Water Cures in Japan: The Case of a Health Manual in the Early Nineteenth Century

Keiko Daidoji

Abstract
This article examines a variety of practices that involve water cures in Japanese medical history. Focusing on a health manual, Byōka suchi 病家須知 (What a household with sick persons should know, published between 1832–1835), by Hirano Jūsei 平野重誠, this article describes how water cures were applied for many symptoms and include listening, washing, bathing in hot water, spitting, imbibing, soaking and immersion. Hirano’s text about the application of water cures referenced both Japanese and Chinese classical literature, but also incorporated Western ideas of hydrotherapy.

Keywords
Byōka suchi 病家須知, Japanese medical history, water cures, simplicity, purification, healing power of nature, gentle therapy

Introduction
Fujikawa Yū 富士川游 (1865–1940), a pioneering medical historian and himself a practitioner of Western medicine, discusses the application of water in Japanese medicine through history.

The application of the water cure for cold damage 傷寒 already appears in Shōkanron 傷寒論 (shanghan lun in Chinese). Thereafter it disappears from the records, and for a long period, many physicians were not keen on this method. However as late as the end of the Edo period, several physicians such as Nakagami

1 This article is based on a section of my Ph.D. thesis submitted to the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London 2009.
2 Shōkanron 傷寒 is a general term for various febrile disorders.
3 For instance, Shanghan lun says ‘when the illness is yang, it should be released through perspiration. Conversely, if one applies cold water by splashing, the fever cannot be removed: 病症陽 应以汗解之、反以冷水之、若灌之、其熱被劫不得去’. Shanghan lun. Zhang Zhongjing 張仲景 (3rd century CE). Xiong Manqi 熊曼琪 ed. Reprint 2000, 302. Although this example is of an unsuccessful remedy, it indicates the use of water cures.
Kinkei 中神琴渓, Kouta Tsunetomo 古宇田知常, Tachibana Shōken 橘尚賢 and Hirano Genryō 平野元良 began to make claims for the effectiveness of the water cure and recommended [applying] it to fever from cold damage.4

Water cure had therefore gained popularity in the late Edo period (1603–1867) after a period of eclipse.

Of the authors cited in this passage Nakagami Kinkei (1744–1833) mentions water cures in Seiseidō itan 生生堂医譚 (Tales of medicine by Seiseidō, 1795). Kouta Tsunetomo is the author of Kansuihen 濰水編 (Compilation of splashing water, 1811), while Tachibana Shōken (d. 1849) wrote Bakufu kōnōki 瀑布効能記 (Record of the efficacy of the waterfall, 1812) and Hirano Genryō is a pen name of Hirano Jūsei 平野重誠 (1790–1867). Hirano was a relatively well-known physician, who left more than ten texts in his name on subjects ranging from medicine to national history. This article will examine the water cures by Hirano, focusing on his health manual Byōka suchi 病家須知 (What a household with sick persons should know), published between 1832–1835. Byōka suchi consists of eight fascicles, covering a broad range of subjects. As well as daily regimen, the text plainly sets forth principles of dietetics, pathology, nursing, child rearing, first aid, midwifery and so on. The primary point of this article is to explore the background to, and references made by, Hirano’s application of water cures. While Hirano cites from both Japanese and Chinese classical literature, he also seems to have a certain degree of influence from the conceptions of hydrotherapy in the West.

As a therapeutic modality the water cure has always been found at the fringes of medical practice. However the fact remains that these medical texts speak of water in diverse forms and contexts. The physicians mentioned above contend that not only cold damage but various other illnesses can be cured by water. For instance, Kansuihen 濰水編 states that splashing with water is effective for ‘goseki 五積 (the five accumulations), rōkushū 六聚 (six gatherings),5 senpeki 仙癖 (conventionally 疝癖, colic pain with congealed clumps) and kaitō 塊痛 (colic pain),6 since they are all thrown off with water. For him, water could also flush out illnesses such as beri-beri, paralysis, and consumption’.7 Seiseidō itan 生生堂医譚 gives examples of water treatment for such conditions as madness, fever, epilepsy, melancholy, bruising,

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5 Conventionally goeski 五積 is characterised as a solid and fixed accumulation of ki in the five viscera; the heart 心, the liver 肝, the spleen 脾, the lung 肺, and the kidney 腎. On the other hand rōkushū 六聚 is a moving accumulation of ki in the five entrails; small intestine 小腸, large intestine 大腸, gall bladder 胆, urinary bladder 膀胱, stomach 胃 and the San Jiao 三焦.
6 Senpeki is conventionally written as 疝癖. Both senpeki and kaitō seem to refer to colic pain with congealed clumps which are characterised as an accumulation of ki.
7 Kouta Tsunetomo 1811, p. 5.
unconsciousness, kyūkyō 急驚 (often children’s convulsions), dizziness, headache, chill and smallpox.\(^8\)

Hirano Jūsei’s *Byōka suchi* contains scattered references to the healing powers of water for many symptoms, when splashed, spat, imbibed, bathed in, and so on. Despite, however, containing a substantial number of examples, *Byōka suchi* always omits detailed explanation of why and how water achieves efficacy, saying only: ‘The details are not to be mentioned here, see *Kisai bigen* 既済微言 (Subtle talk of all aid) and *Suiryō zokuben* 水療俗弁 (Popular talk of the water cure)’\(^9\) or ‘see *Kansuikō* 溅水考 (Consideration of splashing water) for further explanation’.\(^10\) The whereabouts and the contents of the texts he cites are lost to us today, and only their titles appear in *Byōka suchi*. Presumably Hirano wished to avoid too much overlap between texts and unnecessary discussion of complex theory unsuitable for a popular home medicine text like *Byōka suchi*. Like many other physicians of the time, Hirano sought out theories and practices from a broad range of medical texts by both Chinese and Japanese authors. This article collects and examines the fragmentary and limited references to water cures that are interspersed throughout the text of *Byōka suchi*, with the aim of reconstructing the physiology and pathology that lies behind them. This attempt will shed light on some of the unknown aspects of practice and theory of water cures in pre-modern Japan. In this paper, I have translated most disease names into English. Some particular diseases are written both in Chinese and Japanese and I add explanation, as they only make sense within the unique framework of traditional medicine. As for the romanisation of disease names and text titles, Japanese readings are basically applied, as this article is about the Edo-period Japan. However, for some of the texts that originated from China, both Japanese readings and Chinese pinyin are cited, since Chinese original texts are usually referenced in academic writing.

### Merits of water cures

The therapeutic methods of applying water mentioned in *Byōka suchi* can be divided into five categories: application by (1) listening, (2) washing, (3) bathing in hot water, (4) spitting, (5) imbibing and (6) soaking and immersion (Table 1).

\(^{8}\) Seiseidō itan, pp. 76–84.

\(^{9}\) *Byōka suchi*, fascicle 5, page 31 (hereafter BS followed by fascicle and page numbers, e.g. BS 5: 31). Fascicles 1–4 were published in 1832, and fascicles 5–8 were published in 1834. Hirano Jūsei 平野重誠 1832. Facsimile 1998, annotated by Sakurai Yuki.

\(^{10}\) BS 5:11.
Table 1. Water cures in *Byōka suchi*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to use water</th>
<th>Details of treatment</th>
<th>Illness treated (fascicle number: page number of <em>Byōka suchi</em> is cited)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Listening</td>
<td>The patient counts the dripping sounds of water.</td>
<td>Insomnia (1:49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Washing</td>
<td>Washing away eye mucus. Washing the inner private parts with cold water. Washing with cold water.</td>
<td>Tired eyes (2:36) Uterine bleeding after childbirth (4:33) Sao no dekimono 下疳瘡 (venereal ulcers) (5:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Hot baths</td>
<td>Hot baths. Warming with hot water. Hot baths.</td>
<td>Diarrhoea (5:35) When one's legs become cold with nosebleeds (6:26) Rigidity (8:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Spitting</td>
<td>Cold water is spat over the infant's face.</td>
<td>A newborn infant who does not give a first cry (4:23) A woman who faints from dizziness after childbirth (4:26–28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Spitting and imbibing</td>
<td>The patient drinks cold water and spits it over the [patient's] face. Spitting and imbibing Half a cup of freshly drawn is drunk, and also spat over the infant's face.</td>
<td>Uterine bleeding after childbirth, with a thumping heart (4:32) Sashikomi 衝逆 (the infant vomits milk with convulsions in this context) (3:19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Splashing</td>
<td>Splashing water or bathing in water or using a waterfall.</td>
<td>Fever, smallpox, <em>kyōkan</em> 騾痢 (children's convulsions), <em>kan</em> 癬疾 (<em>kan</em> is defined as various kinds of mental disorders in <em>Byōka suchi</em>), epilepsy, madness, paralysis, numb limbs, dog bites, insanity, rush of blood to the head, chronic shivering, <em>okori</em> 瘧 (intermittent fever), initial stages of leprosy and consumption (2:37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to use water</th>
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<th>Illness treated (fascicle number: page number of Byōka suchi is cited)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Splashing</td>
<td>The baby’s head is made wet with a towel soaked in cold water.</td>
<td>Same as above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splashing</td>
<td>Pumping cold water.</td>
<td>Madness from cold damage and ketsuinbyō 厥陰病 (yin-reversal disease) (5:30–31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splashing</td>
<td>Pumping cold water.</td>
<td>Fevers or madness from cold damage, small boils (5:32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splashing</td>
<td>Pumping cold water.</td>
<td>Apoplexy 卒痱, kinuke yamai 僵厥病 (fainting from ki reversal), convulsions, unconsciousness 昏冒, kan 癇證, madness 狂癇 (6:17–19, 23, 24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splashing</td>
<td>Pumping cold water.</td>
<td>Leprosy (5:12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splashing</td>
<td>Cold water is splashed over the head, or the patient is thrown into a clear stream.</td>
<td>Dog bites (rabies) (6:36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splashing</td>
<td>Cold water is splashed over the legs.</td>
<td>Nosebleeds (6:26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splashing</td>
<td>Splashing with cold water or hot baths.</td>
<td>kyōkan 驚癇 (children’s convulsions) (3:20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splashing</td>
<td>Splashing with cold water.</td>
<td>Food poisoning (6:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splashing</td>
<td>Splashing with cold water.</td>
<td>Weakness in infants (8:30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>Wet sheet.</td>
<td>Dizziness after childbirth (8:8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) **Listening**

When one is unable to fall asleep, the sound of water is used as a hypnotic agent. Illustration 1 shows two containers of water at different heights placed near the patient’s head in such a way that the water drips continuously from the upper container into the lower one. The idea is to let the patient count the dripping sounds of water; the technique apparently works as a sedative when one cannot sleep owing to uneasiness or worries, exhaustion or nightmares.
Unlike other modes of water application, this method does not involve any direct physical stimulus. Why the sound was thought to achieve efficacy is not clarified in the text, but seems to be related to the processes linked to dreaming. In the opening of the passage on the water dripping method, *Byōka suchi* refers to the importance of the ancient instruction 'to stop thinking, calm the mind and store the soul' to obtain sound sleep without nightmares. What does 'store the soul' mean? Although the original source of this statement is unknown, it seems to fit the aetiology of dreaming in the Chinese text, *Kōtei daikei Reisū* (黄帝内経靈樞, *Huangdi neijing lingshu* in Chinese; Yellow Emperor’s Inner Canon, Numinous Pivot, hereafter, referred to as *Reisū*).

When *seija* (right evil) attacks the body from outside and cannot find the proper place to settle, it flows into *zō* (the viscera) and drifts around. The evil circulates with the structural *ei* and protective *ei* within the body, and acts tactless towards the *kon* (spirit) and *paku* (soul). They trouble sound sleep, and cause dreams.12 *Byōka suchi* mentions neither *ki* nor evil, but both *Byōka suchi* and *Reisū* agree that when the soul drifts away from its rightful place, it causes uneasy sleep and dreams. Therefore the dripping method may perhaps function by concentrating the mind on counting the sounds of water, thereby preventing the soul from moving aimlessly about. This is perhaps why Hirano refers to this technique as a method to ‘store the soul’ in *Byōka suchi*.

An advantage of this method is that it can be used as an alternative to drugs. Hirano strongly objects to the use of sleeping pills based on ‘an amateur’s complacent judgement, as [the case] is difficult [to assess] even for a medical professional’.13 It is not clear what exactly *Byōka suchi* intends by the term rendered as ‘*nemuri gusuri*麻睡剤 (sleeping pill)’, as a direct translation of *nemuri gusuri* does indeed give us ‘sleeping pill’, but the Chinese characters used here strongly suggest an anaesthetic. Little is known about the use of hypnotics during the Edo period, and I suspect that the ‘sleeping pill’ in *Byōka suchi* may imply something more like an anaesthetic.

This supposition may not be unfounded, because the news that physician Hanaoka Seishū 華岡青洲 (1760–1835) had for the first time succeeded in carrying out a surgical operation under anaesthetic (made mainly from mandarage [datura] andaconite) caused quite a sensation in Edo-period medical

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11 Right evil indicates seasonal wind as a pathogen; it blows from the correct direction with respect to the season, Ishida 1987, p. 288.
13 BS 1:48–9.
It is possible then that anaesthetics, or something similar, had begun to circulate on the drug market, and that lay people sometimes took them as soporifics without proper knowledge of their effects and possible risks. *Byōka suchi* recommends the sound of water because, whether or not it is effective, it is at least ‘harmless’.

One of the merits of water cure lies in its convenience and simplicity. In several places *Byōka suchi* contends that one should try ‘harmless’ water rather than indiscriminately resorting to medicine, which results in nothing but harm. The author holds a strong conviction that the prescription of medicine requires professional knowledge and experience, and should not be attempted by an amateur. Emphasis on drugless modalities is intertwined with warnings about the dangers of the blind misuse of medicines and the problems caused by the uninformed judgment of laypersons. The usage of medicines, what to take and how to take it, requires proper knowledge of the true nature and efficacy of the various drugs.

Lay people tend to think that fevers should be cooled down, while chills should be warmed up. However, the treatment and the prescription of drugs cannot conform to this amateur view. There are many people who misunderstand the true nature of *yin* symptoms because of the name. They very often damage their life by taking the bulb of Carmichael’s monkshood (附子 Aconitum carmichaelii), simply trying to warm up the chilled body as with a fireplace.

Such warnings evoke a picture of the medical environment of the Edo period, where many unlicensed home-made drugs were available, while people had difficulty in finding doctors or at least competent doctors due to the multitude of quacks who did not know how to prescribe medicines correctly. Carmichael’s monkshood contains large quantities of the alkaloid aconitine, a deadly poison, but Edo-period physicians sometimes dispensed it as a warming medicine. Rather than risking one’s life by the misuse of drugs, it was therefore far safer to try water cures. Even if not effective, at least water did no harm. As we shall see later, this claim repeatedly appears in *Byōka suchi* as the motivation to try water cures.

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14 Hanaoka Seishū carried out an operation to remove a cancerous breast tumour under anaesthetic in 1804.
15 For the availability and variety of medicines during the Edo period, see for example, Suzuki 2000, pp. 107–252.
16 BS 2:37.
17 BS 5:22.
(2) Washing with water

Cold water was recommended to wash cuts, tired eyes, venereal ulcers and skin diseases. In this context Hirano also believes in the merit of water for its relative harmlessness when compared to medicines. Pure water was harmless, but a layperson may have feared that washing an injured part with pure water would cause tetanus (hashōfū 破傷風). Although this belief might seem strange retrospectively, one method to ease the minds of those who felt concerned was to mix ash with water. For cuts, wounds and uterine bleeding, one could use a water pistol (children’s toy) or a kettle to spray or pour on the water. Cleansing dirt and blood from a wound, and refreshing tired eyes was surely a natural response based on simple and immediate experience of benefit.

In the case of boils on the genitalia, douching was used to keep the genital area clean and dry to prevent the area becoming ‘foul due to being covered by dirty underwear’, which should be most particularly avoided. The jet of water from a water pistol caused the genitals to constrict and may have closed the passage of bleeding between the uterus and vulva. Meanwhile the wound in the uterus could heal gradually. Disease poisons from boils on the genitalia could gradually retrocede and eventually result in genital dysfunction, so it was extremely important to purge the poisons as soon as possible by washing away pus with a lotion and taking internal medicine. However the advantage of washing with cold water was that ‘the use of washing lotion cannot be explained to laypersons so easily’. Again, a blind reliance on self-prescribed medicines by lay people should be avoided, and water was suggested as a harmless option.

(3) Hot baths

In a few cases Hirano recommended hot water to warm up the chilled parts of the body. Two prescriptions advise hot baths for diarrhoea and cold legs due to nosebleed. When one felt chilled in the initial stages of diarrhoea, bathing (especially the lower body) in very hot water with a pinch of salt was recommended, the hotter the water, the better. Afterwards one should dry the body well, put on warm clothing and take hot food with plenty of soup. On finding the legs chilled owing to a nosebleed, it was good to soak both legs in hot water, to which a few pinches of powdered alum might be added.

18 BS 5:3.
19 BS 4:31.
20 BS 5:3.
In the case of diarrhoea, it was extremely important to begin perspiring as soon as possible in order to get rid of the disease poisons completely. According to *Byōka suchi*, diarrhoea was a disease of *yōmei* 陽明 (where *yang* 阳 *ki* was most vigorous). 21 Regarding the correlation of *yōmei* disease with diarrhoea, Hirano Jūsei’s *Uta shōkan zatsubuyōron zokuben* 歌傷寒雑病論俗弁 (Popular songs of cold damage and various diseases, 1853) offered a more explicit account.

*Yōmei* disease is located in the abdomen. The evil *ki* reaches *yōmei*, therefore the treatment needs to lead [evil *ki*] to the surface, and disperse it through sweating. This [method] is meant to destroy the power of [evil *ki*] to penetrate inside, and to suppress uneasiness in the abdomen. 22

A hot bath, therefore, stimulates perspiration from two angles: it warms up the body from inside, and opens the pores of the skin. 23 On the other hand, it is difficult to understand the reasoning behind the recommendation of hot baths for nosebleeds, as no pathology or expected effect is mentioned. The hot bath is probably intended simply to warm up the chilled legs. Although *Byōka suchi* mentions hot baths only these few times, bathing and balneology were a popular topic in the Edo medical texts. For instance, the most popular cultivation of life text of the Edo period, *Yōjōkun* 養生訓 (by Kaibara Ekiken 貝原益軒, 1713) discusses how to bathe and the effectiveness of hot baths for conditions such as diarrhoea, food damage and stomach ache. 24 As far as hot springs are concerned, the famous Gotō Konzan 後藤艮山 was given the nickname Yunokumakyūan 湯熊灸庵 (Dr Bath-Bear-and-Moxa) for his three favourite treatments: dietetics (especially the use of bear heart as a panacea), balneology, and moxibustion. Kagawa Shuan 香川修庵, author of *Ippondō yakusen zokuhen* 一本堂薬選続編 (1738), recommends Kinosaki 城之崎 (in present-day Hyōgo prefecture) as the best hot spring, which is particularly

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21 *Yōmei* (yang brightness) is the name of a vessel. It refers to the *yōmei ikei* 陽明胃経 (the *yōmei* stomach vessel of the legs) and the *yōmei daichōkei* 陽明大腸経 (the *yōmei* colon vessel of the hands).

22 Hirano Jūsei 1853, fascicle 4, pp. 3–4.

23 There was a general consensus among Edo-period physicians that taking long baths was dangerous because it opened the skin pores wide and left the body vulnerable to outer evil (see, for instance, *Yōjōkun*, 1713 p. 113). Kaibara Ekiken 1713 (reprint 1991), annotated by Ishikawa Ken.

24 Many scholarly works have examined the cultural/social/economic/anthropological aspects of bathing and balneology in Japan. For instance, the general history of bathing culture in Japan is referenced in such works as Matsudaira Makoto 1997, Inoue Shun (ed.) 1987, Nakano Eizō 1996. An anthropological approach to bathing culture is found in Yoshida Shūji 1995.
famous for curing swellings.\textsuperscript{25} Being intended for use as a household manual hot springs were not mentioned in \textit{Byōka suchi}.

\section*{(4) Spitting water}

Spitting water over the face was considered an effective stimulant for a patient who had lost consciousness, a newborn infant who failed to cry, for infantile convulsions and post-partum bleeding or dizziness. For a weak newborn infant, the shock occasioned by spitting cold water may have been sufficient to cause him or her to give a first cry. In other cases water had a cooling effect. Both convulsions and dizziness occurred due to ‘\textit{sashikomi 衝逆} (the retrograde upward movement of \textit{ki})’, which should be treated by cooling. Uterine bleeding often involved such symptoms as ‘fever, perspiration and palpitations’ which were categorised as ‘hot’ in nature; thus cooling would relieve the symptoms.\textsuperscript{26}

\section*{(5) Imbibing water}

Drinking cold water had a cooling effect for various pains that occurred in the inner organs. It was apparently effective for \textit{kakuran 霍乱} (severe vomiting and diarrhoea),\textsuperscript{27} food poisoning, and pain caused by threadworms or pinworms.\textsuperscript{28} Sometimes, drinking could be combined with spitting water over the patient’s face, considered particularly effective for those with palpitations that caused heating in the heart.

The coldness of the water could relieve the pain of threadworms, because it produced a shock in the worms in the intestines so that they loosened their bite.\textsuperscript{29} Drinking water also cooled the inner organs. \textit{Byōka suchi} contended that one should let the patient drink as much cold water as he or she wanted because it demonstrated ‘the need of [one’s] own vital essence which tries

\textsuperscript{25} Regarding the development of spa resorts after the Edo period, recent scholars point out that hot springs were one of the major tourist destinations in the Edo-period Japan. For instance, Clark (1994) examines the folk healing, recreational, and social uses of the hot spring in Japan from ancient times to today. While Nakamura associates the popularity of hot springs with the rise of commercial medicine in the late Edo period. Nakamura 2005, pp. 75–83. Suzuki relates the popularity of hot springs and daily bathing in the Edo period to changes in concepts of the body. Suzuki 1999, pp. 185–200, and 2001, pp. 197–215.

\textsuperscript{26} BS 4:30–3.
\textsuperscript{27} BS 6:3–4.
\textsuperscript{28} BS 6:4.
\textsuperscript{29} BS 6:29.
to moisten and cure the heated inner abdomen' and, anyway, water was 'harmless'.

Furthermore the cooling effect of water was related to detoxification. As pointed out in *Byōka suchi*, 'all toxins quicken with heat, and cease with coldness'. There was a general consensus in Edo-period medicine on the association of toxins with heat, and the power of water to detoxify. For instance, the Edo-period physician Tachibana Nankei 橘南谿 (1753–1805) states: 'All toxins are extremely hot in nature, and therefore whatever the toxin may be, drinking cold water can work as an antidote'. In this way, the use of water for food poisoning was designed to be a cooling antidote.

(6) Affusion

Finally, Hirano claimed that soaking and immersion in water was effective for a variety of symptoms. The key to understanding this method seems to lie in the perception that cold water had an energising effect on pathologies of *yin* and *yang*.

Using this method, the patient was soaked or pumped with cold water, placed under a waterfall, bathed in a well or immersed and made to swim in a river. Illustrations 2 and 3 show a woman who has gone mad being splashed with cold water while being restrained by three men; and a man who has suffered from cold damage due to *ketsuinbyō* 厥陰病 (*yin* reversal disease) swimming in a river.

Pumping cold water over the patient was the main method used among the water cures described in *Byōka suchi*. It was applied to various symptoms: *kan* 癇疾 (defined as various kinds of mental disorders in *Byōka suchi*), seizures, paralysis, apoplexy, convulsion, *kyōfū* 驚癇 (often children’s convulsive fits), *uttori suru yamai* 昏冒 (unconsciousness), *kinuke yamai* 僵厥病 (fainting from *ki*-reversal), madness, dog bite (rabies), rush of blood to the head, fevers, chronic chills, periodic fever, initial stages of consumption, smallpox, leprosy, small boils, numb limbs, nosebleed, food poisoning and others. It was used as well to strengthen a weak infant. In particular, pumping water was considered effective for fever and madness of many kinds, such as fever from the initial stages of smallpox, fevers or madness from cold damage, and madness from *yin* reversal disease.

30 BS 5:29.
31 BS 6:6.
33 BS 5:30.
The coldness of the water and the stimulation from pumping were thought to have an energising effect on the body. The intention seems to have been to stimulate numb limbs or strengthen a weak infant. It may also be possible to consider the efficacy of water from the viewpoint of yin and yang differentiation. In traditional diagnosis, symptoms are largely divided into the two categories of yin and yang. Generally speaking, yin symptoms are associated with the inside, of the body, depletion, coldness, the downward movement of ki, chronic illness, languor, inhibition, decline in bodily metabolism or body function, and so forth. On the other hand, yang symptoms are identified with the outside, repletion, heat, the upward movement of ki, acceleration in bodily metabolism and function, acute illness, exuberance, and exhalation. As far as Byōka suchi is concerned, fever, mental disorders, and all kinds of pus and ulcers can be categorised as yang.

Being innately yin, in most instances water would be pumped on to people with yang symptoms, thereby combating the disease. Nevertheless, water could be applied to both yin and yang symptoms in Byōka suchi. Often it was extremely difficult to distinguish which symptoms were yin and which were yang, and in the matter of cure the power of water was to achieve a balance between the two attributes, thereby curing the illness.

‘Heat’ is perhaps the most obvious case of a yang symptom. Periodic fever, fever at the initial stages of consumption or smallpox (Illustration 4), and fever from cold damage all obviously involve heat. Furthermore rushes of blood, pus from smallpox and leprosy, and small boils are also attributed to ‘heat’ because in Byōka suchi they are regarded as manifestations of ‘pent-up toxins’ in the body. The association between toxins and heat, and the efficacy of cold water as an antidote, have already been mentioned in the section on drinking water. Water cools down ‘heat’ of various kinds.

Mental disorders also seem to belong to the yang category in Byōka suchi. Byōka suchi defines kan 癇 very broadly, including various kinds of disorders affecting the mind, and epilepsy, paralysis, apoplexy, convulsions, infant colic, unconsciousness, fainting from ki-reversal, madness and dog bite (rabies). Hirano interprets the character kan 癇 as ‘the illness that separates the soul (from the body)’. To the extent that kan was attributed to the ‘upward movement of ki’, it was a yang symptom. In the same way, rushes of blood to the head and nosebleeds were also considered yang symptoms, as they were explained as the retrograde upward movement of blood. Within this scheme, the application of cold water, being yin, was expected to rectify yang

34 BS 5:5, 24.
35 BS 6:20.
Illustration 2: A man suffering from cold damage falls into a river, and afterwards the disease is cured (BS 5:30–31)
Illustration 3: Affusion for *yin* reversal (BS 5: 30)
Illustration 4: Using water for a child suffering from smallpox (BS 3:33)
symptoms. Pointing out the role of water as yin to cure yang symptoms, Ōtomo contends that the water cure was a type of ‘shōchi 正治 (regular treatment)’ that treated illnesses by applying something opposite in nature.\(^{36}\)

On the other hand, we also find in Byōka suchi the use of pumped water for yin symptoms, such as extreme yin disease and chills of long duration. It may, at first, seem contradictory, but it was based on the principle of yin and yang, whereby, like night and day, each was in a constant state of movement and when one had reached its extremity it would change into the other. As mentioned before ‘it is often the case that one can obtain efficacy by further warming up a fever, and further cooling down coldness’.\(^{37}\) When yin reaches its extreme, yin is transformed into yang, as yang is transformed into yin.

**Sources**

What ideas lie behind Hirano’s water cures in Byōka suchi? A survey of the references to classic texts in Hirano’s work and the contemporary trend in medicine will provide some interesting perspectives on the theoretical and cultural underpinnings of the uses of water with respect to the healing power of nature and the purification process.

**References**

How did Hirano Jūsei get the idea of using water for various afflictions? In Byōka suchi he contends that the use of pumped water for leprosy is his own original invention which ‘the ancients have never mentioned’.\(^{38}\) However, a number of references in Byōka suchi to classic literature suggest that the author collected and widely surveyed examples of water cures described by his predecessors. Such titles as Shoku Nihongi 続日本紀 (The sequel to the chronicle of Japan, 797), Okagami 大鏡 (Great mirror, 11th century CE), Eiga monogatari 来花物語 (Tales of Glory, 11–12th century CE), Kagerou Nikki 蜻蛉日記 (The Gossamer Years, 975?), Kusharon jusho 俱舍論頌疏 (Jushelun songshu in Chinese, compiled by Yuan Hui 円暉, Tang 唐 China), Somon 素問 (Huangdi neiijing suwen 黄帝内經素問 in Chinese; Yellow Emperor’s Inner Canon, Basic Questions, hereafter referred to as Somon), Shōkanron 傷寒論, Shiki 史記 (Shiji in Chinese; the Historical Records, compiled by Sima Qian

\(^{36}\) Ōtomo 1980 ‘Suichi’.
\(^{37}\) BS 2:37.
\(^{38}\) BS 5:12.
司馬遷, 91 BCE), Chō Shiwa 張子和 (Zhang Zihe, a famous physician active in the 13th century CE, Jin 金 China), Seihan 西蕃 (Shiban in Chinese; western regions), Kaitō itsushi 海嶋逸誌 (Haidao yizhi in Chinese; Lost records of sea islands, by Wang Dahai 大海, Qing 清 China). Hirano merely introduces the titles, but by tracing some of the abovementioned records we can demonstrate that bathing or soaking the body in cold water was believed to cure afflictions of the brain, eyes and liver, as well as swelling and so on. For instance, the Emperor Genshō 元正 (reigned 715–724) visited the waterfall in Mino 美濃 (present day, Gifu 岐阜 prefecture) to cure various symptoms of skin disease,39 and the Emperor Sanjō 三条 (reign 1011–1016) was splashed with water to treat an eye disease.40 An essay Tsurezuregusa 徒然草 (published in English as Essays in Idleness, by Kenkō 兼好法師, 1310) notes that water is good for yōso 癰疽 (abscesses).41

Byōka suchi also mentions the popularity of water cures in the West, ‘in the Netherlands, water cures have become highly regarded lately, and they devote themselves exclusively to [this treatment]. [Water cures] are referred to in their medical texts’.42 However, this view of the water cure as a peculiarly Dutch practice is probably a misunderstanding on Hirano’s part. Although there may have been Dutch texts on the subject, it is more probable that Hirano had come across Dutch translations of texts that were in circulation across contemporary Europe. In the West, the medical uses of water can be traced back to works attributed to Hippocrates (460–370 BCE), but it was not until the eighteenth century that the extensive use of water was promoted as a medical fashion. For instance On the Power and Effect of Cold Water (1738) by Johann Sigmund Hahn of Silesia was published in several editions. At all events, which text Hirano is referring to, we do not know. As argued in the following section, it seems likely that Hirano was under a certain influence from Western medicine.

39 Shoku Nihongi 続日本紀, compiled by Fujiwara Tsugutada 藤原継縄 in 797 CE. Reprint 1990, annotated by Aoki Kazuo, p. 35.
40 Ōkagami 大鏡, Anonymous. It is thought to have been compiled in the 11th century CE. Reprint 1963, annotated by Matsumura Hiroji, pp. 55–6.
42 BS 5:31.
Influence from Western medicine

From the viewpoint of Western influence, one merit of water deserves attention, as emphasised in Byōka suchi. That is, when water is pumped cold onto the skin, it tightens the skin’s pores and strengthens the constitution.

The pumping of water shows prompter efficacy for those who are lean and pale than for those who are overweight and have a ruddy complexion. Therefore it is problematic to practise the pumping of water on those whose skin pores are not fine... Some say that they feel exhausted after being pumped with water. This is nothing but an amateur’s misunderstanding. [Laypersons] do not acknowledge that it is reasonable to use water for those who have become weak, because water tightens the pores of the skin.43

The passage above argues that the stimulus of cold water has an energising effect on the skin and ki circulation, thereby strengthening the body.

Concern with the opening and closing of the skin pores is also found in the pathology of traditional medicine, in conjunction with the idea of wind as an alien invader. Byōka suchi designates harmful ki by such names as jadoku 邪毒 (evil poison), gaija 外邪 (outer evil), dokuki 毒気 (poisonous ki) or kanki 寒気 (cold ki, in case of cold damage). Harmful ki first attacks the pores of the skin, and then intrudes into the human body and sweeps through it.44 For instance, the Chinese text Somon describes how harmful ki enters the body through the skin’s pores.

This is how the myriad diseases begin. It is always the skin and hair that evil attacks first. It opens the pores of the skin. When the pores of the skin are open, the evil enters the channels and vessels. The evil stays there and does not leave, and moves into the entrails, and putrefies the intestines and stomach. When evil first enters via the skin, the body hair stands up and the pores of the skin open.45

If the pores of the skin are loose and open, it means the body is open to invasion. Thus it is naturally assumed that opening and tightening the pores is the key to not allowing the evil pathogen into the body. The coldness of water constricts the pores, thereby blocking evil disease from entering the body.46

43 BS 6:24.
44 BS 5:21.
45 是故百病之始生也. 必先於皮毛. 邪中之. 則腠理開. 間則入客於絡脈. 留而不去. 傳入於經. 留而不去. 傳入於府. 廢於腸胃. 邪之始入於皮也. 沅然起毫毛. 間腠理.


46 On the other hand, there are also ‘warm-factor’ theorists in traditional medicine. Among them, the author of Onékiron 温疫論 (Wenyilun in Chinese, Treatise of warm-factor epidemics), Wu Youxing 吳有性 (c. 1644) is particularly famous and influential. Instead of attributing epidemics to traditional ‘seasonal ki’ or to ‘cold damage’ which invades the body through the skin...
But where does the association between ‘constriction of skin pores’ and ‘strengthening the body’s constitution’ originate? Of course, throughout the history of Chinese and Japanese medical history there is a link between the constriction of the pores and protection against illness, indirectly leading to health and the strengthening of the body. However, the assertion that cold water has the direct effect of strengthening the body is a feature of Byōka suchi. Though it remains a mere speculation, it may be possible to see here the influence of water cures in the contemporary West.

In the nineteenth to early twentieth-century West, the popularity of water cures was promoted by a belief in natural healing. Criticising reliance on drugs as artificial and unhygienic, health reformers tried to take control of the destiny of human health through such things as wholesome diet, regulation of lifestyle and the therapeutic use of waters.

The most influential of these reformers was a Silesian, Vincenz Priessnitz (1799–1851) whose hydropathy became a popular sensation. In the naturopathy movement, this trend was further developed by such people as Sylvester Graham (1794–1851), the French physician François Broussais (1772–1838) and Father Sebastian Kneipp (1821–1897) in Bavaria. In America too, Thomsonism, a movement initiated by Samuel Thomson (1769–1843) advocated the effectiveness of water as a form of household medicine. In addition, at a number of medical spas in sixteenth to early twentieth-century Europe, patients sought such forms of treatment as douches, wet-sheet wrapping, bathing, and drinking the waters for various disorders.

As for the therapeutic virtues of water, water cures were primarily concerned with re-establishing the body’s own natural healing power. Based on the concept that insalubrious air, mental disorder, intemperate diet, and the suppression of perspiration not only caused deterioration in the bodily function, but also produced noxious fluids in the body, water cures were often seen as sudorific or purgative. Hydropathy was designed to properly flush out stale fluids and any obstructions in the body by means of sweating or excretion. Water doctors also agreed that cold water constricted the skin’s pores, thereby energising the circulation of the blood and strengthening the constitution.

Not explicitly associated with water cures, the influence of Western medical applications may be tracked more generally in Byōka suchi through the references to ‘healing by nature’. It is Hirano’s contention that perspiration, fever,

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pores, Wu Youxing proposed the concept of bōki 戻気. According to his theory, there are many different kinds of bōki that enter the body through the nose and mouth. Every bōki attacks a different viscus, thereby causing all the different symptoms.
diarrhoea, the formation of swellings, pus, and ulcers are all ways in which the ‘nature of the human body function’ removes disease toxins.

Fevers radiating from illness are all due to the nature of the human body function, which tries to eradicate illness. Fever is a tool for removing illness and a soldier on your side, therefore you should not attack it.49 This view is also expressed in such phrases as ‘the function of vital energy of nature’, or ‘function of nature’, which allude to the body’s natural ability to repair itself. The belief in ‘the functional power of nature’ of the body is representative of the vision of disease and healing in Byōka suchi. As synonyms, Byōka suchi from time to time employs such terms as ‘umaretsukitara karada no kaneai’ (innate function of the body), ‘ten’nen no hataraki’ (function of the nature of body), ‘shizen no hataraki’ (function of nature), and ‘genki shizen no hataraki’ (power of vital essence and nature).

It is conspicuous that these concepts do not belong to the vocabulary of traditional medicine, and evoke the concept of natural therapeutics in the West. It is thus possible at least to surmise that the explanation of the water cure in Byōka suchi, regarding the pores of the skin, also reflects a certain influence from the West. The idea of ‘purging’ pathogenic evil differentiates Byōka suchi therapy from the standard methods of traditional medicine in Japan, which were in principle based on the concept of ‘restoring balance’ within the body. As for the role of ‘the functional power of nature’, Byōka suchi explains that fever is one of its manifestations, in that it serves to remove excessive heat from the body thereby restoring the balance with the external airs. Such phenomena as diarrhoea and pus are also attributed to the work of ‘the functional power of nature’ as it tries to purge pathogenic evil poisons from the body. In this view, treatment should primarily aim at drawing on the healing power of nature from within the patient, and medicines, acupuncture and moxibustion are all fundamentally supplementary. Terminology such as ‘natural action’ is rather unfamiliar in traditional medicine, and it seems almost certain that Byōka suchi received a certain influence from trends in contemporary Western medicine concerning ideas of healing through nature.

The idea of the healing power of nature can be traced in the Western medical tradition since the Hippocratic corpus. In particular, in the eighteenth century it was espoused by the Leiden school, based in Holland, several texts

49 BS 5:23.
of which were translated by Edo physicians. Moreover the term ‘healing power of nature’ can be found in some medical texts of the Edo-period in connection with Western medicine. It seems that Hirano’s idea of a healing power of nature originates in contemporary Western medical developments, particularly that of the Leiden school, which was concerned particularly with fever and pus. It is known to us that several medical texts of the Leiden schools were translated by Edo physicians. These may suggest a certain conceptual overlap between Hirano’s water cures and Western practices. Hirano argues that the stimulus of cold water strengthens the body’s constitution. That is, water constricts the pores of the skin and energises the circulation of ki, instead of blood as claimed by Western physicians. In addition, as repeatedly claimed in the cases of ‘dripping sound’, ‘washing’ and ‘imbibing’, Hirano’s critical attitude against the abuse of medicine may also be associated with the idea of the healing power of nature.

From the Meiji period onward, the association of water cures and the idea of healing power in nature that seems to have originated from the West became more apparent. A number of physicians and health reformers began to promote water cures. For instance, Ogata Masakiyo 緒方正清 (1887), a Western medicine doctor, introduced the efficacy of various new forms of ‘bathing’—including sand bath, mud bath, ‘clean-air’ bath, sauna and so

50 For instance, the two texts Manbyō chijun 万病治準 by Tsuboi Shindō 坪井信道 and Taisei netsubyōron 泰西熱病論 by Yoshida Chōshuku 吉田長淑 are known to have introduced the medicine of the Leiden school to Edo society. Swieten, a pupil of Boerhaave, wrote a commentary and notes on the ‘Aphorisms’ (1709) of Boerhaave, and Manbyō chijun is a translation of Swieten’s work. Taisei netsubyōron is the translation of a work by Huxham, also a pupil of Boerhaave (1771). These are good examples of the ideas of the Leiden school on the healing power of nature (introduced to Japan as shizen ryōnō 自然良能). In addition, the idea of this healing power of nature is also found in several medical texts of the 1820s. For instance, see Seiyō jji benwaku 西洋医事弁惑 (1822) by Hidaka Ryōdai 日髙凉台 (1797–1868), Byōin seigi 病因精義 (1827) by Komori Tō’ō 小森桃塢 (1782–1843), and Seisetsu naika senyō 西説内科撰要, and Zōho chōtei naika senyō 増補重訂内科撰要 (1822) by Udagawa Genzui 宇田川玄隋 (1769–1834). It can be assumed that Hirano was introduced to the idea of healing power of nature by these medical texts. The influences of Boerhaave’s medicine were examined by Hirao Machiko and Keiko Daidoji ‘Hirano Jūsei, the author of ‘Byōka suchi’ (1832) and his idea of natural healing power’, at the International Historical Conference: 150th Anniversary of the Beginning of Modern Western-style Medical Education in Japan, November, 2007. Nonetheless, there seems to have been a certain difference in treatment between Byōka suchi and the Western natural therapists. In the West, the idea of the healing power of nature can be traced back to Hippocrates’s expectant therapy, which came into favour once again in the eighteenth century. On the other hand the emphasis on the healing power of nature in Byōka suchi is intertwined with objections to the blind use of medicines and to amateur diagnosis, which can easily go wrong. The influence of shizen ryōnō 自然良能 on the Dutch School under the Edo is studied by Yoshida Tadashi 1999 (unpublished, outline available at: http://ja-tec.com/I/I04/content13348.html).
on—for therapeutic purposes. Like many Edo-period texts, he also provides a list of hot springs for various illnesses, however his style is ‘scientific and modern’ in that he analyses their mineral content.\textsuperscript{51} Similarly water cures are promoted in such texts as Takagi Shimakichi 高木嶋吉’s Shizen ryōhō shidōsho 自然療法指導書 (Instructions of naturopathy, 1926)\textsuperscript{52} and Ito Sakon 糸左近’s Muyaku ryōhō 無薬療法 (Remedies without medicines, 1907).\textsuperscript{53} Although I cannot delineate the content of all the abovementioned texts here, a quick survey of their titles and contents reveals the influence of naturopathy from the West. In the lineage of water cures in Japanese medical history, therefore, it is possible to suggest that Hirano’s water cures, in which Western medical concepts are interwoven (although the exact nature of the influence cannot be clarified) in traditional theory, are placed at the very early stage of Japanese medical discourse about Western ideas. We may think that Edo-period Japan was a closed society. However recent scholars have already emphasised the endeavours of Japanese intellectuals who were at pains to incorporate imported knowledge with their domestic interests in various forms and at various levels.\textsuperscript{54} It seems that Hirano’s water cure also bears witness to the adaption and adoption of European knowledge and skills in domestic medicine.

\textbf{Purification}

Another source of Hirano’s ideas are traditional beliefs about the purifying effect of water. In the case of ‘washing’, water is able to cure skin diseases, and ‘affusion’ to cure mental disorders. As well as being physically cooling, water may have the effect of symbolically purifying the patient. In the ancient and medieval periods, illness was viewed in Japan as ‘impure’, and water was applied to ‘purify’ it.\textsuperscript{55} By the Edo period the association of disease and ‘impurity’ had mostly faded, and been replaced by systematic pathology.\textsuperscript{56} However, although it is not explicitly mentioned, one can observe the idea

\textsuperscript{51} Ogata, Masakiyo 1887.
\textsuperscript{52} Takagi Shimakichi 1926. The second chapter discusses the therapeutic application of cold water, while the third, hot water.
\textsuperscript{53} Itō Sakon 1907.
\textsuperscript{54} For example, see Roberts 2009, pp. 65–9.
\textsuperscript{55} Takeda enumerates four aims of bathing in Japan: (1) religious purification, (2) the treatment of illness by the purifying effect of water, based on the concept that illness is ‘impure’, (3) sanitary and hygienic purposes, and (4) pleasure. Takeda 1967, pp. 38–41.
\textsuperscript{56} Nonetheless, the practice of purifying diseases by means of water seems still to have been extant in Edo culture, mostly in the context of folk religions. In particular, bathing for the purpose of religious purification is often called Misogi 權 or Mizugori 水垢離.
of purification at work in the use of water for skin diseases and madness in *Byōka suchi*, probably fuelled by the stigmatisation of these diseases in Edo-period society.

Madness (to be cured by water) is mostly attributed in *Byōka suchi* to cold damage or extreme *yin* disease. We find a great deal of evidence to show that skin diseases and madness were often stigmatised in Edo-period society. For instance, Tatsukawa (1998) observes that insane people were the object of both scorn and fear, and were often confined at home or in temples that functioned as asylums. In particular, Dainun-ji temple 大雲寺 in Kyoto was famous as a place where the insane were sent for treatment by being placed under a waterfall.\(^57\) This suggests an association between a stigmatised image of madness and purification by water. *Byōka suchi* does not clearly voice any negative view of madness, yet it admits that it is sometimes necessary to ‘scold severely, beat, bind tightly, or confine at home’ those who are mad in order to suppress their excited souls, *tamashi'i* 神気.\(^58\) This statement implies that the insane were often treated harshly, and suffered all kinds of abuse in the name of treatment.

On the other hand, the skin diseases referred to here are mostly leprosy, venereal ulcers and small boils. Among those suffering from skin diseases, leprosy sufferers, in particular, experienced stigmatisation, being confined or expelled from their community on the grounds of their severe physical deformity. *Byōka suchi* considers leprosy to be the most fearful of contagious diseases, for the ancients called it the ‘*tenkeibyō* 天刑病 (disease of punishment from heaven)’.\(^59\) The second fascicle of *Byōka suchi* tells of a leper who cured his disease with pure water, taking refuge in the mountains and eating only vegetables and fruit. He was able to escape from his village because ‘even relatives did not dare to come near him, let alone strangers’, and he lived in the mountains ‘rather than disgracing himself at home’. This illustrates the stigmatisation of lepers and their exclusion from society. Suzuki (1998) examines the theory that a strong fear of leprosy in the medieval period resulted in a heightened consciousness of the state of the skin’s surface, which in turn helped promote the consciousness of cleanliness and the habit of daily bathing.\(^60\)

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58 BS 6:23–4.
59 BS 5:12.
It was widely believed that lepers had strong sexual urges, as the disease was inherited via ‘inherent toxins’ from their parents. Consequently, leprosy gradually came to be regarded as the cause or transformation of other diseases, most typically syphilis.\(^{61}\) This popular view is also found in *Byōka suchi*, with the warning that leprosy is sometimes a transformation of syphilis, which may originate in toxins inherited from the parents, created by their strong sexual desire.

As for the association between leprosy and purification by water, the Arima 有馬 hot spring is said to have originated with the treatment of a leper (in fact, the Buddha incognito).\(^{62}\) Drinking the holy water of the Asahi waterfall 朝日滝 (in present-day Toyama 富山 prefecture) and many other famous hot spring sites, such as Kusatsu 草津, was a cure for leprosy. Such accounts are mostly found in legendary tales or folk religion. However it can be assumed that this purifying effect is also implied by the tale in *Byōka suchi* of the leper who was cured of his disease in the mountains by means of pure water.

To summarise, the use of water cures for mental disorders and leprosy (and possibly for other severe skin diseases too) is probably to be attributed not only to the empirical cleansing of the skin’s surface or the cooling of the mind, but also to the pursuit of purification, which seems to have been fuelled by the stigmatisation of those afflictions in the popular view.\(^{63}\)

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, *Byōka suchi* recommends the application of water for various symptoms, in the forms of listening, washing, hot bathing, spitting, imbibing,

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\(^{61}\) Regarding the popular view of syphilis in the sixteenth century, a Portuguese missionary, Luis Frois (1532–1597), noted that ‘in Japan, all men and women regard it (syphilis) as normal, and no one is ashamed of it’. This is cited in his letters, contained in *Nichiō bunka hikaku* 日欧文化比較, in *Daikōkai jidai sōsho*, translated by Okada Akio 1965, p. 587. While admitting the tragic aspects of the disease, Tatsukawa observes that people were generally open and tolerant about syphilis, due to the commonness of the disease (Tatsukawa 1998, pp. 176–198). On the other hand, Suzuki argues that syphilis patients were the target of relentless scorn and discrimination, due to their disfigured features and the idea that they had a strong sexual drive. Suzuki Noriko 2005, pp. 37–66.


\(^{63}\) Regarding the stigmatisation of illnesses, Sontag famously points out that the leper in the Middle Age of Europe and the syphilitic in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were often associated with moral depravity, especially sexual desire in a social context. Sontag 1990, pp. 58–9.
and affusing. The benefits of water cures are often attributed to the coldness of water, and its ability to stimulate the senses, energise the skin, constrict the pores of the skin (or open them, in the case of hot baths), and so on. Being yin in nature, water also establishes a balance between yin and yang symptoms, thereby restoring the body to health. In contrast to many other yōjō texts of the Edo period, there is no mention of hot springs and their efficacy in Byōka suki, probably due to the nature of this text being about home medicine and nursing. Rather than run the risk of amateurs prescribing inappropriate treatment or medicines, water is recommended as a handy and ‘harmless’ option.

The author’s convictions about the extensive applications of water, though not further clarified, may be attributed to a perceived need for purification in stigmatised diseases and, in particular, to influences from the West such as the idea of the ‘healing power of nature’ or the trend of naturopathy.

After the Meiji Restoration (1868), water cures became more popular among Japanese. We can find a number of examples of the therapeutic use of water and cold water massage in health manuals and medical texts written by Western medicine doctors and health reformers. They seem to have received considerable influence from the trend of naturopathy in the West. However the practice in pre-modern times may have laid a foundation for the popular reception of water cures later. In Byōka suki water cures are theorised largely within the context of traditional medicine, while we can also detect a degree of influence derived from European knowledge and practice. In this respect, Hirano’s water cures may be regarded as a form of imbibing Western medical knowledge into Japanese practice.

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