

## Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

# Shimputai

Work and commentary :  
Professor Extraordinary

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### [Lesson 88]

### *Shimputai: Isshuike and Nishuike*

*Shoka shimputai* was invented following the traditional spirit and aesthetics of Ikenobo, and has continued evolving in modern times as a new style of *shoka*. The roots of *shoka shimputai* are found in the early *shoka* works of the 40th Headmaster, Ikenobo Senjo.

We can see two trends in the works contained in his anthology “*Soka Hyakki*.” The first is a form simplifying *yakueda* of *rikka* into three components: *shin*, *soe* and *tai* branches. The second, derived from *nageirebana*, is composed of two branches representing *in* (yin) and *yo* (yang). The former type is the foundation of *shoka shofutai*, and the latter of *shoka shimputai*.

*Shoka* works in the time of “*Soka Hyakki*” were rarely composed using three kinds of floral materials (*sanshu-ike*). Most works were composed of a single floral material (*isshuike*) or of two kinds of floral materials (*nishuike*) to represent *shin*, *soe*, and *tai*. Or they were composed of two *in-yo* (yin-yang) branches from a single floral material (camellia, Chrysanthemum, Bletilla striata, lily, plumed thistle, Sarcandra glabra, narcissus, Forsythia, etc.). These works lend elegance and a sense of vigor via the innate beauty of plants, which qualities have carried through to today’s *shoka shimputai* works.

Over forty years have passed since the invention of *shoka shimputai*. *Shimputai* works are generally composed of three kinds of floral materials, used as *shu*, *yo*, and *ashirai* branches. However, I believe in the value of *isshuike* and *nishuike* arrangements, which maximize the elegance of plants just as embodied in the works of the Headmaster Senjo. The following is my opinion regarding *isshuike* and *nishuike* in *shoka shimputai*.

To begin, the possible combinations of *shu* and *yo* branches in *isshuike* are:

Flowers and leaves / flowers and branches / flowers and buds / tall and short / thick and thin / large and small / upper and undersides / strong and weak / sparse and dense / expansive and compact / rise and droop

An arrangement can use contrasting parts of the same plant as *shu* and *yo* with another branch of the same plant added as *ashirai*. Adding no *ashirai* branch is also an option.

Next, *nishuike* can be arranged in two ways. In the first of these methods, one kind of plant is used for the *shu* and *yo* branches, and a second kind of plant for *ashirai*. In the second method, different plants are used for the *shu* and *yo* branches, with one of the two plants also used for *ashirai*.

The sample work is *isshuike* using *Spathiphyllum*, a flower and leaves of which are employed for the *shu* and *yo* branches while buds and smaller leaves of the same plant are added as *ashirai*. ■

