

The Deer Scroll by Kōetsu and Sōtatsu Reappraised
Golden Week Lecture Series— Four Masterpieces of Japanese Painting: A Symposium

Miyeko Murase, Former Consultant for Japanese Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art and the
Takeo and Itsuko Atsumi Professor Emerita, Columbia University



Poem Scroll with Deer (part), Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, early 17th century, handscroll, ink, gold and silver on paper, 13 3/8 x 372 in., Gift of Mrs. E. Frederick, 51.127

It has been quite some years since I last spoke here at this museum, so many in fact that I have lost count. It is really wonderful to be back, and I want to thank director Mimi Gates and curator Yukiko Shirahara, who invited me to speak today on the world-famous *Deer Scroll* by Sōtatsu and Kōetsu. This proud possession of the Seattle Art Museum is one of the most beautiful paintings ever created by Japanese artists.¹

The scroll just came back from Japan after extensive restorative work. Although the handscroll itself does not bear any title, it is generally known as the *Deer Scroll* because the entire scroll is filled with images of deer, which are shown either singly, in couples, or in large herds. The animals are painted only in gold and/or silver ink, as is the very simple setting of sky, mist, and ground. As you may have noticed, these beautiful pictures of deer are really a background for the equally exquisite writings of *waka* poems in black ink. Here we have a symphony of three arts - poetry, painting, and calligraphy - as a testimonial to the ancient credo of Asia that these three arts occupy an equally important place in life and culture.

The only naturalistic landscape element in this work is a hill rising at the very end of the scroll, at the foot of which is a signature reading “Tokuyūsai Kōetsu.”² One of Japan’s greatest calligraphers, Hon’ami Kōetsu lived from 1558 to 1637. Leaving a respectful distance from this signature, Sōtatsu, the painter of these beautiful animals, placed a large round seal reading “Inen.”³ I will speak more about both artists later.

Although beautiful, the pictures of deer were made as a decorative element for the paper on which Kōetsu wrote a series of *waka* poems which were, however, not his own creations. Kōetsu simply copied them from Japan’s popular old anthology called the *Shin Kokinshū*, (New Collection of Old and New Poems) which was compiled in 1205.

The life of the calligrapher Kōetsu is well known, since he came from one of Kyoto's wealthiest and most sophisticated upper class families, which specialized in polishing and connoisseurship of swords. He had a large circle of friends and acquaintances, some of which were members of the Imperial family while others were warriors or upper class merchants. He made acquaintances with them not only through his family business, but also through personal connections involving artistic and cultural activities. He corresponded frequently with this circle of friends and colleagues and today more than three hundred of such correspondences remain. This letter is a testimonial to his friendships with powerful men of the time.

Dated about 1605, when he was in his late 40s, Kōetsu wrote this letter to a certain Katō Akinari, asking him to come and help him prepare for the tea ceremony the following day to which he invited Furuta Oribe as a guest.⁴ Oribe, as you may know, was the leading tea master of the time. He took over the mantle of Sen no Rikyū in 1591, when Rikyū was forced to commit *seppuku*, ritual suicide, at Toyotomi Hideyoshi's command. You may recall that Oribe himself would meet the same fate ten years later in 1615 at the command of Tokugawa Ieyasu.

Highly sophisticated in artistic matters, Kōetsu is often admiringly referred to in Japan as a "Renaissance Man." He was regarded as one of the three greatest calligraphers of his time. He was, of course, also a connoisseur of swords.

He was a tea master and made many beautiful tea bowls, one of which is designated today as a National Treasure. This one is named *Mt. Fuji* and is in a private collection in Japan.⁵ He is known to have designed decorations on lacquer ware and metal ware, and some historians claim that he was a painter as well.⁶ Not only was he a versatile artist, he also seems to have been deeply committed, like many of his courtier friends, to reviving the courtly tradition of Japanese art and literature. This conviction strongly resonates in the poems that he wrote on Sōtatsu-decorated scrolls and poem cards as you will see today. He is truly worthy of the accolade, a "Renaissance Man." It must be also remembered that he was a catalyst to many future artistic projects.

In sharp contrast to Kōetsu, very little is known about the life of Sōtatsu. We do know that he was married to one of Kōetsu's cousins, and he seems to have come from another artisan family of Kyoto, most likely a weaver's family. When he first appears in historical records, Sōtatsu was already involved with Kōetsu and his circle.

In the closing years of the sixteenth century there was an ambitious publishing venture which is known as the *Sagabon*, or Saga Books, a publication venture that involved the imperial court and Kōetsu's circle of friends. These books, some with illustrations, were called the Saga Books because they were published in the Saga area northwest of Kyoto. They included Chinese and Japanese classics, Buddhist texts, and many other kinds of books. What was unique about this publishing project was that in the past, Japanese publications such as Buddhist sutras were always printed using woodblocks, which were the size of a page of a book or sheet of paper, just like the *ukiyo-e* prints of later years. Saga books were instead printed with movable type, or stamps, almost like a modern press, in the technique that had been introduced from Korea in the late sixteenth century. A particularly beautiful group of books that came out of Saga was a series of Noh libretti, which were either printed or hand-written in books, decorated with designs, and printed with mica or silver using stamps.⁷ Mica or silver was not easily absorbed into wood stamps, and produced smudgy but attractive effects, which you will see in Sōtatsu's decorative

designs. Ink dots you see in between lines of text are notations for recitation. Sōtatsu, who was involved with this project, seems to have been inspired by the new technique of printing and hit on the novel idea of using stamps for his pictures as well. We note that Sōtatsu decorated the paper using stamps for the waves and flowers, or for the pines and the moon.⁸

He would repeat the same small stamps on other projects.⁹ Or sometimes he made a large design, like this long plum branch, and used elements of the design on other projects.¹⁰ He could combine different stamps, which enabled him to create an infinite number of variations and new compositions using a small number of stamps. This experience made a deep impression on young Sōtatsu and cannot be overemphasized. Much later when he became a full-fledged painter, of which I shall speak later today, Sōtatsu used the same principle in creating paintings with a surprising result that no other painters of Japan had ever used.

In 1602 Sōtatsu produced stunningly beautiful covers and frontispieces as replacements for some of the famous twelfth-century Buddhist sutras, which the Heike clan donated in 1164 to the Itsukushima Shrine in the Inland Sea.¹¹ Known as the *Heike Sutras*, this group of thirty-three scrolls of the *Lotus Sutra* represents one of the most lavishly decorated Buddhist scriptures in Japan.

An inscription on the box that contains the scrolls states that in 1602 a powerful warlord named Fukushima Masanori sponsored the repair of some damaged scrolls. Although Sōtatsu's name is not mentioned, it is clear from stylistic analysis that he was responsible for replacing covers and frontispieces of three scrolls from this group.¹²

The case in point is this deer that bears a striking resemblance to the animals in Seattle's scroll¹³ and *Sagabon*.⁹ No doubt, Sōtatsu received this commission through his connection with Kōetsu. We have seen a number of small works representing the deer, and we might say that Seattle's *Deer Scroll* is the culmination of Sōtatsu's experiences using this animal as a subject in his work. The *Deer Scroll* is also one of four major handscrolls on which Sōtatsu and Kōetsu collaborated shortly after the Itsukushima project.

Three others are the *Scroll of Flowers of Four Seasons* in the Hatakeyama Memorial Museum of Fine Art in Tokyo¹⁴, the *Lotus Scroll*¹⁵ which was severely damaged in the 1923 earthquake and subsequently cut up and dispersed amongst various collections, and the *Cranes Scroll*¹⁶ which was re-discovered in the 1950s and is now in the Kyoto National Museum. I will be speaking about them briefly later on today.

The *Deer Scroll* was originally about twenty meters long, roughly seventy feet, but was cut approximately in half in 1935. According to the note pasted on the lid of the Seattle scroll's container, the first part of the scroll consisted of fourteen sheets of paper but was further cut into smaller sections, the largest of which went to the MOA Museum of Art in Atami, the rest were re-mounted onto hanging scrolls and dispersed amongst collections. The second half that came to the Seattle Art Museum includes ten sheets of paper, and is not only intact but also includes Kōetsu's signature,¹⁷ his hand-written seal, *kao* - reading "Kōetsu" - and Sōtatsu's "Inen" seal.¹⁸

Moreover, the recent repair work exposed writing on the end roller stating that Kōetsu wrote on this scroll.¹⁹ I am not quite sure who inscribed this, but needless to say these seals and signatures make the Seattle's section doubly valuable.

Even though this scroll was cut into sections it is easy to reconstruct its original sequence, since Kōetsu copied the twenty-eight poems from the *Shin Kokinshū*, faithfully following the

book's sequence. This anthology, like most other poetic anthologies of ancient Japan, lists the poems divided into categories like four seasons, love, separation, travel, and other poetic themes. These twenty-eight poems were quoted from the autumn section, which includes 276 poems. The subject of deer for the decoration of the paper was chosen no doubt because this animal symbolizes the autumnal season in Japanese art and literature.

The *Deer Scroll* originally began with Poem no. 362*, and this section is now in the Yamatane Museum of Art in Tokyo.²⁰ First is the poet's name, Saigyō Hōshi, a monk who lived in the early twelfth century. He renounced his courtier's life and became a wandering monk-poet. Similar to almost all Japanese texts, writings in this scroll consist of Chinese characters, *kanji*, which are usually used for personal or place names, and the rest in the mixture of *kanji* and *kana*, indigenous phonetic symbols.

I am not going to read every poem in this scroll, but just to give you a hint of what these poems are like, I shall recite the first one:

Even someone without a heart
May be deeply moved -
Snipe taking flight from a marsh
In the autumn twilight. **

Rather than going back and forth between the pictures and calligraphy, I shall discuss the painting first in order to ease you into the calligraphy, which is the more difficult part of the scroll.

As you will see, the deer in this scroll seem to tell some sort of a story. As if fenced in by the poem, this first pensive-looking animal with long antlers stands alone with his head bent slightly. We notice right away that the trademark of Sōtatsu's painting, *tarashikomi* – which is “to pour ink or pigment” to create smudgy effects - appears on this animal's back. Sōtatsu must have been inspired by the effect that the stamps produced on the *Sagabon*.

Then, there is an encounter between a doe and a buck.²¹ I can almost see Kōetsu grinning when he came to this Poem, no. 365, by the Lord Chamberlain which starts “*omou koto*” (something that troubles the heart) that he could write alongside the meditative couple. Skipping a few passages we come to an episode that seems to suggest a *ménage à trois* with two does and a buck.²²

It is hard to tell if these animals, portrayed in line drawing, are meant to be the same ones that are painted in gold or silver ink. Poems and paintings pursue their own agenda seldom giving us detailed information.

The Seattle scroll contains twelve poems. The first poem was written around a buck that stands tall and handsome,²³ echoing the passage at the very beginning of the scroll now in the Yamatane Museum.²⁴ The buck seems to be in a pensive mood, and the poem perfectly resonates with the animal's appearance. It reads:

Ah, the Musashi Plain –
No matter how far I go,
There is no end to autumn.
What sort of wind blows at its outer reaches?

After a long stretch of sky and ground, in which Kōetsu wrote two poems, our buck seems to have joined a large herd in what is perhaps the most beautiful passage of the entire scroll.²⁵ Here we first see the animals' full bodies, some only in line drawings, and others in thick gold or silver paint. Differences in their facial expressions are quite captivating. As we move the scroll further on, we only see the bent heads of the animals, which gradually disappear into the distance.

In a sudden change of mood, a buck gets away from the herd and makes a great leap forward.²⁶ Then, two groups of animals follow.²⁷ They are youthful and vivacious, represented in lively line drawings.

At the very end of the scroll are two bucks watching the dancing deer, as if older members of the herd are watching over the antics of the mischievous youngsters. Immediately below the animals are Kōetsu's signature and a large round "Inen" seal that Sōtatsu used at the very end of the scroll.²⁸

No record tells us who commissioned Kōetsu and Sōtatsu to produce this marvelous scroll. Most likely, a friend of Kōetsu's got the idea of having a scroll of autumn poems written on paper decorated by Sōtatsu. As early as the Nara period in the eighth century, the Japanese favored the ownership of books or scrolls made of beautifully decorated paper on which poems, or even Buddhist texts, were inscribed by noted calligraphers. This custom reached its zenith in the Heian period, like these twelfth-century examples show:

Above is a page from the early twelfth-century book of poems that belongs to the Seattle Art Museum.²⁹ We have already seen the most elaborately decorated example, like this *Heike Sutra*.³⁰ In fact, by this time it came to be considered uncouth to write poetry on undecorated paper. Scrolls and poem cards created by Sōtatsu and Kōetsu belong to this long tradition. Yet, Sōtatsu's designs defied the traditional paper decoration, which tended to be delicately painted or rather fussy, as you see in this example from the early seventeenth century on the right.³¹ Sōtatsu's designs on the left that date from the same period are unique; they are simpler, bolder and more powerful.³²

Unlike the artists of Europe, Japanese artists seldom left documents that refer to their commissions or the progress of their works. We can therefore only hazard a guess about the procedure of creating such poem scrolls. I presume that after obtaining the commission for the *Deer Scroll*, Kōetsu and Sōtatsu did have a preliminary discussion on the work. I assume again that Kōetsu had time to map out the placement of twenty-eight poems after he received the scroll painted by Sōtatsu. If Kōetsu had made mistakes, as he occasionally did, it would have been quite difficult to procure another supply of paper. Paper was expensive in those days to begin with. It would have been very difficult to get replacements when they were beautifully painted like this one.

His job was made tricky, especially because some poems are preceded by longish headnotes, like this Poem no. 375, which states that the poem about the moon peeking through woods was composed as one of fifty poems presented to the emperor.³³ Here, Kōetsu's writings became very small. The poet's name was written in the smallest letters, which was not quite in the original plan I am sure.

Once the general layout was determined, Kōetsu may have relied on his artistic instinct to determine how to create harmony between his writing and the painted images. As you will see later on, Kōetsu was much more conscious of the pictures in this scroll than in other scrolls. For

example, in this passage in the MOA Museum's piece, he wrote the poem at the side of one doe, reading:

Unable to shine between the branches
Of the trees in the broad, sparse forest,
On an autumn night the moon
Raises false hopes.

The last words in the poem, "*aki no yo no tsuki*" (autumn night's moon), written with five Chinese characters in bold letters, stand upright and seem to separate two does. One stands erect and seems to declare her victory, while the other one retreats defeated.

The kinetic energy of the writing in this scroll partly stems from sharp contrasts of *kanji* against *kana*, large letters against small ones, and bold, thick characters against small, delicate strokes. Kōetsu was especially conscious of letters such as "no" (meaning "of") that occurs countless times in the Japanese language. In this particular poem, for example, the word "no" appears six times out of thirty-one syllables that make up a *waka* poem. Since there is more than one way to write this word in Japanese (usually four or five), different characters enabled him to change the entire passage's appearance.

It is wonderful to be able to follow the movement of Kōetsu's hand-cum-brush.³⁴ After dipping his brush into the ink, Kōetsu flourishes his loaded brush to begin a new line and goes on until the ink runs dry. He kept large *kanji* separate and distinct from each other, especially in the first one-third of the scroll, like here in the first poem.

But, from about Poem no. 369, he began experimenting. For this passage on the right, in Poem no. 362, four letters – "*aki no yūgure*" ("autumn twilight") – are separated.³⁵ For the one on the left, from Poem no. 369, he did not lift the brush and wrote five letters – "*higurashi no naku yu*" ("the cicadas cry in evenings").³⁶ He started with a brush loaded fully with black ink and went on, only once lifting the brush at the third letter "no," and continued to finish the rest.

For Poem no 374, Kōetsu wrote the poet's name, Uemon no kami Michitomo, with six characters in one continuous movement, although he cheated a little for the last letter.³⁷ He seems to have been enjoying this feat and wrote the first seven letters of the poem in one brushstroke, or one breath - "*Fukakusa no sato no tsuki kage*" ("moon's shadow on the village of Fukakusa"), in a Kyoto suburb. This tendency became more pronounced and daring in the Seattle section of the scroll.

The artistic hallmark of Kōetsu's technique is this bravura treatment of six letters in Poem no. 378 which flow boldly, as if all nonessential elements of the characters are blown away by the "*ikanaru kaze*" ("what kind of wind"), leaving only the skeletons of letters.³⁸ It is a real tour de force performance and this was not to be repeated again in other scrolls or poem cards that Kōetsu inscribed.

Together, Kōetsu and Sōtatsu produced many more beautiful handscrolls and *shikishi* (poem cards). In addition, many more similar pieces have been attributed to them. However, the most beautiful and indisputably accepted works of the two geniuses are three more handscrolls and a number of poem cards. Besides the *Deer Scroll* is the *Scroll of Flowers of Four Seasons* in the Hatakeyama Memorial Museum of Fine Art in Tokyo.

We have already looked at the *Cranes Scroll*, and the fourth one called the *Lotus Scroll*, which depicts the life cycle of lotus flowers.

These two sections from the *Lotus Scroll* belong to a private collection in Japan³⁹ and to John and Kimiko Powers of Colorado.⁴⁰ Poem cards, or *shikishi*, produced in pairs, like this set of thirty-six in Berlin's East Asian Art Museum, are among the best ones made in sets of thirty-six.⁴¹ They could be pasted on a pair of six-panel folding screens for easy viewing, with three *shikishi* pasted per panel.

It is truly astonishing when we realize that these magnificent works were produced during a very, very short period of time, starting in the early years of the seventeenth century. They were produced one after another for a period of only about ten years, and the project must have kept them busy until it came to an abrupt close in the autumn of 1615.

For some unexplained reason Tokugawa Ieyasu, the head of the new Tokugawa Shogunate, granted Kōetsu a tract of land called Takagamine in the western suburb of Kyoto. Ieyasu consolidated his power and influence as Shogun in the early seventeenth century and suppressed all that the imperial court symbolized. There was no reason why he should grant Kōetsu a piece of land, since the latter had been a staunchly loyal member of the Kyoto elite who supported the imperial court and what it represented. The place was quite far from the central city. Even today it is a largely neglected and quiet part of Kyoto's suburbs.⁴² It could be that this was a form of exile for Kōetsu, who was fifty-seven years old at the time.

Fortunately for us there exists a simple diagram of the houses owned by those who moved out there with Kōetsu and established a community of like-minded people.⁴³ Today romantic scholars call this new settlement an art colony. But, in reality it seems to have been a religious commune of those who shared a belief in the scripture of the *Lotus Sutra*. This group included some of Kōetsu's close family members and colleagues like Kamishi Sōji, a mounter of scrolls, who often placed his seal on the back of a number of Sōtatsu-designed/ Kōetsu-inscribed handscrolls, such as the *Cranes Scroll*.⁴⁴

His name appears on this map, but interestingly and importantly, Sōtatsu's name is not found here. It is at Takagamine where Kōetsu made many teabowls that we admire today.⁴⁵

Kōetsu also continued to write calligraphy for commission, but these post-1615 works are noticeably different from the earlier ones.

First of all, these were not decorated by Sōtatsu.⁴⁶ The painted decorations are not stylized like in other Sōtatsu works and tend to be much more naturalistic. Secondly, the scrolls are silk, not paper like the ones that we have been looking at. Thirdly, the subject of Kōetsu's writing is not limited to *waka* poems. It includes Chinese-style poems, Buddhist sutras and commentaries. And lastly, most of these works include Kōetsu's signature, seal, his studio name Taikyoan, the place name Takagamine, the date of execution - in this case 1626 - and even his age, sixty-nine. Such a formal signature is in keeping with the new style of calligraphy, which is correct and dispassionate.

Clearly there was a separation of the two geniuses. Sōtatsu stayed on in Kyoto and from this time we find documents that mention his name as a painter. The year 1615 was, so to speak, a coming out time for Sōtatsu as a painter in his own right.

Now, I have to tackle the most difficult job of establishing absolute dates for these four handscrolls, or at least, their chronological sequence. Kōetsu did not inscribe dates on these pre-

1615 works and there are hardly any documentary materials that help us in this respect. A cursory comparison of the four handscrolls reveal that Kōetsu's writing style in the *Cranes Scroll* is considerably different from those in the other three scrolls.

His writings here are quite deliberate. Unlike in the *Deer Scroll*, each letter has a square-shaped profile, is quite open, and each brushstroke is carefully drawn. Letters in the *Deer Scroll* are tightly drawn and have narrow profiles. They are soft, gentle and supple. The *Cranes Scroll* has no trace of that wonderfully sensuous look that makes the *Deer Scroll* so unique. Rumor has it that Kōetsu suffered from a mild case of arthritis around 1612. He complained about the pains in his hand in one of his letters, but he seems to have retained control of his hand, albeit not completely. His writing style may have been affected to a certain degree, and to compensate for it he seems to have tried to run abreast of Sōtatsu in different ways.

With verve and speed he wrote poems all over the *Cranes Scroll* – over the birds and over the waves, as if he was resolutely competing with Sōtatsu's painting. Kōetsu seems to have worked in a kind of dash, and he missed one letter, “*Hito*,” of the poet's name Kakinomoto no Hitomaro. Either Kōetsu or someone else had to supply this character later. He also missed two poems and had to squeeze them in a margin in much smaller scripts. The *Cranes Scroll* may have been the work completed after he had trouble with his hand.

I will also remind you that in the *Deer Scroll* neither Kōetsu nor Sōtatsu were quite sure how the other would proceed with the difficult task of filling in the long horizontal space in a handscroll. Their mutual respect seems to have hampered each other's freedom. Sōtatsu left a long expanse of unfilled space, presumably for Kōetsu to fill in with poems. Kōetsu, for his part, was rather reticent in writing poems where Sōtatsu painted his deer. He wrote poems around the animals, below them, and in between, but seldom invaded into painted areas. On the other hand, the *Cranes Scroll* suggests that the two artists became quite comfortable with each other.

The *Four Seasons Flowers Scroll* somewhat resembles the *Deer Scroll*, in calligraphic style - the round, rather tightly constructed characters are very similar. The *Lotus Scroll* also resembles the *Deer Scroll*. My guess, which you have to take with a grain of salt, is that the *Deer Scroll* was the first in the two artists' collaboration, and the *Cranes*, the last. The two others may be placed in between these two.

For the remaining few minutes I would like to focus briefly on the brilliant career that Sōtatsu established as a painter working for the Imperial court on commission, and at the same time operating a successful painting shop of his own named Tawaraya, not to be confused with the famous inn that is in business in Kyoto today.

The physician named Chikusai, who visited Kyoto in 1621, noted that the best souvenirs from Kyoto were the folding fans sold at Tawaraya, which had scenes of *Genji* painted in bright colors. Although no such fans firmly attributed to Sōtatsu remain, they probably looked very much like these scenes of *Genji* from the Burke collection.⁴⁷

Sōtatsu's name appears several times in court diaries in the 1620's when he brought screens to the palace for Imperial inspection of commissioned works. In 1630, Sōtatsu made copies of the famous Muromachi period handscrolls of the biography of the priest-poet Saigyō.

Although the Muromachi-period original in the Imperial collection was lost, Sōtatsu's copies exist, divided among the Idemitsu Museum of Arts and other collections.⁴⁸ Fortunately this copy includes a colophon at the end stating that it was made in 1630 by Hokkyō Sōtatsu,

indicating that Sōtatsu held the honorary title of *hokkyō* which was conferred by the court to important artists. His name disappears after about 1630, suggesting that he may have passed away in the late 1630s like Kōetsu who died in 1637.

There are many famous masterpieces by Sōtatsu like these so-called *Matsushima Screens* in the Freer Gallery's collection.⁴⁹ I may point out that most of these screens are signed "Hokkyō Sōtatsu," not "Inen," like in the poem scrolls. It seems that as Sōtatsu's career progressed, he changed his name and reserved the Inen seal only for the works that his painting shop produced.

There are also small works that Sōtatsu produced in his post-1615 career, like this *shikishi* depicting scenes from the *Tales of Ise* in the Burke collection in New York.⁵⁰ This is one of thirty-six *shikishi*, each one with poetic inscription with the calligrapher's name written on the back of the painting. Yet, none of these paintings was inscribed by Kōetsu who was still living at the time they were created. There are many other Sōtatsu paintings bearing inscriptions by members of the court or high-ranking Buddhist monks, but none by Kōetsu.

While Sōtatsu seems to have made a clean break from Kōetsu, this divorce may have been limited to paper decoration or painting. A number of handsome pieces of lacquerware are traditionally attributed to Kōetsu, yet it is quite apparent that Kōetsu did not design them himself. No one seems to wonder who supplied designs for these stunningly beautiful works. I am proposing that Sōtatsu maintained his connection with Kōetsu even after 1615, through such lacquer work like this flute case decorated with many deer.

This shelf for books⁵¹ and small decorative objects with scenes from the *Tale of Genji* strongly suggests that Sōtatsu was working with Kōetsu.⁵² Designs on the side of this shelf are reminiscent of some of Sōtatsu's *shikishi* decorations.

Sōtatsu's post-1615 paintings often reveal a great deal of debt to what he learned in his early career as a paper decorator. For example, the technique of *tarashikomi* in his ink monochrome painting similar to these screens of dragons in the Freer Gallery is deeply indebted to the technique of stamping he practiced for the *Sagabon* project.⁵³ The stamping technique that gave Sōtatsu an unexpected opportunity to re-use the same stamps in different combinations inspired him to employ a surprising and novel painting method.

The post-1615 Sōtatsu paintings are predominantly figure paintings, except a few like the *Matsushima* and dragons screens. This is a totally new element in Sōtatsu's work, denoting a clear break from his pre-1615 paper decoration. He seems to have learned the art of figure painting from copying old *emaki*, or handscrolls illustrating secular and sacred stories. Sōtatsu had many chances to copy a number of medieval *emaki*, like the *Tenjin engi* and *Saigyō* scrolls. He would re-use small passages or groups of figures that he copied from *emaki*, or combine them in different compositions as you see in this famous set of screens depicting the *Tale of Genji* in the Seikadō collection in Tokyo,⁵⁴ and another *Genji* screen from Tokyo National Museum.⁵⁵ These share the same small group of figures that he had copied from a *Tenjin engi emaki*. The *Tenjin engi emaki* supplied countless themes for his paintings, not only for small subsidiary figures, but also for main subjects of large screens.⁵⁶

Taken out of context, and boldly transformed, the fierce and avenging Thunder and Wind gods fill the golden sky in the pair of magnificent screens in the collection of Kennin-ji in Kyoto.⁵⁷

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the brilliant career of Sōtatsu, one of the greatest geniuses of Japanese painting, had a modest-sounding start as a paper decorator. Working with Kōetsu, the youthful Sōtatsu revolutionized the art of paper decoration, which in turn gave him rich experiences to launch a career as a full-fledged painter.

The two artists found a perfect comradeship in their youth and created some of the most stunningly beautiful ensembles of painting and calligraphy. The *Deer Scroll* is the hallmark of their fabulous collaboration, and again I want to congratulate its latest restoration.

With this basic overview of Sōtatsu's life, I would like to go back to the focus of my talk today. The *Deer Scroll* represents a departure from the two paintings, which are firmly associated with Sōtatsu's name. While the *Genji* fans and *Saigyō* scrolls depict narratives in bright colors, the *Deer Scroll* only depicts animals in gold and silver ink. What's more, the pictures here were made to create an ensemble of three art forms: painting, calligraphy, and poetry.

It seems that Sōtatsu started his career as a designer of writing paper, and there are a large number of such writing papers that bear unmistakable signs of Sōtatsu designs. I can show you only the ones with designs of deer to make the matter clear. Unlike the later *ukiyo-e* prints made with blocks of wood, these are printed works, which were arranged with stamps, just like a printing press with movable type, which had just been introduced from Korea. Some emperors in Kyoto were involved with printing various texts – of classics, religious texts and others. Sōtatsu seems to have been involved with this printing project, known as the Saga Book Project, and he may have adopted the technique of printing images, since the technique facilitated the making of designs using stamps or combinations of various stamps. This stamping technique gave Sōtatsu an ability, which enabled him the repeated use of stamps in endless combinations, as long as he permitted himself the partial use of stamps.

Sōtatsu's use of stamps, especially using gold and silver pigments, inspired another technique, which made him famous. That was to recreate, deliberately with the use of brush, smudged effects, which naturally occurred when using hard-to-be-absorbed gold or silver pigments on wood stamps. Known today as *tarashikomi* – which is reminiscent of the age-old technique of ink painting originating in China and called “splash-ink” in English, Sōtatsu's *tarashikomi* was unique and different from “splash-ink.”

I want to re-emphasize that Sōtatsu was working with the most restricted media, in the colors of silver and gold, and its subject – deer. It may have been a suggestion by Kōetsu. We have no idea why and how he came to these restrictions, which gave Sōtatsu real challenges. Whatever the reasons, Sōtatsu produced two more handscrolls that presented similar challenges – another severed scroll of *Lotus*, which was partially damaged in the earthquake of 1923, and the other, a complete scroll which was rediscovered in the 1950s in perfect condition, the *Cranes Scroll*. As you note right away, the *Lotus Scroll* depicts nothing but Lotus flowers, in their early life, mid-life, and in their decline. In other words, the life of the lotus. For this scroll, Kōetsu wrote poems copied from the anthology called *Hyakunin isshu* (One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets), also selecting autumn poems. The *Cranes Scroll*, the most spectacular in its best condition shortly after its rediscovery, is truly spectacular as the silver still brilliantly shines as if it were painted yesterday. Here, cranes are portrayed in various stages – standing still, flying in herds over the waves, etc. Here too, there is no connection between the cranes and the poems.

There is no documentary evidence to date this scroll. The most recent repair of the scroll revealed that its wooden end roller, which is usually split into two pieces to allow for climate change and its resulting effects on the wood, was most likely inscribed by the artist who mounted the scroll, stating that the calligraphy was done by Kōetsu, omitting the important date of execution. We have to date it purely on the basis of stylistic analysis. Fortunately, his calligraphy in this scroll is very distinct and a comparison with other specimens of Kōetsu calligraphy will give us a clear mandate to date it to an early stage of his career – perhaps at the beginning of his collaboration with Sōtatsu, namely in the very early years of the 17th century. Today, I have demonstrated the reasons for this dating which will at the same time explain the very distinct idiosyncrasy of this calligraphy.

This publication was made possible by a grant from The Foundation of Cultural Heritage and Art Research.

-
- * Poem 362-289 correspond to poems no. 1-28 visible on the Seattle Art Museum's website, <http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/exhibit/interactives/deerscroll/enter.asp>
- ** I am grateful to Professor Paul S. Atkins of the University of Washington for his permission to use his translation of these poems.

- 1 *Deer Scroll*, Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Seattle Art Museum (SAM).
- 2 Signature "Tokuyūsai Kōetsu," *Deer Scroll*, SAM.
- 3 Seal "Inen," *Deer Scroll*, SAM.
- 4 Letter from Hon'ami Kōetsu addressed to Katō Akinari, private collection.
- 5 Tea Bowl called "Fuji-san," National Treasure, Hon'ami Kōetsu, Sunritsu Hattori Museum, Nagano.
- 6 Writing Box called "Shōfu," Important Cultural Property, Hon'ami Kōetsu studio, Tokyo National Museum.
- 7 Noh Libretti (*Sagabon*), Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, New York Public Library.
- 8 Noh Libretti (*Sagabon*), Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, New York Public Library.
- 9 Segment of handscroll, Poems with Plum Blossoms and Deer Design, Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, private collection.
- 10 Segment of handscroll of *Ryūtatsu-bushi* Ballads, 1605, Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, private collection.
- 11 Photograph of Itsukushima Shrine, Hiroshima.
- 12 Cover of Chapter 7 and Frontispiece of Petition of Taira no Kiyomori from *Heike Sutra* National Treasure, Itsukushima Shrine, Hiroshima.
- 13 Deer at Poem #384, *Deer Scroll*, SAM.

-
- 14 *Poem Scroll of Flowers of Four Seasons*, Important Cultural Property, Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, The Hatakeyama Memorial Museum of Fine Art, Tokyo.
- 15 Section of *Lotus Scroll*, Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, New York.
- 16 *Cranes Scroll*, Important Cultural Property, Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Kyoto National Museum.
- 17 Signature "Tokuyūsai Kōetsu," *Deer Scroll*, SAM
- 18 Kōetsu's "hand-written seal (*kaō*) and Sōtatsu's "Inen" seal, *Deer Scroll*, SAM.
- 19 Kōetsu signature on the end roller, *Deer Scroll*, SAM.
- 20 Poem #362, *Deer Scroll*, Yamatane Museum of Art, Tokyo.
- 21 Poem #365, *Deer Scroll*, The Gotoh Museum, Tokyo.
- 22 Poem #370, *Deer Scroll*, MOA Museum of Art, Atami.
- 23 Deer at poem #378, *Deer Scroll*, SAM.
- 24 Deer at poem #362, *Deer Scroll*, Yamatane Museum of Art, Tokyo.
- 25 Deer between poems #380 and #381, *Deer Scroll*, SAM.
- 26 Buck between poems #381 and #382, *Deer Scroll*, SAM.
- 27 Deer at poems #385 and #386, *Deer Scroll*, SAM.
- 28 Deer at poem #389 and Kōetsu's signature, *Deer Scroll*, SAM.
- 29 *Ishiyama-gire*, Poem of Ko no Tsurayuki, attributed to Fujiwara no Sadanobu, Seattle Art Museum.
- 30 *Heike Sutra* Chapter 16, National Treasure, Itsukushima Shrine, Hiroshima.
- 31 *Shikishi* Card with *Waka* Poem, calligraphy attributed to Knoe Nobutada, private collection.
- 32 *Shikishi* Card with *Waka* Poem, Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Das Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst der Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.
- 33 Poem #375, *Deer Scroll*, MOA Museum of Art, Atami.
- 34 Poem #373, *Deer Scroll*, MOA Museum of Art, Atami.
- 35 Poem #362, *Deer Scroll*, Yamatane Museum of Art, Tokyo.
- 36 Poem #369, *Deer Scroll*, MOA Museum of Art, Atami.
- 37 Poem #374, *Deer Scroll*, owner unknown.
- 38 Poem #378, *Deer Scroll*, SAM.
- 39 Section of the *Lotus Scroll*, private collection.
- 40 Section of the *Lotus Scroll*, The John and Kimiko Powers Collection, Colorado.
- 41 *Shikishi* Card with *Waka* Poem, Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Das Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst der Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.
- 42 Photograph of Takagamine, Kyoto.
- 43 Map of the Properties in the Takagamine Community, Kōetsu-ji, Kyoto.
- 44 Seal of "Kamishi Sōji" on the reverse of *Cranes Scroll*, Kyoto National Museum.
- 45 Tea bowl called "Seppou," Hon'ami Kōetsu, Important Cultural Property, The Hatakeyama Memorial Museum of Fine Art, Tokyo.
- 46 Poem Scroll, calligraphy by Hon'ami Kōetsu, 1626, Asia Society, New York.
- 47 *Genji Screens*, Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Property of Mary Griggs Burke, New York.

-
- ⁴⁸ Painting and colophon, *Illustrated Stories of Saigyō*, Important Cultural Property, Karasumaru Mitsuhiro and Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo.
- ⁴⁹ *Waves at Matsushima*, Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
- ⁵⁰ *Utsu no yama*, Episode from *The Tales of Ise*, Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Property of Mary Griggs Burke, New York.
- ⁵¹ Cabinet-shelf called “Ne-no-hi,” Hon’ami Kōetsu studio, Important Cultural Property, Tokyo National Museum.
- ⁵² Flute case with deer design, Important Cultural Property, Hon’ami Kōetsu studio, The Museum of Yamato Bunkakan, Nara.
- ⁵³ *Dragon Screens*, Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
- ⁵⁴ Detail of figures, Miotsukushi-zu from *Tale of Genji Screens*, National Treasure, Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, Tokyo.
- ⁵⁵ Detail of figures, Sekiya-zu from *Tale of Genji Screens*, Important Cultural Property, Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Tokyo National Museum.
- ⁵⁶ Detail of Thunder God, *Scroll of Matsuzaki-tenjin-engi*, 1311, Important Cultural Property, Hōfu Tenman-gū, Yamaguchi.
- ⁵⁷ Thunder God from *Wind God and Thunder God Screens*, National Treasure, Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Kennin-ji, Kyoto.