Confucian Morals and the Making of a ‘Good Wife and Wise Mother’: From ‘Between Husband and Wife there is Distinction’ to ‘As Husbands and Wives be Harmonious’

Sumiko SEKIGUCHI*

The most important text in the ‘Lessons for Women’ genre of the Tokugawa era (1600–1867) was the ‘Greater Learning for Women’. But this text remained too vague to be reliable. In the absence of clear norms to which ‘womanly cultivation’ could be referred, a need to replace it was strongly felt during the Tokugawa era’s latter part. This project, however, came to fruition only in the wake of the Meiji Renovation. Fukuzawa Yukichi and Empress Haruko played pivotal roles in this regard. The Imperial Rescript on Education, issued in 1890, centered on an enumeration of virtues closely resembling the ‘five ethical relations’ of classical Confucianism. Here, however, the classical phrase ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ was no longer used; the stipulation ‘As husbands and wives be harmonious’ is found in its stead. Inoue Tetsujirō, in his semi-official commentary, explained this phrase to mean ‘obedience’ of the wife to her husband and ‘division of labor’ between them. Subsequently, the phrase ‘a good wife and wise mother’ established itself as the standard for womanhood in modern Japan. But this cannot be understood simply as a ‘product of modernity’ owed to Western influence. It also had roots in the notion of a ‘wise wife and wise mother’ absorbed from Chinese thought during the final years of Tokugawa rule, against a background of marked ambivalence and fluctuation that had characterized gender norms in Tokugawa Japan.

I. Introduction

Around the time of the Meiji Renovation, the norms governing relations between the sexes, that is, between husband and wife, changed. This paper asks what the nature of this change was as reflected in texts directed at women in the tradition of the Confucian jokun (Lessons for Women) genre. More succinctly, it asks what the transition from the principle ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ (fūfu betsu ari), contained among the ‘five ethical relations’ (gorin) of traditional Confucianism,
to the injunction ‘As husbands and wives be harmonious’ (fūfu ai-wa shi), as stipulated by the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, meant.

During the late Tokugawa period, as the system of shogunal rule continued more or less unchanged, its power had increasingly weakened. Under conditions of extended domestic peace, a commercial economy grew increasingly vibrant, while the warrior class, occupying the top of the socio-political hierarchy, declined. Concern with these developments led Confucian scholarship to thrive. In these contexts ‘womanly cultivation’ (jokyō) was attributed special weight.

2. The ‘Greater Learning for Women’

The most important text in the jokun genre of the Tokugawa era was the Onna Daigaku (Greater Learning for Women), written during its middle period.1 Widely disseminated as a work by Kaibara Ekiken, it was in fact edited by a different hand, based on Ekiken’s Joshi o Oshiyuru Hō ² (Method for Teaching Women). But while this was the most important text of its kind, it was not systematically argued. It also lacked reference to a most important gender norm: the stipulation that ‘men pursue their duties without, while women govern within’ (otoko wa soto o tsutome onna wa uchi o osamu).

The Joshi o Oshiyuru Hō contained in Kaibara Ekiken’s Wazoku Dōji Kun (Precepts on Japanese Customs for Children) of 1710 contains the proposition: ‘In ancient times, men, from the Emperor on down, governed without while women governed within (otoko wa soto o osame onna wa uchi o osamu). From the Empress on down, it is the wife’s vocation (fujin no shokubun) to conduct all affairs of domestic government (naisei).’ It is probably safe to assume that this statement got lost somewhere in the process of re-editing Ekiken’s text into the Onna Daigaku contained in the Onna Daigaku Takarabako (A Treasure Chest of Greater Learning for Women) of 1716.

The question of whether the proposition ‘In ancient times, men . . . governed without while women governed within’ corresponds to historical reality is not ultimately relevant here. This proposition was, in any case, postulated and pursued as an ideal by Confucian scholars. In Confucianism, the principle of separating men and women into distinct spheres ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ the house, and of assigning them their proper tasks accordingly, had been emphasized since old. The Classic of Rites, for example, states: ‘The men should not speak of what belongs to the inside [of the house], nor the women of what belongs to the outside . . . Things spoken inside should not go out, words spoken outside should not come in’ (Legge 1885: 454–455). And, ‘The observances of propriety commence with a careful attention to the relations between husband and wife. They built the mansion and its apartments, distinguishing between the exterior and interior parts. The men occupied the exterior; the women the interior’ (ibid: 470). Both these passages were quoted in the ‘Lesser Learning’ under the heading ‘Clarifying the Distinction between Husbands and Wives’. While this norm confined women to the house, it also guaranteed them a measure of power within it.

---

1. For an English translation of this text see Kaibara (2005).

2. This title also can be, and often is, transcribed as Nyoshi o Oshiyuru Hō. In fact, the reading nyoshi instead of joshi appears to have been more common in everyday speech at the time, and it is used in the Onna Daigaku. In a scholarly Confucian as opposed to a popularizing tract, however, the reading joshi seems preferable.
But what about the idea that ‘domestic government’ was a wife’s ‘vocation’? It is probably safe to assume that it was Ekiken who first conceived of it. As Hiraishi Naoki has pointed out, Nakae Tōju had conceived of ‘loyal service to one’s lord’ as the ‘vocation’ (shokubun) of a samurai warrior, while Yamaga Sokō had determined guidance of agriculture, craftsmanship and commerce to be the ‘vocation’ of a samurai official. Kaibara Rakuken, in the appendix to his ‘Collected Writings on Agriculture’ (Nōgō Zensho) of 1698, then applied this term more broadly beyond the confines of the warrior class, to assert that not only did ‘samurai, peasants, artisans and merchants’ each have their respective vocations but that horses, oxen, dogs and cats had theirs, too (Hiraishi 1991). Ekiken appears to have been the first to apply this concept also to women. In other words, women were built into and assigned their own place in the vision of a state whose foundation consisted in each fulfilling the ‘vocation’ that was proper to them.

Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901) appears to have noted this problem—that the most important text of the jokun genre was missing this most important maxim: ‘Men pursue their duties without while women govern within’—early on. He had added marginal notes to the Onna Daigaku prior to the Renovation, critically discussing it for future reference. After the Renovation, he displayed an extraordinary interest in this phrase and sought to spur his readers’ interest in it as well.

In the 15th installment of Gakumon no Susume (An Encouragement of Learning) published in July 1876, Fukuzawa remarked as follows:

Although it seems to be an almost natural human division of labor that men pursue their duties without while women govern within, [John] Stuart Mill wrote a ‘Discourse on Women’ that attempted to destroy this custom fixed and immovable since time immemorial (Fukuzawa 1958–1971, vol. 3: 124). The ‘Discourse on Women’, needless to add, of which Fukuzawa speaks here, was Mill’s The Subjection of Women of 1869. Fukuzawa’s copy of this book with his personal name inscribed still exists. It is often taken for granted that Fukuzawa sympathized with such efforts to ‘destroy the subjection of women’ and that his convictions in this regard remained ‘unchanged throughout his life’. But this would seem to read too much into his brief remark, the only reference to Mill’s book contained in his ‘Collected Works’. Fukuzawa was merely expressing his amazement here at the fact that in the West there were such bold moves.

Nowhere does he declare his opposition to the proposition that ‘men pursue their duties without while women govern within’. Wayland’s Elements of Moral Science, which captured Fukuzawa’s imagination ‘to the point of forgetting to sleep and eat’, contained the exact same injunction: ‘Thus, it is the duty, in the first instance, of a husband, to provide for the wants of the family; and of the wife to assume the charge of the affairs of the household. His sphere of duty is without, her sphere of duty is within’. In the West, this idea was firmly established and linked to the concept of ‘vocation’ as well. The idea that ‘the wife does not pursue duties without’, needless to add, also began to be challenged.

---

4. Translation adapted from Fukuzawa (1969: 94). Dilworth and Hirano’s English translation has ‘attempted to destroy this custom that had been fixed and immovable since time immemorial’ (italics added). But such a past sense is not expressed in the Japanese original.
6. Wayland (1870: 316). This was the revised edition first published in 1865 (Sekiguchi 2007: 63).
around that time, and it is these challenges that Fukuzawa has in mind. Kume Kunitake, in his *Bei-Ō Kairan Jikki* (Official Record of the Iwakura Mission to Europe and the United States) published in 1878, already found it necessary to reconfirm that ‘in the teachings of the East’ things were otherwise: ‘the wife governs within but does not pursue duties without’ (Sekiguchi 2007). The only remark regarding political participation by women published under the name of ‘Fukuzawa Yukichi’ during his lifetime—in *Nihon Fujin Ron* (On Japanese Women) of 1885—was confined to the following line: ‘In recent years, even advocates of women’s participation in politics have appeared, and this movement is said to be gaining power day by day’ (Fukuzawa 1958–1971, vol. 5: 453).7

In his *Oboegaki* (Memoranda), on the other hand, Fukuzawa notes around March 1876 that ‘European wives are no match for Japanese wives when it comes to homemaking’ (Fukuzawa 1958–1971, Vol. 7: 667). Even as he pursued ‘civilization’ qua Westernization, in the case of women, Fukuzawa did not call for an emulation of Western ways but praised their ‘homemaking’ skills instead. In his *Minkan Keizairoku* (Popular Political Economy), published in December of 1877, Fukuzawa further writes: ‘That men pursue their duties without while women govern within is the principle of division of labor (*bungyō no mune*)’ (Fukuzawa 1958–1971, vol. 4: 318). He then laments that while in the West ‘division of labor’ (*bungyō no hō*) is widely applied, it had reached a point where sewing was considered the vocation of a tailor. In Japan, things did not work that way. Women had to be instructed ‘first of all in sewing’.

At the very end of his career, in 1899, Fukuzawa bequeathed a ‘Commentary on the Greater Learning for Women’ (*Onna Daigaku Hyōron*) and a ‘New Greater Learning for Women’ (*Shin Onna Daigaku*) of his own. In the former he declares, commenting on a passage from the *Onna Daigaku*: ‘That wives govern within and fully devote themselves to housework (*uchi o osamete kaji ni kokoro o mochii*), never remiss in weaving, sewing and spinning, is the ultimate teaching; these are the tasks in every regard best suited to women’ (Fukuzawa 1958–1971, VI: 486). However, the text of the original passage, which he adduces, is not ‘govern within and fully devote themselves to housework (*uchi o osamete kaji ni kokoro o mochii*) …’, but rather: ‘fully devote themselves to work within the house (*ie no uchi no koto ni kokoro o mochii*) …’. In other words, Fukuzawa added the phrase ‘govern within’ himself, quite obviously approving of it as good. He continues: ‘Among Western women, there are quite many who do not know the proper way of sewing a garment. On this point, it is the custom of Japanese women that I hold in higher esteem’.

3. ‘Between Husband and Wife There is Distinction’

Fukuzawa also showed strong concern for the traditional Confucian proposition ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’, commenting on it on multiple occasions.

---


8. For Kiyooka’s translations of these passages, see Fukuzawa (1988: 197, 207).
The proposition ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ constituted one of the Confucian ‘five ethical relations’ (gorin)—the only one concerned with the relationship between men and women. Its locus classicus is either the Mencius or the Classic of Rites. The former states: ‘Between father and children there is affection; between ruler and ministers there is righteousness; between husband and wife there is distinction; between elder and younger there is precedence; and between friends there is faithfulness’ (Mencius 2008: 71). The Classic of Rites, on the other hand, states: ‘When there is distinction between man and woman, affection comes to prevail between father and son. When there is affection between father and son, righteousness arises . . . The absence of such distinction and righteousness is characteristic of the way of beasts’ (Translation adapted from Legge 1885: 440). That men and women did not approach each other indiscriminately, but observed the ‘distinction’ (betsu) that was proper between them, was the core of following the ‘way of man’ as opposed to the ‘way of beasts’, the basis of ‘ritual propriety’ (rei).

Some one thousand and several hundred years later, Zhu Xi edited the ‘Lesser Learning’ centered on passages from the Classic of Rites. The second section of its Minglun (Clarifying the Ethical Relations) chapter bore the title ‘Clarifying the Distinction between Husband and Wife’. Originally, the phrase ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ had been emphasized to mean that men and women were not to approach each other indiscriminately. But Zhu Xi included such meanings as clear distinction between wives and concubines, observance of spatial separation and division of labor ‘without’ and ‘within’ and adherence by the wife to ‘the way of the three obediences’ (i.e. obedience first to the father, then to the husband, then to the son) in his interpretation.

But how was the phrase ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’, with its many layers of possible meaning, received in Japan? According to Watanabe Hiroshi, in Japan the idea that husband and wife were ‘distinct’ (betsu) in a sense of ‘separate’ met with a sense of discomfort. Rather, their ‘harmonious union’ (wago) was emphasized as a norm. Since the interpretation of the phrase ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ remained unsettled, the phrase ‘Between husband and wife there should be good association’ (fufo naka yoku) was frequently used instead (Watanabe 2000: 208–243). In other words, while the phrase ‘Between husband and wife there should be distinction’ was well-established as a quote from the Classics, it was explained to mean various things: ‘Husbands and wives should not become overfamiliar’ (fufo wa narenareshiku shinai); ‘One is not to mingle into the relations of another husband and wife’ (tanin no fufo to majiriawanai) or ‘distinction between men and women into outside and inside’ (danjo no naigai no betsu). The phrase ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ proved a source of interminable confusion (Sekiguchi 2003, 2005).

If the task was to imagine a nation founded on ‘the family’ (kazoku), composed of one husband and no more than one wife together with their children, as was the case with Fukuzawa,10 confusion over this point must have appeared fatal. As long as such confusion continued, the foundation on which the

9. Watanabe first pointed out that the phrase ‘As husbands and wives be harmonious’ contained in the Imperial Rescript on Education continued a discourse that had been dominant in Japan—speaking not of ‘distinction’ (betsu) between husband and wife, but of their ‘harmonious union’ (wago) or ‘peaceful relation’ (waboku) instead.

10. See the chapter ‘The Family’ (Kazoku) in Seiyō Jijō Gaihen (Conditions of the West. External Volume), Fukuzawa’s rendition of Chamber’s Political Economy (Sekiguchi 2007: 5–13).
morality of intramarital relations stood remained unstable. Fukuzawa had to somehow get beyond the phrase ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ and affirm a moral standard that could take its place.

In his *Nakatsu Ryūsetsu no Sho* (Letter on Parting from Nakatsu) of 1870, for example, he conceived of it as a motto for monogamy. Fukuzawa argued that the proposition ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ (*betsu ari*) could not be interpreted to mean that between husband and wife there ought to be ‘distance and separation’ (*wakehedate ari*). Between husband and wife there had to be sympathetic feelings. Fukuzawa continued: ‘If *betsu* is, after all, to be taken in a sense of “distinction”, it can only be taken to mean distinction between this man and this woman, and that man and that woman as that husband and wife, couple by couple’ (Fukuzawa 1958–1971, vol. 20: 50). His interpretation of this phrase thus continued its interpretation in a sense of ‘One is not to mingle into the relations of another husband and wife’. But in ‘An Outline of the Theory of Civilization’ (*Bunmeiron no Gairyaku*) published in 1875, Fukuzawa explained the phrase ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ to mean that ‘a husband and his wife should not become overfamiliar and behave in an unseemly way’ (Fukuzawa 1958–1971, vol. 4: 92). Here the reading ‘Husbands and wives should not become overfamiliar’ is adopted by him.

In ‘On the Association of Men and Women’ (*Danjo Kosai Ron*) published in 1886, on the other hand, Fukuzawa denounces this same phrase without further ado as ‘social oppression’ (*shakai no assei*). He begins by observing that its original meaning was unknown. Later scholars had interpreted it to mean ‘to treat each other like unrelated persons’ (*tanin rashiku suru*), thus obstructing the ‘emotional interaction’ (*jōkan no majiwari*) between women and men. He then deals it the final blow: ‘My patience is spent, oppression of society! With the men and women of the whole realm behind me, I refuse to yield to your commands!’ (Fukuzawa 1958–1971, vol. 5: 597, 589, 605). Fukuzawa further writes: ‘Men and women are not to come near each other; men pursue their duties outside while women must remain within. This is the basic principle of the ancient teaching which present custom follows and social oppression rigidly upholds with no room for deviation’ (Fukuzawa 1958–1971, vol. 5: 594). At first sight, it may appear that Fukuzawa was after all criticizing the maxim ‘Men pursue their duties without, while women govern within’ here. However, on a closer look, the line ‘the wife governs within’ (*fujin wa uchi o osamu*) is replaced by the line ‘the wife must remain within’ (*fujin wa uchi ni aru beshi*) by him. In taking aim at ‘social oppression’, Fukuzawa strongly objects to the maxim that ‘the wife must remain within’, but the injunction that ‘the wife governs within’ remains unscathed by his critique.

Thus, while Fukuzawa had originally linked the phrases ‘Men pursue their duties without, while women govern within’ and ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’, he now performs a delicate balancing act. Even as he buries the phrase ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ as an instance of ‘social oppression’, he wants to preserve the phrase ‘Men pursue their duties outside while women govern within’ intact (Sekiguchi 2007).

4. From ‘Between Husband and Wife There is Distinction’ to ‘As Husbands and Wives be Harmonious’

In 1889, the Meiji Constitution was promulgated. In the ‘Imperial Rescript on Education’ issued in 1890, one month before the Constitution was to go into force, the phrase ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ was missing. The Rescript stated instead: ‘Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affective to your brothers and sisters, as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true’. Clearly, the Confucian five ethical relations as listed in Mencius had served as its model.

The somewhat difficult to understand phrase keitei ni yu ni (be affectionate to your brothers) that replaced the phrase chyo jo ari (between elder and younger there is precedence) found in Mencius is contained in the Second Book of the Analects as a quote from the Classic of Documents. But where did the phrase fu fu ai wa shi (as husbands and wives be harmonious) that replaced the phrase fu fu betsu ari (between husband and wife there is distinction) come from?

The drafting process of the Imperial Rescript on Education was highly involved. But in its core, it consisted of a series of exchanges between the Confucian lecturer to the emperor Motoda Nagazane on the one hand and Inoue Kowashi, then director general of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau, on the other hand, with the proposal that Inoue had prepared as a basis. The first draft of the Inoue proposal contained the line fu fu ai wa shi (as husbands and wives be harmonious) already. In other words, the wording betsu ari (there is distinction) had been removed as the orthodox norm from the very outset. In its stead, the phrase ai wa shi made its appearance as the moral ideal that relations between the sexes had to fulfill. The details of why Inoue had disposed of the phrase ‘between husband and wife there is distinction’ are not known. But the fact that this phrase had been condemned on the pages of Fukuzawa’s Jiji Shinpo as ‘social oppression’ may well have caught his attention. Four years after Fukuzawa voiced his objections, Inoue settled for the phrase ‘as husbands and wives be harmonious’ in his draft for the Imperial Rescript instead.

In an article titled ‘On the Relation Between Ethics and Physiology’ (Rinri to Seirigaku to no Kankei), which he published under a pseudonym at around the time of the Rescript’s promulgation, Inoue proceeded to explain that the relation between a man and a woman was none else than the ‘harmonious union’ (wagō) of yang and yin: ‘The way of husband and wife consists in two persons gathering together and performing their functions in a single harmonious union—in the manner of one being yin and one being yang, one being hard and one being yielding .’. At first sight, this would seem to resonate with the idea of a ‘harmonious union’ (wagō) between husband and wife known since the Tokugawa era and also with contemporary morals primers that, since the early Meiji period, incorporated Western ideas—phrases like ‘the feeling of true love between a husband and wife’ (fu fu shin ni sooai suru no juo) or ‘only the state of matrimony allows two persons to truly become as one’ (jitsu ni futari o shite ishin no gotoku narashimuru wa hito fufu no kiwa nomi ni ari to su). In Inoue’s case, however, the dichotomic opposition and hierarchical ordering of yin and yang was additionally brought in (Sekiguchi 2005).

The subsequent tug and pull between Inoue and Motoda over this phrase concerned a rather subtle point—the question of whether the characters ai (mutual) and wa (harmony, peace), of which the phrase ai wa shi (be harmonious) is composed, should be followed by syllable script shi to yield the phrase ai wa shi as in Inoue’s case or by syllable-script ki to yield the alternative reading ai yawaragi instead. The phrase ai wa shi in Inoue’s draft was corrected to ai yawaragi at an early point. In other words, at issue between Inoue and Motoda was not the question of the phrase fu fu ai wa shi (as husbands and wives be harmonious) as opposed to the phrase fu fu betsu ari (between husband and wife there is distinction) but rather the question of how the characters ai (mutual) and wa (harmony, peace)
ought to be pronounced. It appears to have been Motoda who stubbornly opposed the reading ai-wa shi to insist on the phrase ai-yawaragi instead. In his Kyōiku Taishi (Outline of Education) written prior to Inoue’s first draft, Motoda had avoided the phrase ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ as well, writing of ‘husband and wife being harmonious without indulging in lewdness’ (fūfu no wa shite in sezu). From Motoda’s point of view, in the simple admonition that husbands and wives ‘be harmonious’, the injunction to ‘not indulge in lewdness’ had dropped from sight. For that reason, the reading ai-yawaragi, that is ‘moderate each other’, must have appeared preferable to him. Ultimately, however, the phrase reverted to ai-wa shi, that is, ‘be harmonious’. The emperor had commissioned Motoda to examine the draft of the Rescript submitted by the cabinet once more. In Motoda’s response, the compound ai-wa was, unusually enough, followed by the syllable-script endings shi and ki in parallel (Inada 1971: 279; Kaigo 1981: 383). In other words, both sides in the dispute were presented. The final call thus appears to have been the emperor’s (Sekiguchi 2005). But at the emperor’s side stood his wife, Empress Haruko (1849–1919), whose learning in the Classics far exceeded his, and who possessed familiarity with Western learning as well. When the emperor pondered his decision, he may well have asked the empress for her opinion.

The question of the moral maxim defining the relation between husband and wife was thus settled—in favor of ‘be harmonious’ as opposed to ‘there is distinction’. But the question remained what concretely this new phrase should be supposed to mean and how it should be translated into lived practice. Public enactment of the part of ‘the wife’ in a marital relation that was ‘harmonious’ was the empress’s role.

5. An Empress Immersed in Study

The empress had played a decisive role in purging the inner palace from the back-room ‘power of the women’ (joken) conceived of as the fundamental political evil during the latter half of the Tokugawa era (Sekiguchi 2008). But she had also absorbed Japanese, Chinese and Western learning, positioning herself at the forefront of ‘womanly cultivation’ (jokyō) thereby.

The ‘Proposal for Reform of the Imperial Household Ministry’ of 1871 had stipulated: ‘The court ladies with the empress at their head, stand in need of being conversant in the states of affairs of Japan, China and the West, both past and present. They must therefore apply themselves to reading every day and, on the occasion of court lectures given to his Imperial Highness, they are to listen in attendance’. The Empress was explicitly instructed to ‘listen in attendance’ to lectures given to the emperor, surrounded by her court ladies. The subjects recommended for imperial study were books like Saigoku Rishishi Hen (Nakamura Masanao’s Japanese rendition of Samuel Smiles’ Self-Help) in the emperor’s case and texts like the Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters), the Lienu Zhuan (Biographies of Exemplary Women) and the Dijian Tushuo (Illustrated Mirror of Emperors) in the case of the empress. In November of that year, the empress began to be given separate lectures as well. The court scholar who would ultimately be in charge of these lectures was Motoda Nagazane (Katano 1996).

Motoda began his instruction, upon the empress’s express wish, with readings from the Dijian Tushuo, a collection of historical legends and events centered on the emperors of the Chinese past. Their actions were divided into good deeds and bad deeds, presented under headings styled as four-character phrases. An empress who understood Confucianism and conformed to its norms on her own initiative thus entered the stage. During court lectures to the emperor, she continued to be present as well.

In 1876, Motoda gave the ‘The Ospreys Cry’ (Guansui) and the ‘Locusts’ (Zhongsi) poems from the Classic of Songs together with Uesugi Yōzan’s Jokun (Lessons for Women) to the empress as
a present. In 1878, he lectured to the empress and the court ladies on Yōzan’s *Rō-ga-kokoro* (The Heart of an Old Man). Next, he lectured on Benjamin Franklin’s ‘Twelve Virtues’. (‘Chastity’ had been removed from Franklin’s list of ‘Thirteen Virtues’, presumably because it was mostly concerned with sexual liberties taken by men.) In Motoda’s selection, Japan, China and the West were represented on an equal footing.

Haruko thus also became familiar with the idea of the ‘mother of the people’ contained in Yōzan’s *Jokun*. When Yōzan had spoken of ‘the mother of the people’ (*kokumin no haha*) and ‘the wise lady of our state’ (*waga kuni no kenfujin*), he had used the character *koku* or *kuni* to indicate a domain. Now, however, a mother of ‘the people of Japan’ was to appear. This ‘mother of the people’ (Haruko) would breed silkworms on her own, undertake an inspection of the Tomioka Spinning Mill (1873) and exhort people to use domestic products.

At the same time, Empress Haruko engaged in the business of women’s education. In November 1871, on the day on which she first received her own court lectures, she gave an audience to five young girls about to be sent to study abroad with the Iwakura Mission. According to the *Meiji Tennō-ki* (Chronicles of the Meiji Emperor), she sent them off with the ‘august exhortation to study assiduously day and night. After achieving their task, they should expect to return to Japan to serve as models for all women and girls’ (Kunaichō (Imperial Household Agency) 1968–1977, vol. 2: 580). In 1873, the empress visited the Tokyo Girls’ School (*Tōkyō Jogakkō*), the first of many imperial visits she would pay to schools for girls. In the rescript she bestowed on the occasion of her attendance of the opening ceremony for the Tokyo Women’s Normal School (*Tōkyō Joshi Shihan Gakkō*) in 1875, she spelled out ‘women’s education’ (*joshi kyōiku*) in Confucian fashion as ‘womanly cultivation’ (*jokyō*):

> When I learned during last year that the erection of this school had been planned in order to cultivate the roots of women’s education, I could not resist being overwhelmed by joy... It is my heart-felt wish that from now on this school will turn to grow and thrive and bring the beautiful fruit of womanly cultivation to bear throughout the nation.15

---


15. During the Tokugawa period, the training of women in reading and writing in addition to sewing was generally emphasized. Whereas in China instruction of women in the reading and writing of characters was shunned, in Japan, particularly in the cities, instruction in reading and writing was forcefully advocated as a prerequisite for service. Kaibara Ekiken, for example, writes in his *Joshi o Oshiyuru Hō* that ‘they must also be made to learn otoko moji (men’s script)’, that is, Chinese characters. The main texts for studying reading and writing among women were the *Onna Daigaku* and the *Onna Imagawa* (*Imagawa* for Women). To know how to read and write these texts meant being able to read and write cursive script and formal epistolary style. Likewise, reading texts like the *Onna Daigaku Takarabako* (A Treasure Chest of Greater Learning for Women), in which the *Onna Daigaku* was contained, or the *Onna Daigaku Oshiegusa* (A Greater Learning for Women Primer) required an ability to read texts mixing Chinese characters with Japanese syllable script. Arcane techniques of writing, as seen in the *chirashigaki* (writings in a scattered hand) practiced among court ladies, were also highly developed. Chinese Studies, on the other hand, was the domain of men. Women were forbidden to pursue them by their parents. (For the case of Tadano Makuzu, compare Sekiguchi 2005: 73.) The case of Aoyama Chise, recounted under the heading ‘A student of writing and reading’ by Yamakawa Kikue in her *Buke no Josei* (Women of the Warrior Houses), who gained the opportunity to study Chinese texts during the final years of the shogunate, was an exception. As private and domain schools in villages and towns greatly increased in numbers during the latter half of the Tokugawa era and, with Chinese Studies as a foundation, Dutch Studies (and ultimately English Studies) additionally began to be absorbed, women were thus placed in a disadvantaged position. Empress Haruko’s exhortation for women to devote themselves to scholarship, with Chinese and English Studies attributed considerable weight, must be seen against this background.
In the place of daimyo’s wives berated as ‘self-indulgent’ by Ogyū Sorai, and of a shogun’s consort ensconced as its resident spirit in the inner palace (Sekiguchi 2008), an empress conversant in Confucianism, who would grandly receive an international mission in ‘audience’, breed silkworms in her palace, aspire to become ‘the mother of the people’ and place herself at the forefront of ‘women’s education’ qua ‘womanly cultivation’, had taken to the stage. Displaying her ‘august austerity’, she also led the people in practicing the virtue of ‘parsimony’.

6. The ‘Four Books for Women’
Among the books especially close to the empress’s heart were the ‘Four Books for Women’ (Chinese: Nü Sishu; Japanese: Onna Shisho), above all the ‘Instructions for the Inner Quarters’ (Chinese: Neixun; Japanese: Naikun). Haruko’s education had started at an early age, and the ‘Four Books for Women’ played an important role in it.

‘The Four Books for Women’ was the collective title given to four representative works in the genre of moral primers for girls: the ‘Admonitions for Women’ (Nüjie) by the Later Han dynasty scholar Ban Zhao, the ‘Analects for Women’ (Nü Lunyu) by the Tang scholar Song Ruozhao, the ‘Instructions for the Inner Quarters’ (Neixun) by the Ming Empress Renxiao and the ‘Record of Paradigms for Women’ (Nü Fanjie Lu) by Chaste Widow Wang, also of the Ming dynasty.

Ban Zhao, the author of the ‘Admonitions for Women’, was a great Confucian scholar who continued her elder brother Ban Gu’s work on the Hanshu (History of the Former Han) and brought it to conclusion. Because she was also entrusted with the education of the empress and her court ladies, she was reverently addressed as Cao Dagu (Venerable Learned Lady Cao) and came to possess great authority. The Four Books were originally compiled and annotated as such by Wang Xiang, the ‘Chaste Widow Wang’s son’, under the title Nü Sishu Jizhu (Commentaries on the Four Books for Women). They were made popular henceforth as a women’s version of the canonic ‘Four Books’ of Song Confucianism.

Thirty-two years after the publication of the ‘Four Books for Women’ in China, a Japanese collection of texts called Onna shisho (Four Books for Women) was published in Japan by Tsujihara Genpo (1656). Although the Japanese collection carried the same name, its contents diverged in many regards from the Chinese. Above all, the ‘Record of Paradigms for Women’ was not found in it, and the ‘Classic of Filiality for Women’ (Onna Kokyō) was included in its stead. The text of its ‘Admonitions for Women’ (Jokai) evinced some subtle differences when compared with the Chinese original as well.

In its second chapter, ‘Husband and Wife’, the ‘Admonitions for Women’ assert that girls ought to be educated like boys, if only for the purpose of ‘serving their husbands’. Tsujihara rendered this passage as follows: ‘Girls too, from the age of eight, should be educated in the way of the Lesser Learning.

---

18. The readings Joshisho and Jokkyō instead of Onna Shisho and Onna Kokyō are also possible. In fact, the former readings were the ones assigned by Tsujihara. However, the latter readings are established in general usage today (including, secondary literature and library catalogues) and for this reason retained here.
And from the age of fifteen, they should be induced into the way of the Greater Learning. Did not Sima Wengong speak thus as well?19

Girls are to proceed, according to this, like boys from a study of the Way of the Lesser Learning to a study of the Way of the Greater Learning. But the Book of Rites (Liji) states in its Neize (Pattern of the Family) chapter: ‘At the age of seven, boys and girls did not occupy the same mat’. And:

A girl at the age of ten ceased to go out [from the women’s apartments]. Her governess taught her [the arts of] pleasing speech and manners, to be docile and obedient, to handle the hempen fibers, to deal with the cocoons, to weave silks and form fillets, to learn [all] woman’s work, how to furnish garments, to watch the sacrifices, to supply the liquors and sauces, to fill the various stands and dishes with pickles and brine, and to assist in setting forth the appurtenances for the ceremonies’ (Legge 1885: 479).

Given these express stipulations, an interpretation of the ‘Admonition for Women’ to the extent that girls ought to proceed to the Greater Learning just like boys is rather difficult. But once Tsujihara had maintained that ‘the Way of the Greater Learning’ ought to be taught to women as well, the actual appearance of a ‘Greater Learning for Women’ (Onna Daigaku) in Japan may have been just a question of time. An ‘Analects for Women’ (Onna Rongo), a ‘Lesser Learning for Women’ (Onna Shogaku) and a ‘Doctrine of the Mean for Women’ (Onna Chiuyo) were also published in close succession and circulated widely. The contents of these three books were not markedly different from the former. There is no indication, on the other hand, that the Chinese ‘Four Books for Women’ were ever reprinted in Japan. The Chinese ‘Four Books for Women’ were thus effectively introduced to Japan only during the Tokugawa era’s waning years, accompanied by a scathing critique of Tsujihara’s texts.

Nishizaka Seian, a Confucian scholar retained by the Maeda house and trained in the Shōhei-kō Confucian academy operated by the Tokugawa on order of the shogun, attached Japanese reading marks and headnotes to the Chinese text of Wang Xiang’s ‘Commentaries’. These were published under the Japanese title Kotei Onna Shisho (The Four Books for Women Annotated and Revised) in 1854. Two copies of Wang Xiang’s Chinese text—that is, the version that included ‘Paradigms for Women’—had been brought to Japan via Nagasaki as ‘imported’ books from China and were sent to two senior councilors in 1850. It is likely that Seian published his Kotei Onna Shisho after becoming acquainted with one of these copies through his connections to the Shōhei Academy.

The distinguishing mark of this newly reintroduced book, the ‘Paradigms for Women’, was the great emphasis it laid on the education of girls. In its chapters on ‘Talent and Virtue’, it criticizes the saying ‘Virtue in girls is the absence of talent’ with the words: ‘This phrase is particularly wrong’. It then continues by praising ‘the learning of girls’ as follows: ‘A girl, of course, can be virtuous without having talent, but those with talent are certain to be lauded for possessing virtue’. This was a revival of the doctrine contained in ‘Admonitions for Women’ that women ought to be educated. And it was

19. In the original, the same passage reads: ‘According to the rites (li), at the age of eight, one begins to be instructed in reading and writing; at the age of fifteen, one arrives at the [Greater] Learning. Why should this not be taken as the rule [for the education of girls as well]?’ Translator’s note: I have benefited from Nancy Lee Swann’s translation in De Bary and Bloom (1999: 823) in rendering this latter quote, but introduced a number of changes. Li does not refer to the ‘[Classic of] Rites’ (Ch. Liji, J: Raiki) here, as there is no such passage in the latter, but to what is established as being in accordance with ‘the rites’ or ‘books on rites’ in general. Compare Yamazaki (1986: 89).
this *Kōtei Onna Shisho* in which the future empress Haruko was instructed in her native Ichijō house.20 Seian’s edition of the ‘Four Books’ thus arrived in the hands of its predestined reader.

Among the empress’s instructors, Wakae Nioko appears to have exerted an especially profound influence over the young girl. After the Imperial Renovation, Wakae became known for frequently submitting memorials to the government—to the point of earning herself the nickname *kenpaku onna* (the memorial woman). The same Wakae would later write the first Japanese commentary on the ‘Four Books for Women’, published after her death under the title *Wage Onna Shisho* (The Four Books for Women Explained in Japanese) in 1883.21 The empress, on the other hand, would take it on herself to popularize the ‘Four Books for Women’ as the basic text for girls’ education in modern Japan. In 1893, Nishizaka Seian’s edition was published by the director of the Women’s Higher Normal School (*Joshi Kōtō Shihan Gakkō*) and distributed to its students.22

The late Meiji and early Taishō eras were periods in which the ideal of the ‘good wife and wise mother’ appeared in danger of being eroded as the *Seitō* (Bluestockings) magazine was founded and ‘new women’ flamboyantly walked onto the scene. But they also were periods in which publications relating to the ‘Four Books for Women’ appeared in close succession (presumably in an attempt to counter these trends) and knowledge of the ‘Four Books for Women’ spread beyond the confines of the upper classes. Thus in 1911, Kaetsu Takako, the founder and principal of the Japan Women’s Commercial School (*Nihon Joshi Shōgyō Gakkō*), also published a ‘Commentary on the Four Books for Women’ (*Onna Shisho Hyōshaku*) based on the edition by Tsujihara Genpo (containing the ‘Classic of Filiality for Women’ instead of the ‘Record of Paradigms for Women’) from her school’s own press.

In her editorial remarks, Kaetsu praised Tsujihara’s edition highly, stating that ‘it is written in an accessible style that can be easily understood by everyone’. In the following year, Tanahashi Ayako, the founder and principal of the Tokyo Higher School for Women (*Tōkyō Kōtō Jogakkō*), published an annotated translation of the ‘Commentaries on the Four Books for Women’ by Wang Xiang that contained the ‘Record of Paradigms for Women’ in an appendix, under the title *Onna Shisho* (The Four Books for Women) from the publisher Taishō Shoin. Tanahashi writes that she presented a copy of this book to Empress Haruko.23

---

20. Given that the *Nü Sishu Jizhu* by Wang Xiang was exceedingly rare, and judging from remarks contained in two biographies published after the Empress’s death, it appears safe to assume that Haruko did not study the *Nü Sishu Jizhu* compiled and edited by Wang Xiang, but the *Kōtei Onna Shisho* annotated and edited on its basis by Nishizaka Seian (Sekiguchi 2001: 40).


22. This was according to an account by Hosokawa Junjirō, contained in Suzuki (1937).

23. The ‘Empress Dowager Shōken’ (as Empress Haruko was remembered posthumously) and the ‘Four Books for Women’ were subsequently also called upon under the ‘system of total war’. Given this fact, Fukaya (1966) has sought to link the idea of ‘a good wife and a wise mother’ to the thought of the *Kokutai no Hongi* (Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan) of 1937 and *Shinmin no Michi* (The Way of the [Imperial] Subject) of 1941. But this amounts to an anachronism, given that this concept had developed from the final years of the Tokugawa into the Meiji era. Under the ‘system of total war’ that aimed at a mobilization of all available resources, all this may have seemed the same, but the ‘family state’ (*kazoku kokka*) propagated by the *Kokutai no Hongi* and *Shinmin no Michi* amounted in effect to a negation of the ‘family state’ as propagated during the late Meiji period by Inoue Tetsujirō. To conceive of them as identical would be a mistake. See Sekiguchi (2007: 258).
7. From Girls’ Schools to ‘Wise Mothers and Good Wives’

In his preface to Kōtei Onna Shishō, Seian greatly stressed that if girls grow up to be wise, they will be wise wives and wise mothers: ‘Ah, if a woman is wise then she is certain to be wise as she becomes a wife, and certain to be wise as she becomes a mother. How can a wise wife and a wise mother fail to bear and raise wise children and descendants?’ Something that might be spoken of as a late Tokugawa discourse on the ‘wise wife and wise mother’ (kenpu kenbo) made its appearance here. It constituted a direct precursor to the discourse on the ‘wise mother and good wife’ (kenbo ryōsai) or ‘good wife and wise mother’ (ryōsai kenbo) of the Meiji period (Sekiguchi 2001).

During the waning years of the Tokugawa shogunate, Yoshida Shōin had been the first to propose the founding of schools for girls following the ideals set forth in ‘Admonitions for Women’ in order to raise ‘chaste wives and ardent women’. The idea of ‘educating women’, as originally spelled out in Cao Dagu’s ‘Admonitions for Women’, had been passed down in China. But due to the overriding rule that ‘a girl at the age of ten ceased to go out’ contained in the Classic of Rites, it was difficult for the idea of a school for girls to develop there. In Japan, on the other hand, where this overriding rule had not penetrated deeply, Shōin could easily proceed from the Confucian idea of ‘educating women’ to the idea of a school for girls.

The Bukyō Zenshō Koroku (Lectures on the Bukyō Zenshō), a collection of lectures by Yoshida Shōin on the ‘Collected Writings on Martial Teachings’ by Yamaga Sokō, contains a lecture titled ‘The Instruction of Children and Descendants’ (Shison Kyōkai). In it, Shōin declares the ‘instruction of girls’ a pivotal need and refers to the ‘Admonitions for Women in Seven Chapters’ (Nüjie Qibian) contained in the ‘Biographies of Exemplary Women’ (Lienu Zhua) section of the History of the Later Han as ‘excellent’. With the words ‘Regarding the instruction of women, I have a further plan’ he then continues to suggest the founding of ‘schools for girls’ (jogakkō): ‘Throughout the realm, a sort of nunneries (nibo no gotoki mono) ought to be built and designated as schools for girls’.24 Women excelling in chastity, learning and women’s crafts were to be chosen as teachers, and the education of ‘the daughters of scholar-officials (shitaifu)’ entrusted to them. Drawing the reader’s attention to Cao Dagu’s ‘Admonitions for Women’, Shōin explains: ‘In her Admonitions for Women, Cao Dagu bemoans the fact that women lack education. She writes: “According to the rites, at the age of eight, one begins to be instructed in reading and writing; at the age of fifteen, one arrives at the [Greater] Learning. Why should this not be taken as the rule [for the education of girls as well]?” I must say that this, before all, captured my heart’ (Yoshida 1934–1936, vol. 3: 219). Shōin further proposed to appoint women who are ‘both chaste and learned’ as court ladies and to let them ‘lead womanly cultivation’—thus placing the rear palace at the forefront of women’s education.

It would be difficult to measure a direct influence of Shōin’s ideas on women’s education in the Meiji period. But several of the ‘School Regulations’ (Gakusei) that were issued by the old domains in the first Meiji years contained stipulations for the founding of ‘schools for girls’ (jogakkō or jokō) already. An influence of Shōin’s thought in addition to Western models can thus easily be surmised.

Nakamura Masanao, another pioneer in women’s education, had also crossed ways with Nishizaka Seian during the shogunate’s final years. Nakamura attended the Shōhe Academy as a boarding

24. In the margins Shōin notes that, according to his memory, there was a line in the Song tongjian to the extent that ‘schools of Greater Learning for girls were erected in the state of Jin’.
student. In his library, a copy of Seian’s Kötei Onna Shishō is preserved with his handwritten notes. Nakamura’s contributions to the Meiroku Zasshi (Journal of the Meiji Six Society) are frequently cited as containing the first instances of the ideal of the ‘wise mother and good wife’ (kenbo ryōsai) or ‘good wife and wise mother’ (ryōsai kenbo) widely propagated during the Meiji period, although Nakamura actually never used this phrase on this journal’s pages.25 This ideal is then commonly portrayed as a specifically ‘modern idea’, a ‘product of modernity’ or a ‘modern invention’.26

Certainly, Nakamura’s assertion: ‘If the mothers are superb, they can have superb children, and Japan can become a splendid country . . . ’27 in his essay ‘On Creating Good Mothers’ (Zenryō naru Haha o Tsukuru Setsu) published in Meiroku Zasshi in 1875 evinces the direct influence of Samuel Smiles’ Character published four years earlier (1871) and translated by Nakamura under the title Seiyō Hinkoron (On Western Moral Conduct) between 1878 and 1880.28 In this sense, Nakamura’s notion of ‘wise mothers’ can clearly be said to have been influenced by modern Western thought. In the same essay, however, Nakamura also argued that if women were given ‘religious and moral education’ in order to ‘reform the character of the people’, their ‘mind and spirit’ would be passed on through ‘education in the womb’ (taikyō).

The idea of ‘education in the womb’ is found also in the ‘Paradigms for Women’ (under the heading ‘On Mothers’). In other words, a notion found in the ‘Four Books for Women’ is here conjoined to the notion of Western authors like Smiles that a civilized nation was best brought about through education for motherhood. In their demand for ‘women’s education’ (Chinese: jiao nü; Japanese: joshi kyōiku), these two traditions met.

To the extent that Nakamura’s thought can be considered the immediate source of the Meiji idea of ‘a wise mother and a good wife’, this notion represented a specifically ‘modern idea’. It formed only after the beginning of the ‘modern era’ (Meiji) in Japan. However, it would be a mistake to claim that it had formed under the influence of Western thought alone. Already before the introduction of Western thought began in earnest, there was the discourse on ‘wise wives and wise mothers’ (kenpu kenbo) dating back to the final years of the shogunate.

When the Peers School for Girls (Kazoku Jogakkō) was inaugurated in 1885, the empress decreed that ‘the literature of Japan, China and the West, be thoroughly perused. All deeds and words by women that

25. That Nakamura used the phrase kenbo ryōsai in the Meiroku Zasshi was first maintained by Fukaya Masashi, in his seminal Ryōsai Kenbo Shugi ni Kyoiku (Education according to the Principle of a Good Wife and a Wise Mother) (Fukaya 1966: 156). Fukaya’s assertion has since been quoted by Koyama (1991: 10) and Sechiyama (1996: 143) among others.

26. There is plenty of scholarship on the concept of ‘a good wife and a wise mother’, but the understanding that it was specifically modern and owed to Western influence during the Meiji period has become standard in recent years (see e.g. Nolte and Hastings 1991; Molony and Uno 2005). The present article approaches the history of Japan as a process marked by both continuity and change (expansion) since the Tokugawa period and seeks to emphasize the influence not only of Western but also of traditional Confucian thought. Fukaya (1966) emphasized that a ‘Confucian attitude (jukyōteki na monjo) provided the foundation’ as well. But this ‘Confucian attitude’ was understood by him entirely in the sense of an attitude characterized by passivity and submission. However, especially during the waning years of the shogunate and around the time of the Meiji Renovation, a discourse of ‘wise wives and wise mothers’ was introduced that projected an image of women as social agents who actively sustain not only the house (family) but also the state.


28. Nakamura’s wording resembles the following passage in Smiles’ book: ‘if, as we hold it to be the case, the moral condition of a people mainly depends upon the education of the home, then the education of women is to be regarded as a matter of national importance’ (Smiles 1997: 57).
are apt to be taken as models, are to be recorded and compiled’ (Kunaichō (Imperial Household Agency) 1968–1977, Vol. 6: 824). This work was completed under the title Fujo Kagami (Mirror for Women) in 1887 under the editorship of Nishimura Shigeki and subsequently adopted as a textbook in the Peers School for Girls. There were not a few overlaps between Fujo Kagami on the one hand and Nakamura’s translation of Smiles’ Character on the other: Washington’s mother, Goethe’s mother, the wife of Grotius (the Dutch philosopher and theologian) and Lady Franklin (the wife of John Franklin, the British explorer of the Polar Sea) were called on by both, be it as paradigms for mothers or as paradigms for wives. But in Fujo Kagami, they were joined by Mencius’ mother, for example.

This new text, furthermore, contained model women of a type not found in Smiles. ‘Thesta, the wife of Polyxenus’, for example, commands attention. Thesta, the sister of the tyrant of Syracuse, stood up for her husband who had fled after a failed attempt at rebellion. She ‘would rather prefer to be called the wife of Polyxenus, who his hiding away in some corner of the world’, she tells Dionysius to his face, ‘than considered the sister of a tyrant and securely live in Syracuse’. When ‘the people of Syracuse’ heard this, they ‘admired her womanly virtue’. After ‘the king’s tyrannical reign was superseded (aratamarite) in the due course of things, and all affairs were restored to their original state (moto ni fukushin)’, they continued to ‘venerate her until the end of her life, according her the rites due to a queen’.29 Similarly, ‘Vittoria, the wife of Fernando, Marquess of Pescara’ is depicted as remonstrating with her husband in a letter, causing him to reflect on his deeds. Both represented types of remonstrating women, one as the ruler’s sister and the other as the ruler’s wife. The figure of the remonstrating wife reflects the ideal of the ‘wise woman’ (kenjo) found also in some of the jokun texts (particularly the ‘Classic of Filial Piety for Women) and in the Gokoku Onna Taiheiki (The Taiheiki of Women Protecting the Realm).

Included among the paragons of female virtue were also Joan of Arc, who is said to have led the French army in a popular war of national liberation,30 ‘Laura’, whose scholarship was marveled in the Italian town of Bologna and who rose to become a teacher at its university,31 and Lady Wilson,

29. Translator’s note: the ultimate source of this account is Plutarch’s ‘Dion’. The Japanese translation contained in the Fujo Kagami, however, appears to be based on Elizabeth Starling’s Noble Deeds of Woman; or, Examples of Female Courage and Virtue, first published in London in 1848. A Japanese translation of Starling’s book by Miyazaki Yoshikuni had been published under the title Seiyō Retsujoden (Biographies of Exemplary Women from the West) in 1879. The wording of this translation and of the story contained in Fujo Kagami are in large parts, though not entirely, identical. The Latin spelling ‘Thesta’ (Zestā in Japanese) used also by Starling as opposed to the original ‘Theste’ in Greek, suggests that her account derived from Juan Luis Vives’ Latin rendition of this story in De Institutione Foeminae Christianae of 1524, whose English translation during the same decade as The Instruction of a Cristen Woman became ‘the most popular conduct book for women in Tudor England and beyond’ (Charles Fantazzi in Vives 2000: 31).

30. The virtue of ‘courage’, as exemplified in Smiles’ Character, is rendered as gōyuū (‘bravery’, ‘valor’, ‘intrepidity’ or ‘prowess’) in Nakamura’s Seiyō Hinkoron. As the latter applied the term gōyuū to women as well, their martial qualities were thus praised even higher than intended by Smiles’ original. Smiles’ heading ‘Education of women in courage’, for example, was rendered by Nakamura as ‘Fuujin no mata gōyuū narashimuru kyōiku o uku beshi’ (Women as well must receive an education that makes them intrepid and brave). The ‘brave Catherine Douglas’, who is described in Smiles’ book (under the heading ‘Heroism of Women’, op. cit. p. 152) as having ‘with the hereditary courage of her family, boldly thrust her arm across the door instead of [its missing] bar’ in order to save the life of James II of Scotland (‘until, her arm being broken, the conspirators burst into the room with drawn swords and daggers, overthrowing the ladies, who, though unarmed, still endeavored to resist them’) is offered in Japan as an ‘example of a woman who displayed the prowess of a heroine [fuujin eiyū]’. The figure of a woman leading an army into battle on horseback, likewise, was not found in Smiles’ original. The Fujo Kagami drew up precisely such an image in the illustration that accompanied its section on Joan of Arc.

31. Translator’s note: Laura Maria Caterina Bassi (1711–1778).
who had provided education to girls in the East Indies—girls ‘who had acquiesced in their ignorance and lack of enlightenment, relating almost like slaves to men’. All these women resembled the empress Haruko who would at times remonstrate with her still immature husband, immerse herself in scholarship and even be compared with the legendary Empress Jingū, said to have led an invasion of the Three Korean Kingdoms.

In other words, the Fujo Kagami was nothing less than a modern version of the ‘Biographies of Exemplary Women’ (J: Retsujoden, Ch: Lienu Zhuan), extending its coverage beyond the Chinese past to include not only Japan but also the West. It called upon women, particularly women of the upper class, to break with a past in which ‘princesses’ had indulged in luxury and to follow the example of an empress who presented a ‘model for women’ (fujo no kikan) instead. With an age in which ‘people’s rights’ (minken) and ‘women’s rights’ (joken) were proclaimed in mind, the empress took it upon herself to embody ‘the virtues of a wife’ (futoku) and to educate women, particularly the upper-class daughters sent to the Peers School for Girls, in the learning of Japan, China and the West alike. Empress Haruko thus assumed the role of Cao Dagu for a modern age.

8. ‘Obedience’ and ‘Division of Labor’

As the Imperial Rescript on Education was promulgated, the Meiji government commissioned Inoue Tetsujirō with the task of writing its commentary on his return from studying philosophy in Germany. Inoue’s draft was subsequently submitted to Inoue Kowashi, Nakamura Masano and Katō Hiroyuki for review, revised accordingly and, following ‘imperial inspection’, published as Chokugo Engi (Commentary on the Imperial Rescript on Education) ‘by Inoue Tetsujirō with a foreword by Minister of Education Yoshikawa Akimasa’ in 1891.

In explaining the meaning of the phrase ‘As husbands and wives be harmonious’, Inoue’s Commentary made explicit note of ‘obedience’ (fukuj) by the wife toward her husband: ‘A wife must yield to her husband. She must not recklessly go against his will’. And: ‘As long as a husband’s words are not entirely unjustified and against morality, a wife is to obey them to the greatest extent possible and thereby maintain her faithfulness. She is not to counter him in a reckless way’. At the same time, he explained the established phrase ‘men pursue their duties without, while women govern within’ in terms of ‘division of labor’. ‘Once a family is formed, a necessity for husband and wife to divide their labors arises. That is, the husband goes outside to pursue his business, while the wife stays inside to perform the housework’. The injunction ‘As husbands and wives be harmonious’ was thus disseminated as the principle on which society was founded with the glosses ‘obedience’ and ‘division of labor’ attached.

In other words, although the phrase ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ disappeared, the social role assignments for men and women encapsulated in the maxim ‘men pursue their duties without, while women govern within’ and the relation of domination that inevitably accompanied them not only survived, but were called upon anew as the ultimate foundation of social morality. But for this social norm to be firmly established, there also was a need to create a type of women who would live up to it. In this regard, the presence of Empress Haruko, as a woman who had internalized Confucian gender norms and led the way in ‘womanly cultivation’ as well as ‘women’s education’, proved invaluable.

9. Conclusion

The Meiji Renovation represented to a significant degree the realization of desires harbored by Confucians and samurai scholars during the later Tokugawa period. In order to realize these ideals, a purge of the ‘power of the women’ (joken) in the shogun’s and daimyo’s inner quarters had been called for, and a ruler’s consort that would ‘govern within’, that is, rule over the inner palace, came to be seen as
indispensable. With Haruko assuming this role and projecting the image of an ‘empress’ who lived up to Confucian ideals, joken also in its alternate reading as ‘women’s rights’ could be relegated to oblivion (Sekiguchi 2008). A model wife that accorded with the injunction ‘As husbands and wives be harmonious’ was to capture the popular imagination instead.

In order for the injunction ‘As husband and wife be harmonious’ (understood to imply the dichotomous opposition and hierarchical ordering of yin and yang) to replace the classical Confucian proposition ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ and become established as a generally accepted social norm—a revised edition of the classical phrase, so to speak, that could succeed to its function—a type of wife was called for that would not only possess the strength to put up with any husband, but actually take the lead in submitting to him. It was Empress Haruko who made this ideal come to life. At the same time, her image as a new Empress Jingū is reminiscent of the ‘wise wife’ portrayed by the Gokoku Onna Taiheiki who would not shrink from remonstrating with her husband, not only if protection of the house but also if protection of the state required it.

**Glossary of Select Terms**

| ai-yawaragi 相和き | jiao nü 教女 |
| ai-wa shi 相和し | Jokai 女誡 |
| Ban Gu 班固 | jōkan no majiwari 感情の交 |
| Ban Zhao 斑昭 | joken 女権 |
| Bei-O Kairan Jikki 米欧回覧実記 | jokō 女校 |
| Bukyō Zensho Kōroku 武教全書講録 | jokun 女訓 |
| Cao Dagu 曹大家 | jokyō 女教 |
| chirashigaki 散らし書き | Joshi o Oshiyuru Hō 教女子法 |
| Chokugo Engi 勅語例義 | Keibara Eikken (Ekken) 貝原益軒 |
| chōyō jo ari 長幼有叙 | keitei ni yū ni 兄弟二友二 |
| Danjo Kōsai Ron 男女交際論 | kenbo ryōsai 賢母良妻 |
| Dijian Tushuo 帝鑑圖説 | kenjo 賢女 |
| fūfu ai-wa shi 夫婦相和し | kengaku onna 建白女 |
| fūfu betsu ari 夫婦有別 | kengaku kenbo 賢婦賢母 |
| fūfu naka yoku 夫婦中能 | Kötei Onna Shisho 校訂 女四書 |
| fūfu no wa shite in sezu 夫婦ノ和シテ淫セス | Kyōiki Taishi 教育大旨 |
| Fujio kagami 婦女鏡 | li 禮 |
| fujio no kikan 婦女の亀鑑 | Li Ji 禮記 |
| futoka 婦徳 | Minglun 明倫 |
| gakusei 学制 | Minkan Keizairoku 民間経済録 |
| Gokoku Onna Taiheiki 護國女太平記 | nai sei 内政 |
| gorin 五行 | Nakatsu Ryūbetsu no Sho 中津留別の書 |
| gōyō 剛勇 | Neixun 内訓 |
| Guansui 閣睢 | Neize 内則 |
| Haruko 美子 | nibō no gotok mono 隈房ノ如き者 |
| ie no uchi no koto ni kokoro o mochii いえの内に心を用ひ | Nihon Fujin Ron 日本婦人論 |
| Nishizaka Seian 西坂成廸 |
References


Maruyama, Masao. 1986. ‘Bunmeiron no Gairyaku’ o Yomu ‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ and ‘As Husbands and Wives be Harmonious’: The Trajectory of ‘Men Pursue their Duties Without while Women Govern Within’. In Meiji Tennô-ki (Chronicles of Emperor Meiji). Tokyo: Meiji Shoin 79–132.


——. 2003. ‘Fûfu Betsu Ari’ kara ‘Fûfu Ai-ware shi’ e – ‘Otoko wa Sato o Tsutome Onna wa Uchi o Oanu’ no Yukue’ (From ‘Between Husband and Wife there is Distinction’ to ‘As Husbands and Wives be Harmonious’: The Trajectory of ‘Men Pursue their Duties Without while Women Govern Within’). Josei Shigaku 13: 18–29.


Watanabe, Hiroshi. 2000. ‘Fûfu betsu ari’ to ‘Fûfu ai-ware shi’ (‘Between husband and wife there is distinction’ and ‘As husbands and wives be harmonious’). In Chûgoku—Shakai to Bunke 15: 208–243.


