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HAMANO, Mayumi. *Hibara Iroha Poetry Screens* by Konoe Nobutada

The *Hibara Iroha Poetry Screens* at Eikando Zenrinji Temple comprise a set of two six-panel screens rendered in *sumi* ink imagery and calligraphy, and titled *Hibara Screen* and *Iroha Poetry Screen*. The calligraphy on the screens is attributed to Konoe Nobutada and is considered important in the history of Japanese calligraphy as the progenitor of *kana* calligraphy in large size.

Despite such recognition, little empirical research about the screens has been offered. In a recent study, the painting of *Hibara Screen* was attributed to Hasegawa Tohaku, but the simple *Iroha Poetry Screen* remains ignored. Most people believe that they were originally made separately and that no connection can be found between them.

The author's research has found a passage in the *Chronological Record of Zenrinji Temple* of about 1623. This says that "The Iroha screens were completed," indicating that the *Iroha Screen* was stored at Zenrinji Temple during the time of the thirty-seventh head priest of Zenrinji Temple, Kaku Shunni, who was a friend of Nobutada.

The *Hibara Screen* and *Iroha Poetry Screen* were catalogued as a set of screens shortly after their production, but there are disparities in how the two were produced. From its mature composition and skilled brush movement, *Hibara Screen* was probably meticulously planned by Konoe Nobutada and Hasegawa Tohaku. In contrast, from the way the *sumi* drips and the light brush movement, *Iroha Poetry Screen* was probably produced extemporaneously. In panels one to three of *Iroha Poetry Screen*, the oddness of the irregular seams of the paper and the brush movement suggest that they may be replicas. Panels four to six are likely to be originals as the brush movement is similar to that of *Hibara Screen*. Hence, it is likely that they are unrelated pieces.

At the same time they resemble each other in unexpected ways, for example, the position of the motifs and their relatively similar shapes and character placing. It is notable that a "vertical repeat mark" is used in the last line of *Iroha Poetry Screen*, in the same manner as that seen in the last line of *Hibara Screen*. This suggests that *Iroha Poetry Screen* was later added to *Hibara Screen* to make them a set.

Since the Miwa region in *Hibara Screen* is closely linked with Kakinomoto no Hitomaro, it is likely that the theme of the painting is impermanence, which Hitomaro expresses in his poems. *Iroha Poetry Screen* is likely to have the same theme. Recent studies on *waka* poetry suggest a trend in linking *waka* from the middle and early modern periods to Buddhism, interpreting Hitomaro's poetry through the impermanence of Iroha poetry.

Knowledge of Chinese/Japanese literature and Buddhism is required to understand such calligraphy and painting. This article raises the possibility that the beneficiaries of the two pieces were intellectuals, i.e., aristocrats and Gozan Zen monks, and that they were participants in the study and creation of Chinese/Japanese verses and linked verses.

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