

Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Shimputai

Work and commentary :
Professor Extraordinary

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【Lesson 87】

Purposes of *Kabuwake* in *Shoka Shimputai*

Kabuwake is a technique in which floral materials are divided into two groups and positioned separately in a vase. There are two types of *shoka shofutai* arrangements employing the *kabuwake* technique: *suirikuike* and *gyodoike*. Both types represent waterside scenery by positioning a group composed of *mizumono* (water plants) in front. When using three kinds of floral materials (*sanshuike*), a work can be composed solely of *okamono* (land plants) without mixing in *mizumono*. It is also possible to use western species alone or to mix western with Japanese species. These methods expand the range of expression.

In this issue, we discuss the *kabuwake* technique in *shoka shimputai*. First, for what purposes is this technique employed? Creators may employ it to realize their expressive intentions for purposes such as the following.

1. Representing traditional aesthetics conveyed via the *kabuwake* technique—depictions of beautiful landscapes or suggestions of a cool feeling by creating waterside scenery in the foreground.
2. Enhancing spatial beauty by dividing floral materials.
 - (A) Dividing floral materials to the right and left expands the arrangement's horizontal spatial impression.
 - (B) Dividing floral materials to the front and back provides depth to the arrangement and gives it a three-dimensional appearance.
3. Pursuing further possibilities.
 - (A) Variant structures create diverse arrangement possibilities.

- (B) The technique can be employed in aiming for different types of expression.

In *shofutai*, it is a basic principle that one of the two divided groups be composed of *shin* and *soe* (*okabu*; male group) and the other group of *tai* (*mekabu*; female group). On the other hand, in *shimputai*, floral materials can be divided in many ways. That said, there are some typical patterns, such as sorted, mixed and repeated patterns. Here, the sorted pattern comes in two types. In one type, one group is composed of *shu* and *yo* branches and arranged spaciously, while the other group is composed of *ashirai* branches and arranged compactly. In the other type, *shu* and *yo* branches are positioned separately, and *ashirai* branches are added to one or both. In the mixed pattern, each of the two groups is composed of *shu* and *yo* branches, meaning that identical floral materials are used in the two groups (condition referred to as “repeated”).

A typical vase used for *kabuwake* arrangements is a wide-mouthed basin, in which two *kenzan* are placed. In recent years, orthodox vases are also being used, with two groups of floral materials positioned on a single *kenzan*.

The sample work uses Clematis (a flower) as *shu* and *Dracaena* (leaves) as *yo*. *Scirpus tabernaemontani* ‘Zebrinus’ is used as *ashirai* and added to both groups to maintain a proper balance.

