





# The Qur'anic mantras recited by Shamanic *Santri* in Java, Indonesia



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To overcome various problems, the practice of shamanism has gained popularity in Javanese society. The belief of the society in this practice is increasing, mainly because of the involvement of the *kyai* (an honorific title of the Muslim clergy), who serves as a shaman. The *kyai*, in this regard, uses Qur'anic verses in his mantra. This study aims to reveal how the use of the Qur'anic verses is interpreted and legitimised in the practice of shamanism amongst the Javanese community. This article concluded that what people understand about the heresy practice of shamanism as it is considered contrary to religious law or *shirk* (idolatry) is not proven. The practice of shamanism carried out by *santri* or *kyai* has normative arguments and theological legitimacy from the Qur'an and books of *salaf* scholars.

**Contribution:** It is prevailing that the practice of shamanism is often considered heresy and un-Islamic. This article however, will give a new insight that the practice of shamanism is not always against Islamic teaching as conducted by *kyai* because he always refers to the Qur'an as a mantra.

**Keywords:** mantra; Qur'an; shamanism; *santri*; Java; Islam; *Kyai*.

## Introduction

The practice of shamanism has increasingly been gaining more popularity amongst Muslim society in Java (Jawa). Muslims tend to ask for help from *kyai* in the matters of healing pain, solving various problems, even career matters (Bahaudin 2015:383). This practice amongst Javanese society is called '*perdukunan*' (shamanism) and someone who practices it is called '*dukun*' (shaman). So, shamanism in Javanese society refers to people who practice healing, therapy, supernatural powers, etc. It does not matter if it is practiced by *santri* (students at Pesantren [Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia] or in a wider sense observant Muslims), *kyai* (an honorific title for Muslim clergy), or *abangan* (Javanese syncretic Muslims). They usually use a mantra or various expressions and languages. The *abangan* use mantras without referring to the holy book or at least not referring to the Qur'an. But *kyais*, in general, use mantras in the Javanese language and are mixed with Arabic prayers.

There has been a process of acculturation in this practice after Islam came to Java. Some *kyais* do not even use the Javanese mantra at all. They instead use Arabic, and some even refer to the holy Qur'an. Even though Islamic values have influenced this old Javanese tradition, such practices are still called shamanism (*perdukunan*). People now call them a *kyai* who is a shaman or a shaman who is a *kyai* simultaneously. There is an association called *Perdunu* (Persatuan Dukun Nusantara, Nusantara Shaman Association) whose members are *kyai*. This association was established to accommodate shamanic *santri* and to tackle any negative stereotype addressed to shamans. The members said that what they practice has justification from books of *salaf* scholars.

The Javanese Muslim community prefers to seek help for their problems from the *kyai* on the belief that they are more reliable in solving all problems, both the fathomable and mystical ones (Achidsti 2014:150). For the poor people, asking for help from the *kyai* is more affordable compared to going to doctors or other medical practitioners and consultants. Further, the public's belief in the *kyai's* ability in shamanism is also the result of the use of Qur'anic verses as mantras by the *kyais*. The use of the Qur'an in the practice of shamanism provides the justification that this practice is not against Islamic teaching. Javanese Muslims prefer going to *kyai* than going to non-*kyai* for asking help. Muslims believe that the Qur'an contains all the answers to life's problems (Putra 2012:244). J.G. Frazer said that not all problems can be solved by reasoning, therefore, magic becomes an alternative way in society (Koentjoroningrat 1985:1–20). The study

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of mantras so far has mostly exposed the phenomenon of using mantras outside the *santri* circle, students in Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren). Likewise, previous studies on the use of Qur'anic verses in the practice of shamanism focused more on the case of using the Qur'anic verses as amulets (Mujahidin 2017:59; Mun'im 2013). Studies conducted by Bowen (1993) and Mun'im (2013) found that Qur'an is usually recited in religious rituals. However, validity of the use of Qur'anic verses as mantras or talismans is still a controversial debate (Farhan 2018; Maulana et al. 2020). Therefore, the use of Qur'anic verses in shamanism amongst *santri* or *kyai* in Java needs to be studied comprehensively to provide answers to the controversy surrounding the legitimacy of using the Qur'an as a mantra. This article aims to fill in the shortcomings of previous studies by revealing how the use of verses is interpreted and legitimated in shamanism practices. This article has three main hypotheses. *First*, the use of verses occurs in a wide spectrum, not only in healing but also for the benefit of solving other everyday problems. *Secondly*, the use of Qur'anic verses as mantras is based on authoritative sources and authentic Islamic literature. *Thirdly*, the use of Qur'anic verses as a mantra gets justification and legitimacy from the holy book and *sahih hadith* (authentic traditions) of the Prophet, as well as the *Ulama* (Islamic religious scholars) who have the authority to determine the legal dictum of its validity. Therefore, these three main points will be discussed in this article.

This article is based on the argument that the use of verses in shamanism practices is legitimated because of *kyai's* involvement in shamanism. The Qur'anic verses are used in shamanism because there is a correlation between the meaning of the verses and the healing that people are seeking. However, it is usually only known by the *kyai*, and those who visit *kyai* do not have this knowledge. *Kyai* has authority in society; therefore, their involvement in shamanism is an extension of *kyai's* legitimate position in society. The use of Qur'anic verses is a tool that strengthens the legitimacy of the *kyai* in the practice of shamanism. In addition, there is a collective belief that the Qur'an can provide answers to all problems faced by human beings.

## Literature review

### Shamanism in Islam

The principle of supernaturalism is regulated in the principles of Islamic faith which are reflected in the pillars of Islam (Fariadi 2013:13). Islam explicitly prohibits its followers from believing and asking for help from other than Allah, especially from shamans, fortune tellers, and psychics because it is considered a form of *shirk* (idolatry) that has consequences on the stakes of religious creed (Handayani 2011:92). Therefore, Islam strongly prohibits various forms of shamanism (Putra 2017:196) in terms of asking for help from supernatural creatures such as *jinn* or demons. In this regard, the joy that the shaman will get from *jinn* is when the *jinn* fulfils the shaman's need, obeys his order, and tells him any

invisible information. Whilst, the *jinn* will get pleasure from the shaman when he praises him, asks him protection, and submits to him. When Islam came to Java, such practice still exists but was then influenced by Islamic values. Therefore, there is a shift of orientation in the practice of shamanism in Java from asking for help from supernatural creatures to asking for help from Allah. In the sense of the latter, shamanism is not against Islamic values.

In the Islamic law's review of magic, several terms have connotations with the term shamanism; sometimes the term is used for the same meaning, but is often used in different meanings — such as *Kaahin* (seer), *Arraaf* (fortune teller), *Rammal* (sorcerer), *Munajjim* (necromancer), *Saahir* (magician) and hypnosis (Silawati & Aslati 2014:239). Prohibitions for practicing shamanism are stated in the Qur'an and *hadith* (Fariadi 2013:15). Islam views shamanism as a dangerous act because it can invalidate a person's faith (*imaan*).

Shamanism is, however, still practiced in the community and is believed to have the ability and expertise to solve someone's problems (Nurdin 2012:383). Shamanism is used by people to live their daily lives and to solve the problems they face, such as curing the illnesses, looking for lost objects, winning competitions, gaining riches, and achieving success (Faqih 2014:25–26; Syofrianisda & Susanti 2017:49). Many studies show that a shaman is usually trusted by society as someone who can cure both medical and non-medical diseases (Wildan & Irwandi 2018:1–12). People usually have their own experience, whether they see by themselves or as told by others, that shaman really can treat strange diseases. Therefore, they believe in the help of the shaman (Fanani & Dewi 2014:54–59). Another practice of shamanism can also be found in Karampuang society in South Sulawesi. The shaman (called *sanro*) here uses natural medicine in his practice. The indigenous people believe that the medical treatment given by the shaman is of value and that the tradition of their ancestors must be preserved (Togobu 2019:29).

### The use of Qur'anic verses in shamanism

Practically, the verses of the Qur'an do not only serve as reading materials that have the value of worship but also as the main reference for Muslims in dealing with social problems because the Qur'an is considered transcendental. Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an has been used as a means of preventing or eliminating evil magic and curing various ailments. This is one of the guidelines or public beliefs that the verses in Qur'an can prevent all dangers or disasters (Rohmah 2018:69). The Qur'an has always been used as a guide in the daily life of Muslims in any context that surrounds human life. In shamanism, the use of Qur'anic verses as amulets can be found in various cultures (Dwiatmojo 2018:102). The belief in the verses of the Qur'an that are beneficial in its physical form is the verses written on paper or certain things or what is commonly called *isim*, talisman, amulet, etc. It is believed that these objects are the media for healing, salvation, or compassion (Nurfuadah 2017:127).

Apart from being written on paper, Qur'anic verses are also written on amulets, plates, and glass paintings (Zainal et al. 2019:4). *Isim azimat* or an amulet made from pieces of the Qur'an in the form of Allah's name is considered to have supernatural powers that can protect their owners and also be used as an antidote to disease and many more (Nurfuadah 2017:132). The Qur'anic verses that are often used as *rajaḥ* (talisman) are Surah Ya-sin (36) verse 58, Surah As-Saffat (37) verses 79–80, Surah As-Saffat (37) verses 109–110, Surah As-Saffat (37) verses 130–131, Surah Az-Zumar (39) verse 73, Surah Ar-Ra'd (13) verse 24, and Surah Al-Qadr (97) verse 5 (Rohmah 2018:89). People in Ponorogo used: talisman to repel/protect from the disturbance caused by spirits or Jinn, house fence talisman, immunity talisman, talisman for success in trade, to soil fertility talisman. Amulets in Ponorogo society use verses from the Qur'an such as Surah al-Fatihah (1), Ayatul Kursi, Surah Ya-Sin (36), Surah ash-Shu'ara (26), Surah Taha (20) verse 39, Surah al-Ikhlās (112), al-Falaq (113), and an-Nas (114) (Mujahidin 2017:61). Meanwhile, in the ritual practice of *Rebo wekasan* in Jember, Qur'anic verses are written on a white porcelain plate which is then dipped in water and drunk. It is believed to have the effect of preventing the disasters that fell on that day. Local people also believe that water that has been written with the verses of the Qur'an can keep them away from all dangers (Rohmah 2018:69). Other treatments using Qur'anic verses also happened in Zanzibar by drinking *kombe*, the water used to wash the Qur'anic verses was made by putting paper on a ceramic plate with the verses written on it using turmeric as ink (Nieber 2017:453).

### Controversy over the use of Qur'anic verses in shamanism

Qur'an is accepted by society in various forms. The Qur'an with its level of sacredness has presented a limitless understanding (Latif 2014:77). Various religious expressions as part of the reception of Qur'anic texts are present in religious practices (Himmatil'Ula & Prasetya 2020:314). The dialectic between the Qur'an and the reality in society has given birth to a religious interpretation which in turn creates various perceptions and practical actions in social reality (Nurfuadah 2017:126). Qur'anic verses are believed to have multiple interpretations and could be understood from various scientific aspects. Ironically, many incompetent people interpret the verses according to their interests and purposes (Kaltsum 2019:164). The attitudes and responses of the Muslim community to the Qur'an in the reality of everyday life according to the context of culture and social interactions is based on the actions of non-individual groups who want to understand or interpret the Qur'an (Mujahidin 2017:46).

Many studies have shown that the Qur'an was used as treatment. In the *rabbani* concept, Qur'an is used as a psychotherapy method by offering *at-tasliyah* verses similar to the one done by the Prophet (Rahim & Nordin 2019:93). The choice of verses has a psychological impact identified by the readers, therefore, they bring them peace of mind

(Alhouseini et al. 2015:2). Qur'an is used as a non-pharmacological treatment that is useful for reducing anxiety (Ghiasi & Keramat 2018:412). It is believed to be a spiritual therapy that can provide calm, reduce fear, anxiety levels, depression, improve physical condition and quality of life (Babamohamadi et al. 2017; Frih et al. 2017; Jabbari et al. 2020; Saged et al. 2020; Yuniarti, Rahmawati & Munfadlila 2019). Apart from creating serenity, Qur'anic verses are used in the *ruqyah* method to seek supplication and protection in treating diseases and other problems (Ahmad, Ramli & Rahman 2019:168–170).

However, the existence of Qur'an has given rise to various forms of responses (Farhan 2018:67). The use of Qur'anic verses without the guidance of Hadith has caused controversies, such as the use of these verses in talisman, amulets, and mantras. For instance, in the talisman, its use causes controversy because the mantras cannot be read by the user, only the author can read it. The user often does not know what is written in it whether it is Qur'anic verses or mantras taught by *jinn* to mislead human beings (Maulana et al. 2020:7). Controversy over the use of Qur'anic verses is also found in Banjar society in using mantras taken from fragments of verses in the Qur'an, for activities such as witchcraft to bind the opposite sex taken from Surah Al-Fatihah (1) verse 5, mantras to make people long for each other taken from Surah Maryam (19) verse 35, Surah Ya-sin (36) verse 82, a mantra to make someone's hearts always close taken from Surah Sad (38) verse 34 (Alfianoor 2017:31–35). All of these uses raise a debate regarding the use of Qur'anic verses because their use is not based on the guidance of Hadith.

### Method

The issue of using verses in the shamanic tradition is important to address the controversies regarding its validity. This study examines the use of Qur'anic verses as mantras in the practice of shamanism amongst Muslim society in Kudus, Central Java. It elaborates deeply about the use of mantras, sources of knowledge, and the basis of legitimacy used. The use of mantra deals with the case, in which the verse is used, and the procedures for using it. The sources of knowledge include the teachers who taught it, the literature studied or used as a reference, and spiritual behaviour. Furthermore, the basis of argumentation includes the proofs from the Qur'an, Sunnah of the Prophet, and literature that serves as the guide. All this information is important to know, understand and to learn more about how the readers of the Qur'an perceive the verses outside their textual conditions.

Methods of data collection were observation and interview. Information related to the use of Qur'anic verses as a mantra was confirmed to the figures who were referred to or were asked for help to treat various complaints of illness or were asked for help from people who were disturbed by spirits, lost things, and undergoing various other daily problems. These people are the *kyais* or the Qur'an teachers in the

village who have learned from traditional Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren). Determining the respondents as data sources is important to ensure that the data generated comes from primary source and is in accordance with their expertise. The persons who have learned from Pesantren were selected because, in view of the society, they are considered to have the most authority on religious understanding. In addition, they are more accommodating to shamanic practices or occult tendencies.

In the data collection process, interview guidelines were used as a basis for determining the research problems. The questions proposed include four aspects: *First*, the data related to the Qur'anic verses which are specifically used for mantras, their uses, and the procedures for using a mantra. *Secondly*, the source of obtaining the knowledge about the use of verses as mantras, which includes the teachers or *kyai*, literature or books that are used as references, as well as spiritual requirements or practices that must be taken to strengthen or support their knowledge or expertise. *Thirdly*, their understanding of the use of the Qur'anic verses as a mantra and a source or the proofs used as the basis for the legitimacy of the practice of shamanism. *Fourthly*, their experience while gaining the knowledge, deepening, and practicing using the Qur'anic verses as a mantra to help others solve their daily problems. All this information is important to obtain valid, comprehensive, and accountable data. The interview process was carried out directly with the respondents by conducting informal conversations.

The data obtained were then classified and mapped to clarify the information related to the use of Qur'anic verses as mantras. Classification was carried out not only on the basis of the theme but also considering the information related to respondents' specific experiences in the learning process and applying the knowledge obtained. The data relating to the use of verses are tabulated (Table 1) based on the verses used as mantras, their uses, and procedures for using them.

The analysis step was carried out in three stages: data restatement, data description, and data interpretation. Data restatement is based on the tabulated results and interviews quotations according to respondents' experiences. Data descriptions are carried out to clarify the tabulated results and pieces of information obtained from the classification results. Interpretation is carried out by taking into account the individual and social context surrounding the respondent.

## Result

The use of Qur'anic verses in the practice of shamanism is still being debated. Some people have even suggested that their use is considered *shirk*, some people accept it and for some it is contradicting. The debate on the use of a Qur'anic verse is explained through three arguments that form the basis for the use of verses.

## The purpose of using Qur'anic verses in mantras

Mantra is an integral part of shamanic practice. In general, the language and meaning of the mantra are not known as it is a collection of words or expressions taken from various cultural treasures or beliefs. But, this study will uncover the Qur'anic verses used as mantras. The use of Qur'anic verses in shamanism practiced by *kyai* or *santri* aims for three main purposes, that is, healing, self-defence, and solving daily problems.

A Javanese shaman with a background as *santri* uses verses from the Qur'an for the benefit of treating various diseases as expressed by respondents:

*'Ning Qur'an iku ono kabeh, Qur'an wes nuturke Qur'an iku "huda," maknane petunjuk lan syifa' maknane obat. Dadi ayat-ayat Qur'an kuwi nduwe asrar dewe-dewe2.'*

*'In the Qur'an, everything is there. The Qur'an has introduced itself that it functions as *huda*, meaning the guide, and *shifa'* means medicine. Therefore, the verses in the Qur'an have their respective secrets [*abilities*].'* (Kyai Ulil, respondent, 30 September 2020)

Qur'anic verses are also used to protect oneself and family. To keep someone from being disturbed by both humans and spirits, read the last verse of Surah at-Tawbah (9) seven times every morning and evening. What is meant by the last verse of Surah at-Tawbah is:

*'[F]ain tawallau faqul hasbiyallahu la ilaaha illahu 'alaihi tawakkaltu wa huwa rabbul 'arsyil adhim.*

*[B]en ora diganggu sing bongso alus apike maca akhire surat at-Taubah ping pitu. Diwaca saben isuk lan sore.'*

*'In order not to be disturbed by spirits, it is better to read the last verse of Surah at-Tawbah. Read it every morning and evening.'* (Kyai Ulil, respondent, 31 September 2020)

In another case, the shamanic *santri* (*dukun santri*) used Surah Yunus (10) verse 81, al-A'raf (7) verse 118, al-Isra and verse 118 which is read after performing the *fard* prayer and followed by seven days of *mutih* fasting (Ustadz Mujab, respondent, 5 Oct 2020). As for avoiding disturbance of the genie or helping people with genie or witchcraft problems, read Ayatul Kursi 313 times.

According to the respondents, there are certain verses and certain practices that have many virtues as stated by Kyai Ulil:

*'[N]ek sing paling sering tak amalke Surah al-Kahf ayat 10 amergo fadhilaha akeh, iso gawe sembarang, iki ono riwayat. Kadang ayate kadang tak tulis jengene ashabul kahfi. Nek sing akeh dijaluki tulung biasane sing kanggo barang sing ilang iku akh sing cocok. Ono pedagang ayam, mba Zuhairoh pernah kilangan emas-emasan, diwacakke ndelalah ketemu. Mba Rosminah kilangan duit ndelalah ketemu meneh.*

*[N]ek ono wong kelangan tak wacakno al-Dhuha ayat 7 dan 8, terus moco la ilaaha illah biha qaamat assamawat, la ilaaha illa allahbiha taqsyau al balyaat, la ilaaha illa allah barid maa faat, Innallaha jaamiunnas li yaumin la raiba fihi, Faradadhu ala dhallati.'*

TABLE 1: Verses used in healing/treatments.

Verses read	Form of treatments	Purposes
Surah al-Ikhlās, al-Falaq, an-Nās	Read three times each, after praying diligently	Resist headaches
Surah al-Fatihah	Read seven times, then blow into the water and drink it. It should be read in a clean (holy) physical state and after two <i>raka'at</i> of sunnah prayer	Treat fever
Surah an-Nasr, al-Ikhlās, al-Falaq, and an-Nās	Read them during every Maghrib prayer	Treat toothache
Surah at-Takathur	Read once every day	For senile people
Ayatul Kursi	Read 313 times when leaving the house	To cast out a genie/bad sorcery (witchcraft)
Surah al-Fatihah and al-Ikhlās	Surah al-Fatihah is read 11 times, al-Ikhlās 11 times plus 11 times <i>sholawat</i> . After reading the above verses, sleep in a clean physical state (after ablution) facing west, head to the north	Mantra for asking directions without praying
Surah at-Tawbah verse 129	Read seven times in the morning and seven times in the evening	For self-defence (to repel disaster and long life)
Surah Yunus: 81, Al-A'raf:118, and Al-Isra: 81–82	Read three times after each <i>fard</i> (obligatory) prayer accompanied by <i>mutih</i> fasting (not eating food from animate beings) for 7 days	For self-defence (to repel disaster and disturbance from outside, such as witchcraft, etc.)
Surah al-Kahf verse 9	Surah al-Kahf (18) verse 9 is read then followed by the names of <i>ashabul kahf</i> .	Self and home defence
Surah ad-Duhaa verse 7 & 8	Surah ad-Duhaa (93) verses 7 and 8 followed by reading <i>la ilaaha illa biha qaamat assamaawaat la ilaaha illallah biha taqsyaf al balyaat la ilaaha illallah biha yaruddu maa fata innallaha jaamiunnas liyaumin laa raiba fihi Rudda alayya dhallati</i>	Search for lost items
Surah Ya-sin; 9, 'Abasa; 34.	After reciting these verses, then pray, " <i>Allahumma allif baini wa baina (Fatimah) kama allafta baina Adam wa Hawa/Eve</i> ". "O...Allah, strengthen our love (me and Fatimah) as strong as the love between Adam and Hawa"	For compassion/Mahabbah (love)
Surah Ash-Shuraa verse 19	Read <i>Ya Lathif</i> 129 times after dawn prayer ( <i>Subuh</i> ), then read surah Ash-Shuraa (42) verse 19	For sufficiency in life

'What I often practice is Surah al-Kahf (18) verse 10 because it has many virtues, as explained in an old story. Sometimes I write down the verses, sometimes I immediately write down the names of Ashabul Kahf. However, what people often ask for is a prayer for things that have been lost. For example, once Zuhairah's mother lost their jewellery, she was able to find it, Mrs Rosminah lost some money and finally found it.

If someone loses something, I read *la ilaaha illah biha qaamat assamaawat, la ilaaha illallah biha taqsyaf al balyaat, la ilaaha illallah biha yaruddu maa fata, Innallaha jaami'unnas liyaumin la raiba fihi, rudda alayya dhaalati*.

There is no God but Allah; through that sentence, the sky stands upright. There is no God but Allah; through that sentence, the disaster will disappear. There is no God but Allah; bring back what has been lost. Verily, Allah will gather humankind on a day in which there will be no doubt (Day of Judgment); bring back to me what has been lost.' (Kyai Ulil, respondent, 30 September 2020)

The above discussion illustrates that there are Qur'anic verses that are often used to solve many cases, many difficulties or daily problems that are commonly encountered by people. Their problems are resolved after they come to the shamanic *kyai* asking for help. Often, the visitors do not get a specific explanation about the verses that they are to read.

## Sources of the Qur'anic verses usage in shamanism

Based on the observation and interview, the source of knowledge amongst shamanic *santri* is hereditary (passed on from generation to generation), classical books, and self-taught/spiritual practice. Like general practitioners, shamanic *santri* also get their knowledge which is passed on from generation to generation in various ways, both from their families and their teachers. They obtain the knowledge from their parents or siblings who have the ability or expertise in using the mantra from the Qur'an. They also receive it from their teachers when they study at Pesantren or when

they visit certain *kyai*. In many cases of teaching at Pesantren, the teacher often shares his knowledge with his *santri* (students). As told by Kyai Ulil when reciting *Tafsir Sawi* by Kyai Haji (KH). Sya'roni Ahmadi, in al-Aqsa Kudus Tower Mosque, suddenly distributed a paper containing the names of *ashabul kahf* which were copies of the original writings of R.K. Asnawi. These names must be read at the same time as reading verse 9 of Surah al-Kahf (18) to protect oneself. The knowledge obtained from the teacher is then put into practice by the students, either for their own benefit or for the benefit of others.

Kyai Ulil, the village *kyai* who graduated from Pesantren believes that the books can be a source of reference in the shamanism practice. They think that their practices come from the book with accountable sources and content:

'[...wong] sing nganggep iku amalan syirik iku mergo ora ngerti. Wong Ibnu Hajar al-Haitami karo Ghazali wae ngolehi, nganggep mubah, asal sing dijuluk tetep Allah. Ndongane karo pengeran ora karo liyane.'

'People who think of practicing the mantra as *shirk*, do not know. Even Ibn Hajar al-Haitami and Imam al-Ghazali permit it, consider it as *mubah* (allowed), as long as the prayers (requests) are addressed only to Allah, asking God (Allah) not to others.' (Kyai Ulil, respondent, 31 September 2020)

The shamanic *santri* also get their knowledge from the classical books taught at Pesantren. Amongst the books containing shamanic mantras which are quite well known include: *Shiyamul Ma'arif wa lataif al-awarif* by Imam Ahmad bin Ali al-Buti, *Jawahir al Lama'ah* by Syaikh Ali Abu Hayillah al-Marzuqi, *Khazinatul Asrar Jalilatul Adhkar* by Muhammad Haqqi an-Nazili. The book *Shamsul Ma'arif* is used in Pesantren in the field of medicine. It contains mantras (verses, *surah*, expressions, and words that contain magical powers) and *aufaq* (columns containing irregular letters and numbers). The book *Khazinatul Asrar* is the work of *ulama tariqa* which contains the virtues of *surah* and verses of the Qur'an. If

practiced, they can solve various daily problems as stated in the Hadith of the Prophet. Likewise, the book *Jawahirul Lama'ah* is a popular book that contains the virtues of *surah* and verses as well as *thayyibat utterance* (the names of Allah and prayers). These books are taught in Pesantren, especially to senior *santri* or those who have graduated from formal schools. Although there is also some Pesantren that teach these books at all levels. The *santri* who get interested in these mantras usually will practice them.

For the Qur'anic mantras read by a shaman to have the desired magical properties, the shamanic *santri* perform various spiritual practices. Based on the results of interviews with respondents, some stated that the most important thing in spiritual practice is to keep oneself from the prohibited behaviour and avoid eating *haram* (unlawful) food. As stated by Kyai Ulil:

*'Ngonu kuwi ya ndelalah akeh sing cocok, orak ono tirakat khusus, yen pas suci ono wong njaluk tomo ya shalat, nek ora ya paling angger wudlu. Tapi pengen dongane 'mandi' siji jogo awake, jogo mangane soko barang haram, barang syubhat. Loro golek waktu sing mustajab koyo bar sholat, tengah wengi, antara adzan lan iqomah, tur kondisine sing suci.'*

'Fortunately, many are compatible. There are no special rituals. If they come and I am in a holy (clean) physical state, I will perform prayer. If not, I will just take a *wudhu* (ablution). But if you want your prayer to be answered, *first*, keep yourself from *haram* and *subhat* (doubting whether it is halal or haram) food. *Secondly*, looking for a *mustajab* (very effective) time for prayer, for example, after *fard* prayers, prayers in the middle of the night, prayers between *adhan* (call to prayer) and *iqama* (second call to prayer), and in a holy physical condition.' (Kyai Ulil, respondent, 31 September 2020)

The important thing that becomes a condition for granting the prayers or mantras is to avoid things that are prohibited by the Shari'ah and to get closer to Allah by praying, *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) at night, praying at *mustajab* (granted) times, and in a holy physical state. Meanwhile, Mrs Reni (shaman, village head, 02 August 2020) stated that certain rituals must be carried out. In general, the ritual of the Javanese shamans is performing some special fasts. Amongst the fasts performed by the shamans are: *pasa* (fasting) *mutih*, *pasa ngrawat*, *pasa ngebleng*, *pasa ngalong*, *pasa pati geni*, but shamanic *santri* generally only performs *mutih* fasting (avoid eating the animate creatures) in addition to sunnah fasting sanctified in Islamic law. The shamanic *santri* undertakes this fast to cleanse himself and get closer to Allah.

### Sources of Qur'anic verses usage legitimacy

In giving treatment, the shamanic *santri* or *kyai* shows that the verses they read when giving the treatment have their foundation in the Qur'an, Hadith, and *qaul ulama* (opinion of the scholars). The first proof comes from the Qur'an itself. The use of the verses of the Qur'an as a mantra is not malicious according to the shamanic *santri*. It is not an act of *shirk*. Kyai Ulil (shaman, Kudus Regency, 22 September 2020) presented an argument based on the Qur'anic verse Surah

al-Isra (17) verse 82 which states that in addition to having the function of guidance (*hudan*), the Qur'an has secret functions especially as medicine and a guide for the believer. Each verse of the Qur'an has its specialty, depending on the human ability to reveal these secrets and privileges. From this feature, the shamanic *santri* uses certain verses as mantras. The use of a verse as a mantra only functions as a means of supporting prayers addressed to Allah. The shamanic *santri* relies everything they seek on Allah because Allah determines the grant for His people's requests.

Secondly, the Prophetic *hadith* is used as proof. The shamanic *santri* cited many *hadith* of the Prophet as a source of legitimacy for using Qur'anic verses as a mantra. In the Hadith of the prophet, many point out the virtue of certain verses. One of the *hadiths* of the prophet, narrated by Imam ad-Daruqutni states, 'Whoever does not seek healing from the Qur'an, Allah will not heal him'. In another narration, it is stated that when Rasulullah was sick, he used Surah al-Muawwidhatain (al-Falaq and an-Nas) as a mantra, then blew it on his body. In the Hadith Sahih (authenticate hadith), it is stated that the Prophet agreed to use Surah al-Fatihah as an antidote to snake venom. The various narrations from the Prophet Muhammad regarding the use of the verses of the Qur'an as a mantra have legitimised the use of Qur'anic verses as a mantra.

The third validation comes from the *qawl al-ulama* (the opinions of the ulama). The various statements of the scholars in the classical books taught in some Pesantren are also the basis for using the verses of the Qur'an as mantras. The statements most frequently mentioned by the shamanic *santri* in Kudus are those of Zainudin Bakri in *Tafsir Sawi* and Sayyid Muhammad Haqqi an-Nazili statements in the book *Khazinat al-Asrar*. According to Kyai Ulil, he recited the book at Pesantren and al-Aqsa Tower Kudus Mosque.

Kyai Ulil conveyed that he got the knowledge about the use of the Qur'anic verses as mantras from several *kyai* in Kudus, such as K.R. Asnawi, Kyai Ahmad Basyir, Kyai Arwani, and Kyai Sya'rani Ahmadi. These *ulama* are believed by the shamanic *santri* to have a lineage that reaches the Prophet; therefore, their truth and validity can be accounted for. With various statements, these scholars strengthen their belief in the practice of using the verses of the Qur'an as mantras.

## Discussion

This study finds that the use of Qur'anic verses in shamanism is not only because of the involvement of *kyai* that makes it legitimised by religion, but also by the people's belief that the Qur'an can answer all the problems of human life. Shamanic *santri* themselves believe that the Qur'an has magical powers that can be used to solve all kinds of problems they face. They use certain *surah* or verses as a mantra for treating illness, for self-defence, to cast away spirits, for compassion, and for various other purposes. The knowledge of using the Qur'anic verses as their mantra has been passed on from generation to generation such as their families or teachers, and from the Islamic literature they

have studied in Pesantren (Shiddiq 2015:219). They also gain knowledge, belief, and privileges from the spiritual practices which they practice and follow according to the Islamic law. Therefore, their practice of using mantras obtained legitimacy from the Qur'an and sunnah of the Prophet and the religious texts.

This study revealed that the Kudus society not only perceives the text of the Qur'an as a guide but also believe that the text has supernatural powers (Rohmah 2018:87). The use of Qur'anic verses as mantras is believed by the people of Kudus to be the source of magical power. By reading certain *surah* or verses, a person will obtain help and strength from Allah. The practice of using Qur'anic verses as mantras also shows that the Qur'an is not only perceived through its textual message but also from the aspects of its virtues or features (Nurfuadah 2017:133). With the privileges of certain verses in the Qur'an, the people of Kudus use them to solve their daily problems. The use of Qur'anic verses as mantra also reflects their belief in the supernatural, which is an integral part of their religious belief (Himmatil'Ula & Prasetya 2020:321).

For the *santri* community, the use of Qur'anic verses as the mantra is based none other than their deep belief in the Qur'an with all the miracles contained in it. Mantra is a tradition that is hereditary and universal. Therefore, the tradition of using mantras can be accepted as a very meaningful heritage. A spell practitioner gets his knowledge from his spiritual teachers and the literature he reads (Shiddiq 2015:224). The specialty of the mantra fills the space of human limitations in overcoming the problems at hand. The traditional development of using mantras shows that people's belief in mantras is still very high. Mantra is the binding of people's relationship with God. They believe that what they read comes from Holy Books. All forms of servitude and supplication in the use of this mantra are addressed to God. In the context of religious rituals, a mantra is a form of submission to God. It means that someone who recites a mantra just believes in God's help. In the old tradition of Javanese society before Islam came to Java, a mantra was also used with the help of supernatural creatures to fulfill someone's wishes.

The spread of Islam by Walisongo, Muslim saints who spread Islam in Java, did not immediately eliminate the existing traditions. However, it gradually replaced the established traditions with new nuances that do not conflict with the Islamic law. Walisongo accommodates local wisdom that does not conflict with Islamic teachings and makes it an instrument in preaching (Damanik 2019; Fadli 2019:298). The building of the Tower Kudus Mosque which resembles a building in the Hindu tradition is a form of tolerance maintained by Walisongo. Likewise, the tradition of slaughtering buffaloes to replace cows on the sacrifice day is also a legacy of the wisdom of Sunan Kudus (one of the Walisongo) (Fadli 2019:298; Supatmo 2017:111) to honour Hindus. The perpetuation of the practice of using verses for

mantras amongst *santri* at Pesantren is another form of local wisdom that has been added by Islamic values (Suparjo 2008:178–193). Their belief in the efficacy of the mantra using Qur'anic verses strengthens their faith in Allah and the miracles of His Holy Book.

The results of this study show uniqueness in the practice of shamanism amongst *santri*, in contrast to other studies that reveal the use of mantras outside the *santri* tradition (Wildan & Irwandi 2018:1–12). This study provides comprehensive information about the use of mantras, sources of knowledge, and the basis of legitimacy used by shamanic *santri*, while the previous research looks more at the legal aspects and prohibitions on shamanism (Fariadi 2013:11–20; Silawati & Aslati 2014:242). However, this study has similarities with previous studies that examined the use of verses from the Qur'an in the shamanic tradition as a universal reality (Dwiatmojo 2018:100).

## Conclusion

The assumption that the practice of shamanism is a form of deviation in Islam cannot be generalised to the whole of the Javanese society. Javanese people who have various traditions and backgrounds of religious understanding have different tendencies from one another, including in the practice of shamanism. The practice of shamanism, which has been considered a form of *shirk* cannot be applied to the *santri* community. The practice of shamanism amongst *santri* or *kyai* has a normative source of knowledge in Islamic literature, both the Qur'an, and sunnah of the Prophet, and opinion of *ulama* (scholars) written in classical literature.

This study also succeeded in revealing at least three aspects: *First*, the Mantra is understood by Kudus people to have the same meaning as *wirid* (reading *kalimat tayyibah*) and *ruqyah* (reading the verse of the Qur'an for healing) when used with a specific purpose. The recitation of the Qur'an functions as a *hudan* (guide), *syifa'* (medicine), and other functions. The use of the Qur'anic verses in shamanism is not an act of *shirk* because it is addressed to God. Every verse of the Qur'an has its secret (*asrar*) for its benefit. To be able to have supernatural powers, the meaning of speech or spell in a mantra does not have to be understood. The importance of the mantra is how it is believed and in its use.

*Secondly*, the use of Qur'anic verses as mantras recited for specific purposes in daily life is a hereditary tradition. Like the *santri* community in Kudus who use the Qur'anic verses as a mantra, they get this knowledge from their *kyai* or spiritual teachers. They also get it from the Islamic classical books they studied at Pesantren. Some of the books used as a reference in Undaan Kudus are *Mujarrabat*, *Khazinatul asrar*, *Shamsul Ma'arif*, *Ghayatul Asrar*, which are known as 'shamanism' books. Another book that is also used as a reference is the *Tafsir As-Sawi* and *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*. These two *tafsir* books contain a lot of narrations that show that certain verses will have certain magical powers when they are read.

Thirdly, for *santri* community in Kudus, the use of Qur'anic verses as a mantra is valid and does not contradict Islamic law. The validity of using Qur'anic verses as a mantra is based on the many implicit and explicit proofs found in the Qur'an and *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad, which show the function of Qur'anic verses as medicine (*shifa'*) and other functions in life. The proofs in the Qur'an are also supported by many statements and narrations of the ulama which show the validity of its use. In addition, the use of Qur'anic verses as mantras is part of the wisdom and nobility that should be preserved.

The scope of this study is limited to the *santri* community in one of the districts in Kudus Regency, which is a traditional *santri* community and is closely related to the teachings of Sunan Kudus, one of Walisongo, which are very accommodating to local wisdom. Respondents in this study were also limited to village *kyai* who graduated from Pesantren and had a high level of Islamic understanding. Therefore, it did not apply to the communities outside the *santri* community, or Muslim communities who did not know this tradition. This study is also limited to the use of verses from the Qur'an as mantras and not from other sources such as *hadith*, *kalimat tayyibah*, and local *kejawen* (old Javanese tradition) mantras. Therefore, further research is needed with a wider scope, more respondents, and material to be more comprehensive.

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## Authors' contributions

H.M., I.S., and A.A.J were all involved in draft preparation, conceptualisation, analysis, data collection, funding acquisition, editing, reviews, and writing the manuscript. M.F. was involved in writing the original draft, investigation, validation, data curation, resources, review and editing.

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This article followed all ethical standards for research.

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## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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