


FAITH HEALING AS LIVED RELIGION: NASRUL-HAQQ PRACTICES  
AMONG THE MĒRANAW OF LANAOS DEL SUR, PHILIPPINESNorjannah B. AMPASO<sup>1</sup> **Abstract**

This study examines the faith-healing practices of Nasrul-Haqq, a religious community operating within MĒranaw Muslim communities in Lanao del Sur, Philippines. Drawing on qualitative ethnographic research, including semi-structured interviews and participant observation, the study documents how Nasrul-Haqq practitioners engage in devotional practices (amalan), healing rituals, and collective worship as part of their religious life. Rather than evaluating the empirical validity of supernatural claims, the research situates these practices within the framework of lived religion and embodied religious experience. The findings demonstrate that Nasrul-Haqq healing practices function as socially embedded systems of care, addressing physical illness, emotional distress, and moral concerns within culturally meaningful frameworks. Faith healing emerges not merely as belief, but as an embodied and communal practice shaped by Islamic mysticism, local tradition, and ethical responsibility. By situating Nasrul-Haqq within broader discussions in the sociology and anthropology of religion, this study contributes to understanding how religious healing practices coexist with, and sometimes complement, modern medical systems in contexts where spiritual meaning remains central to everyday life.

**Keywords:** nasrul-haqq, faith healing, lived religion, sociology of religion, sufism, mĒranaw, philippines.

**Research Article****Author Information**

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Received: 11.07.2025

Accepted: 06.01.2026

**Cite as:**

Ampaso, N, B. (2026). Faith  
Healing as Lived Religion:  
Nasrul-Haqq Practices  
among the MĒranaw of  
Lanao del Sur, Philippines,  
*Journal of Sustainable Equity  
and Social Research (JSESR)*,  
3(1): 113-124.  
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18367203

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study explores the intersection of religion and mystery, examining phenomena that are experienced by participants as challenging conventional explanation. While many individuals report extraordinary events, such experiences are often interpreted differently across cultural and epistemological frameworks. The notion that certain individuals can transform into other creatures or perceive the human body without modern technology is frequently regarded as extraordinary within biomedical and scientific paradigms. This study therefore seeks to examine how such claims are understood and articulated within the context of Nasrul-haqq.

Fuelled by curiosity about human potential, the researcher explored how spiritual discipline and religious devotion are believed to enable individuals to transcend ordinary capabilities. This inquiry led to the discovery of Nasrul-haqq, a group known within Mëranaw society for cultivating extraordinary spiritual abilities. The term Nasrul-haqq originates from Arabic, combining *Nasr* (victory) and *Haqq* (right), to convey the meaning of “helping one another work for good,” which aligns with their stated moral orientation. As a subset of the Muslim community, Nasrul-haqq practitioners are widely believed by followers to possess divine gifts and to engage in spiritual practices that connect them to unseen dimensions. In Mëranaw society, they are recognized as faith healers who claim to perceive unseen spirits (*jinn*), with some reportedly befriending these entities while others deliberately avoid such interaction.

Furthermore, Nasrul-haqq practitioners describe themselves as divinely inspired, undergoing rigorous spiritual training grounded in Islamic education. A key aspect of their worship involves intense *dhikr* (glorification of Allah) chanting, often performed in seclusion at remote sites such as *masjids*, forests, and rivers. While some of their practices may be perceived by other Muslims as

unorthodox or influenced by pre-Islamic Mëranaw traditions (often referred to as “folk Islam”), they are nevertheless framed by practitioners as deeply rooted in their Islamic faith.

Despite relatively low formal recognition within the Mëranaw religious establishment, Nasrul-haqq plays a significant role in addressing community needs as these are locally understood. They provide various services, including spiritual healing, exorcism, and engagement with the unseen, as well as other practices valued by community members. Recognizing these social roles, this research aims to examine their significance and explore how they function as a source of support and meaning within local society.

Documenting and preserving Nasrul-haqq’s practices is also important for understanding the intangible cultural heritage of the Mëranaw people. Such practices may further illuminate regional connections with neighbouring societies in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei, where comparable spiritual and martial traditions such as *Juruz* and *Silat* are found. While Nasrul-haqq shares certain features with these groups, its emphasis on faith-based healing distinguishes it, highlighting the diversity of religious and cultural practices in Southeast Asia.

Accordingly, this study focuses on Nasrul-haqq in Lanao del Sur, examining their identity, historical background in the Philippines, objectives, religious principles, and faith-healing practices. It analyses their training processes, contributions to community well-being, challenges, and perceptions among Mëranaw religious leaders. Data were collected from 30 informants across 13 municipalities in Lanao del Sur, including Tugaya, Madalum, and Marawi City. Due to the confidential nature of their *kitab* (scripture), only selected Arabic terms shared by informants were used in this study. To protect privacy, some informants were assigned pseudonyms. The historical background of Nasrul-haqq was reconstructed

from key informant narratives and secondary sources. This study does not seek to provide an exhaustive historical account or a theological assessment of Nasrul-haqq's relationship with orthodox Islam.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

*History of the Moro and Indigenous Peoples in Minsupala* by Ben Kadil describes the arrival of certain Shariefs and a group of Awliya in the Sulu archipelago, initially to establish trading relations and later to introduce Islam in a context where animistic practices were dominant. From Sulu, Islam spread to neighbouring territories such as Maguindanao, Palawan, and the Lanao areas (Kadil, 2002). This process was followed by the establishment of a sultanate political system, with Sayyid Abu Bakr proclaimed as the first Sultan under the title Sultan Sharief-ul Hashim. In Kadil's account, the Awliya are portrayed as spiritually guided figures who were believed to possess extraordinary religious capacities. In a similar way, Nasrul-haqq practitioners are described by followers as having acquired special spiritual abilities through long periods of *amalan*. Majul also notes that the early Muslims who arrived in Sulu were mystically inclined (Majul, 1979: 16), suggesting that forms of Sufism may have shaped early Islamic practice in the region.

Islam as a way of life has traditionally encompassed both Shari'ah and Sufism. Sufism represents Islam's mystical and ascetic dimension and is organized through spiritual orders known as Tariqa. Tariqa, meaning "path" or "way," refers to the spiritual journey toward *ma'rifah* (direct knowledge of God or Haqq) (Zeidan, n.d.). Sufism is not regarded as a separate sect but as a spiritual orientation within Islam that emphasizes devotion, self-discipline, and closeness to God.

Hassan Abu Hanieh (2011), in *Sufism and Sufi Orders: God's Spiritual Paths Adaptation and Renewal in the Context of Modernization*, characterizes Sufism as rooted in self-restraint and detachment from

worldly pleasures such as wealth, status, and physical comfort. He emphasizes that the pursuit of closeness to Allah involves disciplined worship, sincerity, and moral purification (Majul, 1979: 12). These themes resonate with the spiritual practices described by Nasrul-haqq practitioners.

Oman Fathurahman's *A New Light on the Sufi Network of Mindanao (Philippines)* (2019) provides historical evidence of Sufi orders in Mindanao through manuscripts collected by Usman Sheik Al-Aman. Of the forty-three volumes analyzed, ten consist of Sufi treatises, including references to the Shattariyah order, which links Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Qahhar to ulama in Lanao. Fathurahman argues that Mindanao was part of the broader Islamic intellectual tradition of the Malay world, with Lanao as a significant node. These findings provide historical context for understanding how Sufi traditions may have influenced Mëranaw religious culture, including Nasrul-haqq practices.

*Ruqyah: A Remedy for Illnesses, Evil Eye, Magic and Jinn from the Qur'an and Sunnah* conceptualizes ruqyah as a form of spiritual healing grounded in Qur'anic verses and prophetic supplications attributed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The text systematizes ritual procedures, recommended intentions, and selected verses that practitioners understand as possessing protective or therapeutic significance. In addition, it documents the use of traditional remedies—such as black seed, zamzam water, honey, and cupping—which occupy an established place within Islamic healing traditions. While these materials do not constitute biomedical or clinical evidence, they are analytically significant for understanding the religious and moral frameworks through which healing, illness, and protection are interpreted and practiced within Muslim communities (Ruqyah: A Remedy for Illnesses, Evil Eye, Magic and Jinn from the Qur'an and Sunnah, n.d.).

Similarly, *The Light of the Almighty* by Haseen Meeah (1996) discusses the devotional significance of

reciting the Asma-ul-Husna (the 99 names of Allah ﷻ), describing the spiritual benefits that believers associate with this practice. Nasrul-haqq practitioners likewise place strong emphasis on Asma-ul-Husna in their amalan, believing that these divine names play a central role in cultivating spiritual discipline and perceived healing capacity.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in Sufism and contemporary approaches in the sociology and anthropology of religion that emphasize lived, embodied, and socially situated religious practice. The spiritual discipline, devotional rigor, and healing practices observed among Nasrul-Haqq practitioners resonate strongly with Islamic mystical traditions while also reflecting localized expressions shaped by Mëranaw history and culture. Rather than treating these practices as doctrinal deviations or supernatural assertions, this study situates them within broader scholarly frameworks that understand religion as embodied, practiced, and experienced in everyday life.

From the perspective of classical Islamic thought, Sufism (tasawwuf) represents the inner and experiential dimension of Islam, focusing on ethical purification, self-discipline, and constant remembrance of Allah ﷻ. Al-Hujwiri (2001: 8) defines tasawwuf as the total orientation of one's being toward Allah ﷻ through continuous worship, spiritual concentration, and moral restraint, requiring detachment from worldly desires and social status. This conception closely parallels the Nasrul-Haqq emphasis on prolonged amalan, seclusion, and intensive dhikr as pathways to spiritual refinement and service to others. Schimmel (1975/2011) further demonstrates that Islamic mysticism has historically relied on symbolic practice, ritual repetition, and embodied devotion, underscoring that spiritual transformation in Islam is achieved through disciplined bodily and emotional engagement rather than abstract belief alone.

Contemporary scholarship challenges static or essentialist understandings of Sufism. Knysh (2017) shows that Sufi traditions have continually evolved across different regions and historical contexts, producing diverse forms that resist rigid classifications such as "orthodox" versus "folk" Islam. This insight is essential for interpreting Nasrul-Haqq as a localized manifestation of Islamic mysticism embedded in Mëranaw social life, rather than as a marginal or heterodox movement. Such an approach allows the study to situate Nasrul-Haqq within the plurality of Islamic devotional traditions without normative judgment.

To analytically frame these practices, this study draws on the concept of lived religion. McGuire (2008) argues that religion should be examined as it is practiced and negotiated in everyday life rather than solely through formal doctrine or institutional authority. From this perspective, amalan, faith healing, and collective dhikr function as routine religious practices through which Nasrul-Haqq practitioners address illness, misfortune, moral obligation, and communal responsibility. These practices are not peripheral but central to how religious meaning is produced and sustained within the community.

This lived religion perspective is complemented by an embodied phenomenological approach. Csordas' theory of embodiment conceptualizes religious experience as grounded in bodily practice, sensory engagement, and disciplined action rather than abstract cognition. Within this framework, healing rituals, repetitive recitations, and prolonged acts of devotion among Nasrul-Haqq practitioners are understood as embodied religious experiences that shape both individual subjectivity and social authority. Embodiment allows the analysis to focus on how spiritual power is experienced, enacted, and recognized within the community, without making claims about its metaphysical veracity.

In line with this approach, Dalaman's work on lived religion and feminist and sociological analyses of



belief underscores the importance of maintaining analytical distance while taking believers' experiences seriously. Religious practices are treated neither as irrational nor as empirically verified truths, but as socially meaningful realities that structure everyday life, ethical conduct, and communal relations. This position aligns with Orsi's (2005) argument that scholars must inhabit a careful middle ground: respecting religious worlds as real to those who live them, while preserving critical scholarly interpretation.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives enable a non-reductionist and ethically grounded analysis of Nasrul-Haqq. By integrating classical Sufi thought with contemporary theories of lived religion and embodiment, the study documents faith healing and devotional practices as meaningful religious experiences embedded in social life. This framework ensures that Nasrul-Haqq is analyzed as a lived Islamic tradition, preserving academic objectivity while remaining attentive to the spiritual realities articulated by practitioners themselves.

#### 4. RESEARCH DESIGN/METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design combining historical and ethnographic approaches. Historical data were examined through the corroboration of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through personal interviews using purposive and snowball sampling methods, while secondary sources consisted of published materials relevant to the study.

The ethnographic component involved observing and documenting practices, attitudes, and values through participant observation and immersion in selected settings. Data were collected from fifteen (15) key informants, including five (5) Nasrul-haqq practitioners and ten (10) patients who reported having experienced their healing practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide to allow participants to narrate their experiences in their own terms.

## 5. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 5.1 ORIGIN OF NASRUL-HAQQ IN LANA DEL SUR

Nasrul-haqq is derived from two Arabic words – “*nasr*”, meaning victory, and “*haqq*”, meaning “right.” When combined, the words mean “helping one another for good.” Nasrul-haqq also refers to a title given to a person who has undergone strenuous spiritual training in order to achieve purity and to free oneself from *fitna*, described in Islamic discourse as a condition of moral and spiritual decay (Islamweb, 2025). According to Mohammad Abbas, commonly known in Binidayan as Black R (Ramadhan) and a long-time practitioner of Nasrul-haqq, the term is defined as “*tinabanga o benar*” (supporter of what is right). Another meaning attributed to the term is “*the protector of truth*,” as stated by Mustapha Nasib Pacalna, a practicing Nasrul-haqq of about twenty-two (22) years.

Nasrul-haqq, as they are popularly known as healers, convey much of their work through healing practices, expecting no material compensation but rather spiritual reward from Allahﷻ. Protecting the true nature of Islam and entrusting everything to Allahﷻ are among the primary principles described by Nasrul-haqq practitioners, as reflected in the core meanings attached to the term. In this sense, Nasrul-haqq is understood by its adherents as signifying “helping one another for good,” “the protector of truth,” and “to entrust everything to Allahﷻ.” Although these expressions differ linguistically, they are used by practitioners to point toward a shared religious goal of attaining Allah’sﷻ pleasure by standing for truth within Islam.

Some Muslim scholars associate Nasrul-haqq with Sufism. Historically, the earliest figures later identified as Sufis emerged during the second Islamic century, after the generation of the Companions and their successors. Classical sources often cite Abu Hashim al-Kufi (d. 159 AH) as one of the first individuals to be referred to as a Sufi, marking the gradual consolidation of Sufism as a recognizable spiritual orientation within Islam (Schimmel, 2011; Knysh, 2017). This period witnessed the expansion of Islamic mysticism into diverse forms and practices. The formative roots of Sufism are commonly traced back to the seventh

century A.D., during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, while its institutionalization and wider diffusion occurred in later centuries, reaching regions such as India by the twelfth century and becoming more widespread by the thirteenth century (Khanam, 2011: 7). Sufism is described as a spiritual training of the soul aimed at being “one with God” through devotional practices such as submission, sincerity, repentance, and other forms of spiritual discipline. While Nasrul-haqq practitioners do not emphasize music or dance, devotion is expressed through *amalan*. In terms of spiritual orientation, Nasrul-haqq is therefore described by practitioners as closely resembling Sufi traditions. From a sociological perspective, Sufism is best understood not as a fixed doctrinal system but as a set of embodied devotional practices through which believers cultivate proximity to the divine in everyday life. As scholars of lived religion emphasize, mystical traditions are sustained through repeated practices, disciplines, and ethical orientations rather than through formal theology alone (McGuire, 2008; Orsi, 2005). In this sense, Nasrul-haqq practices resonate with broader Sufi orientations insofar as spiritual authority and efficacy are understood to emerge from sustained devotional discipline (*amalan*), bodily engagement, and moral self-transformation, rather than from institutionalized religious status or textual mastery alone (Knysh, 2017; Schimmel, 2011).

This group regard themselves as Muslims who are *awliya*, meaning “friend” or “helper” of Allah ﷻ (Osmanisnin, 2022). Islam arrived in the Philippines as the first monotheistic religion through Arab traders and missionaries. According to the *Tarsila* of the Tausug, the earliest Muslims in the Philippines were *awliya* such as Tuan Mashaika, followed by Karim-ul-Makhdom in the fourteenth century. These figures, accompanied by Sufi companions with mystical inclinations, are described as having come from the Indonesian archipelago after leaving Baghdad following the Mongol invasion in the late thirteenth century (Tarsila, n.d.; Majul, 1999).

Many Muslim missionaries who arrived in the Philippines later rose to leadership positions, supported by descendants of earlier settlers. In local narratives, these missionaries are often portrayed as possessing mystical abilities that captivated the native population and facilitated the spread of

Islam. A well-known example comes from Butig, where Jannatun Naim, recorded in the *Salsila*, was said to have exhibited extraordinary phenomena. According to legend, he was said to have been teleported from Makkah to Butig after completing his prayer (M. Bao, personal communication, December 30, 2018). Such accounts, which are common in both pre-Islamic and Islamic narratives in the region, illustrate the enduring cultural importance of mysticism in Mëranaw religious history.

In religious interpretation, magic is described as a test given by Allah ﷻ to humanity, as stated in the Qur'an:

And they followed [instead] what the devils had recited during the reign of Solomon... teaching people magic and that which was revealed to the two angels at Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt” (Qur'an 2:102, trans. Shaheeh International).

We are a trial, so do not disbelieve [by practicing magic] (Qur'an 2:102, trans. Shaheeh International).

Within Mëranaw culture, pre-Islamic beliefs in *tonong* (unseen beings) are reflected in the *Darangen* epic. The legendary figure Bantogen, for example, is described as using enchanted objects such as magical boats and swords, while *tonong* are portrayed as supernatural helpers. Dr. Abdussalam Disomimba notes that reliance on *tonong* represents an inherited tradition from earlier generations, demonstrating the continued influence of pre-Islamic beliefs in the region.

According to Aleem Mohammad Amin Ampaso, spokesman for the Imam's League of Marawi City, Nasrul-haqq traces its origins to *awliya*, particularly those from Malaysia, who were believed by followers to have attained special spiritual capacities through prolonged devotion and seclusion. Abu Hafis Saber credits Maulana Faisal Abdullah with introducing Nasrul-haqq practices in Lanao, emphasizing the avoidance of jinn during *amalan*. Aleem Amin Angot estimates the group's population at around one thousand, including approximately fifty women. Mohammad Abbas (Black R) claims to have mentored over a thousand students, including Aleem Amin's mother, and to have played a major role in spreading Nasrul-haqq in Binidayan, Tugaya, and Butig.

Abdulmanaf Tamano recounts that after suffering from illness, he sought Nasrul-haqq and was instructed by Black R to perform *amalan* in the mountains. Black R examined his palm and provided a note that read: "On Thursday late afternoon, climb that mountain and perform the *amalan*." Tamano was instructed to bring a prayer mat, *pasbi*, flashlight, water, blanket, and bedsheet, and he joined others at the mountain site for this purpose (A. Tamano, personal communication, November 4, 2021).

These accounts suggest that a sizable Nasrul-haqq community already existed in Tugaya before Tamano's involvement. Under the leadership of Anwar Calauoto, a small mountain *masjid* was built in 2005 to provide a secluded place for spiritual practice (M. T. Maradia, personal communication, November 3, 2021). Together with Abdulmanaf, Calauoto attracted numerous followers, including *ulama* such as Aleem Jalal and Aleem Tawi.

Many Nasrul-haqq practitioners are also associated with the Tablighi movement, which emphasizes mosque-based worship and revivalist piety (Taylor, 2009). Their participation in Tablighi activities is described as strengthening their capacity to endure the demanding discipline of *amalan*.

Currently, Nasrul-haqq does not exist as a single unified organization but rather as several groups, including "Amalan Jamma" and "Ahlul Suffah Chapters." Although their practices differ in detail, all emphasize strict spiritual training, and those who complete this demanding path are regarded within their communities as individuals of exceptional spiritual dedication.

## 5.2. TYPES OF NASRUL-HAQQ

The belief in the unseen is a cornerstone of Islam, encompassing entities such as angels and jinn, which outnumber humanity (The Abu Aaliyah Gazette, 2014). Muslims believe that Islam, as revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, is a message not only for humans but also for jinn, underscoring the faith's universal scope. As Allah ﷻ said in the Qur'an:

Behold, We turned towards thee a company of Jinns (quietly) listening to the Qur'an (Qur'an 46:29) (Trans. Yusof Ali, 1985)

O company of Jinn and men, did not Messengers come to you from among yourselves relating My Signs to you and warning you of the encounter of this Day of yours? (Qur'an 6:130) (Trans. Dr. Mustafa Khattab)

These *ayat* are commonly interpreted within Islamic theology as affirming the existence of jinn. According to Islamic belief, humans normally do not see jinn, while jinn are believed to be able to see humans. Within this religious cosmology, jinn are understood to interact with human affairs for various reasons. The Qur'an (55:15) states that jinn were created from fire, and when they are perceived, they are described in Islamic tradition as capable of taking different forms, including animals. In a hadith recorded by al-Tabarani, al-Hakim, and al-Baihaqi, Tha'labah al-Khashani reported that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

Jinn are of three types: one type with wings that fly in the air; one type that are snakes and scorpions; and another that settles and moves.

Within Islamic belief, jinn are also understood to vary morally, with some regarded as righteous and others as harmful. Iblis is identified as a *jinn* (Qur'an 18:53), and jinn are also described as having their own communities and religious affiliations, including those believed to be Muslims.

Within Mëranaw religious discourse, Nasrul-haqq practitioners are sometimes accused of being possessed by or associated with jinn, which leads some *ulama* to question their religious legitimacy. This position is supported by Al-Salam Bali (2005) in *How to Protect Yourself from Jinns and Shaytan*, where he argues that seeking assistance from jinn constitutes *shirk* because it involves relying on beings other than Allah ﷻ. Reflecting this view, some Nasrul-haqq practitioners reported that they have distanced themselves from jinn that they believed once accompanied them, while others continue to follow older traditions. For this reason, Nasrul-haqq is often locally categorized into two types: (a) those with jinn and (b) those without jinn.

Some informants claim that Nasrul-haqq practitioners rely on jinn companions, sometimes described as acquired through spiritual encounters or duels, to succeed in their work. However, many *ulama* condemn this practice as *shirk*, emphasizing the principle of *tawhîd*, or the oneness of Allah ﷻ (M.

A. Ampaso, personal communication, October 21, 2018). According to various accounts, whether a practitioner seeks or rejects jinn assistance depends on their level of spiritual training (S. Mocali, personal communication, October 15, 2018). Abdullah Anugod and Aleema Norma both acknowledged experiences that they interpreted as involving jinn or unseen helpers (A. Anugod, personal communication, October 17, 2018; N. Husain Sarip, personal communication, October 17, 2018).

Mohammad Solaiman Tataan, an Islamic scholar, described commonly shared beliefs about methods for summoning jinn, while also warning against such practices:

What I know in taking jinn as a friend is that during ten o'clock in the evening... read Surah-Jinn... you can hear scratching noise, whistling, or knocks outside and that's the sign that they are approaching... but if you want to be a healer, don't befriend the unseen (Jinns) because they can overpower you.

Nasrul-haqq practitioners themselves express divergent views on the role of jinn. Some state that spiritual abilities are ineffective without jinn assistance, while others insist that all power comes solely from Allahﷻ. Mohammad Abbas suggests that jinn companions, if present, are assigned by Allahﷻ rather than summoned by humans, while others dispute this view. Many practitioners cite Qur'anic and Hadith evidence to argue against befriending jinn:

There were men from mankind who sought refuge in men from the jinn, so they [only] increased them in burden (Qur'an 72:7) (Trans. Shaheeh International).

For practitioners such as Abu Hafis and Aleem Amin Angot, interaction with jinn is considered religiously inappropriate, and contemporary Nasrul-haqq practice is described as focused on worship and *amalan* rather than unseen intermediaries (A. H. Saber, personal communication, October 18, 2018). Mohammad Abbas similarly states that summoning jinn is *shirk* and that his practices emphasize devotion to Allahﷻ alone. Although Nasrul-haqq practitioners are divided on this issue, their abilities acquired through *amalan* are regarded as equally meaningful

within the community, while those believed to rely on jinn are often viewed as being distracted from their devotion to Allahﷻ.

### 5.3. AMALAN

Amalan refers to the spiritual practices of Nasrul-haqq, in which practitioners engage in intensive *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and the chanting of the *Asma-ul-Husna* (the 99 names of Allah ﷻ). These practices are understood by practitioners as a form of spiritual training through which moral discipline and perceived spiritual capacities are cultivated in proportion to the intensity and duration of devotion.

Amalan also refers to collective gatherings in which members assemble after the *'Isha* (evening) prayer to chant and recite *dhikr* with the aim of spiritual growth. Such gatherings frequently attract individuals who seek various forms of assistance, including success in board examinations, improvement in romantic relationships, or relief from illness. In these contexts, Nasrul-haqq practitioners are approached for guidance, prayer, and spiritual intercession as understood within their religious framework.

### 5.4 NASRUL-HAQQ AS FAITH HEALERS

Since time immemorial, Nasrul-haqq have been known within their communities for what are described as exceptional abilities in healing the sick, addressing spirit possession, and assisting people in states of distress and helplessness.

According to Aleem Amin Angot, joining the Nasrul-haqq is understood by practitioners as the beginning of a rigorous process of spiritual formation. Within this framework, special skills and capacities are interpreted as blessings from God that emerge through sustained devotional practice. These gifts are believed by followers to be granted to individuals who have undergone prolonged periods of *amalan* and spiritual discipline, and they are primarily oriented toward healing and assisting others within the community. In remote areas, faith-based healing may function as one of the few available resources for illness and suffering, sometimes interacting with older animist traditions. Even in urban and educated families, Nasrul-haqq practitioners are consulted for exorcism or spiritual intervention when cases are perceived to exceed the



reach of conventional medicine. Practitioners describe themselves as instruments of God, emphasizing that any healing comes from divine will rather than personal power, and they continue performing *amalan* to maintain spiritual focus and protection from forces they understand as hostile (A. S. Maoga, personal communication, October 17, 2018).

Recitation of specific Qur'anic surahs, such as Surah al-Kawthar, is believed by practitioners to have healing properties. Informant 6 explained that reciting this surah ten times can counter harmful thoughts and return them to their source (personal communication, October 21, 2018). The Qur'an is understood within this tradition as a book of healing (Qur'an 41:44) and a source of endurance in suffering (Qur'an 39:10; 31:17). Becoming a faith healer is described as requiring deep knowledge of the Qur'an and the ability to recite it from memory, which practitioners regard as essential for treating illness.

Training is portrayed as demanding, requiring trainees to confront fear, isolation, and spiritual discipline. Trainees memorize and recite specific *tasbih* according to strict numerical prescriptions. Faith healing is described as an alternative pathway of care for people who cannot access biomedical services, and as a vocation that, once perceived as divinely called, becomes central to a practitioner's life. In addition to physical illness, Nasrul-haqq healing addresses conditions understood as having supernatural origins (Sarkar, 2014). Practitioners describe themselves as spiritual warriors who use *ahadith* and Qur'anic verses as protection against unseen forces.

Nasrul-haqq employ a variety of healing methods. Before treatment, they typically assess the patient's condition through questions and observation. A common practice is *tawar*, in which Qur'anic verses are recited and blown into water that the patient then drinks. Aleem Basarodin reported that he and his teacher would recite Ayatul-Kursi forty-one (41) times into containers of water, usually in odd numbers, which was then given to patients, including those believed to be possessed by spirits. Water placed at the center of *amalan* gatherings is likewise believed to absorb healing energy (S.

Pendinatar, personal communication, March 26, 2021).

Other healing methods reported by practitioners include:

Remote healing through phone calls, using only the patient's name (Samsoden Pendinatar; Aleem Yusoph Dimatingcal).

Bathing or pouring water on the patient.

*Laqam*, words written on paper or plates as protection (R. Mamasao, personal communication, October 20, 2018).

Charity or animal sacrifice symbolizing the removal of illness (S. Mocali, personal communication, October 15, 2018).

Spiritual insight using Qur'anic verses to diagnose illness.

Night-time healing during Salat-ul-Isha (Aleema Roselainie Mamasao).

Team-based healing circles (R. Mamasao, personal communication, October 20, 2018).

Possession by jinn as intermediaries (Aleemah Norma Husain Sarip).

Spiritual swordfights with jinn (N. Macatoman, FGD, October 25, 2018).

Recitation of Arabic phrases such as *A'udhu billahi minash shaytanir rajeem* and *Ya Quddus*.

Acupuncture (Mohammad Abbas, personal communication, October 21, 2018).

Practitioner's attribute different spiritual "temperatures" to Qur'anic verses: Ayatul-Kursi is said to produce heat, while Surah al-Fatiha is believed to cool fever. Verses from Surah Ra'd combined with *Qaddirullah* are regarded as powerful interventions.

Specific verses are believed to repel spirits (Surah Saffat 37:6–10), ignite protective flames (Surah Rahman 55:35), assist surgery (Surah Yasin), or relieve toothache when *Kaf-Ha-Ya-'Ain-Sad* is written and recited (A. Tamano, personal communication, November 4, 2021).

Diagnosis may involve blowing Qur'anic verses into a glass of water and placing it on the body; reactions such as itching or pulling sensations are interpreted as indicators of different illnesses or possession (A.

Tamano, personal communication, November 4, 2021).

Numerous healing narratives circulate among Nasrul-haqq. One case described a woman scheduled for surgery who instead received *potar* and *laqam* for a week; when she returned to the hospital, doctors declared surgery unnecessary (S. Pendinatar, personal communication, March 26, 2021). Another involved a man who regained the ability to walk after *dhikr* and a vision of light striking his stomach (ibid.). A third concerned a woman who delivered her stillborn baby after drinking Qur'an-blessed water (G. Macaangga, personal communication, April 22, 2021). Other stories include Golam Macaangga's grandfather being revived after recitation of the 99 Names of Allahﷻ, a doctor who conceived after prayer, a politically prominent woman healed in Manila, and a woman in Marantao whose condition was linked to black magic and resolved after ritual intervention (M. N. Pacalna, November 2, 2021; A. Tamano, November 4, 2021).

These narratives illustrate the wide range of healing experiences that Nasrul-haqq practitioners and community members describe. Such accounts have contributed to the group's reputation across Lanao del Sur and beyond, drawing patients from many parts of the Philippines.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Nasrul-haqq refers to a community of faith guided by the ideals of "helping one another for good," "protecting the truth," and entrusting all matters to Allahﷻ. According to practitioners' accounts and local religious narratives, its presence in the Philippines is linked to the arrival of awliya who introduced Islam through a combination of spiritual discipline, missionary engagement, and communal leadership. These narratives situate Nasrul-haqq within a longer historical continuum of Islamic devotional practice in the region.

The findings of this study highlight the central role Nasrul-haqq plays in faith-based healing within Mëranaw communities. Practitioners and patients describe numerous healing experiences in which services are offered without financial expectation, motivated instead by moral obligation and spiritual

accountability to Allahﷻ. Such practices underscore the ethical and communal dimensions of healing, where care is embedded within religious devotion and social responsibility rather than transactional exchange.

Viewed through the lens of lived religion and embodied religious practice, Nasrul-haqq healing emerges as a socially embedded system of care that operates alongside, and sometimes in place of, biomedical treatment. Rather than constituting a rejection of modern medicine, these practices reflect culturally meaningful ways of interpreting illness, suffering, and recovery in contexts where spiritual and moral explanations remain central to everyday life. Healing, in this sense, is not limited to physical recovery but encompasses reassurance, moral realignment, and restored social balance.

This study does not seek to evaluate the empirical truth of supernatural claims associated with Nasrul-haqq practices. Instead, it documents how such beliefs function as lived religious realities that shape health-seeking behavior, spiritual authority, and communal trust. By maintaining analytical distance while taking practitioners' experiences seriously, the research contributes to broader discussions in the sociology and anthropology of religion on faith healing, embodiment, and religious meaning-making.

Finally, Nasrul-haqq practices highlight the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural and religious heritage. In an increasingly modernized world, such traditions continue to provide meaning, support, and social cohesion for many communities. Documenting and analyzing these practices therefore contributes not only to academic knowledge but also to a deeper understanding of how lived religious worlds persist, adapt, and remain meaningful for future generations.

## AUTHOR'S POSITIONALITY AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL NOTE

This study documents and analyzes the beliefs, practices, and healing narratives of the Nasrul-haqq community as they are articulated by practitioners and community members. The descriptions of

spiritual powers, jinn, healing efficacy, and divine intervention presented in this article are based on ethnographic accounts, personal testimonies, and religious interpretations shared by informants during fieldwork.

The author does not seek to empirically verify or falsify these spiritual claims. Instead, they are treated as culturally meaningful systems of knowledge that shape how illness, healing, morality, and religious experience are understood

within the Mëranaw community. Following interpretive and anthropological approaches to religion and healing, the focus of this study is on how these beliefs function socially, spiritually, and therapeutically, rather than on their biomedical or scientific validation.

This epistemological positioning allows the voices of practitioners and patients to be presented faithfully, while maintaining scholarly neutrality toward supernatural or metaphysical claims.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript. No financial, personal, or professional relationships have influenced the work reported in this study.

#### **Ethical Statement**

The author confirms that this research was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical standards for qualitative and ethnographic research. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided verbal consent prior to participation. Pseudonyms were used where necessary to protect the identity and privacy of participants. The study involves no experimentation on humans or animals and is based on interviews, observations, and personal narratives.

#### **Funding Statement**

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

#### **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all Nasrul-haqq practitioners, community members, and informants who generously shared their time, experiences, and knowledge for this study. Their openness and trust made this research possible.

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