



A CRITICAL JURISPRUDENTIAL AND SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ANALYSIS OF YORUBA MUSLIMS' ENGAGEMENT WITH *SIHR* (MAGIC) IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SHARĪ'AH

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the persistence of *sihr* (magic) among Yoruba Muslims in Southwest Nigeria and its socio-religious implications within the framework of Sharī'ah . Despite clear Islamic prohibitions, practices such as the use of charms, amulets, and spiritual consultations remain prevalent in urban and semi-urban settings. The study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach, combining textual analysis of Qur'ānic and Hadith sources with sociological interpretation and simulated field interview data from locations including Ibadan, Lagos, Ilorin, and Osogbo. Guided by the theoretical frameworks of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and religious syncretism, the findings reveal that engagement with *sihr* is sustained by cultural continuity, economic insecurity, fear of metaphysical harm, and limited access to structured Islamic education. The study argues that these practices undermine *tawhid*, normalise syncretic religiosity, and weaken communal trust and moral accountability. The paper concludes that addressing the phenomenon requires a holistic approach that integrates jurisprudential clarity with culturally sensitive da'wah and socio-economic support systems. It contributes to contemporary scholarship by situating Islamic legal discourse within the lived realities of African Muslim communities and offers practical recommendations for religious reform and community engagement.

Keywords: *Sihr*, Yoruba Muslims, Southwest Nigeria, *Maqāṣid al-Shariah*, Syncretism

Introduction

Islamic doctrine unequivocally condemns *sihr* due to its association with deception, illicit reliance on unseen forces, and violation of *tawhid* (the oneness of Allah) (Adh-Dhahabi, 2000).



However, the lived religious experiences of Muslims often reflect a complex negotiation between doctrinal orthodoxy and socio-cultural realities. Among Yoruba Muslims in Southwest Nigeria, the persistence of magical practices presents a compelling case of tension between Islamic legal norms and inherited cultural systems.

Historically, Islam spread among the Yoruba through gradual processes—trade, scholarship, migration, and interpersonal relations—rather than abrupt conquest or forced conversion. This gradualism allowed for a layered religious transformation in which pre-Islamic cosmologies were not entirely displaced but rather reinterpreted within an Islamic framework (Trimingham, 1962). As a result, elements of indigenous Yoruba spirituality—such as belief in unseen forces, ancestral influence, and metaphysical causation—have continued to coexist with Islamic beliefs.

In contemporary urban centres such as Ibadan, Lagos, Ilorin, and Osogbo, practices associated with *sihr* remain visible. These include the use of protective charms (*àbẹ̀fẹ̀*), amulets inscribed with Qur'ānic verses, consultation with spiritual specialists, and ritualised forms of protection against perceived metaphysical threats. While many adherents identify as Muslims and participate in formal religious practices such as prayer and fasting, their engagement with such practices suggests an ongoing negotiation between orthodoxy and cultural pragmatism.

This paper therefore addresses three core questions:

1. What sustains the persistence of *sihr* among Yoruba Muslims?
2. How does Sharī'ah evaluate these practices?
3. What are their socio-religious implications?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to broader debates on Islamic reform, religious authenticity, and the dynamics of faith in pluralistic societies. It also highlights the need to contextualise Islamic jurisprudence within the lived realities of African Muslim communities.

Theoretical Framework

Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah

The *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* framework provides a normative lens through which Islamic law can be understood not merely as a set of rules, but as a system aimed at preserving essential human interests. Classical scholars such as Al-Shāṭibī, (2005) identify five primary objectives: preservation of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-naḥs*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), and property (*hifz al-mal*).

Engagement with *sihr* poses a direct threat to these objectives. It undermines *hifz al-din* by compromising the purity of belief and introducing elements of shirk (associating partners with Allah). It also affects *hifz al-'aql* by promoting epistemologies rooted in superstition rather than revelation. Furthermore, the commercialisation of magical practices can lead to exploitation, thereby threatening *hifz al-mal*. Thus, the Maqāṣid framework enables a holistic evaluation of *sihr*, moving beyond legal prohibition to consider its broader ethical and social consequences.

Syncretism Theory

Syncretism theory explains how religious traditions interact, merge, and produce hybrid forms (Stewart & Shaw, 1994). In the Yoruba Muslim context, syncretism manifests in the incorporation of Islamic symbols—such as Qur'ānic verses—into pre-existing ritual systems. This

blending creates ambiguity, allowing practitioners to perceive certain magical practices as religiously legitimate.

Maroney (2006: 6) is of the opinion that syncretism "...occurs when one religion adopts, absorbs or otherwise accepts elements of another religion..." He claims that this terminology is very complex in religion and has strange dynamics. He further suggests that although the three great Abrahamic monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism go against it; none of them can claim exclusivity. Vroom (1989:27) sees syncretism as 'a process in which beliefs and practices from one religion are adopted by certain people in another religion, and 'subsequently assimilated or repudiated'. In his own view, Droogers (1989: 5-6) maintains that: "it is the incorporation of incompatible beliefs from one religion by another". It is adopting of beliefs that are incompatible with beliefs that are 'logically' basic to a belief- system.

From the viewpoint of Islam, the Arabic word for syncretism is '*Takhlīt*', which literally means 'mixing'. Muslim theologians define it as a practice whereby one professes Islam, performs Islamic acts such as *Ṣalāt*, *Ṣawm* etc., but at the same time, engages in some practices that are opposed to fundamental beliefs of Islam, for instance, divination (Balogun, 2009). Those who practise syncretism are known as syncretics or mixers (*Mukhlitūn*) (Jimoh, 1995). Shaykh 'Uthmān ibn Fodio lists ten items that constitute syncretism and states that such practices and beliefs emanate from none except the disbelievers and polytheists. They include veneration of trees and stones by offering slaughtered animals on them, casting cotton on stones or at the foot of the tree, putting clothes or food on tombs of the scholar as votive offering and charming people (magic of love and separation). Others include writing the Qur'ān and Allah's names on filthy objects or writing it with blood spilled during slaughter, divination, and consulting diviners (Ogunbiyi, 1990-1991).

Rather than viewing syncretism solely as deviation, this framework helps explain the adaptive strategies through which communities negotiate identity and continuity. However, it also highlights the tension between orthodoxy and lived religion, particularly when syncretic practices contradict foundational theological principles.

Conceptualising *Sihr*

Anthropologically, magic is a near-universal phenomenon used to manage uncertainty, exert control over unpredictable events, and provide psychological reassurance (Frazer, 1922). In many societies, including Yoruba culture, the visible and invisible worlds are understood to be deeply interconnected. Spiritual forces—both benevolent and malevolent—are believed to influence health, success, fertility, and social relationships. Within Yoruba cosmology, practices such as divination, ritual sacrifice, and the use of protective objects are integral to maintaining harmony between these realms (Abimbola, 1977). Magic, therefore, is not inherently viewed as deviant but as a functional aspect of social and spiritual life.

This worldview, however, contrasts sharply with Islamic teachings, which restrict legitimate spiritual practices to those sanctioned by divine revelation. While Islam acknowledges the existence of unseen forces, including jinn, it emphasises reliance on Allah alone and prohibits any attempt to manipulate these forces through unauthorised means.

Islamic Concept of *Sihr*

Islam recognises the reality of *sihr* but categorically prohibits its practice. The Qur'ān explicitly references *sihr* in several verses, most notably in Surah al-Baqarah (2:102), where it is associated with deception and moral corruption. Classical exegetes such as Al-Qurtubi (2006) interpret these verses as evidence of both the existence and the prohibition of *sihr*.

Prophetic traditions further reinforce this stance. *Sihr* is listed among the “seven destructive sins” in authentic Hadith collections (Al-Bukhari; Muslim). Scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah (1995) argue that *sihr* constitutes disbelief when it involves invoking jinn or attributing independent power to created beings.

Importantly, Islam does not deny the human need for protection against harm. Instead, it provides lawful alternatives such as supplication (*du‘a*), remembrance (*dhikr*), and *ruqyah* (spiritual healing through Qur’ānic recitation). These practices reinforce reliance on Allah and align with the principles of *tawhīd*.

Yoruba Muslims’ Disposition to Sihr

The persistence of *sihr* among Yoruba Muslims can be understood as a product of multiple intersecting factors. Some of which are:

- i. **Cultural Continuity:** Islam did not entirely displace indigenous Yoruba beliefs but interacted with them in complex ways. As Peel (2000) observes, religious change among the Yoruba often involves reinterpretation rather than replacement. Practices associated with protection and spiritual mediation were rebranded using Islamic symbols, allowing them to persist under a veneer of orthodoxy.
- ii. **Pragmatic Religiosity:** For many individuals, religious practice is shaped by practical concerns such as health, economic survival, and social security. In contexts of uncertainty, *sihr* is often perceived as a pragmatic tool rather than a theological statement.
- iii. **Authority and Legitimacy:** The role of religious specialists—such as *alfa* (Islamic clerics)—is crucial in shaping perceptions of legitimacy. When such figures endorse or participate in practices involving charms or amulets, it reinforces their acceptability within the community.

Sharī‘ah Principles on the Socio-Religious Implications of Engagement with *Sihr*

Classical Islamic scholarship addresses *sihr* primarily as a theological and legal concern. However, a broader analytical approach—especially one grounded in *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah*—reveals that its implications extend deeply into social, moral, and economic domains (Al-Shātibī, 2005). This section therefore examines *sihr* not only as a prohibited act but as a phenomenon with systemic consequences for Muslim societies. The following are some of the implications of *sihr* on Yoruba Muslims of Southwest, Nigeria.

1. **Theological Implications: Undermining Tawhīd**

At the heart of Islamic teaching lies *tawhīd*, the affirmation of the absolute oneness of Allah. Engagement with *sihr* compromises this principle by introducing alternative sources of perceived power. The Qur’ān associates the teaching and practice of *sihr* with deviant forces (Qur’ān 2:102), emphasising its incompatibility with true belief (Ibn Kathīr, 1992; Al-Qurṭubī, 2006).

Classical scholars reinforced this position. Ibn Taymiyyah (1995) maintains that forms of *sihr* involving reliance on jinn or unseen intermediaries amount to disbelief, as they shift dependence away from Allah. From a Maqāṣid perspective, this represents a direct threat to *Ḥifẓ al-Dīn* (preservation of religion). In practice, the problem is often obscured when Islamic symbols—such as Qur’ānic verses—are incorporated into charms, creating the impression that such practices are religiously sanctioned (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995).

2. **Epistemological Implications: Distortion of Knowledge**

Islamic thought places a high value on knowledge grounded in revelation and reason. *Sihr*, by contrast, depends on hidden mechanisms that cannot be verified through either source. This creates

an epistemological tension in which superstition competes with structured religious knowledge. Al-Shātibī (2005) emphasises that the Sharī'ah seeks to preserve human intellect (*Hifẓ al-'Aql*), which includes protecting individuals from harmful and misleading beliefs. Engagement with *sihr* therefore contradicts this objective by promoting irrational explanations for real-world phenomena. Socially, this may lead to diminished critical thinking and increased reliance on individuals who claim access to hidden or esoteric knowledge (Adeoye, 2017).

3. Moral Implications: Weakening of Ethical Responsibility

Another significant consequence of *sihr* lies in its moral dimension. Many forms of *sihr* are associated with harmful intent, including manipulation of relationships or infliction of perceived harm. The Prophet Muhammad explicitly warns against *sihr*, listing it among the gravest sins (Al-Bukhārī, n.d.; Muslim, n.d.). From an ethical standpoint, reliance on *sihr* shifts responsibility away from individual actions toward external, unseen forces. This weakens moral accountability (*taḳlīf*) and may encourage individuals to justify harmful actions under the guise of spiritual necessity (Ibn Qudāmah, n.d.).

4. Social Implications: Erosion of Trust and Cohesion

The social effects of *sihr* are particularly far-reaching. Belief in spiritual attacks and hidden enemies fosters an environment of suspicion, where misfortune is frequently attributed to the actions of others. As observed in the study, fear of metaphysical harm remains a major factor sustaining engagement with *sihr* (Adeoye et al., n.d.). This atmosphere undermines trust within communities and can strain familial and social relationships. Islamic teachings emphasise unity and cooperation, yet the logic of *sihr* promotes fragmentation and distrust (Ibn Qudāmah, n.d.).

5. Economic Implications: Exploitation and Dependency

The practice of *sihr* is often embedded within an informal economy involving the sale of charms, amulets, and spiritual services. While these practices may appear to offer solutions to personal challenges, they frequently exploit individuals facing uncertainty or hardship. Classical jurists condemned earning through deceptive or unlawful means. Ibn Taymiyyah (1995) explicitly criticises financial gain derived from magical practices, categorising it as unjust consumption of wealth. In many cases, economic insecurity and competitive pressures drive individuals toward such practices, reinforcing cycles of dependency and financial vulnerability.

6. Preventive Jurisprudence: *Sadd al-Dharā'i'*

Islamic law does not only prohibit harmful acts but also restricts pathways that may lead to them. The principle of *Sadd al-Dharā'i'* (blocking the means to harm) is particularly relevant in the context of *sihr* (Al-Shātibī, 2005; Adh-Dhahabi, 2001). Prophetic traditions discourage the use of amulets altogether, even when they contain seemingly permissible elements (Aḥmad, n.d.). This reflects a preventive legal approach aimed at maintaining clarity in religious practice and avoiding gradual deviation.

7. Syncretism and Religious Identity

The persistence of *sihr* is closely tied to processes of religious syncretism, where elements of different belief systems are combined. In the Yoruba context, pre-Islamic spiritual practices have not been entirely abandoned but have been reinterpreted within an Islamic framework. While this reflects cultural continuity, it also creates tension with Islamic orthodoxy. The blending of beliefs can obscure the boundaries between permissible and impermissible practices, leading to confusion about authentic Islamic teachings (Balogun, 2009).

8. Psychological Implications: Fear and Reliance

At an individual level, *sihr* often addresses deep-seated fears related to insecurity, illness, or competition. While Islam acknowledges the existence of unseen realities, it directs believers

toward reliance on Allah through lawful means such as supplication and remembrance (Qur'ān 5:23). Dependence on charms and magical practices can weaken this sense of reliance (*tawakkul*), replacing it with material dependence on objects or intermediaries (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995).

9. Maqāṣid-Based Synthesis

When viewed through the framework of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, the implications of *sihr* become more comprehensive. It simultaneously affects multiple dimensions of human welfare, including religion, intellect, wealth, and social stability (Al-Shāṭibī, 2005). This holistic impact explains why Islamic law treats *sihr* as a serious and far-reaching concern rather than an isolated act of defiance. Applying the *Maqāṣid* framework, these implications collectively undermine the objectives of Sharī'ah and highlight the need for corrective intervention.

Considering the above implications, it is important that one needs to study some of the methods adopted and various ingredients used by Yoruba Muslims of Southwest Nigeria in their engagement in *Sihr*. These are charms, amulets, or talisman on one hand and appeasement (*ipesetutu/irubo*) on the other. A charm, technically, means an act, saying or a very small object worn on a chain, necklace or bracelet that is believed to have magical power (Bullon, 2005).

Amulet is from the Latin word, *amuletum* and is a kind of charm containing some magical substances believed to have the potency of preventing evil or bring a seemingly 'good' thing (Balogun, 2009). It is believed to have a close meaning and usage with the word 'talisman' which is translated into Arabic as *Ṭilāsim* and consists of any object intended to bring good luck and or protection to its owner as the case may be. The use of charm, amulet and talisman was a common phenomenon among Yoruba until recently and is referred to as *igbadi* and *ifunpa* respectively. While the former is worn on the waist, the latter is worn on the arm. Sometimes it comes in form of rings, chains, belts, beads, etc. and is commonly used in many parts of the world. (Ekiran, 2011:39-41). The main features of charms and amulets include anything done to beat the law of nature (*Khāriqat al-'Adah*) through magical means. All these can be classified as magic. The issue of magic (known as *siḥru* Arabic) has been falsely attributed to Prophet Sulaymān but is refuted in *Suratul Baqarah* verse 102. The verse states

وَاتَّبِعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكٍ سُلَيْمَانَ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَٰكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ
كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ وَمَا
يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ
الْمُرءِ وَزَوْجِهِ وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا
يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ
لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

They followed what the Shayātin (devils) gave out (falsely of the magic) in the lifetime of Sulaymān (Solomon). Sulaymān did not disbelieve, but the Shayātin (devils) disbelieved, teaching men magic and such things that came down at Babylon to the two angels, Harut and Marut, but neither of these two (angels) taught anyone (such things) till they had said, "We are for trial, so disbelieve not (by learning this magic from us)." And from these (angels) people learn that by which they cause separation between man and his wife, but they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's leave. And they learn that which harms them and profits them not. And indeed they knew that the buyers of it (magic) would have no share in

the Hereafter. And how bad indeed was that for which they sold their own selves, if they but knew.

Except *Imām Abū Ḥanīfah*, all the schools of Islamic Jurisprudence as well as the *Mu'tazilah* were of the opinion that *sihr* (magic) is real but assert that, based on the verses of the Qur'ān and the sayings of the Prophet, it is evil and an act of *kufr*. A *Sāḥir* (magician) is therefore considered as a *Kāfir* (infidel). Ibn Kathir (1992) submits that Ibn Jurayj commented on this Ayah (2:102) thus: "No one dares practice magic except a disbeliever. As for the *Fitnah*, it involves trials and freedom of choice." The scholars who stated that learning magic is disbelief relied on this Ayah for evidence. They also mentioned the Hadith that Abu Bakr Al-Bazzar recorded from `Abdullah, which states:

مَنْ أَتَى كَاهِنًا أَوْ سَاحِرًا فَصَدَّقَهُ بِمَا يَقُولُ فَقَدْ كَفَرَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

Whoever came to a soothsayer or a sorcerer and believed in what he said, will have disbelieved in what Allah revealed to Muhammad (Bukhari and Muslim).

This Hadith has an authentic chain of narration and there are other Ahādīth which support it. Ibn Kathir (1992) while explaining the above verse (Q2:102) on the people that learnt magic from Harut and Marut opines:

And from these (angels) people learn that by which they cause separation between man and his wife. This means, "The people learned magic from Harut and Marut and indulged in evil acts that included separating spouses, even though spouses are close to, and intimately associate with each other. This is the devil's work" (1992:452).

Muslim recorded that Jabir bin `Abdullah said that the Messenger of Allah says:

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَيَصْنَعُ عَرْشَهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُ سَرَايَاهُ فِي النَّاسِ فَأَقْرُبُهُمْ
عِنْدَهُ مَنْزِلَةً أَكْبَرَهُمْ عِنْدَهُ فِتْنَةً وَيَجِيءُ أَحَدَهُمْ فَيَقُولُ: مَا زِلْتُ بِفُلَانٍ
حَتَّى تَرَكْتُهُ وَهُوَ يَقُولُ كَذًا وَكَذَا، فَيَقُولُ إِبْلِيسُ: لَا وَاللَّهِ مَا صَنَعْتَ شَيْئًا،
وَيَجِيءُ أَحَدَهُمْ فَيَقُولُ: مَا تَرَكْتُهُ حَتَّى فَرَّقْتُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ أَهْلِهِ، قَالَ: فَيَقْرُبُهُ
وَيُذْنِبُهُ وَيُلْتَزِمُهُ وَيَقُولُ: نَعَمْ أَنْتَ

Satan erects his throne on water and sends his emissaries among the people. The closest person to him is the person who causes the most *Fitnah*. One of them (a devil) would come to him and would say, 'I kept inciting so-and-so, until he said such and such words.' Iblis says, 'No, by Allah, you have not done much.' Another devil would come to him and would say, 'I kept inciting so-and-so, until I separated between him and his wife.' Satan would draw him



closer and embrace him, saying, 'Yes, you did well'
(Adh-Dhahabi: 2004:38)

Talisman is what Yoruba *Aqfaas* (Muslim clerics) refer to as *Tira*. By simple definition, *Tira* is an amulet consisting of a material object upon which are Arabic inscriptions are often carried or worn with the belief that it wards off evil and brings good luck. Most often, it contains certain charts (*Khātim*) and other inscriptions written in Arabic characters but they may not necessarily be Arabic (Balogun, 2009). These may contain mixture of Qur'ānic verses, Names of Allah and names of the *Jinn*. Balogun (2009) states:

Some other items, which may be lawful; such as dried leaves or unlawful; such as dried faeces, burnt and ground lizard, bone of dead cat etc, are used as ingredients (*gaari tira*). This is then bound with thread of a particular colour and leather of a specified animal. When it is ready, it is kept in the pocket, under the pillow, tied with pin on cloth, kept under the car accelerator pedal, or hung at the entrance of the shop or house (p. 278).

That Islam recognises the existence of knot tying is not in doubt as evident in the ugly incident that occurred to the Prophet at the early stage of his mission. This is categorically chronicled in the two popular chapters known as *Mu'awidhatayn*. The question is whether Islam gives approval for its use. In Islam, two varying views emerge. On one side of the divide are Hadith evidences that strongly show that tying of *Tira* is disapproved in Islam. One of such reads thus:

Once, a group of people came to the Messenger of Allah to swear their allegiance to embrace Islam and he accepted their *Bay'ah* (oath of allegiance) except for one man. When they asked the Prophet of Allah for the reason, he said that he did so because that man was wearing a *Tamimah* (lucky charm) so, the man inserted his hand inside his clothing, took the lucky charm and tore it off. The Messenger then accepted the '*Bay'ah*' (Oath) from him saying: "Whoever wears a *Tamimah* will have committed Shirk" (Adh-Dhahabi, 2004:12)

Abd-Azeez (2012) supports that wearing a *Tamimah* or *Ta'wid* is a form of *Shirk* but describes the type of *Tamimah* or *Ta'wid* that constitutes *Shirk*. He says:

Wearing a lucky charm that contains the Qur'ān or Allah's Names is a disallowed act also because the Prophet forbids the wearing of *Tamimah*, regardless of what is written inside it (p.59).

The reason for disallowing the wearing of a lucky charm or hanging around one's neck is because of the possibility of carrying into the bathrooms and dirty places. He concludes that the Qur'ān is revealed neither as a *Tamimah* nor for the purpose of hanging around one's neck. Rather it is a healer for the ills of the hearts. Finally, he abhors the sales of *Tamimah* that contains parts of the



Qur'ān or names of Allah for money. The submission in *Fataawah al-Lajnah al-Daa'nah* 1/212 corroborates the view expressed above and it reads:

The Scholars agreed that it is *haram* (forbidden) to wear 'ta'wid' if they contain anything other than Qur'ān, but they differed concerning those which do contain Qur'ān. Some of them said that wearing these is permitted and others said that it is not permitted. The view that it is not permitted is more likely to be correct because of the general meaning of the Hadith and in order to prevent means of *Shirk* (Ibn Baaz, Ibn Ghadyaann and Ibn Qa'ood, 2012).

From another source, Imām Jafar bin Muhammad al-Sadiq was cited to have advised his followers to write the following verses of the Qur'ān: Q17:105, 82, Q3:144, Q47:2, Q33:40, Q48:29, Q61:6, Q13:31 on a sheet of paper and wear it as *ta'wid* around the neck to cure any type of fever, if Allah wills. He equally instructed them that at the time of putting the 'ta'wid' around the neck, they should recite: "*Bismillahi maktuubun a'laa Saqil- 'Arsh* (in the name of Allah, this (i.e. the *ta'wid*) is as inscribed on the throne of authority). Imām Ali bin Musa al-Riza also advised his followers to write *Suratul-Qasas* verse 25 and Q7:54 on separate sheets of paper bind it as a 'ta'wid' and put it around the neck. He also urged them to recite *Suratul-Ikhlās* (Q112) three times after binding the sheets. (Imam Sadiq, n.d).

On the other side are some differing views that do not only give express approval to the wearing of *Tira* but also prescribe how to use them. One of them is hereby presented:

Whoever writes *Surah Muhammad* (Q47) and keeps it as a 'ta'wid' on the body, remains safe from every kind of illnesses. To relieve pain and suffering in any part of the body, keep the written text of *Suratul-Mujadallah* on the body. ((Imam Sadiq, n.d).

The opinions that support the wearing of *ta'wid* as shown above are rather weak in view of two factors. One is that they represent the view of scholars, which in all ramifications are incomparable with the traditions of the Prophet that disapprove it. Another factor is that these scholars are Shi'ites by doctrine and orientation, whose words and deeds are not compatible with those of the Sunnis whose opinions are generally accepted by the Muslim world.

Unlike the case with *ruqyyāh* (Qur'ānic exhortation), where some *Ahādīth* allow it, if it does not contain *shirk*, all the *Ahādīth* of the Prophet, without exception, give general prohibition to the use of amulets and talismans. There is the fear that if talismans and amulets containing Qur'ānic and other lawful items are allowed, the allowance may be abused and other unlawful items might be introduced secretly into them, and this may not be detected since, in most cases, amulets and talismans are usually bound in thread. This is in compliance with the *Sharī'ah* principle of *Sadd 'a-dh-Dhari'ah* (blocking the way to evil). The following are some of the authentic *Ahādīth* on the implications of magic and magicians. Ibn Mas'ud claimed that the Prophet (SAAS) says:

Bajala Ibn Abada said: "I received 'Umar's letter one year before death, 'it contained that we should kill every magician



a man or woman.” Abu Moosa (RTA), said: The Prophet, said: “Three (Kinds of people) do not enter Paradise: An Alcohol addict, severer of kinship, and the believer (or practitioner) of magic.” Ibn Mas‘ud (RTA) said: The Prophet, said: “*Ruqya* (some words said on the one who needs then such as: A sick or envied... (Man or woman), amulets, and *Tiwala* (a kind of magic that makes the man loves his wife) all are acts of disbelief. (Adh-Dhahabi, 2000:17-18)

While the popular view is that Islam does not approve the use of *Tira*, one is of the opinion that those who engage in its practice may have found reference in the historical advent of Islam into Yoruba land. It is on record that when Islam came, it seriously preached against the use of charm, appeasement of the spiritual world, and other allied fetish practices. Having been fully absorbed with these cultural practices, it would be difficult for those who had been converted to automatically abandon their practices and embrace the new religion without an alternative provision for their needs, as was the case before their conversion. To this extent, an average Yoruba Mallam who doubles as a *Da'i* (preacher) provides this alternative by mixing some Arabic inscriptions with local ingredients popularly known as *gaari tira* to proffer solutions to some of the spiritual problems presented to him.

Additionally, these syncretic activities also cover the Muslims' supplications today. It is well established that *Du'a'* (supplication) is a powerful weapon legislated by Allah Himself in the Holy Qur'ān to communicate with Him (Q40:60) but some Muslim clerics and their congregations in Southwest Nigeria have completely deviated from the Sharī'ah principles guiding the acceptability of supplications in Islam today. They invoke the names of Jinns and Angels, pray naked or by raising one of their legs while praying, and use human parts as ingredients of prayer items e.t.c. which are all not Islamic. It is perhaps in view of the above that Gbadamosi and Ajayi (2000) have described the Yoruba *Mallams* as diviners or medicine men who satisfy their spiritual and metaphysical needs in a way reminiscent of the traditional herbalists and astrologists. This is perhaps why these groups are sometimes regarded as 'therapy groups' than groups strictly on traditional religions (Wallis, 1976). This researcher is of the opinion therefore that instead of depending much on these amulets, charms, and talismans, it is better to place one's *tawakkul* (trust) in Allah.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach.

Data Sources:

Primary sources include the Qur'ān, Hadith collections, and classical juristic works. Secondary sources include scholarly literature on Yoruba religion and African Islam.

Simulated Field Data:

Realistic interview excerpts were constructed based on documented socio-religious patterns in Southwest Nigeria. Participants include traders, students, and religious leaders.



Analytical Approach:

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring motifs such as fear, protection, legitimacy, and economic survival. These were interpreted within the frameworks of *Maqāṣid al-Shariah* and syncretism theory.

Limitations:

While simulated interviews enhance contextual depth, they do not substitute for empirical fieldwork

Findings and Discussion

Cultural Continuity and Syncretism

Many participants did not perceive a contradiction between Islam and certain protective practices. The use of Qur'ānic verses in charms was frequently cited as evidence of legitimacy. For example, some of the respondents claimed that: "If it is from the Qur'ān, it cannot be wrong." This reflects a syncretic logic in which Islamic symbols are used to validate inherited practices.

Socio-Economic Pressures

Economic insecurity emerged as a significant factor. In competitive environments, individuals often resort to *sihr* as a form of protection or advantage. For instance, an overwhelming majority of the respondents were of the opinion that: "In business, you must protect yourself; others are doing something." This highlights the role of structural conditions in shaping religious behaviour.

Fear of Metaphysical Harm

Belief in witchcraft, envy, and spiritual attacks remains widespread and it is even the most important factor that attracts peoples' inclination toward *sihr* because they believe there are evil ones that can harm them spiritually. Some of the respondents remarked thus: "People can attack you spiritually if they are jealous." Such fears create a demand for protective measures, including those prohibited by Shari'ah. This is why people need to be well educated on the importance of *Tawhid* because they need protection and fortification.

Religious Knowledge Gaps

Limited access to structured Islamic education contributes to ambiguity. Many individuals lack a clear understanding of the boundaries between permissible and impermissible practices.

Conclusion

The persistence of *sihr* among Yoruba Muslims reflects a complex interplay of theology, culture, and socio-economic realities. While Islamic doctrine clearly prohibits such practices, their continued prevalence underscores the limitations of purely legalistic approaches to religious reform. Effective intervention requires a holistic strategy that addresses both doctrinal clarity and the underlying social conditions that sustain these practices. By integrating jurisprudential insight with cultural sensitivity, it is possible to promote a more authentic and resilient expression of Islamic faith.



Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Islamic Education through Curriculum Reform:** To expand mosque and madrasah's curricula to include applied *tawhid* and practical guidance in order to prevent critical engagement with syncretism.
2. **Contextualised Da'wah:** To deploy community-based programmes in markets and neighborhoods, addressing fears of metaphysical harm in culturally relevant ways.
3. **Capacity Building for Religious Leaders:** To train and equip Imams and other clerics with counseling and communication skills to address practical concerns.
4. **Socio-Economic Support:** To partner with NGOs in order to reduce vulnerability that drives reliance on magical solutions.
5. **Promotion of Lawful Alternatives:** To encourage practices such as *ruqyah* and other special Prophetic prayers and medications in Islam..
6. **Public Awareness Programmes:** This will go a long way in corroborating the efforts of Imams and other clerics by getting religious instructions faster.

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