

⁹⁷ *Sōkonshū* 1330.

⁹⁸ *Iwanami Kogo Jiten*, p.118.

Commentary

This poem was composed for a poetry competition in the tenth month of 1429 at the residence of the Director of the Stables of the Right, probably Hatakeyama Yoshizumi⁹⁹ of the influential Hatakeyama family. It was written with the specific intention of showing for comment to the tonsured Emperor Go-Komatsu (1377-1433) whose patronage Shōtetsu evidently enjoyed.¹⁰⁰

According to Shōtetsu's commentary in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, the ex-Emperor praised the poem deeply. Shōtetsu himself was evidently also well-pleased with his composition. Some twenty years later he remarks, 'I doubt that I could write poems of the same standard now'.¹⁰¹

Shōtetsu's satisfaction is justifiable: in this poem, taut with controlled emotion, he succeeds in representing his complex and ambivalent response to the world around him, seemingly effortlessly and without recourse to the intrusive rhetorical artifice which sometimes detracts from his poetry.

On the one hand, the poem expresses the poet's discovery that although the world is full of pain and suffering, he will never be able to permit this Buddhist truth to override the personal joy he feels its beauty, specifically the beauty of the autumn dusk. He is aware that Buddhist teaching exhorts him to abandon the world, even in its most beautiful manifestations, and promises release thereby from suffering, but Shōtetsu expresses through his poem an enlightenment of a different sort, the self-knowledge that for him to abandon the world totally will never be possible. He will always remain attached to the world, even if it means to continue to suffer spiritually, because he cannot render himself numb to its beauty. This poem is therefore simultaneously an ode to the beauty of the natural world, distilled in the image of the autumn dusk, and Shōtetsu's lament at his shortcomings as a monk. Despite his intellectual understanding that he must relinquish his attachment to the world, first and foremost he accepts that he is an artist with an irrepressible aesthetic response to beauty. It is in this tension between Shōtetsu's religious aspirations and human limitations that the deep poignancy and power of the poem resides.

The role played in Shōtetsu's poem by the image of the 'autumn dusk' as a supreme symbol of natural beauty is typical of medieval *waka*. The famous *sanseki* ('three evening') poems

⁹⁹ Headnote to *Sōkonshū* 1328, and Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.118.

¹⁰⁰ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.118.

¹⁰¹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 27.

respectively by Jakuren (d.1202), Saigyō and Teika, and particularly the second 'evening' poem by Saigyō, come to mind:

Sabishisa wa

Sono iro to shi mo

Nakarikeri

Maki tatsu yama no

Aki no yūgure

Loneliness —

The essential color of a beauty

Not to be defined:

Over the dark evergreens, the dusk

That gathers on far autumn hills

Kokoro naki

Mi ni mo aware wa

Shirarekeri

Shigi tatsu sawa no

Aki no yūgure

While denying his heart,

Even a priest must feel his body know

The depths of a sad beauty

From a marsh at autumn twilight

Snipe that rise to wing away

Miwataseba

Hana mo momiji mo

Nakarikeri

Ura no tomoya no

Aki no yūgure

Gaze out far enough

beyond all cherry blossoms

and scarlet maples

to those huts by the harbor

*fading in the autumn dusk*¹⁰²

Significantly, in these poems, as well as in Shōtetsu's, the autumn dusk may be beautiful, but it is a beauty tinged with a profound negativity, showing a typically medieval aesthetic preference.

Indeed, 'autumn dusk' must surely be the quintessential negative symbol, embodying as it does ideas of transience, mortality, death and decay: autumn is the death of the warm and fertile season, while dusk is the death of the day.

Appreciated from a different perspective, but still within the Buddhist paradigm, this poem can also be interpreted as a statement of Buddhist relativism: the existence of the phenomenon of the 'autumn dusk' is dependent on the existence of the viewer, that is, Shōtetsu. Through the lines *wa ga mi yo ni/aramu kagiri no/aki no yūgure* ('as long as I exist'), the idea is posited that as soon as Shōtetsu ceases to exist, then the phenomenon of the autumn dusk will cease to exist also. It is surely not coincidental that the image which Shōtetsu selects to represent a phenomenon which is on the brink of non-existence is the 'autumn dusk'. What could be more appropriate than this image of the physical world being swallowed by the deathliness of winter and dark nothingness? Even the morphology of the characters used to write the image on the page express the transition into non-existence: the solid character 秋(*aki* =autumn) gives way to the less substantial character 夕(*yū* = evening) which in turn further diminishes to the even more ethereal hiragana ぐれ (darkening).¹⁰³ Finally we are left with the blank space at the end of the poem, *mu* or Nothingness

¹⁰² *Shinkokinshū* 361, 362, 363. Translations of Poems 361 and 362 by Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p.261 and p.295, and of Poem 363 by LaFleur in 'Shunzei's Use of Tendai Buddhism', in Sanford, *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan*, p.37.

¹⁰³ One cannot be certain that the same *kanji* and *hiragana* were used by Shōtetsu. However, the manuscript in the hand of Tō no Sosan, which forms the basis for the edition which I use here, is believed to be textually close to

which is the ultimate release from the suffering of existence.

Most importantly, it is in the lines *wa ga mi yo ni/aramu kagiri no/aki no yūgure* ('as long as I exist') that the resolution of Shōtetsu's dilemma can be found. The beauty of the autumn dusk will only be an issue for him, an attachment hindering his final release from the suffering of this world, as long as he has life in his body. But with the cessation of his consciousness there may be nirvana after all.

Poem Seven [1:35]

On the great summer purification ritual:

Misogi suru

Kono wa no uchi ni

Mawarikite

Ware yori saki ni

*Aki ya koyuramu*¹⁰⁴

Unmistakable is the foretaste of autumn

As I pass through

The ritual hoop of purification:

Could it be that autumn

Has already overtaken me?

Misogi suru. Refers specifically here to *nagoshi no harae*, the purification ritual carried out since ancient times at court and shrines on the last day of the sixth month, that is, the last day of summer according to the lunar calendar. **Kono wa.** The hoop of purification (*chinowa*) used in the summer purification ritual. Large hoops (*wa*) formed of sedge (*chi*) were attached to shrine portals and participants passed through the hoop to ward off illness and evil forces.¹⁰⁵

Shōtetsu's original manuscript. Tō no Sosan was nephew of Tō no Tsuneyori', who was one of Shōtetsu's pupils.

¹⁰⁴ This poem appears to be a slight misquotation of *Sōkonshū* 3346, or possibly a later improvement: *Misogi kawa/ Kono wa no uchi ni/ Megurikite/ Ware yori saki ni/ Aki ya koyuramu* ('Unmistakable is the foretaste of autumn/As I pass through the ritual hoop of purification/At the stream of lustration/Could it be that autumn/Has already overtaken me?').

¹⁰⁵ Brower has produced an interesting variant translation of this poem: 'Circling round/ This enclosure where

Commentary

The sense of autumn present in the air at the ritual marking the end of summer has inspired this poem. It is as if autumn has already arrived and ‘stepped ahead’ through the sedge hoop which in a symbolic sense separates summer from autumn. A strong impression is evoked of the relentlessly fast succession of the seasons and awareness of the arrival of the next season before one has properly farewelled the last.

In the language of this poem, in the opening line *kono wa no uchi ni* we detect a subtle echo of the famous first poem of the *Kokinshū*:

Toshi no uchi ni

Haru wa kinikeri

Hitotose o

Kozo to ya iwamu

Kotoshi to ya iwamu

The old calendar year still runs its course

But Nature declares spring has arrived

Which should we acknowledge?

Should we call the year

This year or last year?

In fact the two poems are built upon a similar notion: the human ritual which ceremonially spells the end of one season is not yet complete when the next season manifests itself. Nature holds human readiness in disregard and man is unable to dictate to nature.

It should be observed that the rhetoric of Shōtetsu's poem also is simple and straightforward, in a neo-Kokin style. It stands in contrast with many of Shōtetsu's other compositions and their sometimes excruciating technical difficulty, demonstrating Shōtetsu's versatility with a number of styles.

I make/ The summer lustration,/ Autumn crosses the boundary ahead/And makes its way toward me' (Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.80). The image of autumn coming as if to greet the persona is particularly appealing.

In this poem's depiction of the interpenetration of moments in time, or stages in cycles, Shōtetsu may also be borrowing more of Yoshida Kenkō's ideas. For example, in *Tsurezuregusa* Yoshida Kenkō argues eloquently:

It is not that when spring draws to a close it becomes summer, or that when summer ends the autumn comes: spring itself urges the summer to show itself; *and even while the summer is still with us, the autumn is already intruding* [my italics] and the chill of autumn becomes winter cold...With the falling of the leaves, too, it is not that first the leaves fall and then young shoots form; the leaves fall because the budding from underneath is too powerful to resist.¹⁰⁶

Poem Eight [1:36]

My poem on moonflowers:

Kakikomoru

Mizuno no kishi ni

Yoru awa no

Kienu mo sakeru

*Yūgao no hana*¹⁰⁷

Moonflowers in bloom

Never vanishing

Fresh flowers unfurling to take their place

Eternal as the bubbles brimming against the riverbanks

Of the hidden waters at Mizuno

Mizuno. Mizuno is a plain near present-day Mizu, Hachiman-chō, Tsuzuki District, Kyoto Prefecture stretching both sides of the Kizu River. In ancient times it was used as pasture land by the Imperial Household for grazing horses and also for falconry. Shōtetsu may have passed through

¹⁰⁶ Keene, *Essays in Idleness*, p.138.

¹⁰⁷ *Sōkonshū* 3148. In the chronological version of *Sōkonshū*, this poem is titled 'moonflowers growing over a fence'.

this area on his travels at some point, but the placename Mizuno also appears in imperial anthologies. Two word plays are latent in the placename Mizuno: *mizu no* ('of water'), and *mizu* ('do not see'), adding further reverberations of the location's secluded nature and the waters of its river. **Kakikomoru**. 'To be confined, seclude oneself'. It links as an *engo* with *mizu* ('do not see'). Even though *kakikomoru* is not a commonly used *makurakotoba* for Mizuno, Shōtetsu appears to be using it to this rhetorical effect here, creating a vaguely archaic aura around his poem. Brower's translation 'Mizuno,/The secluded land' evokes this effect rather successfully.¹⁰⁸ **Yūgao**. Translated here as 'moonflowers'. Literally 'evening faces'. A variety of climbing gourd with white flowers which bloom in summer in the early evening but wither the next morning. 'Yūgao' is also the chapter in *The Tale of Genji* devoted to Genji's tragic infatuation with Yūgao, the Lady of the Evening Faces, his first love. **Kienu**. The suffix of this verb (*-nu*) is interpreted here to be the attributive form of the negative suffix *-zu*, not the perfective affirmative suffix *-nu* with which it is morphologically identical. The line *kienu mo sakeru* is thus translated as 'they do not vanish but blossom'. Brower has opted for the alternative but opposite interpretation: 'they vanish but to bloom again'.

Commentary

This poem is included in Volume Four of *Sōkonshū* which follows a seasonal progression and excludes biographical details. We can only speculate about the circumstances which inspired this poem.

For this poem Shōtetsu selects an image of 'moonflowers'. This was an image which had been neglected in the earlier imperial anthologies. In fact, in the 'Collections of Eight Eras', *Hachidaishū*¹⁰⁹, the first eight imperial anthologies which were compiled in the Heian or early Kamakura eras, it occurs as an image in just one poem in the very last anthology, *Shinkokinshū* (Poem 276). However the image gained popularity in the more recent imperial anthologies of the later Kamakura and Muromachi periods. It was also established as one of the poetic topics (*kadai*) for 'summer' in the *Ropyakuban Utaawase* (1193). A distinct mediaeval aesthetic preference is

¹⁰⁸ 'Like the foam/That gathers on the banks at Mizuno, /The secluded land,/They vanish but to bloom again —/The flowers of the evening faces.' Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁹ This was a sub-group comprising the first eight anthologies of the twenty-one imperial anthologies, commencing with the *Kokinshū* and concluding with the *Shinkokinshū*.

asserted in the monochrome subdued beauty of the image.

Key features of the poetic conventions surrounding the topic 'moonflowers' were that the poem be set at twilight in summer, that the moonflowers be growing over the fence of a humble dwelling, and that a quality of luminosity should accompany the moonflowers. Poems should also closely resemble those in the chapter of the same name in *The Tale of Genji*, and the contents of the chapter itself.¹¹⁰

Shōtetsu fulfils these criteria to satisfaction. The summer evening atmosphere is automatically suggested by the image of the moonflowers which only bloom at the end of the day in summer, and also supported by the word-play on *yoru* ('night' and 'to draw near [the river bank]'). The reader can easily imagine that this poem is inspired by a scene Shōtetsu sees before him of moonflowers growing over a fence beyond his veranda. The allusion to light implicit in the verb *kienu* ('do not go out, are not extinguished') establishes the moonflowers in bloom as images of luminosity. We will not attempt here to analyse the similarities between Shōtetsu's poem and the poems on the same topic in the 'Yūgao' (Evening Faces) chapter of *The Tale of Genji*. Suffice it to say without reference to specific poems that Shōtetsu's poem is redolent of this romantic but tragic chapter, both through its diction and its thematic concerns. The initial line *kakikomoru* suggests the situation of the young girl Yūgao first in hiding in a humble dwelling where Genji discovers her, then concealed at Genji's mansion. In the poem, the imagery of bubbles and moonflowers function symbolically to express the themes of transience, ephemerality and mortality which underscore Shōtetsu's poem but also refer back to the 'Yūgao' chapter of *Genji* and the eerie and sudden death of the young Yūgao, who thus becomes the embodiment of transience and mortality. (The ephemerality of bubbles is self-explanatory; moonflowers are ephemeral because they wither and die overnight.) At the same time however both images paradoxically express continuity and eternal life: bubbles may burst but new bubbles will form in their place, and the same irrepressibility of natural forces will bring new moonflowers into bloom. In the context of *Genji*, ironically the young and beautiful Yūgao is quickly replaced by other women in Genji's life, while in a sense her physical existence is perpetuated in her daughter Tamakazura.

In short, this poem on 'moonflowers' can be appreciated on two levels: firstly at surface value as a

¹¹⁰ *Waka Bungaku Jiten*, p.1020.

beautiful and lyrical poem, in the style of descriptive symbolism, and secondly as a poetic allegory expressing the fate of Yūgao in *Genji*, a meaning which would have been immediately clear to a cultivated audience.

Poem Nine [1:44]

A poem on the topic 'Deep Mountains in the Snow':

Shigure made
Kumorite fukaku
Mishi yama no
Yuki ni oku naki
*Kigi no shitaore*¹¹¹

Mountains that looked profound
Wrapped in cloud so heavy
Wintry drizzle might be falling -
Emerge without depth in the snow :
Trees on the slopes with broken boughs

Yuki ni oku naki / Kigi no. *Oku naki*, a pivot-word, functions firstly to describe the state of the mountains plainly visible in the snow (*yuki ni oku naki*, ‘no[hidden]depths in the snow’) and then transfers its meaning to describe the state of the trees hiding nothing (*oku naki kigi no*, ‘the trees with no [hidden]depths’) because their branches have been dragged down by the snow and they can no longer conceal anything. **Kigi no shitaore.** Trees whose branches hang torn and broken (*shitaore*) from the weight of snow.

Commentary

This poem takes as its theme the transformation of the same mountains when seen firstly in the heavy cloud or cold drizzle of early winter, and then later once the snow has fallen. A note of wonder runs through the poem as Shōtetsu sees before him yet another concrete example of the

¹¹¹ *Sōkonshū* 4184.

duality of all physical phenomena.

Shōtetsu achieves an effective 'zoom-lens' effect in this poem through the order and choice of his imagery. The reader is brought closer and closer to the mountain until finally made to focus upon the very trees on the mountainside and the detail of their broken branches, an example of the influence in Shōtetsu's poetry of the Reizei school of poetry.

Poem Ten [1:65]

I composed the following poem on the topic 'Waterbirds At Night':

*Yūzuku yo
Mizu naki sora no
Usugōri
Kudakanu toko to
Tori ya nakuramu¹¹²*

*The crescent moon
Sheds its pale rays like a thin film of ice
Over waterless skies;
Do the marshbirds cry out
Unable to shatter through to their nest?*

Yūzukuyo. The new crescent moon when it only faintly illuminates the sky. The crescent moon rises in the early evening and sets by about midnight. **Toko.** 'Bed, floor.' Here it has been interpreted as the 'nest' where the birds wish to sleep, rendered inaccessible by the frozen skies. This image perhaps coalesces in the imagination of the more fanciful reader with the image of the new moon: both the new moon and a bird's nest share a crescent shape.

Commentary

Both the topic of this poem, 'water birds', and the image 'thin ice', signal this poem as a 'winter poem' according to classical convention.

¹¹² To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

In the night sky, the crescent moon shines weakly, radiating light as white, cold and fragile as thin ice. On hearing the cries of the waterfowl this winter's night, and having observed the iciness of the skies, the poet imagines the birds must be crying because they cannot break through the ice to their 'nest'.

This exquisite poem is a masterful combination of convention and innovativeness. The association of the same image *yūzuku*yo with crying creatures finds a precedent in the *Kokinshū* in the following *waka* by Ki no Tsurayuki:

*Yūzuku*yo
Ogura no yama ni
Naku shika no
Koe no uchi ni ya
*Aki wa kururamu*¹¹³

On dark Mt. Ogura
One night briefly lit by the glimmer of the crescent moon
The deer cry out
Autumn will come to an end
Before their lonely lament fades way

The second major image of Shōtetsu's poem, *mizunaki sora* ('waterless skies') likewise refers back to another *Kokinshū* poem, also by Tsurayuki. Unlike the previous example, however, usage of this image by Shōtetsu differs quite radically from its original usage in Tsurayuki's version:

Sakurabana
Chirinuru kaze no
Nagori ni wa
Mizu naki sora ni
*Nami zo tachikeru*¹¹⁴

¹¹³ *Kokinshū* 312.

¹¹⁴ *Kokinshū* 89.

In the wake of the wind

Which scattered

All the cherry blossom

Waves surge and foam

In a waterless sky

The paradox of ice or waves in a 'waterless sky' is maintained. But in Shōtetsu's poem, several hundred years later than Tsurayuki's, it is not waves of falling blossom which wash through the waterless skies, but the cold weak rays of the new moon which seem to congeal in the 'waterless skies' like a thin film of ice. Tsurayuki's exquisitely beautiful, vibrant and dynamic image of skies awash with soft waves of petals has been replaced with Shōtetsu's static, sterile image of a sky as if frozen over by the frigid rays of the winter crescent moon, a potent indication of the negative shift in imagistic conceptions that has taken place between Tsurayuki's day and Shōtetsu's.

Shōtetsu's poem also attracts especial attention for its imagery of extreme fragility and precariousness: in embellishing his poem with the images of a 'crescent moon' and 'thin ice', Shōtetsu has selected phenomena which are on the barest brink of existence. Moreover, the imaginary situation portrayed, where the marshbirds are unable to nest, let alone lay their eggs, provides a further reminder of the tenuousness of existence and survival.

Poem Eleven [1:68]

A poem on 'Spring Breeze' :

Iro ni fuke

Kusaki mo haru o

Shiranu ma no

Hito no kokoro no

*Hana no hatsukaze*¹¹⁵

O first breath of spring

Sensed already by the flowers

¹¹⁵ *Sōkonshū* 2622.

Which bloom hidden in the hearts of man

While plants and trees sleep on oblivious

Blow so we may really see the vivid hues of their blossoming!

Iro. The immediate meaning here is 'colour' or 'the hues of spring', but the Buddhist usage of *iro* to mean the phenomenal world of tangible objects, that is, the real external world, is also implied.

Hito no kokoro no /Hana no hatsukaze. The first wind [of spring] which has brought [imaginary] spring flowers into bloom in the hearts of man. Shōtetsu means here the impatient anticipation of spring's appearance in the natural world. One feels as if spring has really arrived, yet there are no outward signs of this. The 'first wind' of spring is traditionally the east wind, a convention originating in the Confucian code *Li Chi*, a compilation of the laws of the universe. The phrase *hito no kokoro no hana* ('blossoms in the hearts of man') resonates back to the Kana Preface of the *Kokinshū*: *hito no kokoro o tane to shite* ('making seeds of the hearts of man').

Commentary

Shōtetsu's own commentary clarifies the meaning of this complex and elliptical poem:

Although spring has come [according to the civil calendar], the treetops look as wintry as ever, and seem unaware of the advent of spring. However, the flowers which bloom in human hearts straight away let us know that spring has come. Because this is a spiritual process, with no visual evidence, if only the spring wind would blow so that we could actually see these flowers which blossom in people's hearts, in all their vivid hues. This is the meaning of the poem.¹¹⁶

Shōtetsu's poem also bears the imprint of years of the poet's immersion in Buddhist and, specifically, Zen thought concerning the illusory nature of reality and, conversely, the real nature of illusion. This poem, in its description of the phenomenon *hana no hatsukaze* ('the first spring wind in the blossoms') which does not exist externally in the real world for the poet at that precise moment, paradoxically 'creates' this scene. The Zen scholar Izutsu Toshihiko describes an identical process brought about by a word-picture created by ancient Zen master Feng Hsüeh:

¹¹⁶ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 68.

...the exquisite spring scenery here described in words is a landscape evoked out of the depth of memory. It is a landscape that lies both temporally and spatially far away from the actual point at which the poet stands. It is, in other words, non-existent. Yet as being actually evoked in the memory, the landscape is there, vividly alive. The chirpings of the partridges are not being heard at the present spatio-temporal point of the external reality. But in a different dimension the partridges are undeniably chirping among fragrant flowers.¹¹⁷

In other words, the mere articulation of the flowers of spring ruffled by the breeze has in fact brought them vividly alive and in a sense created them albeit on a different dimension of reality. The effect of this poem therefore challenges the reader's previous perception of what indeed constitutes the real world. By means of this poem, Shōtetsu also touches on the idea that at the core of all perception of reality lies our own consciousness through which all phenomena both come into existence or cease to exist.

Poem Twelve [1:69]

On 'Spring Love':

Yūmagure

Sore ka to mieshi

Omokage no

Kasumu zo katami

*Ariake no tsuki*¹¹⁸

In the gathering dusk

I thought for a moment I saw you my beloved

Now at dawn

I treasure a haunting keepsake of your misty form —

The moon cloud-hazy in the brightening sky

Yūmagure. The time of evening when the darkness is closing in and it is difficult to see. Magure is a compound of 'eyes' (*me*) and 'dark, obscure' (*kurai/gurai*). **Omokage.** The vision of an object

¹¹⁷ Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, p.112.

¹¹⁸ *Sōkonshū* 4443.

which is retained intact and vivid, but sublimated, in the mind's eye, as happens when we recall or imagine some sight or sensory experience. Here it refers to the poet's memory of the lady he thinks he saw. In some cases *omokage* has paranormal, spectral connotations: for example the same word is used in *The Tale of Genji* to refer to the phantasm who appears before Yūgao and causes her death. *Omokage* is said to be of one of Shōtetsu's favourite images and concepts, a 'vision' of beauty carried in the mind's eye, and purified and transformed by the imagination.¹¹⁹

Commentary

The meaning of Poem 12 is made clearer by Shōtetsu's self-commentary:

The poet catches a glimpse of the lady he yearns for in the dusk, at the time of day when the mists come down. He cannot be sure whether it is in fact the lady he loves whom he sees, or not. He carefully stores her image in his mind's eye. Because her image comes to mind again when he gazes at the moon in the dawn sky the next morning, he describes the moon as a hazy keepsake of her.¹²⁰

Without Shōtetsu's commentary the work is very cryptic indeed: the poet perceives a likeness between the hazy appearance of the spring moon in the dawn sky, and his hazy memory of his lover glimpsed in the spring dusk the previous night. When he sees the moon in the dawn sky, its very haziness serves as a keepsake or reminder of the lady he believes he saw. In other words, the sight of the spring moon emerging from the haze and his blurred memory of his lover become fused in his mind.

Imagistically, this is one of the most exquisite poems in our selection: 'twilight' (*yūmagure*), 'face/phantasm' (*omokage*) 'to grow misty' (*kasumu*), 'the moon in the dawn sky' (*ariake no tsuki*) blend in a chiaroscuro atmosphere of delicacy, eeriness and ethereality.

Not surprisingly, Shōtetsu singles out this poem as one example of *yūgen* in his poetry and his commentary on the poem leads him on to one of his most celebrated discussions of *yūgen*:

¹¹⁹ The role of *omokage* in Shōtetsu's poetry is discussed at more length by Inada in *Chūsei Bungaku no Sekai*, pp.66-8.

¹²⁰ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 69.

The scene of wisps of cloud veiling the moon or cherry blossoms half-visible in the mist is so lovely that any discussion of poetical language or poetic content will be inadequate; it is *yūgen* itself, replete with mysterious and subdued beauty. It is in a dimension beyond language.¹²¹

Poem Thirteen [1:84]

[A poem] alluding to love and the wind:

Sore naranu

Hito no kokoro no

Araki kaze

Ukimi ni tōru

*Aki no hageshisa*¹²²

So changed -

You are a stranger to me now:

The cruelty of your cooled passions

Pierces my sad body

Like the bitter autumn winds

Sore naranu hito. Literally, 'the person who is not that one [the lover that he/she used to be]'. In other words, a person whose previous loving attitude has changed. Brower interprets the gender of the fickle, hurtful lover as female¹²³ even though social reality makes it more likely that this figure is a male. **Aki.** The conventional word play is made here on the homophones *aki*, 'autumn' and 'surfeit'.

Commentary

In this seasonally-aligned love poem a metaphor is set up between the bitterness of the autumn wind and the wounding indifference of the poet's beloved, all the more hurtful because his attitude

¹²¹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 69.

¹²² To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

¹²³ 'From the heart of one/No longer what she used to be/Blows a fierce wind -/Dashing against my wretched soul/The harsh autumn of her satiety' (Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p. 99).

was once so warm and loving.

Shōtetsu in his commentary points out the novelty of the phrase *sore naranu*, which he clearly regards as the most successful line of the poem, and so much more original than alternatives which he cites such as *kawariyuku* ('changing') or *wasureyuku* ('forgetting'). The latter epithets, he claims, can be found in poetry 'in their myriads'.¹²⁴

The wording of the poem *Hito no kokoro no/Araki kaze* seems distinctly to echo similar lines in Poem 11, *Hito no kokoro no/Hana no hatsukaze* ('first breath of spring/Sensed already by the flowers/Which bloom hidden in the hearts of man'). The new context given by Poem 13 now provides Poem 11 with an alternative, romantic interpretation: The 'flowers' in the hearts of man can be construed as the flowers of love and yearning, which are urged to blossom into true romance, one of the significations of the word *iro*. But if Poem 11 is depicting the beginning of a romance, a romance about to blossom like the spring, then Poem 13 is showing the sad and inevitable decay of the romance, the romance in its 'autumn', ravaged by the unilateral 'winds of surfeit' or *aki*. Like so many of Shōtetsu's images, 'wind' depending on poetic context and interpretation is therefore both negative and positive in its connotations — as indeed are its effects in the real world, its warmth in spring nurturing and sustaining life, but blighting and withering in autumn and winter.

Poem 13 also reverberates with the imagery and situation of one of Teika's love poems, (mis)quoted by Shōtetsu a few lines later,¹²⁵ which provides one source for Shōtetsu's 'rough wind' (*kaze araki/araki kaze*) imagery and the subject matter of a romance which has turned bitter:

On 'Love Waiting':

Kaze araki

Motoara no kohagi

Sode ni mite

Fukeyuku tsuki ni

¹²⁴ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 84.

¹²⁵ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 86.

The rough wind buffets

The scattered plantings of bush clover :

On the pattern of my sleeves too

The white dew grows heavier and heavier

As night deepens

Poem Fourteen [1:88]

On the topic 'Love which Forgets':

Uki mono to

Omou kokoro no

Ato mo naku

Ware o wasureyo

*Kimi wa uramiji*¹²⁷

Forget our love

And forget at the same time

Your every last loathing of me:

When you do this

My rancour against you will cease

Kimi. This pronoun 'you' usually refers to a male person, so in this poem Shōtetsu is writing from a female viewpoint, unless the 'you' of the poem is perhaps the boy Kōbai or another of Shōtetsu's young male romantic interests. No biographical information to elucidate this poem has been found.

Commentary

¹²⁶ *Ropyakuban Utaawase*, Poem 695. Teika's version was actually *Kaze tsuraki/ Motoara no kohagi/Sode ni mite/Fukeyuku yowa ni/Omoru shiratsuyu*. Shōtetsu has aligned his poem more closely with Teika's than was in fact the case. He replaces Teika's opening line adjective *tsuraki* ('cruel, difficult to withstand') with his own *araki* ('fierce, rough') and the image *yowa* ('late at night') with one of his favourite images, *tsuki* ('moon'), an unconscious but significant substitution revealing Shōtetsu's aesthetic preferences.

¹²⁷ This poem is also found in *Renka Ichijiku* (A Scroll of Love Poems).

As in Poem 13, this poem is written from the suffering party's point of view. Whereas Poem 13 expresses the experience of rejection in the very physical and tactile image of the piercingly bitter autumn wind penetrating one's body, the present poem takes a highly intellectual approach to the situation. It is notable for its absence of concrete imagery, other than the two combatants in the emotional conflict, *ware* ('I') and *kimi* ('you').

The persona reasons that if her former lover can forget her completely, then this will mean that his loathing for her will also be forgotten. If he can forget her to this extent, then she in turn will be appeased and forget the grudge she holds against him.

As if to vindicate the difficult and syllogistic tone of his poem, in the very next paragraph Shōtetsu quotes a poem by Teika resembling his own in its approach:

Wasurenu ya
Sa wa wasurekeri
Wa ga kokoro
Yume ni nase to zo
*Ite wakareshi*¹²⁸

Have you forgotten?
Then you have indeed forgotten !
How we parted with my request
You would pretend
My love was just a dream

Poem Fifteen [1: 100]

'Early Spring in the Mountains':

Kuru haru ni
Ausaka nagara
Shirakawa no

¹²⁸ *Shūigūso*, on the topic 'ill-fated love', quoted in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:89.

Seki no to akuru

*Yama no yuki ka na*¹²⁹

While we expect to meet the coming spring

At Ausaka Hill

Behold the snowy mountains

As wintry as those

Beyond the barrier gate of remote Shirakawa!

Ausaka. Literally, the 'slope of meetings', the mountain between Yamashiro and Ōmi provinces, present-day Kyoto and Shiga Prefectures. It was the location of a famous toll barrier, and as such often symbolised the point of departure from, and re-entry into, the civilization of the capital. By extension, in Heian love poetry, it denoted the point of no return, or physical commitment, in a relationship.¹³⁰ As this poem demonstrates, a play is almost obligatory on the placename Ausaka and the verb 'to meet' (*au*). Here the 'meeting' is with both the spring and, on the allegorical level, with one's lover. **Shirakawa no seki.** This was another famous barrier gate important in the Heian Period located in Iwashiro Province (Fukushima Prefecture). Passing through this barrier gate signified entry into Michinoku and the privilege of visiting the famous *utamakura* (places glorified in poetry) located in this remote and romantic region. Many profoundly emotional poems were composed at Shirakawa, to the extent that this barrier was regarded as sacred ground by literati. For example, Fujiwara no Kiyosuke (1104-1177) relates in his poetic treatise *Fukuro Sōshi* how a certain High Steward Kuniyuki insisted on wearing full court costume to travel through this gate, so profound was his respect for its poetic associations.¹³¹

Commentary

On the literal level, Shōtetsu compares the early spring scenery at Ausaka Mountain, unexpectedly still covered in snow, with the wintry landscape at another famous barrier gate, at Shirakawa, the gateway to cold and remote Michinoku in the far north. His comments following this poem show

¹²⁹ Other sources of this poem are unknown. Inada suggests that it dates from the Ōei period (1394-1428) on the basis of its style and attempt at novelty within the boundaries of traditional expression (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.755).

¹³⁰ Katagiri, *Utamakura Utakotoba Jiten*, pp.25-7.

¹³¹ Katagiri, *Utamakura Utakotoba Jiten*, p.212-14.

that he is more than a little delighted with the novelty of this conception.

*One is at Ausaka but one feels as if one is at the Shirakawa Barrier. Now this is a novel idea!*¹³²

On the allegorical level, the poem also describes a rebuff in a romance: at the crucial juncture, ‘the point of no return’ in the relationship, the hopeful lover is confronted with ‘frigid snows’ and not the warm and welcoming reception which he had anticipated.

The allegory aside, Shōtetsu’s poem also presents, we suggest, a significant reinterpretation of beauty, which according to Shōtetsu’s Teika-derived aesthetic, is no longer necessarily expressed by such positively beautiful images as the spring blossoms of the capital, but can also reside even more profoundly in outwardly negative images of austerity as the snow of the deep north.

Poem Sixteen [1:101]

'Praying for Love':

Aratamaru

Chigiri ya aru to

Miyatsukuri

Kami o utsushite

*Misogi semashi o*¹³³

Perhaps our vows of love

Will be miraculously renewed

Binding us as firmly as the joined crossbeams on the shrine gables

If only I could build a sanctuary, install the deity

And purify myself for worship!

Aratamaru. Hidden behind the verb *aratamaru*, ‘to become new’, ‘change to something different’,

¹³² *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:100. Part of the novelty lies in the fact that the Shirakawa Gate was usually associated with autumn (Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.107, n.276).

¹³³ This poem is to be found in *Renka Ichijiku*.

lies also the word *arata* 'endowed with miraculous powers'. **Chigiri.** A meaningful word play is activated here on *chigiri* meaning 'love pledge' and *chigi*, the ornamental crossbeams jutting from the gables at both ends of a Shinto shrine. It is auspicious to link vows of love with these crossbeams with their characteristics of intersection, close binding and equal weight and length. The symbolism of *chigi* can be further validated by reference to earlier *waka* on unfulfilled love which refer to *chigi* with one crossbeam chopped off.¹³⁴ *Chigi* are a feature of the most ancient style of shrine architecture such as seen at the Grand Shrine of Ise, Izumo or Kasuga Shrine in Nara, imbuing the poem with a vaguely archaic atmosphere. **Misogi.** A pun may also be intended here on *misogi* meaning special timber used in making holy effigies, and *misogi* meaning ritual ablutions performed to rid the person of defilement and sin before worship at a shrine.

Commentary

This poem is built around the theme of renewal and hope, couched in the symbolism of the construction of a new shrine. The poet hopes that the new beginnings represented by a new construction may also be reflected in his private life, with the renewal of romantic vows. Perhaps the prayers he hopes to offer at this shrine will be efficacious in bringing his romantic desires to fruition. However the wistful tone of the desiderative and hypothetical suffix *mashi o* suggests that neither the shrine nor his hopes of renewed love are actually likely to materialise.

Technically this is a skilful poem, but aesthetically and emotionally it does not produce any deep response. The creative energies of the poet appear to be concentrated on inlaying the poem with word associations (*engo*) relating especially to shrines and shrine worship: *arata* (miraculous'), *chigi* (ornamental crossbeams on a shrine roof), *miya* ('shrine'), *kami* ('deity'), *misogi* (ritual purification or special timber used to make holy effigies). Shōtetsu is rather taken with his own cleverness: 'poets in the past could not compose such a poem', he comments.¹³⁵

Poem Seventeen [1:102]

One spring dawn at a place famed for its scenery:

Akenikeri

¹³⁴ 'Chigi no katasogi', as in *Shinkokinshū*, poem 1114.

¹³⁵ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:101.

Aramashikaba no
Haru no hana
Nagisa ni kasumu
*Shiga no yamamoto*¹³⁶

Ah! Dawn has broken!
If only the flowers of spring
Were in bloom:
Mist blurs the water's edge
At the foot of the Shiga mountain

Nagisa. 'Water's edge.' It also functions as a *kakekotoba* carrying on from the previous line to mean 'no flowers exist' (*haru no hana naki*), according to Shōtetsu's self-commentary. **Shiga.** Present-day Shiga Prefecture, on the southwest shore of Lake Biwa. An *utamakura*, or placename with profound poetic associations, and the site of the Ōtsu capital of Emperor Tenji (626-671) in the seventh century. In *Manyōshū* times Shiga was pronounced Shika, and this placename is incorporated into the second line of his poem, *Aramashikaba*. **Shiga no yamamoto.** 'The foot of the Shiga mountain.' The pass over this mountain, which provided the route from Kyoto to Ōmi Province (Shiga Prefecture), was famed in poetry and particularly associated with spring blossoms, immortalized by Ki no Tsurayuki's *Kokinshū* poem which was composed at this spot, preceded by the headnote 'Composed and delivered to a large group of ladies we met on the Shiga Pass':

Azusa yumi
Haru no yamabe o
Koekureba
Michi mo sariaezu
*Hana zo chirikeru*¹³⁷

When I crossed

¹³⁶ *Sōkonshū* 2874.

¹³⁷ Katagiri, *Utamakura Utakotoba Jiten*, p. 189. *Kokinshū* 115.

*The springlike mountains
Where archers bend their bows
So many blossoms scattered
That I could not forge a path .*

In Tsurayuki's poem, the blossoms double as a metaphor for court ladies flower-like in their exquisite robes. Through the spring setting which the two poems share, the charm and beauty of this earlier poem subtly transfers itself to Shōtetsu's poem.

Commentary

This poem provides another effective example of Shōtetsu's experimentation with the idea of 'affirmation through denial' in his poetry.¹³⁸ In this poem he again works on the image of cherry blossoms, wishing them into existence with the desiderative *aramashikaba* ('if only they existed'), then witnessing a momentary materialization with the immediately following image *haru no hana* ('the spring blossoms'), which is then instantly extinguished through the word play *hana nagi(sa)* ('the flowers do not exist'). The image which ultimately remains is that of the tranquil lakeshore wreathed in mist which is also reflected in the gently lapping waves, but there are no blossoms. And yet, since mist is a conventional metaphor for blossom, the reader is still seduced by the possibility that the 'mist' may not in fact be mist at all, but clouds of cherry blossom in bloom after all. Moreover, paradoxically, through denying the existence of the blossoms, the poem succeeds in evoking them in the reader's imagination even more vividly than if the flowers were actually described in bloom on the lakeshore.

This poem also creates a deep impression of nostalgia for a lost past: the placename Shiga evokes the memory of an ancient capital in ruins¹³⁹ and, significantly, the 'flowers', metaphors for the court ladies, are absent. The vision of ancient Shiga seems to shimmer like a mirage in the mist over the lake. Nowhere is the poet's yearning for the past more passionate than in his cry *aramashikaba*, 'if only there were!' And yet, even in this state of loss and deprivation there is consolation, in this case the sight of dawn breaking over the misty waters of Lake Biwa. This

¹³⁸ As in Poem 11.

¹³⁹ *Sasanami ya/ Shiga no miyako wa/ Arenishi o/ Mukashi nagara no/ Yamazakura kana* ('The capital of Shiga /Of the rippling waves /Has fallen to ruin/ Yet the mountain cherry flowers on/ Now as in the past'). *Senzaishū*, 'Spring', Part One, quoted in Katagiri, *Utamakura Utakotoba Jiten*, p. 188.

unadorned, unselfconscious beauty can even compensate, unexpectedly, for the absence of the traditional images of beauty, the cherry blossoms.

Poem Eighteen [1:103]

Dreams at dawn:

*Akatsuki no
Nezame wa oi no
Mukashi nite
Yoi no ma tanomu
Yume mo taeniki¹⁴⁰*

*Waking at dawn troubled me
Many years back in my old age:
Now even the dreams I used to depend on
At night
Have vanished*

Commentary

This poem takes as its subject matter the very human and universal problem of insomnia and early waking in old age, an affliction which crosses all barriers of time and civilization. According to Shōtetsu's own commentary, 'Waking at dawn was a problem which troubled me earlier in my old age, at forty or fifty. Now I cannot even sleep at night'. In contemporary terms, forty or fifty was already considered advanced in years, although Shōtetsu lived many years longer, until the age of seventy-nine.

The chief source of annoyance for Shōtetsu is that because he is unable to sleep, he is unable to make his escape into the refuge of dreams which the night in earlier years had promised him. This is the central conception of the poem.

The poem distinguishes itself from many of Shōtetsu's other works by the directness of its

¹⁴⁰ *Sōkonshū* 5059.

expression. It is one of the few examples of apparently personal poetry in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. But, for all its directness, it is a carefully crafted and unified poem, for example in its recurrent usage of time words *akatsuki* (dawn), *mukashi* (the past), *yoi* (the earlier part of the night), *ma* (interval of time) which link semantically to the central image and concern of the poem, old age (*oi*).

Particularly arresting, if not paradoxical, is the image *oi no mukashi*, literally 'the bygone days of my old age', meaning an earlier period in the old age of a person who must have been old for a very long time. *Mukashi* is a time word of relativity, used when looking back on the past from the present. Through depicting the duration of 'old age' for the poet as lasting for many long years, long enough for old age to have its own 'bygone days', an impression is skilfully created of a poet exceptionally advanced in years and whose suffering and torment has increased proportionally.

Poem Nineteen [1:104]

On the topic 'Peaceful Moonlight at the Dead of Night'

Itazura ni

Fukeyuku sora no

Kage nare ya

Hitori nagamuru

*Aki no yo no tsuki*¹⁴¹

How idly and futilely

Night deepens in the skies

And the moonlight grows more beautiful!

Alone I gaze upon the moon

This autumn night

Commentary

It was this poem which Shōtetsu composed at the age of fourteen for his first poetry gathering at

¹⁴¹ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

the residence of Imagawa Ryōshun, also attended by Reizei Tamemasa and Tamekuni.¹⁴² It thus represents his formal poetic debut. The poem is also significant as Shōtetsu's earliest extant composition, already showing qualities of elegance and decorum¹⁴³ and a predilection for imagery of the moon and moonlight which persisted throughout his poetic career. Especially noteworthy is the association made in the poem between solitude and the intense experience of beauty, in this case the beauty of the moon. In other words, Shōtetsu was already revealing in his poetic at such a young age a sense and predilection for the *sabi* aesthetic.

¹⁴² *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1: 104.

¹⁴³ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p. 751.

4. Annotation of Shōtetsu's Poems in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* Part Two

Poem Twenty [2:2]

'The First Geese Flying from the North':

Harauramu

Sogai ni wataru

Hatsukari no

Namida tsuranaru

*Mine no matsukaze*¹⁴⁴

The autumn gales which blow through the pines on the peak

Must be scattering

The tears strung out like chains

Shed by the first wild geese

Flying in formation

Sogai ni. 'Following on one after another', translated here as 'flying in formation'. **Hatsukari no namida.** 'The tears of the first wild geese.' It was a poetic convention for wild geese to be associated with crying and tears. The tears of the wild geese which return to Japan in autumn were believed to cause the leaves to turn crimson.

Commentary

This fanciful poem speculates on the effect of the autumn gales on the imagined tears of the wild geese in flight, which should be strung out in the sky in a formation as orderly as the geese themselves.

From the context in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* in which this poem occurs, it is obvious that Shōtetsu regarded it as a good poem, exemplary of a style of earlier poetry both he and Teika favoured, the era preceding the *Kokinshū* and producing great names like Ariwara no Narihira and Ono no Komachi. Shōtetsu goes on to define a 'good' poem thus:

¹⁴⁴ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

A good poem is one which somehow has a poem-like turn of phrase when read over again aloud, flows smoothly, is not full of logic, is gentle and restrained and with a deep, inner calm [*yū*¹⁴⁵]. Indeed, an exceedingly good poem is beyond the realm of reason. The excellence of the poem lies in the part which lies beyond description. A poem should just convince naturally and not require a wordy explanation.¹⁴⁶

Shōtetsu may have intended his poem to exude 'a deep, inner calm', but ironically, subtly inferred symbols of order and chaos interact in this poem to produce a rather disturbing effect. The wild geese, in the clockwork- like regularity of their migratory patterns, and in the amazing precision of their formation-flying, embody principles of order. Even their tears form a chain-like pattern (*tsuranaru*) as they fall, or so the poet imagines. On the other hand, the wind, scattering the tears shed by these orderly creatures, becomes the destructive agent of disorder - as in Poem 5 where the wind scatters the poet's tears. The effects of disorder are even mimicked in the syntax of the poem, in the unconventional inversion of the grammatical subject (*mine no matsukaze*) and its predicate (*harauramu*) ('scatter') and their dislocated placement at opposite ends of the poem.

Poem Twenty-One [2:4]

'Morning Frosts':

*Kusa no hara
Tare ni tou to mo
Konogoro ya
Asashimo okite
Karu to kotaemu*¹⁴⁷

*Whoever I ask what happened
To the fields of grass
They will reply
'They are withered and gone*

¹⁴⁵ Written with the 'yū' of *yūgen*.

¹⁴⁶ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 2. Given the complexity of Shōtetsu's poetry, we wonder how many of his own poems would conform to his exacting definition of a 'good' poem.

¹⁴⁷ *Sōkonshū* 4172.

Asashimo okite. 'In the morning frosts.' Brower's translation, 'leaving the morning frost behind', shows a variant and possibly more picturesque interpretation.¹⁴⁸ **Karu.** A complex word play exists here on *karu* which can mean variously 'to wither', 'to cut', 'to move away', 'to become emotionally distant'.

Commentary

This poem works on two levels, the literal level where the poet is enquiring about the whereabouts, or disappearance, of the beautiful autumn 'fields of grass' (*kusa no hara*), and the metaphorical level, where the image *kusa no hara* assumes an allegorical significance, probably representing a lady-love whose whereabouts one seeks in vain. These reverberations are triggered not only through the pun on *karu* meaning both 'to wither' and 'to move away', but also through the romantic situation of the earlier poems which this poem deliberately echoes. As Shōtetsu himself points out in the commentary which follows his poem, the poem is a skilful allusive variation on the imagery and diction of certain poems from the Heian romances *Sagoromo* and *The Tale of Genji*, as well as the *Shinkokinshū*. The *Sagoromo* poem describes the Hagaromo General's vain search for Lady Asukai who has vanished like 'the dew on the grass by the wayside (*michishiba no tsuyu*)'¹⁴⁹; the *Genji* poem occurs in the first interchange between Genji and one of his early romantic conquests Oborozukiyo.¹⁵⁰ The *Shinkokinshū* poem, like Shōtetsu's, reveals no specific details of its romantic circumstances but these nonetheless are heavily insinuated subtextually.¹⁵¹

This poem also functions perfectly satisfactorily according to a third interpretation in which the image 'fields of grass' with its evocation of the Heian canon may serve as a symbol or metaphor of beauty which has vanished, even the lost resplendence of the aristocratic past. *Kusa no hara* is

¹⁴⁸ 'Just ask of anyone/What has become of the grassy fields,/And the reply will be: "In this season they are dead and gone,/Leaving the morning frost behind' (Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.117).

¹⁴⁹ *Tazunubeki/Kusa no hara sae/Shimogarete/Tare ni towamashi/Michishiba no tsuyu* 'Even the fields of grass/Where I should have sought you/ Have withered in the frost/Whom should I ask /Where the dew on the grass by the wayside has vanished?' (Quoted in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 4).

¹⁵⁰ *Ukimi yo ni /Yagate kienaba/Tazunete mo/Kusa no hara o ba/Towaji to ya omou* 'If my miserable mortal body/Were to vanish from this world/In search of me /Would you not/Seek out my grave in the fields of grass?' (Quoted in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2:4, and p.203, n.2).

¹⁵¹ *Shimogare wa/Soko to mo miezu/Kusa no hara/Tare ni towamashi/Aki no nagorio* 'How unrecognizable they are /The fields of grass/ Withered in the frost/Whom shall I ask/Where the traces of autumn have vanished?' (Quoted in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2:4).

indeed an image of 'indeterminate meaning' and deep interpretative potential when its allusive lineage is recognised or if it is appreciated in the broader context of the contemporary historical and social situation.

Poem Twenty-Two [2: 5]

[A poem] alluding to love and clouds:

Omoiwabi

Kiete tanabiku

Kumo naraba

Aware ya kakemu

*Yukusue no sora*¹⁵²

Should I die from the heartbreak of my ardour for you

And the smoke from my funeral pyre

Drift to join the trailing clouds

Would this then move your hard heart?

I gaze at the skies for which I am bound

Omoiwabi. To feel misery at disappointment in love. *Omoi*, or *omohi* if the transliteration into Roman letters is made to reflect the original script accurately, often conceals a pun on the 'fires' (*hi*) of love. In this sense *omoi* acts as an *engo* (associating word) with *kiete*, 'to be extinguished', 'to die', and, most important, links with the implicit image of crematory fires. It also assists the image *kumo* ('clouds') in being interpreted as a metaphor for smoke.

Commentary

The point of this passionate yet pathetic poem is the hope that once the persona becomes united with and evaporates into the unutterably moving beauty of the skies through death and cremation, she may then have the power to move and impress her indifferent lover.¹⁵³

¹⁵² To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

¹⁵³ Brower's variant translation may be aesthetically closer to the original, in that any possibly distasteful allusion to smoke from funeral pyres is left strictly implicit. It also makes the catalyst of pity in the eyes of the beholder the sight of the 'empty sky', rather than the 'trailing clouds': 'If in my misery/I were to fade and trail away/Among the

Shōtetsu's implicit association of death, funeral pyres and clouds in this poem was quite conventional but the powerful yet ethereal image which closes the poem *yukusue no sora* ('the skies for which I am bound') has a definitely medieval flavour in its evocation of infinite emptiness and the inexpressible beauty of this state.

Poem Twenty-Three [2: 7]

'The Pine on the Seashore':

Okitsukaze

Isago o aguru

Hama no ishi ni

Sonarete furuki

*Matsu no koe ka na*¹⁵⁴

Scooping up

The sands of the beach

The onshore breeze

Comes to sing in the boughs of the ancient pine

Stooped over the rocks on the shore

Sonarete. A corruption of *isonaru*, signifying the bent-over form of trees at the seashore, their branches 'familiar' (*naru*) with the beach (*iso*).

Commentary

This poem is ostensibly about the song of the ancient pine on the seashore, but also we suggest explores the mystic quality of the phenomenon of wind, which can never be seen but is constantly revealing itself. In this poem wind is shown as a visual and kinetic phenomenon, stirring the sands, and as an aural phenomenon as the song of the pines. If we try to appreciate the poem from Shōtetsu's metaphysical perspective, it does not seem excessive to interpret the image of the wind

clouds, /Would he perhaps feel pity then /For one ending in empty sky?' (Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p. 118). Brower's translation also captures the 'noun-ending' close of the poem rather more effectively.

¹⁵⁴ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

as Shōtetsu's attempt to convey his insight into *sunyata*, the ultimate nature of reality, immanent and knowable only through the changes which can be perceived in the phenomenal world. The drive to gain insight into this dimension comprised a major facet of Zen thought in the medieval period.¹⁵⁵

Another symbol alluding to the same metaphysical dimension in this poem can be found in the image of the evergreen pine tree, immutable and intimately 'stooped over the rocks' (*sonarete*), at one with them and unable to be articulated or detached from them. This aspect of total integration and interpenetration is another aspect of the ultimate level of reality. In describing phenomena of the concrete world Toshihiko Izutsu comments '...all these things, being in reality non-existent, do not present themselves as solid self-subsistent entities. They are transparent and permeable. Reflecting each other, interpenetrating each other, and dissolving themselves into each other, they form an integral whole which is nothing other than the direct appearance of the primary level of Reality'.¹⁵⁶ The ancient pine spreading its roots among the rocks on the shore, and indeed the wind moving at one with the sand, seem to express this idea.

Parenthetically, it may be helpful to consider the metaphysical role of the pine tree in the Nō drama, where it comprises the only ornamentation on a bare stage. Here too the pine tree expresses the unchanging and all-absorbing dimension of existence out of which the action on the stage fleetingly emerges, the intersection of the phenomenal world and the great nothingness beyond. While it should be stressed that Shōtetsu was unlikely to be specifically trying to evoke the pine of Nō drama in this poem, having numerous precedents for 'pine' imagery in the earlier anthologies, it should be remembered that he was a contemporary of Zeami (1363-1443) and it is not surprising to find an overlap in their metaphysical views and the way they achieved concrete expression.¹⁵⁷

Metaphysical overtones aside, the pine has connotations of endurance and permanence, and as such it can be interpreted to signify the stubborn survival of the aristocratic tradition which Shōtetsu championed. According to this reading, the wind with its vague intimations of violence

¹⁵⁵ Zen Buddhism thrived, emphasizing the importance of realizing the existence of a formless and colorless world of eternal Reality beyond phenomenal forms and colors' (Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, p.228).

¹⁵⁶ Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, p.112.

¹⁵⁷ Various theories exist on the significance of the pine painting on the Nō stage, but behind these theories is consensus that 'the pine suggests a merging with nature and indicates the sanctity of the space' (Komparu, *The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives*, pp.114-6).

and disturbance suggests the turbulent times in which Shōtetsu lived: a highly effective and arresting juxtaposition of tradition against change is set up. It could also be argued that the image 'pine tree', which we recall was incorporated in Shōtetsu's artistic name Shōgetsu-an ('moon in the pine trees') may also even allude to the old poet himself, whose 'voice' like that of the old pine tree in the poem continued to sing despite the batterings of fortune. Indeed, the more harshly the winds of ill fortune blew, the more beautifully and intensely he sang.

Poem Twenty-Four [2: 25]

Composed on the topic 'Trees in Summer and Birds' at the residence of the Senior Assistant Minister of Palace Maintenance and Construction.¹⁵⁸

Hototogisu

Mata hitokoe ni

Narinikeri

Ono ga satsuki no

*Sugi no kogakure*¹⁵⁹

O cuckoo

Again your chorus has dwindled to

A solo cry

From your hiding-place in the cedars

Now your own fifth month has passed

Hototogisu. A bird welcomed as the herald of summer, emerging from the mountains at the beginning of summer and returning to the mountains in autumn. Its song was eagerly awaited and deeply cherished. **Ono ga satsuki.** 'One's own fifth month.' Satsuki is the fifth month in the lunar calendar corresponding with June in the solar calendar, and is the month when the *hototogisu*.

¹⁵⁸ This is possibly Hatakeyama Yoshitada (Kenryō), who was also the Governor of Noto (*Shōtetsu Monogatari*, p.209, n. 21). Shōtetsu appears to have associated very closely with Yoshitada. As previously noted, his name appears about 170 times in Shōtetsu's writings. His first association with him dates to 1429, and their friendship was lifelong. In *Sōkonshū* 10,640, Kenryō's gift of white charcoal in 1459, the year of Shōtetsu's death, is noted. Shōtetsu regularly attended the monthly poetry gatherings at Kenryō's residence (Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, pp.115-116), and this was no doubt the occasion for the present poem.

¹⁵⁹ *Sōkonshū* 3252. No information is supplied in *Sōkonshū* suggesting its date of composition.

emerges from the mountains, thus the proprietary attitude expressed in the phrase 'your own fifth month'. **Sugi no kogakure.** 'Hiding-place in the cedars.' A play on *sugi* (connective form of *sugu*, 'to pass, be over') and *sugi* ('cedar') is intended.¹⁶⁰

Commentary

This poem gains its appeal by evoking through the call of the solitary cuckoo a longing for the summer days now passed when cuckoo song could be heard everywhere. The evocation of summer constitutes the *yojō* of the poem, that is, the situation which lies beyond the poem's actual words, rendered even more beautiful and ironically more vivid by the fact that images of summer exists now only in the poet and the reader's imagination and memory.

The cuckoo and emotions of nostalgia were traditionally closely linked; to this extent Shōtetsu is responding in a conventional manner to the image of 'cuckoo'. By the same token, to choose the cuckoo as his central image in a poem on the topic 'Trees in summer and birds' is also predictable, as the cuckoo was the representative bird of summer in poetry, in the same way that the *uguisu* ('bush warbler') was the representative bird of the spring.

The cuckoo forms the central image in three other poems by Shōtetsu in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* (Poems 35, 37 and 42) which will be discussed presently, an indication that in some way the motif of the cuckoo and its implications of deep nostalgia held particular attraction for Shōtetsu.

In this poem, the cuckoo whose 'own fifth month has passed' could even be interpreted as a cipher for Shōtetsu, at the time when he lost official favour and was forced to 'sing his song' in hiding. This theory cannot be confirmed because the date of composition of the poem is unknown.

Poem Twenty-Five [2: 26]

At a poetry gathering at a certain place, on the topic, 'Praying for Love':

Omoine no

Makura no chiri ni

¹⁶⁰ Brower's variant translation adopts a more playful tone, depicting a perverse cuckoo not singing when it should be singing, rather than the poignant song of one of the last cuckoos after the fifth month has passed. 'Again the cuckoo/Vouchsafes but a single song/And then is silent/In its hiding place amid the cedars/Of the fifth month that is its own' (Brower and Carter, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p. 128).

Majiwaraba
Ayumi o hakobu
*Kami ya nakaramu*¹⁶¹

If a god visited me where I sleep
In lonely yearning
And mingled with the dust by my pillow
What need would there be for me
To go as a pilgrim on foot to his shrine?

Chiri ni majiwaraba. Literally, ‘if the gods mixed with the dust’. This expression alludes to the Buddhist dictum *wakō dōjin*. *Chiri* is the indigenous reading of Sino-Japanese *jin* (‘dust’). This dictum expressed the belief that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas ‘soften their radiance’ (*wakō*) and move in disguise among mankind (*dōjin*), that is among the ‘dust’ and impurities of human society, to bring about salvation. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas supposedly assumed the guise of Shinto gods for their mission of salvation.¹⁶² Shōtetsu uses the phrase *chiri ni majiwaraba* in both the sense of supernatural beings visiting his bedside where the ‘dust’ has literally gathered — in the romantic situation, the presence of dust at one’s pillow indicated an absence of amorous activity¹⁶³— and in its scriptural sense of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas moving among men, the ‘dust’ of humankind.

Commentary

Shōtetsu proposes that if the gods were truly ‘mingling with the dust’ and moving among mankind (*chiri ni majiwaraba*) even to the extent of visiting his dusty pillowside, they would be aware of the disappointment in love he was experiencing and there would be no need for him to make a special pilgrimage to the shrine to pray for an improvement in his romantic situation.

This poem appeals more to the intellect than to the emotions in its play on the dictum *wakō dōjin*. One cannot but think that Shōtetsu has pondered upon the expression *wakō dōjin* for some time,

¹⁶¹ *Sōkonshū* 4408.

¹⁶² *Iwanami Kogo Jiten*, p.839.

¹⁶³ See commentary on *Kokinshū* 167, in Ozawa, *Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū* v 7: *Kokinwakashū*, p.113, n.3.

wondering how its striking imagism (*wa*, 'to soften, make accessible', *kō*, 'radiance', *jin* 'dust') could be exploited in a poem. Technically he has succeeded rather well in the phrase *chiri ni majiwaraba* which works perfectly both literally ('if they should mingle with the dust [of my pillow]') and figuratively ('if they should mingle with the scum of mankind'), but an artificial, uninvolved effect is created. The poem is inspired, we feel, less by a genuine experience of unrequited love than by a desire to show off a virtuosity with words.

Shōtetsu was clearly very pleased with this poem, because he follows it with the comment that he was strongly tempted 'to use it again' the next day (*kore o kaeba ya to zonzijaberishi*¹⁶⁴) when a poem on an identical topic was required at another poetry gathering. Apparently he suppressed this urge, dismissing it as 'weakness' (*yowayowashiku ya to omoite*) and composed a new poem, the poem below. Most readers would sympathise with the endearing pragmatism demonstrated by Shōtetsu on this occasion in contemplating 're-cycling' his poem. It also provides a telling example of Shōtetsu showing his pupils possible short cuts and 'tricks of the trade' in poetry.

Poem Twenty-Six [2:26]

*Sono kami no
Megami ogami no
Michi araba
Koi ni misogi o
Kami ya ukemashi*¹⁶⁵

*If we believe the ancient Way of the Gods
Started from the union of
Male deity with female deity
Would the gods accept
Rituals of worship nurturing love?*

Megami ogami. The first female and male deities, Izanami and Izanagi, the Shinto equivalents of

¹⁶⁴ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2:26.

¹⁶⁵ *Sōkonshū* 4405. The *Sōkonshū* version differs in its first third and fifth line from the version in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

Adam and Eve, from whose union were created the islands of Japan and all the deities. **Michi.** The 'Way' of the Gods, that is, Shintoism. **Koi ni misogi o.** *Misogi* literally means ritual lustration and purification, performed in a river or in the sea in order to cleanse oneself of defilement as part of the act of worship at a Shinto shrine. Here, the line *koi ni misogi o* indicates ritual lustration whose purpose is to cultivate the favour of the gods so that some romantic situation might develop

Commentary

Like the previous poem, this poem is logical and thus rather impersonal. The poet reasons that if Shinto worship looks back to the procreative act of Izanami and Izanagi, then one might speculate that any ritual purification whose performers are praying for love will receive a sympathetic hearing from the gods.

Poem Twenty-Seven [2: 28]

On the topic 'Love Pledged in the Course of a Journey':

Yadori karu
Hitomurasame o
Chigiri nite
Yukue mo shiboru
*Sode no wakareji*¹⁶⁶

Taking shelter from a sudden shower

Drying out our clothes

We exchange a pledge of predestined love;

Dreading the parting of our ways

Sleeves sodden this time with tears

Karu. The various homonymic meanings of *karu* are brought into play: 'to borrow', 'to dry out', 'to move apart'. *Shōtetsu* may also be suggesting the noun *kari* ('transience'). **Hitomurasame.** 'A sudden shower.' *Hitomurasame* is often encountered in the stock expression *hitomurasame no*

¹⁶⁶ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

amayadori ('taking shelter from a sudden shower'), which Shōtetsu has inverted and integrated into the first two lines of his poem (*Yadori karu/Hitomurasame o*). This expression has profound Buddhist connotations, built on the idea that two people who take shelter from the same shower of rain in the same place must be linked by some predetermined karmic bond, a cultural overtone of the poem hopefully conveyed by the phrase 'predestined love' in the above translation.¹⁶⁷

Wakareji. 'The path of separation' and figuratively, 'death'.

Commentary

Taken literally, this poem depicts a very human situation which no doubt occurred quite frequently: two travellers meet seeking shelter from a sudden shower of rain and form an intimate attachment. They anticipate with dread the imminent parting of their ways when their sleeves will get wet again, this time not because of the rain but because of the tears of sorrow they will shed at their parting.

Western morality would tend to censure such a hasty ad hoc relationship as a 'one night stand', but as explained above, in the contemporary Buddhist context which regarded such a chance encounter as the mysterious workings of destiny, it would seem perfectly reasonable and acceptable for a special bond to be forged then and there between the individuals concerned.

The same Buddhist context which the poem consciously evokes through the reverberations of imagery such as *yadori* ('temporary dwelling'), *karu* (suggesting *kari no* 'transient'), *wakareji* ('paths which separate') also imbues the entire poem with a metaphorical significance eventually subsuming the concrete romantic situation: our mortal existence is as transient and impermanent as a temporary shelter on a journey. It may contain moments of joy which should be grasped, but these too are fleeting and inevitably will bring sorrow in the end. Our existence hurtles with certainty towards one destination, which is death. Death will divide even partners who have sworn their love for one another. We would argue that even the word play of the poem contributes to its underlying metaphysical negativism. For example, the noun *chigiri* in the poem is used primarily for its meaning of 'pledge of love' but behind the word lurks its destructive homonym *chigiru* ('to rip up, rip off') casting a shadow over the primary sense of the word and implying that man-woman

¹⁶⁷ *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, v. 17, p. 64.

relationships are essentially perishable and destructive. It has been claimed that the function of the pun is 'to connect two words by similarity of sound so that you are made to think of their possible connections'.¹⁶⁸ Shōtetsu's word plays have precisely this effect.¹⁶⁹ Thus the poem, taking its hint from symbolism latent in the topic, 'Love Pledged on a Journey' (journey signifying the journey of life), expresses succinctly Shōtetsu's Buddhist world view .

Poem Twenty-Eight [2:45]

'Hearing the Temple Bell at the End of Spring':

*Kono yūbe
Iriai no kane no
Kasumu ka na
Oto senu kata ni
Haru ya yukuramu¹⁷⁰*

*As dusk falls
The toll of the sundown bell
Sounds mist-swathed:
Will spring perhaps move away
To the quarter which is silent?*

Iriai no kane. A temple bell rung at sundown signalling the time for evening prayer. **Oto senu kata.** A word play may exist here on 'the direction' (*kata*) where 'nothing sounds, is silent' (*oto senu*), and a 'person or lover' (*kata*) who 'sends no letters' (*oto senu*), providing a hint of romance to the poetic situation.

Commentary

Shōtetsu probably takes his inspiration for this poem from the conventional association between the mist and spring, speculating that departing spring will most likely take her leave in the least

¹⁶⁸ Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p.12, quoted by Fox, *Studying English Literature: A Guide for Advancing Students*, p.87.

¹⁶⁹ The same image also occurs in Poems 1, 2, 16 and 38.

¹⁷⁰ *Sōkonshū* 2674.

springlike direction, in this case where the sound of the temple bell, in all its mistiness, cannot be heard.

Apart from its novel conception, this poem is also noteworthy in its evocation of the rhythms of Shōtetsu's daily life in the cloisters. His sensitivity to the particular timbre of the temple bell at a certain time could surely only be the product of many years of hearing it. The rituals of monastic life appear to be echoed in the natural world by the cycle of the seasons, and a sense of cosmic harmony and Shōtetsu's own feeling of security through this pervade the poem.

Word play on the phrase *oto senu kata* in the lower hemistich spices up the poem with a hint of romantic innuendo: *oto senu kata*, 'the quarter which is silent', may suggest a flagging lover, or a lover who does not make an effort; the temporal imagery of 'dusk' (*yūbe*) and the 'end of spring', with their common inference of 'endings' are appropriate symbols portending the end of a relationship. In this subtext, 'spring' may symbolise the other party in the relationship taking the affair into his/her hands. However it should be observed that the Japanese commentators make no acknowledgement of such a word play. It is not an important facet of the poem and the relevance of the double entendre is limited to two lines of the poem. It is perhaps merely another example of Shōtetsu enriching the texture of his poem with some extra special effects which are related only tangentially to the main conception of the poem.

The poem with its images of the 'sundown bell' and 'spring dusk' appears to be an allusive variation on the following *Shinkokinshū* poem:

Yamazato no

Haru no yūgure

Kite mireba

Iriai no kane ni

*Hana zo chirikeru*¹⁷¹

At dusk in spring

In a village deep in the mountains

¹⁷¹ *Shinkokinshū* 116, by the priest Nōin (b.988).

*I pause to marvel:
Cherry blossoms scattering
To the tolling of the sundown bell*

Through echoing the *Shinkokinshū* poem, by association Shōtetsu summons up the older poem's additional imagery of blossoms falling and the mountain village and thereby deepens his own poem's imagistic dimensions. Moreover, the near synaesthesia in the *Shinkokinshū* poem with its juxtaposition of kinaesthetic/visual imagery (cherry blossoms scattering) and auditory imagery (the sundown bell) becomes concentrated and overt in Shōtetsu's poem, in the striking and blatantly synaesthetic metaphor 'the toll of the sundown bell/Sounds mist-swathed' (*iriai no kane no kasumu*).

Poem Twenty-Nine [2: 47]

[A poem] alluding to love and rivers:

*Ada ni mishi
Hito koso wasure
Yasukawa no
Ukise kokoro ni
Kaeru nami ka na*¹⁷²

*Faithless in your love
How easily you forget me
While memories of those wretched days
Ripple through my mind
Ceaseless as the waves in the shallows of the Yasukawa River*

Yasukawa. A river flowing into Lake Biwa from the east. Here it functions as a pivot word, completing the sense of the upper hemistich as *wasureyasu* ('you forget me easily'), then transforming into the placename Yasukawa in the lower hemistich. It is likely Shōtetsu chose this

¹⁷² To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

placename not for its specific associations, but simply for its suitability as a river name which could relatively easily be integrated into a love poem. **Ukise**. Difficult times or circumstances when matters do not turn out as one would desire. The final syllable *se* ('shallows of a river') also functions as a concrete image in its own right in the poem.

Commentary

The poem uses the Yasukawa River, and more specifically the image of waves which constantly ripple in the shallows of the river, as a metaphor for memories of betrayal in love which resurface continually in the memory. It is as if the persona, while gazing at the river sees in its state his/her own psychological condition.

The poem must surely count among Shōtetsu's most difficult and intractable creations, possibly on account of the complex configuration of the lower hemistich. Here an extreme concentration of abstract images such as *ukise* ('wretched situation') and *kokoro* ('mind, heart') and concrete images such as Yasukawa River, *se* ('shallows') and *nami* ('waves') co-exist in such proximity that the lines defy being read either in a concrete sense or a metaphorical sense, and we are forced to move on both levels of meaning simultaneously. This no doubt was Shōtetsu's purpose: his use of imagery skilfully recreates a heightened emotional state where the boundaries have dissolved between one's internal turmoil and the external scenery. In contrast with the lower hemistich, the upper hemistich is relatively lucid and coherent.

Poem Thirty [2:48]

'The Moon on a Short Night':

Mizu asaku

Ashima ni sudatsu

Kamo no ashi no

Mijikaku ukabu

*Yowa no tsukikage*¹⁷³

¹⁷³ *Sōkonshū* 3168. The *Sōkonshū* version differs slightly: the first line reads *mizu asaki* (the adjective is in its noun-joining form, not its adverbial form); the last line reads *natsu no tsukikage* ('moonlight in summer').

How briefly this short night
The moonlight floats in the lakewaters
— *No longer than the legs of ducklings*
Leaving their nest
Bobbing in the shallows among the reeds

Ukabu. 'To float', but also meaning to be in a state of instability and uncertainty. This verb applies both to describes the moon reflected as if floating in the water and to the ducklings swimming.

Yowa. 'Night time', but also suggesting *yowashi* ('weak').

Commentary

On the literal level, this is a descriptive poem depicting the moon shining in the water on a brief summer's night, comparing the short duration of time the moon is reflected in the water with the shortness of a duckling's legs. (The line 'leaving the nest' (*sudatsu*) confirms that the poem is referring to ducklings, not adult ducks.)

To liken the length of time the moon is reflected in the water to ducklings' legs seems bizarre, if not preposterous. Shōtetsu himself admits his personal misgivings about using the image 'duckling legs' in his commentary which follows the poem, describing it as 'far-fetched'.¹⁷⁴ But Shōtetsu then goes on to vindicate his choice, explaining that it was inspired by the inclusion of 'short' in the topic. Clearly in Shōtetsu's imagination the epitome of 'shortness' was the leg of a duckling, not unreasonable when we discover that under *kamo* ('duck') in the *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, the shortness of their legs is signalled as a distinct characteristic. Moreover, the association between shortness and ducks' legs can be traced back to the Chinese classics: the great exponent of Taoism, Chuang-Tzu, wrote in *Chuang-Tzu*¹⁷⁵ that 'though the duck's legs are short, if you added more on he [the disciple of absolute truth] would worry; though the crane's legs are long, if you lopped some off he would pine. Then what by nature is long is not to be lopped off, what by nature is short is not to be added to; there is nothing to get rid of or to worry over.'¹⁷⁶ This writing was possibly the direct source of the association Shōtetsu makes here between shortness and ducks' legs.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 48.

¹⁷⁵ The writings of Chuang-Tzu (and many others whose writings became included in this work over the centuries). It comprises thirty-three sections (Eliade, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, v. 3, p. 468).

¹⁷⁶ Graham (trans.), *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, pp.200-1.

The strangeness of the analogy between the length of time that the moon is reflected in the water and ducks' legs is further tempered by the fact that the image of ducks' legs occurs in a semi-independent *jo* (anticipatory preface) which need not have any logical connection with what follows. In this case however the *jo* leads quite naturally into the rest of the poem as the other images which occur in the *jo*, namely the shallow water, the stands of reeds, the ducklings paddling, all provide an appropriately tranquil and rustic setting for the moon imagery which follows.

Above we have been concerned with the literal meaning of the poem. However, the symbolic significance of the image of the moon floating in the water must not be overlooked. The reflection of the moon in the water was a very common Buddhist symbol of mutability and ephemerality: not only is the reflection of the moon in water subject to the waxing and waning of the moon and the time of its setting and rising, but also to the condition of the waters in which it is reflected. Clear one moment, the reflection will be broken and refracted the next. The symbolic subtext of the 'moon in the water' imagery is further reinforced by the image of 'ducklings', again suggesting vulnerability and ephemerality, even apparent in the way they bob so lightly and erratically in the water. Indeed, the ducklings have much in common with the 'bubbles' of Poem 8. The adjectives which occur in the poem, *mijikashi* ('short') and *asashi* ('shallow'), not to mention the suggestion of *yowashi* ('weak') in the phrase *yowa no tsukikage*, also imply fragility, brevity, a lack of substance. In combination, the overall effect of the poem's imagery is to produce a fleeting impression of the ephemerality of existence, scarcely a new theme, but certainly expressed most ingeniously.

Poem Thirty-One [2:49]

[A poem] expressing love and mountains:

Ausaka no

Arashi o itami

Koekanete

Seki no toyama ni

*Kiyuru ukikumo*¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, Shōtetsu's pupil Shinkei alludes to the same source: 'A duck's legs are short but only suffering will arise if you try to add on to them; a crane's legs are long, but if you cut them you will be sad' (*Kamo no ashi wa mijika keredomo, tsukeba ureu. Tsuru no ashi wa nagakeredomo, kireba kanashibu*), in *Sasamegoto*, Ijichi et al., *Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū* v.51: *Renga Ronshū Nōgaku Ronshū Haironshū*, p.154). It was evidently a popular parable.

So furiously rages the storm
This poor floating cloud
Cannot traverse the Pass of Meetings:
Rebuffed at the barrier gate
It melts away into the foothills

Ausaka 'Slope of Meetings.' In this poem Ausaka is given the same symbolic value as the point of commitment and no return in a relationship that we observed in Poem 15. **Seki no toyama**. A pivot expression combining *seki no to* ('tollgate') with *toyama* ('lower foothills of a mountain range nearest human habitation'). *Seki* ('tollgate') also suggests the etymologically-related *seki* ('barrier, obstruction'). **Kiyuru**. 'To melt away, die.' **Ukikumo**. 'Floating cloud', often used as a metaphor for things transient, ephemeral, evanescent, including man himself. The origin of this metaphor is probably the Yuima Sutra (Vimalakirti-nirdesha-sutra), the teachings of Buddha's disciple Yuima (Vimalakirti), which compares the mortal body with a cloud: '[this body is] like a cloud, being characterized by turbulence and dissolution.'¹⁷⁹ As usual, *uki* (from the verb *uku* 'to float') also implies *uki*, the noun-modifying inflection of *ushi* ('wretched, painful').

Commentary

This poem succeeds both in literal mode, depicting clouds unable to cross the Ausaka Mountain on account of the intensity of the storm raging there, and as a clever love allegory in which the image of the 'floating cloud' represents a rebuffed lover, rejected by the 'storm' (the other party) at the 'Slope of Meetings' (tryst, or point of no return in a relationship).

The poem can also be interpreted as an allegory for spiritual failure and disappointment, where the poor 'floating cloud' of the poem serves, as in the Yuima sutra, as a cipher for man or even Shōtetsu himself, who is unable to achieve true spirituality, renounce the world, or attain

¹⁷⁸ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

¹⁷⁹ This sutra is one of the most important and influential Mahayana scriptures (Thurman, *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti*, p.ix). The same passage from the Vimalakirti Sutra also significantly compares the body with 'a ball of foam, unable to bear any pressure...a water bubble, not remaining very long...a magical illusion, consisting of falsifications...a dream, being an unreal vision...a reflection, being the image of former actions... an echo, being dependent on conditioning...a flash of lightning, being unstable, and decaying every moment' (*The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti*, p.22). These were images dear to medieval poets, not least of all Shōtetsu, indicating the depth to which Buddhist rhetoric had penetrated into the poetic language and the creative consciousness of medieval Japan.

enlightenment (traverse the Ausaka Pass) and is drawn back to the 'foothills' of worldly attachment. The same imagery of obstacles which cannot be traversed by clouds is found in Poem 3, which indeed lends itself to a similar allegorical interpretation:

Watarikane
Kumo mo yūbe o
Nao tadoru
Ato naki yuki no
Mine no kakehashi

Afraid to cross
The clouds still search their way
In the evening amidst the blank drifts of snow
No footprints remain to guide them
Up their snow-ladder of peaks

Both poems are dominated by the imagery of a difficult exercise which is attempted but eventually is unsuccessful, a symbolic depiction of the immense difficulty of attaining true spirituality and the state of enlightenment.

Poem Thirty-Two [2: 53]

On the topic 'Although I love her, she probably does not know it.':

Orifushi yo
Mo zu naku aki mo
Fuyugareshi
Tōki hajihara
*Momiji dani nashi*¹⁸⁰

Autumn has turned to withering winter
The shrike which sang from time to time

¹⁸⁰ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

Has lost its voice

Even the distant plain where the waxtrees grow

Lies bare of russet leaves

Orifushi. 'Sometimes.' As Shōtetsu points out in his commentary on this poem, it is an *oriku* (acrostic poem): he may possibly have chosen to use the word *orifushi* deliberately at the beginning of this poem to signal this situation. **Mozu.** 'Shrike.' The shrike, and its shrill 'kii, kii' cry are associated with the autumn. Legend maintains that the reason the shrike does not appear until autumn is that it is trying to avoid the *hototogisu* (cuckoo) of summer; in a previous life the *hototogisu* is said to have sold the shrike shoes for which it did not pay.¹⁸¹ The shrike is also noted for its unusual habit of stringing up dead insects and frogs on the branches of trees. Here they dry out over the winter and provide a food source for other birds the following spring. This practice is known as the 'shrike's offering' (*mozu no hayanie*). **Aki.** As usual, a pun exists here on *aki*, meaning both 'autumn' and 'surfeit'. **Fuyugareshi.** 'To wither and die (*k[g]aru*) in winter (*fuyu*), winter-withered.' *Karu* also means 'to grow hoarse and lose one's voice', thus insinuating that the shrike is now silent. *Fuyugareshi* also associates as an *engo* with the shrike on account of the shrike's 'offering' of withered creatures which it leaves strung up on the branches over winter. A play is probably also intended on the homophones *karu* 'to wither' and *karu* 'to grow distant, become estranged', referring to the end of an intimate relationship. This hidden meaning, coupled with the stock pun on *aki*, provides the poem with the romantic innuendo necessary to link the poem back to the poetic topic, 'she certainly does not know that I love her', which otherwise seems barely expressed by the poem, except in its mood of utter negativism and despondency.

Commentary

Shōtetsu points out in his comments that this is an *oriku* (acrostic poem) of the *kutsukaburi* ('shoes and crown') type. Perhaps for this reason Shōtetsu deliberately included the image of the shrike, on the basis of its legendary and shameful association with shoes (*kutsu*), yet another example of his irrepressible virtuosity with words and their complex webs of associations. In a *kutsukaburi* poem, the ten syllables of the topic (in this case *o, mo, fu, to, mo, yo, mo, shi, ra, ji*¹⁸²) are woven into the

¹⁸¹ Katagiri, *Utamakura Utakotoba Jiten*, p.405.

poem in such a way that the first five syllables of the topic fall at the beginning of each of the poem's five lines, and the last five syllables of the topic fall at the end of each of the poem's five lines. The term *kutsukaburi*, needless to say, refers to the fact that the syllables of the topic are woven either into the top, literally 'crown' (*kaburi*), or the lowest part, the 'shoes' (*kutsu*), of each line, and that moreover the top half of the topic provides the syllable for the top syllable of each line, and the bottom half of the topic provides the syllables for the bottom syllable of each line. It was a very difficult word game: even Shōtetsu admits that 'sometimes however hard he tried, he could not compose a poem in this fashion'.¹⁸³ However, in this particular case he has turned out a successful poem which barely reveals its acrostic origin.

This poem is most effective if appreciated as a descriptive piece, depicting a scene of wintry desolation and lifelessness. The shrike is silent, the foliage is withered and dead, and even the lacquer trees, which had been so splendid in their autumn foliage, are bare. All that adorns the trees now, we imagine, are the withered bodies of frogs and insects 'offered' by the shrike, shrivelling more and more as winter advances. In this appropriately bleak setting, the suggestion of the wretchedness of a broken relationship is allowed to filter through, but, perhaps due to the inevitable constraints of the *kutsukaburi* form, which impeded even Shōtetsu, the romantic subtext to the poem is not fully developed.

Aesthetically, this poem contrasts with Shōtetsu's more characteristic exquisite and ethereal poetry. In its dominant image of *fuyugareshi* ('winter-withered'), it foreshadows the negative aesthetic of Shinkei, for whom 'witheredness' was the ultimate expression of beauty, and who embraced 'a tense, stern beauty of barren fields, a winter-withered beauty in which the pulse of the life force is just discernable beneath the awesome desolation of outward appearances, a beauty of starkness and tranquility'.¹⁸⁴

This is also a strongly allusive poem, its last line *momiji dani nashi* semantically resonating the second and third lines of Teika's most often-quoted poem:

Miwataseba

¹⁸² The voiced reading of *shi* as *ji* was not indicated in contemporary orthography, thus enabling *shi* to be matched with *ji* in poems of this sort, as Shōtetsu has done here.

¹⁸³ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 53.

¹⁸⁴ Hagi, 'The *Wabi* Aesthetic', in Varley and Kumakura, *Tea in Japan*, p.214.

Hana mo momiji mo

Nakarikeri

Ura no tomoya no

Aki no yūgure ¹⁸⁵

Gaze out far enough,

beyond all cherry blossoms

and scarlet maples,

to those huts by the harbor

fading in the autumn dusk ¹⁸⁶

It can be argued that both poems are concerned with evoking a sense of the ultimate emptiness (*sunyata*) within which the phenomenal world is fixed. In Teika's poem this is represented by the void of the autumn dusk; in Shōtetsu's poem by the stark winter's scene and the elimination of visual and aural phenomena. The world of Shōtetsu's poem is a world of silence (the shrike has lost its voice) and emptiness; the only view is a stark and distant plain of lacquer trees stripped bare and the scene is 'emptied' of all obvious, superficial beauty. Strangely however, the emptiness which remains is not in the final analysis a negative state. On the contrary it is pregnant with the beauty of all the phenomena which have disappeared into it, and a sublimely beautiful impression lingers as an after-effect of the poem, as if the brilliant autumn foliage of the waxtrees whose existence has been denied is burning even more brightly in the reader's imagination.

Poem Thirty-Three [2: 56]

'Rock moss':¹⁸⁷

Midaretsutsu

Iwao ni sagaru

Matsu ga e no

¹⁸⁵ *Shinkokinshū* 63.

¹⁸⁶ Translation by LaFleur in 'Symbol and *Yūgen*: Shunzei's Use of Tendai Buddhism', in Sanford, LaFleur and Nagatomi, *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan*, p.37.

¹⁸⁷ This topic seems to deviate slightly from the actual topic of the poem, on moss growing from pine trees.

Koke no ito naku

*Yamakaze zo fuku*¹⁸⁸

In disorder

Strands of moss fall

From the branches of the pine on the rockface

Stirred without respite

By the mountain winds

Midaretsutsu. Literally, of hair and other fibres, 'continually in a state of disorder'. An *engo* for *ito* ('strands') and *ito naku* ('without respite'). **Iwao.** A massive projection of rock. Incidentally, the same character 巖, read *gan* instead of *iwao*, is used in Shōtetsu's pseudonym, *Seigan* (清巖). **Matsu ga e.** 'The branches of the pine.' The 'pine' is also associated with Shōtetsu's name, as we have pointed out already. **Koke no ito naku.** As Shōtetsu points out in his commentary on this poem, *ito naku* functions as a pivot word, linking the strands (*ito*) of the hanging moss to the description of the gales blowing without respite (*itonaku*). Shōtetsu is probably describing a particular variety of moss, *saruogase* (a variety of Spanish moss),¹⁸⁹ which grows dangling in bunches from trees in deep and misty mountain areas. It was known for its medicinal properties, and was believed to be efficacious in the treatment of heart and respiratory ailments.¹⁹⁰ Shōtetsu may even have gathered and used it himself for his asthma. The image *koke* ('moss') seems a particularly suitable image to be handled by a monk-recluse such as Shōtetsu: the rough-spun robes of monk-recluses were known as *koke no koromo* ('robes of moss') and their dwellings were known as *koke no iori* ('hermitages of moss').¹⁹¹ This provides another example of the arcane, if gratuitous, self-allusions which, like the above-mentioned characters for his name woven into the present poem, sometimes seem to lie hidden in Shōtetsu's poetry.

Commentary

¹⁸⁸ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

¹⁸⁹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, p.219, n.13.

¹⁹⁰ *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, v. 9, p.169. This practice was not restricted to Japan: Maori medicine likewise apparently uses a variety of sphagnum moss to treat respiratory problems. This would seem to attest to its efficacy.

¹⁹¹ *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, v.8, p.47.

This poem, like the preceding four works, is a descriptive piece in which Shōtetsu depicts a pine tree growing precariously on a rock face festooned with hanging moss which moves and tangles in the mountain wind.

The focal image of the poem is 'moss', an image which joins with the 'rockface' and the 'pine tree' as a conventional image of permanence, antiquity and eternity in the poem. See *Kokinshū* Poem 343 for perhaps the most famous example of the link between moss and rock imagery, and their implications of eternity, timelessness and antiquity particularly as qualities associated with the ancient imperial line. This poem has now evolved into the Japanese national anthem:

Wa ga kimi wa

Chiyo ni yachiyo ni

Sazareishi no

Iwao to narite

Koke no musu made

May our Lord live on

For eon after eon

Until tiny pebbles

Mass into great rockfaces

Moss-covered

Shōtetsu may have been intentionally echoing this famous poem in its diction, but here the similarities end, through the inclusion of rogue images of *midaretsutsu* ('in disorder') and *yamakaze* ('mountain winds') in Shōtetsu's poem. The symmetrical structure of the poem, opening with powerful imagery of disorder (*midaretsutsu*) and concluding with the equally powerful image of mountain winds (*yamakaze*) helps a transference of meaning to take place between the former and the latter, infusing the mountain wind imagery with reverberations of disorder and chaos. It is the tension between the imagery of permanence and antiquity (the moss, the rockface and the pine) and the imagery of change (the mountain winds, and the disordering of the moss) which lies at the heart of Shōtetsu's poem. It thus seems possible to interpret Shōtetsu's poem as a wistful

observation of the institutions and patterns of antiquity in peril, wantonly threatened by the forces of change, chaos and destruction. In contrast, the *Kokinshū* poem is an ode to the eternity, antiquity and stability of the imperial institution. The effect produced by reading the two poems in juxtaposition is quite powerful.

Poem Thirty-Four [2: 58]

'On Wisteria in the Summer':

Natsu kite mo

Niou fujinami

Aratae no

Koromogae senu

*Yama ka to zo miru*¹⁹²

Summer has come and yet

The waves of wisteria flower on

Pale radiance undimmed;

The mountains still seem to wear

White bark-cloth robes of spring

Fujinami. 'Waves of wisteria.' Wisteria (*fuji*) was especially cherished by the court at the height of the Fujiwara ascendancy on account of its name and, in poetry, the image *fujinami* was often used to refer obliquely to the prosperity of the Fujiwara clan.¹⁹³ **Aratae no koromo.** 'Robes of rough bark-cloth.' *Aratae* was a rough-textured fabric woven from wisteria fibres. *Aratae* can also mean 'rough' (*ara*) and 'beautiful' (*tae*). In poetry *aratae* triggers beautiful, rather archaic associations. In the present poem *aratae no koromo* acts as a metaphor describing the appearance of the mountains which, viewed through the haze of blossoming wisteria, seem to be clad in robes of this fabric. The epithet *aratae no* ('of rough bark-cloth') was usually used as a pillow-word for placenames containing *fuji* ('wisteria'),¹⁹⁴ and its present combination with *koromo* ('robe') has an experimental

¹⁹² *Sōkonshū* 3264. No information is provided about the circumstances of this poem's composition.

¹⁹³ *Iwanami Kogo Jiten*, p.1131.

¹⁹⁴ For example, *Aratae no/ Fuji no ura ni* ('On Fujie Bay /Fujie of the rough bark-cloth'). *Manyōshū* 253

ring. In fact, Shōtetsu's accompanying commentary is a little defensive about the expression: 'I do not think there is any problem in my saying *aratae no koromo*.'¹⁹⁵ The first component of *aratae*, *ara*, meaning 'rough' (of seas as well as of texture), also acts as an *engo* for 'waves'. **Koromogae senu**. 'Do not make the required seasonal change of garment.' It was the practice to change to cool, unlined robes on the first day of the fourth month, that is, the first day of summer.¹⁹⁶

Commentary

Once again this poem appeals as a descriptive poem, painting a scene of wisteria still incongruously in bloom although summer has already begun. Shōtetsu effectively captures the notion of the inappropriate blossoming of the wisteria by comparing them with a robe of bark-cloth which the mountains persist in wearing out of season. It is a novel but highly successful simile.

Shōtetsu cannot have used the image of wisteria blooming out of season oblivious to the traditional associations of *fuji* ('wisteria') with the Fujiwara clan, and, by extension, the entire court aristocracy. Is he possibly using the image of wisteria still in bloom to make some sort of political or social comment about the current situation of the aristocracy, suggesting that they are surviving remarkably well, tenacious as the wisteria which keep on blooming, and as stubborn and unchanging as the mountains which refuse to change their garb? Given this interpretation, his poem again provides a powerful affirmation of his belief in the old order's capacity to endure, like the old pine at the seashore in Poem 23.

Poem Thirty-Five [2: 59]

On 'Waiting for the Cuckoo':

Toshi mo henu

Matsu ni kokoro wa

Mijikakute

Tama no o nagaki

*Hototogisu ka na*¹⁹⁷

translated by Cranston, *A Waka Anthology*, v.1, p.199. Shōtetsu alludes to this specific example in his commentary (*Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2:58).

¹⁹⁵ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 58.

¹⁹⁶ *Iwanami Kogo Jiten*, p.525.

¹⁹⁷ *Sōkonshū* 3202.

Each passing year I await your song

More and more impatiently

O cuckoo!

And now look how long the jewelled thread of my life

Stretches out !

Matsu. Superficially *matsu* in this context means 'wait' but it also signifies the pine tree (*matsu*), which is as we have seen above a symbol of durability and longevity and possibly a cipher for the ageing Shōtetsu himself, the master of the 'moon in the pine trees hermitage'. **Tama no o nagaki.** Grammatically this modifies the noun *hototogisu* ('cuckoo') but Shōtetsu's own commentary makes it clear that he is in fact referring to himself: 'It is I', he states.¹⁹⁸ *Tama no o* was the thread believed to tie the spirit (*tama*) to the body and by extension means 'life'. *Tama* also means 'jewel'. The original character for spirit, 魂, came to be replaced by a homophonous character 玉 meaning 'jewel'. Shōtetsu is simply saying that he has lived a long time and he is now an old man. **Hototogisu.** As pointed out in Poem 24's notes, a bird of early summer deeply cherished by the Japanese since ancient times. It was regarded as the herald of summer, emerging from the mountains at the beginning of summer and returning to the mountains in autumn. On the basis of this behaviour, in poetic convention the belief was reflected that 'it flew back and forth between the lands of the living and the dead'.¹⁹⁹ Its mournful cry typically evoked deep melancholy and yearning for the past.²⁰⁰

Commentary

This poem synchronises closely with the preceding poem in its handling of a topic of early summer. Shōtetsu expresses his realisation that in his eagerness and impatience to hear the song of the cuckoo each year, the years have passed unexpectedly quickly and he is now an old man at the end of his life.

¹⁹⁸ Shōtetsu *Monogatari* 2:59.

¹⁹⁹ Cranston, *A Waka Anthology*, v.1, p.805.

²⁰⁰ For example, *Inishie ni/ Kouramu tori wa/ Hototogisu/ Kedashi ya nakishi/A ga kouru goto* ('If there was a bird/That seemed to yearn for days gone by./It was the cuckoo:/I am sure it must have cried/From a longing such as mine'). *MYS* 112, translated by Cranston, *A Waka Anthology*, v.1, p.492.

This is a poem steeped in symbolism, arising from the powerful and complex messages carried by the image *hototogisu*. On the most superficial level, *hototogisu* functions as a positive image, a welcome bird, with its advent eagerly awaited year after year. But *hototogisu* is plainly also a symbol of the passage of time, as its kanji transcription 時鳥 or 'time-bird' makes explicit. And in this specific poetic context where Shōtetsu is expressing his awareness of his own old age, the allusion to passage of time becomes synonymous with a foreboding of imminent death. Thus the 'time-bird' becomes equally the 'time-to-die' bird, and a positive image becomes darkened with melancholy shades of foreboding. It is no coincidence that the bird used in this poem to mark the passage of time and thus portend death is the *hototogisu*, for such are the mythological associations of this bird, crossing the mountain marking the realm of the dead (*shide no yama*) as the 'escort of souls' (*tamamukaedori*).

If the image of *hototogisu* is interpreted in this way, the title of the poem, 'Waiting for the Cuckoo', thus assumes a meaning that is far from innocuous, and is sinisterly apt. A tragic irony overshadows Shōtetsu's impatient anticipation of the cuckoo, the 'time-to-die bird'.²⁰¹

The *hototogisu* is also traditionally associated with nostalgia for the past, and though this cannot be seen as a dominant theme in the poem, this is a further reverberation which should not be overlooked in view of Shōtetsu and his contemporaries' enthrallment with the golden Heian past and their disillusion with the present.

Poem Thirty-Six [2: 60]

[A poem] alluding to dreams and love:

Namida sae

Hito no tamoto ni

Iru to mishi

Tama todamaranu

*Yume zo ukitaru*²⁰²

²⁰¹ In parentheses, it is interesting to speculate the extent to which Shōtetsu was aware of and influenced by a primitive belief that 'when a bird came flying, its spirit entered the human body and revitalised the person' (Philippi, *Kojiki*, p.321, n.12). Shōtetsu's eager anticipation of the *hototogisu* when his life forces are ebbing suggests he may have still regarded *hototogisu* in the primitive way as an agent of revitalization.

So vivid was my dream
I could see my very tears dampen your sleeve:
How wretched are these dreams
In which my soul cannot linger -
My sorrow streams unchecked

Tama todomaranu. A double pun is intended here, on both *tama* ('jewel', a conventional metaphor for 'tear', but also meaning 'spirit, soul' as pointed out in the notes for the previous poem) and *todomaru* ('to cease' or 'to stay'). Thus this phrase can be interpreted as both 'my soul does not stay' or 'my tears do not cease'.

Commentary

This poem in the courtly love tradition evokes the sadness felt at waking from a dream and realising that even though one's soul was united with one's beloved in the dream, the return of consciousness means that it can no longer be with the beloved. It provides another example of Shōtetsu's fondness for complexity in his poetic conceptions. The pun *tama todomaranu* ('my tears do not cease/my soul does not stay') provides the central idea and punchline of the poem, achieving a brilliant synthesis of rhetorical skill and deep emotion. Note that the romantic atmosphere of this poem is heightened by its allusive echo in its last line of a poem in *Genji*, where Genji likewise is expressing his yearning for the seemingly unattainable, in this case the young Murasaki whom he desires to take into his care notwithstanding her nurse's wise resistance.²⁰³

Poem Thirty-Seven [2: 61]

Composed on the topic 'The Cuckoo in the Fourth Lunar month'.²⁰⁴

Hototogisu

²⁰² To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

²⁰³ From the chapter 'Wakamurasaki' (Young Lavender): *Yoru nami no / Kokoro mo shirade/Wakanoura ni/Tamamo nabikamu/ Hodo zo ukitaru* ('The grass at Wakanoura were [sic] rash indeed/To follow waves that go it knows not whither', Yamagishi, *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei v 15: Genji Monogatari*, v.1, p. 215, translated by Seidensticker, *The Tale of Genji*, v.1, p.103).

²⁰⁴ The cuckoo was thought to emerge in the fifth lunar month. See Poem 24.

Ono ga satsuki o
Matsu kai no
Namida no taki mo
*Koe zo sukunaki*²⁰⁵

O cuckoo
How soundlessly you shed
Your cascade of tears
While you pine away to no avail in your evergreen valley
Awaiting your glorious fifth month!

Ono ga satsuki. As in Poem 24, ‘one's own fifth month’, the month in which the cuckoo's song was at its best. **Matsu kai no namida.** This phrase is full of word plays. *Matsu* as always means ‘to wait’ but also suggests ‘pine trees’ (*matsu*). *Kai*, depending on the characters with which it is written, means ‘interval, while’ or ‘valley’, and *kai no namida* (‘tears while you wait in the valley’) also suggests *kai no nashi* (‘to no avail’). Thus the line *Matsu kai no namida* means ‘the tears of your evergreen (pine) valley where you wait’, ‘the tears while you wait’ and ‘the futility of waiting’.

Commentary

As Shōtetsu explains in his own commentary, this poem comprises an allusive variation on a poem by Ariwara no Yukihiro (d. 893), the elder brother of the early Heian poet Ariwara no Narihira (825-880) :

Wa ga yo o ba
Kyō ka asu ka to
Matsu kai no
Namida no taki to
Izure takaken

²⁰⁵ To be found in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

Which is higher? The Nunobiki Falls
Or the cascade of tears I shed to no avail
In my evergreen valley
Waiting — maybe today, maybe tomorrow —
For my hour of glory

Both poems feature precisely the same word play, 'cascade of tears shed to no avail while waiting in my evergreen valley' (*matsu kai no /namida no taki*). The grief in Yukihiro's poem refers to the intense disappointment he experienced at not having achieved worldly success, a context which is easily transferred to Shōtetsu's poem allowing it a new allegorical dimension of interpretation in which the 'cuckoo' again may represent Shōtetsu himself, waiting to no avail for official recognition of his poetic talent. This may be a poem related to events circa 1439 when Shōtetsu's poems were deliberately excluded from the final imperial anthology. However, we know nothing about the circumstances under which this poem was composed, and so this interpretation can remain speculative only.

Poem Thirty-Eight [2: 71]

On the topic 'Love for Another Man's Wife' :

Mi o uji to
Tanomi Kohata no
Yama koete
Shiranami no na o
*Chigiri ni zo karu*²⁰⁶

In my wretchedness
I relied upon the mountains of Kohata
Crossing them to pluck the herbs
Which grow by the white waves of the Uji River
Earning the name 'thief' from our pledges of love

²⁰⁶ *Sōkonshū* 4543. No details of the circumstances of composition are revealed.

Mi o uji. A play of words is probably intended here on *uji* (suggesting the adjective *ushi* 'wretched, unfortunate') and the placename Uji south-east of Kyoto, which in Heian times was a popular location for the nobility's country retreats. Uji is also strongly evocative of the dark 'Uji' chapters which conclude the *Tale of Genji* and to which Shōtetsu seems to allude in this poem.

Tanomi Kohata no yama. 'Relying (*tanomi*) on the hills of Kohata [to alleviate my suffering] I have come.' Kohata hides the verb *kuru* ('come') whose negative stem is *ko-*. Kohata no yama was hilly terrain between Kyoto and Uji. **Shiranami.** Literally, 'white waves', but also a euphemism for brigands, originating in the Chinese history *Hou Han Shu*.²⁰⁷ The image 'white waves' also evokes the fast-flowing Uji River. **Na o ... karu.** *Na* can mean both 'name' and 'herb'. *Karu* can mean 'borrow/earn' and 'pluck, harvest'. If *na o karu* is interpreted as meaning 'plucking herbs', it suggests metaphorically appropriating someone else's wife.

Commentary

This poem sees Shōtetsu expressing himself in his most cryptic mode, but fortunately the comments which precede the poem assist our understanding considerably. Shōtetsu explains, 'The topic 'Love for Another Man's Wife' (*hitozuma ni yoru koi*) is the seduction of another man's wife. Utsusemi and Ukifune would be suitable examples.' Utsusemi, wife of the Governor of Iyo, was wooed by Genji early in *The Tale of Genji*;²⁰⁸ Ukifune, the wife of Kaoru living hidden at Uji, was seduced by Kaoru's friend Prince Niou in the chapter 'Ukifune' (A Boat upon the Waters) one of the final chapters of *The Tale of Genji*. Due to its inclusion of the placenames Uji and Kohata, Shōtetsu's poem seems to refer particularly to Ukifune's situation, and to be composed from the point of view of Prince Niou, secretly travelling over the hills of Kohata to visit and 'steal' his friend's wife Ukifune at Uji.

Poem Thirty-Nine [2:74]

On the topic 'Rice Seedlings':

Tabi yukeba

²⁰⁷ In the *Hou Han Shu*, a history of the later Han period, reference is made to Pai P'o brigands named for the Pai P'o Valley where they operated. The Japanese reading of Pai P'o is *shiranami* ('white waves').

²⁰⁸ Chapters 2 and 3.

Saori no tauta
Kuni ni yori
Tokoro ni tsukete
*Koe zo kawareru*²⁰⁹

As I travel the land
The songs of the first rice-planting rituals
Greet my ears
How different they sound
From place to place , province to province

Saori. The *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* interpretation of this word is ' a length of narrow cloth'.²¹⁰ However in the context of the topic 'rice seedlings', it seems more likely to mean here the descent of the rice spirit (*saori*) at the commencement of rice-planting when the rice-spirit was believed to descend to dwell in the rice-seedlings.²¹¹ **Tauta.** Songs accompanying rice-planting and part of the first rice-planting ritual.

Commentary

Despite the poem's emphasis on the differences Shōtetsu finds in the ricefield songs which he hears as he travels, the poem ultimately attests to his awareness of the essential unity and uniformity of human practices and experiences, in which differences are only superficial.

This is a remarkably straightforward poem for Shōtetsu and serves to prove that he could compose simply and transparently if inclined. It would seem to be based on his own experience, reflecting the travels he himself undertook in earlier years.

Poem Forty [2: 77]

On the topic 'Falling Blossoms' :

²⁰⁹ *Sōkonshū* 2450. No information is available about either the circumstances or the composition date of this poem.

²¹⁰ *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, p.223, n.17.

²¹¹ This interpretation was advocated by Toshio Akima, 1994.

Sakeba chiru

Yo no ma no hana no

Yume no uchi ni

Yagate magirenu

*Mine no shirakumo*²¹²

Flowering only to scatter

A dream of blossoms

In the space of the night into which

The white clouds on the peaks

Do not merge

Sakeba chiru. ‘Whenever they blossom they scatter.’ The terseness of this complete grammatical unit suggests the brief life of the cherry blossoms. **Hana no/Yume no uchi ni /Yagate magirenu.** ‘[The clouds] do not merge with and become indistinguishable from (*magirenu*) the dream of cherry blossoms.’ The confusion of blossoms and clouds was a well-established poetic conceit with innumerable precedents, but Shōtetsu takes his poem in a novel and even iconoclastic direction by presenting the opposite image of clouds which *do not* merge with the blossoms. There is room for debate over whether the *-nu* inflection of the verb *magiru* (‘become indistinguishable from’) is in fact a negative inflection or an affirmative perfective inflection: as *magiru* is a *shimo nidan* (‘lower two step’) verb, the two inflections are morphologically indistinguishable. If read as the affirmative perfective inflection, *magirenu* would mean ‘merged with’. However Hisamatsu Sen’ichi,²¹³ Brower,²¹⁴ and Shōtetsu himself in his commentary following the poem all treat *magirenu* as negative, so we follow this interpretation. It is also more in keeping with Shōtetsu’s predilection for overturning conventional expectations and creating a new angle on an old theme.

Commentary

²¹² *Sōkonshū* 3098.

²¹³ *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, p.224 n. 5.

²¹⁴ No sooner do they bloom,/Than the cherry blossoms scatter -/The fleeting dream/Of a night that takes away all doubt/About the white clouds on the peak’ (Brower and Miner, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.150).

This poem is perhaps one of Shōtetsu's most complex works, on account of its ambiguity as well as its vague but powerful transcendental intimations. On the superficial level, it topples, though with exquisite delicacy, the centuries-old poetic conceit focussing on the fusion and indistinguishability of blossoming cherries and white clouds. The poem appears to describe a situation where the poet has dreamt a beautiful dream of scattering cherry blossoms, possibly inspired by the sight of blossoms which he may have seen that day. When he awakes at dawn, the cherry blossoms of his dreams (and in reality) have vanished, but unexpectedly he is able to find consolation in the sight of the soft white clouds of dawn trailing the peaks, which for once have maintained an entity distinct from the blossoms and have not merged and disappeared with them. Yet in the end one wonders whether the separation between the blossoms and the clouds is total, for the solace the poet may find in the sight of the white clouds seems to compensate for the lost beauty of the blossoms. It is almost as if the blossoms have been reborn in the white clouds.

Regardless of the identification or otherwise of the blossoms and the clouds, this poem is steeped in Buddhist thought: physical phenomena (the blossoms and clouds) are depicted as dreamlike, transient and ephemeral, surfacing from and dissolving back into an absolute void which is the one eternal constant. There is an evocation too of the eternal chain of existence: blossoms disappear but are immediately renewed in the phenomenon of the clouds. The insistent thread of assonance and consonance running through the poem (for example 'n' occurs nine times, 'm' five times, 'y' three times, 'o' seven times, 'a' nine times) underlines the theme of continuity and eternity, however much the surface images of the poem may vary.

Perhaps in evocation of the absolute void, a sense of deep metaphysical emptiness (or fullness) pervades the poem, partly an effect of the image *yo no ma* ('the space or interval of night') whose open vowels like a dark vacuum seem to have swallowed up the cherry blossoms, and partly through the poem's implicit background image of the vast sky against which all the poem's images of clouds/blossoms/peaks appear. The poem's sound effects, its recurrent intonation of the consonants 'n', 'm', 'y' and vowels 'a' and 'o', mentioned above, also play a role in creating this impression. It is surely not coincidental that these are the same sounds that appear in the common Pure Land prayer '*Namu Amida Butsu*' or the meditative syllable '*aum*'²¹⁵ which if repeated

²¹⁵ *Namu Amida Butsu* means 'I give praise to Amida'. *Aum* is a mantra now unfortunately somewhat discredited by its use by the Aum Shinri Kyō, a cult held responsible for fatal gassing on the Tokyo subway in 1995.

sufficient times is said to bring immediate enlightenment into the ultimate nature of reality. Neither do we believe it is coincidental that the sound effects of this particular poem so closely echo the *kakegoe* (drummers' cries) of the Nō drama which play such a part in evoking the eerie and profound atmosphere of the Nō. The four basic *kakigoe* cries are 'ya', 'ha', 'iya', and 'yoi'.²¹⁶ There seems to be something inherently awesome and mystical in these sounds.

Shōtetsu himself appears to have found this poem exceptional, singling it out as we have noted earlier in this chapter as an example of a poem in the *yūgen* style:

This is a poem in the *yūgen* style. *Yūgen* is something which is sensed in the heart but cannot be expressed in words. *Yūgen* manifests itself in the appearance of hazy clouds veiling the moon or the charming sight of autumn mist lying over scarlet leaves on a mountainside. If one were to ask where exactly is the *yūgen* in this scene one would be at pains to answer. People who do not have an appreciation of *yūgen* will say 'the moon is most beautiful shining in the clear unobscured heavens', and this is only to be expected. *Yūgen* lies in the indefinability of what it is that is so appealing and awe-inspiring.²¹⁷

The ineffability and abstruseness of *yūgen* described in Shōtetsu's commentary and the example of Poem 40 itself leaves, we argue, the inherently transcendental qualities of *yūgen* beyond debate.

This is also a very Teika-esque poem deliberately evoking memories of one of Teika's most famous *waka*:

Haru no yo no

Yume no ukihashi

Todae shite

Mine ni wakaruru

*Yokogumo no sora*²¹⁸

The bridge of dreams

²¹⁶ Komparu, *The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives*, p.208.

²¹⁷ 2: 224.

²¹⁸ Quoted in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:15, translated in Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p.262.

Floating on the brief spring night

Soon breaks off:

Now from the mountaintop a cloud

Takes leave into the open sky

Poem Forty-One [2:78]

'*Frogs in the Paddyfields*':

Yuku mizu ni

Kawazu no uta o

Kazu kaku ya

Onaji yamada ni

*Tori mo iruramu*²¹⁹

On the moving waters

Is he tallying up with his beak

The number of songs the frogs sing?

A snipe stands in

The same mountain paddy

Yuku mizu ni... kazu kaku. *Kazu kaku* means to write strokes as a way of keeping a tally. The image *mizu ni kazu kaku* ('to write upon water') is a commonly used metaphor for useless, vain activity. Its usage in this sense can be traced to the Buddhist sutra *Nanbon Nehangyō*,²²⁰ a version of the Nirvana Sutra, a scripture of primitive Buddhism, where 'strokes upon the water' represent the transitoriness of the human being. *Shōtetsu* intensifies the impression of transitoriness by depicting the waters as 'moving' or 'incessantly in motion' (*yuku mizu*). On a secondary level, the verb *kaku* also means 'to stir, scratch, preen feathers' and therefore relates as an *engo* with the image of 'bird' in the lower hemistich.

Commentary.

²¹⁹ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

²²⁰ *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, v.4, p. 570.

This poem adopts a clever and playful style reminiscent of *Kokinshū* poetry especially in its personification of the snipe keeping a tally of the number of songs which the frogs have sung. This is an impossible and futile task given the endless and cyclic nature of a frog's song. Despite a comic element, the poem concludes on a more menacing note, intimating the presence of birds, the frogs' natural predator, in the same paddy field.

An additional innuendo can perhaps be found in the poem. Two images in this poem trigger this secondary interpretation, firstly, the image 'the song of the frog' ('song' is written with the character 歌 which also means 'poem', *uta*) and secondly, the image 'bird'. Is it too far-fetched to consider the possibility that the 'frog' with its 'song' (or 'poem') may be an allegory for Shōtetsu himself, and the 'bird' lurking so menacingly nearby may be a cipher for a member of the Asukai family, whose name includes the same character for 'bird' used in Shōtetsu's poem? Like the marshbird and the frog, they were both competing in the same 'field', and the Asukai family who were linked to the conservative Nijō line were doing their best to undermine Shōtetsu's position.

Poem Forty-Two [2: 85]

On a Cuckoo in a Village:

Ayanakumo

Yūbe no sato no

Toyomu ka na

Matsu ni wa sumaji

Yamahototogisu ²²¹

How senselessly

The village rings out with your song

In the early evening!

O mountain cuckoo who shuns and keeps silent the pines

Where I wait for you!

Ayanakumo. This adverb has a wide range of meanings, extending from the interpretation we have

²²¹ To be found on ly in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

used here of 'senseless, absurd, illogical' to 'unwarranted' or 'insignificant, trifling'. It almost always implies a criticism of behaviour. **Matsu ni wa sumaji.** The conventional pun is made here on *matsu* ('pine tree') and *matsu* ('to wait'). A pun is probably also intended on *sumaji* meaning both 'do not live somewhere' and 'not to ring out clear'.

Commentary.

A note of irony and even anger underlies this poem where Shōtetsu criticizes the mountain cuckoo for choosing such an inappropriate place to perform his glorious song. One can detect in this poem the inner recluse Shōtetsu's profound disdain for society and his inference that true beauty has no place and cannot be appreciated in the humdrum human world (*sato*).

Once again there is a temptation to wonder whether Shōtetsu might be speaking allegorically through the image *hototogisu* about himself, composing poetry in vain for an unappreciative audience when he would be better off making a clean break with his life in the capital.

On the technical level this poem provides another example of Shōtetsu's delight in word-play, which concentrates itself in the fourth line, *matsu ni wa sumaji* ('does not live in the pines/ does not ring out clear in the pines'). As in previous examples,²²² the puns provide both the rhetorical and thematic focal point of the poem: it is here that the strongest theme of the poem is expressed - inappropriateness and out-of-jointedness, in an almost Shakespearean sense. The cuckoo should be singing in the pine-trees but it is not. Thus the *hototogisu* may become a symbol of dysfunction and disorder. Through this interpretation, one discovers yet again an overtly positive image, the long-awaited *hototogisu*, assuming negative connotations.

Poem Forty-Three [2:86]

[A poem] alluding to love and smoke:

Kou to te mo

Kai nashi muro no

Yashima moru

Kami dani shiranu

²²² For example the pun on *tama todamaranu* in Poem 36.

*How vain is my yearning for you my beloved!
Even the guardian god of the kitchen furnace
- Or Muronoyashima Shrine with the steaming pond -
Knows nothing of the
Smoke of passion sealed in my breast!*

Muronoyashima. This word, abundant in interpretations, is in the first instance a placename with rich poetic associations, used as an alternative name for Ōmiwa Shrine in present-day Tochigi City, Tochigi Prefecture. Muronoyashima was often combined as it is here with the image of 'smoke' in *waka* poetry, due to the existence in the shrine precincts of a pond of spring water whose waters evaporated to hang in the air like smoke. This shrine is dedicated to several gods, referred to in this poem. Controversy exists over the etymology of the proper noun Muronoyashima, but there are evidently eight islands (*yashima*) in the pond.²²⁴ A second possible interpretation of *muronoyashima* as a common noun meaning *kamado* ('kitchen cooking range, furnace') also exists,²²⁵ combining with the image *mune no kemuri* ('smoke of passion sealed in my breast') even more neatly and effectively than the place name Muronoyashima. Also embedded in *muronoyashima* is the Buddhist term *muro* denoting a state of release from all carnal desires, the state that the poet is evidently having such a struggle to attain at the moment of writing. Written with the characters used in our present edition of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, *muro* (室) also suggests a monk's hermitage, a meaning further strengthening the poem's Buddhist texture and connecting it with Shōtetsu's own situation. **Moru kami.** Either (or simultaneously) the gods of Muronoyashima Shrine, or the god of the hearth, Kōjin, who was also believed secretly to watch over and protect people (*moru*). This god, who should have an intimate knowledge of one's feelings and behaviour, has no idea of the poet's fiery love, an indication of how perfectly such feelings must have been concealed. *Moru* also means 'to leak', thus linking as another *engo* with the image of 'smoke'.

²²³ *Sōkonshū* 4643. It occurs here however with a different first line, *tatsu to te mo* ('Even though [the smoke] rises'). Shōtetsu's accuracy in recalling poems, his own as well as those of others, was at times imperfect.

²²⁴ Katagiri, *Utamakura Utakotoba Jiten*, p.402.

²²⁵ *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, v.19, p.124.

Commentary

This is a poem skilfully expressing the hidden and suppressed passion of a person (maybe Shōtetsu himself) who should have distanced himself from such carnal and worldly emotions.

It provides a fine example of Shōtetsu's superb technical skill in manipulating words for their word-play potential, especially *muronoyashima*.

The same word shows Shōtetsu's fondness for unusual images: *muronoyashima* is a rare image in *waka* poetry which does not occur at all in the *Kokinshū* and occurs only twice in the *Shinkokinshū*.²²⁶ Yet Shōtetsu himself shows a predilection for this image, particularly in love poetry. Out of twenty poems in *Sōkonshū* on the topic 'Love with Allusion to Smoke', the image *muronoyashima* occurs three times, including the present poem.

Shōtetsu's pride and possessiveness regarding his play on *muronoyashima moru* is very obvious in the comments which follow the poem in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*: 'These words should not be used again', he states.²²⁷

Poem Forty-Four [2:87]

Kono tabi wa

Yasuku zo koemu

Suzu wakete

Moto fuminareshi

*Iwa no kakemichi*²²⁸

This time the journey should hold no fear for you

The perilous path over the mountains

Which you are used to treading

Parting the bamboo grasses

Pilgrim bells jangling

²²⁶ Poems 34 and 1010.

²²⁷ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 86.

²²⁸ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

Kono tabi. There is a likely play of words here on the homophones *tabi* (journey) and *tabi* (time, occasion). **Suzu.** Another name for *suzutake*, a bamboo-like grass with thin stalks which grows thickly in the shade in mountain areas. A play is also possibly intended on *suzu* meaning 'bell', referring to the bells worn by pilgrims on pilgrimages such as these.²²⁹ **Kakemichi.** This can refer merely to a steep mountain path or else a path scaling a rockface made by laying pieces of timber in steps, similar to *kakehashi* in Poem Three. Both meanings are probably implied here.

Commentary

According to the comments in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* which precede this poem, Shōtetsu was invited to compose this poem by an archbishop who had stayed overnight at the Sonshō-in Temple in Nara on his way to perform mountain austerities.²³⁰ The prelate was a fellow poet, a contributor of eight poems to the *Shinzokukokinshū*, the anthology from which Shōtetsu was excluded, and one of Shōtetsu's contemporaries. It is unclear what precisely Shōtetsu's own business was at Sonshō-in. It must be an episode which took place in Shōtetsu's maturity, as the Archbishop, his contemporary, is already well-advanced in his career: the double honorifics with which he is described were generally only used of the highest ranking personages and indicate he was at the apex of his career.

Unable to refuse a request from such a high-ranking dignitary, Shōtetsu prepared ink and immediately composed the above poem.²³¹ Compared with some of his other works, this poem is simple and straightforward, reflecting perhaps a concession to the conservative style which this cleric favoured as a *Shinzokukokinshū* poet.²³²

The fact that the archbishop specifically requested Shōtetsu to produce a poem, rather than the abbot of the temple where he had stayed overnight, indicates his awareness of Shōtetsu's reputation as a poet, and perhaps a curiosity to test his impromptu abilities.

²²⁹ Brower's translation, though capturing successfully the effortlessness of the original, does not include this wordplay: 'This time your journey/Will be easy as you make your way/Through bamboo thickets,/Treading the same path among the crags/That you have walked in days gone by'

(Brower and Miner, *Conversations with Shōtetsu*, p.156).

²³⁰ Identified by Hisamatsu as Giun, the son of Acting Great Counsellor Ashikaga Mitsunori (*Shōtetsu Monogatari*, p. 228, n.24). He was from the Jissō-in Temple, a Tendai temple in Yamashiro Province.

²³¹ *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 2: 87.

²³² This was the preferred style of the *Shinzokukokinshū*, a Nijō-aligned anthology, and is manifest in Giun's own poems (Numbers 114, 538, 676, 1,043, 1,373, 1,602, 1,849 and 1,859).

On the topic 'Accustomed to Unfulfilled Love':

*Yo no tsune no
Hito ni mono iu
Yoshi nagara
Omou kokoro no
Iro ya miyuramu²³³*

*I pretend to chat with you
As if you were any ordinary person
Fearful all the while
I might reveal
The hidden colours of my passion*

Mono iu. 'To say things, chat.' From an early date²³⁴ the phrase was also used to mean 'to engage in intimate and amorous chitchat'. In the context of this poem it is used primarily in the innocent sense of 'chatting' but with a wistful consciousness of its other meaning. **Omou kokoro.** 'Heart of love.' *Omou* is rich in possible interpretations. Foremost here is the meaning 'to love' but other overtones include 'to hope, desire', 'to imagine or anticipate', 'to be anxious', 'to recall the past'. The persona could thus be describing not only his love, but also his hope for a new romance or his anxiety over what will happen, or his memories of a passion which returns when he meets someone with whom he had a relationship in the past. **Iro.** Literally, 'colour', and by extension, 'facial expression'. Also, 'sexual passion'. The poet fears that the expression on his face may betray his true passion. **Miyuramu.** As with *mono iu* and *iro*, this word also has connotations of intimacy between a man and a woman. The concrete meaning is 'to be visible' but it additionally means 'to have intimate relations'.

Commentary

²³³ *Sōkonshū* 4403.

²³⁴ Examples exist in *Ise Monogatari* or *Izumi Shikibu Nikki* for example.

In sentiment this poem is very close to Poem Forty-Three in its expression of a concealed passion which must not be brought into the open. But unlike Poem Forty-Three, the same conception is expressed in more simple terms without excessive word-play, lending greater sincerity to the emotions depicted and freeing the poem from the artificiality of the previous poem. Nonetheless the poem is not completely lacking in word play, in this case a set of innuendoes implying an amorous connection: *mono iu, omou kokoro, iro, miyuramu*. The persistence of these innuendoes, which cannot, it seems, be kept out of the poem, suggest the extent and near uncontrollability of the poet's infatuation.

Poem Forty-Six [2:90]

On the topic 'Lamps in an Old Temple' :

Nori zo kore

Hotoke no tame ni

Tomosu hi ni

Hikari o soe yo

*Koto no ha no tama*²³⁵

These are the Teachings!

To the lamps that I light

For the Buddha

Add your incandescence

Jewelled words of poetry!

Nori. Buddha's teachings; the scriptures. **Koto no ha no tama.** The word *koto no ha* (literally 'word-leaves') occurs in the famous first sentence of the Kana Preface of the *Kokinshū*²³⁶. It was used from Heian times as an elegant word for 'language' but often refers specifically to *waka* poetry.²³⁷ In the present poem it is embellished further by the metaphor *tama* which signifies an

²³⁵ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

²³⁶ *Yamato uta wa hito no kokoro o tane to shite yorozu no koto no ha to zo narerikeru* ('The seeds of Japanese poetry lie in the human heart and grow into leaves of ten thousand words.' Translated by Rodd and Henkenius, *Kokinshū*, p. 35).

²³⁷ *Iwanami Kogo Jiten*, p.503.

object of beauty, a jewel . The meaning of its homonym *tama* ('soul, spirit, life-force') is also strongly present. In the context of Buddhist worship depicted by this poem, *tama* may also suggest the beads (*tama*) of the rosary fingered while intoning the sutras.

Commentary

This poem brings *waka* poetry into a relationship of equivalence with the Buddhist teachings, maintaining that it can serve the same purpose of increasing one's piety and bringing one closer to enlightenment. Shōtetsu is thus emphasising the spiritual and metaphysical efficacy of his art. The parallel drawn between poetry and the conventional practice of Buddhism is underlined by the structural parallelism of Shōtetsu's poem, where the first line *nori zo kore* ('These are the Teachings') is balanced against the last line *koto no ha no tama* ('Jewelled words of poetry'). From the time of Shunzei, poets had been preoccupied with this question of the role of poetry in the true practice of the Way. For some it caused considerable spiritual anguish,²³⁸ but Shōtetsu seems troubled by few doubts that poetry and Buddhism might not be altogether compatible.

This poem, apart from reiterating the role of poetry in the Buddhist Way, makes quite clear the sheer delight Shōtetsu found in beautiful language itself, whether this be the poetic language of the sutras which he claims 'adds' to the incandescence of the lamps, or the language of *waka* poetry. Perhaps one could be forgiven for imagining that one reason Shōtetsu was drawn to Buddhist orders might have been because this way of life allowed him to submerge himself in beauty in various forms, not only the beauty of the sutras but also accessories of worship such as the lighted lamps set before the Buddha. As a direct expression of Shōtetsu's involvement in Buddhist worship, this poem is rare among his poems of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

Poem Forty-Seven [2:91]

In celebration of a shrine:

Iohara ni

Arazu nagara no

²³⁸ For example Shunzei is said to have gone on a retreat to the Sumiyoshi Shrine to make amends for his neglect of the Buddha, fearful of the consequences this may bring him in the afterlife. One night, the god of Sumiyoshi apparently appeared to him in a dream and assured him that *waka* poetry and the way of the Buddha were one. Shōtetsu relates this legend in *Shōtetsu Monogatari* 1:58.

Miyama moru
Mio no kamimatsu
*Urakaze zo fuku*²³⁹

This is not Iohara, but here too
Guarding the holy mountain
The sacred pine of Mio
Stands sentinel
And the bay breeze blows!

Iohara. An ancient sub-state of pre-Taika reform times (pre-645), now the coastal part of present-day Shizuoka Prefecture. **Nagara.** The primary meaning here is 'whilst' but Shōtetsu is also weaving into the poem the celebrated placename Nagaranoyama (*nagara no miyama*), Mt. Nagara, situated behind Miidera Temple, Ōtsu, in present-day Shiga Prefecture. In addition Shōtetsu may be making a wittily-veiled reference to Miidera Temple (Onjōji)²⁴⁰ itself, the chief temple of the Tendai Jimon sub-sect, whose Buddhist 'mountain' appellation was 'Nagara'. Shōtetsu was very friendly with some of Miidera's clergy and from 1447 attended poetry gatherings there. This may have been a private joke thrown in for their benefit.²⁴¹ Also, *nagara* suggests the verb *nagarau* ('to live long') which brings an appropriately auspicious note to this celebratory occasion. **Miyama.** 'Revered mountain.' In this context it is likely to be Mt. Hiei towering to the north-east of Kyoto between Kyoto and Shiga Prefectures, the site of the powerful Enryaku-ji temple complex, the head temple in the Tendai sect of Buddhism. *Miyama* also auspiciously evokes Mt. Fuji, the revered and sacred mountain which forms a backdrop to the other Mio in Iohara, Shizuoka Prefecture. **Moru.** A pun is intended here on *moru* 'to watch over' and *moru* 'to leak' thus creating a semantic link with the noun *mi*, immediately following, whose first syllable *mi* can signify *mizu* ('water'). The tutelary (*moru*) relationship between Enryaku-ji and Hie Shrine, the likely location of the poem, is also alluded to. **Mio.** Best known as a placename in Shimizu city,

²³⁹ To be found only in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

²⁴⁰ Established in 686.

²⁴¹ Inada, *Shōtetsu no Kenkyū*, p.120.

present-day Shizuoka Prefecture, at the tip of the Miho Peninsula. It is the location of Miho no Matsubara, a spectacular sandspit with white sands and green pine trees set against the backdrop of Mt. Fuji, which had featured frequently in poetry since *Manyōshū* times. Miho no Matsubara was also famed as the home of the Hagoromo pine where the Heavenly Maiden is said to have left her feather robe. It provides the setting for Zeami's Nō drama *Hagoromo* (The Feathered Robe). In the midst of the pine trees stands the ancient Miho Shrine where an alleged piece of the feathered robe is enshrined. In this poem, however, Shōtetsu specifically points out that it is a different Mio near a different revered mountain. This was probably the old post-town (*eki*) Mio located on the major transportation route to the Japan Sea coast from Kyoto which followed the western shores of Lake Biwa, in the same locality as the Hie Shrine and Mt. Hiei. It is a placename of some obscurity, but Shōtetsu knew this area very well. **Kamimatsu.** An ancient and sacred pine tree often found in shrine precincts and deeply venerated. The explicit sanctity of the pinetree in this poem confirms the positive overtones acquired by 'pine' in preceding poems. The shrine where the pine is located is not identified but if the revered mountain (*miyama*) is interpreted as Mt. Hiei and there is a tutelary role involved, it is likely to be the Hie Shrine²⁴² situated in Sakamoto, Ōtsu, at the eastern foot of Mt. Hiei. This shrine predates the Tendai establishment of Enryaku-ji Temple on Mt. Hiei but became closely affiliated with Enryaku-ji in a tutelary or guardian (*moru*) capacity.

Commentary

As the headnote of this poem points out, this is a celebratory poem in honour of a shrine. The identity of the shrine is not overtly stated but the content of the poem would indicate to readers that it was the Hie Shrine on the shores of Lake Biwa. The nature of the celebration is not divulged. It was perhaps a special service, or the completion of some building project.

The conception underlying the poem is straightforward: the location is Mio, not the more famous Mio which provides a setting of pines against which to view Mt Fuji, but Mio at the foot of Mt Hiei. Yet here too the elements generally associated with the other Mio gather together: a revered mountain, a shrine, a sacred pine, a bay (on Lake Biwa), not to mention the same placename Mio. Here too one can see and hear the wind from the bay blowing through the branches of the ancient

²⁴² Known in the pre-Muromachi period as Hiesha, but today known as Hiyoshi Taisha. Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Pre-modern Japan*, p.xvi.

pine and easily imagine one is at the other Mio. The invocation of the other Mio in Iohara with its Miho Shrine may be linked with the celebratory purpose of this poem, as if praying that the ancient and powerful spirituality of the Miho Shrine and its Hagaromo legend associations might be transferred to the Hie Shrine.

Despite the simplicity of its conception, in its execution this poem is one of Shōtetsu's most cryptic compositions, riddlelike and even suggestive of *kōan* (Zen conundrums) in its enigmatic description of Mio, with hidden clues which eventually suggest its location and thus the site of the sacred pine.

It can be argued that this poem also makes a contribution to the metaphysical debate on the relationship between reality and illusion, or the powerful effects of affirmation through denial. This poem so vividly evokes, then denies the famous Mio with the sea breeze wafting through the pines, that one experiences a disturbing sensation of being simultaneously present at an illusory place and absent at an actual place. Which Mio is in fact more real, the Mio of the imagination, or the Mio of the actual occasion at the Hie shrine? This speculative dimension of this poem should not be underestimated.

Poem Forty-Eight [2:102]

Admiring Flowers:

Hitoeda no

Hana no iro ka o

Kazasu yue

Itodo yatsururu

Oi no sode kana

With this fragrant spray of brilliant blossoms

I adorn my head;

Alas this old man's shabby sleeves

Look even more

Worn-out!

Kazasu. The wearing of flowers or greenery, latterly artificial, in one's hair or head gear. A primitive magic is reflected in this practice: a transference of the vitality of the plant to the wearer was believed to take place, leading to rejuvenation and revigoration. **Yatsururu.** The gaunt, worn and haggard physical appearance of the poet, and the shabby, wretched state of his attire. **Oi no sode.** Literally, the 'sleeves of old age' but also the image 'sleeve' functions as a synecdoche for the total attire and physical appearance of the poet.

Commentary

Shōtetsu relates here with wry humour his own experience. Perversely, the sprig of blossom he has held up to his head seems to lack completely the magical qualities of rejuvenation that he had sought. Ironically, the brilliance of the blossom merely accentuates the shabbiness of his own appearance and the haggardness of his ageing face. In the commentary immediately following this poem, Shōtetsu makes the insightful comment that 'wretched clothing worn in the snow appears even more wretched', inferring that snow and blossom possess analogous properties.

Thus, on a serious aesthetic level, this poem also undertakes an exploration of the contradictions and negative qualities lying within the phenomenon of beauty itself (the blossoms) and the way in which something beautiful can ironically make something unattractive (himself) look even uglier. Shōtetsu seems to be making a comment yet again on the inherent ambivalence and contradictions inherent in all phenomena.

CONCLUSION

In our Introduction, we outlined the paradox which we detected between the highly aesthetic nature of Shōtetsu's poetry and the environment in which it was conceived, between the exquisite 'voice' of Shōtetsu's poetry and the 'violent age' which produced it. We now must return to this problem in the light of the detailed material of the preceding chapters, and seek to identify in what way, if any, Shōtetsu's poetry can be reconciled with its context.

In terms of the 'violent' environment, it would be difficult indeed to deny that the years of Shōtetsu's poetic activity from about 1390 until the composition of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* in about 1448 were years of accelerating political and social turmoil punctuated with increasing frequency by rebellions spearheaded by ambitious rival chieftains challenging the Ashikaga hegemony, and by civil revolts triggered by diverse, mostly civilian elements who were under extreme financial duress. These events have been described in Chapter Two. As might be expected, acts of horrendous violence accompanied such incidents, the best-documented of which is probably the treacherous assassination of Ashikaga Yoshinori by his vassal Akamatsu Mitsusuke in 1441. Massive assaults on property also occurred, including the destruction by arson of the Kitano Shrine in 1426 and the 'malt incident' of 1444 in which the western half of Kyoto was almost completely reduced to ashes. The violence eventually reached its nadir some years after Shōtetsu's death with the catastrophic Ōnin War when the capital served as a battlefield for an entire decade, resulting in the destruction of most of the interior of the city and a dramatic decline in population to about 40,000.¹ These were also years of natural disasters, flooding, famine and pestilence.

From the point of view of the 'voice', the preceding translation of Shōtetsu's poetry demonstrates the extent of the gulf which exists between the generally unpalatable, chaotic and brutal reality of the world in which he wrote, and his poetry. We have noted how, in the final analysis, Shōtetsu's poetry is a conscious invocation of the poetic aesthetic of the past, and the visions of beauty cherished by the court aristocracy. It is a tribute to the ancient *waka* tradition, and an attempt to resurrect its glory. We should not expect to find, and indeed do not find, direct comments in Shōtetsu's poetry on prosaic aspects of reality such as politics, economics, military affairs, even if

¹ Hall and Mass, *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, p.30.

on occasion we are tempted by our knowledge of the background to suggest some allegory may be intended. The *waka* was simply not the vehicle for this sort of expression. The place to make this sort of comment was in diaries, essays and, in extreme situations, publicly displayed lampoons.

It is true that this aesthetic detachment from 'reality' is difficult to comprehend, in view of the fact that Shōtetsu was evidently deeply involved in the 'real' world, enjoying a lifetime's association with members of the great feudal families, including the Hosokawa, the Yamana, the Hatakeyama, the Akamatsu, the Isshiki, and eventually forging close links with the protagonists in the unfolding violence of the Ōnin War, namely Hosokawa Katsumoto, Yamana Sōzen, and the young shogun Yoshimasa himself. For these reasons, it is inconceivable that Shōtetsu was unaware of the vicissitudes of his era and the intrigues taking place around him. We know, moreover, that Shōtetsu's own home was destroyed by fire on at least three occasions, probably from the spreading flames of incendiary attacks on nearby institutions. The worst of these disasters occurred in 1432 at Imakumano. Likewise Shōtetsu was himself victimized by shogun Yoshinori, for reasons still not entirely clear, resulting in several years of exile, the confiscation of his hereditary property and the public humiliation of being pointedly excluded from the only imperial anthology compiled during his lifetime. These severe setbacks have been discussed in Chapter One. Nonetheless, Shōtetsu's poetry is stoically silent about these tragedies. For Shōtetsu, poetry was a place of refuge, solace and beauty from which these personal sufferings should be excluded.

However, it would be a fallacy to conclude from the above comments that Shōtetsu's poetry achieves total detachment from the real world, however overwhelming this impression may be and however strong may have been Shōtetsu's intent. On the contrary, as we have already glimpsed, there are a number of ways in which his poetry is very closely tied to his environment, some subtle, and some quite overt.

The first point of contact must surely relate to the theory that 'aesthetic values and ideas of beauty are themselves historical constructs'.² Shōtetsu's sense of beauty did not emerge in a vacuum: it was a result of the interaction between his own innate sensibility and receptiveness and the pre-existent aesthetic tradition which he encountered in his immediate environment which had itself matured over the centuries subject to many different and complex influences. Even the aesthetic

² Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, p.4.

detachment of *waka* poetry to which Shōtetsu conformed was a time-honoured socially-prescribed convention.

Another deeply significant link between Shōtetsu's contemporary reality and his poetry can be found in the phenomenon of Shōtetsu himself, a commoner-monk issuing from the provincial military aristocracy, patronized by the new warrior leadership and composing aristocratic *waka* poetry. Shōtetsu's poetic activity per se must be seen as a product and symbol of the immense social and political changes that were taking place in his day, the potential for social mobility regardless of original status and the usurpation of aristocratic tradition by the military.

Conversely, the underlying conservatism and retrospection of Shōtetsu's poetry, which determined that his art should be modelled on Teika's aestheticism and the ancient *waka* tradition, can be understood as a reaction to the violent flux which he was witnessing around him and from which he himself both prospered and suffered. It is the protesting 'voice' of conservatism and nostalgia in a rapidly changing world signalling the depth of his insecurity and yearning for old and reassuring forms. By the same token, the strand of innovation which runs parallel to the conservatism of his poetry shows that Shōtetsu could not in the end resist the powerful, all-pervasive momentum of change which was sending its shockwaves throughout Muromachi Japan. In his poetry, the spirit of change transformed itself into his urge to innovate and achieve originality in his poetic expression mindful all the while of the limitations of tradition.

Even the artificiality and escapism of Shōtetsu's poetic world was not diametrically opposed to the real world. On the contrary, as we have seen in Chapter Two, the pursuit of solace in artificial worlds could be called a popular leisure activity of the ruling classes in the Kitayama period, symbolised above all by Kinkakuji (the Golden Pavilion) on the Kitayama estate and the cultural and artistic activities that took place there. Escape into an artificial world of beauty provided essential respite from the brutality of war-mongering and power politics, and Shōtetsu's poetry was an integral part of the same movement.

Likewise, the preoccupation with the nature and evocation of ultimate beauty which underlies Shōtetsu's poetic experimentation, finds its parallel in Kitayama culture where the influx of luxury fine arts from Ming China and the need to discriminate between good and bad (or valuable and worthless) are said to have precipitated precisely the same desire to understand and analyse the

essence of beauty. While others engaged in the connoisseurship of ceramics, ink paintings, and even the performing arts, Shōtetsu embarked on a quest to discover the nature of true beauty in his poetry. His discourses on *yūgen* reveal some of his epiphanies.

The exchange between Shōtetsu's poetry and its environment by no means ends here. The outside world penetrates deeply into many of his poems in their very subject matter and contents, for example in their portrayal of contemporary customs and practices, whether these relate to shrine and temple ritual, seasonal costume-changing, animistic agricultural rites, magic, monkly pilgrimages or courtship and love-making. But, most pervasively of all, we argue that the exchange lies hidden in the deep texture of his poetry, in the imprecise area of the reverberations and associations of his imagery and its latent symbolism. The definition of images as 'introjections of external forms'³ seems particularly relevant to this discussion.

Thus we can see the contemporary world mirrored in the images we especially noted in our overview of Shōtetsu's poetry at the beginning of Chapter Three and to which we returned in our translation and commentary. We refer especially to its imagery of fragility and vulnerability such as 'thin ice' (10), 'snow-ladder' (3) or sand scooped up by the breeze (23); imagery of ephemerality and mortality such as the 'moonflower' (8), 'cicada' (4), 'autumn leaves' (4); imagery of mutability such as the 'moon in water' (30) and 'moving waters' (41). Similarly we can find external origins for the undercurrent imagery of violence, turbulence, chaos and disorder which threatens Shōtetsu's fragile poetic world, for example, the violent and destructive autumn wind 'scattering tears' and 'piercing' pitiful bodies (Poems 5, 13 and 20) or Poem 38 which is, in blunt terms, the description of the rape of one's best friend's wife. Other poems carry veiled and sinister suggestions of sterility and deathliness, for example, Poem 9 with its bough-snapped trees on the bleak snow-covered slopes, Poem 10 with its icily congealed skies where the marshbirds cannot nest, or Poem 32 with its stark depiction of the winter-withered heath. Even the duality expressed by the ambivalent, often contradictory connotations of certain images or symbols, for example *hototogisu* ('cuckoo') or *aki no yūgure* ('autumn dusk'), finds a prosaic counterpart in Shōtetsu's real world of political intrigue, double-dealing and betrayal. All can be seen as distillations through Shōtetsu's aesthetic sensibility of disturbing qualities which he observed and at times personally experienced in the events of the real world.

³ Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, p. 6.

There is, however, one further and even more important way in which we can read the environment into the deep texture of Shōtetsu's poetry, referring to a different dimension of reality which was perhaps even more real and immediate to Shōtetsu than the concrete world, and formed a more conscious part of his poetic. This is his spiritual environment, the set of beliefs which he carried about in his head and his heart, which as we have seen were Buddhist-based and centred on the principle of *mujiō*, the ephemerality, impermanence and instability of all phenomena which underlies and explains all suffering. His poems in one way or another all allude to this principle; if at the same time we can find in his poems 'introjections' of the actual contemporary social and historical world, this is simply because human society is subject to and affected by the same cosmic laws. Images, we noted above, are 'introjections of external forms', but this is just half of the quotation, which goes on to describe images as 'direct intuitions of spiritual forms'.⁴ Shōtetsu's poetry provides a fine example of this relationship. Perhaps the ultimate revelation of the osmosis between Shōtetsu's spiritual environment and his poetry can be found in his highly transcendental interpretation of *yūgen*, the aesthetic and spiritual core of his poetic. We suggest that, in the final analysis, it is this spiritual and metaphysical sub-text of Shōtetsu's poetry which provides us with our most irrefutable and powerful evidence of its contextuality, if we remember to include Shōtetsu's contemporary spiritual world into our understanding of 'context'.

Afterword: Directions For Future Research

As we pointed out in the Introduction, studies relating to Shōtetsu in the West are not numerous, and many directions invite further research. Areas which particularly present themselves as logical developments from this study include a comparative study of Shōtetsu and Teika's poetry, specific analysis of the Reizei influence in Shōtetsu's poetry, or a study of further samples of Shōtetsu's poetry such as *Shōtetsu Senshu* (the collection of one thousand topically-classified poems by Shōtetsu, compiled by Ichijō Kanera), sequences such as *Shōtetsu Eisō* or *Tsukikusa*, or specific volumes of his monumental work *Sōkonshū* with special attention to their imagistic texture and image frequency, to find if these works confirm or refute tendencies which we claim have been shown by the poetry of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*. In addition, from the biographical and socio-historical point-of-view, it would be rewarding to take a closer look at the volumes of *Sōkonshū*

⁴ Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, p. 6.

which are accompanied by diary-like headnotes, and also contemporary journals such as *Kanmon Gyoki* or *Hekizan Nichiroku*. Finally, a translation and appraisal of Shōtetsu's travelogue *Nagusamegusa* ('Grasses of Consolation') is long overdue.

APPENDICES

Appendix One. Kanji transcription of appellations used by Shōtetsu.

Masakiyo	正清
Nobukiyo	信清
Seigan	清巖 or 清岩
Shōgetsu-an	松月庵 or 招月庵
Shōtetsu	正徹
Sonmyō-maru	尊命丸 or 尊明丸
Tesshoki	徹書記

Appendix Two. First pages and postscript from the Shōkōkan manuscript of *Shōtetsu Monogatari*, which is one of the earliest extant manuscripts of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* and belongs to the lineage of the Tō no Sosan manuscript. (Photocopy obtained courtesy of Kokubungaku Kenkyū Shiryōkan, Tokyo.)

巳拾九

正徹物語

東常縁聞書



正徹物語 全

此道ありて実なるにせむらん其の真なるにありては



定家

その心も其の流二際冷泉の流也別為無一流とて
この心も其の魔醜首種之三目の心也たひは
揚塵疑わすは是れ其の心也
三事ありてありては是れ其の心也
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野野作
副書

東常縁用書

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奇の事しやまこ〜り〜ぬ色このり
ありてけ奇〜と〜られ〜

山家月

後京極坊政敷

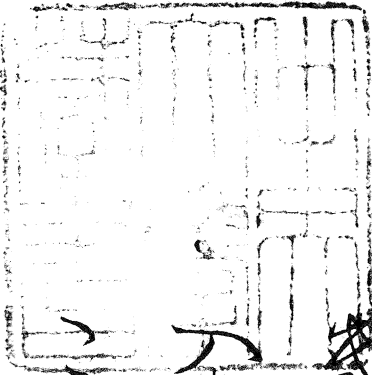
所とあれある〜と〜せ〜と〜月と粘りて
惟め〜是成〜と〜れ〜と〜ひも〜ら〜り〜
る書之

懐舊

通光卿

Appendix Three. Preface and postscript from the Kansei 2 (1790) woodblock print edition of *Shōtetsu Monogatari* from the collection of Chūō University Library. The final page indicates the Shorin bookshop with outlets in Edo, Kyoto, Osaka and Sakai where this work could be purchased. It must have had some commercial viability at this time. (Photocopy obtained courtesy of Kokubungaku Shiryōkan, Tokyo.)

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 初撰よりお祭り誠の教奇よりのお祭りを發明の期
 なりしむ

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 信より今世の字本より二巻の正徹の記上巻城
 どのちよ二冊より一巻の記實ハ字本の二冊の上巻の
 一冊より一冊の正徹の記下巻なりしは傍し
 平

享保十四歲閏九月六日對燈書長

寛政二年庚戌九月

江戸通石町十軒店

京堀川通綾小路下町

堺天神裏門前

大坂堺筋長堀橋北詰

山崎金兵衛

齋藤庄兵衛

北村佐兵衛

増田源兵衛

書林

Appendix Four: Japanese script version of Shōtetsu's poetry in *Shōtetsu Monogatari*.

正徹日記 上

- 1 契りつゝ送りしほどの年をへば今夜や中の衣ならまし
- 2 契れけさ逢ふもおもひのほかなれば又行く末も命ならずや
- 3 渡りかね雲も夕をなをたどる跡なき雪のみなねのかけはし
- 4 森の葉も秋にやあはんなくせみの梢の露の身をかへぬとて
- 5 ゆふしでも我になびかぬ露ぞちるたがねぎごとの末の秋風
- 6 うしとてもよもいとはれじ我身世にあらん限りの秋の夕ぐれ
- 7 御祓するこの輪のうちに廻りきて我より先に秋やこゆらん
- 8 かきこもるみづのゝ岸によるあはの消えぬもさけるゆふがほの花
- 9 時雨まで曇りてふかくみし山の雪に奥なき木々の下をれ
- 10 夕づくよ水なき空のうす水くだかぬ床と鳥や鳴くらん
- 11 色に吹け草木も春をしらぬまの人の心の花の初風
- 12 夕まぐれそれかと思えし面影の露むぞかたみ有明の月
- 13 それならぬ人の心のあらき風憂き身にとをる秋のはげしき
- 14 うきものと思ふ心の跡もなく我を忘れよ君は恨みじ
- 15 来る春に逢坂ながら白川の關の戸あくる山の雪かな
- 16 あらたまる契りやあると宮造り神をうつして御祓せましを
- 17 明けにけりあらましかばの春の花渚に霞む志賀の山もと
- 18 曉の寝覚めは老いの昔にて宵の間頼む夢も絶えにき
- 19 いたづらに更け行く空のかげなれや獨り詠むる秋の夜の月

正徹日記 下

- 20 拂ふらんそがひに渡る初鴈の涙つらなる峯の松風
- 21 草の原誰に問ふとも此比や朝霜置きてかるところたぐん
- 22 思ひ侘び消えてたなびく雲ならばあはれやかけん行末の空
- 23 沖つ風いさごをあぐる濱のいしにそなれてふるき松の聲かな
- 24 郭公又一聲になりにけりをのが五月の杉の木がくれ
- 25 思ひねの枕の塵にまじはらば歩みを運ぶ神やなからん
- 26 その神の女神男神の道あらば戀に御祓を神や請けまし
- 27 宿りかゝる一村雨を契りにて行衛もしぼる袖の別れ路
- 28 この夕入相の鐘の霞む哉音せぬかたに春や行くらん
- 29 あだに見し人こそ忘れ安川のうき瀬心に歸る浪かな
- 30 水浅く蘆間にすだつ鳴の足の短かく浮ぶ夜はの月かげ
- 31 逢坂の嵐をいたみ越えかねて關のと山に消ゆるうき雲
- 32 折ふしよ鳴なく秋も冬枯れしとをきはじはら紅葉だになし
- 33 亂れつゝいはほにさがる松が枝の苔のいとなく山風ぞ吹く
- 34 夏来ても匂ふ藤浪あらたへの衣がへせぬ山かどぞ見る
- 35 年もへぬ待つに心は短かくて玉の緒長き時鳥かな
- 36 涙さへ人の袂に入ると見し玉とどまらぬ夢ぞうきたる
- 37 郭公をのが五月を待つかひの涙の灌も聲ぞすくなき
- 38 身をうち「とたのみ木幡の山こえて白波の名を契にぞ」かる

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