



No.6 Kijimun' s Monologue, September 2017

Keywords: *Hengaku, Shofuku, Ren*

Hi, everyone! In this month, I'm going to introduce *Hengaku, Shofuku* and *Ren* with which decorate *Tokonoma* (an elevated alcove in a traditional Japanese room) or *Butsudan* (a Buddhist altar.) Don't miss it!

What is *Hengaku, Shofuku* and *Ren*?

●*Hengaku*

Hengaku is a tablet on which letters are, in general, horizontally written, and it is set up on a *Torii* (a gateway of a *Shintō* shrine), on a gate or in a room of a building. It shows a name of the building, a memorial word, a religious message or an idiomatic word derived from Chinese literature or historical events. (Image 1)

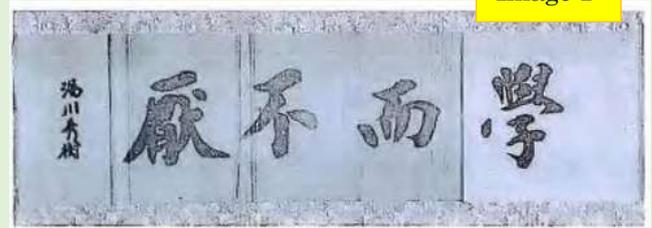


Image 1

●*Shofuku*

Shofuku is a handscroll or a plaque which were reinforced by backing with paper or with cloth to make them decorative (This technique is called "*Hyōsō*"). *Shofuku* is also known as *Kakemono, Kakejiku, Kakefuku* or *Kakeji*. In the era of Ryukyu Kingdom, *Shofuku* given by King as a reward, on which King wrote a memorial word or which was brought by Chinese envoys were especially called as "*Okakedoko*". (Image 2) The word or the sentence written on *Shofuku* are Chinese classical poetry, Japanese *tanka* poetry, Ryukyuan verses, textual matters in Japanese or aphorisms and citations from Confucianism or from the Buddhist Scripture. (Image 3)



Image 2

●*Ren*

Ren is a long and narrow slip made by wood or by paper (or by bamboo), which are generally hung on both right and left side of a wall or of a pillar, and on which a couplet of Chinese classical poetry is written. The Chinese classical poetry was chosen from an anthology like

"*Renkushū*" according to where the *Ren* would be set up.

The history of *Hengaku, Shofuku* and *Ren*

The history of *Hengaku, Shofuku* and *Ren* has a close relation to the history of Chinese character which was completed in China more than 3,000 years ago. Ancient calligraphers invented various styles based on characters developed from Oracle bone script (a kind of hieroglyph.) It had an impact for the establishment of an artistic field of Calligraphy, and it became a driving force to transfer the Chinese culture and civilization to foreign countries. Famous literatis or intellectuals wrote on *Hengaku, Shofuku* and *Ren*, there are some *Hengaku* or *Ren* which were sculptured based on writings in *Sumi* (India ink) particularly. These *Hengaku, Shofuku* and *Ren* were used as a diplomatic tool in Ryukyu towards China and Satsuma, or as valuables which were granted from King to vassals.



Image 3