



REVIEW ARTICLE

CHARACTERIZATION OF MYSTICAL PRACTICES IN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL IN SENEGAL

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ABSTRACT

Mystical practices, as an irrational and obscure social reality in Senegal, naturally and logically find their way into professional football, which is governed by scientific rules of performance. Given this situation, we questioned their characteristics and objectives. The answers were obtained through semi-structured interviews with the actors and participant observation in the various professional football clubs in Dakar, Senegal. The main results highlight a description of mystical practices aimed at achieving success, including victory, fame, and/or promotion through the use of baths and sometimes blood sacrifices recommended by consulted holders of mystical powers. Depending on the objective, prescriptions may include offerings of kola nuts, the addition of perfume, amulets, etc. Additionally, mystical practices as a means of protection often manifest through bodily fortification and/or the averting of bad luck. These practices are generally carried out by fumigating with carefully and mystically gathered plant incense, adhering strictly to the instructions of occultists. All these recommendations are preceded by divination and prediction sessions often conveyed to the intermediaries of "xondiom".

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INTRODUCTION

The enthusiasm generated by football in its various forms (popular, amateur, professional, etc.) makes it a true social phenomenon, as it seems to occupy all aspects of life and "constitutes a total social fact because it concerns, more or less, all elements of society" (M. Augé, 1982), with the main actor being the player. "The successful footballer is generally considered to be someone who not only possesses a very high motor potential but also a good psychological potential, which coaches often instill through communication using the pretext of physical, technical, and tactical exercises" (S. Diallo, 2021). This situation translates on a group level to "the development of competitive and performative processes... The competitive process consists of people, financial means, and infrastructures that prepare for competitions. These are criteria that a club and its president can control. Conversely, the performative process consists of elements over which a club has no control, such as supporters, media, local history, culture, or the cultural environment" (E. Medjad, 2006). These elements, including the socio-cultural environment, although not controlled, are significant in achieving performance. Indeed, "in sub-Saharan African countries, the organization of football matches gives rise to multiform magical (fetishistic) practices.

During rituals, people gather, sing, pray, cry, dance... to invoke spirits of nature or the dead to secure their club's sporting victory" (P. L. Litoto et al., 2020). These authors ultimately question: "Do magical practices stemming from traditional culture, passed down from generation to generation (habitus), contribute to victory to the extent of disrupting the rationality of football?" In any case, the actors develop multiple strategies to win at any cost. They bring to the forefront unsporting behaviors that constitute fouls or infractions in many sports, thus violating the generally accepted rules of sportsmanship and the conduct of participants. Senegal is certainly no exception to this eminently socio-cultural collective mentality. For this reason, it seems that the significant focus on rational mental preparation does not appear to be a concern for many football actors in Senegal. "Clubs apparently do not feel the need to address this very important aspect of modern football, as it helps the coach understand how the athlete acts, thinks, and feels, both during (visible and invisible) training and in competition" (D. Burton and T. Raedeke, 2008). The lack of consideration for engaging a sports psychologist is a widespread social conception rooted in the collective consciousness. It is even seen as a sign of weakness or illness, in the sense that only the weak or sick seem to need a psychological trainer whose role is to ask the athlete questions

they had never thought about, to show them different perspectives. Does this situation help explain the repetitive failures and/or successes of teams engaged in sub-regional and continental competitions? In reality, only one Senegalese team has reached the honors of a final: Jeanne d'Arc of Dakar, finalist in the CAF (Confederation of African Football) Cup in 1998 against CS Sfax of Tunis, losing the final in both legs with scores of 1-0 and 3-0 in favor of the Tunisian club. All others have been eliminated in the group stage. Even on the international level, it took more than 60 years for the national football team to win its first continental title in Cameroon at the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in 2022, after rallying all the nation's forces around the team. In reality, "in Senegal, football seems today inseparable from the activities and concerns of society" (D. Chev , 2012). Purely cultural and occult factors are invoked in the sports field and apparently contribute to the morale of football teams in particular. These are mystical practices to which most Senegalese football actors would resort to boost self-confidence, ensure mystical protection for Senegalese players, and probably achieve success. These unsporting behaviors and practices are often evident on football fields in Senegal, from the popular national championship to the professional league. Several factors may be at the origin of these occult and culturally accepted unsporting behaviors. The "Xonjom" would, in fact, be a phenomenon embedded in the heart of Senegalese socio-cultural practices. As such, Senegalese people have a particular relationship with mystical practices, "Xonjom," whose transfer into football—a sport capable of quickly bringing popularity and wealth—seems self-evident. To support this observation, H. Dieng et al. (2019) assert, "Senegalese people attach great importance to religion and magic. These practices are not only specific to sports; they are prevalent in all activities of Senegalese society, especially those where interests are at stake, such as football." In the same vein, M. Mbodj (2008) confirms, "It is a sociological reality stemming from culture and is visible despite the displayed modernism, and it is deeply rooted in the population. It is considered a complementary element to psychological preparation that guarantees victory." However, parallel to the scientific logic brought by specific disciplines, these activities stand out due to their occult nature, as they relate to religion and/or magic.

In short, one of the main characteristics of Senegalese football lies in the invocation of irrational factors for the psychological preparation of players, in place of activities led by specialists drawing their knowledge and practices from scientific disciplines that have produced proven and generalizable results. This raises the question of the relationship with performance, beyond training, to which morale significantly contributes. In other words, the mental preparation of teams by a sports psychologist is relegated to the background in favor of occult practices transferred into the sports field, which could impact the morale of the teams and favor success. Mental preparation based on occultism has not spared the first division football championship (Ligue 1), which has been professionalized since 2009. This is why we proposed to study them more deeply based on this research question: What are the objectives and characteristics of the mystical practices to which the actors of the Senegalese professional Ligue 1 football engage? It is therefore about identifying the purposes assigned to them, describing them, and analyzing them accordingly.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in the Dakar region, which is located on the Cape Verde Peninsula and covers an area of 550 km², or 0.28% of the national territory. Our study area is more limited because it only covers the teams from the Dakar region in the first division of Senegal's professional football league. These mainly include Gu diawaye, Teungueth, Pikine, Douane, Ouakam, Gor e, Dakar Sacr  C ur, and Jaraaf, clubs that are mostly attached to the realities of their zone, all having a socio-emotional base. These teams are historically and culturally attached to mystical practices. However, to answer our research question, we primarily used the qualitative method with the semi-structured interview technique with the 6 head coaches and 8 members of the commission responsible for the "xonjom" of these clubs. In addition, as a coach of some of these teams, we conducted participant observation. The field data collected through these collection techniques allowed us to identify the objectives assigned to these occult practices and to characterize them within the various teams of the professional league in Senegal.

RESULTS

While it is true that mystical practices have several objectives because they are capable of doing both good and harm, it remains undeniable that the characterization can be differentiated from one to another depending on the objectives pursued. Each case is specific both for the 'xonjomeur' and for the clubs.

From the Objective of Success to Mystical Practices: Competitions in the professional football league are highly contested, as the stakes are enormous. This is why, with the evidence of the existence of occult practices in this high-level sports environment, we proposed to describe and characterize occult activities in clubs for victory, fame, and promotion.

Mystical Practices for Victory: Victory, as a decisive advantage won over an opponent during a competition, is currently the most sought-after element in football. It leads to success, which is generated by the performance achieved. To attain it, actors in Senegalese professional football place occultism at the core of the team's preparation strategy. Mystical practices aimed at achieving victory take various forms. One of the most recurrent activities is the "Samp," which involves sacrificing an ox or a sheep as dictated by the consulted marabouts. The characteristics of the animal, such as its color and age, are also important, as are the method of slaughter and the use of the meat. Typically, the raw meat is divided into 7 or 9 equal parts to be given as a sacrifice to the needy. Sometimes, there is a requirement to cook one of the parts and give it to beggars who frequent the Quranic school. Before eating, these beggars must wash their hands in a special container. The water is then collected by members of the "Commission X," who add "Xaatim" and plain water to increase the volume, allowing the entire team to bathe in it. But that's not all; after eating, these beggars must wash their hands in a calabash. This water is also collected, and the same ritual is performed. These mystical baths take place during the team's gathering, on the day of the match. Additionally, the mystical pursuit of victory sometimes requires, in certain circumstances, the making of talismans by marabouts or feticheurs with a very specific usage method.

For example, the paper given by the marabout must be wrapped in lion skin and all possible means used to discreetly place it in the opponent's goalposts. Furthermore, attackers who are supposed to score goals and goalkeepers receive specific mystical treatments. For the former, six kola nuts—three red and three white—are placed in a calabash. Three (3) pots of water are poured in, and this content is reserved for the bath of the three attackers. According to members of the "Commission X," this allows them to be effective in front of the goal. As for the goalkeeper, he is often advised to spend the night with a rooster, whose color may vary according to the marabouts. To ensure the mystical practice produces the desired effect, he must secretly give this rooster to a hearing-impaired person without his teammates knowing. This is why, during gatherings where players spend the night, goalkeepers are separated from the rest of the group. This practice is believed to ensure the inviolability of the team's goals, meaning that at worst, the match will end in a 0-0 draw if the attackers fail to score.

Finally, a bath performed on an elevated surface is believed to favor victory. This involves standing on a stone to wash the entire body with holy water. This practice is reserved for players just before they go to the field. According to members of the "Commission X," by analogy, this allows them to gain an advantage over the opponent. In summary, the "Xonjom" practices aimed at achieving victory at the end of a match require the sacrifice of an ox with specific color, age, and conditions, leading to offerings and baths, the making of talismans covered in lion skin, offerings of kola nuts by attackers, or a rooster given to a hearing-impaired person, and finally, a victory bath performed by the entire team. In reality, the initial practices are preparatory for the final one, which is truly aimed at success.

Mystical Practices for Fame: Fame is, to some extent, a consequence of success. In Senegalese professional football, it is also achieved through mystical practices that come in various forms. Here, we describe the most common ones. Mystical practices for popularity are maraboutic recommendations that manifest in several ways, heavily marked by the use of various common products. These practices are always based on Arabic and maraboutic writings in black ink on white paper, with a strong presence of analogy. For example, in one of the observed forms, three elements stand out:

- **Well Water:** Characterized by its purity, well water is central to the daily lives of villagers, serving as a gathering point for men and women alike. Since it is sought after by all segments of the village population in a single location, its use in mystical practices can symbolically direct people's attention to those who use it, potentially making them famous through maraboutic activities aimed at this purpose.
- **Sand from a Water Fountain:** This sand is significant due to the high number of people who walk on it. The attraction to water and the frequent visits to the fountain explain its mystical appeal. According to members of the "Commission X," "there is nothing faster to make a person famous with a good marabout and the proper use of this sand. Those who follow all the rules of its usage have a high chance of being surprised by their newfound popularity. This is why, mystically, we work with it, as we have also sold players to replenish the club's funds."
- **Perfume:** Following the same logic of popularity and attraction, a pleasant scent is universally appealing. This appeal, enhanced by the occult forces summoned by those with mystical powers, is almost inevitably transferred to the recipients, in this case, the players, leading to their fame.
- **Seven Days:** This number is symbolic because it encompasses temporal imperatives. It's not just any seven days, but specifically the seven days of the week—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. When applied, this occult practice for fame ensures that footballers enjoy continuous popularity seven days a week.
- **Red Stones:** The color red symbolizes visibility and attracts occult forces towards the targeted individuals for fame. The goal is to make the spirits highlight the players, ensuring their forced visibility among the masses. Burying these stones after baths accompanied by holy water is also symbolic, as it makes it difficult for any enemy to locate them and disrupt this "Xon." The significance of the numbers 1211 for the red stones and 21 for the number of bathing days remains undisclosed.

So far, these mystical practices for fame involve the use of holy water baths combined with attractive and/or sought-after products. There are also other practices, notably the wearing of talismans or amulets around the neck or inserted into rings made of precious metal worn on the finger. These practices aren't limited to the players; all other actors, including members of the "Commission X," coaches, top managers, etc., partake in them as fame can help them climb higher in their careers or gain international recognition. However, this promotion is also the subject of specific mystical practices. In summary, mystical practices for fame are characterized by the directives of those with mystical powers and typically consist of special Quranic writings combined with products that captivate many people, such as perfume, well water, sand from a water fountain, red stones, etc., all mixed in a solution of holy water.

Mystical Practices for Promotion: Promotion is a significant goal in Senegalese professional football, and teams are willing to use all available means, including mystical practices, to reach the top. Promotion, in this context, refers to advancing from one stage to a more desirable one within and beyond the clubs. Specifically, it means reaching higher levels in the field and in the specialty of each actor (players, coaches, and top managers).

- **For Players:** Promotion is associated with several milestones, such as becoming a starting player, achieving stardom, signing more financially lucrative contracts, or being recruited by major clubs in European leagues.
- **For Coaches:** The concept is almost identical. Coaches believe that promotion involves moving from an assistant coach to a head coach, from coaching clubs to leading a national team or a major European club, with the performance in the current club playing a crucial role.
- **For Top Managers:** The performance of the players determines their promotion, which can also pave the way for their inclusion in the Executive Committee (COMEX) of the federation. Often businessmen, top managers see their success highlighted by the interest of major firms in marketing needs and player sales.

Achieving these goals is closely tied to the invocation of the mystical force known as "Xon." As they put it: "We are Africans, and we have our own realities. If you don't do it, others will, and they will dominate you. We work in a field where everything is competitive, and you must mobilize everything available, including training, competence, experience, parental blessings and support, and most importantly, the 'Xonjom.' These are our realities." These mystical practices for promotion take two concrete forms in these up-and-coming clubs:

Mystical Baths: These are generally considered the most effective way to reach the top. Such baths with holy water follow specific steps. First, a "todial" must be performed to crush and neutralize all occult attacks aimed at hindering advancement. According to members of the X Commissions, "It involves the mystical cleansing of the body, which usually requires the use of a liquid solution composed of holy water, salt, and 'poftan.' This is the first bath for the recipients and constitutes the first step. You can't put a clean product in a dirty dish. What is dirty renders the clean unusable and impure."

The second bath follows with another liquid composed of holy water provided by the marabout, who recommends adding honey and perfume. Social uses of these two products are sufficiently indicative of the goal being pursued, even though the actors recognize using the same products for both fame and promotion. When asked, "Why these two products and not others?" Senegalese professional football actors respond: "We don't really know why the marabouts recommended them to us. But if you draw a parallel between promotion and these products, you can logically consider that perfume and honey are finished products that have passed through all stages of conception. Moreover, they are almost universally appealing. But the real differences lie in the marabouts' writings, which must be used with holy water. The papers are not the same. Additionally, we have even been asked at times to add sand from the water fountain to the holy water."

Sacrifices: These are performed to protect and promote the recipient. As with the first form, the step of purification through cleaning is necessary for the same reasons mentioned earlier. According to members of the X Commissions, "Mystical power holders make predictions based on dreams or trance states, revealing the conditions for sacrifices required to obtain the desired outcome. Often, these individuals demand the shedding of human or animal blood. Typically, this involves purchasing a sheep or a goat. Some require that the animal be buried after slaughter, while others demand that the meat be gathered and distributed as 'sarakh' to specified individuals, as directed by the marabouts or fetishes."

To favor mystical promotion, clubs follow a series of steps dictated by mystical power holders. The body cleansing baths are followed by attraction baths involving the use of perfume and honey. The final step includes performing sacrifices, which can take various forms. In summary, in Senegalese professional football, mystical success encompasses occult practices for victory, fame, and promotion. In all three cases, bodily purification through baths with Quranic writings is a necessary preliminary step. It sometimes involves blood sacrifices of animals. Depending on the goal, specific products are added to the holy water before bathing. For success, amulets made from lion skin and offerings of kola nuts are

used in addition to the baths. For mystical fame, the addition of perfume, well water, fountain sand, red stones, etc., to the holy water is required. These products help attract attention or increase human presence. Baths during all seven days of the week are essential to gaining popularity and recognition in the activities of Senegalese professional football players. Finally, to enhance promotion, holy water is mixed with products like honey and perfume, known for their pleasant taste and smell. This practice is accompanied by sacrifices that can take various forms.

Protection as the Basis for Mystical Practices: Football is a contact sport, and at the highest level, the risk of injury is significant. Therefore, beyond wearing protective talismans, Senegalese professional football players also turn to other means, including mystical practices, for protection. This protection, as the basis for mystical practices, generally manifests as either physical shielding or the warding off of bad luck.

Mystical Practices for Physical Shielding: Mystically, protection often focuses on achieving invulnerability to occult attacks and preserving the body from anything that might reduce physical capabilities. Mystical practices for physical shielding in Senegalese professional football follow specific typological and procedural rules. Generally, two types of practices are observed:

The first type involves Muslim practices, performed by marabouts who use the Quran to achieve the desired results and fulfill the teams' requests. The rituals involve stages of divination, washing, and actual physical shielding. Marabouts begin with divination through a Muslim ritual called "listikhar." According to Commission "X" members, "the marabout performs ablutions before going to bed at night, recites some Quranic verses, and asks God to reveal specific characteristics of clients concerning their vulnerability to occult practices and more. In dreams, the marabout may receive revelations and be guided towards necessary sacrifices. The next day, the marabout informs the clients of the situation and proceeds to make recommendations based on his expertise." The "listikhar" serves as a diagnostic tool, similar to a medical examination, allowing the marabout to mystically assess the clients. "Through this 'listikhar,' they identify what they call 'those with small heads' and 'those with large heads,' meaning, respectively, those who are very vulnerable and those who are invulnerable. Some players are already shielded before being recruited into teams, and no one dares to attack them. This initial stage allows the marabout to see everything." This diagnostic stage is usually followed by a cleansing bath according to the predictions. The goal is to cleanse the body, as members of Commission X generally agree that "bodily dirt impairs the effectiveness of mystical practices for shielding. By dirt, we mean impurities related to 'thiat,' 'lamigne,' and other mystical attacks that could make players vulnerable." This bath thus serves as the initial remedy for the clients, who, in this case, are Senegalese professional football players. The next step involves a physical shielding bath, conducted at various levels. Sometimes, the liquid solution recommended by marabouts includes holy water and very resilient substances like black or red stones known for their strength, the iron from a Laobé's axe, also known as 'diambéré,' or very bitter caïlcédra bark. Instructions on how to use these products may also be provided. Bathing days and times are sometimes specified, with some marabouts advising to bathe every day of

the week to ensure that any attempts at mystical attacks against the football players will be thwarted regardless of the day. The dark of night is also preferred, as the twilight and the bath aid in the mystical invisibility of those who wish to attack the clients of the marabouts.

Finally, in addition to all this, marabouts sometimes recommend specific offerings made from kola nuts of different colors. In some cases, players and/or officials are required to spend the night with these kola nuts under their pillows before offering them to disabled individuals. Two elements deserve analysis here: the relationship between the desired goal (mystical shielding) and the characteristics of these sacrifices, including the color differences in the kola nuts—which can be a source of confusion and imprecision—and the physical and/or sensory limitations of the disabled individuals that might create vulnerabilities in mystical attacks, all of which is underpinned by incantations and talismans.

The second type of practice is carried out by fetishists consulted by the team managers for the mystical shielding of players. Like the marabouts, these practitioners of occult powers first engage in divination and prediction. Typically, in isolated and well-enclosed places, they invoke strange names with incantations, enter into a temporary trance, and then report what they have seen and what they have been instructed to do to achieve the goal. After this divination, they generally demand blood sacrifices, recommending that the agents of "Xon" buy a black goat, kill it at night, and offer its meat to specific types of people they define. This constitutes the first phase of the treatment. The second phase involves pouring alcohol and some of the goat's blood onto the site of the divination to appease the spirits invoked by the fetishist. Finally, these practitioners of mystical powers give one or more special powders to the agents of Xon, which must be placed in incense burners. The players, dressed in loincloths, are invited to inhale the smoke. This practice, called "sourou," is strongly recommended by the fetishists.

Furthermore, it is noted that these mystical treatments are never permanent. Renewal is a rule because "every match involves attacks whose power depends on the stakes. Consequently, previous shields can be breached at any time, as an enemy does not tire of trying to achieve their goals sooner or later. The times when players are most attacked are the nights before matches. Sometimes, several practitioners of occult practices are enlisted to neutralize key members of the opposing teams. The most targeted are goalkeepers, goal scorers, and specifically the most influential players, etc. Even coaches are not spared. The sponsors of mystical practices always seek to confuse them to make them make poor decisions on the field or to make untimely substitutions." For all these reasons, the recipients of these occult practices for mystical shielding must adhere to the practice conditions, including baths before the competition or tournament. This is called "samp." The camps for team gatherings before matches are also times and places where shielding practices are intensified. Some bottles of holy water are kept by the agents in carefully maintained bags. The players, coaches, and staff must use them at the stadium outside the playing area and secretly. The goal is to counter all attacks with talismans hidden in the stadiums or in the form of holy water sprinkled in the playing area, in the locker rooms, or around the stadium. In summary, mystical practices for player invulnerability are orders placed by agents or members of Commission X with

marabouts and fetishists. In both cases, divination is a prerequisite to determine the degree of vulnerability, the occult activities to perform, the days and times, and the locations. These practices must be constantly renewed and are often accompanied by practices aimed at warding off bad luck.

Mystical Practices for Ward Off Bad Luck: These practices closely resemble those used for mystical invulnerability of football players. However, in this case, the goal is to repel or deflect occult attacks from opponents or ensure they do not reach their targets. To ward off bad luck, professional football players in Senegal consult practitioners of mystical powers who primarily recommend three methods. The first method involves thoroughly burning targeted individuals with a red powder derived from specific tree barks or roots whose names are not disclosed. According to members of Commission X, "their effectiveness depends on several factors, including the time of collection. One does not collect them at just any hour. Generally, the most favorable times are when human activity is minimal, particularly in villages around 2 PM or at the onset of twilight (Timis). These are times when the activities of Djinnns and other supernatural spirits are intense. Their responsiveness is considered high. They ensure the effectiveness of the practice and require a small ritual in return. After the incantations, a handful of cereal (millet, rice), sugar, or biscuits should be sprinkled before cutting the part of the plant or tree you need. This involves buying that part of the plant or tree." These are indeed pagan practices aiming to harness the forces of nature for mystical purposes, carried out by fetishists. The second condition is the recitation of complex words in the form of incantations at the moment of cutting the root or removing the tree bark. Almost unanimously, members of Commission X agree on these conditions. Some even admit to having had the opportunity to collect such materials and recite incantations learned from their grandparents for personal purposes.

The third condition involves following the procedure, known as "suuru." Coaches, then players, one by one, are wrapped in a sheet and positioned over the incense burner or stove emitting smoke from the collected bark or root powder according to the described conditions. To ward off bad luck, the recipient must inhale the smoke, which, thanks to the sheet, will envelop their entire body. In summary, mystical practices used to ward off bad luck include the fumigation of actors with a plant-based incense, carefully collected, incantations, and strict adherence to the directives of practitioners of mystical powers.

DISCUSSION

As a social practice, "xonjom" has been the subject of much research. It is approached from various angles by different authors. "Mystical practice as a psychological factor" (B. Malinowski, 1963) provides athletes with a strong mindset. As a social reality, it attracted the attention of Gora Mbodji (1987), who noted that "...the use of occult practices or 'xonjom' is well-established in culturally alien sports like football...". Additionally, from an epistemological perspective, I. Sow (2013) highlights their elusive nature by stating: "...reason seems to have only a relative effect on external factors...", while F. D. Loum (2014) described "xonjom" in Senegalese arenas. However, it must be noted that Loum's work was limited to characterizing the terminal practices on

the field. Her work, as well as others' to our knowledge, does not address the processes and procedures for "Xondiom". This study contributes to a better understanding of the nature of mystical practices in football, which is, in principle, a field dominated by new science-based training approaches. Moreover, it helps to clearly identify occult practices through field information. However, the selective exploitation of data leads us to nuance the results obtained since not all stakeholders' opinions were considered in this study when analyzing the results.

CONCLUSION

To fully understand the significance of mystical practices, a precise description of their components is essential. This study confirms the prominent role of mystical practices in high-level sports. Indeed, mystical activities serve as conduits for success, manifesting in victory, fame, and promotion. The initial step of purification involves baths based on Quranic texts. Sometimes, sacrifices involving animal blood, accompanied by specific rules, are recommended. Additional products are added to the prescribed baths depending on the goal of the practice. Besides baths, achieving success can be facilitated by using amulets covered with lion skin and offering cola nuts, while fame is attained through a mixture of perfume, well water, sand from a water fountain, and red stones. Weekly mystical baths are required to achieve assigned goals. For promotion, products such as honey and perfume, known for their taste and smell, are added to holy water. These practices are complemented by sacrifices in various forms.

From another perspective, mystical practices, through bodily protection and warding off bad luck, enhance the protection of professional league players. They are preceded by divinatory activities and predictions. Additionally, fumigation is a recurrent practice used for both bodily protection and warding off bad luck. In this case, powders made from conditionally collected, dried, ground, and burned tree and plant barks and roots are used. Also, mixtures of salt, lemon, and "pofan" are employed for these purposes. Beyond these mixtures, practitioners recommend sacrifices, such as blood from slaughtered sheep or goats. Protective practices are often renewed and reinforced based on upcoming matches.

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