

Ŭng Kol Pang, a 14th century Korean treatise on falconry

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Abstract / Zusammenfassung

It is not easy to find out where, when and how falconry developed and spread into Korea. The oldest evidence for falconry in Korea is found on a wall-painting in the tomb of Sham Shil Ch'ong dating from the Kokuryō-dynasty (c. 5th century AD). In medieval times a treatise entitled *Ŭng Kol Pang* or *Book on Hawks and Falcons* was written by a government official named I Cho Nyōn (1266-1343). In this treatise birds of prey were classified into hawks and falcons. However, owing to the lack of detailed depictions of the birds, it is not clear what kind of species exactly are meant. The *Ŭng Kol Pang* is devoted to the breeding of falcons and to the treatment of their diseases. As will be illustrated, the methods and therapies applied in medieval Korea are based on traditional Chinese or Korean medicine and folk remedies.

Es ist nicht einfach herauszufinden, wo, wann und wie sich die Beizjagd entwickelte und in Korea übernommen wurde. Der älteste Hinweis für Beizjagd in Korea findet sich auf Wandmalereien im Grab von Sham Shil Ch'ong, das in die Kokuryō Dynastie (ca. 5. Jahrhundert n. Chr.) datiert. Im Mittelalter schrieb ein Regierungsbeamter mit Namen I Cho Nyōn (1266-1343) eine Abhandlung mit dem Titel *Ŭng Kol Pang* oder *Buch über Habichte und Falken*. In dieser Abhandlung werden die Greifvögel in Habichte und Falken eingeteilt. Wegen fehlender Abbildungen sind wir jedoch nicht in der Lage zu bestimmen, welche Arten gemeint sind. Der *Ŭng Kol Pang* ist dem Brutgeschäft der Falken und der Behandlung ihrer Krankheiten gewidmet. Die im mittelalterlichen Korea angewandten Methoden und Therapien basieren auf der traditionellen chinesischen oder koreanischen Medizin und auf der Volksheilkunde.

Keywords Hawking, Middle Ages, Korea, traditional medicine
Beizjagd, Mittelalter, Korea, traditionelle Medizin

Introduction

It is commonly accepted that falconry originated in the Asian steppe and that it developed alongside with horsemanship. According to Canby (2002), falconry was known in ancient Anatolia about 2000 BC. Gerdessen (1956, 5) comments on an anecdote about falconry during the reign of the Chinese King Wen (689-675 BC), which is mentioned in the earliest work on falconry in Japan. If this citation is correct, the Chinese might have known falconry already in the first millennium BC. According to Epstein (1943), falconry was introduced from Korea to Japan in the 4th century AD, with a governmental office being set up for falconry by the emperor. However, owing to the lack of historical records, it is not easy to trace, where, when and how falconry developed and spread into east Asia.

The earliest evidence for falconry in ancient Korea is found on a 5th-6th century AD tomb wall at Jilin Sheng. To date located in China, this region once formed part of the Kokuryō Kingdom (37-668 AD), the territory of

which included the whole of Manchuria and the north-eastern part of China. The tomb named Sham Shil Ch'ong (the tomb with three rooms) belongs to an unknown aristocrat of the Kokuryō dynasty. The wall painting depicts a man riding a horse with a falcon on his fist (Fig. 1).

Fragmentary evidence concerning ancient Korean falconry can also be found in historical writings, e.g., by a Confucian scholar named Kim Pu Sik (1075-1151) and by a Buddhist priest named Il Yon (1206-1289?). In their works dealing with the 'Three Kingdoms Period' (third to seventh century AD) one can read the following: "*Ah Shin, King Ch'im Ryu's first son ... liked horseback riding and falconry*" (Kim 1145, 48) or "*He saw a man releasing a falcon and (the falcon) chasing a pheasant ... (The men) heard the bell ringing and found it.*" (Il Yon 1281, 408).

During the Koryō Dynasty (918-1392 AD) falconry was strongly influenced by the Mongols who wielded power over Asia. Moreover, Arab falconers were employed for



Fig. 1: The wall painting in the tomb of *Sham Shil Ch'ong*. (Chŏn 2000, 201; Fig. Mae Sha Nyang).

training falcons in China at that time (Lee 1998, 28), transmitting a good deal of their knowledge to East and South-east Asia. During the Koryŏ and Chosŏn Dynasties (1392-1910 AD), a government agency named *Ŭng Pang* was responsible for training and supplying falcons to the royal families and for foreign envoys. The famous Korean falcon, *Shong Kol Mae*, was among the important tributes paid to Mongolia and China.

In the 14th century falconry appears to have been very popular, as is illustrated by the following text passage: “*In this year the falcon-competition was booming and [the falcons] competed with each other. [But] when they came back [from the competition], a falcon disease also broke out and only one or two out of ten survived. Among the seven [falcons] which I was taking care of, only two fell ill and the others were not different from normal.*” [*Ŭng Kol Pang*, Chapter ‘The method of fattening an emaciated falcon’ – Folio 30].

Falcons and hawks also appear in art works of the Chosŏn dynasty. The painting of a falcon or hawk at home was believed to protect people from demons causing illness and bad luck. On these paintings the bird had the image of a god rather than a naturalistic appearance. However, realistic scenes of falconry were also found, e.g., on a woodcut the second King of Chosŏn, Taejong (1367-1422) gave his brother as a prize (Lee 1998, 10 f.) (Fig. 2) and on a famous painting by Kim Hong To (1745-?) (Fig. 3).

Traces of falconry are also found in Korean writings. The Korean idiom ‘*shi ch'i mi tte da* (시치미떼다)’ originates from falconry and means ‘to feign ignorance’. ‘*Shi ch'i mi*’ (Fig. 4) is the tag on the tail which marked the ownership of a falcon and *tte da* means to remove (Chŏn 1999, 1418). Some people took off the mark in order to steal a good falcon, which illustrates how valuable trained falcons must have been. However, laws such as the *Lex Gubalda* or the *Lex Salica* in Europe, which explicitly stated punishment for thieves of falcons (Gerdessen 1956, 3 ff.), did not exist in Korea.

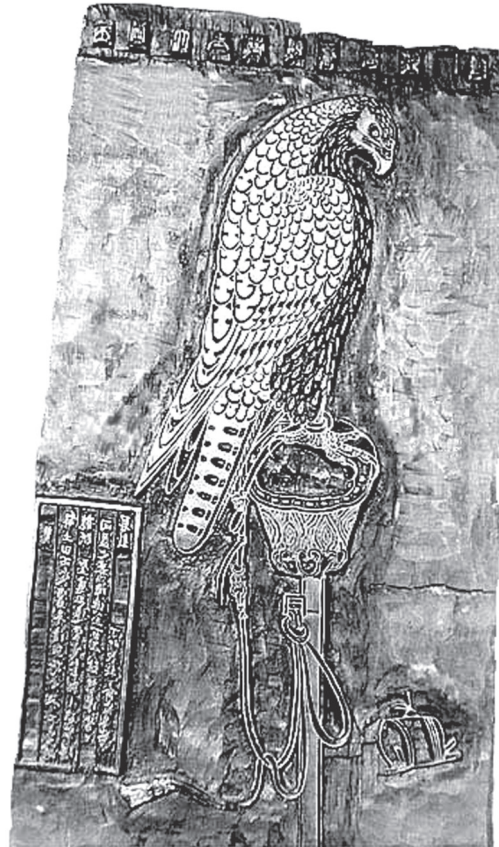


Fig. 2: Woodcut of a hawk. (Digital Encyclopedia © encyclopedia.com).

Interestingly, the Confucian scholars who had the main power during the Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasties considered hunting with falcons a trivial amusement that a man of virtue should avoid: “*The strength [of the hawk] to fly up to the clouds and attack the birds is considered as an amusement. For this reason from ancient times till now, princes, dukes and virtuous men do not love it.*” [*Ŭng Kol Pang*, Chapter ‘The method of fattening an emaciated falcon’ – Folio 31].

Nevertheless, neither the aristocracy nor the army officers entirely gave up the joy of falconry, even during the Chosŏn dynasty when Confucianism strongly influenced all aspects of society. In particular Prince An Pyŏng (1418-1453) must have been famous for his enthusiasm for hawks. In 1444 he published a treatise entitled *Kobon Ŭng Kol Pang* (*Old Text of the Book on Hawks and Falcons*). The original has been lost, but copies of it exist in handwritten form, probably dating from the 19th century. Except for some passages, the treatise *Kobon Ŭng Kol Pang* is remarkably similar in contents to the *Ŭng Kol Pang* (*Book on Hawks and Falcons*), written about a century earlier. Obviously the author of the *Kobon Ŭng Kol Pang* had a copy of *Ŭng Kol Pang*. The latter appears to have been widely distributed, as is illustrated by the fact that Kim Tong Myŏng, a diplomat who visited Japan, writes that in the



Fig. 3: A folk painting by Kim Hong To. (Digital Gallery of Anshan city, Danwon Kim Hong To-Museum).

year 1673 he met a Japanese falconer who possessed a copy of I Cho Nyŏn's falconry book.

Ŭng Kol Pang or Book on Hawks and Falcons

The earliest treatise on falconry known to exist in Korea is the *Ŭng Kol Pang* or *Book on Hawks and Falcons*. It was written by a government official named I Cho Nyŏn (1266-1343), who lived during the Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392 AD). The original text is lost but there exist some copies of a later date. The latter are written in Chinese but they contain special terms for falconry in *I tu*, the unique system of phonetic representation of native sounds by Chinese logographs, which was also used in Korea during the Middle Ages¹.

From the existing copies of the *Ŭng Kol Pang*, the one kept in the National Library at Seoul and written by An

Jŏng Pok (Ms. *Hankwi-Kocho* 68-41) has been used for this study (Fig. 5). In case the writing was unclear or if the text was damaged we consulted the other editions (Table 1). In particular the translation into Korean by Lee (1990) was an important reference for our study. When exactly the *Ŭng Kol Pang* was written is uncertain. From a mentioning in the text it is supposed to post-date the year 1322: "... In the winter of 1322 I had a greatly talented (excellent) A kol. One day its nose was acutely stuffy and its eyes were full of tears. Then people considered it a 'weakness of the head' and tried to treat it with moxibustion." [Chapter 'The method of fattening an emaciated falcon' – Folio 29].

I Cho Nyŏn mentions that he wrote the *Ŭng Kol Pang* for the purpose of sharing his own experience about falconry and falcon diseases: "As I gained some experience, I am writing about the usages and the effects of the medicines giving examples. [I'll be] pleased if it would be read and used for the breeding of hawks ... In

¹ The Korean characters (*Han gŭl*) were only invented in 1443.



Fig. 4: *Shi ch'i mi* – The tag on the tail marking the ownership of a falcon.

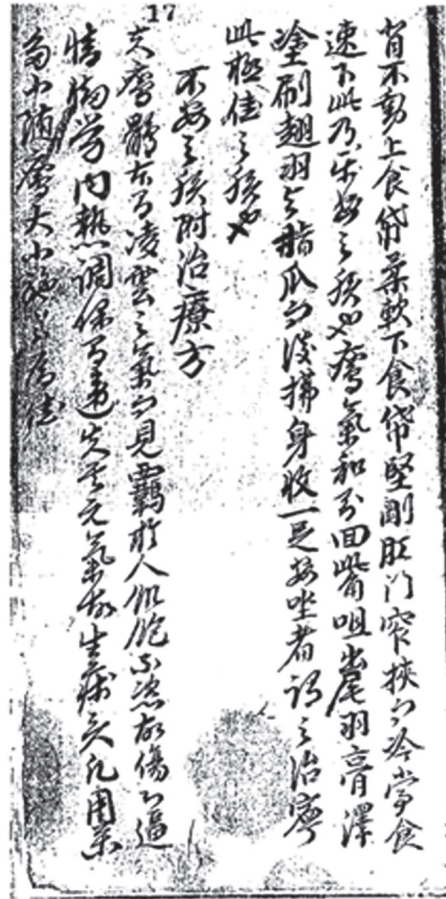


Fig. 5: *Ŭng Kol Pang* (Ms. Hankwi-Kocho 68-41, Folio 17). (National Digital Library).

Year	Title	Author	Manuscript/Print	Whereabouts
1325(?)	<i>Ŭng Kol Pang</i>	I Cho Nyŏn	Original handwriting	lost
1444	<i>Kobon Ŭng Kol Pang</i>	An Pyŏng	Handwriting	Ko-7532-2 ⁽¹⁾
1760(?)	<i>Ŭng Kol Pang</i>	I Cho Nyŏn	Handwriting – I Cho Nyŏn mentioned as author	Hankwi-Kocho 68-41 ⁽¹⁾
19 th century	<i>Ŭng Kol Pang</i>	Edited by I Yŏm	Japanese edition	As a facsimile (Lee 1994)
1930	<i>Ŭng Kol Pang</i>	Copied by I Pyŏng Sho	Handwriting – I Yŏm mentioned as editor	Published in Tokyo by Tongkŏngshŏrim As a facsimile (Lee 1994)

Table 1: Manuscripts and prints of the *Ŭng Kol Pang*. The works marked with ⁽¹⁾ can be found in the National Library in Seoul.

Contents	Folio
On the figure [of falcons]	1
On the beak	1
On the feet	2
On the colour of the feathers the feathers	3
On the name of the feathers	4
On the natural disposition	5
Food	6-7
Breeding and manning	8-11
Training and practicing	12-14
Treating after releasing	15
Good nature and signs	16
Critical symptoms of the diseases and appendix of the treatments	17-21
The puffy nose is also a symptom	22-24
The method of fattening an emaciated falcon	25-26
Preparation of medicines	33-36

Table 2: Contents of the *Ŭng Kol Pang*. After the chapter *Preparation of medicines* follow the *Poems and Songs on falcons* and *A petition by Han Chinsha from Myŏnchŏn*. According to Lee (1994) the petition by *Han Chinsha* was written in order to find his copy of the '*Ŭng Kol Pang*' he had borrowed to someone but obviously never got back. It remains unclear, however, why this petition was appended to this treatise.

general the methods for taking care of the hawk and the falcon originated from amusement, so the man of virtue has disregarded it. But the people interested in the falcon and the hawk could read and prepare these things mentioned for emergencies." [Chapter 'The method of fattening an emaciated falcon' – Folio 30].

The Ms. Hankwi-Kocho 68-41 comprises 24 sheets (11.9 x 22.1 cm) of handmade Korean paper. Table 1 lists the different editions of the *Book on Hawks and Falcons*. It contains 16 chapters (Table 2). Illustrations of falcons or hawks are absent in all copies we have seen.

On the species of falcons and hawks mentioned in the treatise

In the chapter 'The method of fattening an emaciated falcon' (Ms. Hankwi-Kocho 68-41 – Folio 30) the following information concerning the species employed by falconers can be found: "*The name of the hawk first appeared during the Tang dynasty (618-907). In general the birds of prey can be classified into two groups. One is called the hawk (ŭng) and the other is called the falcon (kol). Hwang ŭng, paek ŭng, kak ŭng, yo cha and ch'ŏng chŏn belong to the species of hawk. A kol, t'o kol, hae ch'ŏng ryong, rong t'al and hwang chŏn belong to the species of falcon. [But] in general not only these particular types are regarded as the hawk and the falcon.*"

Contrary to the precise descriptions in medieval European literature of the bird species used in falconry (see, e.g., *De arte venandi cum avibus* by Friedrich II; von den Driesch & Peters 2002, 101 ff.), the taxonomic status of the birds of prey dealt with in the Korean treatise is far from clear, because a description of the different

species is lacking. In addition, both *ŭng* (鷹, hawk) and *kol* (鶡, falcon) are generally called *mae* (매) in Korean, just as falcon and hawk or falconry and hawking can mean exactly the same thing in English (Canby 2002). Since in the *Ŭng Kol Pang* the birds of prey have been classified into *ŭng* and *kol*, it is obvious that the Korean falconer divided the different species in a way bird taxonomists do to date. Lee (1994, 93 ff.) tried to identify the species of falcons and hawks mentioned in the *Ŭng Kol Pang* (Table 3). But it turned out that even falcons and hawks belonging to the same species were named differently. As such, aspects such as the age and the sex of a bird are important criteria for giving names. Also in Arabian falconry a female and a male bird were often considered two different species because their hunting behaviour differed (Möller 1965, 127).

It is said that there existed over 200 names for birds of prey in the Korean language (Lee 1994, 105). For example, *hwang ŭng* (yellow hawk) and *paek ŭng* (white hawk) might be a classification based on the individual age and colours of the feathers. Based on the *Kobon Ŭng kol pang* 'yellow' means 'Pora' (黃者今之甫羅). 'Pora' generally means the brown dotted breast feathers of young hawks (Kim 1994, 112 f.). According to a Korean dictionary *a kol* and *t'o kol* mean *female sparrow hawk* and *male sparrow hawk*, but the sparrow hawk was also named *yo cha* (Chŏn 1999, 422, 1470). It is not clear what kind of species *ch'ŏng chŏn* (blue falcon) and *hwang chŏn* (yellow falcon) represent. According to Park Yong Sun, a falconer who still practises traditional Korean falconry, the names *shong kol* and *a kol* were used in ancient times to designate the peregrine *Falco peregrinus*. To date, however, *shong kol* refers to the goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*. In addition, there are special terms for falcons and hawks referring to their age and

Category	Name	Possible species (Lee 1994, 93f)
Ŭng (鷹, hawk)	Hwang ũng (yellow hawk)	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i> (?)
	Paek ũng (white hawk)	<i>Falco rusticolus</i> (?)
	Kak ũng (horn hawk)	<i>Spizaetus nipalensis</i>
	Yo cha	<i>Accipiter nisus</i> (?)
	Ch'ōng chōn (blue hawk)	<i>Accipiter nisus</i> (?)
Kol (鶻, falcon)	A kol	Male <i>Accipiter nisus</i> or <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
	T'o kol	Female <i>Accipiter nisus</i> or <i>Falco cherrug</i>
	Hae ch'ōng ryong	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
	Rong t'al	<i>Falco columbarius</i>
	Hwang chōn (yellow falcon)	<i>Accipiter nisus</i> (?)

Table 3: Names of hawks and falcons mentioned in the *Ŭng Kol Pang* and their possible taxonomic status.

degree of training. A wild hawk, for example, is called *nal ji ni* (날지니), *po ra mae* (보라매) refers to a young hawk caught the same year and *shu ji ni* (수지니) is a trained hawk.

On falconry and falcon medicine

To choose a good falcon or hawk is one of the most important things for falconers, from ancient times till now. Therefore, a large part of the *Ŭng Kol Pang* is devoted to the exterior of birds suited for falconry. The shape of the body, beak, legs and feet, and the colour and condition of the feathers are all described in detail. However, the characteristics of falcons and hawks are not separately described. In the *Ŭng Kol Pang* the ideal bird looks as follows: “Generally if the hawk has a big body its head is small ... The crown of the head is flat. The eyes are round and deep, its chest is firm and flat ... it has a wide breast, powerful muscles and short legs. But long legs are said to be also good” [Chapter ‘On the figure (of falcons)’ – Folio 1].

The similarities between this description and the depiction of a good goshawk in the ‘*Said Gai-I-Shaukati*’, an Indian treatise of falconry which was translated from Urdu into English by Harcourt (1968), are obvious: “Some experts say that one with a wide breast, long neck, small head flat like a snake, the feathers on its neck curling like buds, its head feathers very thick and so fine they cannot be counted even under a magnifying glass, ... the thigh and leg joints powerful, the feet small with wide toes, the eyes dark with red pupils... .” (Harcourt 1968, 4 f.). Possibly at that time the goshawk was the species most widely used also in Korea.

Captured birds were kept and trained in a so-called (hawk) house, which in fact is a dark room for manning birds which will be released afterwards. However, there is no

information about the way to capture wild hawks or how to take care of moulting birds, i.e. of aspects which are generally described in much detail in Indian or European treatises on falconry (e.g., Möller and Viré 1988, 112 f.).

The health of the falcons and hawks was also a matter of concern to the Korean falconer. The chapter *Critical symptoms of the diseases and appendix of the treatment* contains general information and instructions for treating hawks or falcons: “[If] it becomes timid and tired and it gets hot internally, unless one takes good care of it or maintains it in good condition, it will lose vitality. Then it falls ill. In general [it] should be treated with some medication. The amount of [the medication] should be applied according to the size of the hawk.” The *Ŭng Kol Pang* contains a number of prescriptions mentioning herbs used in traditional Korean and Chinese medicine and in folk remedies. The treatment methods are said to originate from the falconers’ own experience. Superstitious treatments or spells are lacking in the treatise.

In traditional Korean or Chinese medicine the ‘heart’ is considered to control spiritual activity and blood circulation. Thus, if someone is stressed his ‘heart’ can be injured. It can, therefore, be expected that the treatment of sick birds should be based upon an understanding of the medicine and necessitates a careful observation of the birds: “People from ancient times till now have raised hawks without an understanding of the method of medical treatment. [Hence] they are not only difficult to breed but they also fall ill. Then they sit on their hands and wait till the hawks’ death because they can not save the life [of the falcon]. I feel pity for that. It should be observed how [the falcon] is drinking and feeding. The signs of losing weight and gaining weight should be examined. By doing so, the root of the diseases can be eliminated. Then based on *pon ch'o* (*pen cao*, 本草)², the hawk should be treated [with medi-

2 Probably the *Shen nung pen cao jin* (神農本草經), the Chinese *Materia medica* believed to be written by the legendary emperor *Shen nung*. The oldest edition of this book dates to the 5 -6th century AD (Yamada 2002, 141 ff.)

cines] according to the type of medicines and in relation to the symptoms³.” [Chapter ‘The method of fattening an emaciated falcon’ – Folio 31].

The diseases described in the ‘*Ŭng Kol Pang*’ cannot be equalled to conditions described in modern falcon medicine. But many of the diseases mentioned are still causing problems today, such as digestive disorders, respiratory problems, loss of appetite, parasitoses, and infectious diseases.

The eight prescriptions and 19 herbal medicines mentioned in the treatise were widely used in traditional Korean and Chinese medicine. For example *Hwang Ryŏn Shan*, a powder composed of *Rizoma coptidis*, *Radix rhei*, *Cortex phellodendri*, *Radix ginseng* and *Pollen typhae*, was used for treating fever, diarrhoea or traumas. However, it is doubtful whether the therapies were entirely based on traditional Chinese medicine, since *Moon water* (menstrual blood), urine, ash of a human skull, milk of a woman nursing a boy, or a man’s faeces were also applied in case of internal diseases and traumas. This reminds us of the so-called *snake rule* in European falconry books (von den Driesch 1983). The urine of young children, the milk of a nursing woman, or even human blood were also considered effective medicines in the *Said Gai-I –Shaukati*. Obviously, though falconry has been practiced in many countries across Eurasia, the treatments were and are not so different (Gerdessen 1956, 20). This indicates that there must have been an exchange of knowledge about falconry and about the medical treatment of falcons and hawks between cultures in western, southern and eastern Asia, with the Arabian, Indian and Chinese medical practices influencing each other (e.g., Ma 1992). An illustration of this may be found in the following treatment. *Kwi ran*, administered in case of diarrhoea or in order to evacuate something “rotten” in the intestines, is an egg-shaped object made from indigestible materials such as hairs, cotton and feathers. Similar therapies for detoxification or for removing foreign bodies or worms from the gastro-intestinal tract are found in European and Indian texts on falconry (Gerdessen 1956, 34, 53; Evans 1968, 46). The evening before a hunting trip, *Kwi ran* (Fig. 6) was given with meat⁴ in order to empty the stomach of the birds.

Certain diseases were treated applying moxibustion. This therapy was commonly used in case of a swelling of the legs and feet or to treat diseases of the eyes and the respiratory tract. At the present stage of research it is difficult to ascertain whether people already applied



Fig. 6: *Kwi ran* – An egg-shaped object made from indigestible materials such as hairs, cotton and feathers. For further explanation see text.

acupuncture to treat birds medically. To date Korean falconers will not treat their animals using acupuncture. In the ‘*Ŭng Kol Pang*’ the acupuncture point *paek hwi* (*bai hui*, 百會) is mentioned as the spot where one has to apply moxibustion in case “... the eyes of the falcon are crooked and full of tears and diseases of the nose.” [Chapter ‘Critical symptoms of the diseases and appendix of the treatments’ – Folio 21]. This point, located in the middle of the crown of the head, is used in human medicine for the treatment of paralysis, epilepsy, tetanus and blood stagnation in the head. But, according to the so-called classics in Chinese dealing with medical care of horses and cows, *paek hwi* is located at the conjunction of the lumbar vertebra and the sacrum and will be solicited for treating hip joint diseases such as coxarthrosis. Conceivably I Cho Nyŏn knew this acupuncture point from his knowledge on human medicine.

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3 Folio 31 and 32 are severely damaged. In case the characters in this folio 31 are illegible I used the manuscript ‘*Kobon Ŭng Kol Pang*’ as a reference.

4 Named *Gem bap* or *Nak bap* according to the province (Kim 1994, 98f.).

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