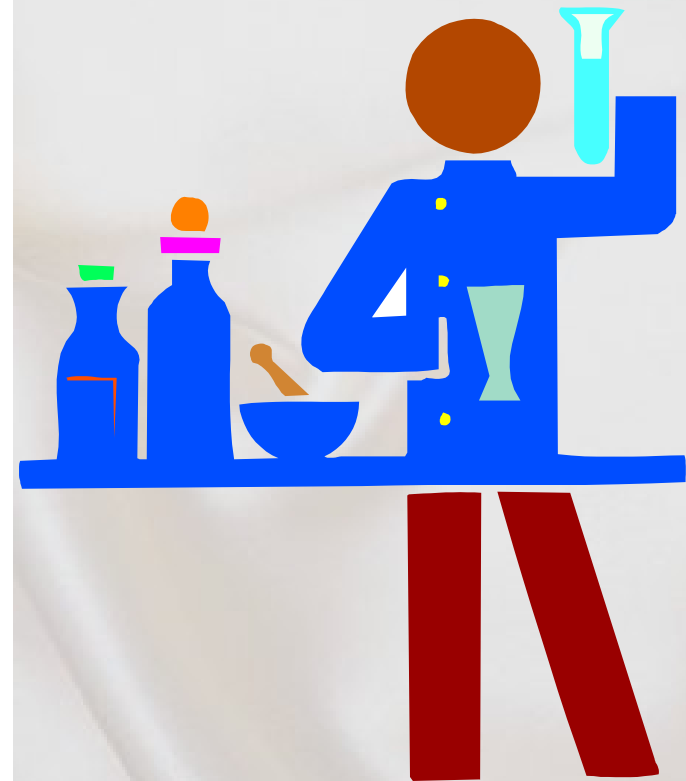


Presenting the One and Only Modern Japanese Medicine Show

Featuring nostrums, patent medicines, devices, health and beauty aids, and health information posters, circa 1900 - 1945

We can learn much from looking at a society's popular medicines and health notions. In the case of commercial products, the goal is to sell as much as possible. Ads that conjure up a fear of some hitherto unknown ailment often work well, as do those that play on fears about the health and development of one's children. The ads in the following slides are more often aimed at women than men. They rely on combinations of traditional imagery and symbols and the notion that we live in a modern age of science. Some products have strange-sounding foreign names that conjure up an image of scientific medical intervention.



Morning Club Tooth Powder, Meiji Era



Brushing the teeth was not a well-established custom in early twentieth century Japan, and so toothpaste and tooth powder companies had to create a market by encouraging the practice.

Appeals to glamour were common. The ads are for the same product. The one at left is from the Meiji era; the one at right from the Shōwa era.

Notice the difference in what is glamorous at each time.



Club Polish Tooth Powder, Shōwa Era

Fujisawa Camphor Taishō Era

“The essential defense against insects for your home” says the slogan at top right. Camphor and other aromatic substances like naphtha were used to prevent moths from laying eggs in clothing and for other aspects of the battle against bugs. Camphor is camphor, and so image (and probably price) would have been especially important in garnering market share. Wisely, Fujisawa adopted the image of Shōki, the traditional slayer of demons in both Japan and China, as its mascot. If Shōki can slay demons, Fujisawa camphor can surely keep moths at bay.

The next slide features two more Fujisawa camphor ads from the Taishō era.





In addition to repelling insects, the ad at the right also claims efficacy at repelling humidity.

Fujisawa Camphor, featuring Shōki the demon queller.





Here are two fine blood-fortifying tonics with exotic, foreign sounding names. At the right is something we might call “Blutose” by Fujisawa. At left is Somatose, a tonic featuring meat protein, brought to you by the good folks at Bayer.

Both ads are from the Taishō era.



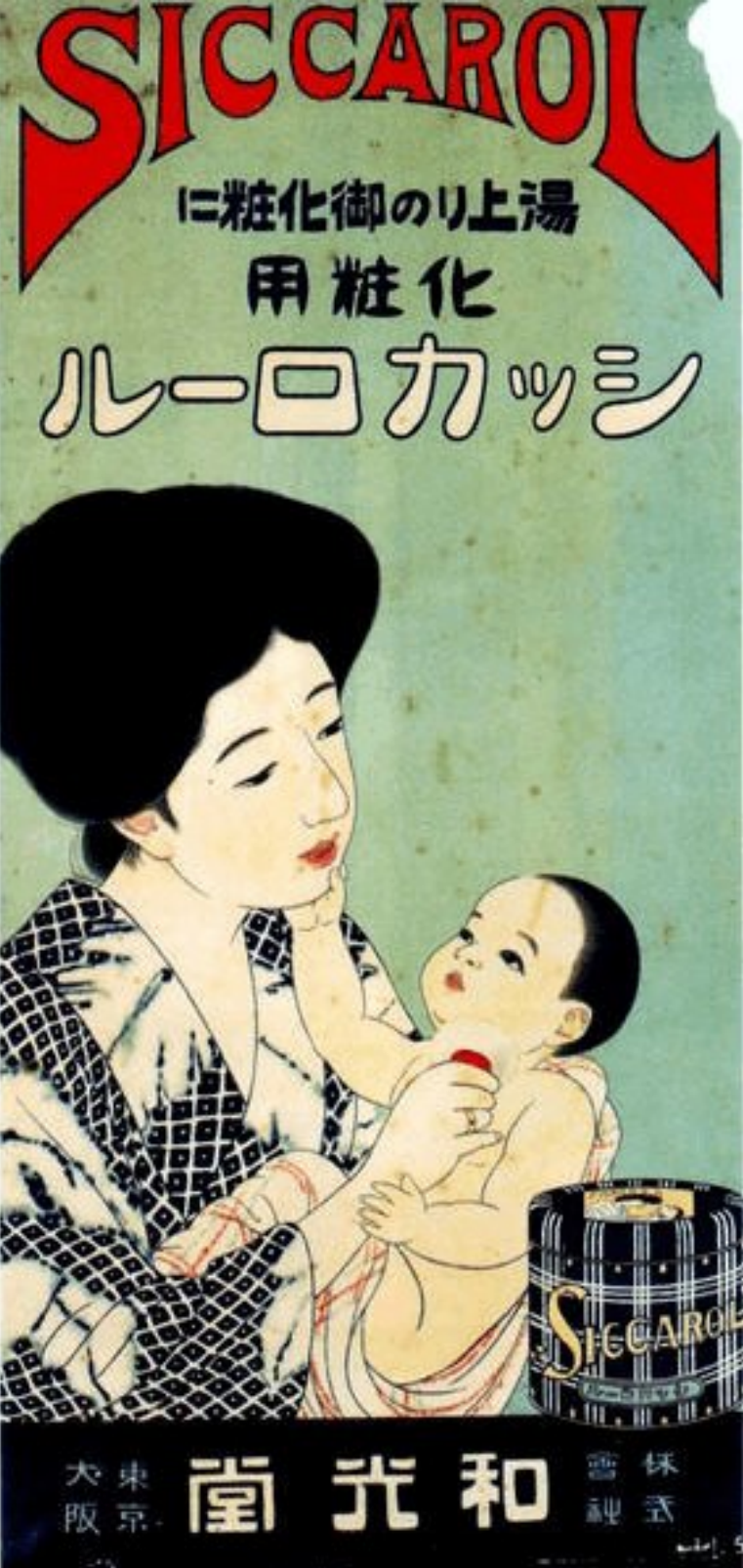
Ranran Balsam Taishō Era

Here's a dictionary definition of
balsam:

“1a. Any of several aromatic resins, such as balsam of Peru and balsam of Tolu, that contain considerable amounts of benzoic acid, cinnamic acid, or both, or their esters. b. Any of several other fragrant plant resins, such as Canada balsam. **c. A similar substance, especially a fragrant ointment used as medication; a balm.** 2. Any of various trees, especially the balsam fir, yielding an aromatic resinous substance.”

Source: *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition. 2000.





☞ Siccarol, Taishō Era
 This product has a very medicinal sounding name, which, for English speakers might suggest a cough syrup or perhaps some kind of stomachic (digestive aid). But the product here is an after-bath powder for cosmetic use.

Beauty Hair Wash Powder, Taishō Era ☞
 The text is written in what appears to be Japanized Korean, presumably understandable to either a reader of Korean or Japanese. It says this product is an ideal hair wash for men or women. Why Korean? Because Korea was a Japanese colony at this time.



Metabolin Pills, Takeda Pharmaceuticals, Shōwa Era

Here's a great-sounding name for a patent medicine. The yellow text says it is a "High unit vitamin B1 tonic" and the blue text says that it is good for fatigue of the digestive tract (or fatigue and the digestive tract) and that it fortifies your general energy and provides nutrition.

Such vague claims combined with a medical-sounding name are common today as well. This kind of marketing works. Wouldn't you like to be as vigorous as her? Metabolin!



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高單位ビタミンB1剤

勞疲・腸胃
に養榮・氣脚

丸善製薬

The advertisement features a vibrant illustration of a young woman with a joyful expression, her face flushed with red, holding a brown leather soccer ball high above her head with both hands. She is wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved collared shirt. The background is a bright blue sky with white, curved motion lines suggesting energy and movement. The product name '強 力 メ タ ボ リ ン 錠' is written vertically in large, bold red characters. To the left of the woman, the text '高單位ビタミンB1剤' is written vertically in yellow. At the bottom, the text '勞疲・腸胃' and 'に養榮・氣脚' is written in blue. A small red triangle logo is visible in the bottom right corner, with the text '丸善製薬' (Maruichi Pharmaceutical) written below it.

Saxylon, Takeda Pharmaceuticals, Shōwa Era

Another Shōwa-era product for vigorous people by Takeda. Saxylon would seem to be an ointment of some kind, but the yellow-brownish characters in the background say it is a pill or capsule (the word “pill” partly covers the medicine container, lower right). It treats external injuries such as cracks, frostbite, scrapes, skin abrasions, etc. Like Metabolin in the previous slide, this medicine has a scientific-sounding name, and the graphic image is excellent.



Portamin blood supplement and strengthening tonic, Shōwa era



Two more fine products from our friends at Takeda. At left is blood supplement with a vitamin-sounding name. The text of the baby food ad says “Instead of the mother’s breast, use [cow’s] milk and ‘roron.’”

Roron suggests something fancy, though it is probably just a brand name for sugar.



Infant-rearing Sugar Shōwa era



Here are two ads for Fatoshin Pustule (or something like that), a cough pill, whose name doesn't sound so great in English. The ad at the right invites the reader to "use two fingers instead of five." Shōwa era.



Oriize, Shōwa Era

No Wimps Zone!!

Surely you don't want your child to grow up to be a wimp or a weakling. Then, just to be sure he does not, give him Oriize (or some such sounding brand) Growth Tonic. In very small letters under the Oriize brand name, we are told that it consists of "sunlight vitamins." Just as the sun makes plants grow tall, so too can this fine product make your sons grow tall and manly. The slogan alludes to sunlight: "Brightly banish wimpiness."

Cod Liver Oil for Glasses, Shōwa Era



Dorikono is a straight-forward type of product, albeit absurd in its claims. The glasses cod liver oil ad is a little more unusual. The yellow text says “Early to sleep, early to rise--sleep well!” How exactly cod liver oil applied to glasses helps regulate the natural cycle is not obvious to me. Notice the clock gears--an emblem of modern life.



Dorikono, a Shōwa-era strengthening drink that “immediately turns to blood, to stamina” after being consumed.

Makunin Pills, Shōwa Era. “The authority of a worldly roundworm eradication medicine” says large red text. The diagrams in the box explain the cycle by which round worms invade the body, multiply, and spread. The images to the right show the spread and transmission of roundworms (starting with nightsoil-fertilized agricultural fields), the images bottom center show some effects of roundworm infestation, and the images top left show hygienic practices that prevent the transmission of roundworms. And then there are Makunin Pills, of course. The figure at the far top right in red is Shōki the demon queller, and Makunin Pills are a product of Fujisawa (see the camphor ads earlier).

The advertisement is a vertical layout. At the top right, a red Shōki demon figure is depicted. Below it, a large red title reads '世界的蛔蟲驅除薬の權威' (World Authority of Roundworm Eradication Medicine) and 'マクニン錠' (Makunin Tablets). To the left of the title, a vertical red text reads '兒童團體用新發賣' (Newly Released for Children's Groups). The central part of the ad is a large diagram titled '蛔蟲の人體内侵入の経路圖' (Diagram of the Pathway of Roundworm Invasion of the Human Body). This diagram is divided into several sections: '衛生上の注意' (Notes on Hygiene) at the top left, '経路の経路' (Pathway) in the center, and '効果の比較' (Comparison of Effects) at the bottom center. The diagram includes illustrations of a person's body with internal organs, a bar chart, and various scenes of daily life. At the bottom of the diagram, the text '醫學博士 藤原十九郎先生 校長' (Professor Dr. Fujiwara Jūjūichirō, Principal) is visible. On the right side of the diagram, there is a vertical red text: '本薬は小學校以上の御用込製薬の獨り社會奉仕の一環として製し、兒童團體用マクニン錠を發賣し、百人分以上何人分にも成るまで一人一錠七粒にて御用令に準ずる各本藥店或は本舖直物御用申とてよ'. At the bottom right, there is a red vertical text: 'マクニン錠' and 'フジサワ製薬株式会社' (Fujisawa Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd.).

Electric-heat Inhaler
Shōwa Era

久能木式
電熱吸入器



Trachoma: “A contagious disease of the conjunctiva and cornea, caused by the gram-negative bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis* and characterized by inflammation, hypertrophy, and formation of granules of adenoid tissue. It is a major cause of blindness in Asia and Africa.”

The trachoma poster is especially interesting. It says “Your eyes are important!” followed by a series of slogans about the spread, prevention, and ill effects of trachoma (see dictionary definition above). Notice all the symbols of the modern world. The point, of course, is that with compromised eyesight, your ability to function in and contribute to this world is limited.



Poster from the Japan Trachoma Prevention Society, Shōwa Era

Repay [Your Debt to] the Nation Fly Paper, Shōwa Era



The Hoshi stomach pills ad is interesting because it uses an old notion of spirits or demons of disease. The fly paper is even more interesting because it invokes the modern notion that citizens owe a debt to their nation, which, in this case can be repaid by using a particular brand of fly paper! What's the logic? Well, the white text on the black background explains that flies spread germs all over the house. So, presumably, a less germ-infested house might lead to better health and thus better ability to serve the nation. It's a stretch, but appeals to patriotic sentiments can sell products.



Hoshi Upset Stomach Pills, Shōwa Era