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INOOKA, Moena. Expressional Awareness in the *Hitachi Meishozu Byōbu*

This paper examines the recently discovered *Hitachi meishozu byōbu*, or Hitachi Screen—a pair of six-fold screens depicting famous places in Hitachi province, which is privately owned and in Ōshū City, Iwate Prefecture. In addition to analyzing the composition of the work and the various depicted images, the essay considers its art historical significance within the lineage of early modern folding screens depicting famous places.

The Hitachi Screen is executed in ink and color on silk, and depicts Hitachi Province as well as part of Shimōsa Province as seen from the Pacific coast. The scene depicted corresponds roughly to the end of the seventeenth century. The first section examines the composition of the work, identifying two sections divided by a band of golden clouds that cut diagonally across the frame: an inland region and a contiguously flowing coastal region.

The Hitachi Screen is probably one of the earliest examples of a panoramic depiction of Hitachi Province in the early modern period; furthermore, considering the lack of similar sketches (*funpon*), we may presume that it was created due to individual interest and motivation. The second section elucidates the character of the Hitachi Screen through a concrete examination of the motifs represented in the work. Unlike depictions of views grounded in the literary tradition of *waka* poetry, the choice of subject matter depicted is based on an early modern understanding of the “famous place” (*meisho*). Importantly, images relating to the authority of the *daimyō* are absent or diluted. While the scenery shown on the Hitachi Screen was present during the lifetime of Tokugawa Mitsukuni (1628–1701), the second *daimyō* of the Mito domain, the features of the Hitachi Screen bear scant resemblance to Mitsukuni’s geographical awareness, when compared to the topographical records compiled during his tenure. Unlike other contemporary folding screens, such as the *View of Edo* (*Edo-zu byōbu*, 17th century, National Museum of Japanese History), the Hitachi Screen focuses elsewhere than the seat of power: this is a work that has been composed with little or no awareness of the imperatives of authoritarian, feudal power. For this reason it is unlikely that the Hitachi Screen was produced within official circles.

The third section focuses on the depiction of coastal scenery, which has been presented as a contiguous, flowing unit. While there is no evidence of a desire to visualize governmental power in an authoritarian manner, the Hitachi Screen appears to pay close attention to the distribution of goods on sea and river lanes, tracing maritime traffic from northern Japan as it wends its way inland on riverine trade routes. In particular, the major ports of Nakaminato, Ebisawa, and Itako are depicted with a high degree of accuracy. Moreover, landmarks and difficult stretches along the sea routes are depicted in a recognizable way, with all the cargo vessels appearing to head for Edo. Maritime transportation, then, is the main theme of the Hitachi Screen, and the creation of a folding screen centered on such interests in itself suggests the possibility that it was in fact commissioned by an affluent merchant house within Hitachi Province that was making use of the sea routes as cargo wholesalers.

Widespread trade routes linked land and sea in the late seventeenth century. The Hitachi Screen was created in a period that witnessed an explosive increase in traffic of both people and goods. Numerous folding screens were created at the time, depicting land and sea routes, such as the Tōkaidō and various sea routes, demonstrating a heightened awareness of trade networks, which was prevalent throughout the course of the seventeenth century. The mode of depiction present in the Hitachi Screens appears to have been developed in the context of such interest; thus it is possible to estimate that it was produced at the end of the seventeenth century, when inland riverine routes were still in wide use. The Hitachi Screen should be reconsidered within the broader lineage of early modern depictions of famous places, as it illuminates an alternative context for the reception of early modern *meisho-zu* screens, distinct from those official circles that traditionally have been the focus of scholarship.

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