

# Rikka

Work and commentary :  
Associate Professor

Hirotaka Furukawa

## 【Lesson 85】

### Rikka Shofutai Expressions

Upon the introduction of *rikka shimputai* in 1999, the fundamentals of *rikka shofutai* were redefined in the *densho* (book of flower traditions) “*Rikka Shoden* (Elementary).” In the section “*Rikka Shofutai*,” the *densho* states, “The fundamental style of *rikka* is the standing style.” Elsewhere it states, “While continuing the tradition of *rikka*, *rikka shofutai* acts as a foundation for *shimputai* as well as serving as a fundamental style for *rikka* practice.”

When practicing *rikka shofutai*, beginners usually practice arrangements composed solely of *kusamono*. However, *rikka shofutai* arrangements are generally composed using both *kimono* and *kusamono*, which enables arrangements to portray beautiful landscapes with fields, mountains and waterside scenes. In an arrangement, floral materials are positioned based on the rule of “*kokon enkin*.” Moreover, a *kusamono* material should not be positioned between *kimono* materials, while a *kimono* material should not be surrounded by *kusamono* materials. To compose *rikka shofutai* arrangements, we need to understand these traditional rules.

“*Kokon enkin*” (“old and new, far and near”) indicates a structure depicting the passage of time and suggesting spatial extent. *Kimono* materials positioned in the upper section as *shin* and *mikoshi* symbolize towering mountains rising in the distance. The middle and lower sections combine *kimono* and *kusamono*, jointly presenting the proximate view in detail. *Kusamono* function to indicate a beautiful mountain lake or stream flowing into and out of sight. *Rikka* arrangements easily evoke vivid images of beautiful landscapes, with plant-dotted mountains in the center and additional scenery suggesting the passing of seasons.

In the *densho* “*Ikenobo Sen’no Kuden*,” Headmaster Sen’no notes that *rikka* represents majestic landscapes by using a minimal amount of water and plants. Here, the horizontal surface with little water suggests unchanging elements, and against the horizontal water surface plants are positioned to stand vertically. Water is, as in the *densho*, essential for all living creatures, including plants. Such basic rule of nature can be emphasized by the horizontal and vertical positioning described above, which is fundamental for *rikka shofutai* arrangements.

The *densho* also prescribes that the *mizugiwa* should have a slender and vigorous appearance. The *mizugiwa* serves as a point of contact between water and plants, and stands upright to suggest the *seichusen* (an invisible centerline). In addition, a *rikka shofutai* arrangement is composed with *yakueda* branches, which have various positioning constraints passed down for generations. Among these constraints are ones concerning the *de* (height at which each *yakueda* begins curving away from the center) and the direction in which each *yakueda* extends. *Rikka* is continually adapting itself to the trends of the times. We must follow fundamental constraints while also pursuing contemporary forms of expression.

*Rikka shofutai* arrangements are structured asymmetrically in a form known as *ucho-satan* (long on the right, short on the left). *Yakueda* branches begin curving away from the *seichusen* at different points, their shapes beautifully complementing each other. This structure suggests beautiful nature, with plants living in complementary harmony amid the transience. We must consider what Headmaster Sen’no meant when using the term “*yoroshiki omokage*” (the beauty arising from the initial impression of plants) in the *densho*, and carefully consider what constitutes human ideals. Observers are also required to think deeply about the intended expression of the *rikka* arrangement. ■