

Shimputai

Work and commentary :
Professor Extraordinary

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【Lesson 85】

Shoka Shimputai: Correlation between Shu and Yo

Shoka shimputai was established in 1977. This was a time when ikebana was becoming popular and, consequently, Ikenobo practitioners started expanding their activities. Around the same time, florists began stocking many new types of floral materials, imported from overseas or cultivated in greenhouses. In addition, young people with non-conventional ideas helped bring about a shift in trends.

Ikenobo also invented a new style of *shoka*—*shoka shimputai*, which enabled expressions unachievable in traditional *shoka shofutai*. *Shoka shimputai* found favor among Ikenobo practitioners, who composed arrangement of this novel style for display at home or at exhibitions. The style was one long-awaited by Ikenobo practitioners.

A *shimputai* arrangement is composed of two branches, each representing *in* (yin) and *yo* (yang). This is the original form of *shoka*. Correlations between the two different floral materials are of many kinds. The two materials may differ in growth speed, strength, or the directions in which their branches extend. Another difference in the *in-yo* (yin-yang) principle is found in varied appearances of the branches or leaves, such as whether they are straight or curved. The two branches are regarded as *in* (yin) or *yo* (yang) according to their specific properties and combined in an arrangement as *shu* and *yo* branches.

The correlation of the *shu* and *yo* branches is the starting point of the creation process of a *shimputai* arrangement. If the relationship between the two branches is unclear, the expressive intention of the

creator becomes ambiguous, causing the arrangement to lack sharpness or definition.

Therefore, when selecting a floral material for use as the *shu* branch, creators should select one that makes a strong impression. The floral material need not be long, vivid, huge or particularly well-shaped. It can be small or fragile; what is important is that it be a source of inspiration to the creator. Another floral material used as the *yo* branch should support the *shu* branch in a subtle manner, maximizing its appeal.

Now, take a close look at the sample work, which employs white *Phalaenopsis aphrodite* (orchid) as the *shu* branch. The branch is positioned so that the flower on the top faces slightly forward, in line with the plant's natural appearance. Used as the *shu* branch, the ineffable sensibilities of the orchid tug on observers' heartstrings. Combined with it as the *yo* branch is *Sarcandra glabra*, considered an auspicious plant because its Japanese name is a homonym for a term meaning "large amount of money."

Combining *Phalaenopsis Aphrodite* with the green leaves and red berries of *Sarcandra glabra* produces an ideal correlation between the *shu* and *yo* branches, enriching that expression of the arrangement. ■

