Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

# *Rikka*

Work and commentary / Professor
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## 【Lesson 26】
## Classic *Rikka*

It is worthwhile to trace the steps of our old masters, who lived their lives with enthusiasm and devoted themselves to their ikebana studies throughout history, and to recognize their passion toward ikebana from its birth up to the present. Learning from the past to identify enduring aesthetics even amid the ebb and flow of trends and fashions will surely help further development of ikebana.

When the Headmaster Sen'ei introduced *shoka shimputai*, he stated in its textbook as follows:

"I do not mean to compare new and old styles of ikebana and say that new styles are better than old ones. However, I do believe that the reason why ikebana, which is ephemeral by nature, has been able to have a history as long as five hundred years is because it has always had styles that touch the hearts of the people of the time. For ikebana, which cannot be kept indefinitely as a physical object, imitating classic works and re-creating them based on old illustrations is the hallowed method by which we understand the classics and learn the traditions. It is also through imitating and re-creating classic works that we are able to recognize that ikebana has not merely passed down one particular style time and time again, but that it has in fact undergone many changes.

(…)

Although it is of course paramount that we learn the traditions of ikebana, should we become too fixated with the past to look also to the future, the potential of ikebana will be limited. I dare to introduce *shimputai* because I hope that these five hundred years of ikebana will continue on, and that ikebana will remain both contemporary and something of true value to the world."

*Rikka* has the longest history among the different styles of Ikenobo ikebana. The style of *rikka* developed and perfected in the Edo Era used to be called "classic *rikka,*" and the style in the Meiji Era "Meiji *rikka,*" but they are now both considered "classic *rikka.*" Learning these styles is not only useful for studying *rikka*. How floral materials have been used and combined in the history of the style of *rikka* can be applicable to those of *shoka*, *shimputai*, and free style. Applying these *rikka* methods to other styles might require advanced techniques, but it is an important process in understanding the immutable elements of Ikenobo (naturalness, plainness, and gentleness), and you must do so in a way that gets through to contemporary people. Moreover, although it is "classic," the style of *rikka* has certain aspects that deeply resonate with its viewers beyond time. It embodies a kind of expressiveness that gives us the desire to try creating a work in the style ourselves if given the chance.

In this work, contemporary floral materials are positioned based on classic *rikka* works.

* Japanese text and picture: p.30-31