



The Literature Study of Korean Herbal Medicine and Tradition for Postpartum Beliefs and Practices

Maisaraf Binti Marman

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Ministry of Tourism and
Culture Malaysia

Malaysia



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Abstract

The practice of mother and child-healing and celebration is perhaps one of the intangible cultural heritages that has continued and survived through several nations. East Asia and South East Asia region is an area rich with various elements of intangible cultural heritage. A traditional post-partum belief is about the medicine and tradition. Some of investigated were founded from the website journal and documents recorded in the medical classics of "Donguibogam(東醫寶鑑)" published in 2015 by Korean Institute of Oriental Medicine and Korean Medicine book published in 2013 by Korea Foundation respectively in the Joseon Dynasty. The others data collection were founded by literature review from journal in website.

Keywords: *herbal medicine, postpartum, tradition*

1. Introduction

Every country has its traditions and culture of each. Postpartum maternal health care influences the health of both the mothers and their children greatly. Traditional herbal medicine confinement and each country have its own uniqueness. In Malay 'Pantang' literally means 'restriction'. 'Pantang' refers to the 'do's and don'ts' during the postpartum confinement period. Traditional postpartum care or 'pantang' in

Malaysia is a complementary care regime widely practiced among women after giving birth regardless of the socio-demographic and cultural differences. In Malaysia, the three major ethnic groups i.e. Malays, Chinese and Indians each have their own confinement practices. However these three ethnic groups share some similar principles and elements including prescribed confinement period, postpartum diet, massage, hot compress (*bertungku*), corset (*bengkung*), herbal baths and medicinal tonics as well as certain specific lifestyle measures. Intangible cultural heritage has been handed down from generation to generation and has contributed to the development of cultural diversity and the creativity of humanity. Intangible cultural heritage for social development is well recognized as it represents the involvement of historical traditions and the cultural identity of a society embodied in creative expression.

Therefore, due to their significance, the management of these safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is in need of a new outlook and methods to ensure their well-being, longevity practicing and durability for a long term. Therefore, the Department of National Heritage Malaysia mobilizes effort to find the tradition practices of collection from renowned historical documentation and institutions all states and community. Aware of the disposal and loss of the traditions, because of the modernization era, the handling method efforts of research that is proven efficient and practical is very much sought after. As the Department of National Heritage of Malaysia has a considerable amount of listed collection for National Heritage since 2007.

The Customs of Traditional Korean postpartum care is special

Giving birth here in Korea is interesting on various levels. They have post-natal care for women after giving birth and food medicine. According to ‘Korean Medicine; A Holistic Way to Health and Healing’ book series from the Korea Essentials series, 2013, Korean Foundation, the first real development of a distinctive Korean medicine can be traced to the early Joseon period, when ancient indigenous methods of treatment were compiled into a text called *Hyangyakjipseongbang*. But the later publication of *Uibangyuchwi*, East Asia's first medical encyclopedia, allowed the framework of Korean traditional medicine to truly take shape. With Japan abandoning its official system in the 19th century and China adopting a more pragmatic combination of traditional and Western approaches in the second half of the 20th, Korea has remained the truest to its roots among all traditions of East Asian medicine.

Korean Herb Medicine

Korean traditional medicine* has long been an important part of Korean culture. Many years before Western medicine arrived in the country, it was used to cure and prevent diseases. Korean traditional medicine went through a period of decline in attention and importance after the arrival of Western medicine, but that has been changing in recent years. More people around the world are growing aware of the limits of the Western approach and turning to alternative forms of medicine.

Hanyak, or Korean herbal medicine, is often thought to be associated with folk remedies. But Korean traditional medicine is entirely different. Whereas a folk remedy might identify a particular herb used to treat an ailment, Korean traditional medicine represents a pharmacological system of treatment based on long-term clinical research.

Conditions Related to Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Postpartum Treatment

According to ‘Korean Medicine; A Holistic Way to Health and Healing’ book series from the Korea Essentials series, 2013, Korean Foundation, in Korean traditional medicine, sterility, or the inability to conceive a child, is seen as resulting from a number of factors such as weakness of the kidneys, congestion of the liver, damp phlegm, and blood deficiency.

The most common treatment when childbirth is expected to be difficult is *dalsaengsan*, which is often called "medicine for a safe delivery." *Dalsaengsan*, which was mentioned as far back as the time of *Donguibogam*, is prescribed in the later stages of pregnancy to reduce amniotic fluid-swollen baby, it

allows for easier passage through the uterus. A report presented in an academic conference said the average time of childbirth was reduced 40 percent or more with use of *dalsaengsan*. Another medication called *bulsusan* is also prescribed when childbirth is imminent. This increase the contractile force of the uterus and reduces the time of labor pain, while relaxing muscles to help the uterus open more easily. Both medicines are used for easier and safe childbirth but cannot be used indiscriminately. The dose should be adjust according to the mother's condition and body type and the symptoms she exhibits.

In the postpartum recovery period, it is important to make up for energy and blood damage from the childbirth process and help the mother return to her pre-pregnancy condition as soon as possible. While the situations of patients vary, most women experience lochia, or the release of secretions from wounds to the endometrium from the shedding of placenta and ovaries. Treatment involves prescription to restore energy and blood and push lochia out more easily. Medications also help to relieve swelling and promote milk flow.

In addition to the medications, the mother should eat a wide range of foods. Green seaweed is considered the best food for women recovering from childbirth; it assists in uterine contractions, clears the blood, and helps restore joint functions. Pumpkin is another excellent choice; it helps metabolize fluids while its diuretic effects relieve edema. It also strengthens overall energy by promoting digestion.

2. Objective

The objective of the research of conservation, preservation and safeguarding the cultural heritage and natural heritage through research, documentation, enforcement and promote awareness of heritage through:

- To sharing knowledge about the Korean tradition Medicine of postpartum belief and practices after women giving birth.
- To record objects and details of customs and traditions intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of the local community and indigenous herbal medicine confinement of women after childbirth.
- To foster heritage co-operation on info sharing on regards Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage between in tradition field.

Statement of the problem

Several problems were identified during the research is conducted. Here are the problems that occur include:

- Lack of skilled of young people about the efficacy of herbal medicine research for the Korean community in the process when postpartum abstinence.
- Not much research has been done with regard to abstinence treatment by mothers after childbirth. This makes it difficult to do comparative research.

Significant of study

The study of Korean Medicine for postpartum belief and practices will give benefit and gain knowledge about the tradition and regarded as a guideline for references by Intangible Cultural Heritage, Division of Department of National Heritage of Malaysia to safeguarding the Malaysian tradition too.

3. Research Methodology

Settings: This study was carried out at institution of herbal, museum, books review and journals between September and November 2016.

Observation: Through observation, women in South Korea over 50 years old and still has a strong vitality.

Random Sampling: The journals from website I choose is randomly sampling based on their experienced and results.

4. Result of Literature Review

4.1 Literature Review from Jean Batten, English Teacher, Daegu, South Korea.

Ms Jean Batten is a teacher and she's living in Daegu, teaching at an all girl's middle school and exploring the culture and wonders of Korea. She has a Korean friends and experienced about the Korean Traditional postpartum belief and practices. She sharing an experienced and knowledge at her blog. The tradition divided to three part, it is pre-birth, labor and delivery, and after the birth.

Pre birth

Traditionally, the Korean culture is hierarchical, with the role of the Korean woman being submissive to the husband and the husband's family, especially the mother-in-law. So like many Asian countries, it was very desirable to give birth to boys who were treated with special care; especially first born boys. In the old days, to only have girls was not only grounds for divorce, but a surrogate mom may have been sought out to provide the family with a male child. Women often prayed and made offerings to the *samshin halmoni* (삼신할머니 grandmother spirit), the Big Dipper, mountain spirits, Buddha, and to certain rocks and trees considered to be sacred. According to the myth of Korea's founding, such an offering was made by the mother of Tan-gun, the founder of Korea, under a large tree before his birth.



Samshin Halmoni
삼신 할머니

The pregnant woman was expected to only look at 'beautiful' things. This practice is called *taekyo* 태교. Everything she ate, felt, thought or saw could influence the physical appearance of the baby. She could only eat foods that were unblemished and had to avoid broken or crooked pieces of fruit, cookies, vegetable, etc. Pregnant mothers are not to show pain during delivery as this is a sign of shame and weakness. All the women in this interview declined pain medication for these reasons.

Another aspect of taekyo is similar to our Western prenatal rituals, and focuses on the relationship between the baby and the mother. Usually this means focusing on reading to the baby, music, meditation, etc.

Then there is the belief in *taemong* 태몽. “Tae” means womb and “Mong” means a dream. So if the baby’s parents or grandparent’s dream of flowers then it indicates the baby will be a boy. Dreams of fruit, and the baby will be a girl.

Labor & Delivery

Pregnant mothers are not to show pain during delivery as this is a sign of shame and weakness. She was expected to be silent so as to focus all her body energy into ‘chi’ – natural energy.

After the Birth

Upon the birth of a child, a straw rope, or *geumchul* 금줄, is hung across the gate to the house. These talismans are used to frighten away evil spirits as well as to warn people not to enter the premises, as a child has recently been born. If more children are desired, the placenta and afterbirth are burned under the eaves of the house. If no more children are desired, these are burned some distance from the house, usually in a clean, sunny place on the side of a mountain. The ashes are often scattered to the winds or in a river.



금줄 / 고추

아들을 낳았을 때의 금줄, 부정한 자의 출입을 금지한다는 표시이다.
고추는 남성의 성기를 상징하며, 붉은 색은 잡귀를 물리치며, 숲은 경화를 의미한다.

For 21 days, no one can enter the house when a geumjul is hung. The charcoal represents purity, the red is to scare spirits, the red pepper represents a boy and the pine tree for it's green color represents a girl. This picture shows both.

The mother eats seaweed soup (*miyeok guk* 미역국, the same one that students cannot eat during exam time) since it was to clean out the toxins from childbirth and was to be eaten by the mother for four weeks after giving birth. And because of its healthful properties, might have it three times a day over the next 2-3 months. It contains a high content of calcium and iodine, nutrients that are important for nursing mothers. Many women consume it during the pregnancy phase as well. It is also traditionally eaten on birthdays for this reason, a reminder of the first food that the mother has eaten and passed on to her newborn through her milk, thus bringing good fortune for the rest of the year.



**New mothers should eat Miyeok guk 미역국,
a seaweed soup to stay healthy for her newborn.**

According to Korean practice, a new mother is supposed to cover up with blankets and keep warm to protect her loose bones; if a mother fails to do so, she may suffer from bone pain or rheumatism in her old age.



**Doctors urge mothers to stay warm.
So even through childbirth no icechips are given and
she cannot bathe. Once home,
a new mother is kept warm.**

A mother is really taken care of after childbirth, she doesn't get kicked out of the hospital after 2 or 3 days (natural birth) or a week (cesarean birth). In Korea, giving birth is a few thousand dollars cheaper rather than others country such as America. After birth, the mother stays usually for about 2 weeks. The mother is pampered.

A baby is not named for a while! Parents try to give their child a good name so that their child can live a healthy, happy, and successful life, but naming a child is not an easy task! Korean parents who believe that their child's fortune is determined by its name often defer to naming specialists, believing that there are many factors to consider such as saju (사주 the "Four Pillars" – the year, month, day and hour of one's birth) and eumyangohaeng (음양오행 the theory of yin and yang, and the five elements that constitute the universe). Naming specialists usually decide on a name one of two ways: by finding good Chinese characters for names proposed by the parents or by suggesting two or three names for the parents to choose from. A visit to the naming specialist can cost anywhere from 100,000 won to a million won (\$100 – \$1,000).

4.2 Korean Post-partum Traditions by ZenKimchi (Nov 26, 2010)

In Korea, there are 21 days, *samil-il*, where a mother's job is to just eat and rest. Her body is weak and broken. If she doesn't recover fully she can have chronic issues in the future. Whether or not you believe this, it is the tradition. And it does make sense.

What Mr. ZenKimchi found is collect the Korean traditional post-partum beliefs. He don't want to judge them and label them as to how practical his think they are. But He will categorize them in whether they are current beliefs or have fallen out of favor in modern Korean society or are just questionable sources.

Current Modern Korean Traditions

- 21-42 days of recovery for the mother
- Eating Miyeok-guk (Seaweed Soup) at least three times a day
- Belief: it cleans the blood and contracts the uterus
- Considering the number of slim in-shape young mothers I have seen in Korea, who knows if this might actually have some truth to it?
- Don't eat hard or crunchy foods
- Medical science shows that new mothers' gums are tender after birth, so there is some truth to this
- Mothers should stay warm
- This is an old humors belief in hot and cold common in east Asia and other cultures. The blood is hot, and mothers lose this in childbirth, so they must always be kept excessively warm to recover this lost humor.
- This includes not drinking cold liquids. They must be hot or at room temperature. And no ice cream!
- Avoid cold drafts. The belief is that a woman's bones are loose, and a draft can enter the joints and cause rheumatism or arthritis in old age.
- Always wear socks and blankets
- Mothers have a special caretaker
- This is either an elder female in the family, a person hired to help or some time in a post-partum clinic, known as a *sanhujoriwon*
- Mothers' primary jobs are to eat and rest

- No house chores
- No driving
- Don't leave the house
- This is another one that has some backing in medical studies
- Proper breast massages
- I don't think this is strictly a Korean belief
- Hot pads and hot towels on the breasts also help—and are also not strictly Korean practices

Outdated or Questionable Korean Traditions

- People other than the parents can't see the newborn for 100 days.
- Korea used to have a high infant mortality rate, so babies were kept secret from the public until they reached 100 days old and had better survival chances. That's the basis for the *baekil* 100-day ceremony.
- Mothers should not take showers or wash their hair
- It's believed that this will make them cold, but this is starting to fall out of favor

4.3 Rebecca Chan, Founder SgMummy.com (2009)

In Korean, there is a word that describes postpartum care. It is "**Samchilil**", which mean 21 days. Koreans believe that the new mother should be in confinement for at least 3 weeks after birth. Koreans mums duties were supposed only to be rest and sleep during this period. They are not allowed to move about too much as this is to help the uterus to contract. They also have special buy ampicillin cheap confinement diets. Although Kimchi remains as their main source of food, seaweed soup known as "**miyuk-kuk**" is one dish that is to be consume 3 times a day. It is encouraged to consume everyday for a least 3 months. Seaweed soup has healing properties, it is believed to help to clean the blood, contains calcium as well as to help with the breastfeeding milk production. Hard or crunchy food is best to be avoided as they believed the mother's gum Hobart Capital Markets Limited is still very weak after delivery.

Koreans confinement has some similarities to Chinese. They are supposed to wear thick clothes to prevent wind from entering body and not to walk bare footed around the house. Putting on socks is a must. Taking a hot shower or washing of hair is however allowed but mothers who has a caesarean delivery Accept Ach Payments should avoid taking a shower for a week.

Do you Know?

Korean has Postpartum Clinics known as **Sanhujoriwon**. It provides traditional care for the mother and the babies. Woman after birth stay at these clinics where each mother has her own room with a bathroom, double bed, TV, PC, nursing goods such as a breast milk pump, a massager and phone. Staff train the mothers to breast-feed and offer classes on how to wash, swaddle and calm their babies. There is some strict rules that mothers are not allowed to touch other babies, even the grandparents. There is also restriction on visiting hours too. A fortnight stay at this clinic cost at least 2 – 2.5 million won (\$1494). Mothers who has stayed in these clinics find it better to cope with their postnatal emotions as they shared their feelings with fellow mothers and they are able to get ample rest during their stay.

5. Respondant for Questionnaire Korean Medicine after Giving Birth

Professor Saadia Amin is non-local people in South Korea. She is working as researcher Professor at Cheonbuk University. She has experienced about giving birth in South Korea.

Question: Korean Medicine for Women after Giving Birth (Focus on Korean Tradition):

Answer: In my case, I never took any Korean Traditional Medicine but yes, during my stay at post-natal care, they provided me some soups (esp made of seaweeds, some traditional drinks which consisted the major component of Ginseng. Rest, they kept me on regular diet as I gave a natural birth.

1) Pre-Birth

a) Question: How many check up in clinic / hospital:

Answer: Doctors they do checkup twice in a month (i.e after every 15 days) for the starting of 3 months of conceiving and then they call expected mothers only once in a month till six month of pregnancy. From the seven month, the test is after 15 days and eight months onwards, patients are checked every week. These checkups include blood test, urine test, X-rays, heartbeat test of expected mothers, ultrasounds, heartbeat test of babies, observation of baby's kick in a womb etc.

b) Question: What medicine you taken since pregnant time:

Answer: Doctors never give any medicine to any pregnant lady unless there is some special case. From six months of pregnancy only Iron (Fe) pills are given to the expected mothers for maintaining the hemoglobin level.

2) Giving Birth

a) Question: What of special meal you eat / drink after deliver baby:

Answer: For a natural delivery, the mother is under supervision for 24h. A regular meal is given to the mothers along with some medicines. In case of C-section, the mothers are kept under the supervision for 7 days. A regular meal is given along with some medicine. In both the cases, nothing is forbidden to eat and regular meal is permitted to new mothers.

3) After Birth

a) Question: What of special meal you eat / drink after deliver baby:

Answer: Nothing is forbidden to eat and regular meal is permitted to new mothers.

b) Question: What kind of medicine (traditional or modern) you taken after giving birth:

Answer: As I said, mine was natural delivery so I was discharged from the hospital after one day and thereafter, I stayed in post-natal care for a week. Nothing special in food was given except some traditional drink made of Ginseng and regular medicine for three days.

6. Research Contribution

6.1 Contribution to ICHCAP

- Adding storage inventory record of research useful to ICHCAP about intangible cultural heritage of Korea for UNESCO nomination in the future.
- A reference of intangible cultural heritage of indigenous and traditional Korean society.
- This research project is still process, in order to ensure the safeguarding of the Korean Medicine of Traditional Postpartum Belief & Practices - suggestion for a new ICH project to be implementation.

6.2 Contribution to Malaysia

- Sharing knowledge about care to safeguarding of indigenous women postpartum confinement Korean society.
- Benefits of traditional medicine that can be used together.
- Suggestion to publish books & workshop to sharing knowledge and experiences about Korean Medicine of Traditional Postpartum Belief & Practices.

7. Conclusion

This research study aims to gather research materials Indigenous Culture Korean society and can be documented as a material which can be consulted in the future. Furthermore it touches customs and traditions practiced medicine for generations by local communities that would indeed be the practice for mothers of confinement to restore energy and as a source of health care for women.

In addition, the increased use of technology has also led to various forms of medical rival that exist solely to facilitate the treatment process. If the research medicinal herbs for the community when the confinement does not there have been efforts to preserve and maintain in the form of documentation and so on, it is feared that the next generation cannot understand the right way in practice treatment of abstinence after childbirth and beyond affect health. In fact, it also cannot be complete without reference material that is no longer the elderly (who are proficient) that can help to provide guidance and advice on the care during the confinement. This step is also very good to strengthen research on indigenous heritage and culture of Korean society.

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