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Zum Titelbild/Front picture *Curare* 36(2013)3:

The photo shows the setting of an interview between Prof. William Sax, South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg, and Walid Darwish Zamzam, who practices Islamic healing in UK. Mr. Zamzam gave a lecture on „Islamic Healing: a practitioner’s point of view“ at Heidelberg on 02 July, 2013. The interview can be found on pages 168–171 of this issue.

Die letzten Hefte:

Curare 35(2012)4: Objekte sammeln, sehen und deuten. Die Sprache der Objekte

Curare 36(2013)1+2: Medizinethnologische Diskurse um Körpermodifikationen im interkulturellen Arbeitsfeld Ethnologie und Medizin

Die nächsten Hefte:

Curare 36(2013)4 zu Themen aus der Transkulturellen Psychologie

Curare 36(2014) zur Ethnobotanik und Ethnopharmakologie

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In *Curare* 36(2013)1+2 auf S. 12 und in der Anmerkung 23 zitiert die Autorin DEBORA FROMMELD in ihrem Beitrag „Fit statt fett“: *Der Body-Mass-Index als biopolitisches Instrument* Zeitungsberichte über Verbeamtungswünsche, die wegen eines abweichenden BMIs abgelehnt werden. Im geschilderten Falle handelte es sich um einen Polizeianwärter mit einem ausgeprägt trainierten muskulösen Körper. Wie zu erfahren ist, gelang es dem Bewerber, nach einem Gerichtsverfahren doch noch eingestellt zu werden. Hier die beiden Quellen: <http://www.derwesten.de/wr/wr-info/zu-muskuloes-fuer-den-polizeidienst-id76939.html> • <http://www.derwesten.de/wr/staedte/schwelm/muskelspiel-vor-gericht-gewonnen-id348813.html>

• *Addendum und Erratum zu Autor Valšík:*

Der Erstautor des Artikels “Popular Medicine and Traditional Mutilations in Egyptian Nubia” von VALŠÍK J.A. & HUSSIEN F.H. in *Curare* 36(2013)1+2: 86–92 heißt nicht Jan A. Valšík, sondern JINDŘICH A. VALŠÍK (s. S. 89). Eine neuere Diplomarbeit ist seinem Leben und Werk gewidmet (Diplomovka-Vymazalová-Valšík), Brno (Brünn) [<http://www.uschovna.cz/en/package/P8X3L3SBFK7ELFBL-MAT>]. Information von Assoc. Prof. Rado Beňuš, Bratislava, Head of the Department of Anthropology of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of CU, where Prof. Valšík used to work. (benus@nic.fns.uniba.sk).



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The Reality of 21st Century Islamic Healing—An Interview with a Muslim Healer

WILLIAM S. SAX

Walid Darwish Zamzam was born in 1972 in Lebanon to a family of Palestinian refugees. The family was very large, with eleven brothers and sisters. His father was an Islamic healer who used herbal medicine as well as *hejama* or wet cupping¹, and Mr. Zamzam learned these techniques from him. In addition, he qualified in Lebanon as a staff nurse. Since immigrating to England, Mr. Zamzam has become a leading advocate of *hejama*, holding frequent workshops on the topic throughout the U.K. and abroad, and practicing it on a regular basis. He also practices Islamic exorcism (*ruqiya*), and in fact sees no sharp border between the two kinds of healing, as the interview below (conducted on 3rd July 2013 along with my doctoral student Hasan Ashraf) illustrates.

I first met him in Birmingham in early 2013, while beginning my own project on *ruqiya*.² I was given his telephone number by an Islamic Bookseller who had attended one of his workshops, and Mr. Zamzam was kind enough to stop by my hotel one evening for a chat. He was on his way to London, accompanied by a Somali exorcist (*raqi*). At our very first meeting, I was impressed by the breadth of his networks: he seemed to know everyone in the Islamic healing “scene” in the U.K., and did not hesitate to put me in touch with them. Later, and after many hours of discussion, I came to know him as someone who is passionately committed to Islamic healing, which he esteems not only for its therapeutic value, but also as a way to bring people closer to God. He is equally passionate in his denunciation of healers who exploit others’ sickness and distress to earn money. His own charges are very modest, and sometimes he even heals people for free.

I was able to observe this myself one night when Mr. Zamzam took several calls on his cellphone from clients with various problems, as we drove in his car. One call came from a woman in the USA whose mother was afflicted by Jinn. Mr. Zamzam instructed the woman to hold her phone next to her mother’s ear. He then asked me to hold the cell phone so that he could keep both hands on the



wheel, and began to recite the Koranic verses that are the kernel of *ruqiya*, occasionally directing me to speak with the daughter and ask how her mother was reacting to the treatment. In this way, I experienced the reality of 21st century Islamic healing as we hurtled down the expressway from Bradford to London.

Sax: *You include wet cupping under the category “prophetic medicine”: What do you mean by this, exactly?*

Zamzam: Prophetic medicine is based on the guidance of the Prophet, Sallallahu Alaihi Wa Sallam [“Peace be upon Him”, henceforth PboH]: for example we have to use black seed oil, and this is based on the guidance of the Prophet. According to one very authentic Hadith, black seed can cure any illness except death. Also, prophetic medicine

uses dates and this is also based on a reliable Hadith. If you eat seven dates early in the morning, you wouldn't be affected by evil eye or by black magic. ... [There is also a Hadith mentioning] Qustal-Bahri [*Saussurea lappa*]³, which we normally obtain from India. You have to crush it to make it fine, you can sniff it, you can use it with olive oil, you do some recitation and you can use it for people affected by evil eye or black magic or whatever. The Prophet (PboH), said that his followers could be treated by honey or by *hejama*, but he forbade them to be treated by cauterization.

Sax: *Do you remember how did you get interested in this? Did you watch your father, maybe want to follow in his footsteps? Did he tell you that it should be your job or what ...?*

Zamzam: Actually, I used to spend a lot of time with my father, when his clients came I used to sit and listen ... from my childhood I was interested in herbal medicine.

Sax: *You told me that you lived briefly in Ukraine and elsewhere, and now you are in the UK. Why did you leave Lebanon?*

Zamzam: You see, for Palestinian people it is very hard to get a job in Lebanon. If you are qualified as a nurse or a doctor you can't work in the government hospital, you are only entitled to work in the camps. So this is one of the main reasons I left Lebanon.

Sax: *And you went to the UK?*

Zamzam: First I went to Denmark and stayed with my relatives, and later I went to the UK where I am now a citizen.

Sax: *So how did you get started there with hejama and ruqiya?*

Zamzam: In 1996 I had some health problems. I was affected by black magic, and was very ill. One of my friends recommended that I do *ruqiya* healing, and when I did so I found it was very effective. Later I learned how to do it, and the first time I heard the Jinn speak was in 1999.

Sax: *How did that happen?*

Zamzam: I had already learned a lot from my dad, and I used to recite on people, but it was actually in 1999 that I made real progress. I used to recite "Ayat Al-Kursi," one of the greatest *sura* in the Holy

Book, the Qur'an. I was sitting next to my friend, and I put my hand on him while reciting silently, but he took my hand away. Later we were sitting in the car and I started to recite on him, and then a female Jinn spoke aloud, and she said, "I love him." After that I began to recite and recite and recite, and after some time the Jinn left him and he was o.k. He said, "I am back to normal. I feel very light and happy." And that is how I started.

Sax: *You have told me a lot of stories about your experiences with the Jinn: fantastic stories! Have you ever been frightened of them?*

Zamzam: To be honest, sometimes the Jinn threaten you. They say, "I am going to get revenge on you, I am going to kill you, I am going to do this or that..." They try to frighten you. But a good Muslim believes that if you recite Al-Fatiha⁴, or Ayat Al-Kursi, or the last two ayats from Surat Al-Baqarah⁵, it will give you protection. Now, some non-Arabic speakers find this difficult, but they can recite three quls (a very short Sura) three times a day.

Sax: *What about using amulets (tabiz)?*

Zamzam: A lot of people go to Pirs (Sufi holy men), and get amulets, but they don't know what's in them. And many times I opened the amulet and found something from the Qur'an along with some numbers and a language I didn't understand. The correct way to do healing is to recite from the Holy Qur'an, not to hang something around your neck. OK, some people do it and say, "I am using Ayat Al-Kursi which is the greatest Ayat in the Holy Qur'an," and they hang it around their neck or on their arm. But this means they have to take it into the bathroom, and this is not allowed.⁶

Sax: *Do the words of the Holy Qur'an also work for your non-Muslim clients?*

Zamzam: Of course! Muslim and non-Muslim, the Qur'an it will work for them even if they can't understand it. If they listen and they concentrate, it will have an effect on the Jinn. I had one lady who listened to a recorded *ruqiya* and it worked: the Jinn spoke!

Sax: *So on the one hand you have the ruqiya, which is directly based on the Holy Qur'an, and on the other hand you have the hejama technique which does not have a religious dimension. What's the link*

between the physical technique of blood-letting and the spiritual technique of ruqiya?

Zamzam: I would say that you should conduct both procedures together, because they are linked. *Hejama* can cure physical illness. Are evil eye and black magic, illnesses? Of course they are! Is epilepsy an illness? Of course it is! And some of the patients suffering from epileptic seizure are actually victims of black magic, they are possessed by Jinn while others have mental illness. We do both procedures, *hejama* and *ruqiya*, so as to have a more powerful effect on them.

Sax: *What about the relationship between mental illness and spiritual illness? Do you have some patients whose mental problems are completely biological, or is it always a matter of Jinn?*

Zamzam: To be honest, I would have to say that 95 per cent of the cases I've encountered are caused by Jinn. Even in those cases where the patient has been born with mental illness, the *ruqiya* will do them no harm. In any case ... most of the cases of mental illnesses I've seen were caused by black magic.

Sax: *And you think that would be the case for most people?*

Zamzam: Could be ... could be.

Sax: *You founded the "British Islamic Holistic Medical Council." Why?*

Zamzam: Previously I worked for several organizations, and found that a lot of people are using Islam just to earn money. I'll tell you something: One student came to my house from London. I trained him, and after one week he announced on Facebook that he was the greatest *hejama* expert in the world. He called himself "the father of *ruqiya*," and some real *raqi*s from Saudi Arabia got upset with him. What was he saying, that he is the father of our Qur'an? This is haram! But he has got some good people, a good I.T. team working for him. He has a nice website: it takes you straight to the message, or they send you message saying, "We are extremely busy, but if you would like to leave a brief message about your location and what you suffer from, we will ask our specialist to get back to you as soon as he's free." So an Imam from Saudi Arabia came to me and asked if I knew this guy. I said, "Yes, he came to me, I've trained him in *hejama* and he took nearly

23 kilos of honey from me and he said he would pay me." I'll show you: I'll dial him. [He does so.] Look at that: "Can't talk right now, salam-alaikum, we have received a missed call ..." Here, you can read it.

Sax: [reading out loud] *"We have received a missed call from this number. Would you like an appointment with our specialist raqi? Please text your name, location, and a brief explanation of your case, and we shall text you back immediately, Islamic healing, body and soul."*

Zamzam: But I am not interested in money. I am more interested in reviving this Sunnah. I would like to teach people about it. We are charging people but it's not very expensive. Others are practicing *hejama* but not following the British law. But we have a contract with the insurance company, we have arrangements for the clinical waste, any patient coming to us has to fill out the consultation form, they have to sign the consent form, and before we do the procedure we find out if someone is having kidney dialysis or taking (contra-indicated medications), etc. Otherwise we don't do it. But the British Islamic Holistic Medical Council is not only just *hejama*, we also do *ruqiya* and we are going to begin teaching people how to recite Qur'an.

Sax: *While travelling with you in the UK, I got the feeling that this practice of hejama is growing quite rapidly now. Is that true? Why is hejama becoming so fashionable? How much is this due to you and your colleagues?*

Zamzam: I'll tell you why. The people I have trained are mostly doctors, dentists, nurses and so on. They want to treat their families, not to make a career out of *hejama*. But mainly I would say it's because it is an Islamic treatment.

Sax: *What's the future of hejama?*

Zamzam: To be honest, I don't know. But now it's like a Tsunami, no one can stop it. Especially in the UK, it is spreading everywhere.

Sax: *What about the USA?*

Zamzam: I visited Phoenix and Texas. I found a very good response there. They called me actually again and were expecting me to go on May ... I may return in September.

Sax: *But not so explosive as the UK?*

Zamzam: No, I think UK is number one with the *hejama*.

Ashraf: *Are most of your clients Pakistanis or people from Saudi Arabia living in the UK or from Bangladesh?*

Zamzam: It's multi-cultural, the students are from all over. We did have some non-Muslims, but I would say 99 per cent are Muslim. I'll tell you something: If you check on internet, there is something called "Hejama Nation," their course is now accredited by the British Islamic Holistic Medical Council, but they will show you there's a map, international map, if you are looking for any *hejama* therapist internationally, around the world, you can find the details for them ... and to be honest, *hejama* is just amazing for people who are taking psychopharmaceuticals, it's fantastic!

Sax: *So you can substitute *hejama*, and help to get them off of these psychopharmaceuticals?*

Zamzam: It will help them a lot. So many people have had the *hejama* and then stopped the medicine, totally. Many of my patients were receiving anti-depression tablets and they stopped it, others had anxi-

ety, they couldn't sleep and they told me that after the *hejama* they started sleeping. The brother of one of my patients rang me after, two days and told me that his brother was sleeping like a baby now.

Sax: *You know, some anthropologists have written that it's all disappearing, that belief in Jinns is going away. Others say it's growing.*

Zamzam: Who said that it is disappearing? It's growing, it's modern, and if you don't believe in the Jinn, they will come to you, and then you will believe in them!

Notes

1. In German: *blutiges Schröpfen*.
2. <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/interdisciplinary-research-groups/mc11-changing-minds.html>
3. *Saussurea lappa* (Decne.) C.B. Clarke. Origin in North India, very common in different medical traditions in the past and present and old commercial product [German: (Indische) Kostwurz, Königswurz]. Synonyms are *Saussurea costus* (Falc.) Lipsch., *Aplotaxis lappa* Decne., *Aucklandia costus* Falc., *Theodorea costus* (Falc.) Kuntze. These botanic synonyms are found as well in the names of corresponding pharmaceutical products. The name of the Genus "Saussurea" is given in honor of the Swiss botanist Horace Benedict de Saussure (1746–1799).
4. The first chapter in the Qur'an
5. <http://quran.com/2>
6. Because one should not take the Qur'an into an impure place.



William S. Sax received his PhD in Anthropology from the University of Chicago in 1987. After that he taught at Harvard University for two years, after which he was employed by the Department of Philosophy and Religious studies at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand, until 2000, when he became Professor and Head of the Department of Ethnology at the University of Heidelberg. He has published extensively on the topic of ritual healing, including the book *God of Justice: Ritual Healing and Social Justice in the Central Himalayas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Currently he is completing a book on Divine Kingship in the Western Himalayas of North India, is co-ordinator of the Mini-Cluster „Changing Minds“ in the research cluster Asia and Europe in a Global Context <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/interdisciplinary-research-groups/mc11-changing-minds.html> // and Heidelberg Co-ordinator of the Research Network AROGYAM http://www.sai.uni-heidelberg.de/delhi/index.php?subaction=showfull&id=1344372363&archive=&start_from=&ucat=4& //

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