

Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Shoka

Work and commentary :
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[Lesson 86]

Shoka, a Simplification of Rikka

“The fundamentals of *nageirebana*, the predecessor of *shoka*, were derived from *rikka*.” This statement is found in “Transition of *Shoka*,” the opening chapter of the *densho* (book of flower traditions) “*Shokamaki*.” In this issue, we discuss the relation between *rikka* and *nageirebana*, from which *shoka* derives, as well as traces of *rikka* found in *shoka shofutai* arrangements.

The *densho* also contains a description in the same chapter concerning decoration of the *tokonoma* (alcove in a traditional Japanese room) in accordance with the number of *kakejiku* (hanging scrolls) displayed there. Here, the *densho* prescribes:

“When displaying a set of four *kakejiku* scrolls, a *shoku* table (offering table) is placed in the center of the four *kakejiku*, and a pair of *rikka* compositions are placed on both sides of the *shoku* table, just as the aforementioned *zashikikazari* (guest room decorations) for a set of three *kakejiku*. An incense burner is placed atop the upper surface of the *shoku*, and a *nageirebana* composition is displayed on the lower surface of the *shoku*. This style is the simplification of the decorations on the *shoku* table placed in the center of the *zashikikazari* for a set of three *kakejiku*. Accordingly, the *nageirebana* composition on the lower surface of the *shoku* is considered a simplification of the *rikka* composition that would be arranged in the *mitsugusoku* vase (three implements for worship: vase, incense burner, and candle stand). *Nageirebana* is said to be derived from this simplified form of *rikka*.”

When a set of four (or two) *kakejiku* scrolls is displayed, other *zashikikazari* decorations in the *tokonoma* are simplified when compared to the display of a set of three scrolls. Accordingly, *rikka* arranged in a *mitsugusoku* vase is also simplified and displayed on the lower portion of the *shoku* table. This simplified *rikka* arrangement is believed to be the starting point of *nageirebana*. Its basic form follows that of *rikka*, composed solely of the *shin* branch with *mizugiwa* (the part of the roots of the floral materials just above the water surface) standing upright. This original form of *nageirebana*, a simplified form of *rikka*, is still found in *tsubaki ichirinike* (single flower arrangement), an

arrangement included in the *densho* “*Shichishuden* (Seven Special Teachings).”

Iwata Ritsuzan, who served as a Headmaster’s representative, illustrated the shapes and functions of the *yakueda* branches of *rikka* found in *shoka shofutai* in diagrams contained in his book “*Kado Iemoto: Rikka Bunkaitosho*” (see page 36). Iwata Ritsuzan was a disciple of Muto Shoan, who in turn was a leading disciple of the Headmaster Ikenobo Sensho, and served as his first representative. The Headmaster Ikenobo Sensho is known for having perfected *shoka shofutai*. “*Kado Iemoto: Rikka Bunkaitosho*” presents what Iwata Ritsuzan learned orally from Muto Shoan. Here is a summary of some of the teachings:

- Each *yakueda* branch in *rikka* has aspects of *in* (陰; yin), *yo* (陽; yang), *shin* (真), *soe* (副) and *tai* (体). Likewise, *shoka shofutai* has aspects of *in* (陰; yin), *yo* (陽; yang), *rei* (嶺), *gaku* (岳), *shi* (市), *bi* (尾) and *ro* (瀧).
- *Shin* of the *shoka* in *okiike* (standalone style) corresponds to the *hira-no-shin* of *nokishin rikka* (*rikka* using a curved branch as *shin*), which curves outward from the centerline and then inward so its tip returns to the center. *Shoshin* is associated with *shoka* arrangements in the *shin* classification. *Rikka* in the *hongatte* floral pattern is akin to *shoka* in the *hongatte* pattern.
- The *soe* branch in some *rikka* floral patterns is reflected in *shoka* of *yokogake* (*shoka* hung on the main pillar of a *tokonoma*). Traces of the *uke* branch are found in *shoka* using an *ichijugiri* vase (bamboo vase with one mouth), and there are hints of *nagashi* in *mukogake* (*shoka* hung on the rear wall of a *tokonoma*) and in *tsuriike* (*shoka* suspended from a *tokonoma* ceiling), the exception being those using a boat-shaped vase. Note that *tsurumono* (trailing materials) and *taremono* (drooping materials) should be arranged in the upper vase of a *nijugiri* vase (bamboo vase with two mouths one above the other).
- *Tanikoshi-shin*, *taniwatari-shin* and *chudan nagashi* (included in “*Rikka Jukyukajo*”) are simplified to develop as *tsurifune* (*shoka* using a boat-shaped vase suspended from a *tokonoma* ceiling; included in “*Shoka Gokajo*”).
- *Uke-agari* is reflected in arrangements using a *nijugiri* vase.

Shoka shofutai was perfected in efforts to reify the theories and beautiful forms of *rikka* and *shoka* that developed beginning with the tenure of the 40th Headmaster Ikenobo Senjo and extending to that of the 42nd Headmaster Ikenobo Sensho. And of course, such theories and forms are built upon the vigor of plants, which we must always bear in mind. 