

Review

The influence of traditional Iranian and Chinese medicine on western and islamic countries

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Abstract: Traditional Chinese and Iranian medicine are ancient medical and health care systems that still forms an important part of diagnosis and treatment systems in Iran, China and other parts of the world. The integration of these two systems and modern biomedicine is also an important issue. Iranian and Chinese traditional medicines recommended for health promotion and well-being. Chinese herbal drugs have been described by medieval Muslim medical scholars such as Tabari, Rhazes, Haly Abbas, Avicenna and Jurjani (1137 CE). Traditional Chinese and Iranian medicine play an important role in sustainable agriculture and food systems, it also offers a holistic approach to prevent diseases while making appropriate use of organic and herbal products especially growth by small-scale family farmers. Both Iranian and Chinese traditional medicines may help to balance temperature, and both can be health prevention and preservation. Traditional healing practices consist of Islamic religious text based practices, Islamic worship practices and folk healing practices, Islamic religious text based practices are included spiritual healing, medicinal herbs, applied therapy and dietary prescriptions. At present, herbal medications or related products in the global market are derived from Chinese herbs, Indian herbs, Iranian herbs, Arabic herbs, and Western herbs. Herbal remedies may also be classified into three categories, namely, modern herbs, theoretical herbs, and empirical herbs, in accordance with their nature/characteristics and the nature of current usage. Traditional Chinese and Iranian medicines are inexpensive and available to all and they also focus more on fitness than illness

Keywords: traditional Iranian medicine; traditional Chinese medicine; islamic countries; pharmaceutical science

1. Introduction

Most population of the world, especially in developing countries relies on traditional medicine (Soleymani *et al.*, 2010; Shahrajabian *et al.*, 2011; Soleymani *et al.*, 2013; Yong and Shahrajabian, 2017; Shahrajabian *et al.*, 2018; Soleymani and Shahrajabian, 2018; Ogbaji *et al.*, 2018; Yong *et al.*, 2018; Shahrajabian *et al.*, 2019a,b). Iranian traditional medicine is one of the most famous and ancient forms of traditional medicine, whose earliest record can be traced back to 6,500 BC (Shojaii *et al.*, 2016; Zeinalian *et al.*, 2017). It is believed that traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has a 3000-4000- year history, and TCM spread across Asia throughout the centuries (Shahrajabian *et al.*, 2019c,d,e). TCM is the overarching umbrella for many disciplines, and throughout history, TCM and acupuncture have been subjected to religious, cultural and political pressures (Ogbaji *et al.*, 2013; Shahrajabian *et al.*, 2019f,g,h,i). Archeological studies have shown that the practice of herbal medicine dates as far back as 60,000 years ago in Iraq and 8,000 years ago in China (Leroi Gourhan, 1975). Traditional Chinese medicine included 5 branches, namely, acupuncture and Moxibustion, Chinese herbology (commonly known as Chinese herbal medicine), Qigong healing, Tuina therapeutic massage, and Chinese dietary therapy

(Lu and Lu, 2014). During the Islamic Golden Age, Persian physicians contributed to medicine in two phases. The philosophers, Gerber, Al-kind, Rhazes, Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes had profound effect on the Dark Ages of Europe (Petri *et al.*, 2015). Chinese herbal drugs have been described by medieval Muslim medical scholars such as Tabari (870 CE), Rhazes (925 CE), Haly Abbas (982 CE), Avicenna (1037 CE) and Jurjani (1137 CE). The term *al-sin* (the Arabic word for China) is used 46 times in *Avicenna's Canon of Medicine* in reference to herbal drugs imported from China. Cinnamon (dar *sini*; “Chinese herb”), wild ginger (*asaron*), rhubarb (*rivand-e sini*), nutmeg (*basbasa*), incense tree wood (ood), cubeb (*kababe*) and sandalwood (*sandal*) were the most frequently mentioned Chinese herbs in Islamic medical books. There are also multiple similarities between the clinical uses of these herbs in both medical systems. Different traditional medicines are consisted of Chinese, Persian, Graeco-Roman and Ayurvedic theories and practices (Soleymani *et al.*, 2011a; Soleymani *et al.*, 2011b; Soleymani and Shahrajabian, 2012a; Soleymani and Shahrajabian, 2012b; Soleymani *et al.*, 2016; Soleymani *et al.*, 2017). Similar to the Graeco-Arabic medicine, the Iranian traditional medicine is based on the theory that the human body is filled with four basic substances, called humors, including Phlegm (Balgham), Blood (Dam), Yellow bile (Şafra) and Black bile (Sauda). The four substances determine the physical and mental characteristics of each person, also known as mizaj or temperaments. The main essence of the Iranian traditional medicine in maintaining health and treating illnesses is that each person should choose a life style which matches their distinguished mizaj. Mizaj and genetics are relatively similar as the temperament will be determined once an embryo starts to develop. Furthermore, the dominant mizaj can be inherited from the parents. Traditional Chinese medicine plays an important role in sustainable agriculture and food systems, it also offers a holistic approach to prevent diseases while making appropriate use of organic and herbal products especially growth by small-scale family farmers. In the early 11th century, Avicenna (980–1037), a great philosopher and physician, incorporated a number of Chinese herbal preparations in his book *Pharmacopoeia*. Heydari *et al.* (2015) reported that Chinese herbal drugs were a major component of the exchange of goods and knowledge between China and the Islamic and later to the western world amid this era. The life style rules in Iranian traditional medicine are mainly focused on six core principles, including food and drinks, climatic conditions and environment, sleeping and waking, physical activities, psychiatric conditions and ridding body from waste materials such as sweat, urine or feces. Zeinalian *et al.* (2015) showed that Iranian-Islamic traditional medicine (IITM) offers an ancient comprehensive personalized medicine (PM) which is more available and inexpensive compared to the modern PM, and it may focus more on fitness than illness in comparison. The most important similarities and differences between four main medical systems is shown in Table 1. Chinese herbal medicine (CHM) in China is presented in Figure 1. Achievements of Arabic medicine and pharmacy is presented in Figure 2. A unifying conceptual model of traditional Arabic and Islamic medicine is shown in Figure 3.

Table 1. The most important similarities and differences between four main medical systems (Al-Rawi and Fetters, 2012).

Criteria	Ayurvedic medicine	Traditional Chinese medicine	Greek medicine	Islamic medicine
Inherent wisdom responsible for health restoration and preservation	Prana	Chi Energy	Physis (healing power of nature)	Physis (healing power of nature)
Active force that maintains equilibrium	Doshas (energy dominance)	Yin and Yang (energy dominance)	Humours (metabolic dominance)	Humours and Tempermental imbalance
Spiritual Influence	Hinduism/Buddhism	Taoism/Confuciansim/Buddism	Abrahamic scriptures	Abrahamic scriptures

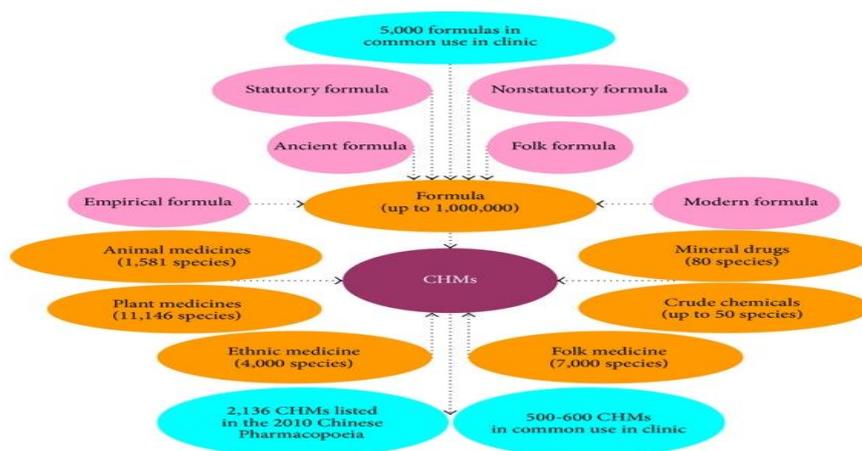


Figure 1. Chinese herbal medicine (CHM) in China (Pan *et al.*, 2014).

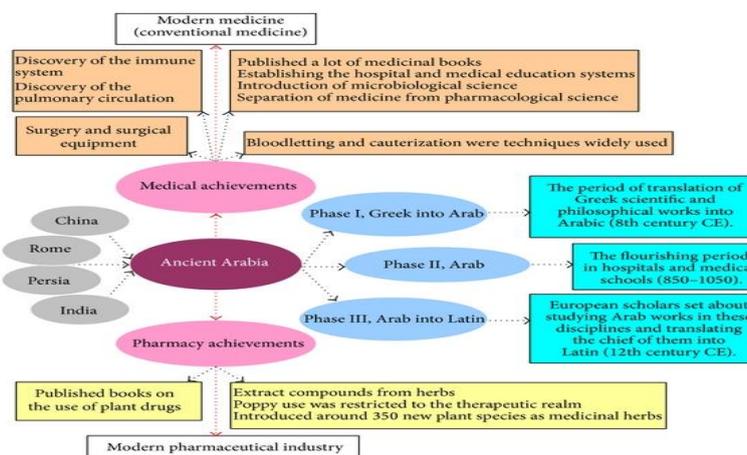


Figure 2. Achievements of Arabic medicine and pharmacy (Pan *et al.*, 2014).

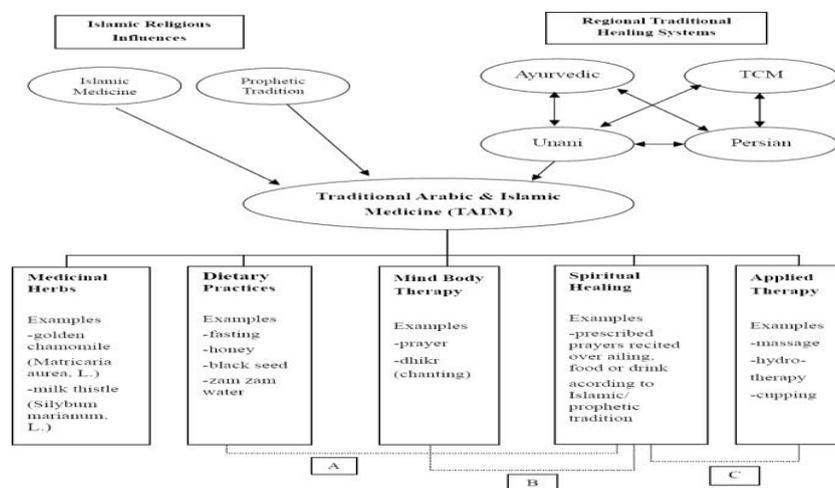


Figure 3. A unifying conceptual model of traditional Arabic and Islamic medicine (Al-Rawi and Fetters, 2012).

Traditional healing practices consist of Islamic religious text based practices, Islamic worship practices and folk healing practices, Islamic religious text based practices are included spiritual healing, medicinal herbs, applied therapy and dietary prescriptions. Folk healing practices is included medicinal herbs and applied therapy. Sarebanha *et al.* (2016) concluded that the methods of western medicine diagnosis with science and technology (Western diagnostic techniques) can be introduced to Chinese and Iranian clinical practice, which can improve the accuracy of Chinese and Iranian diagnosis and lead to an advantage for improving the medical efficiency in the clinical treatment. Rezaeizadeh *et al.* (2009) reported that traditional medicine has the advantage of being considered as part of the culture therefore, bypassing cultural issues that may affect the practice of medicine, and it can be used in conjunction with and as an aid to the conventional medicine. Comparisons of methods of diagnosis in traditional Iranian and Chinese medicine is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparisons of methods of diagnosis in traditional Iranian medicine and traditional Chinese medicine (Sarebanha *et al.*, 2016).

Method of diagnosis in traditional Iranian medicine	Method of diagnosis in traditional Chinese medicine
Inspection	Inspection
Palpation	Listening and Smelling
Percussion	Interrogation
Interrogation (Questioning)	Pulse examination, Palpation
Smelling	
Urine Analysis	
Characteristic of traditional Iranian medicine	Characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine
Temperaments:	Pulse taking
Warm and Wet	Tongue observation
Warm and Dry	
Cold and Dry	
Cold and Wet	
Humors:	
Blood	
Bile	
Black bile	
Phlegm	
Urine analysis	
Pulse taking	

2. Conclusions

Integrative use of modern agriculture and science of traditional Chinese and Iranian herbs with novel technologies especially in Islamic countries will secure production of medicinal herbs in different parts of the world. Despite the scarcity of medical knowledge in the Koran, Arabs adopted the ancient medical practices that originated from Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Persia, India and China. Traditional healing practices consist of Islamic religious text based practices, Islamic worship practices and folk healing practices, Islamic religious text based practices are included spiritual healing, medicinal herbs, applied therapy and dietary prescriptions. At present, herbal medications or related products in the global market are derived from Chinese herbs, Indian herbs, Iranian herbs, Arabic herbs, and Western herbs. Herbal remedies may also be classified into three categories, namely, modern herbs, theoretical herbs, and empirical herbs, in accordance with their nature/characteristics and the nature of current usage. There is no doubt that herbal products will continue to play a crucial role in the health care system of human societies, not to mention that secondary metabolites of plants are economically important as drugs, fragrances, pigments, food additives, and pesticides. Given the growing popularity of the Iranian and Chinese traditional medicine among the public, many scholars and scientists express optimism that continued research in the field will lead to further revival of the scientific method and bring about more breakthroughs in the medical science in general. The comprehensive Iranian and Chinese traditional medicine cover all aspects of health and disease, including both spiritual and physical features. Besides, traditional Chinese and Iranian medicines are inexpensive and available to all and they also focus more on fitness than illness.

Conflict of interest

None to declare.

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