Fujokagami (1887) is a morals textbook for girls, written in a biographical style, compiled by Shigeki Nishimura, an official in the Department of the Imperial Household, according to the wishes of the empress of Emperor Meiji. Furthermore, it was compiled for the purpose of serving as the textbook at Kazokujogakko, the girls’ school for the nobility. This study aims to locate this textbook historically by considering it from all perspectives.

First, this study clarifies the compilation circumstances and the contents of Fujokagami. It comprises 120 exempla of women in six volumes. Such morals textbooks for girls written in a biographical style were published in the Meiji Era following similar publications during the Edo period. Fujokagami was compiled as the morals textbook copyrighted by the Department of the Imperial Household following the publication of Meijikosetsuroku and Yogakukoyo. Since Fujokagami was written as a supplement to Yogakukoyo, which tends to discuss Confucianism, it is occasionally considered as the book of Confucianism. However, the period in which Nishimura was ordered to compile Fujokagami in his predecessor’s place was aimed at modernizing and westernizing the Imperial Household under the command of Hirobumi Ito, the lord chamberlain of the household, and preparations were made for the foundation of Kazokujogakko. Therefore, Nishimura, “the unique scholar of Western learning,” was seemingly a suitable person for compiling Fujokagami.

An examination of the descriptions of items of virtue, written in the manuscripts of Fujokagami, clarifies that 12 items of virtue were determined after several stages, and that there are numerous aspects deviating from the estimate that Fujokagami is the book of Confucianism. By further examining the contents of exempla in Fujokagami along with these items of virtue and comparing it with Yogakukoyo and other morals textbooks for girls that were written in a biographical style and published in the first half of the Meiji Era, it is revealed that the distinguishing feature of Fujokagami is its description about various virtuous conducts of the Japanese, Chinese, and Western women. In addition, by examining the composition of the sources of exempla mentioned in the manuscript and the method of selecting them from each source, it is revealed that the diversity of these sources and the adoption of contents of exempla about various items of virtue has resulted in the formation of the distinguishing features of Fujokagami.
Second, this study also clarifies the historical character of Fujokagami.

Fujokagami can be placed in between the Confucian view of womanhood and the thought of making good wives and wise mothers. In light of the change of morals textbooks for girls, the features of Fujokagami tend to be different.

Moreover, it is understandable that Nishimura composed the contents of Fujokagami by considering the items of virtue that he considered important for women from the time of compiling Shogakushushinkun, and that he compiled Fujokagami as considering the contents of items of virtue suitable for women of the nobility at that time in the light of Eastern and Western theory. The fact that Fujokagami was written as the textbook for Kazokujogakko in its foundation period is concerned with the unique character of Fujokagami, and therefore, Fujokagami is comprehensive in nature in the history of morals textbooks for girls written in a biographical style.

Furthermore, an examination of the historical documents in the possession of the Imperial Household Agency reveals that Fujokagami was bestowed at a limited extent; however, its sale was permitted from the early period following the bestowment, and its form was modified to meet the requirements of school. During a certain period, the number of printed copies increased due to the influence of the mention of its title in the morals textbook compiled by the Ministry of Education. In the Taisho and Showa period, Fujokagami was sometimes sold as a set with Yogakukoyo, and the commentaries of Fujokagami were published.