

TANBANO Yasunori (912-995)

“Ishin-hō” (医心方), the oldest medical text that exists in Japan is a compilation of Sui-Tang medical texts of the Heian era and highlights the essence of Chinese medicine which Japan assimilated.

In the year 984 Yasunori edited this text and presented it to the Imperial Court. Yasunori was a descendent of Emperor Ling of Later Han dynasty, the 8th generation grandson of Achino-omi who immigrated to Japan from China. He became a doctor of acupuncture and a doctor of medicine, and was given the family name of TAMBA-NO-SUKUNE. This medical encyclopedia comprises a total of 30 volumes, which became the secret source of the imperial medicine and firmly established the position of the TAMBA family as court doctors for the following 900 years.

The contents covered pharmaceutical, dietary and sexual medicine. The contents consisted almost completely of quotations from Chinese medical and pharmaceutical texts (and a certain portion from Korean medical texts). Medicine was divided mainly according to “Shobyō-genkō-ron” (諸病源候論) in Sui dynasty and directly quoted a hundred and several dozen works. Thus, these should be regarded as extractions and compilations from medical literature of Han, Six Dynasties and Sui/Tang, but the style of the compilations also reflects characteristics of Japanese vision.

That is to say that major portions of conceptional and speculative sections like those pertaining to the Yin-Yang, Five Phases and pulse theory were abridged. The selection of foods mentioned also reflects the conditions in Japan at the time. The Japanese tendency to value practicality over logic is evident. While Yasunori was proud of his Chinese ancestry, he also had an awareness of being Japanese.

“Ishin-hō” reveals both sides of him. Of the 30 volumes, Vol. 2 addresses acupuncture and moxibustion. The basic reference text used on acupoints and meridians was “Kōtei-daikei-meidō (ruisei)” (黄帝内経明堂 (類成)) edited during the early Tang period by Yang Shang-shan.

This work remained hidden over a long period and until it was made public at the end of the Edo era by Taki a descendent of TAMBA, was unknown to general physicians. Most quoted works were later destroyed in China, but through preservation of their old style in

“Ishin-hō”, this text has become an irreplaceable source for the study of medieval Chinese medicine.

During the more than 100 years from when “Ishin-ho” was compiled until the end of the Heian era, medical works such as the “Iryaku-shō” (“医略抄”) and “Chōsei-ryōyō-hō” (“長生療養方”) were compiled, but until the Nissou era “Ishin-ho” remained the one unsurpassed in content and volume.

Figure1

Portrait of TAMBANO Yasuyori
The collection of Kyō-u-sho-oku library of
Takeda Science Foundation

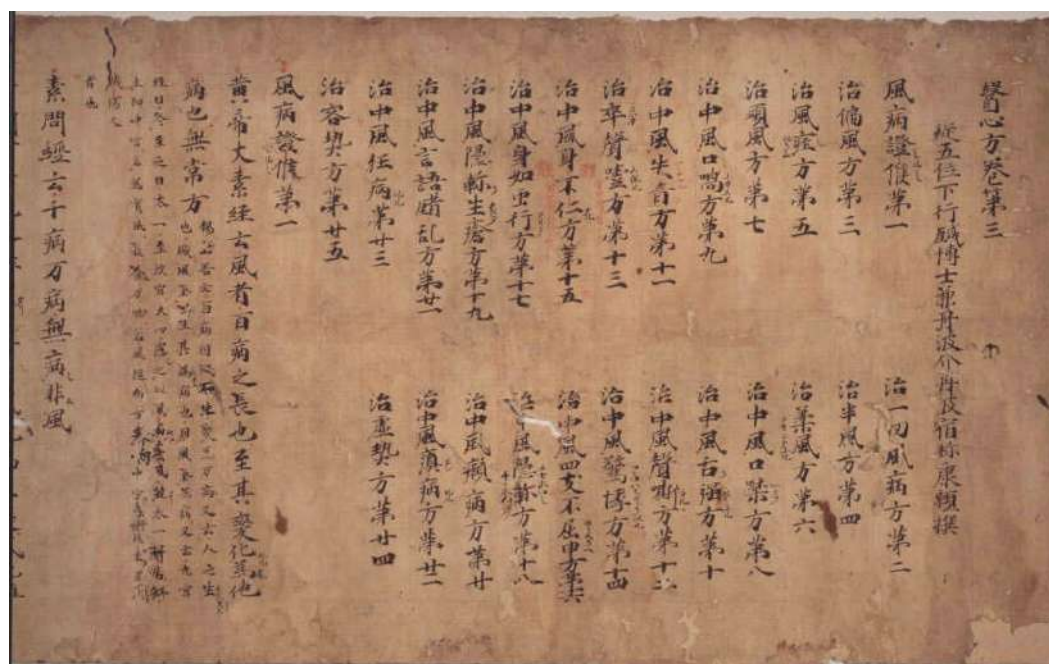


Figure2

“Ishin-hō” (“医心方”) volume 3
The collection of Tokyo National Museum

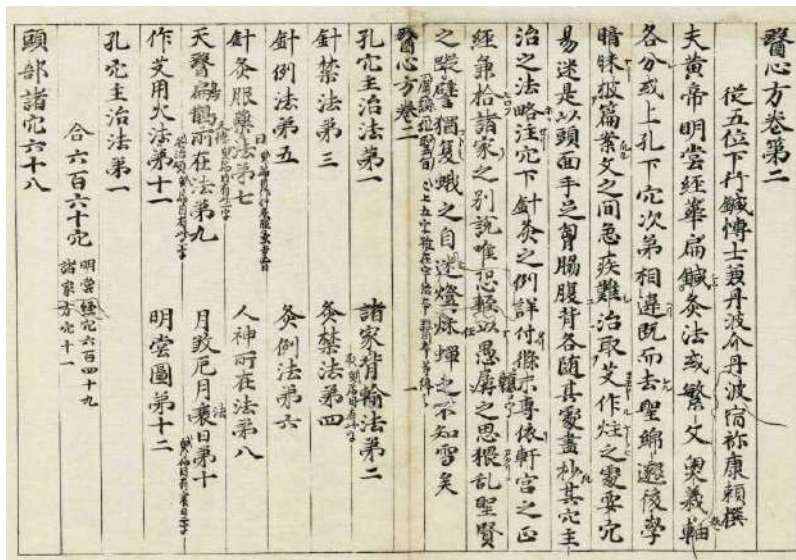


Figure3

Book of acupuncture and moxibustion of "Ishin-hō" ("医心方") (Published in 1860)

The collection of Kitasato University Oriental Medicine Research Center

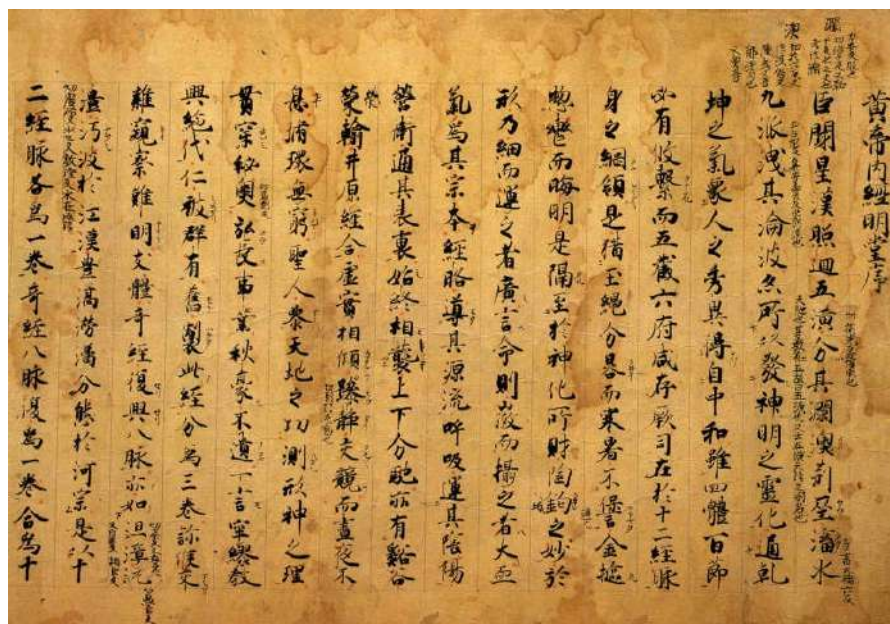


Figure4

"Kōtei-daikei-meidō" ("黄帝内經明堂")

The collection of Maeda Ikutokukai Sonkeikaku Bunko

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