Leadership has various facets. Local political leaders in the village of ‘R’ were respected less for their supposed religious expertise than for their facility in brokering agreement in an uncertain social context, where they reach in semi-formal localized meetings called bichars. Conversely, piety was assumed from those who oversaw religious festivities, culturally re-created core religious knowledge, and healed various ailments. In each case the practitioner was assumed to be a mediator between God and his (or occasionally her) neighbour. Such mediation is primarily for daily needs since ultimate questions like salvation are left to God alone to decide – although many believe that one can become acceptable to God by being accepted by a local pir (since this pir is acceptable by God, the same can be accepted by his pir). There are several types of healers in rural Bangladesh, including the kabirja, ojo (or pir) and fakir (the last, Nico Kaptein notes, are usually associated with fakirs, since it is thought that snakes can exhale poison which the wind can carry long distances; the most is split onto the ground, evaporates, and becomes wind-borne) and then randomly affects people far away. Signs of super natural activity include (1) the ability to heal and (2) religious as an aspect to their perceived role.

‘A’ described himself as an ojo although he also occasionally heals by giving different mantras (or super natural elements) and blowing air over an afflicted area (a practice called pho deoy in Bengali). Giving or selling amulets and pronouncing mantras is a common practice in the context of this project concerned with lists of Hindu deities. Although there seems to be an element of truth in this, ‘A’ says that people usually associate ojos with snakes, since the curative effect of breath is widely held to be that of one of the Prophet’s powers. 1 The ojo’s performance is marked by his ability to control them. Similarly, ‘H’ said that he also occasionally heals by giving different mantras (or super natural elements) and blowing air over an afflicted area (a practice called pho deoy in Bengali). Giving or selling amulets and pronouncing mantras is a common practice in the context of this project concerned with lists of Hindu deities. Although there seems to be an element of truth in this, ‘A’ says that people usually associate ojos with snakes, since the curative effect of breath is widely held to be that of one of the Prophet’s powers.

Fakirs
Healing is also performed by fakirs, whose spiritual role is generally recognized and often relies on association with a local pir. ‘S’ is a locally recognized fakir who usually diagnoses by tying a piece of thread around a finger. This binds any of the several types of in-dwelling spirits to answer any questions and then obey his commands (although there seems at times to be an element of bargaining in this). ‘F’ also heals by finger-tying or by giving amulets (using a small stock of Arabic formulae), by pho deoy or by pani pora (administering water that has been made sacred by having a Qa’i’rane breeze over it).

Discussion
There are, of course, other healers in and around ‘R’ – there is even a gomt gomt hospital in nearby Tangail, and the prevalence of illness means that healers assume a position of some local status. The doctors in Tan gail are, however, perceived totally as trained experts and there is no assumption that their ability to heal is linked to a shamanistic role. 2 Similarly, ‘H’ says that he also occasionally heals by giving different amulets (or super natural entities) and blowing air over an afflicted area (a practice called pho deoy in Bengali). Giving or selling amulets and pronouncing mantras is a common practice among Hindus in the context of this project concerned with lists of Hindu deities. Although there seems to be an element of truth in this, ‘A’ says that people usually associate ojos with snakes, since the curative effect of breath is widely held to be that of one of the Prophet’s powers.

Notes
1. This study was in the village (‘R’) near Tangail, but draws on several years’ residence in Bangladesh and Malaya.
2. See next article in this issue for a description of the role of the Prophet Mohammed (Shah), 1999, 21.

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Within the framework of the current project on the ‘Dissemination of Religious Authority in Indonesia’, Jajat Burhanuddin (IIAS), Nico Kaptein (Leiden University), authors: Among the sources of authority for the respective fatwas – textual and personal questions like salvation are left to God 1. This study was in the village (‘R’) near Tangail, but draws on several years’ residence in Bangladesh and Malaya. Not only did the healers operate in a spiritual realm, it was also the realm of faith – the faith others have in their abilities and their own faith in God. While physical materials might be used in the healing process, it was the assumption that the practitioner was in a right position before God which was of supreme importance. Not all healers, in other words, were seen as pious people with the tacit assumption that an impious person could not heal in the same way. The question of audience will of course be crucial, and the effect of a fatwa in a given society is naturally related to the social context, whether local, national or international. The presentation will also address how fatwas are disseminated, what response they engender, and how a relationship is established between the fatwa requestor and the mufti. In so doing, they will inquire into the sources of authority for the respective fatwas – textual and/or personal.

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