

Amulets in the Socio-Cultural, Religious, and Spiritual Perspectives of Human Civilization

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Abstract

This study examines the meanings, functions, and evolving perceptions of amulets across various socio-cultural traditions, religious practices, and spiritual systems throughout human history. Using a qualitative design grounded in historical analysis and thematic interpretation, the research draws on classical manuscripts, archaeological reports, Islamic hadith sources, and recent Scopus-indexed publications. The findings show that amulets serve three core functions—protective, therapeutic, and symbolic—while also acting as markers of cultural and spiritual identity shaped by collective memory and communal belief systems. Cross-cultural comparison reveals diverse theological views. Islam oscillates between prohibition and conditional permissibility. Christianity treats amulets as expressions of faith. Hindu-Buddhist traditions embed them in ritual cosmology, and modern spirituality reframes them as psychological or existential tools. Overall, the study argues that the significance of amulets lies not in their material form but in the symbolic constructions surrounding them, positioning amulets as multidimensional artifacts that bridge culture, religion, and spirituality.

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Studi ini menelaah makna, fungsi, dan perubahan persepsi mengenai jimat dalam berbagai tradisi sosial-budaya, praktik keagamaan, dan sistem spiritual sepanjang sejarah peradaban manusia. Dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif yang bertumpu pada analisis historis dan interpretasi tematik, penelitian ini merujuk pada naskah-naskah klasik, laporan arkeologis, sumber-sumber hadis Islam, serta publikasi mutakhir yang terindeks Scopus. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa jimat memiliki tiga fungsi utama—protektif, terapeutik, dan simbolik—serta berperan sebagai penanda identitas kultural dan spiritual yang dibentuk oleh memori kolektif dan sistem kepercayaan komunal. Perbandingan lintas budaya mengungkap beragam pandangan teologis: Islam berada pada spektrum antara pelarangan dan kebolehan bersyarat; Kekristenan memandang jimat sebagai ekspresi iman; tradisi Hindu-Buddha mengintegrasikannya dalam kosmologi ritual; sementara spiritualitas modern merekonstruksinya sebagai instrumen psikologis atau eksistensial. Secara keseluruhan, studi ini berargumen bahwa signifikansi jimat tidak terletak pada bentuk materialnya, melainkan pada konstruksi simbolik yang melingkupinya, sehingga menempatkan jimat sebagai artefak multidimensional yang menjembatani budaya, agama, dan spiritualitas.

Keywords: Amulets; Tradition; Religion; Spirituality; Civilization

Introduction

Amulets, material objects believed to hold protective, curative, or symbolic power, have long shaped human belief systems from ancient civilizations to contemporary societies. Across various cultural settings, they serve as mediators between humans and the supernatural, as well as markers of cultural identity that evolve in response to shifting cosmologies, religious doctrines, and social landscapes. An amulet (English: amulet, talisman; Arabic: *tamimah*, plural *tama'im*) is considered an object believed to possess supernatural powers. Some people think it can provide protection, luck, healing, and magical powers for its owner (Aliviana, 2012; Al Ayubi, 2016; Mulyadi, 2017; Ariska, 2018; Pratiwi & Yudianto, 2023; Badrudin, 2023; Drajat & Harahap, 2024; Subawa, 2024).

In many cultures and traditions, amulets are often associated with specific spells or rituals intended to 'activate' their power or establish a connection with their owner (Stange, 2009; Ulfa et al., 2024; Qodri, 2024). Amulets are part of the cultural and spiritual heritage of many societies, and regard them as myths or superstitions (Ismail, 2017). According to Levin, children in many

parts of the world, at the time of his research, wore amulets around their necks or wrists. The nature of these amulets is linked to society's view of the role of deities, as well as the growth of magic practices.

Yamauchi states that it is not easy to distinguish between the two because the Bible was born in a world full of magic, as illustrated by Moses' conflict with the magicians of Egypt and Peter's confrontation with Simon Magus. Similarly, distinguishing magic from religion is challenging, as most scholars associate magic with the manipulation of supernatural powers for personal gain. Examples of magic related to "love" include talismans and love potions. While those associated with "hate" are harmful drugs, curses, and the evil eye. White magic includes spells against snakes and the use of amulets. The Bible condemns magic, but it remains an ineradicable element in the biblical world (Yamauchi, 1983).

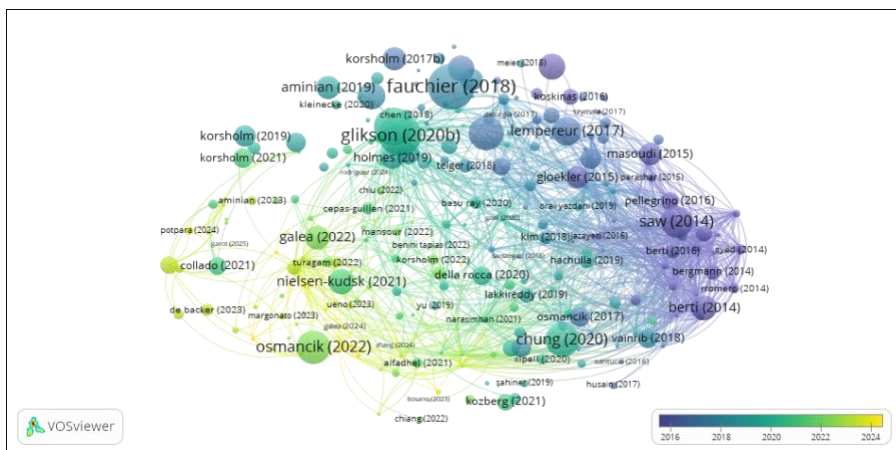
Furthermore, from another perspective, amulets serve to neutralize the evil effects of malevolent gods. Favorite amulets include bags of garlic, turquoise beads, and representations of the demon god Baal. The familiar letter R is the talisman of the ancient Horus, the son of the Egyptian god (Levin, 1973). These amulets have a direct connection to civilization, religion, and culture, and have evolved in tandem with people's spirituality, surviving for centuries. As a result, many people around the world still believe in their power (Aflaki, 2019; Woodward, 2004). The magical power of amulets in Muslim societies is described as "a method of stronger supplication or amplified prayer" (Porter et al., 2017). While the Quran describes magic as forbidden and harmful, it is generally associated with evil or deception (Iqbal & Rahman, 2000).

Various authors describe different classifications of amulets according to their functional principles: the principle of homeopathy, the principle of contact, the principle of the magic of the written word, the principle of the magic of colors, the principle of magical substances, the principle of symbolizing higher powers, and the combinatorial principle, meaning that amulets are contextually understood more broadly than magic (Amri, 1997; Nuska, 2012; Syahfitri, 2018). Azimat in English is commonly referred to as an

amulet or a talisman. Based on this word, the author traces the source by consulting Scopus, examining the article title, abstract, and keywords, including "amulet," "talisman," and "magic."

A systematic bibliometric analysis was conducted using the Scopus database to ensure methodological precision and global relevance. The keywords "amulet," "talisman," and "magic" were applied across titles, abstracts, and keyword fields, yielding 2,283, 963, and 78 records, respectively, alongside additional relevant sources. From these, six core publications were selected for in-depth analysis based on their conceptual and thematic alignment. This approach establishes a robust empirical foundation, positioning the present study within the global scholarly discourse on the religious, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of amulets. As illustrated in Figure 1, the bibliometric mapping provides a visual representation of the thematic relationships and scholarly networks identified in the Scopus data. The following section presents five VOSviewer visualizations that further examine these thematic and citation networks.

Figure 1. Scopus data 228 (10%) of 2,228 documents based on tracking Article title, Abstract, keywords "Amulet".



A comprehensive bibliometric mapping was conducted using VOSviewer based on Scopus data to identify the global research landscape on amulets and related concepts. The search employed the keywords "Amulet," "Talisman," and "Magic" across article titles, abstracts, and author-defined keywords. The analysis yielded 2,283 records for Amulet, 963 publications for Talisman (each cited more than ten times), and 78 interrelated studies for the combined term "Amulet & Talisman." Additionally, a refined search identified six core publications from 21 relevant records, with citation counts ranging from 1 to 24, representing works that explicitly engage with the integrated themes of "Amulet," "Talisman," and "Magic." Collectively, these datasets form the empirical basis for the VOSviewer visualizations that illustrate citation patterns, thematic clusters, and the intellectual structure of amulet studies within the global scholarly discourse on religion, culture, and spirituality.

As shown in the VOSviewer visualization above, Gilchrist received the highest number of citations, 123 times. His article is titled "Magic for the Dead? The Archaeology of Magic in Later Medieval Burials." Overall, these articles are related to the theme of the study being researched by the author. Furthermore, this study is more focused when Scopus data tracking is carried out using the keywords 'amulet' and 'magic', further refining the data needed for this study. From the search of these two words, 242 documents were found.

Previous research, such as Sa'dudin (2024), examined the variety of prayers and protective amulets found in the Mugarrobat manuscripts. The LKK_CIAMIS2013_MLM01 manuscript, which contains specific supplications and amulets characterized by particular ritual formulations (kaifiyya) and perceived efficacies. Ulfa, Tohar, & Roza (2024) study Malay Azimat as Mental Psychotherapy Past and Present (A Study of Kitab Mugarrobat Melayu). Porter, V., Saif, L., & Savage-Smith, E. (2017) explore the concept of the amulet, referred to in Malay as the 'talisman,' within the Islamic context, while also engaging with magical literature and the theoretical frameworks that underlie its mystical dimensions. In medieval times, Marciniak conducted research in Poland on objects that were not in daily use, such as figurines, rattles,

containers, and masks, as well as artifacts connected to magical activity (Marciniak-Kajzer, 2024). Waegeman's (2024) article, "Amulet and Alphabet: Magical amulets in the first book of Cyranides," examines how magical activities and occultism in the era of the 4th century BC (BC) to the 1st century BC.

Furthermore, in his article "Healing and the Elements in the Ancient World," Marx offers a profound reinterpretation of ancient healing practices through an epistemological paradigm that synthesizes scientific rationality with theological cosmology. She contends that belief in divine healing constitutes a coherent and intellectually rigorous system of knowledge grounded in the elemental theory of nature. Through this analytical framework, Marx critically challenges the conventional dichotomy between science and religion, positioning ancient healing traditions as a legitimate manifestation of intellectual rationality within their historical and philosophical contexts (Marx, 2025).

Meanwhile, based on the author's systematic exploration of the Scopus database concerning this issue, the findings are presented in the following table 1:

Table 1. Variations of Scopus data tracking more relevant to this theme with Keywords, Amulet, Talisman, and Magic

No.	Keywords	Total Doc.	Primary Source
1	Amulet	2.278	Scopus (all documents)
2	Talisman	963	Scopus (all documents)
3	Amulet AND Talisman	78	Scopus (all documents)
4	Amulet AND Talisman AND Magic	21	Scopus (all documents)
5	Amulet AND Talisman AND Magic	6	Scopus (≥ 1 citation)
6	Amulet AND Magic	242	Scopus (all documents)

Scopus search data in article title, abstract, keywords: Amulet; Talisman; Magic. 6 out of 21 documents referenced from 21 Scopus documents. A more specific search related to this research involves using these three keywords. Because not all writings or papers that use the word "amulet," which means talisman, are the purpose and objective of this research.

Furthermore, this study became more focused after Scopus data tracking was carried out using the keywords "amulet" and "magic", which further refined the data needed for this study. From the search of these two words, 242 documents were found. As shown in the VOSviewer visualization above, Gilchrist received the highest number of citations, 123 times. His article is titled "Magic for the Dead: The Archaeology of Magic in Later Medieval Burials." Overall, these articles are related to the theme of the study being researched by the author.

Previous research, such as Sa'dudin (2024), examined the variety of Prayers and Amulets of Salvation in Mujarobah Manuscripts by showing the manuscript LKK_CIAMIS 2013_MLM01, which contains prayers and amulets with certain kaifiyah and efficacy. Ulfa, I. J., Tohar, A. A., & Roza, E. (2024) researched about: Malay Azimat: As Mental Psychotherapy Past and Present (Study of Kitab Mujarobat Melayu). Porter, V., Saif, L., & Savage-Smith, E. (2017). They examine the term "amulet" in the Islamic context, drawing on magical literature and theories.

In medieval times, Marciniak conducted research in Poland on objects that were not in daily use, such as figurines, rattles, containers, and masks, as well as artifacts connected to magical activity (Marciniak-Kajzer, 2024). While Waegeman (2024) researched Amulet and Alphabet: Magical Amulets in the First Book of Cyranides, examining magical activities and acculturation from the 4th century BC to the 1st century BC.

Furthermore, the author identified 42 pieces of literature sourced from Scopus that specifically examined talismans directly associated with magical powers. The data presented in the table indicate that contemporary scholarship consistently associates amulets with supernatural or magical

powers, and in many cases, with broader cultural, religious, and spiritual practices. Scopus-indexed publications reveal a strong conceptual association between amulets and mystical belief systems, which explains why researchers often analyze them in conjunction with broader ritual traditions or within specific regional and typological contexts. Despite this scholarly interest, the literature reveals an evident gap: no study has yet undertaken a unified examination of amulets through an integrated socio-cultural, religious, and spiritual lens. Publication trends further underscore the growing relevance of this topic, with 11 documents appearing in 2024, 19 in 2023, and 12 in 2022.

A synthesis of the literature reveals that the term 'amulet' is employed across at least five distinct perspectives. First, it appears in cross-cultural and cross-religious analyses—from Ancient Egyptian civilization to modern traditions—where amulets are generally associated with belief in supernatural or spiritual efficacy. Although often used interchangeably with *talisman*, the former is typically understood as protective rather than empowering. Second, within archaeological studies, amulets emerge as small ritual objects embedded in the spiritual practices and symbolic systems of ancient societies. Third, in several religious traditions, including Islam, sacred writings—particularly Qur'anic verses—are inscribed or worn as amulets to provide metaphysical protection.

Beyond these primary usages, the term *amulet* also appears in broader and metaphorical contexts across several fields. In scientific discourse, it may be employed figuratively to describe concepts or mechanisms perceived as protective or stabilizing. In technology and branding, the term is strategically adopted to evoke associations with protection, uniqueness, or good fortune, such as in the naming of software products or digital applications. In the creative arts and design, an *amulet* refers to artworks or visual compositions that incorporate symbolic motifs to convey spiritual meanings or aesthetic values.

In traditional pharmacology, certain natural substances or herbal preparations believed to possess protective or therapeutic properties are similarly conceptualized as amulets. These five interpretive perspectives

emerge consistently within the literature surveyed for this study. Nevertheless, the present research deliberately confines its focus to the first domain—amulets linked to magical or ritual practices—which aligns with the core thematic concerns identified in prior scholarship (Marciniak-Kajzer, 2024).

A systematic review of existing literature indicates that no prior study has examined *"Amulets in Human Tradition, Religion, and Spirituality"* through a comprehensive and integrated analytical framework. This absence of holistic scholarship underscores the need for a multidimensional investigation into the phenomenon. Accordingly, this study aims to address four central research questions: (1) what meanings and functions do amulets hold within cultural, religious, and spiritual traditions; (2) how do amulets contribute to the formation and expression of spiritual and cultural identity; (3) in what ways do socio-cultural, religious, and spiritual perspectives differ in their interpretations of amulets; and (4) how do communities distinguish between amulets as religious objects, cultural artifacts, or instruments of magical practice.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative historical-analytical design (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2014) that integrates classical manuscripts, ethnographic accounts, archaeological findings, Islamic hadith literature, museum archives, and contemporary Scopus-indexed scholarship to examine the meanings, functions, and evolving interpretations of amulets across diverse socio-cultural, religious, and spiritual settings. Data were generated from Mugarrobat manuscripts (Ulfa et al., 2024; Sa'dudin, 2024), regional talismanic traditions in Java, Cirebon, and Sumatra (Adiansyah, 2017; Ayatullah et al., 2024; Anggriana et al., 2022), African and Latin American amulet practices (Guerrero-Mosquera, 2023), and Japanese collections such as the Náprstek Museum (Kraemerová, 2014; Onderka, 2022). Islamic theological sources include hadith narrations from At-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, and Ahmad regarding the permissibility limits of amulets (Harahap & Rambe,

2024; Abdurrahman Saleh et al., 2023), while Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist perspectives draw on studies by Gilchrist (2008), Silooy (2023), Hidas (2010), and Wiwanitkit (2010). Purposive and criterial sampling ensured the conceptual relevance and methodological credibility of all materials (Bryman, 2016; Clark et al., 2021). Analytical procedures included open, axial, and selective thematic coding (Charmaz, 2014) to identify typologies, symbolic structures, ritual functions, and cross-cultural transformations of amulet practices, supported by bibliometric mapping using VOSviewer based on Scopus datasets (Insoll, 2011; Meyer & Houtman, 2012) with keywords "amulet," "talisman," and "magic" (Marciniak-Kajzer, 2024; Waegeman, 2024). Triangulation across textual, ethnographic, historical, and bibliometric sources (Pahleviannur, 2022; Mahesha & Nurhakim, 2024; Yuliawati, 2024; Oktavia, 2024; Sari et al., 2025) ensured methodological rigor and strengthened the validity of findings. This comprehensive framework enables a coherent and multidimensional analysis of amulets as cultural, religious, and spiritual artifacts embedded within the long arc of human civilization.

Discussion

Human engagement with tradition, religion, and spirituality often produces unique phenomena that illustrate diverse perceptions of the supernatural, with amulets serving as cultural texts whose meanings are negotiated through belief, practice, and intergenerational transmission (Naim, 2010; Soleh & Kuncoro, 2023). This reflects the evolution of cultural and religious beliefs within the community. One notable example originates from Java and contains not only prayers but also amulets with specific forms and perceived efficacies. This is the *Mujarobah Manuscript* (manuscript code: LKK_CIAMIS2013_MLM01), which is part of the digital collection of the Research and Development and Education Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

The manuscript, cataloged in 2013 as part of the West Java regional collection, is written in three languages—Sundanese, Javanese, and Arabic—representing the multilingual and multicultural dimensions of Sundanese

manuscript tradition. This manuscript contains prayers and talismans intended for healing and salvation, written in Arabic, with accompanying explanations of the prayers provided in Sundanese and Javanese languages. The literacy tradition of the Sundanese community emerged around the 16th century AD, coinciding with the discovery of the ancient Sundanese manuscript Sanghyang Siksakandang Karesian (SSK), written in 1518 AD (Ulfa et al., 2024; Sa'dudin, 2024).

Interest in magic and the occult intensified during the Hellenistic period, which spanned approximately from the 4th century BCE to the 1st century BCE. This period spanned from the conquest of Alexander the Great in 323 BC to the conquest of Egypt in 30 BC. It was characterized by the spread of Greek culture to wider areas, namely the Middle East region, such as Egypt, Asia, and the Mediterranean, which lies between the continents of Europe, Africa, and Asia. This resulted in the assimilation of Greek culture with the culture of the conquered territories, which came to be known as Hellenistic syncretism. In this context, the practice of magic, ritual magic, and the occult received greater attention, often integrated into various existing religious and cultural traditions. During this period, magical texts and practices also began to emerge, reflecting a profound interest in matters related to supernatural forces and the secrets of life (Bodson, 1998; Gilchrist, 2008; Peers, 2010; Waegeman, 2024).

In ancient Java, the use of talismans was believed to harness power from objects and ancestral spirits. When Islam emerged, it was transformed into a power of God; this is how the verses of the Quran became incantations (Adiansyah, 2017; Musadad, 2017).

Similarly, in the Christian tradition, the Coptic Church in Egypt practices a healing method rooted in rich traditions and spirituality, combining religious elements, herbal remedies, and symbolism to achieve both physical and spiritual well-being. Through faith, prayer, and rituals, Copts seek healing and protection from God, believing that divine power can restore health and well-being. This is influenced by ancient Mesi buya and Christian teachings. They

invoke the Three Holy Children (saints) who function as healers (Surrazin, 2024).

The number of Coptic Christians in Egypt (Middle East) has steadily declined since Islam entered Egypt, in addition to governmental and non-governmental discrimination. This has occurred since the fall of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak (1981-11 February 2011) after replacing the assassinated Anwar Sadat (Meilasari, 2011; bin Syed Mohd, 2024). Many other Christians left the Middle East for Europe and America. But this has a positive impact; first, it strengthens their group solidarity; second, it strengthens their identity as native to the land of the Pyramids; and third, it becomes a matter of pride for them to maintain their identity as Coptic Christians (Pahlawan & Maharani, 2015; Yahya & Haryani, 2018; Indriana, 2018; Masyhur, 2020).

The practice of hanging prayers on the body of toddlers is a tradition among the people of Indonesia for spiritual protection, warding off the disturbance of spirits, warding off babies who often cry, and providing healing to babies who often cry without stopping, and are affected by the disease *segak apoy* (convulsions). In the tradition that applies in the Madurese village, if the baby's problem is rather severe, their clerics make an amulet that will be hung or hung on the baby as an antidote to the disturbances of supernatural beings that always disturb the baby, so that it always fusses at night (Suryanto et al., 2024).

Referring to the teachings of Islam, especially in the Hadith related to the use of amulets on young children, it has the status of *Hasan-Shahih Lighairih*. However, the narrator, Muhammad bin Ishaq, has been criticized as a *mudallis and mu'an'an*. However, this hadith is corroborated by other narrations, making it a reliable source of proof. The practice of hanging prayers on a toddler's body is allowed as long as it is not believed to be an amulet. (Ningsih, et al., 2022; Irma, 2024; Harahap, & Rambe, 2024).

Additionally, there are traditions from the companions of the Prophet Muhammad related to the indications of the permissibility of wearing

amulets, as mentioned in the Qur'an, including those of 'Aisha and Anas, the actions of Abdullah bin 'Amr, and the words of Aisha (Abdurrahman Saleh, 2023). The treatment is only meant for infants; after they reach puberty, the amulet is opened (Sarinastiti, 2018).

The hadiths on which Harahab and Rambe (2024) based their research are the hadith narrated by Imam at-Tirmidhi, Juz XIII, page 34, as follows:

'Ali ibn Hujr narrated to us Isma'il ibn 'Ayyasy from Muhammad ibn Ishaq from 'Amr ibn Shu'aib from his father from his grandfather that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When one of you awakes in sleep, he should say: I seek refuge with the perfect words of Allah from His wrath and from the evil of His servants and from the whispering of the devil and from his coming to me." Abdullah ibn 'Umar taught it to his children who had reached puberty, and to those who had not reached puberty among them. He wrote it on a card and hung it around his neck. Abu Isa said that this hadeeth is a hasan gharib hadeeth. (HR: At-Tirmidhi: 3451 - hasan without redaction 'As for Abdullah ibn 'Amr ... according to Muhammad Nashiruddin al-Albani from Abdullah ibn 'Amru ibn Al-'Ash ibn Wa'il, he was a companion of his kuniyah Abu Muhammad, the country lived Maru and died in 63 AH)

A similar Hadith was also narrated by Imam Abu Daud Juz II page 405 (Abu Daud, 2: 405). Muhammad Nashiruddin al-Albani commented that the *Hadith is of a hasan quality without the phrase "said 'Abdullah ibn' Umar ..."* (Abu Daud, 2: 405). It is also narrated by Imam Ahmad (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 1988: 2: 181). The wording of the three traditions is considered similar. Still, the lesson that can be understood from the narration is that Abdullah bin 'Amru taught his young son, wrote it down, and then hung it around his neck while teaching and memorizing it, while his adult son was taught and memorized. This means that after reaching adulthood, his children are likely to understand and learn it, and be able to practice it every time they go to bed, as well as if they wake up at night for any reason. Like *tawassul*, the use of amulets is believed to be a means of triggering the presence of great power

from outside the wearer, allowing them to experience protection from this power (Samsurizal, 2023).

Islam allows Qur'anic verses to be worn as amulets to protect against the evil eye and jinn. However, true Buddhism prohibits all types of amulets and does not believe in the evil eye or possession by supernatural forces. Khan explains that cultural influences play an important role in shaping *superstitious* behavior, as both Muslims and Buddhists in the South Asian region use several types of amulets to treat various ailments.

Similarly, visiting living saints and touching their feet, as well as other practices, are observed by people of both religions in the subcontinent. In addition, certain phenomena, such as a black cat crossing the road or a broken mirror, are considered signs of misfortune and curses by people of both religions (Arni, 2016; Mulyadi, 2017; Saragih & Riyadi, 2020; Anggriana et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2024; Samsurizal, 2025).

In nineteenth-century West Sumatra, the expansion of the Syattariyah Order reshaped local religious practices, including the use of *sharia-based amulets* as tools for spiritual protection and as remedies for ailments that were not easily detected through biomedical diagnosis. Characterized by a synthesis of Minangkabau cultural traditions and Islamic mystical teachings, the Syattariyah Order produced amulets inscribed with Qur'anic verses and standardized supplications that functioned both therapeutically and as markers of religious and cultural identity. Their persistence reflects two key dynamics: the local authority of Syattariyah scholars, who legitimize these practices through their spiritual lineage, and the pluralistic medical paradigm in which communities combine religious healing with biomedical treatment.

Although contemporary doctrinal debates often question the permissibility of amulets, the Minangkabau case demonstrates a pragmatic accommodation that maintains the primacy of *tawhīd*. Thus, Syattariyah amulets operate not merely as magical objects but as culturally embedded religious technologies preserved for their spiritual, symbolic, and psychosocial value across generations (Anggriana et al., 2022).

West Sumatra is also known as the place where silat (*silek*) schools developed. A silat style is generally named after the place where it emerged, except *Silek Tuo*, which is considered the oldest style in the region. From this foundational silat tradition emerged various schools that are culturally identified with their places of origin, such as Silek Kumango, Silek Pauah, and Silek Lintau. Each style embodies distinctive movements that reflect its unique cultural and regional identity.

Some silat schools have been difficult to find traces of, in addition to the lack of preservation efforts, as well as the attitude of silek elders in the past, who were very careful in transferring knowledge to their students. This demonstrates the high level of caution a teacher must exercise when transmitting knowledge to their students, and they even take an oath before joining the discipline (Lebe, 2018; Kurniantiwi, 2019; Saputra, 2019). As previous researchers have found, the author discovered one silat school that requires the use of amulets to complete the knowledge learned and teaches mantras to be memorized; if recorded, they must be destroyed (Handiza, 2024; Qoidah & Rizal, 2024).

Based on the author's direct interview with a teacher with the initials JMk, "this knowledge should not be disseminated without procedure". After more than a year of following this sect, which is not allowed to be mentioned, the sect gave an amulet like the following picture:

The amulet is wrapped in a white cloth, with a "chosen" tiger skin tied to it, while a mantra is recited. It is believed to protect the owner from evil and bring prestige, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Meanwhile, the Banjar community is known for its religious traditions, but in certain activities, they still use amulets. However, those used as disease therapy by the Banjar community include *sarigading* cloth, *kalimbutuhan*, *kuwari*, *caping*, *samban*, *buyu* bracelets, *sawan* bracelets, *berajah* clothes, *berajah* rings, *berajah* bracelets, *berajah* handkerchiefs, *berajah* shells, basal, and *haikal* bracelets. The reason they must wear amulets is that they have a

disease that is difficult and long to heal, and if they have a kinship with a supernatural person (Arni, 2016).

Figure 2. Amulet



Wahyu (2023) states that in West Sumatra, there are types of amulets for children, amulets for pregnant women, amulets to repel plant pests, amulets to ward off demons, and amulets for treatment. At the same time, the forms of amulets used include bracelets, necklaces, hangers, small objects, ties, and written forms. The community believes it serves the purpose of mental health. Then, in social and politics, and finally, there is cultural and religious acculturation (Wahyu & Arsa, 2023).

Humans, as multidimensional creatures, are often driven in their quest for survival by a sense of vulnerability and helplessness in the face of the natural world. Hence, they need the power of belief that exists beyond themselves. This power can manifest in various forms, including real and unreal objects, such as signs, symbols, and sounds. In addition, they are also influenced by traditions that have been formed in a structured manner, allowing them to express these in the form of valuable and meaningful beliefs. The three things mentioned earlier are considered to possess power or provide a life force that is believed to release them from various difficulties and eliminate fears. One form of a symbol of that power is the amulet. Wherever excavations of ancient

cities, temples, and tombs have been conducted, the objects most often revealed are amulets. The use of these objects is not limited to specific places, people, and periods; they are universal, reflecting a belief in magic that is as old as humanity and continues to this day (Budge, 2013; Adamu, 2020; Badrudin, 2023).

In fact, a museum of Asian, African, and American art and culture, the Japanese Náprstek Museum, located in Prague, Czech Republic, founded in 1862 by Vojtěch Náprstek, collects amulets, most of which are amulets from temples dating from the early 20th century, traditional handicraft items from famous pilgrimage places, and toys used as amulets (Kraemerová, 2014; Onderka, 2022; Vrtalová, 2022; Arifianto, 2024).

Numerous studies have examined topics related to the Náprstek Museum. As illustrated in Figure 3, the author presents a bibliometric visualization of these studies using VOSviewer analysis based on Scopus data.

Figure 3. Scopus data using VOSviewer analysis with keyword search "museum & náprstek" dated November 22, 2024. Seventy-nine documents were found, all of which discuss the Náprstek Museum in relation to various areas of study.



Online searches of Scopus sources using the keywords 'museum' and 'Naprstek' yielded 79 documents, with only three specifically examining

amulets. The documents were written by Onderca (2014), Gyul (2022), and Kraemerová (2022).

The Japanese are very tolerant of religious freedom (Sartini, 2008), so the distinction between amulets from temples is somewhat blurred. Additionally, it can be challenging to determine where the amulet was made or where it was purchased. This is because ethnographers do not collect amulets, but rather travelers and those who admire Japan do. Their reasons for collecting amulets may be primarily personal, and it is only later that they understand the historical and cultural value of the objects.

In the following, the author presents five different perspectives on amulets. First, local tradition and culture; in many traditional cultures, amulets are typically small objects filled with specific materials or writings and are believed to possess special powers (Yuliana et al., 2024; Wirajaya, 2024). In Indonesia, for example, an amulet may take the form of a small kris, a stone, or a cloth inscribed with specific verses.

Amulets in Javanese tradition are typically objects empowered by a shaman or spiritual practitioner, and are believed to possess supernatural qualities that protect their owners from harm (Ayatullah et al., 2024). In Africa and Latin America, amulets are often crafted from plant roots, animal skins, or bird feathers regarded as sacred by local communities. These objects are easily carried or worn and are believed to protect from intimidation and even from enslavement. In Africa, such amulets are known as *nomina*, some of which contain elements of Islamic heritage in both West and East Africa, as evidenced by inscriptions of Qur'anic verses. This tradition later spread to the Western world between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, during which various forms of amulets—such as *mandinga bags*, *obeah*, *obias*, and other relics—continued to circulate (Guerrero-Mosquera, 2023).

Secondly, religion and beliefs; in Islam, there are concepts such as *rajah*, sometimes considered *azimat* or amulet in the Malay tradition, although to a certain extent (Handiza, 2024). The difference between *azimat* and *rajah* lies in the complexity of the elements inscribed. *Rajah* is limited to images that are

believed to be auspicious. Meanwhile, azimat encompasses everything auspicious, including pictures, writings, speech, movements, and so on (Sa'dudin, 2024). While in the science of wisdom, *rajaḥ* is known as *wifiq*, which is part of the science of wisdom. The study of *wifiq* has been revisited by scholars in the West recently (Ayatullah, 2024).

Some Muslims use Qur'anic verses written on small pieces of paper as a form of protection, carried as a talisman. However, Islamic teachings strictly prohibit the use of talismans that are considered shirk or violate the concept of tawhid, as shirk, among other things, damages the relationship with Allah, invalidates worship, is characterized by hypocrisy, and causes uncertainty in one's beliefs (Harahab, 2024; Dewi, 2024). Among the arguments that are often used in terms of the prohibition of using amulets in Islamic teachings are the words of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as follows:

"... from 'Abdullāh who said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, 'Verily, incantations, amulets and tiḡalah (love magic) are forms of shirk.'" (HR. Abu Daud/ 2: 402).

This hadith was reported by Ibn Majah (2:1166), Ibn Hanbal (1998:1:381), and Bayhaqiy (1926:43). All of them were narrated through the companion of `Abdullah ibn Mas'ud. This hadith is based on the story of Zainab, who went to a Jew to treat her sore eye, and when he treated her, her eye was healed. Then, Abdullah said that this was the work of the devil, who stabbed your eyes with his fingers, when the devil stopped his stabbing. That is why Abdullah ibn Mas'ud told Zainab to recite the following supplication:

"... O Lord of mankind, remove sickness, surely You are the Giver of healing, there is no healing except from You, a healing that leaves no effects of the disease."

Ibn Majah narrated that this is done along with pouring clean water over the affected eye. This supplication was also narrated by Imam al-Bukhari

(1987) and Imam Muslim (4: 1721) in their Sahih books, as well as at-Tirmidhi (5: 561).

Likewise, the verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW provide general guidance on the prohibition of seeking treatment with haraam things. Recall when Prophet Ibrahim delivered advice to idolaters, one of which was the statement expressed in His words, (if I am sick, He is the one who heals me QS. Ash-Shu'ara/26 verse 80). Many more Quranic verses are related to this issue, such as QS. Yunus/10 verse 57; an-Nahal/16 verse 69; al-Isra'/17 verse 82; Fusshilat/41 verse 44. These verses use the *term shifa'*, implying that the Quran is one of the medicines that can cure human physical and spiritual diseases (Syafi'ul & Zuhri Qudsy, 2019; Asyari, 2023). Likewise, the hadith narrated by Abu Daud: 2: 400, explains that,

"...from Abu ad-Darda', he said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Verily, Allah has sent down a disease and a cure, and for every disease there is a cure, so seek treatment, but do not seek treatment with anything unlawful." (Hadith Abu Daud/ 2: 400).

Likewise, the majority of Islamic scholars forbid the use of talismans. On the other hand, there are also those who allow it, but with the condition that it must use verses of the Koran and prayers taught by the Prophet Muhammad, as mentioned above. Likewise, the belief in the existence of spirits in objects (animism) and the belief in the existence of forces that can affect humans (dynamism) gradually began to disappear, giving rise to monotheism or tawhid, which involves worshiping Allah by rejecting all forms of worship other than Allah. This is reflected in worship, noble character, and adherence to Islamic law. Based on various religious teachings that have been recognized in Indonesia, such as Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, Christianity, Catholicism, and Buddhism, believing in supernatural powers outside of God Almighty is prohibited. Meanwhile, supernatural practices are common in other European, African, and Asian countries (De Bruyn, 2017; Sukma et al., 2024).

Third, in Christianity, the use of amulets is discouraged; however, some individuals carry holy crosses or medals, such as the Medal of St. Benedict, as a symbol of protection (Silooy, 2023). These objects are typically not regarded as possessing magical powers, but rather as symbols of faith (Paberang, 2022). One example of Christians maintaining their faith can be seen in Pamberang's research in Toraja on the Rambu Solo ceremony, which utilizes the tau-tau statue, a practice rejected by Christian leaders as incompatible with the Christian faith. However, since the ceremony predates the introduction of Christianity in Toraja and has become a customary tradition passed down from one generation to the next, it remains a symbol used in the ceremony. Therefore, it is the indigenous people who dominantly carry out the ceremony.

Likewise, in relation to the symbol of the Cross, they deny the accusation that it is the dwelling place of the Jinn, as it is where the Lord Jesus was crucified. They believe that the Cross is where the Lord Jesus willingly sacrificed to die on the cross to atone for human sin. There were no mistakes and offenses committed by the Lord Jesus. Instead, through His sacrifice on the cross, Satan was defeated, and humanity was able to receive forgiveness of sins from the Lord Jesus. Chinese Christians also treat the Dragon symbol in the same way (Sutanto, 2024; Witoro, 2024). In fact, Gilchrist points out that in graves around the 7th to 9th centuries, it can be said that the placement of amulets on the dead was sacred to Christian beliefs, which were intended to transform or protect the corpse (Gilchrist, 2008).

Fourth, in India and Southeast Asia, Hinduism and Buddhism are prevalent, and the use of amulets is quite common, as seen among Buddhists in Thailand, who are considered the strongest Buddhists in the World, as well as among heterodox and superstitious practices, including the amulet market. Archaeological findings provide evidence that amulets originated from India in the early phase. A Buddhist tantric work, *Mahāpratisarā vidyāvidhi*, teaches how to prepare a protective circle, known as a *Mahāpratisarā* amulet. For Thais, amulets are a source of solace to restore their confidence, and even policemen use them as a psychological support system (Wiwanitkit, 2010;

Hidas, 2010; Ghosh & Ghosh, 2011; Srichampa, 2013; Taylor, 2014; Muchtar, 2018; Hafiz, 2022; Fitriani et al., 2023).

Hindu communities often wear bracelets, beads, or necklaces that contain sacred symbols—such as the syllable "Om" or images of deities—which are regarded as sources of good fortune and spiritual protection. Within Buddhist practice, various forms of Buddhist amulets are also found, particularly in Thailand, where they are believed to bring inner peace and spiritual safety. In the Korean context, protective charms appear in the form of seal-diagram talismans inscribed with Dharma attributes, which are copied and recited as part of ritual expression (McBride II, 2024). Nevertheless, normative Buddhist doctrine formally discourages the use of amulets and incantations, as Buddhism does not endorse beliefs in the evil eye or spirit possession. Even so, cultural traditions significantly influence religious behavior, as both Muslims and Buddhists in South Asia continue to employ amulets and verbal charms to address various physical and psychological disorders (Khan et al., 2024).

Fifth, Modern belief systems and spirituality; The use of amulets dates back to the times when animism or magic met spiritual needs, as seen in ancient Greek and Egyptian artifacts written in the Demotic and Coptic writing systems. Demotic, a cursive script used from the 7th century BCE until Roman times, was written on lamellae (metal paper) and is known to have originated not only in Egypt but also in Rome, as seen in Greek Magical Amulets (GMAs). Bilingual Demotic and Greek spells survive from the Roman period (Budge, 1930; Gaster, 1931; De Bruyn, 2017; Gonzalez, 1991).

Gonzalez (1991: 125) provides the example of jade plaque-shaped charms, which have been in use since approximately 4,000 BCE and were common among the Arabs, Turks, and Armenians. Similarly, the ancient Egyptians, the Aztecs, and the Mayans were also influenced by this concept. These jade plaques were believed to help women during childbirth. Other uses of jade included curing stomach and intestinal problems, protecting the heart, warding off lightning, and bringing victory in battle. As illustrated in

Figure 4, jade plaque-shaped charms were widely known in several ancient cultures.

Figure 4. Jade plaque-shaped charms, in use since 4,000 BCE, were common among the Arabs, Turks, and Armenians.



This jade plaque depicts a cross-legged figure with a deformed forehead, which the Mayans greatly admired because they believed it was a result of applying pressure to the forehead during childhood. The figure is holding a circle with a cross in it. This cross has nothing to do with the Christian cross and is instead a representation of the four cardinal points and the four seasons that dominate the earth, symbolized by the circle.

Furthermore, in the Malay Archipelago, before Islam entered in the 13th century by Arab traders, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the beliefs of the ancestors of the Malay people, they used objects or writings "Azimat" which were considered magical for the treatment of physical and mental illnesses and could protect the owner from disease and restore energy balance. The use of amulets began to decline since Islam became established among the Malay community. They gradually followed the teachings of Islam by using verses from the Quran and the prayers of scholars archived in manuscripts such as the book of Tajul Muluk.

In Islamic belief, this can lead people away from faith in Allah (shirk) and also influence their belief in amulets, which can foster superstition and even lead them to believe in magic rather than the Koran (Hasbullah, 2024; Bayu, 2024). However, in essence, Azimat itself is a form of Dhikr to Allah SWT, which can be used as a therapeutic method. Nowadays, dhikr can be an effective tool in overcoming psychological problems and maintaining emotional balance, thus bringing inner calm (Ulfa et al., 2024; Wijaya, 2024; Siregar et al., 2024; Maryamah et al., 2024).

In modern spirituality, talismans can be crystals, precious stones, or specific symbols believed to possess certain energies and properties. Crystals such as amethyst, rose quartz, or obsidian are often used as energy protectors or lucky charms. For example, feng shui in the Chinese tradition utilizes mirrors, dragon statues, or other symbols that are thought to bring harmony, luck, and positive energy into the home (Febriani, 2023; Drajat & Harahap, 2024).

Spiritual phenomena that are developing today, according to Yasraf Amir Piliang, First, Secularization of Spirituality, namely the shift of the domain of divinity (theosophy) towards the domain of reason. Second, Spiritual Immanence, this concept stems from Nietzsche's assertion that "God is dead," meaning that God no longer possesses metaphysical power. This opens up opportunities for humans to become like Superman; humans can navigate themselves to find their own strength or spirit. Third, Libidization of Spirituality, namely the liberation of desire from shackles, including the shackles of God. Fourth, Schizo-Spirituality is free from belief systems. Fifth, Hybrid-Spirituality is a symbiosis of lower passions and divine passions, or described as a merger of profane lifestyles and spirituality, such as yoga lifestyle, internal energy, fasting, and so on. Sixth, Techno Spirituality is characterized by technology visionaries who have an obsession with becoming God through the power of their intellect and the sophistication of the technology they master; this represents a new spirit for them (Naim, 2010: 68-71).

Conclusion

This research shows that amulets have a significant role in the history of human civilization, not only as cultural artifacts but also as universal spiritual symbols. The existence of amulets spans various traditions, religions, and cultures, reflecting the human need to connect with supernatural forces as a means of coping with life's uncertainties and challenges. In the context of religion, amulets have diverse meanings and reception: some religious traditions integrate them as part of religious rituals, while others view them as a form of deviation from the core teachings. Additionally, this study found that amulets play a significant role in shaping people's spiritual and cultural identities. This phenomenon is not only related to the past. Still, it remains relevant in modern spirituality, where symbols such as crystals, spells, and amulets continue to be used for protection, good luck, or psychological therapy. By providing an interdisciplinary perspective, this study confirms the importance of amulets as elements that connect tradition, religion, and spirituality in a global cultural context. This research opens new avenues for further exploration of the role of amulets within modernity and the social dynamics of contemporary society, while contributing to global interdisciplinary scholarship by bridging socio-cultural anthropology, comparative religion, and spiritual heritage studies.

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