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KHIWANCHAI KERDBANGNORN : THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SURVIVAL OF THE TRADITIONAL MUSLIM BIRTH ATTENDANT IN MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH WORK : A CASE STUDY IN A VILLAGE OF RANONG PROVINCE. THESIS ADVISORS: PORNTIIP USUPARAT, M.A., SAOWAPA PORNSTRIPONGSE, M.A., OON MANTAWI, M.A. 202 p. ISBN 974-662-229-3

The purpose of this research was to examine the survival of the role of the traditional Muslim birth attendant in maternal and child health work. The data were gathered from a traditional birth attendant, 14 pregnant women and 32 post-partum women between November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1997 and March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1998 using qualitative and medical anthropological approaches.

The data indicate that the pregnant women and post-partum women utilize both modern (Western) and traditional medicine. All of the pregnant women received antenatal care at the public health center but when giving birth, most of them utilized the services of a traditional birth attendant, and after birthing, all of them received traditional post-partum treatment to help them maintain a balance between 'hot' and 'cold'. The traditional birth attendant has an important role in both massaging the abdomens of pregnant women (this makes the delivery easier) and general post-partum care. The findings also revealed that the factors influencing the survival of the role of the traditional birth attendant include:

1. Social and cultural factors :

1.1) The religion. Since the traditional Muslim birth attendant is from the village herself - and is also Muslim - the villagers trust her. They know that she understands the Islamic laws relating to women and that because of this certain uncomfortable situations can be avoided.

1.2) The villagers' beliefs about pregnancy and birthing. Since the villagers believe that pregnancy is given by God, if the traditional birth attendant makes a mistake, they do not blame her for it: they believe that it is the will of God. In addition to this the villagers do not view pregnancy as some sort of 'illness', so they see no necessity for going to hospital.

1.3) The strength of relationships within the social network. Since most of the villagers live close to their families the elders can easily continue transmitting their beliefs to the next generation.

2. Factors relating to the traditional birth attendant herself - and the service she provides:

2.1) The acceptance level (among the villagers) of the traditional birth attendant is high since she is elderly and combines traditional treatments with modern medical treatment and this means that she is accepted by both older/more traditional villagers as well as the younger ones.

2.2) The nature of the service provided is simple and appropriate for the villagers.

2.3) The services of the traditional birth attendant are inexpensive.