Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Rikka

Work and commentary / Professor
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【Lesson 21】
Using *Shareboku* and *Kokeboku* Effectively

Shareboku (weather-beaten wood) and *kokeboku* (moss-grown wood) have been frequently used in works since the early Edo era. They are used in order to best take advantage of deep green floral materials. Having no feeling of vitality themselves, they provide some variation to the work as well as create a natural and gently aged atmosphere.

You cannot simply use *shareboku* or *kokeboku* however you like in your work, indeed there is a fundamental rule that *kokeboku* should be used in spring and *shareboku* in autumn. Moss, which presents fresh green when it is wet, maximizes Japanese plum or Prunus which are suitable for spring works. *Shareboku*, on the other hand, can express the harshness of autumn and winter with the appearance of having been exposed to the elements. It adds zest to a work when used with plants like maple, Ilex serrata, and willow.

Whether using *shareboku* or *kokeboku*, it is a rule that you have to show enough of the wood itself for the viewer to see what kind of tree it originally was.

Also, it is not traditional to use *shareboku* or *kokeboku* on their own, unaccompanied. This is something you have to be very aware of it when using them.

According to an old *densho* (book of flowery tradition), "*ichiboku nisho*" and "*issho niboku*" are not allowed. "*Ichiboku nisho*" means to display two kinds of floral materials against one kind of *shareboku*, while "*issho niboku*" means to use both *shareboku* and *kokeboku* up against a single kind of floral material. The *densho* warns against both these kinds of unnatural methods.

Which floral materials are to be used as *shareboku* and which are to be used as *kokeboku* is also listed in *densho*. Examples of floral materials used as *shareboku* are pine, Chamaecyparis obtusa, Southern Japanese hemlock, oak, giant dogwood, Ilex serrata, willow, and Chinese juniper, while those used as *kokeboku* include pine, Chamaecyparis obtusa, Southern Japanese hemlock, Japanese plum, Prunus, Chinese juniper, and Japanese azalea.

Shareboku and *kokeboku* add excellent flavor to the work, so you may come to want to use them nonchalantly. However, you sometimes find such works as an arrangement where Japanese azalea *kokeboku* is combined with Japanese plum. We have to pay closer attention when using them.

＊Japanese text and pictures: p.26-27