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**Religion And Alternative Medicine: Issues On Using Ruqyah (Incantation)
Among Malay-Muslim Practices**

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Abstract

Ruqyah is a prayer therapy in sorcery treatment. This article aims to identify the various *ruqyah* methods practised by Islamic treatment centres among the Malay-Muslims in Malaysia in comparison with the method used by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) also known as Prophetic Tradition. Field study was conducted in the data gathering process through observations and interviews to identify the various types of *ruqyah* being used in sorcery treatment. The comparative analysis was performed to compare the *ruqyah* method and the Prophetic tradition. The study reveals that there are a total of four types of *ruqyah* methods being practised by Islamic treatment centres in Malaysia such as prayers using verses or *Qur'an*, prayer as taught by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), any good prayer that are not from the source of *Qur'an* and *hadith*, and finally shaman and spell.

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Keywords: Alternative Medicine, Ruqyah (Incantation), Sorcery, Malay-Muslim

Introduction

Ruqyah refers to prayer therapy by practitioners during treatments. It contains various types of recitation be it from the selected verses of *Qur'an*, prayers as recorded in by the hadiths, undefined source of prayers or even spells. However, the term *ruqyah* specifically refers to finding a cure from genies, spells and other types of sorcery (known as '*pukau*' and '*santau*' in the Malay and Muslim community) using verses from the *Qur'an* or prayer as had been taught by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). (York, 2011; Suriati S. 2009-2010).

Among the Malay community in Malaysia, the term *ruqyah* is rarely used. However, the term spell, incantation and curse are more known than *ruqyah* in traditional Malay treatment by shamans. Incantations are also divided into several different types and can be classified based on their different purposes. It is just one of the methods used in spells and sorcery. (Haron Daud, 2001; Harun Mat Piah, 1989; Maryati, 1993).

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Ruqyah is known among Islamic treatment practitioners who uses verses of Qur'an or selected prayer in their healing process. In Malaysia, there are combinations of *ruqyah* method using recitation and spells with *ruqyah* using verses of Qur'an as well as hadith in the process. There are also Islamic treatment centers who claims that they are strictly abide the Islamic rules and regulations in their healing process even though it is clearly that they are not following the Islamic guidelines.

Scope and Methodology

Research was conducted in 23 selected Islamic centers in Malaysia that consist of Islamic groups as well as private treatment centers that offer various treatment types for different types of diseases and mainly of type spell and sorcery. The research does not include treatment centers that does not offer sorcery treatment. (Khadher, 2012). Refer to Table 1.0 shows view the list of Islamic treatment centers in this research, mainly in Malaysia. This research was conducted over in 3 years to gather information through observations, interviews and practical application of the treatment methods.

Table1.0: List of Islamic Treatment Centers in Malaysia Selected as Study Sample by Category

No.	Name Of Islamic Medicine Centre	Abbreviations	Category
1.	Association of Welfare and Islamic Medication Malaysia (Darussyifa')	Darussyifa'	Cluster Islamic Treatment Centre
2.	Association of Islamic Medication Darussalam Malaysia (Darussalam)	Darussalam	
3.	Al-Manarah Islamic Treatment Center (PRIM)	PRIM	
4.	Academy of Islamic Treatment Nur Ehsan (AKRINE)	AKRINE	Privately-owned Islamic Treatment Centre
5.	Sinar Zamdurrani	Zamdurrani	
6.	Center of Quranic Therapy Darul Hikmah	Darul Hikmah	
7.	Darul Ruqyah Islamic Treatment Center	Darul Ruqyah	
8.	Syifa al-Hidayah Treatment Center	Syifa al-Hidayah	
9.	Gshahmisteri Islamic Treatment Center	Gshahmisteri	
10.	Darul Manzil Islamic Treatment Center (RIDAM)	RIDAM	
11.	Ikhtiar Darul Syifa' Treatment Center (PURIDAS)	PURIDAS	
12.	al-Madani Islamic Treatment Center (PRIA)	PRIA	
13.	Sinar Nur Treatment Center	Sinar Nur	
14.	Teknologi al-Quran and Asma al-Husna Treatment Center	Teknologi al-Quran	
15.	Hikmah Therapy Treatment Center	Terapi Hikmah	
16.	Seven Queen Treatment Center	7 Puteri	
17.	Islamic Therapy al-Fatah	TIAF	
18.	Al-Mustaqim Islamic Treatment Center	Al-Mustaqim	
19.	Nursyifa' Alternative Treatment Center	PRAINS	

(PRAINS)		
20.	Islamic Treatment Center of Budi Losong	BUDI Losong
21.	Kartika Buana Treatment Center	Kartika Buana
22.	Traditional Treatment Center of Jauharsyifa	Jauharsyifa
23.	Qalibun Sakinah Treatment Center	Qalibun Sakinah

(Khadher, 2012)

Altogether there are 3 groups of registered Islamic treatment centers, namely, as ‘Persatuan Kebajikan Dan Pengubatan Islam Malaysia (DARUSSYIFA’), Darussalam, under Persatuan Perubatan Islam Darussalam Malayssia (DARUSSALAM) and Pusat Rawatan Islam Manarah (PRIM) under Persatuan Kebajikan Budi Malaysia (BUDI). (Khadher, 2012).

The focus of this article is the use of prayer therapy (*ruqyah*) in spell and sorcery treatment in selected Islamic treatment centers. Based on observations, different *ruqyah* are being used by different Islamic treatment center even for the same disease. The effectiveness of the treatment differs from the practitioner’s personal attitude or even the method used during treatment.

Results

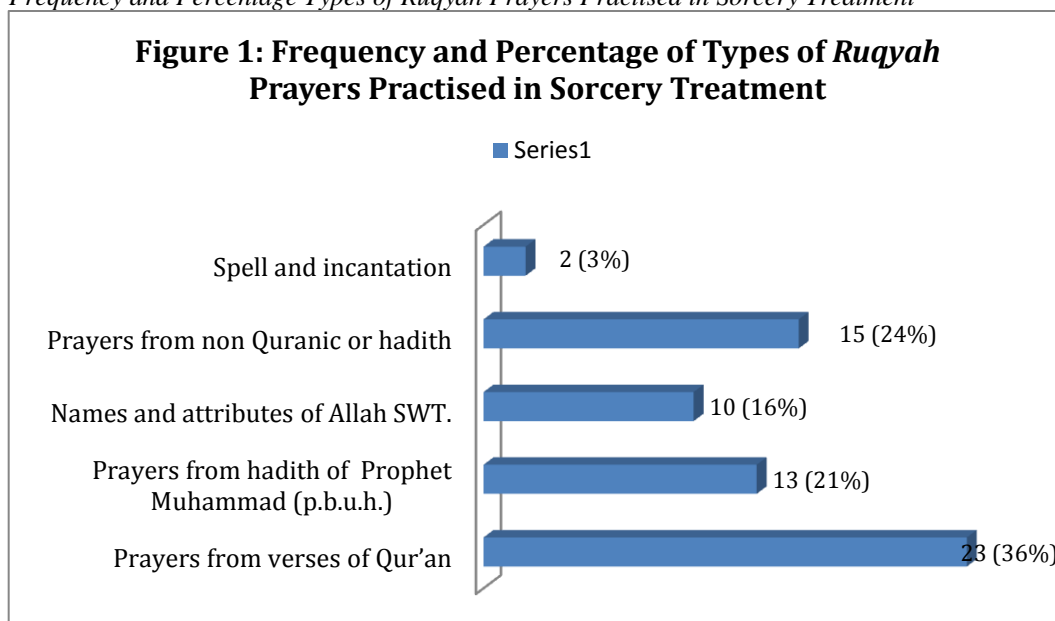
Based on the 23 Islamic treatment centers in this study, *ruqyah* can be divided into five types. First is Qur’an verses prayers, second is prayers from hadith of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), third is Allah’s names and attributes, fourth is non-Qur’anic verses prayers or hadith and lastly spells and incantations. (Khadher, 2012). Refer to table 2.0 for the types of *ruqyah* prayers as being practised in the selected Islamic treatment centers.

Table 2.0
Types of Ruqyah Prayers Practised in Sorcery Treatment in Islamic Treatment Centres.

Bil	Prayer types in treatment / Islamic treatment center	Danisevifa?	Damecalam	PRIM	AKRINF	Zamdirrani	Damil	Damil	Svifa	al-Gehahmictari	RIDAM	PURIDAS	PRIA	Sinar Nhr	Teknoloji al-	Terani	7 Puteri	TIAF	Al-Mustarim	PRAINS	RUDI	Kartika	Jauharsvifa	Qalibun	
1.	Prayers from verses of Qur’an	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
2.	Prayers from hadith of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
3.	Names and attributes of Allah SWT.	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

4.	Prayers from non Quranic or hadith	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.	Spell and incantation					/				/				

Figure 1:
Frequency and Percentage Types of Ruqyah Prayers Practised in Sorcery Treatment



Based on the above chart, it was found that reading the verses of Qur'an is the most commonly used *ruqyah* by the practitioners in Islamic treatment centers during sorcery and spell treatment.

All the 23 Islamic treatment centers acknowledged the usage of Qur'an verses as *ruqyah*, representing 36% of Islamic treatment centers in Malaysia. However, not all the verses in Qur'an were used in the *ruqyah* treatment. Only selected verses of Qur'an and the most common verses were from Sura al-A'raf :117-122, Sura Yunus : 81-82, Sura Taha : 69 and 97 and lastly Sura Mu'minin: 115-118. While the verses of the Qur'an quoted from the whole chapter was the Sura al-Fatihah, Sura al-Ikhlās, al-Falaq and al-Nas. These three suras (not including al-Fatihah) was also used as a protection by the practitioner. (al-Bukhari, 2000). Nonetheless there is a significant differences between the Islamic treatment centers in the selection of and combination the Qur'an verses for treatment.

Meanwhile, for the *ruqyah* category that uses hadith of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), only 13 out of the 23 treatment centers, representing 13% of total Islamic treatment centers in Malaysia, said that they used the prayers from hadith of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). While the rest of the selected treatment centers did not use prayers from hadith. Whereas, the remaining 10 other Islamic treatment centers, did not use prayer taken from the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.).

For example, the spell read by Jibril a.s. when treating Prophet Muhammad from magic spell is:

“Bismillahi arqika min kulli shayin yu’zika min sharri kulli nafsin aw ‘aini hasidin, Allahu yashfika bismillahi arqika”

Meaning: *“By Allah, I spell your name from all diseases that hurt you and from the evil of every soul and the evil eye of envy, Allah will heal you, with Allah’s name, I spell your name.”*(Muslim, 2000, No.hadith 5699)

Meanwhile, the names of Allah SWT and His attributes were also used in *ruqyah*. There were 10 Islamic treatment centres using the names of Allah SWT and His attributes. Based on observations, between the pronouncements of Allah's names that are often used are al-Hayy (The Living), al-Qayyum (The Self-Subsisting) or a combination of these expressions as *Allahuakbar, La Ilahallah* and others. (Khadher, 2012).

In addition to the sorcery treatment, some practitioners have also included prayers of their knowledge. The prayers asked for the healing by the Almighty Allah from the disease of the ailing patient. Only 15 out of 23 selected Islamic treatment centres or 24% of Malaysia Islamic centres in Malaysia recited prayers that were not from verses of Qur’an and hadith from Prophet Muhammad SAW. However, it was found that all prayers were of good prayers and did not contain any bad prayers of worshiping other God or creature than one and only Allah SWT to fulfill all of *ruqyah* conditions (Khadher, 2012).

Below is an example of *Selawat Syifa’* that is widely used in any form of illness:

“Allahumma salli ‘ala sayyidina muhammadin tibbil qulubi wadawa’iha, wa ‘afiyati’ abdaani wa shifaa’iha, wa nuril absaari wa diya’iha, wa ‘ala aalihi wa sahabihi wa sallim.”

Meaning: *“Dear Allah, have mercy on our chief, the Prophet Muhammad that with the blessing of blessings upon him, will heal the hearts, a healing and healing to our body and a healing to our illness give us the light of vision and also Blessing and peace to his family and his companions.”*(Haron Din, Dr, 2009).

Example of incantation read by Ustaz Khairul Syakirin when treating patients including those who were under sorcery and spell. (Khadher, 2012).

*“Hey Senggoro.
Aku sembahkan 7 ekor jin.
Di atas batu putih. Terlak hitam. Di bawah atap separuh.
Dengan berkat lailahallah, Muhammadur Rasulullah”*

In the mean time, there were two Islamic treatment centers practicing the illegal Prayer Therapy method by reciting spell and recitation. According to them, it was not wrong to recite any spell and recitation as long as the meaning were well known to the practitioner themselves.

Even though, according to Ustaz Khairul Syakirin, that practice of the above spell was not wrong because he did understand its meaning, but if we were referring to the common understanding, practicing it is clearly confusing, misleading and cannot be understood. It is advisable to leave than to practice these type of recitation. It is better to stick to prayers from the verses of Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition during treatment.

Discussion

There are issues to consider when performing *ruqyah* using prayers from unknown resources even if the prayers are of good words and intentions or even if the prayers are meant for healing that does not contain any form of worshiping, cursing and so fourth. For example various versions of *salawat* for Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) (eg: *Sawalat Syifa'*, *Salawat Tafriyyah*, *Salawat Munjiyyah* etc.) and certain selected prayers like The prayer of Nabi Sulaiman, The prayer for marriage, The Seven *Bismillah* ('*Bismillah Tujuh*'), and prayer for women in labour ('*Du'a Selusuh*'). Observations by the researcher on these prayers found that if they were free from do not contain any form of doubt, worshiping, no unidentified meaning of wordings or shirk, all those prayers have good meanings.

The question is, can we practice the *ruqyah* that does not contain verses from of the Qur'an or hadith? From the researcher's point of view, one can practice *ruqyah* using the above prayers and *salawat* because; [**Firstly**]: the prayers and recitations followed the *ruqyah* guideline, [**Secondly**]: the prayers and *salawat* does not have any form of similarization of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) as well as attributes of Allah SWT such as Allah The Great Healer and it does not contain any form of worshiping and [**Thirdly**]: There is no argumentation (nas) supporting the fact that all of these prayer recitation and *salawat* is haram. From *usul fiqh* rule "No argumentation does not mean it is haram". Even if there is no argumentation (nas) in stating a fact, it does not mean that a prayers is prohibited or haram. (Khadher, 2012).

In addition, regarding the use of incantation in treatment there is a *hadith* saying that it is haram as it is a form of shirk. (Abu Dawud, 2000, no.hadith 3883). According to al-Khitabi, "*al-Ruqa*" which means spell, is strictly prohibited if it is not in Arabic and if the meaning is not understood, that might fall in the sorcery and disbelief (kufur) category. Whereas if an incantation is understood like zikir for Allah SWT it is permissible in the blessing of Allah SWT. (al-'Azim Abadi, 1969; Hassan Azaizeh, 2008).

Therefore the incantation being practiced must abide by the following rules; [**First**]: The recited incantation must follow the *ruqyah* condition and permissible in Islam. [**Second**]: Acknowledgement of the spell and recitation is understandable and does not contain any form of worshiping that leads to shirk if it is a non Arabic language or native local language. This means that there is a person or authority who really understands the spell and incantation and can authorized the spell and incantation to be mentioned in hadith. (Muslim, 2000, no.hadith 5731); [**Third**]: The practitioners is not a shaman, sorcerer or fortune teller and all the other black magic practitioner. The practitioner (al-Mu'alij) must have a good personality and is religious. (al-Jawrani, 2007); [**Fourth**]: Incantation techniques and implementation. This is referring to the technique practiced by shaman and sorcerer using charms and amulets, incantation that includes offering, incantation recitation in dirty places like in the toilet and lastly incantation ritual that includes despicable action like stepping on The Holy Qur'an and cursing other human beings. Such techniques is strictly prohibited and

haram. The allowed incantation procedures in accordance to Islamic guidelines does not include any usage of charms and or amulets, does not include any dirty stuff and does not have any form of worshipping. (Khadher, 2012).

Even if an incantation is understood by the practitioner, from the research point of view, it is better to avoid using it as this could lead to doubt among patients and their family members. Furthermore, even if the incantation is understood by the practitioner, commoners may not understand them. So it is best to avoid rather than doing something that could cause harm and misunderstanding in the community.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion different types of Prayer Therapy are used in the treatment of sorcery either in the form of authorized *ruqyah* verses of the Qur'an and the prayers of the hadith of the Prophet or a prohibited spell and incantation that contains elements of worship and are pleasing to God. In addition, there are types that contain good *ruqyah* recitation but not derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

Therefore, this article suggests to all patients seeking treatment to choose Islamic treatment centers that uses permitted *ruqyah* only, especially those who use verses of Qur'an and prayers taken from the hadith of the Prophet. It is as clear in the Qur'an, as Allah states that "In the Qur'an there is a healing and a mercy for the believers" (al-Isra ': 82). Whereas if caregivers use prayer or reading without any injunction or not derived from the Qur'an or the Prophetic Tradition, the main emphasis is on ensuring that they meet the recitation or *ruqyah* guideline that are allowed in Islam.

It should be avoided the use of prohibited spell and incantation due to doubt or are clearly prohibited or haram because they are not understood, including any form of worshipping or even *ruqyah* that are followed by sacrificing animal. These despicable practices are common among fake Islamic treatment practitioners like witches and shamans even though they use verses of Qur'an in their treatment.

Finally, in the endeavor to seek healing from Allah SWT, goals do justify the means. Thus, one must be careful when selecting the Islamic treatment center that really abide by the Islamic rules and regulations in the conduct of their treatment.

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