

Review of: "“Healing is having faith in Allah, the healer, and the medicine”: An exploratory qualitative study of Islamic-based healing practices in Northern Ghana"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to read this article. It is fascinating. Nevertheless, it requires some changes that, I believe, will improve its quality.

1. Description of the methodology - all information should be in one place, "Methodology," and should not be divided into sections such as Methods and Study Design, sampling, etc.

2. The authors divide healers into two categories, Islamic/non-Islamic, as follows:

"Healers were included in the study if they were Dagomba, used only Islamic healing approaches, were willing and available to participate, and gave their free, informed consent. Those who did not meet the criteria were excluded. So, one healer was excluded because he stated that he used both Islamic and Dagbon traditional healing modalities."

However:

If the authors assume such categories, the latter requires a firm theoretical background. There is a bulk of literature on this topic; for example:

Asad, T. (2009) The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam. Qui Parle 17.2;

DANUTA PENKALA-GAWĘCKA, The Way of the Shaman and the Revival of Spiritual Healing in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan;

Yusuf Muslim Eneborg (2014) The Quest for 'Disenchantment' and the Modernization of Magic, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 25:4, 419-432, DOI: 10.1080/09596410.2014.890847

But maybe the authors will find something relevant from the region of Africa. The authors write about what is considered shirk and "un-Islamic," but it seems that they are judging on this very controversial issue. For example, in my region of research - Central Asia, people who gain religious knowledge through dreams, fortune-telling casting, e.g., with stones, but also using the Quran (the authors describe this technique), are judged severely by so-called "strict" Muslims who believe that such practices are "shirk," bid'a, etc. At the same time, these "strict Muslims" often use practices that can also be considered "un-Islamic" by others. But a scientific essay aims to show what influences people's perception, "what is

Islamic/or not in a given context," not to judge this issue. The same goes for ruqiya/expelling jinns, etc.; these concepts are not always the same, requiring clarification within the text.

3. The authors describe various categories of healers, so at least a paragraph on "What is Islamic authority" should be added to see, e.g.:

Geertz, C. (1983) *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.

Kalmbach, H. (2012) Introduction: Islamic Authority and the Study of Female Religious Leaders. In: Bano, M., Kalmbach, H. (eds.) *Women, Leadership, and Mosques, Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority*. Leiden: Brill. p. 1-27.

Kister, M.J. (1994) Social and Religious Concepts of Authority in Islam. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 18. p. 84-127.

Kloos, D., Künkler, M. (2016) Studying Female Islamic Authority: From Top-Down to Bottom-Up Modes of Certification. *Asian Studies Review* 40.4. p. 479-490

4. The authors conducted six interviews and participant observations. It's not much, so I suggest that the part devoted to field study be supplemented with at least some description of the healing rituals, more quotes from interviews, etc. It will make the essay more lively.

5. I would consider reformulating the research questions.

6. Other literature on exorcisms from other parts of the world would be helpful, e.g., *NEIGHBORS AND NEIGHBORSHIP: DJINN AND HUMANS IN MUSLIM CULTURES* (Guest Editors K.P. Trofimova and A.A. Yarlykapov) – I can send it to the authors if it is unavailable.

Also, a very interesting book and documentary by Christian Suhr, *DESCENDING WITH ANGELS* Islamic exorcism and psychiatry, a film monograph