



The Representation of Zen Buddhism in Ikebana Flower Arrangement of Ikenobou School



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Abstract

This study aims to describe the philosophy that emerges from *Ikebana* (the Japanese flower arrangement) of *Ikenobou* school/stream and the representation of beauty concept according to Zen Buddhism in *Ikenobou's ikebana*. The research data was contained of seven (7) characteristics of Zen Buddhism according to Hisamatsu Shin'ichi namely: *fukinsei*, *kanso*, *shizen*, *kokou*, *yuugen*, *datsuzoku*, and *seijaku* within five (5) *Ikebana* flower arrangements from *Ikenobou* school namely: *rikka*, *shoka*, *moribana*, *nageire*, and *jiyuka*. As the result showed: 1) the prominent characteristic was *Seijaku* which found in the four *Ikebana* styles in twenty-one pieces, meanwhile the least characteristics were *Fukinsei* and *Kanso* found in two pieces of flower arrangements whereas the *Kokou* characteristic was absent in all flower arrangements; 2) the representation of beauty philosophy found in the flower arrangement of *Ikenobou* school/stream through its *Ikebana* styles were: (a). The 自由化 (*Jiyuka*) style represented characteristics of: 不均斉 (*fukinsei*) or asymmetrical, 自然 (*shizen*) or naturalness, and 脱俗 (*datsuzoku*) or free from bonds/ties. (b). The 昇華正風一種いけ (*Shoka Shofutai Isshuike*) style represented the characteristics of 簡素 (*kanso*) or simplicity. (c). The 立花 (*rikka*) style represented the characteristic of 幽玄 (*yuugen*) or deep meaning and (d). 昇華新風 (*shoka shinputai*) represented the characteristic of 静寂 (*seijaku*) or stillness/silence.

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1 Introduction

Japan as a very well-known nation has distinguished uniqueness in its culture, it is a country with many diverse cultures where most of them were the result of the assimilation process with other cultural nations which later crystallized and embodied into Japanese culture itself. There are many various cultural types include in arts line (*Ikebana*, *Origami*, *Ukiyo-e*), handicrafts (such as sculpture and pottery crafts), plays or drama performances (*Bunraku* dolls, *Kabuki*, *Noh*, *Rakugo*) and other cultural traditions such as Japanese people's habits (Japanese games, *Onsen*, *Sento*, tea ceremony, Japanese garden) that well preserved and still applicable to Japanese society to this day.

Zen Buddhism has played a great role in the scope of art and beauty in Japan and became a major factor in shaping the distinct Japanese aesthetic. The Japanese utilize Zen culture into their aesthetic and artistic designs where its concept closely related to simplicity in life and also inspired the emergence of other various Japanese cultures as the result of cultural assimilation in the 19th century. From several Japanese proverbs, the influence of Zen teaching is imminent in Japanese life in areas of philosophy, activities, and artifacts. There are many teachings of simplicity in life as the form of philosophy, daily behaviors as the form of activities, and artifacts as the products of artistic culture. The expression of Zen in the life of Japan people are visible in *Ikebana*, tea room architecture, paintings and *Chanoyu*. According to Dharma in Soepardjo & Setiawan (1999), the tea ceremony, the art of flower arrangement (*Ikebana*), the small slice cuttings of seafood showed how meticulous they are in managing their lives. All displayed emptiness, simplicity, harmony, and balance. One type of Japanese arts which becomes a point of interest to the author is the art of flower arrangement or better known as *Ikebana* which has become a Japanese tradition that represented Zen teachings in its art (González-Rossia et al., 2006; Shimada et al., 2013; Suka et al., 2015).

The birth of *Ikebana* laid in the hands of Buddhist priests where *Ikebana* was necessary for performing a series of praying activities that involving flower arrangements as one mandatory material besides incences and candles. To be an *Ikebana* flower arrangement, the work demanded as a result from the crystallization of the spiritual life. However, *Ikebana* has undergone many changes and various improvements before accepted by Japanese society in a whole as a Japanese cultural heritage. The Japanese art of flower arrangement or *Ikebana* also been taught in schools where its implementation seen as a decorative flower arrangement which always present in many occasions, whether in home decoration, community activities, national events or any religious ceremonies. From these descriptions, the author is interested to analyze the art of *Ikebana* related to its oldest school/stream *Ikenobo*, as one branch of art that has become a Japanese tradition influenced by Zen Buddhism teachings whose described many values of Zen teachings in it. Therefore, this research is entitled as "A Representation of Zen Buddhism in *Ikebana* Flower Arrangement from *Ikenobou* School/Stream". Based on the introductory description of this study, the authors postulate following research problems; a) what philosophy emerges from *Ikenobou* stream as a branch of *Ikebana*?, b) how is the representation of beauty philosophy according to Zen Buddhism teaching found in the *Ikenobou* stream as the branch of *Ikebana*?

Literature review

Zen (meditation)

Zen teachings greatly affected Japanese culture. This is in accordance with Shiratori's opinion as well as found in Putri & Handayani (2010), that revealed the following statements:

元々は中国から輸入ではあるが、道元と栄西がそれを日本的な禅宗にし、結局は茶道・華道・能など禅的な文化をつくることになったのである。

Motomoto wa Chūgoku kara yunyūde wa aru ga, Dōgen to Eisai ga sore o Nihon-tekina Zenshū ni shi, kekkyoku wa sadō kadō nō nado Zen-tekina bunka o tsukuru koto ni natta nodearu.

Zen has originally come from China before Dogen and Eisai had transformed the original Zen into Japanese Zen Buddhism which eventually led to the conception of *Chado*, *Kado*, and *Noh* as the manifestation of Zen culture. By time, Zen has influenced every aspect of Japanese life, not only the aspects related to art, social institutions, and government but also aspects related to architecture and landscaping. Classical Zen arts such as painting, calligraphy, tea ceremony, poetry, and Japanese gardens are seen as expressions and ways to illuminate the mind for having no restraints and bonds. Many Zen experts are also famous as notable calligraphers, poets, painters, and musicians (Purser, 2013).

As summary about Zen, it is one of the branch/stream from Mahayana Buddhism whose taught meditation by calming and focusing the mind for reaching higher level of self-understanding. The Zen teaching will not be fully understood by words or language since it must be experienced personally. Zen teaching have developed widely in Japan and influenced the perspectives and life of Japanese society in every aspect, including the culture and arts of Japanese society.

Buddhism

The concept in Buddhism believed everything is created by series of causes and conditions. This is the World's Law where in the end everything will also disappear by the same law. The three mainstay pillars in Buddhism are: the *Buddha* (The Enlightened One; He who has perfectly purified his mind of all taints), *Dhamma* (His teaching to keep disciples or people away from *dukkha*/suffering) and *Sangha* (Assembly of monks or Buddhist disciples who devoted their whole life to practice *Dhamma*) (Ismail, 2022).

There are two main streams/schools of Buddhism which their existences are generally recognized by scholars; *Theravada* (Doctrine of the Elders) and *Mahayana* (Great Vehicle). *Theravada* has widespread adherents (*Theravadins*) in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. *Mahayana* embodied Zen traditions of Pure Land, Zen, *Nichiren*, *Shingon* and *Tiantai* (Tiendai) where it can be found throughout East Asia. Meanwhile, Tibetan Buddhism preserves *Vajrayana* teachings from 8th century India (White, 2000), and is practiced around people in Himalaya, Mongolia and Kalmykia (Powers, 2007), which later spread over China, Taiwan, Bhutan, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and other countries (Chodron, 1999). With the number of Buddhists throughout the world estimated ranging from 488 million to 535 million, it makes Buddhism to be one of the world's major religions (Khairiah, 2018). One primary derivative of *Mahayana* teaching (among others) is *Zen Buddhism* which emerged in China (*C'han*) and rapidly flourished in Japan (McDermott, 2002). The core of Buddhism teachings is about self-control to achieve *Nirvana* through the Eight Paths of Truth. In summary, *Buddhism* religion is a philosophical perspective with a non-theistic understanding based on Siddhartha Gautama teachings. Its way of thinking believes everything created by series of causes and effects which becomes the World Law where everything will also disappear by the same law.

The Beauty of Zen Buddhism from Hisamatsu Shin Ichi Perspective

Hisamatsu Shinichi (1889-1980) was a philosopher, Zen Buddhist and master of Chanoyu. He was a professor at Kyoto University and received an honorary doctorate from Harvard University. The beauty theory which he expressed was deeply rooted in Zen teachings. Zen is an expression of appreciation to Buddhism originated from China which blends with Confucian culture (including Lao-Tsu's thoughts about praising or give high respect to human works). The Zen Buddhism stream prioritizes state of *Satori* (Awakening) which must be achieved through the individual's own efforts. The characteristics of Zen Buddhism as principles of Japanese art explained by 7 (seven) primary characteristics within the Book of Zen.

A summary about Zen Buddhism as one of *Mahayana Buddhism* teachings presented that everything is a creation of mind and to give direct meaning to life without being misled by logical thinking. The characteristics of Zen Buddhism applied for principles in Japanese art are 不均斉 (*fukinsei*) or asymmetrical, 簡素 (*kanso*) or simplicity, 自然 (*shizen*) or natural, 枯高 (*kokou*) or sublime dryness, 幽玄 (*yuugen*) or deep meaning, 脱俗 (*datsuzoku*) or free from any bondage, and 静寂 (*seijaku*) or silence.

Ikebana

Ikebana is a Japanese term consisted of two words *Ike* and *Bana* coined together where *Ike* has a meaning of life and *Bana* has a meaning of flower, thus, *Ikebana* flower arrangement is an arrangement to make the flowers look alive (Aminudin, 1991). *Ikebana* generally translated into 'flower arrangement' and refers to Japanese flower arrangement. In further detail, *Ikebana*(生花) is the art of flower arrangement that utilizes various types of flowers and plants aimed to enjoy their beauty. *Ikebana* which originated in Japan has flourished to many countries in the world. Japanese society also know *Ikebana* by term of Kadō (華道; *Ka* is a flower and *Do* is a way of life) which places more emphasis on the artistic aspect of achieving perfectness in flower arrangement (Nakayama, 2018).

The art of Japanese flower arrangement has different style compared to European (Western) style flower arrangement. *Ikebana* has a very simple arrangement with only few (not many) flowers and leaves involved. Since

Ikebana arrangement heavily influenced by religious elements, then, each arrangement possess a deep meaning in symbolizing life. *Ikebana* flower arrangement not only plays as a vertical symbol or the relationship between human to their God but also have a horizontal dimension as a symbol that represents relationship among human in harmony. High focus or deep level of concentration and persistence (perseverance) to learn *Ikebana* flower arrangement is required since *Ikebana* is not only bringing together many types of flowers and plants in harmony, but it also teaches us to learn the meaning of life. Making *Ikebana* has a profound relaxation effect to the human body (Aminudin, 1991).

Ikebana has undergone many changes and improvements before accepted as a whole by Japanese society to be a cultural heritage of Japan. The art of *Ikebana* flower arrangement also been taught in schools. In general, the students learn 盛り花 (*Moribana*) style in low and shallow containers and 投げ入れ (*Nageire*) style in tall and upright containers (Aminudin, 1991). *Ikebana* is still maintained, preserved, and disseminated not only in Japan, but all over the world with a distinctive oriental style that displays beauty in simplicity yet soulful. Some changes in styles or series of *Ikebana* from traditional to modern arrangements are seen in the 自由化 (*jiyuka*) arrangement, a style which created during a new era and continues to develop according to the needs and developments of the times, but keep maintaining *Tenchijin* principle; three elements representing heaven, earth and human, symbolizes harmonious relationship between human, nature and the Divine One as one philosophy of Zen teachings (Inagaki et al., 1999; Prescott, 1998; Tanaka et al., 2018; Darlina, 2016).

According to Yuana (2019), in general, schools/streams of *Ikebana* are classified into 10 (ten) schools; (1). *Ikenobou* 池坊, (2). *Ikebana Kyokaden* いけばな京花傳, (3). *Isuzukoryuu* 五十鈴古流, (4). *Isesoumoku fujinoryuu* 伊勢草木藤野流, (5). *Ichiyoushiki ikebana* 一葉式いけ花, (6). *Ohararyuu* 小原流, (7). *Omuroryuu* 御室流, (8). *Katsurakoryuu* 桂古流, (9). *Kadoueishinryuu* 華道瑩心流, (10). *Kadouenshuu* 華道遠州. The *Ikenobou* school is the oldest and largest school of *Ikebana*, centered at Rokkakudo Shrine, Kyoto. In its teaching curriculum, *Ikenobou* teaches three styles of flower arrangement namely *Rikka*, *Shokai* and *Jiyuka*. These three styles represented the development of each era, *Rikka* style represented the *Muromachi* Period, *Shoka* represented the *Edo* Period, and *Jiyuka* style represented modern life as today.

2 Materials and Methods

Type of Research

The research method chosen for this study was library research with descriptive method. A library study is a study conducted through data collection from library study or a study held for solving a problem by focusing on critical and in-depth study of the relevant library material. Sources for the literature review are textbooks, scientific journals, statistical references, and research results in the form of theses, dissertations, and the internet, as well as other relevant sources. A literature study also used in this research to draw analysis of the problem studied.

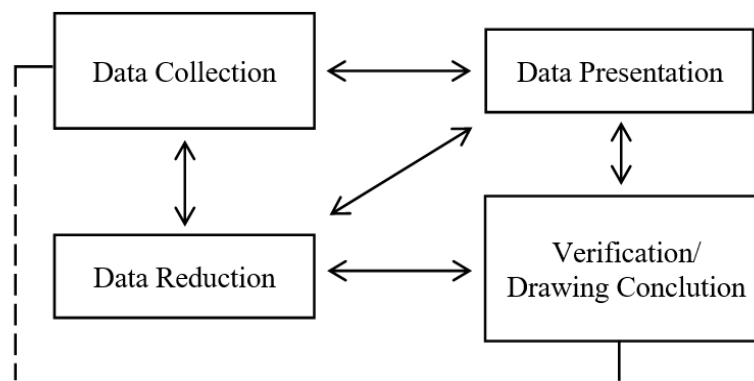


Figure 1. The research process
Source: (Miles & Michael, 2007)

Source of data

For this study, the source of data was a book entitled *Ikenobou Ikebana* (“池坊いけばな”) written by Ikenobo Sen`ei published by Shufu no Tomosha in 1982.

Data collection

Techniques of data collection in this study were: (1) employing library technique. Literary or library technique is a library study carried out by reading, studying and recording various literature or reading materials related to the subject matter, then filtering data and setting a theoretical frame of thoughts (Kartono, 1998), (2) accessing the internet site (website), it is a technique where the author must browse many websites or internet sites that provide related data to this study (sites of research journal about history of Zen and *Ikebana* in relation to Buddhism, along with other sites that serve as basic foundation or primary references to study theories that being observed by the author. Whereas the research stages that carried out by the author in data collection process aside from recording data were data reduction and data tabulation.

Stages in data reduction were: (1) summarize any relevant document data, (2) perform coding by using symbols or summaries, (3) analyze the data during document search, (4) create reflective notes, (5) make marginal notes, and (6) compare research findings that have been grouped according to themes appropriate with the research focus. In this study, data tabulation was carried out by creating tables contain of result from collective data regarding the types of *Ikebana* and their models as well as the explanation from Zen Buddhism principles conveyed in the *Ikebana* model (Loveday, 1986; Recht & Wilderom, 1998; Sakurai et al., 2011).

Data analysis

The analytical method for this study was a qualitative descriptive method by thoroughly describing data obtained during the research process. This study applied a result presentation technique of informal data analysis. According to Sudaryanto in Mahsun (2005), as quoted from Daruma journal by Candrawati et al. (2021), a result presentation of data analysis in an informal manner is a formulation using ordinary words which include the use of technical terminology due to data analysis was formed in description of words in Indonesian and Japanese languages when describe the representation of Zen Buddhism in *Ikebana* flower arrangement.

Technique used for data analysis of this study was Miles and Michael analysis model. Miles & Michael (2007), suggest activities during analyzing qualitative data carried out in interactive ways and continue until completion for getting the saturated data (characterized by no new data or information obtained). Research activities during study analysis include data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusion and verification (see figure 1).

The first stage of drawing conclusion from the research data were data collection, conducted qualitative analysis by looking for different meanings, took notes in regulating cause and effect and made conclusions according to the results of the study. The final conclusion of this study was no final data collection, therefore, it depends on the size of the data collection during note taking, providing codes, storing and re-searching the previous researches ever made in the related scope. Conclusions are drawn to answer the problem formulation that has been written in the first chapter. Drawing conclusions is the final result of the research process.

3 Results and Discussions

Zen Buddhism Philosophy Emerges in Ikenobou School of Ikebana

As data collection result, the authors gathered 44 pieces of data which took form in series of *Ikebana* with five (5) style arrangements of 立花(*rikka*), 昇華(*shoka*), 盛り花(*moribana*), 投げ入れ(*nageire*), and 自由化(*jiyuka*). Each style exhibited characteristics of Zen Buddhism (see data appendix). Each data then categorized under the seven characteristics of Zen Buddhism and arranged in tabular form to facilitate further data analysis. Table 1 displayed *Ikebana* in five styles flower arrangements that have been collected and represented the seven characteristics of Zen Buddhism (Agusta, 2003; Suastra, 2017; Budiarto, 2003; Wentz, 2014).

Table 1
The Representation of *Zen Buddhism* in five styles of *Ikenobou* School/Stream of *Ikebana*

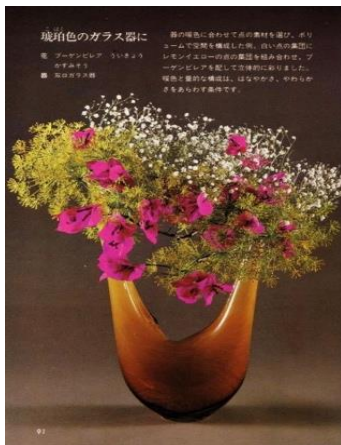
| No | Zen Characteristics | Zen Appearance in <i>Ikebana</i> Style | Note |
|----|---------------------|--|-----------|
| 1 | Fukinsei (不均齊) | 2 | |
| 2 | Kanso (簡素) | 2 | |
| 3 | Shizen (自然) | 6 | |
| 4 | Kokou (枯高) | - | Not Found |
| 5 | Yuugen (幽玄) | 20 | |
| 6 | Datsuzoku (脱俗) | 16 | |
| 7 | Seijaku (静寂) | 21 | |

Next, according to table 1, the author is going to conduct further analysis to each characteristic of Zen Buddhism that found in the *Ikebana* flower arrangement. In this explanation, the author chooses three data from each *Ikebana* style that represented characteristics of Zen Buddhism. The study analysis will cover all aspects, begin with materials, flower arrangement's shape into type of vase used in the arrangement. The following section will give explanation from analysis of each Zen characteristic represented in the *Ikebana* flower arrangement.

Representation of Beauty Philosophy According to Zen Buddhisme in Ikenobou School/Stream of Ikebana

This sub-chapter will describe analysis to data collection related to many different styles in *Ikebana* flower arrangements. Explanation in this section will be necessary to answer formulation of two (2) research questions stated in previous chapter; (1) what philosophy value that emerged from *Ikebana* arrangement, and (2) what representation of Zen Buddhism conveyed in *Ikebana* or the art of Japanese flower arrangement. This study refers to the seven (7) characteristics of Zen Buddhism according to Hisamatsu Shin'ichi: 不均齊 (*fukinsei*), 簡素 (*kanso*), 自然 (*shizen*), 枯高 (*kokou*), 幽玄 (*yuugen*), 脱俗 (*datsuzoku*), and 静寂 (*seijaku*). The author performs a literature study for collecting data about *Ikebana* and Zen Buddhism which later conducts an analysis by applying a descriptive approach for data interpretation. Data analysis will be supported by photographs or pictures of the flower arrangements to strengthen the interpretation result for each data that the authors analyzes.

1) The Characteristics of 不均齊 (*Fukinsei*)



From description of two *Ikebana* types stated in code II-J/H.91/19 and II-J/H.12/H.124/29, the authors conclude the flower arrangement style of 自由化 (*Jiyuka*: code II- J/H.91/19) to be the strongest variation of *Ikebana* representing 不均齊 (*fukinsei*) or the asymmetrical characteristic. An unbalance ratio between the right and left sides of the flower arrangement, irregular materials arrangement and shape of the arrangement which is not in horizontal but in tilted position are elements showing the characteristic of 不均齊 (*fukinsei*). As a reminder, the *Ikebana* art have three (3) arranging styles; formal, semi-formal and informal/grass styles. The asymmetrical character became the closest character to informal style, whereas a symmetrical form refers to a formal style. For something that has unbalanced and uneven arrangement by definition is no longer becomes a formal style, thus it is said the 自由化 (*Jiyuka*) showed many characteristics of 不均齊 (*fukinsei*) or imperfections in its flower arrangement.

2) The Characteristics of 簡素 (Kanso)



From description of two *Ikebana* types stated in code JWF-SSI/H.50/H.126/04 and H-SS/H.5/H.252/08, the authors conclude the flower arrangement style of 昇華正風一種いけ (*Shoka Shofutai Isshuike*: code SSI/H.50/H.126/04) to be the strongest style representing 簡素 (*Kanso*) or simplicity characteristic. This flower arrangement only selects one type of material and one type of colour which are not too flashy (subtle) and uncontrast colour, make these elements inherent a simplicity character in it. The 昇華正風一種いけ (*Shoka Shofutai Isshuike*) arrangement also builds a natural impression (not artificial or overly created) and emphasizes the beauty of the main material approached by classical proportion or by a traditional style.

3) The Characteristic of 自然 (Shizen)



Based on the description of three types of *Ikebana* stated in codes II-SSN/H.3/H.266/01, H-J/H.5/H.112/07, and II-J/H.55/H.130/18, the authors conclude the flower arrangement style of 自由 (*Jiyuka*: code II-J/H.55/H.130/18) to be the strongest style representing 自然 (*Shizen*) or naturalness characteristic. The arrangement uses a variety of materials which arranged freely by utilizing the shape of the branches on the flowers which extend naturally in asymmetrical shape, making the flower arrangement look natural without being forced as conforming the principle of 自然 (*Shizen*) or naturalness characteristic that is not born from artificial conduct.

4) The Characteristics of 幽玄 (Yuugen)



Based on description of three types of *Ikebana* stated in codes II-R/H.15/H.296/13, II-M/H.50/H.114/31, and II-R/H.140/H.189/37, the authors conclude the flower arrangement style of 立花 (*Rikka*: code II-R/H.15/H.296/13) to be the strongest style representing 幽玄 (*Yuugen*) or deep meaning characteristic. Its flower arrangement conveyed deep meaning that evokes natural landscape characteristic along with dark colour selections for the arrangement and its vase, gives impression of serene atmosphere and brings out a peaceful of mind.

5) The Characteristic of 脱俗 (Datsuzoku)



Based on description of three types of *Ikebana* stated in codes II-J/H.96/23, II-J/H.14/H.294/34, and II-J/H.54/H.82/44, the authors conclude the flower arrangement style of 自由化 (*Jiyuka*: code II-J/H.96/23) to be the strongest style representing 脱俗 (*Datsuzoku*) or free from any bonds/tie's characteristic. Its flower arrangement has no solid patterns with material usage tends to have free movement out of the vase, supported by vase shape that endorses the artist's creativity mind which showing a characteristic of 脱俗 (*datsuzoku*) reflected a break away or mind escaping from any existing patterns or standards.

6) The Characteristic of 静寂 (Seijaku)



Based on description of three types of *Ikebana* stated in codes II-SS/H.53/H.66/16, II-SS/H.4/H.245/28, and II-SS/H.148/H.194/43, the authors conclude the flower arrangement style of 昇華新風 (*Shoka Shinputai*; code II-SS/H.148/H.194/43) to be the strongest style representing 静寂 (*Seijaku*) or stillness/silence characteristic. Its flower arrangement showing stream of simplicity, yet the impression gives peace of mind. It flows to the right and left side in dynamic movements to make an apparent expression of moving state but in stillness/stationary form.

4 Conclusion

According to study analysis from the result and discussion which have been previously described, the authors draw study conclusion as follow:

- 1) The philosophy emerges from *Ikenobou* school/stream of *Ikebana* in five (5) *Ikebana* styles are: a) characteristic of 静寂 (*Sijaku*) as the prominent characteristic found in twenty one (21) pieces of flower arrangements, b) characteristic of 幽玄 (*Yuugen*) found in twenty (20) pieces of flower arrangements, c) characteristic of 脱俗 (*Datsuzoku*) found in sixteen (16) pieces of flower arrangements, d) characteristic of 自然 (*Shizen*) found in six (6) pieces of flower arrangements, meanwhile, the characteristic of 不均齐 (*Fukinsei*) and the characteristic of 簡素 (*Kanso*) were the least characteristics found in two (2) pieces of flower arrangements, whereas the characteristic of 枯高 (*Kokou*) was not found in flower arrangements at all.
- 2) The representation of beauty philosophy conveyed in *Ikebana* flower arrangements from *Ikenobou* school/stream of *Ikebana* are:
 - a) The 自由化 (*Jiyuka*) style represents characteristics of: 1) 不均齐 (*Fukinsei*) or asymmetrical, 2) 自然 (*Shizen*) or naturalness, and 3) 脱俗 (*Datsuzoku*) or free from ties.
 - b) The 昇華正風一種いけ (*Shoka Shofutai Isshuike*) style represents the characteristic of 簡素 (*Kanso*) or simplicity.
 - c) The 立花 (*Rikka*) style represents the characteristic of 幽玄 (*Yuugen*) or deep meaning.

The 昇華新風 (*Shoka Shinputai*) represents the characteristic of 静寂 (*Sijaku*) or stillness.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declared that they have no competing interests.

Statement of authorship

The authors have a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The authors have approved the final article.

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