

Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Shimputai

Work and commentary :
Professor

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[Lesson 50]

Rikka Shimputai: Seichusen and Shoshin

Rikka has an invisible centerline called “*seichusen*.” In *nokishin rikka*, the *shin* branch curves outward and then curves inward again so its tip returns to the *seichusen*. The *shin* branch is referred to in one of the following ways, depending on the positional relation to the *seichusen*. In *hira-no-shin*, the tip of the *shin* reaches precisely to the *seichusen*. In *ka-no-shin*, the tip of the *shin* extends beyond the *seichusen*. In *fukyu-no-shin*, the tip of the *shin* falls short of the *seichusen*. With the *seichusen* at center, various techniques such as *ucho-satan* (long on the right, short on the left) and *kokon enkin* (*kusamono* low in front and *kimono* high behind them) are employed, enabling the work to maintain a proper balance longitudinally, vertically and horizontally.

The *shoshin* branch is positioned so that it stands upright on the *seichusen*. An intrinsically straight plant should be used as *shoshin*, because it functions as a point of reference for the positioning of other *yakueda* branches. The height of the *shoshin* branch is about half the height of the *shin* branch, though it may vary depending on the shapes, textures, colors and other conditions of the floral materials and of the vase to be used for the work.

The *densho* “*Rikka Shoden* (Elementary)” advises that some conventional rules may be set aside to arrange *rikka shofutai* in the contemporary style. These rules include the positioning of *kimono* behind the *shin* branch and *kusamono* in front of the *shin* branch, as well as the height (upper, middle, or lower section) at which certain plants are positioned. However, when using *kusamono* as *shoshin*, the *kusamono* must be positioned

in front of the *shin* branch, and when *kimono* is used as *shoshin*, the *kimono* must be positioned behind the *shin* branch.

In *rikka shimputai*, on the other hand, floral materials are not positioned according to the prescribed styles; rather, the creator’s genuine impression of the natural beauty of the plants is expressed freely in all aspects of the work. A work is structured while focusing on the appearance or impression of the main floral material to be highlighted in the work, allowing opportunities for employing all kinds of unconventional styles. Before practicing *rikka shimputai*, which has no prescribed style, creators must study *rikka shofutai* to fully recognize its stylistic rules. Regardless of the presence or absence of a prescribed style, however, the *seichusen* has an essential role to play in the appearance of the entire work.

“*Rikka Chuden* (Intermediate)” states:

The fundamental style of *rikka shimputai* is the “standing style.”

—The function of the *shoshin* as the *seichusen* is significant in *shimputai*, as the *shin* can be arranged in various ways.

The “General Theory of *Shimputai*” also states:

Rikka shimputai involves standing forms. To ensure the standing posture, creators must pay heed to the *shoshin* so the observers can feel the presence of the *seichusen*. Moreover, the *mizugiwa* should be arranged so as to allow observers to sense both the concentration and emanation of life.

As stated in the works cited above, *rikka shimputai* must have *shoshin*, or a branch functioning as *shoshin*, to indicate the *seichusen*. Unlike *rikka shofutai*, however, the positioning, height and other rules for the use of the branch are not specified. Elegance and dignity as *rikka* is what is considered most important.

In this work, the *seichusen* is clearly indicated by *Heliconia*.