Waza and Feminine Virtue in Japan

Le waza et la vertu féminine au Japon

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In Japan, the term waza is often used in the context of physical education, sports, and traditional performing arts. Often, the word does not refer to specific sport techniques but to a higher level of finesse, prowess, or the techniques and mindsets associated with the Japanese martial arts or the Japanese traditional performing arts. Kumiko Ikuta (1987) analyzed waza by revealing the learning processes of Japanese traditional performing arts such as kabuki, ka-do (flower arrangement art), sa-do (Japanese tea ceremonial art), and budo (Japanese martial arts). Akitomo Kaneko (2002) also explored how waza transmits to one another, especially by focusing on internal physical feelings during movements based on morphological kinematics theories. These perspectives are the most exciting part for many people ranging from academic scholars to coaching staff working in the sports-related fields. Indeed, the usage of waza in this project, both in technique and culture, was most likely inspired by interest in the kinds of physical techniques and feats that have a certain mystique about them. However, the word waza does not only refer to such mystical feats; it can also be used in a more general sense to refer to everyday conduct, behavior, or tasks. This latter usage of waza is featured prominently in classical Japanese historical sources, especially in the literature related to feminine education. How was the term waza treated in the Japanese historical context? What type of effect has it had on Japanese female education throughout history?

First, this paper focuses on waza as a term describing everyday behavior, rather than a mystical or rare feat of the body. Adopting the perspective of femininity, the relationship between women and waza is explored. After that, the discussion is expanded to the quest of relevance between women and naginata, which was treated as Japanese female martial weapons. Last, we consider how the practice of naginata affected feminine virtue in Japan.
Defining Waza

First, we should examine how waza わざ is defined in the dictionary. Shogakukan’s Japanese dictionary lists the following eight definitions:

1. A profound or highly purposive act or event
2. The conscious performance of an action; a deed; a feat
3. A Buddhist ceremony or undertaking; a Buddhist memorial service
4. A customary act performed for a purpose, undertaking, job, or occupation
An event; a matter; a term used to call attention to profound circumstances, conditions, or situations underlying a matter
5. Art; skill; technique; prowess
6. Formalized skills and techniques pitted in contests, especially in martial arts such as sumo, judo, and kendo
7. A curse; divine malediction; harm

The above entry lists seven possible Kanji characters for the term: 業, 技, 仕, 神, 幹, and 幹. These characters share the same kunyomi reading (native Japanese reading) of waza. However, each of them has a different onyomi reading (a reading used when the character appears in a Sino-Japanese compound) and meaning. The entry lists the onyomi readings and meanings as follows:

業 Gō; gō
An undertaking or job; academic or artistic pursuit; a vocation; a livelihood; a service
Examples: 業績 gō-seki [accomplishment], 業務 gō-mu [work or duty], 学業 gakugo [studies], 事業 jiyō [business undertaking].

When read as a waza, the term refers to an act, behavior, or ability.
Examples: 神業 kami-waza [divine act or Shinto ritual], 仕業 shi-waza [deed <often negative>], 早業 haya-waza [swift work]

Archaic readings: narihahi, kotowaza, nari, tsutomu

技 Gi
Manual action; handicraft; handiwork; skill (especially in martial arts, sports, or performance); ability; a general term for the skill to conduct something; ability to proceed with a job; prowess
Examples: 技巧 gi-kō [finesse], 技術 gi-jutsu [technology], 技量 gi-ryō [competence], 演技 en-gi [performance], 心技体 shin-gi-tai [mental-technical-physical]

Archaic readings: waza, ayatsuru

工 Kō; ku
Ability to use tools or craft; something useful and valuable with ingenuity; technical sophistication to produce an elaborate product; technical wizardry.
Examples: 工芸 kō-gei [craftsmanship], 工作 kō-saku [handicraft], 工匠芸 kōshō
工匠芸 kōshō [artisan], 細工芸 ai-ku [craftsmanship]; archaic readings: takumi, tsukuru.

伎 Gi
Same as 技Gi
Archaic readings: shiwasa, takumi

芸 Gei
To cultivate horticulture; to create or attain something; an academic; (visual) artist; musician; or a dramatic skill, talent, technique, or ability
Examples: 芸者 gei-sha [geisha], 芸術 gei-jutsu [art], 芸能 gei-nō [artistic performance], 芸芸 bun-gei [literature and art]

術 Jutsu
The specific technique, approach, method, measure, or way for a craft, art, or academic pursuit
Examples: 術語 jutsu-go [nomenclature], 学術 gaku-jutsu [scholarship], 手術 shu-jutsu [surgery], 妖術 yō-jutsu [sorcery].

幹 Kan
The ability to process or implement things; living up to one’s responsibilities; being in command of things; ability
Examples: 幹才 kan-sai [genius], 幹略 kan-ryaku [strategy], 幹能 sai-kan [capability].

Thus, waza is a considerably broad Japanese term that can be written in different ways. In other words, waza can be used in several contexts, and even in a particular context, it can have multiple meanings.

Keeping this in mind, we examine two examples that illustrate the relationship between waza and women.

Waza and Women According to Early-Modern Jokunsyo: References to Waza in Kaibara’s Wazoku doujikun

For the first example, we explore how the term waza was used in passages about female instruction in an 18th-century text and what these usages tell us about feminine norms in Japan’s early modern period (1568–1867).

The selected text is Wazoku Dōjikun (和俗童子訓: “Precepts for Children in Vernacular Japanese”). Compiled in 1710 by Kaibara Ekiken, Wazoku Dōjikun was Japan’s first completely developed textbook. The fifth volume of the book is titled “Instructions for Teaching Girls.” Seeing an opportunity in the government’s educational policy, a bookseller at the time published a simplified, vernacular version of this volume with the title Onna Daigaku (女大学: The Great Learning for Women). Onna Daigaku had circulated widely across Japan. Onna Daigaku and other texts on the instructions for women were referred to with the blanket term jokun-sho (女訓書: Instructional Texts for Women). Shizuko Ogawa identified two broad categories of early modern jokun-sho. The first category consisted of jokun-sho which were published in the 17th or early-18th centuries (the first half of the Tokugawa period [1603–1867]). There are four noted
texts in this category, collectively known as the onna shi sho [女四書: The Four Texts for Women]. These text consisted of Nakae Toju’s Kagami Kusa (鏡草), Kumazawa Banzan’s Joshikun (女子訓), Jokunshō (女訓抄: unknown author), and Nakamura Tekisai’s Hime Kagami (比売鏡). In some cases, the text either copied the entire content of a Chinese instructional text for women or adopted the same Buddhist ideology that underpinned the source. In other cases, the author expressed his ideas on matter. In the second category, jokun-sho were published in the late-18th and early-19th centuries (the latter half of the Tokugawa period). These were published as part of the textbooks used in terakoya schools known as ōraimono (往来物), which included instructional content for calligraphy and reading.¹

Wazoku Dōjikun was more of a general school textbook than jokun-sho.¹⁰ However, the text that stemmed from Wazoku Dōjikun—Onna Daigaku—was a jokun-sho of the ōraimono category. Furthermore, being a bestseller at the time, Onna Daigaku continued to have a major impact on women’s education throughout the rest of the early modern period and even into the early years of the modern period (1868–1945).¹¹

This article focuses on the “Instructions for Teaching Girls”, a chapter in Kaibara’s Wazoku Dōjikun, the key jokun-sho of early modern Japan. I examined instances in the chapter where the word waza was featured and what these examples revealed about how the concept was related to women.¹²

Figure 1 ¹³. Onna-Daigaku

The Four Practices of a Woman

Waza appears 18 times in the chapter, “Instructions for Teaching Girls.” These instances were grouped into nine categories. The usage in most cases confirmed the aforementioned fourth dictionary definition (a customary act performed for a purpose,
an undertaking, a job, an occupation). Hence, the word was used to describe women’s duties at home. This concept of feminine waza, as used in the text, was underpinned by a foundational set of feminine norms, expressed as the Four Practices (四行). Wazoku Dōjikun describes the Four Practices as follows:

女に四行あり。一に婦徳、二に婦言、三に婦容、四に婦功。此四は女のつとめ行なふべきわざ也。婦徳とは、心だてよきを云。心貞しく、いさぎよく、和順なるを徳とす。婦言とは、ことばのよきを云。いつはれる事をいはず。ことばをゑらびていひ、にげ(似気)なき悪言をいたさず。いふべき時いひて、ふ用な
る事をいはず。人共いふ事をきさらはざる也。婦容とは、かたちのよきを云。あ
ながらに、かざりをもはら(専)にせざれども、女は、かたち(容)なよか（なよやかノ義）にて、おわし(促)からず、よそひのあてはかに、身もちきれいに、いさぎよく、衣服もあかづきけがれなき、是婦容なり。婦容とは、女のつ
とむべきわざなり。ぬひ物をし、う(紡)み・つむ(績)ぎをし、衣服をととのへて、むべきわざを事とし、たはふれあそび・わらふ事をこのま
ず。食物、飲物をいさぎよくして、しうと・おつと・賓客にすすむる、是婦
功なり。此四は女人の職分也。つとめずんばあるべからず。心を用ひてつとめ
なば、たれもなるべきわざ也。おこたりすさみて、其職分をむなしくすべから
す。"
The passage described feminine works as a woman’s waza. In this usage, waza meant art or skill. The passage mentioned some specific skills, such as needlework and cooking. However, the author was less concerned with the tasks and more concerned with the obedient attitude with which the woman was to undertake them. According to the author, a woman was expected to cook meals for her parents-in-law, husband, and any guests unreservedly. Thus, a woman’s role within the dynamics of the patrilineal household was to sew and cook masterfully so as not to offend the other parties in that household.

Figure 2. Example of “Feminine works” from Onna Daigaku

References to Waza

The above passage on the Four Practices is not the only part of the “Instructions for Teaching Girls” volume that contains references to waza. The references to the term also appear in the following passages (see Table 1). I have underlined and placed the term waza here in bold. In most cases, the term is used to refer to feminine works, but there are also instances where it refers to other components of the Four Practices (e.g., ethics, speech, or comportment). To make it easier to understand, the relevant practices are mentioned in Table 1.

See table in annex.

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Waza Instances and The Four Practices of a Women
To summarize, we have seen nine instances where the word “waza” appears in the chapter “Instructions for Teaching Girls” in Kaibara’s *Wazoku Dōjikun*: once in the section on the four undertakings and eight other times (as listed in Table 1). Overall, the instances of waza reflect two perspectives. In the first perspective, waza refers to specific skills such as sewing and spinning. These usages occur frequently. However, notably, these references to waza were not just about acquiring objective proficiency in a skill. On the one hand, waza, in these instances, was associated with the outward “works,” but it was also simultaneously associated with the inward “ethics” which described an idealized feminine attitude, and the author advocated the teaching of the waza from both perspectives. Fusa Sekiguchi (1981) argued that needlework formed an essential part of a woman’s development in the Tokugawa (1603–1867) and Meiji (1868–1912) periods, citing evidence from the Tokugawa-period *jokun-sho*. One of the *jokun-sho* was *Wazoku Dōjikun*. In fact, Fusa Sekiguchi used this source to argue that needlework instruction was linked to the attainment of “ethics.”

Thus, although needlework (or dressmaking) waza were objective skills and unrelated to moral disposition, the authors of the *jokun-sho* (Instructional Texts for Women) of early-modern Japan treated them as inseparable from the “ethics” of waza and advocated that they should be taught as such.

**Naginata and Feminine Virtue**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the strong connection between waza, which included sewing, spinning, and needlework, and that of female ethics or virtue were revealed. In the future, we would like to focus on Naginata and consider the relationship between naginata and feminine virtue.

**The Relationship between Naginata Practice and Feminine Virtue in Medieval and Early-Modern Japan**

Another example of how a woman’s waza was closely connected with feminine virtue is naginata practice. When naginata (a pole weapon) became a weapon for women to wield, and in the discussion of how it became a martial art, Akira Yuasa said the following:

The naginata was superseded by the yari (a straight-headed spear) following changes in warfare, specifically, the shift from single combat to fighting in tactical formations toward the end of the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and the introduction of artillery units during the Sengoku period (1467–1568). Unfortunately, compared to other martial arts, little is known about naginata practice in the Tokugawa period due to a dearth of historical sources (such as missives and other documents).

In the Tokugawa period, naginata would adorn the entranceways of high-ranking samurai households and would be used as decorative weapons in Daimyo Processions. Furthermore, they were used exclusively by priests or wives and daughters of samurai. The naginata served, especially, as a tool for training the wives and daughters of samurai households in manners and etiquette. It was therefore used to instill in them the feminine virtues of docility, obedience, chastity, and propriety. While the samurai sons would perform kenjutsu as an openly practiced art (*omote-gei*), the daughters...
would learn naginata discreetly (裏芸, ura-gei). This is why little is known about
naginata training during this time.\footnote{24}

Tamio Nakamura said something similar:
After artillery was brought to Tanegashima in 1543, battle tactics changed significantly;
naginata ceased to play the main role in battles and was superseded by the yari and the
gun. When the Summer Siege of Osaka ended in 1615, Japan entered an age of peace
called Genna-Enbu (元和偃武; “Peace after the Genna era”). During this age, the
practical use of naginata further decreased, and it ended up becoming an ornamental
weapon, a bridal good, or a pastime for young women.\footnote{18}

The above represents the established narrative, and these words also appear in Nippon
Budokan’s Nippon no Budō (Japanese Martial Arts).\footnote{20} However, no historical sources
provide clear answers as to why naginata became a pastime for girls in samurai
households.\footnote{25} However, I found some insights into the matter from the Wakan Sansai Zue
(和漢三才図会; “Illustrated Sino-Japanese Encyclopedia”).

Capable of cutting, slicing, striking, or stabbing, the naginata could serve as a sword,
spear, or staff. The weapons were highly prized among women, priests, and physicians.
\footnote{22}

Wakan Sansai Zue is a Japanese encyclopedia composed by Terajima Ryoan in 1712. As
Terajima included the above information in the encyclopedia, we can assume that it
was a widespread belief in 1712 that naginata was sought after because of its versatility.
However, the entry only tells us that naginata was a woman’s weapon; it does not tell
us whether women regularly practiced naginata or whether the practice impacted the
cultivation of feminine virtue. As mentioned earlier, according to the established
narrative (advocated by Yuasa and Maehata), naginata practice played a role in the
cultivation of feminine virtue during the Tokugawa period;\footnote{23} however, no historical
sources have demonstrated clear evidence to confirm this.

Sakuma Shozan’s Jokun (女訓: Instruction for Females) is an early modern source that
includes content on female naginata training. Jokun says the following:

をんなのちからわざすれば、ほねもこはく、ゆびもふとく、しかたいやしな
るものなれば、ちからわざせぬかたよろしけもうしならはせど、のちのちも
ののふのつまともならん身の、太刀長刀のあつかひ、一とほり心得ざるもいか
がなれば、としせぬあひだに、師をえらびて、よきほどにこころ得侍るべきな
り。\footnote{29}

A girl is customarily advised to avoid muscular waza because if she engages in feats of
strength, her bones will grow tougher, her fingers fatter, and she will appear coarse
and vulgar. However, as a maiden will marry into a samurai household, it would be
unwise for her to not be skilled in the tachi or naginata. Accordingly, in a quiet time of
the year, a teacher should be selected, and the girl should learn to train as appropriate.
\footnote{25}

Sakuma Shozun composed Jokun in 1840, when he was 29 years old.\footnote{26} In the above
passage, Sakuma argues that as long as a girl is to marry into a samurai household in
the future, she should practice naginata to learn the general techniques. However,
similar to the entry in the Wakan Sansai Zue encyclopedia, this source does not provide
more evidence for a linkage between naginata and feminine virtue; the author only
mentions the need for girls to master naginata techniques.
The Relationship between Naginata and Feminine Virtue in Modern Japan

A close linkage between female naginata practice and feminine virtue becomes apparent toward the end of Japan’s modern period (1868–1945). We see this in Kunihiko Mitamura’s *Dai-Nippon Naginata-dō Kyōhan* (大日本薙刀道教範: “Greater Japan Guide to Teaching the Way of Naginata”). In the text’s 14th chapter, titled Naginata-dō for Girls”, Mitamura said the following:

現時行はれる薙刀道の修錬も等しく武士道、神ながらの道の涵養に目的を置くものにして、時に望んでそれに應ずる心構へを修得すると共に、それに依つて起るべき和順貞節の婦徳を涵養するものなり。而してそれら武道に依つて来る身体の鍛錬は附随のものにして又當然の事なり

Naginata-dō, as practiced today, serves the purpose of fostering bushido and Shintoism. It teaches girls to always be vigilant, and from this spirit arises the feminine virtues of docility and chastity. Needless to say, all this is accompanied by the physical fitness one gains from training in the martial arts.

Figure 3 29. Kunihiko Mitamura

In the above passage, Mitamura argues that naginata instills the necessary mindset for cultivating bushido and Shintoism and has the added effect of fostering the feminine virtues of docility and chastity. In other words, he saw naginata practices as closely connected to the cultivation of feminine virtue. However, the following question arises: Why is naginata’s role in feminine virtues not featured in early modern literature?

This source was first published in 1939. In the previous year, the National Mobilization Law (国家総動員法, Kokka Sōdōin Hō) was enacted, placing the nation on wartime
footing. In the preface to Dai-Nippon Naginata-dō Kyōhan, Mitamura commented on the situation:

現時再び歐州大戦の火蓋は切られつつあり。・・・然らば武備の充実は一日も怠る可きにあらず、而して武備の充実に最も涵養なるは、國民の尚武の氣風にあり、文武は共に鳥の兩翼、車の雙輪の如きものにして、一も缺く可からざるものなり。30

Once again, a great war looms in Europe. (…) During this time, we must not be remiss for one moment in preparing the nation for conflict. The military resource we cultivate is the valorous spirit of the populace. The literary and military arts are like the wings of a bird or the wheels of a vehicle; both are important. 31

With these words, Mitamura gave a rallying cry, encouraging a militant spirit in the populace in response to the National Mobilization Law. Subsequently, he went on to identify the training of females as a key part of the task of preparing the populace:

而して國民尚武の氣風に最も重大なる影響を與ふるものは母の訓育也。夫れ夫婦は人倫の大網にして、父子兄弟の由て生ずる所なる、一家盛衰治亂の界、全く茲にあり、故に女子を教戒せずんばあるべからず。男子何程剛腹にして、武士道を守るとも婦人道を失う時は一家治まらず、子孫の教戒、亦廃絶するに至る豊惜まざるべけんや。然らば武の精神を練成するにも、男子のそれよりも、婦女子の訓育にこそ最も重大なるものあることは自明なり。31

The action that will contribute the most to cultivating a valorous spirit in the people is the training of mothers. 32

A married couple constitutes the broad outline for all morality, as it is the origin of all patrilineal and fraternal relations. The household’s fortunes—whether it prospers or declines, becomes orderly or chaotic—are all down to the married couple. Therefore, it is essential to instruct girls properly. Regardless of how robust boys are and how well they observe bushido, if the woman strays from her wisely behavior, the household will surely fall into disorder, ruining the grandchildren’s chances of receiving proper education. How can such a family avoid an ignominy?

Hence, when it comes to fostering the warrior spirit, it is even more important to train women than men. However, today, many people act in an effeminate and frivolous manner. When morality declines and is cast aside such that the mind becomes vapid, it causes the national fundamentals to be lost. People become bewitched with new things in the West. The only path to remedy this is to adopt the spirit of bushido in the Shinto way. 33

Kunihiko Mitamura was a practitioner of kendo and held the title Kendō Kyōshi (kendo instructor). He was adopted by Akinori Mitamura, the 14th head of the Tendo-ryū (Tendo School), and subsequently married Akinori’s adopted daughter Chiyo and studied the history of the school. 34 Tendo-ryū is a famous school for naginata. The year 1941 saw the founding of a Tendo academy for training instructors of Tendo-ryū naginata-jutsu. As the head of the academy, Kunihiko Mitamura devoted himself to girls’ education. In this role, he instructed girls in the art of naginata. 35

Thus, the ideas that Mitamura expressed in the two excerpts from the preface of Dai-Nippon Naginata-dō Kyōhan reflect his personal background, his passion for girls’ education, and the broader circumstances of the time. Notably, he associated naginata
with the cultivation of feminine virtue because of the belief that “the action that will contribute the most to cultivating a valorous spirit in people is the training of mothers.”

Mitamura elaborated on the relationship between naginata and the cultivation of feminine virtues in *Nippon Naginata-dō Kyōhān*’s 14th chapter (“Naginata-dō for girls”). Notably, he distinguishes between naginata-jutsu (naginata techniques) and naginata-dō (the “way” of naginata).

We must distinguish between “naginata-jutsu” and “naginata-dō.” “Naginata-jutsu” stems from the combat techniques that used naginata as a weapon. The term has a narrow sense; it denotes the physical techniques and mental fortitude through which one prepares the body to defend or attack as necessary to ensure victory when the critical moment arises. “Naginata-dō,” on the other hand, denotes the martial virtues that practitioners cultivate by refining their naginata-jutsu. These martial virtues are synonymous with the Imperial Way and consist of three components: the *Nigi-Mitama* (tranquil soul), the *Ara-Mitama* (wild soul), and the *Kushi-Mitama* (wise soul). Colloquially, it is the Yamato-Damashii (Japanese spirit) or Kuni-Tama (homeland spirit). This ethos has its greatest value in the practice of bushido.

Generally speaking, naginata-dō represents the corpus, while naginata-jutsu represents the operation. Over the ages, practitioners have been admonished as follows: those who start the jutsu but know not the dō are perilous, and those who know the dō but still fail to cultivate the virtues are pitiful.

According to Mitamura, naginata-jutsu narrowly refers to the specific techniques associated with wielding the naginata, while naginata-dō refers broadly to the martial virtue a practitioner would cultivate by refining their naginata-jutsu. Mitamura explains that this martial virtue is synonymous with the Imperial Way, Yamato-Damashii, and bushido. Subsequently, he introduces his anatomical analogy; naginata-dō represents the corpus (the main body), while naginata-jutsu represents the operation of this body. Finally, he argues that one who starts learning naginata-jutsu must understand naginata-dō and follow the way until they cultivate martial virtue.

The purpose of naginata-dō is to cultivate an ever-greater spirit of patriotism in the practitioner and, in turn, physical fitness and all the virtues that follow, including...
valor, honor, and decorum, as well as self-discipline, forbearance, composure, agility, modesty, vigor, and resolve. These are qualities that the women of Japan should embody to be good wives and mothers.

Naginata-dō should not be confined to the dojo; its true value is only realized once practitioners apply the ethos in their daily lives such that it guides their everyday conduct. Unless one applies naginata-dō in the real world, no matter how proficient they are in jutsu, they will, as I mentioned earlier, be deemed as one who is versed in jutsu but does not attain the dō.

Mitamura described the purpose of naginata-dō. It first cultivates a mental disposition. This disposition leads to physical fitness, from which the practitioner cultivates qualities such as valor, honor, decorum, self-discipline, and so on. The intended end result, Mitamura argued, is that the practitioners will become model Japanese women embodying the qualities of a good wife and mother.

Mitamura also discussed the benefits of naginata-jutsu, highlighting the efficacy of full-body exercise, breathing techniques, muscle training, and mental discipline. However, he argued that naginata-dō was superior:

Such are the benefits of naginata-jutsu. The principal benefit is the attainment of the spirit of the Imperial Way. The spirit cultivates greater patriotism and fosters the virtues of obedient Japanese femininity, with unsparing, selfless devotion to duty and polite, decorous, and elegant qualities, underpinned by an ever-firm, unassailable faith. Thus, the ultimate goal is to master the dō; the jutsu is but a means to that end, for, in training in the jutsu, one naturally attains dō. Moreover, it is the spiritual faculties that play the greatest role when it comes to applying jutsu in practice. In this respect, Japanese naginata-dō differs fundamentally from Western sports, in which physical education takes precedence over spiritual cultivation.

The gist of Mitamura’s argument here is that practitioners use naginata-jutsu to attain the spirit of the Imperial Way and a spirit of patriotism, through which they cultivate the obedience that characterizes Japanese femininity. According to Mitamura, jutsu is the means to achieve dō, and training in jutsu naturally leads to the dō. Thus, the greatest importance is placed on the spiritual aspects; in this respect, Mitamura identifies a fundamental difference from Western sports, in which the spiritual is subservient to the physical.

In summary, although Mitamura distinguished between naginata-dō and naginata-jutsu, he ultimately treated them as being interconnected. He also argued that the goal was to cultivate, through this connection, the spiritual faculties of a Japanese subject and that from these faculties arise feminine virtue.

Naginata was originally denoted as the eponymous weapon and the technical art of wielding it in battle. As the times changed, it came to be seen as a weapon for women and a means to cultivate Japanese feminine virtue. This was especially evident in modern Japan; reflecting the fraught times, people started seeing naginata-dō as
intrinsically linked with the cultivation of feminine virtue, as clearly expressed in the aforementioned source.

**Figure 4** Hou-ken-no-sahou (奉剣之作法)

![Image of two individuals in traditional attire]

**Figure 5** Basic training (基本練習)

![Image of a group of individuals in a training session]

This paper introduced two cases illustrating the linkage between the Japanese word waza and the cultivation of feminine virtues in Japanese women. The “Instructions for Teaching Girls” volume in Wazoku Dōjikun highlighted four kinds of waza corresponding to the Four Practices. These consisted of feminine virtue, feminine comportment, feminine speech, and feminine works. In the case of feminine works, waza referred to
the skills that women were expected to practice, especially domestic skills such as needlework and cooking. Notably, the author was more concerned with the connection of these skills with the feminine attitudinal norms described in feminine virtue. Inspired by an underlying feminine norm in which the woman’s place is in the home, the author highlighted the interpersonal role of a woman within a system of household relations headed by the paterfamilias; namely, the woman must show consideration for others in the household and avoid offending them. Feminine virtue was seen as having a particularly important role as it underpinned feminine behavioral norms and waza.

54 The sources concerning naginata and femininity seldom used the word waza. However, naginata was a reasonable theme to explore as waza can mean “formalized skills and techniques pitted in contests, especially in martial arts such as sumo, judo, and kendo,” and given that waza can be written as the character “術,” which in a Kanji compound takes on the onyomi reading of jutsu” (as in “naginata-jutsu”). My analysis of naginata and the cultivation of feminine virtue revealed that the linkage between the two was most evident in modern Japan. I showed that Kunihiko Mitamura linked the two on the grounds that naginata-dō and naginata-jutsu facilitates the cultivation of core Japanese spiritual values—bushido and Shintoism. This narrative would have reflected the climate of the time to a large extent, but it was probably also informed and affected by the basic feminine norms that were carried over from the early modern period. These norms, as communicated in the jokun-sho of that period, saw feminine virtue as fundamental to a woman’s waza. The hypothetical model of the idea through these discussions is shown below in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Hypothetical Model of the Process of Waza and Female virtue in Japan

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However, my assertion here remains speculative in the absence of sufficient evidence; I intend to investigate this matter further in a future study.
NOTES

3. This is the Hiragana characters for the term of waza.
13. Kaibara Ekiken (original author), 女大学 Onna Daigaku (Oosaka: Kashiwahara Seimon et al. Published, 1848).
16. Kaibara Ekiken (original author), 女大学 Onna Daigaku (Oosaka: Kashiwahara Seimon et al. Published, 1848).
19. Tamio Nakamura, 近代なぎなた小史, 近代なぎなた名著選集 Kindai Naginata Shōshi [A Short History of the Naginata in Modern Japan], in 近代なぎなた名著選集 Kindai Naginata Meicho Senshū [Selected Works on the Naginata in Modern Japan], ed. ... (Tokyo: Hon no Tomosha, 2004), 4–24.


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