

Presence of Ikebana Ikenobō in Brazil

Valderson Cuiabano Silvério de Souza

Translated by Sara Huggard-Caine

The word *Ikebana* and the practice of Japanese floral art became better known in Brazil after the World War. The following styles were represented before: Shōgetsudō-Koryū School with Prof. Mrs. Fumi Naiki; Yamato-Ryū School—dissident from Ōhara School (1938) with Prof. (Mr.) Rigi-ku Kikuchi; Ikenobō School (1945) with Prof. (Mrs.) Ei Fujiwara and Mishō-Ryū School (1946) with Prof. (Mrs.) Kiseho Ikeda. All other Ikebana schools in Brazil were created after the second half of the twentieth century.

The tradition of the Ikebana Ikenobō 池坊 floral art came to Brazil in 1933 with the arrival of Professor (Mrs.) Ei Fujiwara, who emigrated to Brazil in that year. She had received the title and diploma *Waki Kyōju* 脇教授 1 (1st Grade Ikebana instructor) one year before. The title allowed her to teach and gave her authority to issue Ikebana Japanese Academy recognized certificates. In 1935 she organized the first groups of students and started to give classes to the Itaquera Japanese colony in São Paulo. In 1950 she moved to the city of São Paulo, increasing the number of students and the name “*Ikebana*” as definition of Japanese floral art. In 1953 she was awarded the title and degree of *Sei Kyōju* 正教授 1 (1st Grade Main Professor). The huge distance between Brazil and Japan, the problems of the opposed seasons, the differentiated calendars and the administrative procedures of the Iemoto system impelled her to depart from the Ikenobō school in 1963.

This fact had an unheard-of consequence: the creation, on April 1964, of the only Ikebana School originated outside Japan—the Ikebana Kōgetsu Ryū Cultural Association—Kadō Kōgetsu Ryū 華道香月流, registered at the Education Ministry of the Republic of Brazil. The split from the Ikenobō School of Japan was only administrative as the style, composition and maintenance were based on the esthetic concepts of Ikenobō. The only discreet innovation was the use of native Brazilian flora, thus beginning the process of adaptation of the art of Japanese flower arrangement in our country.

The Buddhist monk and professor Hirotohi Seki¹ arrived in Brazil in 1953. He was renowned as “Special Grade Professor of the Ikenobō school.” His work was important to spread the knowledge of Japanese flower arrangement art in Brazil as well as the culture as a whole. In “The Man and the Flower,” the introduction of his book *Ikebana Ikenobō*,² he wrote:

I had the honor of being designated by the IKENOBŌ school, where I graduated, and by the followers of this style, as teacher of the art, and then transferred to this lovely country, Brazil.

As soon as I arrived, I was surprised to find the practice of this art distorted by tendencies quite different from the classical ones and therefore I made and continue to make efforts to spread the exact concept of what the IKENOBŌ style is. (Seki, 1961, p. 2)

On the occasion of the fourth centennial of the foundation of the city of São Paulo in 1954, the Japanese government sent a cultural committee, sponsored by the Foreign Affairs Ministry, which included Prof. (Mrs.) Noriko Nakamura (afterwards known as Noriko Ono), representative of the Sōgetsu School at the time. Her mission was to demonstrate Ikebana art at the recently opened Japanese Pavilion of the Ibirapuera Park. Mrs. Ono, through her work and her interaction with the media, was fundamental in making the word Ikebana known amongst Brazilians.

Later, she created her own school, Kokusai Ikebana (International Ikebana) and she identifies that period in São Paulo as a turning point in her work as an artist, as a teacher and as promoter of Japanese floral art worldwide.

Throughout the fifties and mainly after the festivities of the IV Centennial of the founding of São Paulo, Master Seki made a considerable effort to strengthen interaction between the São Paulo University, the São Paulo Art Museum, São Paulo intellectuals and descendants and friends of Japanese nationals established here. His basic Ikebana course aspired to create interest for the symbolic and religious aspects of the Japanese culture, and to study the relations in the use of colours and shapes in Japanese art and folklore. It is during this period that Japanese floral art becomes relevant in the Brazilian media. Several publications devoted special issues to the art. For example, the *Casa e Jardim* (House and Garden) magazine, published a series of articles by Professor Ei Fujiwara with explanations of the art and basic Ikebana arrangements, as well as an Ikebana special Journalistic column in the women supplement of the *Jornal Paulista*.

Official teaching of Ikebana Ikenobō in Brazil begins in 1960 with the foundation of the Kadō Iemoto Ikenobō Kadōkai Nambei Shibu. The Regional Director was Professor Hirotohi Seki and Mrs Hideko Akamo was designated as Vice-Director. The registers of the Association indicate November 23, 1960 as the foundation date. At the beginning, classes were given at Professor Seki's home, at Professor (Mrs.) Ishi Kanazawa's home, and at the old Bunkyo building which was then known as Society for Japanese Culture in São Paulo and is now the Brazilian Society for Japanese Culture.

To commemorate the inauguration of the premises, the São Paulo Shimbun journal organized an Ikebana show. Wide journalistic coverage was given to the event, introducing the professors and their respective Ikebana Schools acting in São Paulo. On 28th April, 1961 was inaugurated the Collective Exhibition of Ikebana Schools. Ten schools and fifteen masters participated on this event: Mishō-Ryū (Kiseho Ikeda), Yamato-Ryū (Houen Kikuchi), Seigetsu-Ryū (Kaoru Yano), Ikenobō (Hirotohi Seki, Kyoko Shingu), Kokusai Ikebana (Suketaro Okada, Michiko Takizawa, Haruno Iwama), Sōgetsu-Ryū (Shunpo e Shunpa Kuroda, Shikoo Kato), Shoko Mishō-Ryū (Ichiko Yasuda), Nisshin-Ryū (Shoshin Nishizawa), Ōhara-Ryū (Hoko Yano), Shōgetsudō Koryū (Fumi Naiki), and with the special participation of the Enshū-Ryū School (Tsutaya Shiota).

On January 26th, 1962, all schools and styles acting in Brazil joined in the Ikebana Association of Brazil – Ikebana Kyōkai. Three main objectives were established:

1. To make Ikebana, a typical Japanese art, widely known for cultural exchange between Brazil and Japan.
2. To develop friendships between the associates to improve the Kadō.

3. To promote and support the shows of each of the diverse schools as well as the collective ones.

At the beginning of the sixties the Kadō Iemoto Ikenobō Nambei Shibu started its consolidation in Brazil. Professor Seki gave symposiums and talks to Brazilian and Japanese universities to spread interest of students and general knowledge about art as a whole. A cycle of seminars made under his coordination by Brazilian and Japanese professors of the School of Art of Tokio indicates the quality and importance of collaboration in these events. By 1963, the Nambei Shibu has a main office in São Paulo and branches in Marília, Tupã, Mogi das Cruzes and the Paraná State. The participation of the Association on the ceremonies held at the new capital Brasília, DF, on February, to celebrate the third year of the inauguration of the city was an important landmark.

This historical period is very important for the consolidation of Ikebana in Brazil. The name and the shapes of Japanese floral art became popular following a wave of modernism created by the new capital, the bossa nova music, and the movies of the “new cinema” movement. Ikebana became integrated as the “modern style of flower arrangement” along with all these new manifestations.

1964 was important for Brazil and for Ikebana Ikenobō. Soon after the military coup, in April, the new Bunkyo building was inaugurated at the Liberdade district in São Paulo. A floral exposition is presented by all the Ikebana schools to celebrate the event. Activities of the Nambei Shibu School are concentrated mainly in the State of Parana which has a growing number of students and communities interested in classes. In October, this School presents their annual show at the Japanese Pavilion in the Ibirapuera Park. Later that month, Professor Seki returns to Japan and his position is occupied by the Vice-Director, Professor (Mrs.) Hideko Akamo, who was also giving classes of “shodō” (Japanese calligraphy). At the end of the year, the School participated in the commemorative events of the IV Centennial of the founding of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Under the new direction, the school modified the Art School methodology and became a “school or club of ladies,” as most of the flower arrangement schools in Japan and elsewhere. This derivation made by Professor (Mrs.) Akamo had the positive result of promoting a constant commitment with community voluntary work, financial donations and permanent collaboration with philanthropic and charitable institutions. These activities are still carried out nowadays.

As from 1966, Ikebana arrangements were shown at the premieres of Japanese films and the Nambei Shibu School started events such as The First Flower of the Year (*Hatsuike*), and shows and bazaars in agricultural festivities such as the Potato Season and the ones promoted by the Agricultural Cooperative of Cotia, as well as the important Annual Show of professors and students.

An important development was the foundation of The Institute of Ikebana Ikenobō of Brazil in April 1968, founded by dissident members of the Ikenobō group of the Ikebana Association. Professor (Mrs.) Kiyoko Shingu was the first Director President and Mrs. Kimiko Abe, the first Vice-President. In August, they presented their first exhibition, held in the main room of the Bunkyo building, and in 1969 they presented an exhibition at the Palacio da Alvorada (residence of the Brazilian President) for diplomatic wives as well as another one, opened to the public, at the renowned Hotel Nacional of Brasília.

Plans for the commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of the Nambei Shibu Association start-

ed on the seventies and in November 26, 1971 an exhibition was opened at the Bienal Building in São Paulo with the attendance of the Grand Master Sen'ei Ikenobō and his entourage and two days later, another one was made at the Ministry of Education and Culture in the city of Brasília, DF.

The association with the Shōhaku³ School was a relevant factor for later generations. Since then, Ikebana classes for students of any level have been given mandatorily by a Nambei Shibu professor. It is a sign of continuity and respect to the one-thousand year old Japanese flower arrangement art. Another positive factor was the return of the Nambei Shibu Association to the Brazil Ikebana Association (Ikebana Kyōkai) after 15 years of separation.

Special events continued during the eighties: the First Flower of The Year Ceremony—*Hatsuike* and the annual Show of Ikebana and Shodō Calligraphy at the Bunkyo premises. In 1981 the Nambei Shibu Association organized the First Annual Bazaar which has been a yearly event of social meeting of artists, such as ceramists who specialize in Ikebana vases, as well as other folklore and semi-industrialized items. During September, a group of professors and students left from São Paulo to Argentina to participate in a commemorative show of Ikebana Ikenobō in that country. This was very adequate as the institution had spread the art in Argentina, Paraguay and Peru.

The decade was also important for the Brazilian Ikebana Ikenobō Institute and for Brazilian Ikebana in general. In 1981 the President of Brazil Shibu, Mrs. Kyoko Shingu, started a university level course of Ikebana offered by the São Paulo University (USP) at the House of Japanese Culture in their premises. This subject, as well as the Tea Ceremony, is offered at the Oriental Languages Department of the Philosophy, Languages and Human Sciences of the USP. It has raised a lot of interest and has helped to spread the subjects amongst the academic circle. Also in 1981, the Brazilian Shibu founded a branch in Pereira Barreto, a city in the state of São Paulo.

1984 was also relevant to Nambei Shibu, as the school went through a revision due to the death of Professor Mrs. Akamo, President of the Association. In August, an Extraordinary General Meeting chose Mr. Shokichi Shibukawa as President; Professor (Mrs.) Ishi Kanazawa as 1st Vice-President and Professor Mrs. Mine Ushida as 2nd Vice-President, thus ending the pioneer and implementation stage. A new phase started then when it became a Brazilian entity instead of being only related to Japan and to the Ikebana Association in Brasil. The national register of the Association of Flower Arrangement Kadō Iemoto Ikenobō Nambei Shibu in the Liberdade District of the city of São Paulo was made on December 14, 1984.

The old guard of the Japanese group disappeared gradually and a new participative scheme started with the introduction of regularly elected directors, at first in a shy and irregular way and then with training of younger candidates. After a period of classes and participation, the associates slowly start a “special administrative course” to be introduced to higher positions and eventually to be able to manage the school. The concept of “association” started to be recognized and respected as the mark of the new times. This practice remains for those students who enjoy participating and facing the task of transmitting knowledge and culture. Most of them, however, maintain only a symbolic and financial relation (through the payment of fees). Professors strain to increase the collaboration and participation in the Association activities and exhibits, but the students are reluctant to integrate and give excuses to justify their absences and lack of commitment.

The transformations occurred in the Association Nambei Shibu during 1984 caused Professor

Mrs. Emilia Tanaka to ask for release from it and ask the Iemoto for authorization to create a new branch of Ikebana Ikenobō in Brazil. The authorization arrived from Japan and on 15th November the third branch of Ikebana Ikenobō with Mrs. Emilia Tanaka as the founder and President was created in Brazil and named Latin American Ikebana Kadō Ikenobō Tatibana.

The Nambei Shibu Association “new era” was marked by the purchase of premises at Liberdade Avenue 486 (Room 1210) on April 26, 1985 and Ikebana Ikenobō classes started on August 9, 1985. In 1987, the members of the Parana branch of the Nambei Shibu Association were released to form the Institute of Parana Ikebana Ikenobō South America, under direction of Professor Takako Kawasaki. Authorization and register for the new branch arrived from Japan in September and thus began the fourth Ikebana Ikenobō School in Brazil.

Also in 1987 Professor (Mrs.) Kiyoko Shingu, founder and President of the Brazilian Ikebana Ikenobō School, returned to Japan. To continue the activities already in course, Professor (Mrs.) Kimiko Abe was elected President. Changes in the Board of Nambei Shibu were made before the end of the decade. Annual commemorations such as the 1st Flower of the Year were minimal or not held at all in 1989 due to the demise of the Showa Emperor. But on September, the Association made a commemorative exhibition on occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of Nambei Shibu at the São Paulo Cultural Center in the district of Paraiso with the participation of The Grand Master and other special guests arrived from Japan. We would like to point out that as from that date, the annual Nambei Shibu Ikebana exhibitions have been made on that privileged space, thus opening the art to the public of São Paulo in general. Since then, very few events were held in other locations.

In the nineties, all the practices developed by the Ikebana schools were carried on: classes, shows, and charitable events. This was a period when procedures and achievements took a definite form, as the three São Paulo schools started creating their own routines and established their peculiar characteristics, both in the artistic field and in the use of predetermined cultural spaces in the city. It is remarkable that all of them felt an invigorating surge with the ever increasing presence of non-descendant students and the formal position of the Iemoto throughout the decade urging internationalization and globalization of Japanese floral art. The presence of *gaijin* (foreign) students gave a new interpretation to the guidance established by the central Kyoto headquarters since the start of the Edo era. Whether in Brazil or in other occidental countries, it was necessary to adapt oriental rules and concepts to the local environment.

And it was also during the second half of the nineties that we started our work to spreading the knowledge of Ikebana amongst all Brazilian people with stress on Japanese non-descendants. For most of them this artistic form was—and still is—a paradoxical enigma. Ikebana art is frontally opposed to the official parameters of a classical work of art because its lifetime is transitory, it cannot become a commercial object, its technique is complex and its conservation, impossible. These qualities, together with lack of knowledge of the Japanese esthetical concepts made many art critics and part of the public—whether in Brazil or abroad—consider Ikebana as just a folklore manifestation instead of a real form of art.

We may be the first non-Japanese descendents to attain the title and degree *Sei kyōju* 正教授 1 (1st Grade Main Professor), in South America, given by the 45th Iemoto of the Sen’ei Ikenobō School, specialist in the strictest traditional Ikebana style. This nomination makes us feel very

honored and reaffirms the pioneer characteristics of Ikebana Ikenobō in the globalized world, and imposes on us the mission of acting as interface between the Orient and the Brazilian community.

We hope and propose, with this event, to obtain new visibility and develop the interest of the cultural and promotional policies of national institutions, as well as of the Japanese-Brazilian community. If Brazilian people, whether or not of Japanese descent, are keen on knowing the origins and traditions of Japanese art, this is due to the presence and endeavours of their representatives in Brazil. Through their work and talent, they showed the beauty of their cultural traditions.

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NOTES

1 We believe Professor Seki was a buddhist monk of the Sōtō Zen tradition, as he came to work at the Bushinji temple on São Joaquim Street and lived in the Pinheiros district, at Fradique Coutinho St., in the city of São Paulo.

2 Seki, Hirotooshi, *Ikebana Ikenobō*. Published by the author—xerox copy of the original made by Copiadora Geracopia, São Paulo 1961.

3 The Shohaku Language School was founded in 1953 by Professor (Mrs.) Mariko Kawamura. In 1982, as some professors followed the pedagogic line of professor (Mr.) Oshiman Jungi, the School was renamed as Language School Oshiman. In 1993, the school was recognized by the Brazilian education authorities and was named Primary and Secondary Shool Professor Oshiman. In 1996 the Cultural Association Oshiman was founded. At present, the school is located at the Aclimacao District in São Paulo. Professor (Mrs.) Mine Ushida gave

the Ikebana classes there during many years and since 2001 she has been replaced by Professor (Mrs.) Kazue Takada, vice-President of the Nambei Shibu Association.