BOOK REVIEWS

David W. Ramey, *Lost Traditions. Horses and Horse Medicine in Premodern Japan*. Japanese transl. by Dan Sherer, with contributions by Katja Triplett and Kaoru Tomoyoshi. David W. Ramey: 2024. 252 pages; ISBN 979-8-218-50512-7.

Studies on the horse in Japan are now a well-established field of research. This scholarly tradition originates from the significant role that the horse—an animal not native to the archipelago but introduced around the fourth century CE—played in premodern Japanese society. Moreover, it has been nurtured by the involvement of a key institution: the Equine Museum of Japan in Yokohama (currently closed for full renovation). The museum, supported by the Equine Cultural Affairs Foundation of Japan, has organized numerous exhibitions and published a range of accessible materials. It also produced a comprehensive ten-volume compendium of knowledge about horses in Japan, titled *Uma no bunka sōsho* [Book Series on Horse Culture], published between 1993 and 1995.[1]

The volume under review is therefore a welcome addition to the field, and its title suggests that it may represent a significant contribution. Published as a deluxe hardcover edition, on glossy paper that does justice to the numerous illustrations appearing on nearly every page, the book has been privately printed by its main author, David W. Ramey (DVM).

The volume consists of three main parts, which I discuss below, along with an "Introduction" in which the author outlines his motivations for the publication, an "Afterword" explaining what the text can offer modern and future horse owners, and an "Appendix" presenting translations of Buddhist texts included in the manuscript.

"Part 1. Horses in Japanese History" spans 72 pages and includes 38 entries, offering a valuable encyclopedic overview of the role of the horse in premodern Japan. Particularly noteworthy is its *longue durée* approach, which situates the horse within broader historical continuities. The wide range of sources—textual, visual, and material—used to construct this historical narrative is also commendable.

"Part 2. The Manuscript," comprising 125 pages, is entirely devoted to a manuscript on equine veterinary medicine, with a few entries addressing cattle. The title given on the cover consists of a single Chinese character: *Uma* ("horse"). From Ramey's "Introduction," we learn that the manuscript is his personal property, a gift from Hada Takayuki, and is dated to the transitional period between the late Muromachi and early Edo eras—roughly the sixteenth to seventeenth century. This

[1] *Uma no bunka sōsho* [Book Series on Horse Culture], 10 vols., eds. Egami Namio, Kinoshita Junji, Kodama Kōta (Yokohama: Baji bunka zaidan, 1993–1995).

section, edited by Dan Sherer with contributions from Katja Triplett, features high-resolution photographic reproductions of the manuscript, a diplomatic transcription, an English translation, and 216 footnotes. Typically, each page displays two facing pages of the original manuscript. Both the transcription and the translation are executed with meticulous attention to detail and methodological rigor.

"Part 3. Traditional Horse Medicine in Japan" covers 41 pages and comprises 18 entries. It aims to contextualize the manuscript, offering a wealth of information—in the same entry-based format—on hippiatry in premodern Japan. This material is presented within the broader framework of Japanese medical history. This section is especially valuable for deepening the interpretation of the manuscript itself, as exemplified by the discussion titled "The Five Types of Medicine in this Manuscript" (pp. 216ff).

The author is right to highlight that a defining feature of equine medicine is its synthesis of multiple medical traditions—a point clearly substantiated by the manuscript. These include Chinese medicine, rooted in physiognomy and herbal remedies; the Buddhist doctrine, which plays a central role in healing practices, as also shown by Katja Triplett;[2] and a form of Japanese indigenous magical thinking, often closely intertwined with Buddhism, based on beliefs concerning auspicious and inauspicious days for treatment, and the idea that health is intrinsically linked to cosmic harmony.

These concepts are not presented as distinct or competing systems. Rather, they are seamlessly integrated. For certain ailments, for example, the cause may be attributed to demonic influences, unfavorable calendrical conditions, or misalignment with heavenly forces. Correspondingly, the proposed treatments include needling, herbal remedies, and ritual incantations, reflecting the multilayered nature of the healing process.

It is also worth emphasizing that such medical syncretism is neither unique to veterinary practice nor specific to the period under examination. Comparable frameworks can be found in both specialized and general texts. For instance, this integrated approach is already evident in the *Ba'i sōshi emaki* [Handscroll on Horse Doctors, 1267], the oldest surviving Japanese text on equine medicine. More broadly, this composite mode of knowledge appears in encyclopedic and reference works such as the *Nichūreki* [Two Almanacs, early thirteenth century], a compilation intended for the aristocracy that brings together a wide range of medical and practical information, including veterinary care.

A codicological and bibliographic analysis would have greatly enriched the volume. There is no mention of the manuscript's dimensions, the type of paper, its condition, or the binding style. Based on the photographic reproductions, it appears to feature a sewn multi-section binding (*tetsuyōsō*), with sheets folded at the center and stitched along the left margin using an eight-hole style. Further commentary on the editorial approach to the diplomatic edition would also have been valuable. Some footnotes suggest that the editors conducted collation with related texts, including

[2] Katja Triplett, *Buddhism and Medicine in Japan: A Topical Survey (500–1600 CE) of a Complex Relationship* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

manuscripts (not further specified) from the Anzai school of hippiatry. Such details are crucial for understanding the manuscript's intended readership and the networks in which it circulated.

A deeper investigation into its linguistic and paleographic characteristics would likewise have been warranted. I would consider debatable the author's claim that "[t]he author [of the manuscript] was assuredly not a member of the Imperial Court—had he or she been a member of the Court, all incantations and prayers would have been written in the Chinese *kanji* characters and not in the *kana* script frequently found in this manuscript" (p. 216). Given the oral and performative nature of prayers and magical formulas, the use of *kana*—the Japanese vernacular—seems plausible. Even in the classical period, when the Sinitic language served as a prestige language, *norito* prayers were composed in vernacular Japanese. Moreover, vernacular incantations (*majinai*) are attested in earlier texts, such as the *Kuchizusami* [A Verbal Amusement, 970] and the abovementioned *Nichūreki*, both written in Sinitic but incorporating such formulas. While this does not confirm the author's affiliation with the Court, it does not exclude the possibility. The presence of *kana*, in itself, is not a definitive argument against such a connection.

It remains possible that the veterinarian belonged to a range of social backgrounds: perhaps a member of the state bureaucracy (as veterinarians were already officially recognized under the eighth-century legal codes); a Buddhist monk; or part of the samurai class, which had become widespread by the late sixteenth to early seventeenth century. What is clear, however, is that veterinary knowledge was inherently "multilingual," reflecting the heterogeneity of practices it encompassed, regardless of the author's precise social origin.

The amount of information contained in the volume is truly remarkable; however, it appears that the privately published work did not benefit from a thorough editorial review. Beyond some minor typographical errors, the volume includes several formal inaccuracies, such as geographical and historical mistakes—for example, the claim on p. 12 that the prefectures of Miyazaki, Kagoshima, and Nagasaki are located in Honshū, when they are in fact in Kyūshū, or the assertion on p. 240 that Kyōto was the capital in 646, although it did not become the capital, as Heiankyō, until 794. There are also inconsistencies in the romanization of Japanese and Chinese terms, as well as shortcomings in bibliographic and iconographic citations.

Additional bibliographic references should also be considered, including the book edited by Sasaki, Kawajiri, and Kurozumi,[3] which integrates archeological and philological approaches; the works of Masuda Seiichi[4] and Satō Kentarō;[5] this reviewer's own contributions to the field;[6] and Clio Simonetta's substantial

[3] *Uma to kodai shakai* [Horse and Ancient Society], eds. Sasaki Ken'ichi, Kawajiri Akio, Kurozumi Kazuhiko (Tōkyō: Yagi shoten, 2021).

[4] Masuda Seiichi, *Nihon baji bunka no genryū* [The Origins of Japanese Equine Culture] (Tōkyō: Fuyō shobō shuppan, 1996).

[5] Satō Kentarō, *Nihon kodai no maki to basei kanshi* [Pastures and the Officials for Horse Management in Ancient Japan] (Tōkyō: Hanawa shobō, 2016).

[6] Antonio Manieri, "*Wamyōruijushō* 'gyūba no ke' mon to Narachō no kakyū kanjinsō. *Kangoshō*, *Yōshi kangoshō*, *Benshiki rissei* o megutte" [The Section "Bovine and Equine Coats" of the *Classified Notes on Japanese Names* and Low-ranking Officials in Nara Court: Notes on the *Notes on Chinese Words*, *Notes on*

dissertation, defended at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris, which presents a 735-page study of the warhorse in Japan from the fourth to the tenth century.[7] Furthermore, while the ten-volume series *Uma no bunka sōsho* is cited in its entirety, a more selective and in-depth engagement with specific volumes or chapters would have been more productive. Volume 7, *Bagaku: Uma o kagaku suru* [Hippology: To Think the Horse in Terms of Science], edited by Matsuo Shin'ichi—particularly the article by Mitsui Takaosa[8]—deserves discussion for its direct relevance to the manuscript.

Finally, it would be appropriate to fully leverage the potential of the rich iconographic apparatus featured in Sections 1 and 3 of the volume. In several instances, images appear unrelated to the accompanying text or lack adequate context. For example, the manuscript reproduction from the *Engishiki* [Procedures of the Engi Era, 927] on p. 207 is not relevant for the section on horses, and the various maps of Japan on pp. XII–XIII are presented without explanation. A more analytical integration of visual sources would have enhanced the overall impact of the work, as exemplified in the well-executed sections on "Japanese Horse Gaits," "Famous Horses in Japanese History," and "All Sorts of Horses," where images effectively support the discussion.

In conclusion, while the volume presents a wealth of valuable material, one gets the impression that, despite the luxurious edition, the author's primary aim was more popularization than the presentation of a critical scholarly work. Nonetheless, the author's generosity in making this rare and important manuscript accessible to a broader audience is commendable, and for that reason, the book deserves serious consideration. The book opens important avenues for further research and offers a foundation for future scholarship. One may hope that subsequent editions—ideally issued in a more accessible and affordable paperback format—will address the aforementioned limitations through more rigorous editorial oversight, expanded

Chinese Words of the Mater Yako, *Compendium of Classifications*], *Higashi Ajia hikaku bunka kenkyū* 11 (2012): 72–85; Idem, "Uma no keiro no bungaku. *Wamyōruijushō* 'gyūba no ke' mon to *Minamoto no Shitagō uma no ke no na utaawase*" [Literature on the Horse Coats. The Section "Bovine and Equine Coats" of the *Classified Notes on Japanese Names* and the *Poetry Contest on the Names of Coats by Minamoto no Shitagō*], *Minato. Kotoba to rekishi*, Vol. 24, eds. Teramura Masao and Kuranaka Shinobu (Tōkyō: Bensei shuppansha, 2012), 217–232; Idem, "La veterinaria nel Giappone antico: note su testi e lessico nel periodo dello Stato retto dai codici," in *Riflessioni sul Giappone antico e moderno*, eds. Matilde Mastrangelo, Luca Milasi, Stefano Romagnoli (Roma: Aracne, 2014), 305–328; Idem, "*Wamyōruijushō* 'gyūba no yamai' bu ni kansuru ikkōsatsu. Wakun *tari* o chūshin ni" [A Study on the Section "Bovine and Equine Maladies" of the *Classified Notes on Japanese Names*: The Japanese Gloss *tari*], in *Minato. Kotoba to rekishi*, vol. 29, eds. Abō Hiroshi and Kuranaka Shinobu (Tōkyō: Bensei shuppansha, 2019), 25–36; Idem, "The Law on Stables and Pastures. An Annotated Translation of *Kyūmokuryō* (Sect. 23 of Yōrōryō)," *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques* 73/2 (2019): 277–296; Idem, "Uma no kaiga to bungaku. Stibbert hakubutsukanzō *Bamōdōizu* o megutte" [Picture and Literature on Horses: The *Drawing on Similarities and Differences of Horse Coats* from the Stibbert Museum], in *Minato. Kotoba to rekishi*, vol. 30, eds. Abō Hiroshi and Kuranaka Shinobu (Tōkyō: Bensei shuppansha, 2021), 90–103.

[7] Clio Simonetta, *Le cheval de guerre au Japon, de son introduction au X^e^siècle*. PhD Thesis (Paris: École Pratique des Hautes Études – Université Paris Sciences et Lettres, 2024).

[8] Mitsui Takaosa, "Emaki ni himerareta rekishi" [The History Hidden in the Handscrolls], in *Uma no bunka shōso*, *Vol. 7. Bagaku. Uma o kagaku suru*, ed. Matsuo Shin'ichi (Yokohama: Baji bunka zaidan, 1994), 442–462.

scholarly commentary, and a more critical and systematic use of both visual and textual sources. If such revisions are undertaken, the work has the potential to become an indispensable scholarly reference in the study of premodern Japanese veterinary practices and, more broadly, in the cultural history of the horse in East Asia.

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