

ANIMAL CARE IN JAPANESE TRADITION: A SHORT HISTORY

BY W. PUCK BRECHER — ASIA SHORTS BOOK SERIES

SUGGESTED COURSES:

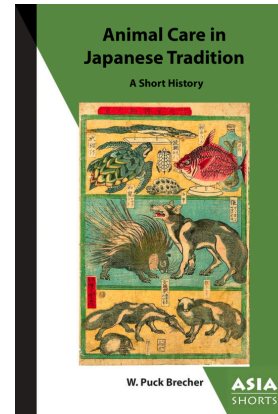
- History - East Asia

KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS:

- Animals in East Asian thought, religion, and ritual
- Religion in theory and practice
- History of veterinary medicine in Japan (esoteric and exoteric traditions)
- History of Japanese petkeeping
- History of animal welfare in Japan

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What roles do animals play in ancient Japanese myths and legends? How do these stories reflect the cultural values and beliefs of the time?
2. Discuss the significance of animal Shinto shrines, like the famous Nara deer park or the fox shrines. What cultural practices and traditions are associated with these places?
3. Investigate various folktales and fables that feature animals as central characters. What moral lessons or cultural values can be derived from these stories?
4. How did animals like horses, oxen, and dogs contribute to agriculture and transportation in different periods of Japanese history?
5. Explore the representation of animals in Zen Buddhism and their symbolic significance in Zen parables and teachings.
6. List some common pets in the Edo period, including how they were enjoyed and cared for.
7. How was veterinary knowledge acquired and taught in early Japan? How did this change during the Edo period? During the Meiji period?
8. How were hunting birds and dogs utilized and perceived during the rule of different shogunates in Japanese history?
9. When and how did the concept of animal welfare appear in Japan? How did it evolve?
10. Animals in Contemporary Japanese Culture: How are animals depicted in modern Japanese media, animation, and pop culture? Are there any significant shifts in the portrayal of animals compared to historical representations?
11. Discuss the ethical implications of human-animal relationships in historical Japan, such as animal rights, hunting practices, and the use of animals in rituals.



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(1850S-1930S): CONTINUITY OVER CHANGE

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“Richly detailed yet accessible and concise, this compelling overview of animal care in Japan covers a surprising amount of historical ground while offering fresh and nuanced insights on this fraught topic. Brecher dispels persistent idealistic misconceptions about historical human-animal relationships in Japan as he traces how wildlife and domestic animals were treated and cared for in the early modern through modern periods. This readable and engaging study is a must-read for scholars and students of Japanese history and animal studies.”

— **BARBARA R. AMBROS**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

“Well over a decade and a half after the publication of the landmark Japanimals volume, Brecher’s stimulating book shows that we still have much to learn about the long history of animal-human relations in the Japanese archipelago. Engagingly written, this book covers the full sweep of Japanese history and lays out a bold argument about the enduring significance of attitudes and practices with deep roots in the past.”

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