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Citation

Kanke, T., & Morooka, J. (2024). A Historical Survey of Speech and Education at Mission Schools in Modern Japan. *Proceedings Of The Tenth Conference Of The International Society For The Study Of Argumentation*, 479-489. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4107827>

Version: Publisher's Version

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4107827>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

A Historical Survey of Speech and Education at Mission Schools in Modern Japan

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ABSTRACT: This paper conducts archival research to shed light on speech and debate education in mission schools in modern Japan. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, many Protestant missionaries arrived in Japan. They opened Western-style schools based on the liberal arts tradition and provided students with opportunities to practice speech and debate both inside and outside of class. This paper presents the result of a preliminary investigation into argument practice in mission schools in modern Japan.

KEYWORDS: debate, literary society, mission schools, modern Japan, visual argument

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper conducts archival research to shed light on speech and debate education in mission schools in modern Japan. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, many Protestant missionaries arrived in Japan with the aim of spreading their Christian beliefs. As a part of their missionary efforts, they opened Western-style schools based on the liberal arts tradition. Contrary to the general belief that the Japanese oratorical culture lacks the tradition of debate and argument (Sato, 2017), many mission schools provided students with opportunities to practice speech and debate both inside and outside of class. However, speech and debate education in mission schools has been insufficiently studied thus far.

This paper presents the result of a preliminary investigation into speech and debate education in mission schools by examining published materials documenting the school histories and historical records of select literary societies. The goals of this paper are three- fold. First, this paper attempts to present an overall picture of mission schools' speech and debate education by investigating how prevalent it was among schools nationwide. Second, the paper recounts debate activities in two mission schools where debate was a major activity in their literary societies. Third, the paper looks at girls' mission schools and attempts to identify notable features in speech and debate education there. Overall, this paper argues that speech and debate education in mission schools was intended not only to improve students' speaking and argumentation skills but also to cultivate their civic virtues.

2. SPEECH AND DEBATE EDUCATION AS LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION IN MISSION SCHOOLS

Triggered by the arrival of the US Navy ships led by Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853, Japan was forced to establish diplomatic and commercial relations with the United States and other western superpowers. This so-called opening of the country (*kaikoku*) enabled foreign missionaries to reside in seven designated ports in Japan. According to Ballhatchet (2003), “[t]he majority of missionaries were American, with contingents from Britain and Canada, and from the mainstream denominations: Presbyterian and Reformed, Congregational, Methodist, Episcopal, and Baptist” (p. 42). Foreign missionaries began to pursue missionary activities more vigorously after the longstanding ban on Christianity was lifted in 1873. Believing that education was “[t]he most easily accessible way ...to reach the hearts of the Japanese” (Ritter, 1898, p. 22), foreign missionaries invested heavily in educational work. As a result, a total of 70 Protestant mission schools—18 for boys and 52 for girls—were founded by 1889 (Watanabe, 2008, p. 144).

Against this historical backdrop, it was natural that early education in mission schools was under the strong influence of American colleges. For example, the curriculum of Toogijuku which went into effect in 1878 was modeled after that of Indiana Asbury University (now DePauw University), or the alma mater of John Ing who spearheaded the development of the curriculum (Kitahara, 2002, pp. 90-93). Another example is Doshisha Academy (now Doshisha University). The school was founded in 1875 by Joe Nijima who was ordained as a Protestant minister in the United States. Soon after the opening of the school, a literary society called *Dōshinkōsha* was formed and students held speech meetings there just like members of college literary societies in the United States (Aoyama, 1931, pp. 91-92). Like Toogijuku and Doshisha Academy, many other mission schools had one or more literary societies in the Meiji period (1868-1912), including Meiji Gakuin (now Meiji Gakuin University), St. Paul’s School (now Rikkyo University), Tokyo Eiwa School (now Aoyama Gakuin University), and Tōyō Eiwa School (now Azabu Junior and Senior High School). Literary societies were also established in all-girls mission schools such as Ferris Seminary (now Ferris Jyogakuin), Tōyō Eiwa Girls’ School (now Tōyō Eiwa University), and Shinei Girls’ School (a precursor of Joshigakuin Junior and Senior High School).

Common activities in literary societies included speech (oration), debate, declamation, and essay writing. Performing arts such as theater and music were also a substantial portion of literary societies’ activities in some mission schools, especially girls’ schools. Just like American colleges at the time, liberal arts were at the heart of mission schools’ education in the Meiji period (Sato, 2006). According to Schmidt (1957), college literary societies in the United States represented “probably the most liberal part of the ‘liberal’ education of the nineteenth century” (p. 99). This holds largely true for mission schools in Meiji Japan. Literary societies performed important civic functions by providing students with a space to speak up and engage in free and open discourse.

Activities in literary societies were often conducted in both Japanese and English. Many mission schools founded in the 1870s and 1880s were initially named Eiwa or Waei Gakkō (literally, English-Japanese or Japanese-English Schools). As the names suggest, mission schools attracted students for their intensive English education. The by-laws of Eiwa Bungakukai, a literary society at Meiji Gakuin, stipulated that composition, speech,

and debate be practiced in both English and Japanese (Kikuta, 1970, p. 80). Kwansei Gakuin even had two literary societies: Seinenkai (the Youth Association) and Eigo Bungakukai (the English Literary Society). Members of the Youth Association practiced oration, debate, elocution, declamation, and essay writing mostly in Japanese (Kwansei Gakuin Kirisutokyōshugi Kyōiku Kenkyūshitsu, 1976). Members of the English Literary Society, on the other hand, undertook “their business transactions and literary exercises” in English (Kanzaki, 2005, p. 220).

It should also be noted that literary societies allowed students to socialize with those from other mission schools. Literary societies of some mission schools periodically held joint meetings. Such intermural events usually lasted longer, involved more activities, and attracted larger audiences. For example, St. Paul’s School, Tokyo Eiwa School, Tōyō Eiwa School, and Meiji Gakuin formed Dōmeibungakukai (an allied literary society) and held joint meetings in the late 1880s (Kikuta, 1970, pp. 97-98). Invitations were also sent to several girls’ mission schools as well. To mention one example, a joint meeting on February 22, 1889, garnered over 350 participants, including students and faculty from five girls’ schools (Miyaji, 1970, pp.105-106). Students from Shinei Girls’ School even performed music on stage. As no co-educational schools existed during this period, these joint meetings were rare opportunities for male and female students to learn together in the same physical setting.

3. DEBATE ACTIVITIES IN MISSION SCHOOLS: THE CASES OF MEIJI GAKUIN AND TOOGIJUKU

This section focuses on debate activities in mission schools. Although the details of debate activities in mission schools remain largely unexplored, our preliminary archival research has found that debate was a major activity in the literary societies of at least two mission schools in the 1870s and 1880s: Toogijuku in Hirosaki (the northern part of Japan) and Meiji Gakuin in Tokyo (the eastern part of Japan). Debate was also regularly conducted in the Youth Association of Kwansei Gakuin in Osaka (the central part of Japan) in the early 1890s. This geographical diffusion hints at the spread of debate education among mission schools across Japan.

Eiwa Bungakukai, a literary society at Meiji Gakuin, was established in 1884. As noted above, its goals were to develop students’ writing, speaking, and debating skills in Japanese and English. From the beginning debate was the main feature of its regular programs. A debate usually took place towards the end of a regular program following several speeches. All students at Meiji Gakuin were divided into two opposing teams in advance and the team leader and secretary assigned students to debate on behalf of the team (Miyaji, 1970, p. 103). No information about the number of speakers is available, but different students were chosen to debate each time so that all students had the chance to participate in a debate. The two teams sat opposite each other during a debate, including those students who were not assigned to speak on that day (Miyaji, 1970, p. 103). Both sides spoke several times and a decision was made by a majority vote.

The procedures for debating in Toogijuku’s literary society were a little different. The society met every other Saturday and typically opened a regular program with the declamation of famous works by several members. Other students then read their own

essays. Afterwards a debate and orations took place in that order (Kimura, 1931, p. 27; Yamaga, 1931, p. 6). Students were selected for a debate in advance and prepared arguments either in favor of or in opposition to the topic. They took turns giving speeches during a debate until all major arguments were exhausted. The chair then opened the floor to further debate and any member was allowed to voice their opinions on the topic. After a while, the chair brought such “floor debate” to closure, listened to opinions from two “jurors”, and rendered a decision. A critic was designated separately to offer an assessment of the arguments and speeches presented in the debate (Yamaga, 1931, p. 6).

These records suggest that there was no standard way to conduct a debate across mission schools during this period. Debates in mission schools seemed to be unstructured compared to the contemporary debate we are familiar with. Although the way debate was conducted at Toogijuku and Meiji Gakuin differed in many ways, they had one thing in common: All students got a chance to speak and have their opinions taken seriously by others. Branstetter (2022) argues that many people in the Meiji period came to appreciate democratic sensibilities by taking part in *enzetsukai* (speech societies) and *tōronkai* (discussion or debate groups). Similarly, we hold that the back-and-forth exchange of arguments within the literary societies not only helped students to cultivate argumentation skills but also served to inculcate democratic values and norms in them.

As far as topics are concerned, students at Meiji Gakuin and Toogijuku debated a variety of controversial issues. The topics used in Meiji Gakuin’s literary society during 1884 and 1888 ranged from “should men and women be granted equal rights?” (October 10, 1884) and “should the youth and students be given freedom to discuss politics?” (October 30, 1885) to “should the military spending be cut to build a railroad system in Japan” (March 5, 1886) (Kikuta, 1970). Although no records of specific debate topics used in Toogijuku’s literary society can be found, Hanshiro Kimura (1931), a school alumnus, recalls that political, economic, and local topics were mainly debated during his school years (from 1875 to 1881). The debate topics used in these two literary societies suggest that students at Toogijuku and Meiji Gakuin were given some leeway in debating controversial social issues including political ones—albeit within the confines of the literary societies—even after the Assembly Ordinance in 1880 prohibited students from even attending political meetings in public (Nakamura, 1993, p. 21). As the above topic list shows, students at Meiji Gakuin even debated the pros and cons of the restrictions on students’ right to speak about political matters in public.

Lastly, debate meetings in mission schools sometimes had real-world consequences. For example, a speech and debate meeting by Toogijuku’s literary society was made open to the public every fourth Saturday. According to Kitahara (2002), these public events served to inform local people of current news, stimulated the formation of local speech and debate associations, and thereby laid foundation for the growth of popular rights movements (*jiyū minken undō*) in Hirosaki (pp. 110-119). Students occasionally convened debates on pressing topics facing the school as well. For example, when Ayao Hattori, then the school manager at Meiji Gakuin, asked for students’ opinions on the relocation of the school campus, the literary society decided to hold a debate on whether the campus should be relocated to Ushigome or Takanawadai. The debate took place on March 26, 1888 and resulted in favor of Ushigome by a vote of 23 to 22 (Kikuta, 1970, p. 88). Although it is doubtful that the result of the debate affected the school’s decision, it nevertheless illustrates that school authorities valued the activities of the literary society.

4. DEBATE EDUCATION IN MISSIONS SCHOOLS FOR GIRLS

This section has two parts. The first part delineates the characteristics of debate education in mission schools by examining the debate topics we discovered through our archival research. Some mission schools for girls had debates with variety of topics on different occasions. In the second part, we demonstrate how female students engaged in argumentative practice through the analysis of a play performed by students in Ferris Seminary.

We had access to the historical records of the mission schools for girls listed in Table 1. Most of our research for this paper was conducted utilizing school history books that were compiled and published in the 1970s and 1980s for commemorative occasions, such as the school's 100-year anniversary. The availability of historical evidence in these books seems varied as each school had been affected differently by disasters, such as big earthquakes or war during the century since the school's founding.

Mission Schools for Girls	Location	Year of Est.
Ferris Seminary (Ferris Waei Jogakkō, now Ferris Jogakuin)	Yokohama	1870
Hara Girls' School (Hara Jogakkō, now Joshi Gakuin)	Tokyo	1870
Kyōritsu Girls' School (Kyōritsu Jogakkō)	Yokohama	1871
Rikkyo Girls' School (Rikkyo Jogakkō)	Tokyo	1877
Baika Girls' School (Baika Jogakkō)	Osaka	1878
Kwassui Girls' School (Kwassui Jogakkō)	Nagasaki	1879
Yokohama Eiwa Girls' School (Yokohama Eiwa Jogakkō)	Yokohama	1880
Tōyō Eiwa Girls' School (Tōyō Eiwa Jogakkō)	Tokyo	1884
Kanazawa Girls' School (Kanazawa Jogakkō, now Hokuiku Gakuin)	Kanazawa	1885
Sōshin Girls' School (Sōshin Jogakkō)	Yokohama	1886
Matsuyama Girls' School (Matsuyama Jogakkō)	Matsuyama	1886
Friends Girls' School (Furendo Jogakkō)	Tokyo	1887
St. Hilda's School (Kōran Jogakkō)	Tokyo	1887
Kinjō Girls' School (Kinjō Jogakkō)	Nagoya	1889

Table 1: The list of mission schools for girls this paper studied

In general, debate activities were not as widely practiced in girls' schools as in boys' schools. Out of 14 girls' schools surveyed in this study, only four schools published records of debate activities during the 1870s and 1880s. For example, the major activities of the literary society at Tōyō Eiwa Girls' School were musical performance, declamation, poetry reading, tableau vivant, and discussion (Miyasaka, 1975, p. 182). Tomita (1998) also suggests that theatrical performance was more characteristic of literary societies at all-girls mission schools than at their male counterparts (p. 95). It does not follow, however, that female students in mission schools had no opportunities to learn debate. For example, Keishisha and Reishisha, literary societies at Kwassui Girls' School in Nagasaki, were established to cultivate students' writing, speaking, and debating skills (Kwassui Gakuin Hyakunenshi Henshū linkai, 1980, p. 37). Table 2 shows the record of debate topics used in the three mission schools for girls.

Date	School, location and occasion	Debate proposition/topic	Source
May 1878	Hara Girls' School, Tokyo, Debate (Hara Jogakkō, Tokyo, Tōronkai)	1. Pros and cons of reading novels (Shōsetsu wo yomu no rigai) 2. Pros and cons of editing the customs or rules on Christian marriage proposal (Reiten/kyōkai kyūkon nadono kisoku wo henshū suru no rigai)	Nanaichi zappō (Kyōkai shinpō, 1879, p. 4)
June 1878		3. Is Hebrews a Letter of Paul? (Heburu sho wa hatashite pouru no tegami naru ya ina) 4. Can utilitarianism be used as an effective guide for morality? (Rigaku wa dōtoku no kyōdō sha naru ya ina)	
June 1, 1889	Ferris Seminary, Yokohama, the celebration for the opening of Van Schaick Hall (Ferris Waei Jogakkō, Yokohama, Ban sukoikku hōru kaikai shiki)	There was a “student debate on women’s suffrage (joshi senkyo ken ni kansuru seito kan no tōron)” as one of the programs during the celebration.	Ferris Waei Jogakkō rokujū nen shi (Yamamoto, 1931, p. 70)
February 27, 1892	Baika Girls' School, Osaka, a meeting for the literary society (Baika Jogakkō, Osaka, Dai nijū ikkai kōbun kai)	Which is more important for general education for women, English studies or Japanese and Chinese studies? (Futsū joshi kyōiku ni oite eigaku to wakangaku to izure ka omosuku beki)	Tsubomi (Kiji, 1892, p. 39)

Table 2: Topics debated in mission schools for girls in the Meiji period

The topics debated in the mission schools for girls were wide-ranging, depending on the school and the occasion. Hara Girls' School was one of the oldest mission schools for girls, having been established in 1870, two years after the Meiji Restoration, and had at least four debates in 1879. Nanaichi zappō, a Christian newspaper, reported that the school had “debate meetings (tōronkai),” one in May and another in June in 1879. Nanaichi also reported the “propositions for the next meeting,” which probably indicates that they regularly held monthly debate meetings at that time (Kyōkai shinpō, 1879, p. 4). In the May debate meeting, Hara had a debate on education which questions the worth of “reading novels” and also had a debate on Christian customs regarding “Christian marriage proposal” (Kyōkai shinpō, 1879, p. 4). As the meeting in June also had a topic related to Biblical interpretation of Hebrews, Hara Girls' School may have intended to use debate, at least in part, for religious education. The final debate topic from Hara was about “utilitarianism” which we surmise prompted philosophical or moral arguments in educational contexts. If Hara held debates on a monthly basis as the record suggests, it can be said that the liberal arts education that the missionary teachers attempted to promote took root in the school in the early years of the Meiji period.

Ferris Seminary is also one of the oldest mission schools in Japan. The school had a debate at the celebration for the opening of their new school auditorium, Van Schaick Hall, on June 1, 1889. It was part of a series of events for the whole day. In the morning, they had the main opening ceremony which included prayers, singing hymns and speeches by

missionaries and pastors. This was followed by a lunch reception which 70 guests attended, including the governor of Kanagawa Prefecture and Mr. Greathouse, U.S. Consul-General, both of whom made celebration speeches. The following afternoon, “the guests, the school staff and the students got together at the celebration,” where “the staff and students gave performances, such as playing instruments, delivering speeches and reciting verses” (Yamamoto, 1931, p. 71). One of these performances was the debate listed in Table 2. The exact phrasing of the proposition for the debate is unknown. However, it was reported that “the student debate on women’s suffrage received a big round of applause” (Yamamoto, 1931, p. 71). The topic suggests that political arguments were exchanged by students in the debate, which “drew the attention of the entire audience, reflecting the view of the times” (Yamamoto, 1931, p. 71). Around the time this debate was held, women’s rights, including women’s suffrage, were being vigorously advocated by the general public. For example, *Jogaku zasshi*, “Japan’s first mass-circulation periodical designed for women” (Brownstein, 1980, p. 319), published a series of editorials on women’s suffrage (Komyoji, 1888a, 1888b). All in all, the debate illustrates Ferris students’ willingness to actively engage in social issues.

Baika Girls’ School in Osaka was recorded having a debate in 1892. The topic was school education for girls, asking students to compare the importance of English studies and Japanese and Chinese studies. Around that time, the westernization trend present since the Meiji Restoration shifted toward nationalism, “starting from the Normanton Incident in 1886,” followed by “the government failures in Treaty Revision” and subsequent social changes such as “the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889” and “the establishment of the Imperial Diet” in the next year (Ferris *Jogakuin 150 nenshi hensan iinkai*, 2022, p. 124). The criticism against westernization at the time put “mission schools into financial trouble” (Yamamoto, 1931, p. 81). The debate in Baika can be seen as one of the responses to that outside criticism. Also, it should be noted that the debate was held within a meeting of literary society (*kōbun kai*), hence it is possible that the debate topic was proposed by the students.

While it is true that more mission schools for girls adopted liberal arts education selectively and focused more on activities such as drama, song, recitation and reading, through study of the debate topics from the three mission schools for women, we surmise that some schools engaged in debate and argumentation quite vigorously. Each school had to adapt to the changing social circumstances caused by the major political transition from the feudal Edo government to a modern Meiji government and chose to have different focuses in accordance with their own pedagogical principles. In the next section, we discuss a play performed at Ferris Seminary, which exemplifies another display of arguments made by female students in mission schools.

On May 26, 1887, about two years before the women’s suffrage debate discussed earlier, Ferris Seminary held a social gathering which was attended by two hundred people including the students’ families and “the ladies and gentlemen specially invited by the school” (Shinpō, 1887, p. 38). As part of the program, a *hanjimon* play was performed, which exhibited arguments for women’s rights. Other events on the program included music performances, songs and an English recitation of an excerpt from Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. The *hanjimon* play was performed by students and presumably written by the students at Ferris Seminary.

The term, hanjimonono, originally comes from a type of riddle expressed by letters and visual images, which was popular in the Edo period (Hanjimonono, n.d.). A similar form of expression in Western culture is “rebus,” which is “a puzzle device that combines the use of illustrated pictures with individual letters to depict words or phrases” (Rebus, n.d.). Both hanjimonono and rebus ask viewers to make certain efforts to reveal the hidden message/information that they present. When viewers find the answers, it eventually gives them a sense of accomplishment. The hanjimonono play at Ferris had four scenes which asked the audience to find the answer to the riddle the play as a whole presented, as Jogaku zasshi described “there was a hanjimonono” which expressed “one assertion (kakugen)” out of “the four parts of the play” (Shinpō, 1887, p. 39).

Jogaku zasshi described the four scenes of the play as follows. Scene one is on women’s clothes. The character Nakase, who wears an outfit with a hakama (a Japanese divided skirt) and hifu (a Japanese garment put on over a kimono), and the character Yoshimi, who wears western clothes, visit the character Azuma-jō who is rumoured to be conservative (shukyū heki). The three of them have arguments over “the improvement of women’s clothes” (Shinpō, 1887, p. 39). The names of the three women in the scene were carefully chosen, as Nakase (中瀬) which can be read in Japanese as “Middle-flow,” Yoshimi (西海) as “West sea” and Azuma-jō (東嬢) as “East woman,” correspond to their respective style of clothes or their character. Scene two is an argument for women’s occupations. Two Japanese women talk (monogatari) as they twist paper, which implies that they are doing a side job at home. As they twist papers, they talk about women in western countries who receive vocational aid (jusan no moyō), which indicates “the importance of women’s occupations” (Shinpō, 1887, p. 39). Scene three is about a bell and drum, which work as part of the key to find the assertion the whole play attempts to generate in this hanjimonono. In the scene, an old couple look for a lost child, making alert sounds with a bell and a drum (shōko wo nara shite), and they look “comical” (Shinpō, 1887, p. 39). Scene four is about a straw doll, which is also a part that directly leads to the assertion. In the scene, along with a prologue (kōjō) that “urges the audience to find an assertion (kakugen)” out of the “implication from the previous three scenes,” a straw doll appears looking miserable (Shinpō, 1887, p. 39). After scene four, “the audience excitedly discussed and sought for the answer, then one person answered correctly” that the assertion the play infers is “proof is better than argument” (Shinpō, 1887, p. 39).

To explicate how this hanjimonono play worked to generate the assertion that “proof is better than argument” would require additional information on Japanese language and of a famous quote from the Japanese card game (iroha karuta). First, the audience needs to notice that bell and drum (shōko) in scene three indicates a word “proof (shōko),” because they are homophones in Japanese; both are pronounced as shōko with different meaning, “bell and drum” and “proof.” Also, the appearance of the straw doll in scene four reminds the audience of a card in the Japanese card game. The card depicts a picture of a samurai raising a straw doll with a quoted proverb, “proof is better than argument.” Scene one on women’s clothes and scene two on women’s occupation function as the proofs that call for the improvement of women’s rights, which also supports the assertion that proof is better than argument. The play was a form of visual argument with an implicit claim which in turn, was articulated by the audience who were called to answer the hanjimonono riddle the play presented.

As noted in the last section, students' participation in political activities had been restricted after the Assembly Ordinance in 1880 which prohibited teachers and students from participating in political meetings (Nakamura, 1993, p. 21). The implicit argument the play presented could have been a deliberate attempt to evade violation of the Ordinance. As Pattessio (2011) notes, the limitations of such government restrictions that the Ordinance and the "Law on Assembly and Political Associations," were "far from being proof of women's limitations," but instead, were "the signs that early Meiji women had indeed created for themselves the possibility of speaking and acting in Japanese society" (p. 31).

Debate may not have been prevalent in mission schools for girls in early modern Japan; however, the surviving archival records indicate that certain schools engaged in debate quite actively. Also, some students were argumentative enough to put their political claims in a play that carefully circumvents the government restrictions and the violation of social norms.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study conducted archival research on debate activities in mission schools in modern Japan. Many of those schools followed the tradition of liberal arts education that the missionaries, mainly from the United States, intended to bring in, having literary societies in which students engaged in activities such as speech, debate, writing, theatre, or music. Not all mission schools put emphasis on debate; however, some schools considered debate as an important element of their education, and the students actively participated in it. Debate, regardless of its format, served as an important vehicle for promoting civic education and even facilitating students' political participation.

The debate topics employed in each school were varied. Some schools preferred religious and educational topics while others, with the notable example of Meiji Gakuin, debated on controversial policy topics, which can be seen as preparation for political participation, such as the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889 and the establishment of the Imperial Diet in the following year. Although this study is limited in its scope, it is possible that their debate topic choices could have changed over time.

Although this study did not find extensive records of debate by female students, some mission schools for girls did practice debate. Ferris Seminary, at least during some part of the Meiji period, debated political topics and presented political arguments in a form of a play to a large audience. Ferris can be considered to be more politically oriented than other schools since around the time they held the debate in the late 1880s, Toshiko Nakajima (also known as Shōen Nakajima or Toshiko Kishida), a prominent women's rights activist, was teaching at Ferris, and indeed, delivered her own speech at the same celebration event (Yamamoto, 1931, p. 71). In such an environment, assertive students who sought to argue for their rights might have invented a play like the hanjimonō in which their claims were implicit enough to conform to the government regulation on public assembly. To be sure, similar attempts were made elsewhere during the same period. For example, several works of fiction were published in which female characters vigorously engage in public speaking and argue for women's rights. As Sekiguchi (2000) points out, most of those "women speaker novels (joshi enzetsu shōsetsu)" were published "between

1886 and 1890” (p. 14). Indeed, the government restriction on students’ advocacy did not eliminate it, rather it led some students to invent creative methods to express their arguments in no less effective, but surely safer ways.

Many historical documents have been digitalized in Japan, namely through the efforts of the National Diet Library. Archival research surely benefitted from the easier access to the digitalized historical materials and the keyword search which has saved significant amounts of time. However, it would be difficult to discover argument practices such as the hanjimono play only through a keyword search, because it is unlikely to locate the implicit arguments intentionally hidden in the play. Continuous effort is still essential in archival research to uncover argument practices in historical contexts.

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