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HARUKI, Shoko. The Intention behind Soga Shōhaku's *Immortals*: The Jōshi and Tanabata Seasonal Festivals

The folding-screen painting entitled *Immortals* (dated 1764) is the most well-known and remarkable work among the paintings made by Soga Shōhaku (1730–1781). Previous studies of this work have attempted to determine the identities of the eight immortals that are depicted in the painting. Although progress has been made, there is no scholarly consensus and questions about its iconography remain unanswered. The purpose of this paper is to reveal the intention behind *Immortals* by examining discrepancies between common depictions of each immortal and the immortals depicted in this particular work. First, I investigate the possible identities of each figure in the screens while drawing on the findings of and evaluating past critical studies. I revisit the theory that some figures in *Immortals* actually depict more than one immortal. Then I propose that such inclusion or fusion is a primary factor of that particular immortal's unusual depiction.

Next, I demonstrate that figures in the screens have metaphorical connections to characters and scenes in Japanese and Chinese literary works such as *Tale of Genji*, *Tale of the Heike*, *Taiheiki* (Record of the Great Peace), and *Sai-yuki* (Journey to the West). I argue that there is a pattern that connects four-figure groupings to immortals, characters and scenes of literary works that refer to folk tales and events of two seasonal festivals: four figures seen in the right panel of the screen reference the Jōshi festival held on March 3rd, and another four figures on the left panel link with Tanabata, held on July 7, in the same manner.

I conclude that because the figure of Xi Wangmu portrayed in the left side of the screens has a close relationship to both Jōshi and Tanabata, this painting was most likely based on a painting depicting the immortals that gathered for Xi Wangmu's birthday. Because Jōshi and Tanabata are seasonal festivals to pray for the healthy growth of girls and women, I believe that *Immortals* was made for women of samurai society. I suggest that two Daimyo families, the Kyogoku family of Marugame domain and the Tōdō of Tsu domain, were related to the production of this painting. In addition, I point out that *Immortals* evokes the Ise and Harima regions, which were particularly important work places for Shōhaku.

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