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SHIOTA, Shiyakuyuu. A Study on Maeda Seison's *Mikoshiburi*: The Modern Renaissance of Handscrolls (Emaki)

Seison Maeda (1885–1977) was a leading figure of the Nihon Bijutsuin and was known primarily for creating handscrolls. His earliest, entitled *Mikoshiburi* (1912), was submitted to the sixth Bunten Exhibition. Seison received tremendous support from both Okakura Tenshin and Hara Sankei while working on this painting. In fact, Seison's work shows heavy influence from medieval picture scrolls such as *Ban Dainagon Emaki* and *Shingisan Engi Emaki*; the painter himself confessed to being greatly impressed by the teaching of Tenshin. However, Sankei's own collection of medieval paintings also provided profound inspiration for the making of *Mikoshiburi*. Seison worked on this painting under the patronage of Sankei, an known collector of medieval art. Seison borrowed many motifs from the seventh scroll of *Ippen Hijiri-e*, which was owned by Sankei at the time. *Mikoshiburi* especially shows many compositional similarities with the second section of the seventh scroll of *Ippen Hijiri-e*. Sanjō Ōhashi, Seison's late Meiji era painting, also shows traces of influence from the seventh scroll of *Ippen Hijiri-e*; it has even been used as proof of Seison's reference to the artwork. While the relationship between Sankei's art collection and actual works by painters under his patronage has already been highlighted by Furuta Ryō in his attempt to demonstrate the influence of *Matsubarano Maki* on Imamura Shikō's *Nekkoku no Maki*, analysis of *Mikoshiburi* gives a fresh perspective in the matter. Moreover, the fact that *Koremori Kōya no Maki*, which Seison painted six years later, also borrows some expressions used in *Ippen Hijiri-e*, further illustrates the extent to which the latter was acknowledged by modern Japanese painters.

Another important characteristic of this work is its disregard for narrative. Seison's disdain for incorporating narrative into artwork has been pointed out by his son-in-law, renowned handscroll scholar Akiyama Terukazu. This lack of narration becomes even more apparent when comparing Seison's *Mikoshiburi* with other works depicting the same story. The study of art history during Seison's time, particularly discussions of handscrolls by Taki Seiichi in *Kokka* magazine, applauded the depiction of human activity as the most valuable aspect of medieval scrolls. It is not hard to imagine that Seison was aware of these pioneering studies, as his fellow pupil Kobayashi Kokei was an avid reader of *Kokka* magazine. Hence, it is fair to say that Seison's emulation of human forms and features from scrolls such as *Ban Dainagon Emaki*, as well as his emphasis on crowd depiction over story-telling in *Mikoshiburi*, closely resonated with the aesthetics of art historical studies of his time.

In the Taisho era, many painters of Nihon Bijutsuin were involved with a phenomenon some might call a "Handscroll Renaissance." Handscrolls reached their height of recognition around this time; medieval scrolls were shown extensively at museums and art exhibitions, replicas of these scrolls were made as a result of the maturing publishing and printing industries, and in-depth studies were conducted on individual artworks. This nostalgia for medieval scrolls was furthered by the use of older scrolls as sources of inspiration by painters like Seison, and the reaffirmation of the value of these scrolls by art historians. Many painters attempted to duplicate images of crowds onto larger surfaces, such as a folding screens, prior to the creation of *Mikoshiburi*; Seison's approach, however, not only resurrected this formative art in its original state - on a scroll - but also made it more suitable for exhibitions.

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