



*SIHIR* AMONG CONTEMPORARY MALAYS

BY

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## ABSTRACT

This study is about black magic (*sihir*) among contemporary Malays. It provides a historical overview of the relationship between Malays and the practice of black magic to show how it has evolved with the advance of time. The work engages in a wide range of material from contemporary Malay magazines and newspapers, to scholarly research on the Islamic conception of the unseen (*ghayb*) as well as the observations of Orientalists on magic in Malay culture. Ultimately, this study finds that belief and practice of *sihir* among contemporary Malays still persist despite the advancement in areas of institutional Islamization and modernization that Malaysia and Malays have experienced over the past three decades. On the contrary, it has evolved into a more sophisticated and technologically updated form since contemporary practitioners of *sihir* can be found utilizing the media to advertise their services. This study shows that the demand for *sihir* is purely to involve in covert social ills and the presence of the Islamic healing centres indicate that the belief in and practice of *sihir* has not subsided. The existence of these Islamic healing centres also does not help contain *sihir*. This study recommends that in order for the practice of *sihir* to be completely eradicated, there must be a strong co-operation between the relevant government, Islamic organizations, the learned section of society and all other concerned party to form a ‘think-tank’ on how to solve this ‘cancer’ of the race and the necessity for laws to control the practice of *sihir*.

## ملخص البحث

هذه الدراسة تتناول قضية السحر الاسود لدى الملايويين المعاصرين. وهي تقدم نظرة تاريخية للعلاقة بين الملايويين وممارسة السحر الأسود، و كيف تطورت مع مرور الزمن. اعتمد هذا البحث على دراسة مجموعة واسعة من المواد المنشورة في المجالات والصحف الماليزية المعاصرة حول هذا الموضوع، وكذلك التقصي العلمي في التصور الإسلامي لموضوع الغيبات، فضلا عن الملاحظات المؤخوذه عن المستشرقين في موضوع السحر في ثقافة الملايو. بينت هذه الدراسة بالدليل على أن ممارسة السحر بين الملايويين المعاصرين لا تزال قائمة على الرغم من التقدم الذي وصلت إليه شتى المؤسسات الإسلامية والمراحل التحديثية التي شهدها المجتمع الملايوي على مدى العقود الثلاثة الماضية. و اوضح البحث ان هذه الظاهرة تطورت إلى شكل أكثر تعقيدا من الناحية التكنولوجية، بحيث يمكن الاطلاع على الممارسين للسحر من خلال وسائل الإعلام كوسيلة للإعلان عن خدماتهم. هذه الدراسة تبين أن هناك طلب مستمر لممارسة السحر وهي ظاهرة مرتبطة بالعلل الاجتماعية السرية لدى المجتمع، ووجود مراكز الشفاء الإسلامية كدليل بارز على أن ممارسة السحر لم تختف. الا إن هذه المراكز أيضا لا تستطيع الإسهام في احتواء ممارسة السحر. لهذا، توصي الدراسة أنه من أجل محاربة ممارسة السحر لا بد من استئصاله تماما، ويجب أن يكون هناك تعاون قوي بين المؤسسات الحكومية ذات العلاقة، والمنظمات الإسلامية، بالتعاون مع الفئة المثقفة من المجتمع، وجميع الأحزاب المعنية لتكوين "مركز أبحاث" حول كيفية إجثثاث هذا "الداء العضال" من جذوره، وضرورة وضع قوانين خاصة والضابطة للتحكم في ظاهرة ممارسة السحر.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts (Islamic Spirituality and Contemporary Society).

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Baharudin Ahmad  
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts (Islamic Spirituality and Contemporary Society).

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Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Dean of ISTAC and is accepted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts (Islamic Spirituality and Contemporary Society).

.....  
Ismawi Hj. Zen  
Dean, ISTAC

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

Azizah Rahmad

Signature.....

Date:.....

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*To my late mother, **Allahyarmah Fatimah Daud** who once walked me to my village primary school and my late brother, **Allahyarham Zainudin Rahmad** who ensured I completed my high school.*

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## TRANSLITERATION

Table of the system of transliteration of Arabic terms and names followed in this thesis

### Consonant

ب	b	ط	t
ت	t	ظ	z
ث	th	ع	'
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	h	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ṣ	ء	'
ض	ḍ	ي	y

Short Vowels =  $\overset{ˆ}{\text{—}}$  = a     $\overset{ˆ}{\text{—}}$  = i     $\overset{ˆ}{\text{—}}$  = u

Long Vowels = ا = ā    ي = ī    و = ū

Diphthongs = ا ي = ay    ا و = aw

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

The belief and practice of *sihir* is not a new phenomenon. It cuts across all races regardless of their religious background and social standing. Likewise for contemporary Malays, the issue of *sihir* remains a ‘hidden’ social dilemma that has perpetually trailed their race throughout the centuries. While the subject matter of *sihir* has always captivated both Western and Eastern ethnologists, their opinions with regards to it – understood as witchcraft, charms, sorcery or ‘magic’- never comes close to the real definition of ‘*sihr*’ in the Arabic language.

Most of the Arabic definitions of the word *sihr*, which will be discussed at length in this work, is referred as an ‘evil act’ involving mankind: the *sahir* or sorcerer collaborates with species of the unseen (or the *ghayb* - the *jinn*) done openly or secretly. *Sihir* is an intricate issue which cannot be easily comprehended except that as the result of *sihir*: an out of the ordinary phenomenon which normally can never be explained rationally.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis discusses those phenomena and their related issues of *sihir* among contemporary Malays of the Malay Peninsula who are defined in the country’s Constitution as those who profess Islam, habitually speak the Malay language and conform to Malay customs and traditions.<sup>2</sup> This has to be clear as the term “Malay” itself represents a vast ethnic group with 5,000 years of history.

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<sup>1</sup> Amran Kasimin, *Analysis Sihir, Satu Amalan Masyarakat Melayu*, (Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Watan, 1987), 3. –An analysis of *Sihir* practices among the Malays –Translated by Azizah Rahmad.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Milner, *The Malays*, (United Kingdom: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), 2.

The descendants of the “Malays” spread out as far as Madagascar off the continent of Africa, all the way to the Pacific islands of New Zealand and include the island of Formosa, now known as Taiwan and Sri Lanka.<sup>3</sup> Moreover today, the term “Malay” can also refer not only to those Malays in Malaysia but also to the people of the vast islands of Indonesia, the South of the Philippines, Southern Thailand, Singapore, Cambodia and Brunei.<sup>4</sup>

As far as the present Malays of Malaysia are concerned, like their other counterparts of the different races and religions; they too are visibly ‘moving on with time’ enjoying the fruits of ‘modernity’<sup>5</sup> with successes and achievements in almost all endeavors. At the same time, they vibrantly adhere to the teachings and practices of Islam while holding on to their Malay cultural heritage and traditions. Malaysians, after all are to benefit from the country’s bold vision of “The Way Forward – *Vision 2020*” with the ultimate objective to be a fully developed country by the year 2020 when Malaysians are to finally succeed economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically and culturally.<sup>6</sup>

The overall success of the Malays was evidently portrayed when the Malays achieved a stake in the overall country’s economy. It reached a pinnacle when Dr. Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor became the first Malay in space.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Anthony Milner, *The Malays*, (United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), x.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Day McAmis, *Malay Muslims, The History and Challenge of Resurgence Islam in SEA*, (UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 1-5.

<sup>5</sup> Syed Farid Alatas, *Islam and Modernization, Islam in Southeast Asia, Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Edited by K.S. Nathan, Mohammad Hashim Kamali, (Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 2005), 209.

<sup>6</sup> The way forward, Vision 2020: 1991-2020, the Malaysian government websites. <<http://www.epu.gov.my>> (accessed 20 June, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> The Angkasawan program was an initiative by the Malaysian government to send a Malaysian to the International Space Station on board Soyuz TMA-11. The program was named after the Malay word for astronaut, Angkasawan. It resulted in Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor becoming the first Malaysian in space on October 10, 2007. <<http://www.angkasa.gov.my/>> (accessed 20 June, 2011).

Standing behind these achievements are the country's modern infrastructures signaling that Malaysians are fully geared to march towards their 2020 goals. However, while all that has been planned for Malaysians seem on track, there seems to be 'a setback' when it is officially reported and acknowledged that the Malays are still plagued with the ancient practice of *sihir*. Not only is the practice of *sihir* seems irresistible, it is also reportedly becoming more rampant, so much so that a *Syariah* High court judge suggested strongly in a seminar held in Kuantan in October, 2010 that it is time Malaysia considers drafting a law to govern the practice of black magic.<sup>8</sup>

This seemed to compliment the Selangor *Mufti* Department earlier initiations on the subject matter when on the 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009 a gathering of those 'Muslim professionals': the "*Muzakarah Pakar Bentuk-bentuk Sihir Pengasih Dan Metodology Diagnosis*" – (The Discussion of Experts on the types of Love spells and their diagnoses)" was held in Shah Alam, followed later by the second "Expert Seminar on the Implementation of *Sihir* Crime Law in Malaysia" held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2010.<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The above suggestion by the *Syariah* High Court judge and the seminars held painted the obvious problems of *sihir* among the Malays today. *Sihir* constitutes *shirk*, an act not forgiven by Allah<sup>10</sup> which will jeopardize the *Iman* or faith of an individual. Its ill effects often cause sufferings and miseries to the victims, in the long run *sihir* will not only result in the breakdown of the individual, *sihir* is known to breakup families' unities and tears the fabric of society apart.

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<sup>8</sup> Alina Simon, "Call for law to govern practiced of black magic", *The New Straits Time*, 12 October, 2010, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Professional Islamic Support and Nurture Group, "Expert seminar on the Implementation of *Sihir* crime in Malaysia", Shah Alam, < <http://www.pisang.org.uk/>> (accessed 20 November, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah An Introduction to History*, Translated by Franz Rosenthal, (US: Princeton University Press, 2005), 39.

### 1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Firstly: the aim of this research is to study on the vibrancy of *sihir* related activities among the modern Malays as often been reported by the media.

Secondly: it hopes to analyze these reported *sihir* activities and investigate how *sihir* is practiced in today's context among contemporary Malays. This is to compare if they are still the same as the practices of *Malay magic* during Skeat's study more than a century ago, as Skeat then had concluded that *Malay magic* which he was studying might one day 'survive' under new conditions.<sup>11</sup>

Thirdly: we shall look at the birth of the Islamic healing centres and their roles, if any, in containing the practices of *sihir* among contemporary Malays.

Lastly: The thesis hopes to study the possible reasons why *sihir* still thrives today and conclude by offering viable recommendations to help ease the situation, if not to eliminate this practice altogether.

### 1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

#### a. Information gathering: Local Media, library Research/the Internet

As this thesis is on contemporary issue faced by the Malays in particular, it begins by gathering as much information as possible on *sihir* from local daily newspapers, including the ones on the internet. Through the internet one will discover that *sihir* is no longer a kept secret. There are plenty of recorded talks, seminars and discussions on *sihir* recorded and downloaded by amateurs on YouTube which the public, including children, can have access to. There are also plenty of uncensored scenes of what actually transpires during those healing processes and rituals of those affected with *sihir* or other *jinn* related ailments.

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<sup>11</sup> Walter William Skeat, *Malay Magic, Being an Introduction to the Folklore and Popular Religion of the Malay Peninsula*, (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, Reprint No. 24, 2005), *Preface xiv*.

The other ‘hubs’ of the latest information about *sihir* and its related activities are from the Malay magazines and tabloids such as the *Mastika*, *Wawancara*, *Bicara*, *Pesona*, *Kosmos* or *Mingguan Perdana*, available at magazine stalls and even established bookstores throughout the country. Thus for the purpose of this thesis, collecting and reading them are unavoidable as they do provide the latest relevant information on this subject matter spreading among the Malays today. These Malay tabloids are also the choice of contemporary *bomohs* and the *ustazs* at the many Islamic healing centres to promote themselves and their services. As such we can find plenty of their advertisements mostly complete with their bio-data and expertise.

The present researcher is also fortunate to be invited to attend the Selangor *Mufti* Department, held on the 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2009: the discussion known as “*Muzakarah Pakar - Bentuk-bentuk Sihir Pengasih Dan Metodology Diagnosis*” – or (The Discussion of Experts on the types of Love spells and their diagnoses)” at the Selangor Secretariat State Building in Shah Alam. Among the panelists was Dato Dr. Haron Din a personality that needs no introduction as far as the subject matter of *sihir* among contemporary Malays is concerned.

**b. Field work: Personal visits and Interviews.**

In order to get in touch with the reality of *sihir* among the Malays today, visiting at least one modern *bomoh* is compulsory and this includes meeting an *ustaz* at any Islamic healing centre. The purpose of this visit is to interview them personally, experience the ‘atmosphere’ at both places and also to meet their clients and find out their experiences with *sihir* and how they have been affected.

## 1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of defining *sihir* and other issues related to it, firstly this thesis relies heavily on several works of scholars on their elucidations of the verses of the Qur'ān. Among them are: *The Explication of The Holy Qur'ān* by Ibn Kathir. *The Meaning of the Qur'ān* by S. Abul A'la Maududi: *The Qur'ān, Text, Translation and Commentary* by Abdullah Yusuf Ali: *The Message of the Qur'ān* by Muhammad Asad. From Malay scholars and *ulama*, the references are the *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Prof. Dr. Hamka, *Tafsir al-Misbah* by Prof. Dr. M. Quraish Shihab and the *Tafsir al-Ṭabarī: of Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir al-Ṭabarī*: translated and published by the Indonesian Religious Council. And for the narrations of the Hadith of the Prophet (SAW). regarding *sihir*, we should refer to the *Sahih al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*.

Invaluable information on the overall diversity of the culture of the people of the region of South-East Asia, is found in the book entitled, *The Modern Anthropology of South-East Asia, An Introduction* both the authors Victor T. King and William D. Wilder who have between them 66 years as professional anthropologists. This book touches on the issue of magic among the people of this region but not in detail and as for the magic of the Malays in Malaysia, the authors recommended that we first look into the 'landmark study' of this subject matter by Walter William Skeat in his book the *Malay Magic, Being an Introduction to the folklore and popular religion of the Malay Peninsula*.

It was published in 1900 and now republished in 2005 by The Malaysian Branch of The Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS). Skeat worked in Selangor from 1891 to 1897 during which he collected the 'facts' of the "*Malay magic*" which he meant as their 'rituals with many formulae and beliefs'. By 'Folk-lore' he meant legends, myths and traditions.

Thus, this thesis finds an invaluable wealth of information on *Malay magic* during his time which is often heard by hearsays but has been recorded officially in his book. Sir Richard Winstedt wrote the *The Malay Magician being Shaman, Saiva and Sufi* in 1951 with the aim of unraveling the different elements of a complex system of magic which the previous scholars of Europe<sup>12</sup> had summarized as “Malay”.

Here Winstedt tried as much as he could to record the chronological order of what had transpired with Malay magic which comprised of three elements: Pagan, Hindu and Muslim. But he lamented that this was just ‘difficult’ and in fact abandoned the idea of doing so in the last chapter of his book. From Winstedt’s work, we should be able to compare *Malay magic* as recorded by Skeat.

Kirk Michael Endicott came out with *An Analysis of Malay Magic* in 1970 which was originally for his Bachelor of Letters degree at Oxford. And this was precisely what was done by Endicott: Analyzing the work of Skeat and Winstedt on the *Malay Magic* before he arrived at his own findings on them. They all seem to agree that “Magic was the means of manipulating the ‘soul’ which the Malay termed as ‘*semangat*’ which this paper will discuss later in detail.

From Muslims scholars, this thesis first look at ‘world-famous’, Wahid Abdussalam Bali’s book translated into English as *The Sword against Black Magic & Evil Magicians*. This Egyptian scholar is known for writing about *sihr* in Arabic. Here we find that the author wrote in detail on what constitutes black magic and the gruesome conditions one was subjected to in order to be a sorcerer.

The *jinn* is central to the issue of *sihir* and this paper finds books that discuss this issue from the Qur’anic and Hadith perspective are those written by Dr. Abdul-

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Winstedt, *The Malay Magician being Shaman, Saiva and Sufi* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1982) – In his *Preface*, we assumed Winstedt referring to William Walter Skeat and his team.

Mundhir Khaleel in his *The Jinn & Human Sickness, Remedies in the Light of the Qur'ān & Sunnah* and another on *The World of the Jinn & Devil* written by Umar S. al-Ashqar.

Among the pioneer Malay writers on the subject matter of *sihir* are both Amran Kasimin and Haron Din. Their first book in 1987 was the *Treatment from the disturbances of the Jinn through the Al-Qur'ān and Sunnah*. This book discusses at length those *jinn* which were given their different names by the Malays and like what the title of the books says, gives a lot of Qur'ānic supplications in order to prevent or cure oneself from any *jinn* related ailments. In 1997 Amran Kasimin wrote a book specifically on *Malay Sihir* in his book, *Sihir Practices among the Malays*. Both books discuss *sihir* in the Malay context and provided details of the various types of Malay *sihir* and other related phenomenon related to *sihir*.

This thesis is fortunate to discover a book written by a traditional Malay *bomoh*, Ahmad Haji Che Din: *The Exposition of the mysterious Malay World*. This book is based on his decades of vast experiences in dealing with anything connected with 'Malay magic', plus the interviews he conducted and recorded from the various types of Malay *bomohs* over the decades.

On the contrary we have a young contemporary writer on *sihir* who seems to opt for a shortcut in solving this issue that is plaguing his race. A lawyer by profession: Mahyuddin Ismail wrote a book with the sheer determination to eliminate *sihir* entitled: *Sorcerers to the Gallows*, published in May 2011. Like the Judge of the High *Syariah* court in Kuantan, he gave his reasons and suggestion as to how the government can go about tabling *sihir* as a crime punishable by the court of law.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE DEFINITIONS OF *SIHIR*

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Generally, majority of the Malays became familiar with and started to use the word ‘*sihir*’<sup>1</sup> only roughly about half a century ago. The government’s adoption of the *Islamization* policy<sup>2</sup> open the doors of opportunities for them to understand better the Islamic worldview on this issue and realized that the appropriate Arabic word for magic is *sihr* which is pronounced in Malay as ‘*sihir*.’ The Malay word used before *sihir* was also the Arabic word “*Ilmu*” which means ‘knowledge or science’<sup>3</sup> and often the Malay folks would refer to *sihir* as either “*Ilmu Jahat* or later “*Ilmu Hitam*”: the additional Malay word “*Jahat* or *Hitam*” implying: ‘evil’ and ‘black knowledge’ of those *bomohs* indulging in black magic and the *jinn*<sup>4</sup>. Today, we still find among the elder Malays who still refer to *sihir* as “*Ilmu hitam*’.

If one browses through an Arabic-English dictionary: the Arabic word *sihr* literally means as either: magic, witchcraft, sorcery, wizardry, witchery, charm or spell.<sup>5</sup> Amran Kasimin suggested that there are many definitions of *sihir*.<sup>6</sup> And thus we shall first see those opinions of the Arab scholars and *ulama* from Wahid AbdusSalam Bali’s book with regards to the different literal meanings which according to them are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis uses ‘*sihir*’ to mean “*Ilmu hitam*’ (black knowledge) also ‘*Sihr*’, in Arabic.

<sup>2</sup> Norhashimah Mohd Yasin, *Islamisation/Malaynisation: A study on the Role of Islamic Law in the Economic Development of Malaysia: 1969-1993* (Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1996), 189-245.

<sup>3</sup> Kirk Michael Endicott, *An Analysis of Malay Magic*, (London: Clarendon Press, 1970), 13.

<sup>4</sup> Amran Kasimin, *Sihir Satu Amalan Kebatinan*, (Bangi: UKM, 2009), 26. –*Sihir*, A Spiritual Practice – Translated by Azizah Rahmad

<sup>5</sup> Rohi Baalbaki, *Al-Mawrid*, (Beirut: Dar El-Ilm LilMalayin, 2004), 626.

<sup>6</sup> Amran Kasimin, *Analysis Sihir, Satu Amalan Masyarakat Melayu* (KL: Percetakan Watan, 1987), 3. – An analysis of *Sihir* practices among the Malays –Translated by Azizah Rahmad.

- Al-Layth: *sihr* is an act which brings one nearer to *al-Shayṭān* as *sihr* happens with the help of *al-Shayṭān*
- Al-Zahari: The basic meaning of *sihr* is to make something seem in a form other than the real one.
- Ibn Mandhur: When a *sāḥir* makes something false appear to be real or make something appear differently than its original form.
- Shamir reported on the authority of ‘Ā’ishah R.A. :The Arabs have given the name *sihr* because, it can change good health to illness,

While technically *sihir* according to Ibn Qudama Al-Maqdisi, is a set of *uqad* (knots), *ruqa* (incantations) and words uttered or written, or carried out in such a way as to affect the body, heart or mind of the intended victim without even coming close to him physically. Thus the victim will suffer in misery without knowing the sources. *Sihir* is also known to create the ‘obstacle’ against a man from having any sexual intercourse with his wife causing them to hate each other and separate.

Sheikh Wahid Abdussalam Bali summed up both this literal and technical definitions of *sihir* as “the memorandum of understanding’ set up between a *sāḥir* and *al-Shayṭān*, which stipulates that the *sāḥir* must commit certain illegal or polytheistic acts, in return for the *al-Shayṭān*’s assistance and obedience in fulfilling the *sāḥir*’s request. Some of the means adopted by the *sāḥira* in order to come close to *al-Shayṭān* were to use the Qur’ān as footwear to go to the toilet, writing some Qur’ānic verses with filth or menses discharge and offering sacrifices of animals in the name of *al-Shayṭān*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Wahid AbdusSalam Bali, *Sword Against Black Magic & Evil Magicians*, (London: Al-Firdous Ltd, 2004), 12-14.

From the renowned Indonesian contemporary scholar M. Quraish Shihab, we get the explanation of *sihr* as from the alphabets (*sīn-ḥā-rā*) which is derived from the Arabic word: *saḥar*: meaning the period when it is that time very late at night approaching dawn or something like this *fajr* in which during ‘these moments of darkness into light’: the visions can be indistinguishably blurred when vision is not clear and full. Thus what appears in front of someone might not be so or he might imagine rather something which is also just not so: ‘seems like’ or an illusion.<sup>8</sup>

Since its early history, it has been acknowledged that the phenomenon of *sihir* materialized due to its practitioners reverting themselves to the ‘forces of the other world’ other than God. This is why it has been forbidden by religious law. This is why books dealing with the ‘art of witchcrafts or talisman’ were nonexistent among them except those books before Moses’ prophecy.<sup>9</sup>

What Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), meant by ‘beings or forces of the higher world other than god’ were those practitioners of magic subjecting themselves to the stars or the ‘inhabitants’ of the realm of the *ghayb* meaning *jinn* of the species of *Iblīs* and *al-Shayṭān*.

With their assistance, *sihir* is believed to be able to cause strange phenomena beyond human perception. But this does not make *sihir* merely a myth. Regardless of how it is being spelt as *sihr* in the Arabic language or *sihir* as the Malays pronounce it, is as real as science itself.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> M.Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah, Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur’ān*, (Jakarta:Penerbit Lentera Hati, 2006), Volume 8, *Surah al-Ṭaha* 20: 66 and 327. (Translated by Azizah Rahmad).

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Khaldun translated by Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah, An Introduction of History, The Classic Islamic History of the World*, USA: Princeton University Press, 2005), 390-391.

<sup>10</sup> Abdul Hamid Siddiqi rendered in English the, *Sahih Muslim Vol. III*, (Lahore: Islamic Book Services, 1993), 1192-1193.

## 2.2 *SIHR* FROM THE QURĀN AND HADITH

The holy Qur’ān mentions the word *sihr* thirty five times including the word *al-Naffāsah* in the (Qur’ān 113:4) which also implies *sihr*.<sup>11</sup> Among these holy verses, the (Qur’ān 2:102) is agreed upon by most Muslim clerics and scholars as the pioneer evidence of the existence of *sihr*. There are many interpretations of verse 102 of the *Al-Baqarah*. But majority of Muslim scholars agreed that this verse was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). when the Jews asked him on several subject matters found in the Torah. They opposed and rejected the answers given to them by the Prophet (SAW). Allah then sent down the revelation.

From *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*: we learned that the explanation of the first sentence of verse 102 of the *al-Baqarah* was on how *sihir* was taught to the Jews by *al-Shayṭān* during the reign of Prophet Sulaymān. After the death of Prophet Sulaymān, *al-Shayṭān* cleverly schemed to have this craft written in a book claiming that: “*This is the writing of Āṣif bin Barkhiya al-Ṣiddiq for King Sulaymān bin Daud consisting of treasures of knowledge*”. To further convince the Jews, *al-Shayṭān* then buried this book under Sulaymān’s throne. In their pursuit of *sihir* the Jews of course dug out “Sulaymān’s magical book” and later in the process of learning the craft of sorcery claimed that many of the occult powers were attributed to the power of Sulaymān’s magic. But we know here that Allah had revealed that Prophet Sulaymān did not deal with the evil art of magic. It was *al-Shayṭān*’s trick upon them.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur’ān, Text, Translation and Commentary*, (New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur’an, Inc., 2008): Surah Al-Baqarah 2:102 (twice), Al-Maidah 5: 110;, Al-An’aam 6 7; Al-A’raaf, 7: 113,116 & 120, Yunus 10: 77,80 & 81, Huud: 7, Toha 20: 57,58, 63 (twice), 66, 69, 70,71, 73, ; Al-Anbiyaa 21: 3, Asy- Syu’ara 26: 38,40,41,46 & 49, Al Naml 27: 13, Al-Qashash 28: 36, Saba 34: 43, Ash-Shaaffat 37: 15, Az-Zukhruf 43: 30, Al-AhQaaf 46: 7, Al-Qamar 54: 2, Ash-Shaff 61: 6, Al-Muddatstsir 74: 24 and Al-Falaq 113:4 (An-Nafasa)

<sup>12</sup> Syaikh Ahmad Muhammad Syakir, Syaikh Mahmud Muhammad Syakir, *Tafsir Ath-Thabari Vol 2, – Abu Ja’far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Azzam, 2008), 284-291.

Who were *Hārūt* and *Mārut* mentioned in this long verse? According to Abdullah Yūsuf Ali most scholars interpreted them as angels but to *al-Ṭabari* the word ‘angels’ applied to *Hārūt* and *Mārut* is just ‘figurative’ to mean ‘wise men’ of knowledge, science and power. *Hārūt* and *Mārut* lived in Babylon, a very ancient seat of science especially in the science of astronomy. They were later defined as heroes and were worshipped as god of magic in Babylon. Being men of wisdom, *Hārūt* and *Mārut* of course did not fiddle in any art of evil or indulge in any fraud.

They both did not withhold knowledge and never taught anyone without warning them of the trial and temptation of knowledge in the hands of evil men. Regardless of this, the evil ones learnt a little of this true astronomical science from *Hārūt* and *Mārut* and together with their fraudulent magic applied them to ‘evil uses’ while deceiving the public of those charms and spells and love potions which did nothing but lead to discord between the sexes.<sup>13</sup>

Historically, these preoccupations with astrology, sorcery and the objects of powerful charms and talismans were common among the two great pre-Islamic nations, the Persians and the Greeks (Rum). They demanded them because they possessed an abundant of ‘scientific innovations’ and were the ruling nations immediately before Islam and its time. As a result, in their regions and cities this ‘sciences’ flourished greatly. The Persians and the Greeks were said to have attained these skills from the Chaldeans of the Babylon, the Syrians and the Copts, the native Egyptian Christians.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur’ān Text, Translation and Commentary*, (New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur’an, Inc., 2008), 44-45.

<sup>14</sup> Franz Rosenthal, *Ibn Khaldun, The Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History, The Classic Islamic History of the World*, (US: Princeton University Press: 2005), 372-373.