

Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Shimputai

Work and commentary :
Professor Extraordinary

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[Lesson 86]

Shoka Shimputai: Functions of Ashirai Branches

“An *ashirai* branch should possess characteristics contrasting with the *yakueda* branch with which it is combined. For example, a leafed *ashirai* should be added to a leafless *yakueda*. Likewise, combine a heavy branch with a light one, a soft branch with a hard one, a swaying branch with an immobile one, and a curved branch with a straight one.”

“*Ashirai* branches soften the impression made by hard branches and strengthen the impression made by delicate branches.”

These are descriptions regarding *ashirai* branches found in old books.

We must be aware that the functions of *ashirai* branches in *shoka shimputai* are fundamentally different from their functions in *shoka shofutai*. In *shofutai*, *ashirai* branches are added to complement the functions of each of the three *yakueda* branches. In contrast, *ashirai* branches in *shimputai* perform various functions in addition to complementing the structure while affecting the entire arrangement.

Functions of *ashirai* branches

- **Supporting the forms of main branches**

When the *shu* and *yo* branches are positioned in the upper section of an arrangement, *ashirai* branches are added in the lower section to complement the effects created by the shapes and colors of the main branches. It is also possible to add *ashirai* branches in the upper and middle sections to support the forms the main branches.

- **Complementing a sense of rhythm in *shu* and *yo* branches**

When the impact of the image created by the *shu* and *yo* branches is weak, *ashirai* branches are added to create a sense of rhythm via their colors or the positioning of their shapes.

- **Providing a proper *in-yo* (yin-yang) balance**

When the *shu* and *yo* branches lean to one side, *ashirai* branches are added to provide proper balance. Also, when it is difficult to differentiate the *in-yo* (yin-yang) and *hyo-ri* (inside-outside) of the *shu* and *yo* branches, *ashirai* branches are added to clarify these elements.

- **Enhancing a contrast effect**

When the color contrast between the *shu* and *yo* branches is inadequate, *ashirai* branches are added to enhance the contrast.

- **Indicating a background**

When the *shu* and *yo* branches insufficiently evoke an image of a certain season or scenery, *ashirai* branches are added to evoke such images.

Now, take a close look at the sample work.

Employed as the *shu* branch is tulip, a flower that, like cherry blossoms, represents spring. Two flowers are positioned with due consideration for the impression each makes. The tulip leaves are also positioned with care so that all appear attractive. Used as the *yo* branch is *Gypsophila*. Its flowers, which dot the open space with varying degrees of density, convey an image of snow beginning to melt with the arrival of spring. Iris ochroleuca leaves are added as *ashirai* to suggest the background, in which the leaves are rustled by a gentle spring breeze. 華

