SACRIFICIAL PRACTICES IN ACHOLI TRADITIONAL RELIGION

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DECLARATION

I, ODONG ROBERT, do hereby declare that this dissertation on Sacrificial Practices in Acholi Traditional Religion is my original work and has never been presented to any institution for any degree or any other academic award.

Sign:……

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APPROVAL

We the undersigned university supervisors confirm that this dissertation done by Odong Robert on the topic of Sacrificial Practices in Acholi Traditional Religion was under our supervision and it meets the requirements for the award of the degree of a Master of Arts in Religious Studies of Kyambogo University.

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DEDICATION

This research dissertation is dedicated to my beloved father, Mr. Okot Benjamin and my mother, Rose Akidi, who have constantly supported me morally, spiritually, financially and otherwise.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

ATR: Acholi Traditional Religion

IDP: Internally Displaced People's Camps

GIS: Geographic Information System

LRA: Lord's Resistance Army

WW II: World War II or the Second World War of 1945

NU: Northern Uganda

UBOS: Uganda Bureau of Statistics

Rev. Fr: Reverend Father

SJ: Society of Jesus

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Abomination (*agwok*/*kiir*): an act of breaking cultural, social and religious norms of the society.

Acholi: an ethnic/tribal group in Uganda and they are found in the present districts of Agago, Gulu, Omoro, Pader, Kitgum, Lamwo, Nwoya, Amuru and Gulu City.

Central Luo: This refers to a group of closely related ethnic communities in northern Uganda who share linguistic, cultural and religious traditions. They include the Acholi, Lango and the Alur people.

Ceremony: a ritual performed that marks a significant event, occasion or transition in a community or individual's life.

Chief (*Rwot*): a cultural and religious leader in Acholi indigenous society who holds significant spiritual, and cultural role in the day today running of the affairs of Acholi society.

Cultural heritage: the traditions, values, and history of a particular community that should be passed from one generation to another for preservation.

Expiator (*latum kiir*): a person who performs a ritual to cleanse an individual or people after an act of abomination.

Death compensation negotiators (*Luri tal*): individuals whose work is to negotiate and reconcile two families after a case of murder has been committed.

Globalization: the way people around the world today connect with others through channels like trade, technology and travels.

Individualism: in this study refers to the notion that each human person is free to think, act and make choices by him/herself.

Modernity: refers to the contemporary era evidenced by advancement in science and technology, individualism, urbanization and globalization.

New Religious Movement: a system of religious belief that has been formed recently and they give different ways of thinking about spiritual life, often outside of the traditional religions like Christianity, and Islam.

Offering: refers to a situation where food stuffs, water, milk, honey, or money are given to God, the spirits and the living ancestors.

Phenomenon: an event, situation or experience which can be seen. In this context, the phenomenon of sacrificial practices refers to the circumstances under which the questions of 'what, when, how and where' the acts of sacrificial giving take place among the Acholi people.

Religion: a system of beliefs, values, and practices directed to a numinous being. It is a way of life that motivates people to behave in a certain way towards a supreme being.

Ritual: a religious act which is repetitive, symbolic and it is done in a meticulous way.

Sacrificial practices: the rituals and ceremonies carried out when a community or an individual offers animal and birds as sacrifices to the supernatural beings.

Shrine priests (*wegi abila*): individuals who serve as spiritual leaders, caretakers, and the go-between between the divine and the human beings in indigenous religions.

Urbanization: a situation where many people move from rural areas into towns and cities which often changes how they live, work and interact with other people around them.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people, specifically focusing on the phenomenon, significance and the influence of modernity on sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. The study was qualitative and used a phenomenological design. Data was collected through interviews, participant observation and documentary review and analyzed through the cultural theoretical framework. Through participant observation, the ritual of cleansing the abomination of blood pact was examined. Documentary review was used to compare the thesis with previous literatures on journals and books. The findings of the study revealed that sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion were offered during purification and cleansing ceremonies, life-cycle rituals, appeasement of ancestral spirits and gods, social harmony and conflict resolution, and prevention of misfortune among others. Sacrifices were found to be very significant in Acholi society as it helped in cultural preservation, fostering unity and social harmony, spiritual connection with gods, regulating morality of people and in promotion of health and prosperity. Acholi sacrificial practices were found to face considerable religious, economic, educational, political and negative social changes that have negatively impacted on the practice. The study recommends dialogue among the different religious groups to avoid stigmatization. The researcher also proposes cultural education to be embraced by the education department of Uganda. Traditional sites that are considered sacred should also be protected according to the study recommendation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

While early anthropological theories such as those of Tylor, Frazer and Smith regarded traditional sacrificial practices as primitive exchange (Nyandiwa, 2024), contemporary scholarship affirms that sacrifice still holds a significant place in the religious life of people in Luo society (Shipton, 2014). Besides, there are a lot of myths about the subject of sacrifice in Acholi Traditional Religion. For instance, some people associate the Acholi sacrificial practices with superstition (Okidi, 2024) & (P'Bitek, 1971). Therefore, there was need to provide knowledge on sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. This research study was an interrogation of sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion within the African Traditional Religious experience. It attempted to explicate the sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. The study sought to examine the phenomenon, the significance and the impact of modernity and globalization on the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. Those were the three fundamental questions that this study was set out to provide answers to. The study presented the understanding and the values that the Acholi people attach to their sacrificial practices and this was achieved through studying the religious experience of some few selected Acholi people about sacrifices and also analyzing the already published literatures on sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion. The study was conducted in Agago district in northern Uganda in the sub-counties of Paimol, Omiya Pachwa, Lapono and Adilang. The study primarily focused on animal sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion. This was done through the qualitative research approach and by use of phenomenological research method.

1.1 Background of the Study

Sacrifice is a key component of African religious life and it is an indispensable act of worship (Mbiti, 1969). For centuries, the Acholi people of northern Uganda have sought balance and harmony through the practice of giving sacrifices to the deities and the ancestors (Grove, 1926). This serves as a bridge between the mundane and the divine, thereby illuminating the intricate religious dynamics of the Acholi Traditional Religion. Generally, the Acholi Traditional Religion and culture are anchored on the practice of sacrifices (*tum ki kwer*), riddles (*koc*) and folk tales (*ododo*). However, these aspects of the Acholi way of life are mostly found in oral traditions and there is limited written information about them. Besides, the subject of sacrifice is an academic area in Acholi Traditional Religion where very little is known and there are misleading perceptions among modern Acholi people about the role and significance of sacrifices in Acholi traditional society in general. Therefore, this study was motivated by the urgent need to preserve and restore Acholi sacrificial practices, whose erosion under the influence of modernity and religious condemnation threatens the spiritual tradition, the transmission of indigenous knowledge and moral values of the Acholi people.

The practice of giving sacrifices has been a common phenomenon in all human societies. According to Mbiti (1969), sacrifice refers to instances where animals are offered or killed for the purpose of presenting their bodies or parts to a higher power, such as gods, spirits, or the ancestors. In a similar way, Nwobodo, (2024) defined sacrifice as the act of giving something precious, such as an animal, person, or a valuable possession, as a form of devotion, worship or appeasement to a divine being. This study took sacrifice to mean a situation where animals or birds are killed and presented to the spiritual beings. According to this study, sacrificial practices in Acholi tradition refer to the full set of actions and meanings involved when making sacrifices to the supernatural entities. This includes both the reason for the sacrifice such as healing, protection and the physical acts performed like preparing sites, invoking spirits and

presenting the sacrifice. It is therefore, a complete ritual event including the entire process through which people seek to restore order and maintain connection with the unseen world. Several scholars like (Mbiti, 1969; Tubi, 2022 & Kanu et al (2020) found out that there are six types of sacrifices in Traditional African society: the first is the thanksgiving sacrifice which is given to thank God for his goodness and the favour he has rendered to the people. Second, is the communion sacrifice in which all members of the society are involved in offering of sacrifice. This type of sacrifice does not only bring members together but it also promotes reconciliation and forgiveness among the people as they relate with one another in unity and happiness. The third type is the votive sacrifice in which an individual gives sacrifice to the sacred beings or the ancestors to fulfill the vows he/she made with the transcendental being. Fourthly, is the propitiatory sacrifice, also known as expiatory sacrifice which is made to atone for sins, wrong doing or impurities committed by the people. Fifth, is preventive sacrifices which are offered to prevent calamities and misfortunes from befalling a community. Finally, there is substitutionary sacrifice which refers to sacrifice made to substitute for something or someone else. In this kind of sacrifice, the guilt is transferred to the substitute. Similarly, Tubi (2022) observed that there are four types of materials for sacrifice in African Traditional Religions. These are food including yams, nuts, beans, soup. Then, there is drinks such as palm wine, sorghum beer, spirits among others. The third object of sacrifice is animal such as goat, cow, dog, chicken among others. Lastly, the Africans also offer objects such as cloth, coins, cowries. However, the focus of this study was largely on animal sacrifice in Acholi Traditional Religion.

Globally, people have been giving sacrifices to the super natural beings and the spirits throughout time immemorial. It is reported that the Romans used to offer sacrifices to their gods. They would also offer animal sacrifices in times of war and this was done to appease gods and make them grant peace to the Romans (Scheid, 2012). This was a very common

practice and it was believed that by performing sacrifices, the people would receive blessings from gods. People in ancient Greece especially in the city of Athens also offered sacrifices to their gods and this led to an establishment of a strong relationship between the gods and mankind which confirmed that the gods were superior to mankind (Scheid, 2012). Ullucci (2015) also observed that for almost 10,000 years prior to the arrival of Christianity, offering animals to the gods was one of the most significant customs in the ancient Mediterranean. However, sacrifice had drastically decreased within 400 years of the founding of Christianity and would finally be outlawed by the Christian rulers. There must be conversations on such a significant change in ritual practice. It is also evident that within some Christian organizations, an opposing argument regarding sacrifice developed early on. Christian writing presented Jesus' death, the Eucharist and several other items as "real sacrifice" that were superior to all other material gifts (Ullucci, 2015). This study by Ullucci (2015) deserves credit for putting up the argument that the birth of Christianity was a formidable challenge to the practice of sacrifices in different parts of the world. This is true in the context of Acholi Traditional setting where Christianity has considerably affected sacrificial practices of the Acholi people.

According to Allison (2016), sacrifice formed an important religious phenomenon among the Israelites. The purpose of sacrifice in ancient Israel ranged from giving a gift to God, having fellowship, purification, countering evils, and appeasing God. In ancient Israel, it was believed that failure to give sacrifice would result to calamities and suffering by the Israelites. In sacrificial practice of ancient Israel, all the wild and unclean animals were prohibited for sacrifices. Sacrifices were very important to the Israelites and it signified obedience and surrendering of all the Israelites had to God who was considered the master of all things (Allison, 2016). The idea of offering only clean animals as advocated for in ancient Israel is similar to the Acholi concept of offering only good animals to gods and ancestors. Just like the

Israelite God would not accept insincere sacrifices, the Acholi people also believe that their gods would bring curses to those who offer poor animals as sacrifices.

Tubi (2022) observed that in the African continent, sacrifice is at the heart of worship. Africans in their indigenous setting cannot carryout acts of worship without giving sacrifices. Offering sacrifice in African religious experience is a sacred act of worship. According to Mbiti (1969), it was observed that in African religious experience, for society to be harmonious and cohesive, a sacred relationship between God and humanity, the spirits and humans, and the living and the dead must be upheld. People suffer and toil when this spiritual realm is disturbed. On the other side, offering sacrifices is another psychological strategy to bring this ontological balance back. Additionally, it is a time and act for establishing and reestablishing communication between the gods and humanity, as well as between spirits and humans. Mbiti (1969) has captured the primary reason why Africans perform the ritual of sacrificial giving and this is very true in context of Acholi Traditional Religion where people give sacrifices to appease the gods, the spirits and the living-dead. Parrinder (1969) observed that sacrifice is a common ritual practice in all religions in Africa. Africans may sacrifice on a daily basis, at fixed schedules or occasionally. In Africa the main importance of sacrifice are gift and propitiation. Sacrifices are given to gods daily in some societies to keep man in good relationship with the spirits and the ancestors (Parrinder, 1969). However, blood sacrifice has long been abandoned by most people due to the influence of European and Asian peoples, but it was still practiced in the temple of Jerusalem and it is popular in some Indian cults today (Parrinder, 1969).

In Uganda, there was a shrine (*abila*) in every homestead especially among the Acholi people before the advent of Christianity (Grove, 1926). Sacrifices were made to the ancestors (*kwaro*) in the shrines during both joyful and difficult times. In joyful times (*kare me yomcwiny*) like after success in the battle, hunt, birth or recovery from severe sickness, sacrifices were offered. In a similar way, in times of difficulties (*kare marac*), like epidemics, drought, people gathered

before the ancestral shrines and performed sacrifices (P' Bitek, 1971). Similarly, a study by Nyandiwa (2024) reported that the Luo people believe that any fate that befalls the society whether positive or negative comes from the super natural world and people have the obligation of offering sacrifice to God. According to P'Bitek (1970), the African scholar has two assignments to do. The first step is to dispel any myths that some western research has spread about African peoples and culture. Secondly, the African scholars should make an effort to portray African institutions as they actually are. The African scholar is called upon to present the truth about Africa. In line with sacrifices in Acholi society, the above scholar is right and he deserves credit because when the Christian missionaries came to Africa, they discouraged and undermined the practice of animal sacrifice. This has had considerable influence on sacrificial practices in different parts of the African continent including that of Acholi people. Essentially, in Acholi society today, there has been a declining trend in sacrificial practices. According to scholars like Okidi, 2024; Nyandiwa, 2024, and P'Bitek, 1971, the decline in the practice of giving sacrifices among the Acholi people is attributed to various factors such as foreign religions, western education, globalization among others. Today, many Acholi people prefer foreign religious practices to Acholi traditional religious practices. They regard traditional sacrifices with contempt as they think the practices are useless. This poses a threat to the Acholi society because if this cultural practice is completely eroded in favor of foreign cultural practices, then the Acholi are most likely to lose their cultural heritage with all the splendid package of moral instructions that it carries. It seems that the Acholi people of today lack objective knowledge about the spiritual importance of sacrificial practices which used to be a fundamental part of the Acholi Traditional Religion. Against this background, this research examined sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion in order to broaden knowledge about sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion.

1.2 The Context of Acholi Traditional Religion and Society

The Acholi people belong to the Luo group of people who relocated to northern Uganda and western Kenya from Bahr el Ghazel in southern Sudan. The Acholi are found in the Acholi sub-region of Uganda. This subregion is located in northern Uganda, bordered in the north by South Sudan, in the east by Karamoja, while in the west by West-Nile and the Lango sub-region in the south (Amone, 2015). The Acholi people can be found in both South Sudan and northern Uganda. However, the scope of this study was on Acholi of northern Uganda. The Acholi has a total population of 2.04 million people which constitutes 4.4% of the aggregate population of Uganda (Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2024)). There are basically nine districts that make up Acholi subregion and these are: Agago, Pader, Kitgum, Gulu, Gulu City, Omoro, Nwoya, Amuru, and Lamwo. However, this study was conducted in the Acholi district of Agago.

The Acholi used to be called *gang* by their southern neighbors-likely from the Acholi word for village and Shuli by the Arab traders from the north. These names appeared in early maps and writings by explorers like Sir Samuel Baker and Emin Pasha (Girling, 1960). The Acholi comprise a people whose livelihood centers on farming and raising livestock. Their homeland spans roughly 15,000 square miles, located east of the Nile River, stretching between latitudes 2 degrees 30’ and 4 degrees north, and longitudes 31 degrees to 33 degrees west (Girling, 1960). Among the Acholi, physical build varies considerably. Some men stand over six feet, lean and long-limbed, while others are more compact, with stout frames closer to five feet. Their skin complexion ranges from a rich, dark hue reminiscent of polished ebony to a softer brown tone. Compared to the Bantu speaking people who live in the south, the Acholi tend to be robust in stature, with deeper skin color and greater height (Girling, 1960).

The religious world view of the Acholi centers on *Jok*, a term that denotes a broad category of spiritual entities rather than a singular divine figure (Ocaya, 1988). Unlike the monotheistic

traditions of Christianity and Islam, Acholi religious beliefs recognizes a plurality of spirits (*jogi*)- each associated with distinct aspects of communal life. These spirits preside over domains such as childbirth, marriage, agriculture, and harvest. Sacrifices and offerings are made to these entities informs of animals, birds, beverages, food among others. Each clan maintained its own *jok*, believed to safeguard the wellbeing of its members and guide them in times of need (Ocaya, 1988). The Acholi held the view that the spirits of the dead ancestors remained present in the community and these spirits were regularly honored through rituals. Central to this practice was the *abila* (a shrine) typically located at the center of the village, which served as a place where individuals offered prayers and sacrifices before undertaking any activity such as warfare or hunting (Malandra, 1939). The community gathered at the *abila* to seek healing, protection and prosperity and returned there in times of misfortunes or to express gratitude during celebrations. The *abila* was also used for deliberation and conflict resolution (p'Bitek, 1971 & Ocaya, 1988). Within Acholi religious belief system, various spiritual entities are regarded as guardians of community well-being. Each region is associated with a distinct spirit: Lagoro is linked to Agago, Kalawinya to Ogom, Olalteng to Puranga, Baka to Patiko, Labejatwol to Alero, Nyilak to Atiak, Kilegaber to Koro, and Loka to Koc. Among the above spirits, Lagoro of Agago holds a particularly prominent role. When concerns arise that affect the entire Acholi region, it is the spirit of Lagoro that is approached and sacrificial acts are carried out on the hill bearing his name (Isiko and Acayo, 2021). In Acholi society, the chief is regarded as the main religious and cultural leaders of the people. They do their religious responsibilities through the royal councils assisted by prominent religious specialists such as chief messengers, shrine priests, expiators, death compensation negotiators, rainmakers, ritual elders, medicine men or herbalists among others.

The Acholi people have for long practiced sacrifice to counter problems in their society. For instance, in 2000 sacrifice informs of goats were reported to have been offered at Aruu falls to

ward off Ebola epidemic that had ravaged Acholi land (Isiko & Acayo, 2021). However, recently, this religious phenomenon of offering sacrifice has been neglected by not only the scholarship but also by those who are supposed to practice this religious phenomenon. This gives room for this study to shade more light into the sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion.

1.3 The Problem Statement

Sacrifices and offerings are one of the most popular forms of worship by African peoples (Mbiti, 1969; Falola, 2022). The Acholi of Uganda have for long practiced sacrifices as a form of worship and for other reasons such as restoring peace and harmony in community, evoking spiritual protection, and good luck among others (p'Bitek,1971; Otim,2025). Despite these positive spiritual aspects associated with this practice, the Acholi worldview on offering sacrifices is slowly getting eroded under a growing, yet dominant concern that sacrifices promote witchcraft, are barbaric and primitive (Ocaya, 1988; Victor, 2020 & Okidi, 2024). In recent years, there has been a Christian campaign to eliminate animal sacrifice in the Acholi community and there is an animal rights movement that claim that the practice of animal sacrifice promotes injustice to animals and should be challenged as a deliberate animal torture (Shipton, 2014). The effect of this experience has raised doubt on the spiritual significance of Acholi traditional sacrifices in general and also appear to interfere with the Acholi traditional religious practices. While the process of offering sacrifice involves imparting knowledge and moral lessons in the Acholi community, its gradual erosion is most likely to wash away such cultural heritage and thus weaken the moral fabric of the Acholi people. The negative perceptions about the Acholi worldview on sacrificial offering, yet such practices are highly revered by many Acholi communities point to lack of objective knowledge about sacrificial practices in Acholi society. This study therefore attempted to examine and make a documentation on the indigenous knowledge on sacrificial practices among the Acholi which

will help to broaden knowledge on the general understanding and appreciation of sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

To examine the sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion with a view to exploring their cultural and spiritual significance, and evaluating the impact of modernity on their continuity and transformation.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

a) To assess the phenomenon of sacrificial practices among the Acholi people.
b) To examine the significance of sacrificial practices among the Acholi people.
c) To evaluate the influence of modernity on sacrificial practices of the Acholi people.

1.5 Research Questions

The following were the research questions that guided the study:

a) What is the phenomenon of sacrificial practices among the Acholi people?
b) What is the significance of sacrificial practices among the Acholi people?
c) How has modernity and globalization affected the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study will be useful to the Acholi chiefdom (*Ker Kwaro Acholi*) as it provides useful information and documentation about sacrificial practices among the Acholi that can be preserved for future generation. For the chiefdom, the study will strengthen cultural authority and continuity as it will act as a reference for traditional leaders to guide traditional rituals with accuracy and integrity since oral transmission weakens over time. For future generation, the study will help them to understand the logic behind Acholi cultural practices of offering

sacrifices rather than inherited hollow traditions. The study can therefore, serve as a tool for revival of Acholi culture and values on sacrificial practices. The study also contributes to the discovery of objective knowledge on sacrificial practices among the Acholi people which will help to bridge the knowledge gaps about the spiritual significance of sacrificial practices in ATR and challenge those who have negative perceptions about Acholi sacrificial practice. Lastly, the study will help in research writing as well as the development of a theory based on sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The study is rooted on the Cultural Theory postulated by the American anthropologist called Clifford Geertz. Cultural theory became very popular especially after World War II (WWII). This theory suggests that culture has the ability to shape behaviors of individuals and that of the community in a collective manner (Geertz, 1973). The theory also proposes that different cultures have different symbols and people attach different meanings to these symbols. These symbols have the role of expressing cultural beliefs, ideas and values (Geertz, 1973). According to this theory, a symbol is any object, event, quality or relation which serves as a vehicle for conception; the conception in this context is the meaning of the symbol and meaning is embodied in the symbol (Geertz, 1973). Cultural theory mainly focuses on the subjective meaning that individuals attach to their actions. One of the assumptions of cultural theory is that in all societies, different types of symbols exist and they give different meanings that control and guide the behaviour of man. This cultural theory helped the researcher to analyze and appreciate why people from a given context may have different attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The theory provided a framework for the researcher to study critically cultural components such as cultural practice of offering sacrifices, and helped the researcher gain a deeper understanding of social interactions and the ways in which sacrifice influences human behavior.

Scholars such as Stuart Hall, Richard Hoggart and others have applauded cultural theory arguing that it exposes everyday practices, identities and beliefs as shaped by hidden structures of ideology, discourse and social power. However, scholars like Asad (1993) critiqued Geertz's cultural theory for taking religion as a cultural system arguing that it universalizes western propositions and it does not pay attention to historical concerns. Besides, Kuper (1999) argues that Geertz's cultural theory lacks empirical grounding and instead romanticizes culture. Regardless of the above critiques of Geertz' cultural theory, this study finds cultural theory deeply relevant for analyzing sacrificial practices of the Acholi which rely on symbolic meaning, and culturally embedded ideas of spiritual protection and reconciliation.

Cultural theory was in line with this thesis because the Acholi attach a lot of meanings, and values to their symbolic practice of offering sacrifice. Sacrificial practices help to shape the behaviour of the Acholi people and it promotes social cohesion in the community just as the cultural theory proposes. The findings of the study proved that the propositions of the cultural theory are right, that is to say it was proved that the Acholi culture of giving sacrifices has influenced the general behaviour and the moral direction of the Acholi people. The cultural practice of the Acholi people has also made them to live in unity and cooperate with one another just as the cultural theory proposes.

1.8 Justification of the Study

Previous studies have examined the different broader sacrificial practices performed among the Luo people of East Africa. For instance, p'Bitek (1971) offers a critical examination of ritual practices among the Acholi, Alur, Lango and other related groups. However, this study approached sacrifice as part of a wider religious structure and did not isolate sacrificial practices for detailed examination. Nyandiwa (2024) has conducted a phenomenological inquiry into the Luo sacrificial rites in Kenya. However, there is a gap in a focused, and

systematic research on sacrificial practices as understood and conducted within Acholi Traditional Religion. This study attempted to fill that gap by providing a contextualized and in-depth exploration of sacrificial practices among the Acholi so as to form a basis for promoting cultural awareness, preservation and appreciation.

1.9 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study included the geographical, content and time scope as explained below.

1.9.1 Geographical Scope

The study was carried out in Agago district in northern Uganda. Agago district is one of the districts in Acholi subregion. Agago is bordered by Kitgum district in the north, Kotido district in the northeast, Abim district to the east, Otuke district to the south, and Pader district to the west. Agago district has a total of 26 sub-counties. Agago district was chosen for this study because it still has a high rate of sacrificial practices yet little is known about this religious way of life to the outside world. Agago district is also the epicenter of Acholi religious heritage where by people from different parts of Acholi sub-region go and perform sacrificial practices (Isiko and Acayo, 2021). Besides, the Paimol rebellion, a clash between Acholi Traditional Religion and Christianity also took place in Agago. Wipolo, a Christian shrine established in Agago, is an imposition against Acholi Traditional Religion.

1.9.2 Content Scope

The study was about sacrificial practices of the Acholi people within the African Traditional Religious experience, focusing on the phenomenon, significance and the influence of modernity on sacrificial practices of the Acholi people.

1.9.3 Time Scope

This study was not limited to any time scope. It focuses on the traditional religious life of the Acholi people which is as old as their existence.

1.10 Conclusion

The study of sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion is an important subject for academic discussion that helps in understanding the cultural and religious values of the Acholi people. Yet little is known about the religious significance and the status quo of sacrificial practices in Acholi society. There has also been a lot of controversies and misconceptions about sacrifices in Acholi society which has led to a gradual erosion of understanding around the meaning and function of sacrifice in ATR. This study aimed at making people understand the concept of sacrifices and the values that the Acholi people attach to their sacrificial ritual practices.

The next chapter (chapter 2) reviewed previous scholarly literatures on sacrificial practices among the Acholi people.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses published literatures in line with sacrifice in Acholi Traditional Religion. Generally, there are few literatures on the topic of sacrificial practices especially in the context of the Acholi people. This is because the Acholi people always rely more on oral traditions to pass vital information about sacrifices to the young ones. Consequently, this study relied on broader texts, especially on published works about sacrifices in other parts of Africa, which are related to sacrifices in Acholi context. These related literatures were reviewed based on the themes according to the objectives of the study: the phenomenon of sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion, the significance of sacrifices among the Acholi people, and progressively, the influence of modernity on sacrificial practices of the Acholi people.

2.1 The Phenomenon of Sacrificial Practices in Indigenous African Religion

In this study, a phenomenon refers to an event or practice that reveals deeper spiritual meaning within a particular tradition. Eliade (1959) emphasized that religious phenomena are expressions of the sacred manifesting in the ordinary world, while Otto (1958) described them as encounters with the "numinous being, “a profound experience marked by awe and mystery. Sacrificial practices in Indigenous African religions fit this description, as they are not merely ritual actions but expressions of a community’s relationship with spiritual forces. This section answers the questions of what, when, who and where sacrificial practices were done in indigenous religious experience of the African people.

According to P’Bitek (1971), the central Luo offered sacrifices to their ancestors in both good and difficult times. The good and joyful times in which sacrifices are offered include;

celebration of success in wars, hunting, birth, recovery from long illness, while the difficult times which attracted sacrifices included; outbreak of an epidemic, crop failure or the outbreak of animal disease (P'Bitek, 1971). Similarly, Grove (1926) argues that Acholi made sacrifices to gods when they experienced illnesses and this was done through the help of the witch doctors (*Ajwaka*) who gave sacrifice on behalf of the sick person. The elders also made sacrifices before going for hunting and wars. The sacrifices given would make gods and ancestors to make them successful in their undertaking. I give credit to the idea of the above scholars, however, apart from failing to give the details of how, when, why and who give sacrifices among the central Luo people, the scholars argue that sacrifices among the Acholi are made to the ancestors and not to God. It is true the Acholi revere the ancestors but it would be an empirical mistake to argue that they offer sacrifices solely to the ancestors. That position can be challenged by Mwakabana & Lutheran World Federation (LWF)., (2002) and Mbiti (1970) who argued that the Luo people offer sacrifices to God under large trees during moments of calamities. They prepare food and dine together either in the shade of the sacrificial tree or in some other place. For instance, the traditional doctors of the Luo (*Ajwaka*) would offer sacrifices of sheep, or hens and make long prayers in the time of wars. They also give sacrifices to gods when putting up a new building with the belief that gods will in return help to chase away all the bad spirits that hide around that place where the building would be placed and he will make children and animals to grow in good health (Mbiti, 1970). This study attempted to address this controversy by disclosing the particular deity to which sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion is offered. The study found a conflicting answer to this issue. Most Acholi people believe that sacrifices are offered to the dead ancestors and yet there are also some Acholi people who believe that sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion is offered to the supreme God.

Mbiti (1975) argued that sacrifices were offered to God by the African people through intermediaries like rain makers, ritual elders, oracles, priests, kings among others since the Africans believed that they are too inferior to approach God directly. A number of scholars (Mbiti, 1975); (Nwobodo, 2024) and Kanu et al., (2020b) have acknowledged that there are circumstances that make people in African societies to give sacrifices to God and these include; drought, epidemics, wars, raids, insect pest, and destructive floods. Invariably, these animals are of particular colour which can be black, red, white or brown. Normally, domestic animals such as sheep, goats, cattle, dogs, fowls are sacrificed by the heads of families (Mbiti, 1975). It is true that the Luo people including the Acholi of Uganda offer sacrifice to God in times of trouble as Mbiti and others reported. However, while these studies offer useful background about sacrificial practices, they were written many years ago and do not reflect how sacrifices have changed. They do not show what sacrificial practices look like today among the Acholi people, or how modern life has affected them. This study looks at those changes and gives a current picture of how these practices are understood and carried out now.

Mbiti (1969) observed that the Abaluyia of Kenya have specific time in which they make sacrifices to God including the time of birth, naming and circumcision of an individual as well as wedding, funerals, and the time of harvests. They pray to God while offering the sacrifices. Mbiti continued and reported that both the Akamba and the Kikuyu of Kenya give sacrifices on great functions like rites of passage, planting, and harvest. Most importantly, when rains delay, sacrifice is offered. The Kikuyu of Kenya offered sheep of a specific colour, while the Akamba use oxen, sheep or goat of a particular type (Mbiti, 1969). This study relates to sacrifice in Acholi traditional religion because people used to offer sacrifices when there is drought in the land. According to Grove (1926), the Acholi carry out sacrifice at the birth of a child, also known as the *kwer*. This ritual was done for three days for a baby girl and four days for a baby boy. In this period of the ritual, the mother is forbidden from certain things

depending on a particular Acholi society. In some societies, she does not eat salt while in other society, she does not take porridge of any kind. Throughout the ritual period, the baby is not allowed to be brought out of the hut. At the end of the rituals, all the women in that village would gather together and they partake of the food from the sacrificed animal (Grove, 1926). However, much as Grove (1926) deserves to be commended for his work, he made a grave error by saying that the ritual is observed for three days for girls and four days for boys. The truth is the reverse of what he recorded. This is because according to the Acholi culture, any ritual for a male takes three days and that of a female takes four days.

A study by Tubi (2022) found out that in Okun indigenous religion in Nigeria, there are four fundamental requirements for giving sacrifices and these are; purity of the items offered, the sacrifices should be offered by priests, they must follow certain laid-down rites and finally, they are to be offered from specific spots. This study resonates with sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion because sacrifices to be offered in Acholi community are expected to meet those requirements discussed. Grove (1926) noted that sacrifices in Acholi society were offered by specific witchdoctors (*Ajwagi*), elderly men and women of respect. The items to be offered were only accepted when the traditions of the Acholi have been followed. Above all, the chief played significant religious role in Acholi society. However, the above study does not justify why certain people do not officiate sacrifices. The Acholi people according to the study only allow certain specific people to officiate the offering of sacrifices because they are considered holy and closer to gods because of the privilege position they hold.

Among the central Luo, a woman is believed to have committed abomination (*kir*) when out of anger, she deliberately takes a pot or dish with or without food and throws it away. This act of *kir* will immediately result to sickness in a home (P'Bitek, 1971 & Grove, 1926)). When the elders of the family are notified of the act, they organize for an emergency meeting by the father of the husband in which the wife's parents and brothers would be invited. The parents

and brothers of the woman would rebuke her and the husband's people would blame the man for being violent on the woman. Issues were settled by offering sacrifice of a goat and reconciliation carried out (P'Bitek, 1971). I acknowledge this succinct work by the scholar above because it captures the essence of what is done in Acholi society. However, the work of P'Bitek (1971) on sacrifice only looks at one side of the woman committing the abomination (*kir*) yet men also violate the moral order of Acholi society which would also call for sacrifice. In Acholi society, it is generally known that both male and female commit acts of abomination (*buru*/*kir*). Any abomination which calls for sacrificial cleansing by men can also be done by a woman.

According to P'Bitek (1971), the Acholi would give sacrifices of goats to the living ancestors who normally appear to the living people asking for sacrifices. To P'Bitek, sacrifices among the Acholi are made to the ancestors (*kwari*). At the building of the shrines (*abila*), people would offer sacrifices to the ancestors. It is on this occasion that the dead speak directly to the living through the witch doctor (*ajwaka*). At the new shrines, goats that are offered would be made to stay until they urinate, a sign that the ancestors have accepted them. These goats are then slaughtered and the blood is made to flow into the shrines (*abila*). Part of the meat would be thrown to the shrines after cooking. This act is accompanied by prayer for protection and good health (P'Bitek, 1971). Okidi (2024) also noted that the Acholi people made sacrifices to appease the gods and the ancestors. This was a common religious practice of the Acholi people which has been done since time in memorial. Farmers, fishermen and hunters in Yoruba believe that success in their work depends of the graces of the supreme being. Therefore, they give sacrifices to thank these beings that have provided them with their needs. This is normally done in thanksgiving sacrifices (Alkalah, 2016).

In African traditional society, communal sacrifices are normally given at shrines or in places that are considered holy like lakes, hills, waterfalls among others while individual sacrifices

are made in or near homes and in some places, the people have shrines at home for sacrificial offering (Mbiti, 1975). This is related to what P'Bitek reported among the central Luo. To P'Bitek, sometimes, among the central Luo, the ancestors would also possess the living and request for houses (shrines) to be built. The building of the shrines is accompanied by offering sacrifices of goats and chickens. These dead ancestors who normally appear to the living always complain that they have been left out and not attended to by their children and people's failure to offer sacrifices would cause misfortunes in Acholi society (P'Bitek, 1971).

A number of scholars (Mbiti, 1975; Parrinder, 1969; Nwobodo, 2024 and Kanu et al., 2020b) have attempted to explore the religious specialists who are authorized to offer sacrifices in African Traditional Religion. To Mbiti (1975), sacrifices are given by special people since people believe that they are too small to approach God directly. The intermediaries who help people to offer sacrifices include rain makers, ritual elders, priests, oracles, kings, medicine men, diviners, seers (Mbiti, 1975). Parrinder (1969) observed that religious leaders such as priests, medium, diviners among others are the ones who offer sacrifices in African society. Among the Igbo in Nigeria, a religious person performs sacrifices at different times of the day and sometimes at night. Prayers accompany the offering of sacrifices in which people appeal to God for their needs (Nwobodo, 2024). Kanu et al., (2020b) confirms that the object of sacrifice included sheep, goats, fruits, eggs and they are determined by the priests, that is to say, the decision on what to offer rests on the priests. These sacrifices are offered in places like shrines, markets, cross roads. Those studies are in line with a study conducted by Grove (1926) who noted that the Acholi used animals such as goats, sheep, chicken and sometimes cattle to offer their sacrifices to the spiritual beings.

Sacrifices were made during the time of exorcism by those who are possessed in eastern Nigeria. To carry out this task, the diviner (*Dibia*) would determine the right kind of sacrifice to be offered and he determines the how, where, when and whom it should be made to. The

main reason for this kind of sacrifice is to break the bond between the possessed and the spiritual world. Exorcism is always successful when proper sacrifices are made (Nwobodo, 2024). This relates to a study by P'Bitek (1971) which observed that the central Luo offer sacrifices to free the patients who have been possessed by the spirits and the sacrifice to be given depends on the request of the spirits in the patient (*jok*). The spirits may ask for a goat, chicken or any other thing. P'Bitek (1971) further reported that there are many *jok* that possess people and they can be the *jok kulu* (spirits of the river), *jok orongo* (causes a disease which makes a person shiver all over the body). Consequently, these spirits cause different diseases to the people like stomach ache, headache, miscarriage and others. It is through the help of the *ajwaka* who offer sacrifices that these *jok* will be exorcised.

Girling (1960) reported that animal sacrifice (*tum*) was made in Acholi society when someone kills a relative or any member of the society. The sacrificial ceremony is conducted in the dead man's family for purposes of reconciliation. Two rams from each family are brought for the function to be slaughtered. The animals are cut and the blood is put in a gourd and cooked. The killer and father, or the relative of the victim kneel down on earth carrying the blood of the sheep between them. They dip their hands into the blood which is put between them and smear each other's lips, forehead and chest. Then the elder of the killer take some of the undigested matter from the intestine (*wee*) and smear the girl brought for compensation with it as they ask for forgiveness and peace in the village. Some of the blood is then mixed with the chyme (*wee)* and the bitter root (*oput*) and all the members present drink of it. After the ceremony, the two parties eat and drink beer together with happiness. They will be peaceful from that day onwards (Girling, 1960). Girling's work was published in 1960. However, since then, the Acholi sacrificial system might have gone through transformations dure to colonial legacy, LRA insurgency, globalization and religious influence. This study investigates how these forces have reshaped sacrificial practices in ATR. Besides, Girling's account is mainly descriptive

and externally framed, but this study incorporated current Acholi voices including that of the elders, chiefs, expiators among others which gave room for understanding sacrificial practices in ATR.

2.2 The Significance of Sacrificial Practices in Traditional Religious Systems

Shipton (2014) reported that among the Luo people, sacrifices help to provide relief and aid in times of the outbreak of drought, famine, diseases and wars. Sacrifices help people to ask for good health, food, money, and safety from the spiritual world. The Luo people sacrifice a black sheep to God in times of calamities and they ask God to bless their new houses as they offer sacrifices (Mbiti, 1975). The Igbo make sacrifices to friendly deities to ask for favour from them. People go to known deities to surrender themselves and their families for protection. This kind of relationship requires them to frequently offer sacrifices to these gods after a specific period of time to keep peace with the spiritual beings (Nwobodo, 2024). These studies resonate with sacrifices in Acholi society since people in Acholi Traditional Religion also give sacrifices to ask for favour from the numinous beings. The studies confirm what Okidi (2024) observed when he noted that the Acholi offered sacrifices to the gods to appease him so that they provide them with their daily needs.

Sacrifice among the Luo are made to solve the infertility problem of both human beings and animals, curing sicknesses, purifying murderers or those who are victims of incest (Shipton, 2014). Similarly, Girling (1960) reported that sacrifice would be made among the Acholi when two people are got in the very act of incestuous relationship. This is also reflected in a study by Tubi (2022) which reported that sacrifice among the Okun of Nigeria helped in purifying the individual and community at large. His study found out that sacrifices helped in cleansing acts of abomination that are violated by individuals in society. Some of the abominations are; incest, murder, defilement among others (Tubi, 2022). However, much as this study is related

to Acholi case, it does not provide the kind of sacrifice which is needed to purify these abominable acts. In addition, there are many taboos in Acholi traditions which would require sacrifices if broken but they are not captured in this study. This research aimed to fill this gap by examining and documenting about abominable acts that warrant sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion.

Sacrifices among the Yoruba people in Nigeria are offered by different individual families in order to be in good relationship with the divine beings (Kanu et al., 2020b). The Igbo also give sacrifices to ask the deity for special favours. People make sacrifices to deliver and dedicate their lives to the supernatural beings. They then keep renewing this relationship by offering sacrifices consistently to the spiritual beings (Nwobodo, 2024). The Yoruba of Nigeria believe that in order to attain good health, increase in crops, cattle, and family, one has to sacrifice to the spiritual beings. When a man makes regular sacrifices, he receives favour from the super natural beings (Alkalah, 2016). The above studies are related to sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion because the Acholi also do offer sacrifices with the intention of asking favors and blessings from the spiritual world. However, the geographical gap can be seen in those work since they were carried out in West Africa.

Sacrifices among the central Luo perform social role. At the time of the sacrificial ritual in the shrines (*abila*), clansmen and clanswomen used the occasion to know one another (P'Bitek,1971). Parrinder (1969) noted that sacrifices in African societies are communal. They bring people together as they shared the meat of sacrificial animals. Nwobodo (2024) reported that the Yoruba people make sacrifice to bring unity in the community. The primary role of sacrifice is to bring communion between the sacred being and man and this relationship is maintained by offering more sacrifices (Nwobodo, 2024). In addition, the Acholi of Uganda slaughter animals for purposes of reconciliation. The blood of the sacrificial animal is poured in the shrines of gods and on the person seeking reconciliation (Wepener, 2021). The above

scholars deserve credit for acknowledging social cohesion as a significance of sacrifice in Africa which is akin to what the Acholi of Uganda do. However, apart from bringing people together, the Acholi used the occasion of sacrificial ceremony to teach about the importance of unity, hard work and following the norms, an aspect which the above studies did not capture.

The Luo people offered sacrifices to counter vengeful spirits of a dead neglected person to stop it from disturbing people and affecting crops (Shipton, 2014). Sacrifices among the central Luo were meant to deal with evil forces that make life difficult and it would provide mechanism for dealing with these evil problems (P'Bitek, 1971). Mbiti found out that the Luo people offer sacrifices to ask God to send away the bad spirits that would bring troubles in the homesteads (Mbiti, 1970). Nwobodo (2024) observed that sacrifice among the Igbo of Nigeria is made to the gods to ask for deliverance for those who were possessed. This sacrifice was believed to break the bond between the possessed individual and the bad spiritual world. However, as noted above, there are disagreements among scholars on the subject of sacrifices made to do away with evil spirits. A couple of scholars like Shipton (2014); and P'Bitek (1971) argued that the sacrifices are made to the spirits to ask them to leave the possessed people while (Mbiti, 1975) , and (Nwobodo, 2024) opined that people make sacrifices to God to ask him to exorcise the evil spirits from people. This study will fill this controversy by finding the correct exorcism practice in Acholi context.

The Acholi people of northern Uganda sacrificed animals for the purpose of reconciliation among members in society. They slaughter an animal for purposes of reconciliation. The blood of the sacrificial animal is poured in the shrines of God and on the person seeking reconciliation. Afterwards, the parties involved in the reconciliation process eat and drink together (Wepener, 2021). According to Wepener (2021), sacrifices in Africa is often fundamental in bringing reconciliation among the people. The above scholar went further and

reported that slaughtering and eating together are a very common practice in many cultures in South Africa which applies to Acholi Traditional Religion.

2.3 The Impact of Modernity on African Indigenous Sacrificial Practices

There has been a Christian movement to eliminate animal sacrifice among the Luo of Kenya on ground that the practice is non-Christian, idolatrous and superstitious. The Roman Catholic and Anglican Christians contend that the Eucharist is the right sacrifice that should be celebrated (Shipton, 2014). Tubi (2022) reported that western culture, Christianity and Islam have had significant impact on the indigenous religion of the Okun people of Nigeria. These three civilizations have imposed their ways of life on the local people and the later have been influenced to look at traditional sacrificial practices as superstitious. Consequently, the followers of Islam and Christianity have abandoned their traditional religious practices and lineages (Tubi, 2022). Christianity has had a considerable impact on African Traditional Religion. The influence of Christianity can be clearly seen in the decline of traditional African practices. The Christian impact on traditional religion can be seen from the neglect of sacrificial ceremonial practices (Parrinder, 1969). These studies speak to the case of sacrifice in Acholi Traditional Religion because as observed above, it is indeed true that Christians in Acholi regard sacrificial practices with contempt and they discourage people from offering sacrifices. Okidi (2024) opines that upon their coming to the Acholi land, the Christian missionaries urged the Acholi people to abandon their practice of offering sacrifice saying that the practice was evil.

Several scholars, Kanu et al (2020b) and Tubi (2022) reported that modernization has influenced the work of traditional African priests. Kanu et al (2020b) opined that modernization has brought in the role of western medicine which has eroded the role of priests in Traditional Africa. Tubi (2022) concludes that the western world has led to the decline in the number of

priests and the traditional rites. This study is related to the case of sacrifices in Acholi society since it is indeed true that the priests in Acholi Traditional Religion played fundamental role in performing religious roles. However, Tubi's study does not give the details of how the priests today are perceived by the local people in Africa. This research aimed at filling this gap by looking at the current perceptions of the Acholi Christians on traditional priests and their role in Acholi society.

Tubi (2022) also reported that western education has influenced the traditional system in Africa and it has suppressed the traditional method of imparting knowledge to the younger generations. Etta & Onah (2024) opined that the western scholars were guilty of attacking and conceptualizing African Traditional Religion using their culture and historical context as the lens for understanding. The western philosophical method they used could not define African Traditional religious practices. The popularity of education system of Europe has also affected local beliefs and practices in Africa. The elders blame western education because the children always come back from school and despise the gods of the local people (Parrinder, 1969). The above studies explored the general impact of Western education on African traditions, but they stop short of showing how it has affected specific religious practices like sacrifice. None of them look closely at the Acholi people or explain how education has changed the way sacrificial practices are performed or understood among the Acholi people. This study takes up that task by focusing on the Acholi and examining how their sacrificial practices have been shaped by formal schooling and the values it promotes.

Kanu et al (2020b) observed that in contemporary world, sacrifices are very rare because of the modern civilization. Sacrifice is not revered as before. Today, some people consult diviners and offer sacrifices in secrets unlike before where it was done as a lifestyle of the African people. Similarly, Shipton (2014) reported about the decline in sacrificial practices in the Luo land and in African continent in general since the 1930s. By the 1990s, ceremonies where

sacrifices of animals were offered had disappeared from the scene. While these scholars note the general decline of sacrifice in African societies, they do not explain how specific aspects of Western influence like Christianity, formal education, or urban life have affected or changed the way sacrificial practices are understood or practiced today. This study focuses on the Acholi to show how these forces have shaped sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion over time.

A study by Shipton (2014) reported that there has been an animal rights movement in Europe, America and other parts of the world that advocate for the rights of animals. This movement has strong advocates in Africa and they regard animal sacrifice as torture and murder. Moreover, other scientists have found out that there are more health benefits of vegan diets compared to animal meat and they advocate for vegetarianism (Shipton, 2014). Some economists have also criticized and fought against animal rearing arguing that the practice of animal rearing waste land that should be used for agriculture (Shipton, 2014).

2.4 Conclusion

A lot of studies have been done on sacrificial practices in African Traditional Religion. However, there are scarce studies that focus on specific religio-cultural contexts, as the case is with ATR. Even the few existing studies have not captured the phenomenon of sacrifice in Acholi Traditional religion. Most information at hand is outdated since they have been written several decades ago. In addition, the available literatures on sacrificial practices appear to be very general handling the African continent at large. In spite of the above, the researcher acknowledges and recognizes the contribution of those scholars on the subject of sacrifice in indigenous religions of Africa. This review was therefore able to identify the time gap, geographical and empirical gaps which forms the basis of analysis of previous studies conducted in line with sacrificial practices in ATR.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter gives the research design that was used in the study. It describes the population from which the study sample was selected and the method of sampling which was employed. It also describes the data collection methods and instruments that were used to collect data and the means of data analysis which was used in the study.

3.1 Research Design and Setting

A research design refers to the overall strategy that you decide on to coherently and logically integrate the different study components (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). It gives a plan on selection of the research participants, data collection and analysis (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). The study employed Interpretivism Research Philosophy put forward by Max Weber, a German sociologist which is based on the assumption that knowledge is subjective and there is no single reality. Interpretivism also assumes that understanding social phenomena needs grasping the meanings and interpretations that people attach to their experiences. This philosophy helped the researcher to explore the diverse views that the Acholi people have about sacrificial practices in ATR. This study used a purely qualitative research approach. Qualitative research refers to an approach used to gather and analyze non-numerical data so as to gain an understanding of people's attitude, behaviour, beliefs, opinions, experiences and priorities (Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative approach was most appropriate because it provided room for the study to gain a rich and in-depth understanding of the lived experiences, beliefs and behaviour of the Acholi people being studied. This study also employed Phenomenological Research Design, which refers to a method that seeks to understand the meanings that people attach to their lived realities/ experiences and challenges scholarship that approach people's worldviews

from a subjective perspective which is often judgmental, biased and prejudiced. The design focuses on revelation, sharing an account and understanding of lived experiences (Van Manen, 2014). I employed phenomenological method through conducting in-depth key informant interviews with shrine priests, expiators, chiefs and other Acholi Traditional religious specialists to understand the lived experience and the meaning behind sacrificial practices. Phenomenology guided both data collection and analysis phases. I bracketed my preconceived biases and focused on participants' descriptions of sacrificial rituals to understand the lived experiences of the Acholi on sacrificial practices. This design is chosen because it allows the researcher to get rich and in-depth information from the Acholi people who practice sacrifices and understand the meanings, and values that these people attach to their sacrificial practices.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Agago district in northern Uganda. Agago district is located as shown in the GIS map in figure 1 (next page). The study focused on the four sub-counties of Paimol, Omiya Pachwa, Lapono and Adilang. In each of the sub-counties above, the study was carried out in the four royal councils. Agago district was chosen for this study because it is considered as the epicenter of Acholi traditional religious life where people from different parts of Acholi sub-region go and offer sacrifices. The above four sub-counties were chosen for this study because they border Karamoja and people still perform sacrificial practices for security and protection from the Karamojong cattle raiders. Besides, these sub-counties still had traditional Acholi age-set systems where sacrifices were offered by people in different age groups who wished to join another age group. Most importantly, the above sub-counties had religious specialists who actively performed sacrificial rituals.

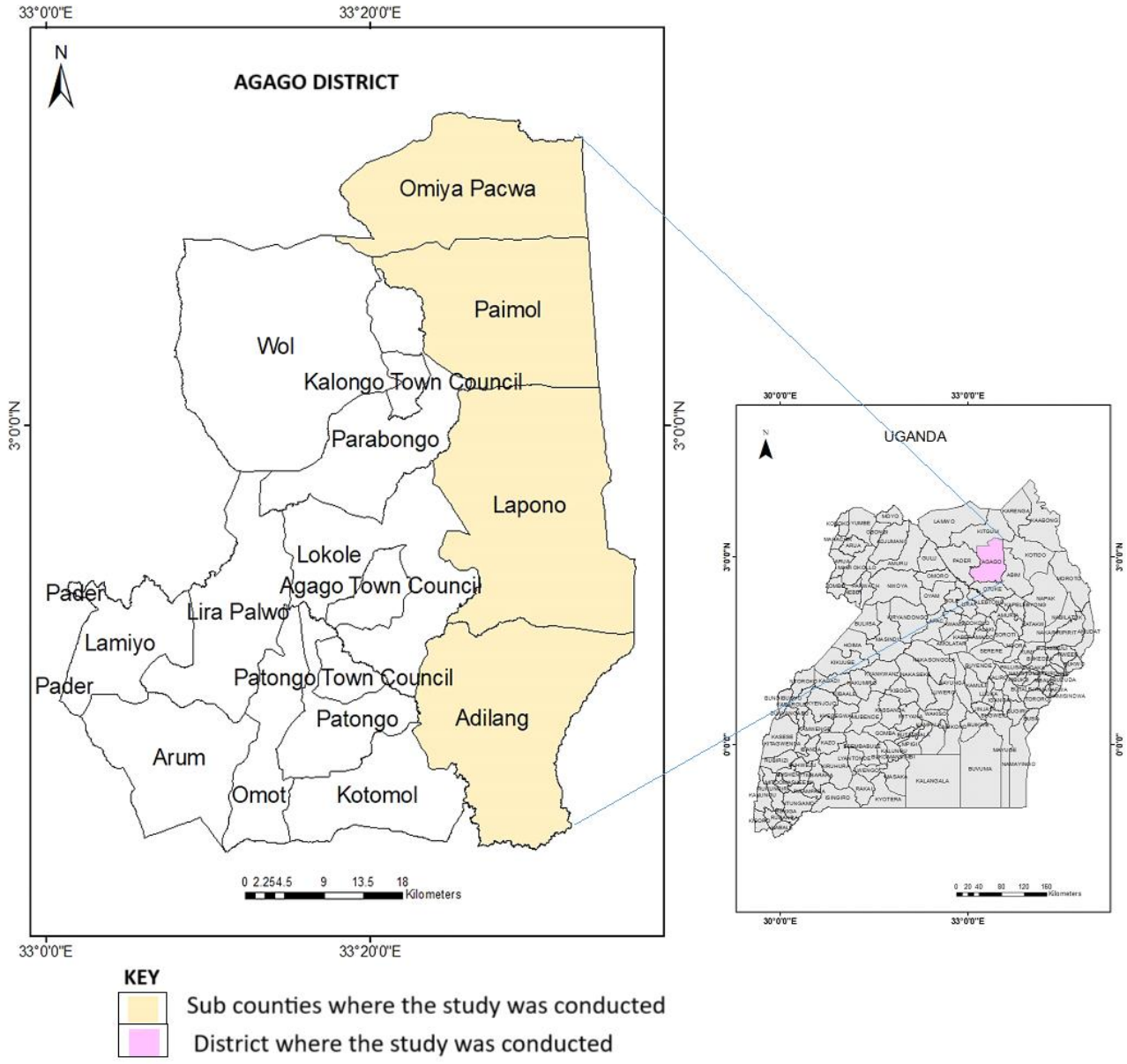


Figure 1:Location of the Area of study

3.3 Study Population

Both male and female participants were included in this study. The study population included shrine priests (*wegi abila*), ritual expiators (*lutum kir*), death compensation negotiators (*luri tal*), chiefs (*Rwodi*), and elders (*ludito mutegi*). These were the most important people for the study because they were regarded as the custodians of the Acholi Traditional Religion. They provided key information about the phenomenon of sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion in which they described what, where, when and how sacrifices are offered in Acholi

Traditional Religion. These people also provided information about the significance and the influence of modernity on the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. The above categories of people were important because all of them participated actively in the different sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. That is to say, the above categories of people gave their responses to the researcher based on what they had experienced in giving of sacrifices. It is in this sense that they were able to report first-hand information based on what they had experienced and not just what they heard about.

3.4 Sample Size

The researcher collected data from a total of 22 research participants as follows: 06 shrine priests (*wegi abila*) were sampled out to get the data. This category of the respondents was important because they are the ones who are responsible for making sacrifices in the shrines. 05 ritual expiators *(lutum kir)* were also interviewed. These expiators physically participate in performing sacrificial rituals to cleanse victims of abomination. The sample also included 03 chiefs (*Rwodi*) since they are regarded as the cultural and religious leaders of the Acholi people. A total of 04 elders (*ludito*) and 04 death compensation negotiators (*luri tal*) were interviewed since they are the custodians of Acholi Traditional Religion and they participate very actively in the ritual of sacrificial offering. The above sample was considered appropriate for this study drawing from the recommendation made by Denscombe (2014) who argues that phenomenological research requires a small number of informants (10 to 15) whom the researcher engages into a lengthy discussion about their real life experiences to ascertain the values and meaning that these individuals attach to their experiences. However, it should be noted that the researcher had planned to interview a total of 40 research participants but he reached saturation level on the 22nd research participant. The other participants were giving the same information given by the first 22 people which made the researcher to stop getting more information.

3.5 Sampling Method

The study employed a non-probability sampling method. The researcher used purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques to get data from the field. Purposive method was employed since the researcher wanted to recruit participants who had the most reliable information about the topic of sacrifice in Acholi Traditional Religion. This explains why the shrine priests, expiators, death compensation negotiators, chiefs, and elders were interviewed since they are the immediate people who are concerned with sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion. With purposive sampling, data was obtained from people who are believed to have key information about sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. The researcher also used snowball sampling in which he asked elders to recommend other elders who had the kind of information he desired. This enabled him to get data from people who have the most reliable information.

3.6 Data Sources

Data collected for this study were from both primary and secondary sources. Key Informant Interviews and Participant Observation were the two primary sources used in data collection. These two primary sources of data allowed the researcher to gain very rich information about sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. The research participants of this study were very hospitable and cooperated well with the researcher. These primary sources of data helped the researcher to ask for clarification from the research participants which made the researcher obtain detailed data on the subject at hand. Primary data generated agreed and sometimes disagreed with secondary data that were already in circulation. These primary data attested that sacrifices are important aspect of Acholi Traditional Religion. Besides, the researcher used secondary data sources like published articles, books and other documents available in the internet. These helped to conceptualize sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

3.7.1 Key Informant Interviews.

The researcher conducted one-on-one in-depth interviews with shrine priests, expiators, the chiefs, elders, and death compensation negotiators. In this method, the researcher prepared open-ended questions and administered them to the research participants. The researcher prepared interview guides and asked questions to the participants following the order of questions in the guide (see appendix 2). The researcher was able to move to the four sub-counties and he easily got the research participants through the royal councils. The researcher started by accessing the contact information of the chiefs of the four sub-counties. He then made a phone call to organize the date and the venue for the interviews. On the day of interviews, the researcher would go early enough to respect the time of the research participants. The researcher then sat down with the participants and introduced himself and the purpose of the research study. The research participants were also politely asked to introduce themselves and the cultural positions they held. The researcher then asked for the consent of the research participants. They freely agreed and signed consent forms before the interviews. The researcher then asked the participants to be very free when they were carrying out the discussion. To avoid missing of any essential details of the information from the research participants, the researcher asked the interviewees to allow him take the voice recording of their information using his phone. This was done to capture the information the way they were without missing any part of the information. He was allowed by all the interviewees and he recorded the voices and also wrote key information in a counter book. Where need arose in the interview processes, probing questions were asked to allow for further discussion for deeper understanding. An in-depth interview as a method was chosen and it was so fundamental because it gave the researcher the room for clarification of certain questions and responses. It also favoured both literates and the illiterates.

3.7.2 Participant Observation.

The researcher attended one of the sacrificial ritual ceremonies of the Acholi people. This was the sacrificial ritual done to purify the victims of blood pact. The researcher employed observation guide and field notes as tool for this method. The tool was used to focus attention on specific behaviour, ritual and words as shown in appendix 2. The researcher was able to observe in detail what they do, why they do it, how they do and when they conduct the ritual of blood pact. This enabled the researcher to see a very clear picture of the Acholi sacrificial practice and it resonates well with what they had told him during the interviews. This was the case of a woman who had just lost a husband but they had made a blood pact. The woman on that day of the ceremony looked pale, dejected and terrified. She thought she would die after the death of her husband. It had taken just one day after the death of the husband. The ritual expiator was called and he was accompanied by respected elders of that village. The dead man was represented in the ritual by his biological brother. The ceremony took place in the home of the brother of this woman. The researcher was able to attend this ceremony because everyone was allowed to attend it. There were many people from the side of the woman and man who witnessed the ceremony. The two people were brought before the elders and two goats were also brought. The woman was asked what happened and she reported that her dead man threatened to break up with her if she did not make a blood pact with him. She accepted because she did not want to lose him. She was then asked who started sucking the blood of the other and she responded that it was the man. The elders then taught the crowd the dangers of making blood pact and sacrifice was given. The first goat was held by the two people and it was cut by a spear to death. The second goat was also killed in the same way. The meat was cooked and people ate to their full. This method helped the researcher to observe and understand what people do in sacrificial rituals of the Acholi people and compare it with what they had been

telling him during the interviews. Indeed, the researcher understood that the data he was being given were correct since they match with what he witnessed physically.

3.7.3 Document Review

The researcher used this method to collect and review numerous published texts that were physically available online and physical texts about sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. These included published articles and text books. From such data, the researcher did document analysis to contextualize the current state of knowledge on sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. This method was applicable for this study because published information was readily available online, they were less costly and less time consuming.

3.8 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Kahn (1986) defines validity as the extent to which an instrument completely measures what it is supposed to measure. In other words, this refers to the truthfulness of the research findings. The researcher started by conducting a pretest in Unyama sub-county, Gulu City and corrected all the errors that arose, and cross checked all the data to ensure that all questions yield information that were correct and representative of what the researcher was looking for.

The researcher was also able to make a comparison between information given by the research participants who hail from the same community to see whether the information was the same and which in most cases this had been the case. The researcher also politely asked the participants to give the information that they experienced or witnessed being done. As part of reliability and validity, the researcher used probing questions to seek for more clarification in areas that the research participants had not been very clear. The researcher also asked certain questions to confirm the literatures that were already in existence. For instance, he asked the entity to whom sacrifices were offered in Acholi Traditional Religion. This was purposely done and it confirmed what P'Bitek documented when he wrote that sacrifices were offered to

ancestors in Acholi Traditional Religion. The researcher exercised on truth and honesty so that the study would produce similar results when it is replicated by another investigator.

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Directorate of Research and Graduate Training, Kyambogo University before going to the field (see Appendix 5). The researcher prepared interview guides (Appendix 2) and other materials for data collection. The researcher later did the booking of the respondents to alert them of when he intended to meet with them for data collection. Finally, the researcher organized and got the required materials ready and went in to the field for data collection.

3.10 Data Analysis and Presentation

The researcher used thematic analysis for analyzing data that were collected from the field. The data collected through interviews and participant observation methods was analyzed using NVivo 12, a qualitative data analysis software. The analysis involved several steps, including data familiarization through repeated reading, initial coding using NVivo coding functions, development of themes, matrix coding to examine relationships between themes and visualization of patterns and relationship. After getting data from the field, the researcher transformed the tape-recorded data into written texts (transcribing). In this case, since the researcher was an insider and he understands the language of the Acholi, he translated the information that were given in Acholi language into English language. The transcribed data was then typed in Microsoft word by the researcher. The Microsoft data was then imported into NVivo software. The software developed codes and themes based on the research questions of the study. It should be noted that the NVivo software did only the coding and development of the themes. The researcher then carefully read through the themes and codes that came out and grouped the transcribed data in line with the themes and codes generated. Data was manually

categorized in line with the phenomenon of sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion, the significance of sacrificial practices among the Acholi people and the influence of modernity on Acholi sacrificial practices. Then, the researcher went ahead and put each specific objective into sub-sections of their own presenting the key findings, analyzing data and making discussions under the same section. Data analysis and presentation were put in three different sub-sections based on the study objectives. Codes such as SP, DCN, E, C, Ex were used to present the verbatims from the participants and the meaning of these codes can be found in appendix 7.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

To ensure confidentiality of the information provided by the participants and to demonstrate the practice of ethics in this study, the researcher carried out the following activities:

The researcher got authorization from Kyambogo University by getting an introductory letter from the office of the Directorate of Research and Graduate Training (see Appendix 5) that helped introduce him to the research participants and also highlight the purpose of the study. All participants who participated in the study were treated with maximum respect and they were assured of their safety and freedom.

The participants in the research were given freedom of either to participate in the research or not. Those who participated all signed the consent forms (see Appendix 4) willingly before being interviewed. The researcher asked for permission from the participants before taking their photos where he did so. Permission was also sought from the respondents before the audio-recording of the voices of the participants using mobile phone. The participants were also given opportunity to either identify themselves or not. This was done for moral justification of the research as regards, the minimum abuse, safety, and psychological well-being of the research participants.

Complete confidentiality was accorded to the research participants and the researcher with utmost good faith kept the information given within the confines agreed upon by the research participants so as to protect their personality. To demonstrate confidentiality, the researcher employed codes such as SP 001, DCN 003, E 002 and others and this was deliberately done to keep the holders of the information provided confidential. For more clarity, key to the codes can be viewed in appendix 7. In addition, the researcher also made prior arrangements with the respondents in order to avoid inconveniencing or interfering with their other programme.

The researcher happens to be an Acholi from Agago district and he knows and understands a few of these sacrificial practices. However, the little knowledge he had about Acholi sacrificial practices does not in any way influence the writing of this thesis. All what is presented in this thesis represents the views from the research participants.

3.12 Limitations

The researcher encountered a number of challenges which included the following:

The researcher faced a challenge of late coming by some of the research participants even after making prior appointments with them. He would arrive to the interview venue in time but most of the interviewees would come between 30 minutes to one hour late. This affected the researcher because it disrupted the planned schedule and reduced the time for in-depth engagement. To address this, the researcher adopted flexible scheduling approach whereby interview time would be extended to allow for in-depth discussion with the participants.

Many research participants expected that the researcher would give them money after being interviewed as compensation for the time spent in interview. This expectation initially influenced the openness and authenticity of some responses, as participants appeared to give correct responses in the way they thought might be more rewarding. To mitigate this, I clarified the purpose of the study and emphasized that participation was voluntary and non-remunerated.

Another challenge encountered by the researcher was from some of the chiefs (*Rwodi*). Some of the chiefs thought that the study was political and they brought in the aspect of misunderstanding that was shaking the Acholi Cultural institution by then. However, the researcher was able to overcome this challenge by properly identifying himself as a student through providing the introductory letter and the student's identification card. This made them to consent and participate very freely in the study.

Some of the sub-counties like Lapono and Omiya Pachwa were insecure. These are communities in Agago district that were being constantly raided by the Karimojong cattle rustlers. At times the researcher became emotional after seeing homes destroyed by the raiders and the victims living under terrible conditions. The researcher travelled in those areas while fearing being attacked by the cattle raiders who were present at that time. For safety purposes, the researcher made sure that he travelled during day time, conducted the study and came back during day time since the raiders mostly travelled in the night.

3.13 Conclusion

The phenomenological method used for carrying out this study fitted the study very well as it enabled the researcher to get reliable first-hand information from the people who practice their religious ideas from their own perspectives. Consequently, the study reflects the real concerns, values and changes happening in Acholi society. Therefore, the researcher believes that this study will have a lasting impact on the discourse of sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. The methods chosen made the findings not only accurate but they respect the people's own ways of thinking. The next section covers the findings about the phenomenon of sacrificial practices in ATR.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PHENOMENON OF ACHOLI SACRIFICIAL PRACTICES

4.0 Introduction

This section looks at the phenomenon of sacrificial practices among the Acholi people. It explores the various sacrificial rituals performed by the Acholi people, the context in which they are performed and the procedures involved. In other words, it is concerned with answering the question of what, when, where and how sacrificial practices are carried out in Acholi Traditional Religion. Data was collected using interview and participant observation methods. Most interviewees showed that sacrifices in Acholi society are offered during purification and cleansing rituals, appeasement of ancestral spirits and gods, life cycle rituals, social harmony and conflict resolutions, prevention of misfortunes and progressively, sacrifices were offered in times of wars and insurgencies. The findings from the field therefore showed that sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion were offered when there was need to restore social harmony, resolve conflicts and reconcile communities. Sacrifices according to the informants were offered to prevent misfortune and during times of war to seek protection from gods and the ancestors.

4.1 Purification and Cleansing

This theme explores the sacrificial rituals performed among the Acholi people which aim at cleansing individuals or communities from the different abominations which are unacceptable such as incest, sexual misconduct or the breaking of taboos. In Acholi society, there are certain values that should be upheld by everybody in the community. The breaking of these values and norms would call for cleansing and purification rituals. This view is supported by Mbiti (1969) who writes that the Africans made sacrifices to gods during ceremonies of purification of villages from bad acts done by some individuals or the community as a whole.

Amongst the many abominations that call for sacrifice is incest. In its most popular parlance, incest refers to sexual intercourse between people who are related by blood. In Acholi society, animal sacrifice would be required when two people are got or have been reported to have practiced incest. This finding confirms what other scholars found out about indigenous practice of sacrifice. Girling (1960) notes that sacrifice would be made among the Acholi when people are got in the act of incest. Similarly, (Tubi, 2022) acknowledged that the Okun people of Nigeria sacrificed after incest had been carried out. Talking about incest, one participant reported that,

> Incest would call for sacrifice in Acholi community. This would call for the use of a he goat with horn, born alone and of any color to cleanse this act. The two people who committed incest were taken where they had sexual intercourse. They were made to erect a temporary grass thatched house there. They were made to sit in that building. The goat was cut in to two halves between the two victims and the one who started the issue was made to hold the mouth of the goat so that it did not cry. The intestine substance (*wee yiye-kwata duku*) was splashed where the act occurred and the goat was roasted and eaten. The bones were burnt in the fire. The temporary structure was then burnt and the victims were to escape from the burning house on their own. This ritual sacrifice was led by the elders of the community and the local herbalists (SP 002).

By undertaking this ritual, it is believed that the two people who committed the act are cleansed and they become part of the community. Sacrifice is therefore considered very important in integrating people who have sinned back in the community. In another case, an interviewee said that sacrifice would be required when a girl gives birth through incest. However, this participant reported that incest would call for the sacrifice of a sheep. This interviewee when asked said,

> Sacrifice of a sheep would be made when a girl gave birth as a result of incest. During the ritual, a temporary grass thatched house was built. The father and the mother of the offenders would be required to build the hut. The two people who had practiced incest would be made to sit in that house. They are made to eat the meat of the sheep. Then the people present surround the house while carrying sticks (*lut pogo*) and set the temporary house ablaze. As the two tried to escape from the house, they were beaten by anyone present. When they escaped, they would be brought by the youths and made to sit down again and they were beaten and given warnings never to repeat the act. Local brews (*kwete*) were drunk by the elders of the community in this ceremony (DCN 002).

From the above excerpts, it becomes clear that incest would call for sacrifice in Acholi society. In both cases, it is noted that the ritual was attended by people of the community. The Acholi would do this in order to teach moral lessons to the entire community and in that way potential criminals would be deterred by the punishment given to the culprits. However, there were variations in how the ritual is conducted. As the first participant noted that incest is cleansed by use of a goat, the second respondent said it needs a sheep. The variation is in line with cultural theory which says that people have different meanings that they attach to cultural practices. Besides, there are variations in the details of how the ritual is carried out. The former participant noted that the temporary house for the ritual is built by the offenders or people who committed the act while the later interviewee said that this temporary building was made by the parents of the offenders. These variations could also be because of the geographical location where you find rituals were performed differently in different locations in Acholi land.

Another participant gave quite a different opinion on this subject and reported that when someone commits incest (had sexual intercourse with the wife of his brother when the brother is still alive), it would be considered an abomination and therefore it would call for sacrifice.

This act would call for the offering of two goats. This respondent on this matter of someone having intercourse with the brother's wife said,

> When this act was reported, the elders summoned the two people and they gathered and sat down. The elders then asked the origin of the problem, who started the problem. If it was a woman, she would be made to go to her ancestral home and come back with a goat. The ritual was done in front of the door where the act occurred. The goat was split into two as the two offenders held it. This goat was roasted and eaten. The second goat was used for (moyo kom) to find out if the first ritual had been successful (Ex 001)

The above view brings two perspectives into play. On the one hand, it can be argued that in some Acholi community, the wife of your brother is also your wife and therefore having sex with her is not considered a serious crime. The issue would be blamed on the husband who would be considered to be having a weakness. On the other hand, in many communities in Acholi, having sex with the wife of your brother was greatly condemned and it would call for sacrifice as the participant above indicated. In addition, the clan members would organize for a clan meeting where the two are seriously warned and beaten. What is also clear is that the Acholi people would accept sexual acts which is legal. That is to say, only when your brother dies and the woman is left a widow. Inheritance would be allowed in that case. Any sexual act done when your brother is still alive is prohibited on moral grounds. This promoted faithfulness in marriages among the Acholi people. The requirement for the woman to return to her ancestral home and procure a goat could mean an act of reconnection with her lineage, invoking ancestral authority as part of the reconciliation process. The splitting of the goat while both offenders hold it introduces a moment of shared responsibility and mutual resolution of problems.

There are other sexual misconducts which are highly prohibited in Acholi society. For instance, to have sexual intercourse in the bush was considered a serious abomination and it would require sacrificial giving to cleanse it. In many Acholi society, children were warned against having sex in wrong places. This resonates with what Obinna (1999) reported when he said that sexual encounter in the bush would call for purification ritual which involves the sacrifice of an animal. This was believed to bring death to the offenders if violated. In line with sexual act in the bush, an interviewee said:

> Sexual act in the bush would call for the use of a male sheep for sacrifice in Acholi society. The two were taken where they had sexual intercourse. They erected a temporary grass thatched house there. They would be made to sit in that building. The sheep was cut in to two halves between the two victims while they held it. The blood of the sheep was believed to wash their sinful act. The intestine substance (wee yiye-kwata duku) was splashed where the act occurred. When the ritual was done, the sheep was roasted and eaten by the people who attended the ceremony. This ritual sacrifice was organized and done by the elders of that community (SP 002).

Generally, it is believed among the Acholi that when two people have sexual acts in the bush, misfortunes would follow them. The two may be childless in their future marriage. Sometimes, if they happen to produce children, the children may die and this is because of their sinful act of having sex in the bush. The above ritual of sacrifice would however wash the sin committed.

Similarly, a participant agreed with the above reporting when he said that the Acholi would sacrifice when two people have sexual intercourse in the bush. The interviewee said:

> Acholi would offer sacrifice when a man and a woman had sexual intercourse in the bush. This would cause death if it was not purified through sacrifice. This

> sacrifice took place in the bush where the act occurred. The two people would be required to get a sheep and a goat. When that day comes, the two are made to erect a temporary house (*gomo bolo*). The sheep was slaughtered in between them as they held it. This sheep was roasted and eaten by the people. The elders then gave warnings and moral instructions to the offenders and the onlookers. The temporary house was burnt and the two were caned for the act committed. The goat was killed and the elders and diviners looked at its intestine to affirm if the first sacrifice had washed all the impurities. This goat was cooked and eaten by all the people who attend the ceremony (C001).

In agreement to the above excerpt, another interviewee gave a similar version about sacrificial ritual performed when sexual act was performed in the bush. He narrated the same story above and the only variation he gave was where he mentioned that a male goat was used for this ritual and all people in the community were mobilized to witness this ritual practice. Serious warnings and instructions were given by the elders of the community to the people and the offenders being cleansed (C002).

On the same subject above, one participant gave a contradicting view and said that sexual intercourse in the bush was allowed in Acholi society when someone came from very far away and he was dating in a distant place. In that case, this person would be required to tie grass together in the place where they wanted to have the sexual act. To this participant, the grass tied together was a symbolic representation of a house and it would formalize sex in the bush. However, he noted that when the grass was not tied and people had sex in the bush it was an abomination and it would call for the use of a sheep and goat for sacrifice. The sacrificial ritual took place in the bush and the first animal slaughtered was the sheep which was speared and thrown away because it had washed impurities. The goat was killed later after one week and

the elders and diviners looked at its intestine to ascertain if the previous ritual took place well (Ex 005).

From the above information of the participants, it can be deduced that the Acholi would sacrifice when sex was not respected. Sexual acts in the bush were heavily condemned. This was an important aspect in Acholi Traditional Religion that promoted faithfulness in marriage and regulated sexual misbehavior. It also prevented sexual misconduct and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. It should also be remembered that the Acholi not only discourage sexual acts in the bush, but they also condemn sexual intercourse outside marriage and sex before marriage. This could as well explain why unwanted children from illegitimate sexual acts were very rare in Acholi Traditional Society.

Many participants who responded to the interviews reported that in Acholi society, sacrifice would be required when a woman pushes away a man from her chest during sexual act. According to the participants, this was a serious abomination and it would need animal sacrifices of sheep and goat. To the Acholi people, sex should be respected because it is the means through which human beings procreate. Any misconduct or ill treatment during sexual act would require ritual cleansing which was normally done by sacrificial rituals. In agreement with this view, one informant reported that;

> Sacrifice must be performed when a woman pushed a man away from her when he wanted to have sexual intercourse. This was considered a serious abomination and it needed a sheep and a goat for sacrifice. All these were got from the family of the woman. She would be sent to get these. When the sacrificial animals were brought, the ritual took place where the woman got married in front of the cookhouse (*inyim ot jokon*). The woman was made to hold the sheep (*romo*) from one side and her brother held it from the other side

during the ritual. The sheep was then cut it to two halves and the blood was collected in a broken pot where traditional medicine was put. The sheep was supposed to be roasted afterwards and not cooked. The people present ate the roasted meat. Later, a goat (*dyel*) was again slaughtered by a diviner who would look into the intestine of the goat and sees whether the sacrificial ritual took place well and there would be no issue in the family. This goat was then cooked outside around the fire place not inside the cookhouse. They used simsim paste to prepare the meat. When food got ready, the woman who committed the act was made to sit on the skin of a goat on the compound and they got the cooked front leg of the goat and gave it to the woman to eat from her seat. This was a sign of repentance on her side. The woman was then instructed never to repeat the act and other instructions were also given by the elders. When this sacrificial ritual was not done, then the two should never engage in any sexual intercourse, because if they did so then they would surely die (SP 001)."

Based on the above finding, it can be deduced that the Acholi sacrificed in order to cleanse impurities after sexual misconduct. It is generally believed that sex is supposed to be enjoyed and never misused by any of the two parties. In line with the above finding, another informant during the interview said that,

> sacrifice would be offered if a woman pushes the husband out when they were having sexual intercourse or the man wants to have sex. This would require the sacrifice of two goats. These goats were brought from the family of the woman. This woman was supposed to come with her brother for this ritual. She held the goat as it was being killed. This goat was roasted and eaten by the people. After some days, the second goat was also killed. It was used to find out if the first

> sacrifice fulfilled the intended purpose (*moyo kom*). The goat was killed and eaten while the intestine was used to search for any problem (DCN 003).

Much as the above two interviewees reported on the side of the woman, another participant said that this offense could also be committed by a man. This means that both genders would be required to sacrifice in case they misbehave during sexual acts. Talking about this issue, the participant argued that,

> If a man removed his penis out of a woman's sexual organs due to misunderstanding during the sexual act, it would call for sacrificial rituals. This act would call for sacrifice of two goats. The ceremony was done in the home where the act occurred. The two people were made to hold the goat as it was killed. The goat was roasted and eaten. The second goat was killed later after some days. It was used by the diviner who looked at its intestine to see if the first sacrifice handled the problems it was set to handle. If this ritual was not done it caused death in that family. The children may get ill and start dying one after the other (Ex 002).

From the above findings, a variety of perspectives were expressed on how sacrifices were offered when a woman pushes a man from her body during sexual act. The details of what was done varies from community to community. However, a common view among interviewees was that the act of pushing a partner away during sexual act was prohibited and considered a serious abomination and it would call for animal sacrifices. Therefore, a possible explanation is that sacrifices were seen as necessary tools for cleansing Acholi people and their communities from bad acts (impurities) that were considered bad and unacceptable. The sacrificial rituals performed helped in the restoration of social and spiritual order. These findings are in line with the work of Turner (1969) who through his concept of ritual

purification pointed out that rituals helped in reintegrating the individual back into the society after the violation of the moral rule. The Acholi practice of giving sacrifices also reflects the finding of a study by Goffman (1963), who examines the shame of impurity and the need for rituals to purify people from this moral disgrace. Therefore, the existence of purification rituals among the Acholi people shows the Acholi's deep concern for moral goodness and the need to have harmony in the community. Sacrificial practices show the importance of traditional customs in maintaining social order in Acholi society.

4.2 Appeasement of Ancestral Spirits and gods

Participants reported that sacrifices in Acholi were offered to appease the ancestral spirits or gods to prevent misfortunes like infertility, drought, epidemics, or death. These relate well with the work of Akin-Otiko (2019) who argues that the Yoruba people offered sacrifices to gods to appease him so that he gives healing, protection and children. Similarly, Kanu et al (2020b) found out that sacrifices are offered to appease gods and make him grant good things to human beings.

The Acholi people would give sacrifice to gods when there was infertility in their land. For instance, when a man or woman was incapable of producing children, the affected person would be taken through sacrificial ritual where birds were offered to appease gods. In this way, it was believed that the gods would eat the blood of the sacrificed birds and at the end blessed the person to begin producing children. On the issue of offering sacrifice due to the impotence or bareness of a man and woman respectively, one interviewee reported that:

> Sacrifices were offered when a man was unable to have sexual intercourse or if he was incapable of producing children. He reported that this problem was believed to have been brought by the ancestors in the shrines. This ritual was also performed on women who have the same problem. This sacrificial ritual was done by the shrine priest and the affected people would send the message

> to the shrine priest. The affected person would be required to come with a male chicken from his/her home and this chicken must be white with black stripes (*gweno latwol*). He/she was required to go with this chicken and sleeps in the home of the shrine priest as the ritual begins the following day. The ritual was performed in front of the shrine. The head of the chicken was chopped and the chicken was waved on the person. The dying chicken jumped about and the priest instructed it to come back home. Eventually the head would turn to the shrine. The chicken was then cooked around that shrine without salt and it was eaten with millet flour. Only good report from the affected person would be heard, that is to say the problem of infertility would definitely be solved (SP 001).

From the above excerpts, it was believed that the sacrifice of chicken offered had appeased gods in the shrine and they did act by solving the problem of infertility. All the respondents who talked about this phenomenon of sacrifice agreed that the affected people would immediately begin to function sexually.

Similar to the above finding, another informant also alluded to the idea of sacrificing chicken though with minor differences in details of how the sacrifice was done. According to this participant, he performed the sacrifice himself. He reported that, the ritual to make people begin to produce was done before the shrines. The person who had this problem would approach him and he would in turn prepare millet flour (*moko kal*), simsim (*nyim*), and one chicken for the ceremony. That person would be given the day he should come for the function. He then came and he moved with the priest to the place where the shrine was. They would go and sleep there as they waited for the rituals. In the early morning, the priest began his work. They would go in the bush, cut and brought a tree (*kango*). The priest would spread the leaves of the tree near the shrine. The priest then picked the chicken and prayed and he spread the chicken on the

affected person. He instructed the person to sit down before the shrine. He then picked the chicken and cut off its neck before the shrine. The chicken was cooked and eaten. The person was made to go and enter the house and closed the door without seeing behind (SP 003).

Another recurrent issue in the response of the interviewees was that the Acholi would perform sacrificial ritual when there had been severe drought in their land and people needed rains for planting crops. This is in line with the work of P'Bitek (1971) when he argues that the Acholi sacrificed to gods when they are struck with drought. Similarly, Kanu et al (2020b) noted that the Yoruba offered sacrifices during the time of drought. Among the Acholi people, planting season normally began in March and it moved up to June. Sometimes, it would delay to rain up to April and people would begin to ask the chief to go and appease gods so that they are able to get rain from the gods. This was an interesting and a common finding from most participants when asked about the phenomenon of sacrifice among the Acholi people. About the need to offer sacrifice at the time of drought, one informant commented that: "When the sun stays too long, we go to the *Rwot* and tell him it's time to ask the gods for rain, SP 001." This act carried emotional weight, signaling collective concern and hope. The chief's messengers (*lukwena pa Rwot*) assumed the sacred responsibility of carrying shea nut oil and a white-striped chicken (gweno *latwol*) to the hills. An informant continued and emphasized the significance of the chicken's markings: "It must be white with black marks. That's important, SP 001." These details were not arbitrary but they were imbued with symbolic meaning, reflecting participants' belief in the gods' preferences and the ritual's integrity. Women's roles were shaped by perceptions of purity and generational status. The informant explained, "We dance outside the cave, but the old women who no longer give birth can enter. They are clean for the gods, SP 001." This distinction reveals how participants interpret bodily states in relation to spiritual access, highlighting a nuanced understanding of gender and sacred space. The moment the oil was poured inside the cave was described with awe. "After pouring

the oil, thunder comes from the cave. Then water starts falling from the rocks. That's when we know the gods have answered, SP 001". This experience was not just observed but it was felt as a direct encounter with the divine. The ritual culminated in the slaughter of the chicken and divination through its entrails. A local diviner explained, "We look inside it to know how the rain will be. If it's good, we roast and eat it there, SP 001." This act combined spiritual insight with communal affirmation, reinforcing the shared meaning of the ritual. Finally, the sacred water was sprinkled at the shrines of both the messenger and the chief. "The water from the cave is taken to the chief's shrine. Once he sprinkles it, the rain begins, SP 001". For participants, this moment marked the fulfillment of their spiritual dialogue—a tangible response from the gods to human petition.

From the expressions of the people interviewed, the researcher found out that indeed the Acholi took this practice as a reality and they attached a lot of values and meaning to the sacrifice that was done to get rain. In fact, anyone who never wanted to participate in this ritual could be arrested and beaten by the crowds. Another participant agreed with the above finding when she said that the Acholi sacrificed when there was prolonged drought in order to appease gods to give rain to people. However, in addition to the requirements for sacrifice provided by the previous informant above, this participant reported that when the chicken was slaughtered, part of the meat was given to the gods and the rest were eaten by the people present in that sacrificial ritual ceremony. The participant also added that the gods came out of their caves with ululations in forms of snake as they met with the people who had gone to get the rain. These would be two big snakes that were short and they could talk and sing. Women then sang to praise these gods. After the rituals, it would begin to rain immediately according to the interviewee and rain would beat people on the way. The people who went for the ritual would cane each other with sticks (*lut pogo*) as it continued raining (E 002). Some participants mentioned a particular colour of chicken that were used in the sacrifice. Some participants said a black chicken was

used for sacrifice and others said that this ritual needed a white chicken while some said chicken of any colour would be used.

Still on the issue of sacrifice to bring rain in Acholi, another participant said that the sacrifice would begin with preparation of a local brew (*kwete*) made from millet flour. The chicken of white colour with black stripes would be used (*gweno latwol*). This local brew was given to the gods in the shrine and part of it was drunk by the people performing the ceremony. The chicken was slaughtered and its blood was poured in the shrine and the meat was cooked and eaten. Women sang to praise gods and it would begin raining immediately (DCN 004). The above findings therefore contradicts and disapproves the work of P'Bitek (1971) who said that sacrifice to get rain was done before the shrines among the Acholi people. The above findings from all participants attest that sacrifices were made from the caves of specific hills. The variation in the finding could be because of the geographical location since P'Bitek carried his study from west Acholi while this study was conducted in east Acholi. There could probably be variations in the ritual practices based on these geographical locations of different Acholi societies.

The finding of the study also revealed that the Acholi would do sacrificial practices to appease gods for protecting them at the end of every year. This corroborates with the work of Kanu et al (2020a) when he reported that the Africans offered sacrifices to appease gods and make him grant good things to human beings. This event was marked by the offering of animals such as cattle, goats, and sheep to the gods in front of the shrines. On celebration of the end of the year with sacrifice, a participant responded that:

> The Acholi people celebrated the end of every year by offering sacrifice. This would include animals like cows, goats and chicken. All the people of a particular community contributed for this celebration and rituals. Every

> household gave items like millet, simsim, shea nut oil among others. The celebration would be presided by the elders and they gave moral instructions and lessons to the young ones on the day of the celebration. The key messages are on unity and hard work. The animals are slaughtered and libation given to the gods to appreciate them for good harvest and protection. The elders were the first to taste any food item prepared. The day ended with drinking together joyfully and people danced different traditional songs (C003).

It should be remembered that the above sacrificial practice united people of Acholi and it made them to learn from the elderly members of the society. Prayers would be said on such occasions and the elders gave blessings to the young ones. Besides, this sacrificial ritual reveals that Acholi year-end sacrifice fosters unity, reinforces moral values, and expresses gratitude through shared offerings, elder-led instruction, and ritual communion with ancestral forces.

Related to the above, the Acholi would give sacrifice after realizing good harvests as a token of appreciation to the gods for giving them rain that made the harvest successful. This was followed by drinking and merry making by all members of the community. A participant commented about sacrifice made among the Acholi to celebrate good harvest and said that:

> The Acholi people sacrificed to the gods after realizing good harvests. This ceremony would require offering of the food items to gods. Prayers were said and the celebration were done in the home of the chiefs, or in the home of any particular individual. In most cases animals such as cows, goats, chickens were slaughtered, part of it given to gods in the shrines and others eaten on that day by the people in the community. People also drank the local brews and they danced traditional dances. Important speeches and moral instructions were given by the elders to the children (DCN 004).

In some Acholi society, some people would give individual sacrifices to thank gods for providing them with wealth. In support of this view, one interviewee observed that:

> In Acholi society it was common to find people giving sacrifices to gods for helping them get money or acquire properties like cars, land, good houses, motorcycles among others. These people would approach the shrine priests who would instruct them to offer sacrifices of goats, sheep, or cattle depending on what the individual would want to offer. The animal was slaughtered and the blood was poured on the shrines. The shrine priest blessed the person, prayed for him and wished him more good luck. The person then slaughtered, thanked gods and ate and drank with members of the community on that day. The day ended with joyful dancing to traditional songs (C001).

Based on the above findings, it can be deduced that sacrifices in Acholi society were used to appease the ancestors and gods which were believed to have authority over the Acholi people and their well-being. This practice resonates well with the work of Horton (1960) who said that religious rituals help to establish good relationship and order between people and the unseen world. The Acholi practice of offering sacrifices to appease gods and ancestors also reflects the work of Durkheim (1912) who said that religion played a fundamental role in maintaining social harmony as sacrifices are used to help human beings gain favour with the supernatural entities. The values attached by the Acholi people towards the sacrificial ritual practices shows that traditional practices are still very important in the world view of the Acholi people.

4.3 Life Cycle Rituals

This theme explored and explained the notion that sacrifices are integral to key life events such as birth, marriage, and death hence making it a key component of the phenomenon of sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion.

The Acholi people would celebrate the birth of twins by offering sacrifices. This was an important stage in the lives of the twin children and their parents. It was an important celebration and every member of the society was involved. This finding resonates what Akin-Otiko (2019) reported in his study when he said that the Yoruba people offered sacrifice to their gods to thank him for the good things, he has given like children. Similarly, this finding supports what Grove (1926) wrote when he said that the Acholi offered sacrifices to celebrate the birth of children. In regard to offering sacrifice at the birth of twins, a participant reported that:

> Sacrifice was needed if a woman produced twins. That woman was not supposed to go anywhere including her ancestral home until this ritual was performed. This would require the use of a male goat which had also been born twins. This goat should be of black colour. Four white chickens (*gweni matar angwen*) would also be needed. One chicken would be got from the place of maternal origin and three from the paternal home. On the day of the ritual, the elders went around the village to collect items for the ritual. These items include: peas (*ngor)*, *simsim*, and millet. These items were brought to the home of the person who had produced twins and that was where the rituals took place. It was required by traditions that the person who presided over the ritual should have also given birth to twins. The grass (*lum canga*) was put on the hand of the twin's mother. The goat and chickens were then slaughtered. The local brew (*kwete*) was prepared and the elders could tell the future by looking into it to see whether the ritual went on successfully. The meat was cooked but the front right leg was separated. Women sang and danced during the ceremony. Traditionally, women could dance naked. It was said that when the ritual was

> not performed, the children would not grow normally, sometimes the child became deaf or experienced illnesses and could even die (C 003).

The above explains how some Acholi people celebrated the birth of twins. However, another informant gave quite a different account of how the ritual of twin celebration was conducted. She reported that:

> Sacrifice would be needed when a woman produced twins so as to make the babies grow healthily. A male and female chicken would be needed. The elders and parents of the twin would be present at this function. The ritual took place at the home of the parents of the twins. The two parents were made to hold the chicken and the chickens were killed by strangling with a mingling stick. A kind of tree (kango) was tied on the hands of the two parents, their other children who were attending the ritual ceremony. The chicken was then cooked and eaten by the people. Local brews (kwete) were then drunk by the people present. It was experienced that when this ritual was not done, the twins would die, the twins may grow well but they would not produce in future, they may become insane or keep on experiencing illnesses that would not be treated by any western medicine (E 002).

Another interviewee gave a report which was in agreement with the above finding. This participant said that:

> The Acholi would sacrifice two white chickens at the birth of a twin. When these twins were male, they would use two male chickens and vice versa. These rituals were done when the kids were still young. When the babies were brought from the health center after their birth, two chicken were needed. The mother of the babies stopped at the entrance of their compound (*wang kac*) and the two

> chicken were slaughtered and waved on the babies. They were taken into the house and they brought two big sticks and put them at the door way to notify people that there were new born and people should not enter that house. It was until after three days for boys and/or four days for girls that they removed the sticks and brought out the babies. Their umbilical cords were removed and put in a broken pot. The *kango* sticks were then brought and used to cover the buried umbilical cords. They dug a hole in the compound and buried the umbilical cords there. If they were boys, they would take three days inside and when they were female, they would take four days inside. On the day of the ritual, the babies were taken in front of the home. They cooked the peas (*ngor*) and millet flour (*moko kal*). The peas were pasted and it was eaten without salt. If this ritual was not performed, it was believed that it would lead to the passing on of one of the twins (DCN 003).

From the above excerpts, it was clear that when a woman produced twins, sacrificial rituals were carried out. However, the details of the rituals varied because of geographical location of different Acholi communities. Whereas goats were used in some communities, some Acholi communities used chickens. These differences suggest that the ritual is not fixed but flexible, shaped by local customs, family lineage, and perhaps the availability of resources. The inconsistencies also point to differing interpretations of spiritual causality. While all participants linked the ritual to the health and survival of the twins, the perceived consequences of neglecting the ritual ranged from deafness and death to infertility and mental illness. This variation reflects how belief systems are lived and negotiated within communities, rather than uniformly applied. These differences prompt reflection on how oral traditions evolve, how ritual meaning is preserved or altered, and how individual memory interacts with collective practice.

Children born with serious abnormalities would also attract sacrificial rituals in Acholi Traditional society. There are certain abnormalities that would call for the throwing of children away and the offering of sacrifices to the gods. This was when the Acholi people were sure that the child in question was completely unable to grow well and be helpful in future. To avoid the burdens of caring for these abnormal children, the Acholi offered sacrifices to appreciate gods for the life of the child and returned the child to gods by throwing it in the rivers. About the throwing of the abnormal child accompanied by sacrificial rituals, one interviewee commented that:

> When a child was born and it was found to be completely abnormal, it would need a sacrificial ritual known as (*kwe me langegang*). For example, some children were born with their heads becoming bigger and bigger every day. Such children were thrown away among the Acholi and sacrifices were offered. On the day of the ritual, the child was carried on the back of the mother accompanied by other women. When they reached the river, they would walk across the river. When they reached the middle of the river, the mother loosened the cloth holding the child so that the child falls in the water. Then the women immediately began to search for the fallen child. They would go around looking for it but avoided where the child had fallen. When they were now sure that the child was dead, they picked it up and buried it in the bank of the river. A sheep would be slaughtered at the riverside. It was cut into halves and it was roasted and eaten by the people present (DCN 001).

It can be observed that this sacrifice was meant to appease the gods and transport the child to the spiritual world. When sacrifice was not offered, the abnormal child would come back in style to disturb the family in form of another birth abnormality. In agreement with the above

information, another informant gave a similar report about sacrifice offered at the ritual of throwing an abnormal child though with slight variations. According to this informant,

> Sacrifice was needed in Acholi society in case a very abnormal child was born (*kwer me jok abola*). For example, a child may be born without any eyes, or without the entire head. Sometimes, a child was born when there was no bone in its head. Sometimes, the head may be very big. This kind of a child would be thrown away in the river. On that day of the ritual, elderly women came together and one of them carried the baby on her back and they moved to the nearby river. The mother of the child remained at home. Some old men would also accompany the women to help in burial. When they reached the river, the woman carrying the abnormal child would loosen the cloth used for tying the baby on the back and it fell in the river. They began to search for the baby. When they were sure that the baby was dead, it was taken out of water and buried at the bank of the river. A sheep would be sacrificed in the bush. The sheep was cooked and eaten from there. The utensils used for cooking shall not be returned back home (E 002).

From the above findings, we see a slightly different account in the explanation of the details of sacrifice offered by Acholi people at abnormal births. While the former participant reported that the child was carried to the river by the mother, the later participant alluded that the mother of the child remained at home and the child was carried by an elder woman to the river. The former participant also pointed out that the utensils used for cooking the sacrificed sheep would be left out in the bush. The dialects are even different, one was called '*kwer me langegang'* and the other was called '*kwer me jok abola*.' Most of the narratives matched and I think the slight variation could be because different Acholi communities practiced slightly different sacrificial practices depending on the geographical location of the area.

Besides, in Acholi society, when a child was born with the legs being the first to come out, it was necessary to carry out sacrificial rituals. These children were generally considered abnormal (*doc*). To the Acholi people, at birth, a normal child would come out with the head first. Any birth contrary to this was considered abnormal and would call for the offering of a sacrifice. Many interviewees gave this phenomenon when they were asked but the view of one participant stood out about sacrifice offered when a child comes out with the leg first, he said that, "sacrifice would be required when a child came out of the womb from the leg (kwer me doc). The Acholi believe that a normal human person should come out of the mother's womb from the head not with the legs. This sacrifice would be done from home in front of the shrine. This would need the sacrifice of a white chicken (gweno matar). If the baby was a boy, a male chicken would be slaughtered and vice versa. Other food items used in the rituals were millet, peas and simsim, and shea nut oil, clay pot, and rust/pala (E 002)." Other participants reported that when this abnormal birth occurred, two chickens were used. Other food items like peas (*ngor*), and millet flour were used. They were cooked and eaten by the people (DCN 003).

The Acholi people of northern Uganda also carried out sacrifice during initiation ceremonies. This practice was common where there was an age-set system. This was a system where by people in Acholi society were categorized into different age groups. The grouping was done according to the age of individuals. Members of the same age group shared the same responsibilities and respect was accorded to members belonging to the elderly group. It should be noted that for one to move from one group to the other, a person would need to prepare and slaughter animals to the gods and organize celebration that would bring together different members of the society. On sacrifice to mark transition in life, one respondent commented that, "sacrifice would be given by the Acholi people during the transition stage in the age set system. For example, when a youth would want to change his status from youth to an adult, he would be required to offer sacrifice before joining another age group. The animal was killed and eaten

and the person would join the group. The animal was killed by the person or people entering a particular group. This ceremony was done under a particular tree which had been used since time immemorial. The elders prayed for and blessed the person or people joining a particular age group (E 004).” The above was significant because it showed a sign of responsibility and every young member of the society was eager to join the next level of the age set system. It motivated people to work hard and climb the ladder up the age set system since joining another group up the hierarchy requires offering sacrifices of animals.

Many research participants also noted that sacrifice was also performed when reburying a person. This would need the use of two goats. The two goats were sacrificed to appease gods and to make the dead person happy and grant permission for the body to be removed and taken to another place for burial. An informant commented about sacrifice made at reburial and said that, “sacrifice was performed among the Acholi when there was need to rebury a dead person. She continued that sometimes a person may have been buried in a different home. The owner may request the person to be taken away from his land and to do this would call for the sacrifice of two goats. The first sacrifice would see the first goat killed on the side of the grave. The second goat is killed at the home where reburial will take place. Part of the meat was cooked and eaten by the people present (Ex 004).”

On a similar note, another participant said that the Acholi sacrificed during the second burial ritual. He commented that this ritual began by the youth of a particular clan preparing temporary grass thatched shelters (*bolo*) in the home where the ceremony would occur. When that day comes, a medicine man/woman led the ritual of killing the goats, and cows and blood was sprinkled on the shrines. The meat was then cooked and eaten. The members present in that occasion also drank alcohol (*kongo arege*) but they started by pouring part of alcohol on the ground as libation for the ancestors (Ex 002).

One informant came out with one unique phenomenon of sacrifice in Acholi society. This participant reported that when a child's teeth begin coming out from up, it would call for sacrifice (*kwer me bere*). This was because when this happens, it affected children in the neighborhood who would experience severe diarrhea which was not curable by any western medicine. The parents of such a child would be required to look for millet flour (*moko kal*) for making local brew (*kwete*), peas (*ngor*) and simsim. These items were also collected from other women in the village for the function. These items were collected and brought together. The food items of the parent of the affected child were put in a mortar (*pany*). These items were prepared and eaten by people in the community. When they were about to depart from the ceremony, all the women with children picked them up and they sang a traditional song and they went round the mortar. After sometimes, they picked their chicken and ran and closed themselves in their houses and then came out later (DCN 001).

As it can be observed from the above findings, sacrificial rituals are part of important life events among the Acholi people. These events include birth, marriage and death. Sacrifices are seen as indispensable in ensuring the continuity of life and social order. This is in line with Gennep (1960) theory of rites of passage where rituals helped in marking important different stages of life. In addition, the work by Harris (1979) on "rites of intensification" explains that community life rituals are very important in strengthening the social and spiritual connection of a group. Life-cycle rituals therefore give a sense of community identity and continuity. However, these practices are challenged by modern settings where individualism and secularism are the order of the day. Many Acholi people today do not attach values to the practice of offering sacrifices.

4.4 Social Harmony and Conflict Resolution

This theme looks at the phenomenon of sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion that were performed to restore social harmony, resolve conflicts and reconcile communities.

The most fundamental occasion among the Acholi people where sacrifice was offered to restore social harmony was the reconciliation rituals, commonly known as *Mato Oput* ceremony. This ritual was done after an act of murder. In Acholi society, deliberate killing of a human person was highly condemned and in case this happened, there would be a bad relationship between the family of the murderer and that of the murdered. In some cases, more killings were done if the chiefs and other cultural leaders did not intervene. This finding confirms what Wepener (2021) reported when he said that the Acholi of northern Uganda sacrificed animals for purposes of reconciliation. When murder happened, the chief messenger would take the lead in reconciling the two clans in question. These rituals involved compensating the family of the dead with cattle or money and the offering of sacrifices. Before the *Mato Oput* rituals, the two families with murder problem would not associate, let alone meeting on the way. It was only the ritual of reconciliation that brought the two families together. In one case about reconciliation ritual where sacrifices are offered, one participant reported that;

> The Mato Oput reconciliation ceremony was performed after intentional killing between clans. It typically took place in the wilderness or near a river. The ritual began with the slaughter and roasting of a male sheep. Essential items included a male goat, millet flour for food and brew, simsim, alcohol, a chicken for the chief messenger, and symbolic tools like a spear, hoe, and calabash. The meat was placed in an old winnower, and both parties—victim and offender—ate it without using their hands, which were tied behind their backs. They then drank a bitter brew made from the oput tree, also without hands, symbolizing humility and submission. The ceremony moved to the victim's home, where another goat was slaughtered. Simsim oil was applied to its chest, and the intestines were examined to confirm ritual success. The front leg was reserved for ceremonial use. Inside the house, the reconciled parties ate posho together. Elders issued

> stern warnings against future violence and urged unity. The event concluded with communal feasting, including the slaughter of cows (C 001)

Deducing from the above, the use of tied hands, bitter brew, and shared eating points to the gravity of the offense and the humility required for forgiveness. The progression of the ceremony from the bush to home reflects changing from separation to reintegration. Many participants gave similar reports about *Mato Oput* (reconciliation ceremony). All their reports pointed to the importance of the reconciliation rituals. The views given showed that they took reconciliation ceremony very seriously after which the two clans would come back to live in unity forever. In the past it was also mentioned that fellow human beings would be taken away by the family of the victims. That is to say, it was articulated that when one person killed another person from another clan, the clan of the victim would get one person from the clan of the offender. This person captured as ransom could even be killed. Sometimes, a young woman was taken by the family of the victim to compensate for the loss of their dear ones. These women were always mistreated and backbitten. They lived horrible life perpetrated by the other clan (DCN 002). However, the participants gave conflicting figures on the number of animals needed to compensate the family of the victim after murder. Other participants said compensation would need 16 cattle, while others said 14 yet others mentioned 12 cattle and 4 goats. Other participants also said two goats were used in the sacrificial ritual whereas others mentioned a sheep and a goat. These variations according to me is just because different communities in Acholi had different cultural practices but the reason behind them are the same.



Fig 1: Photo of the researcher with the bitter tree (*yat oput*) used in Acholi reconciliation rituals. It is the roots of the tree shown in front of the researcher that is extracted and used for the Mato Oput ritual.



Fig 2: Photo of the researcher with some cultural leaders of Lapono sub-county taken with consent from them immediately after the interviews. From right: Rwot Owor Faustino Kiwel (Chief of Lapono), the Researcher, Obol Geoffrey (Expiator), Ocan Marino Okidi (Shrine Priest), Okidi Bwong Gwok (Elder) and Lawino Esther (Death Compensation Negotiator).

The deliberate act of burning a house by a person would call for the offering of sacrifice according to many interviewees. This act was considered a serious abomination (*buru*) by the Acholi people and it was believed that death would occur if a sacrificial ritual was not undertaken. According to the traditions of the Acholi people, a house is as important as a human life and it should not be destroyed deliberately. This is because it gives protection to human persons. One participant reported about the sacrificial ritual done after the burning of a house and said that:

> Sacrifice would be made in Acholi society when a person deliberately burnt the house of another person. This would require the sacrifice of a goat. When a person burnt the house and he/she refused to take responsibility, the offended person picked the ashes of the burnt house and scattered it in most paths used by the people of the village. Sometimes, it was taken and scattered in the river where people fetch and use. When the person who burnt the house walked along the path or used the water where the ashes had been scattered, the person dies. When there was an agreement for the rituals to be performed, it would take place in the place where the house was burnt. The offender brought the goat and it was killed by spearing in front of the burnt house. There was always teachings and warnings given to the offender and the people present. The goat was roasted and eaten by the people (Ex 001).

Similar to the above excerpt, another participant reported that burning of a house would call for the sacrifice of a sheep. After slaughtering of the sheep, the medicine man and elders present would put the medicine in the ashes and the intestine substance (*wee*) of the burnt house. The sheep was then roasted and eaten by the people. The congregation present during the rituals were given very strong warnings and moral instructions. Another house was not to be put on that particular site where the house was burnt (Ex 006).

From the above findings, it can be deduced that the Acholi took sacrifice after the burning of the house seriously. It was believed that when a person burns a house and he does not accept the responsibility and no sacrifice is offered, the stomach of that person would swell and it would not be cured by western medicine. The person would die as a result of the consequences of the bad act committed. This abomination might even follow the children. However, it should be noted that today, people burn houses belonging to their fellows and nothing bad happens to them which challenges the belief got by the above finding.

Among the Acholi, rivaling over a garden would also call for sacrifice. This was when two people went and dug the same garden. This was considered a serious abomination (*buru madit*) and it would call for sacrificial rituals. This was believed to impact on the entire society when sacrifice was not given. In most cases, when there was no rain, elders moved around villages trying to find out who were the people who could have rivaled and dug the same garden. In support of this view, a participant had this to say, the Acholi would sacrifice in case someone went and cleared down the crops that had been planted by another person due to land wrangle (*puru cam ki ipoto*). This would need the sacrifice of a goat. This act when not handled well would lead to severe drought in the whole community. The person found in the wrong would look for a goat for sacrifice. The ritual was presided over by the elders and it was conducted in the garden where the act occurred. The goat was killed in the garden and it was roasted and eaten from the garden. The blood was collected and sprinkled on the crops in the garden (SP 005). Another informant gave a similar yet different version of sacrifice offered when there was land conflict among the Acholi people. The participant reported that sacrifice was a must when two people rivaling over a garden both tilled the same garden though it may be done at different time (*loco kweri ipoto*). This sacrificial ritual needed a chicken and it was presided over by the elders. The person who was found on the wrong would be the one to look for the chicken. The ritual took place in the garden where the problem had been caused. They began

by teaching the two people about the importance of unity and the need to be together. The chicken was split from the abdomen by use of a spear. The chicken was roasted and eaten (Ex 004)."

Among the Acholi people, the chief was highly revered as the political and religious leader of the people. Consequently, any act of aggression against the chief was unbecoming and it would call for a sacrificial ritual. It was believed that when the chief was unhappy, his unhappiness would also make gods unhappy and therefore there would be no rain. This was why anybody who fought against the chief was required to offer sacrifice. In performing sacrifice after fighting the chief, one interviewee put it that, "sacrifice would be needed if someone fought with a chief. This would need the sacrifice of a black bull and a black male goat. These two animals would be brought by that person who fought the chief. The chief would be required to look for one chicken. The ceremony took place in the home of the chief at the shrine (*nyim abila*). The bull was to be used for feeding the people who would attend the rituals. The goat was to help find out if the ceremony had happened successfully (*mono kom Rwot*). On that day of the rituals, the chief and some of his officials like messengers were made to sit on the skin of a cow. When the meat was ready, they were given the meat in their hands and mouths. They would enter the house and come out. People then began to eat the food prepared (C005)." From the above information, it can be alluded that in Acholi society, having peace with the chief would mean good health, fertility and prosperity while having grudges and problems with the chief would tantamount to problems in the entire society. This explains why the Acholi would do anything possible to promote the well-being of the chief and his family members.

In Acholi society it was also reported that the elder boy in a family was to marry first. If a younger brother married ahead of the elder brother, it was considered an abomination. This would cause conflicts and animal sacrifice was to be given. The performance of animal sacrifice was meant to prevent conflicts and holding of grudges among the two brothers. One

interviewee had this to say in reference to this matter, “sacrifice would be needed when a young person, male or female became the first to get a wife or husband when there was an elderly person. If it was a man, before their parents paid for the bride price, the elder brother and the younger one should be talked to. This was done to bring about peace in the family and good relationship between the two brothers or sisters. The elder brother might be unhappy when he sees animals being taken to pay for the bride price of his younger brother. They were then brought in front of the house of their parents. The two brothers would be made to hold each other’s hand and they sat in front of the house. The goat was brought and it was split in to two by a spear. The two were taken into the house and brought back. The intestine of the goat (*wee*) was splashed onto the chest of the two people. The intestine substance (*wee*) was believed to purify the two brothers (C 001).”

In Acholi society, sacrificial practices were performed to catch thieves who had failed to admit after stealing things. This ceremony was important and it was attended by all members of that community. It was presided over by the elders. A lot of moral instructions were given by the elders to the congregation present. In most cases, when this ritual was being planned the wrong doers came out openly and apologized for their wrong acts. This promoted reconciliation and harmony among the Acholi people. This confirms what Wepener (2021) said when he argues that sacrifice promotes reconciliation among African people. Commenting about sacrificial practices for catching a thief, one participant said:

> Sacrifice would be done to get a criminal in Acholi community. For example, a thief could be arrested through the ritual ceremony called jumping over the door (*kalo kika*). This was led by the elders of the community. The people of that community gathered together in one place and elders talked to them about what happened. One week was always given for the criminal to come out and reveal himself to the owner of the property that had been lost. If the criminal feared to

> come out, he was advised to use another person to reveal himself. When one-week elapsed, people would come and gather together. The elders then prayed to gods while holding small sticks. A goat was killed and its liver removed. The door was brought and people ate the liver and jumped through the door. This started by the owner of the lost property who swore that if he was lying that his property was lost when it was not, then he should die. Other people also came one at a time and said they should die if they were the ones who stole the property as they participated in the ritual of biting the liver and jumping over the door. It was reported that if the thief was there and he jumped over the door post and ate the liver, he would die instantly (DCN 001).

The ritual of jumping over the door (*kalo kika*) was very significant because it regulated the behaviour of people and helped to reduce on the number of thieves in Acholi society. This was because people feared going through this ritual which used to embarrass thieves.

Throughout Acholi society violence against other people was highly condemned. A person who behaved violently towards a brother or any other person in the community would be required to offer a sacrifice. This also helped to send message to potential violent people to stop becoming victims. One participant in regard to sacrifices offered due to violence commented that, "sacrifice would be required when out of anger someone picks a spear and aims at another person with the intention of killing. This would require the sacrifice of a sheep and the offender was the one who brought the sheep for sacrifice. On the day of the sacrificial ritual, the medicine man would prepare the local herbs mixed with sorghum flour. The sorghum seed was also put in the mixture. The sheep was killed and its blood collected and put in the mixture of the local herbs and sorghum. The offender was then given the mixture a total of three times. The sheep was roasted and eaten (DCN 004)."

Following from the above findings, it can be observed that sacrifices served as system of restorative justice in Acholi society. This helped in promoting reconciliation after conflicts like murder. The sacrificial rituals restore peace and harmony among conflicting people. The findings therefore reflect the study by Mauss (1954) who argued that gift exchange in terms of sacrifices promotes social cohesion and resolve conflicts. Besides, this practice of offering sacrifices among the Acholi people aligns with the idea of "restorative justice" as painted by (Braithwaite, 1989), which stated that rituals play important role in mending and addressing past wrongs. The continued use of sacrificial rituals in conflict resolutions among the Acholi people points to the persistence of indigenous conflict resolution methods in the phase of modern judicial system in place.

4.5 Prevention of Misfortunes

In Acholi Traditional society, there were moments when sacrifices were offered to prevent future misfortunes such as illness, death or bareness. This section is concerned with looking at the phenomenon of sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion that were aimed at preventing future misfortunes.

In Acholi society, when two individuals made blood pact it was considered a very bad act and sacrifice would be offered to avoid misfortunes from befalling these two people. This finding was supported by the work of Kanu et al (2020b) who argues that the Africans offered preventive sacrifices to avert bad things from happening after an act of abomination. Blood pact was a situation where two lovers cut themselves and leak the blood of one another while swearing that they would not separate until death put them apart. It was generally believed that if one of the two people who made blood pact died, the other person would also die immediately. Sacrifices done in accordance with the traditions of the Acholi people would help

to avert this misfortune. Commenting about sacrificing when blood pact was made, an informant reported that;

> Sacrifice must be offered in case a boy and a girl or a man and a woman made blood pact. To purify and cleanse this act, a boy would be required to get one goat and a girl would also get one goat. The person who started leaking the blood of the other would be the one to begin the sacrifice. If the boy/man was the one who started the leaking, he would be required to pick the goat and go with it in his in-law's place. The mat was placed in front of his mother-in-law and the boy held the hand of the woman. They would bring the goat and put it in between the boy and the girl. Then they got a leave and sprinkled water on the chest of the goat as the elders prayed to gods. The goat was then killed and the intestine was observed by the diviner. They got the local brew made from millet (kwete) which was mixed with *akwaradok* roots (a kind of local medicine). The diviner again used the kwete to tell the future. Then the goat was skinned and cooked. The front leg was for the people being cleansed. After cooking, the ritual officiator picked the food and put in the mouths of the two people (*gwelo dog*). The man would receive the food in the mouth thrice and the woman four times. Other parts of the animal were then eaten by the congregation present. When that was done, the ceremony following the same order would be taken to the home of the boy/man. It was believed that when this was not done, there would be death (DCN 001).

According to the above verbatim, the sacrificial practice above involves both families of the woman and that of her ancestral home which points to the idea of kinship ties and social cohesion brought about by the practice. Failure to carry out the practice was believed to result to death which underscores the spiritual gravity of this practice. Many other interviewees

reported about the above phenomenon of sacrifice among the Acholi people. However, there were slight variations on the narration of how the sacrificial ritual of blood pact was done. While the above participant reported that this sacrifice would take place in the home of both the woman and the man, other participants reported that this sacrifice was offered in the ancestral home of the man. Where as in the above account the two goats were slaughtered for the ritual of appeasing the gods, another participant said the second goat was meant to find out through divination how the first sacrifice went on (Ex 002). The time when the ritual was done also varied, some said the ritual took place once and others said the ritual took place in the home of the woman and that of the man at an interval of one week.

I personally participated in one of the sacrificial rituals performed for the blood pact victims. In that ceremony, it was done on a woman. The husband of the woman had just died two days ago and the woman was so worried about what would happen to her since she had made blood pact with the deceased man. She was worried and from her face, she was going through serious pain. What I saw confirmed what the participants above narrated and there was a lot of passion that people had for the woman who went through the rituals. The sacrifice took place from the ancestral home of the late man. The woman brought two goats for the sacrifice. The sacrifice was presided over by a known expiator of the village accompanied by some elders. The late man was represented by his brother who performed the sacrifice on his behalf. The elders started by giving moral instructions to the congregation present. The two goats were held by the woman and the brother of the late man and they were killed by spearing. From the looks of things, I observed that she started feeling very free after the ritual had been performed.

Traditionally, the Acholi made sacrifices to cleanse an act of fight between a father and the son or the mother and the son/daughter. This was considered a serious abomination (*buru*) and it was believed that it would cause death if not handled well. To avoid the occurrence of misfortunes after fights of these individuals, a sacrificial ritual was to be done. This finding

confirms the work of P'Bitek (1971) when he said the Acholi people offered sacrifices when a man and his father fought. One participant had this to say about sacrifice done to avert misfortune after the fight between a father and a son, "sacrifice would be offered in Acholi society when a father and the son fought or the mother and the son or daughter engaged in fighting. This act was unacceptable in Acholi society and it called for the sacrifice of a sheep or goat. The goat was cut into two (*kimworo amwora*). The intestine substance (*wee*) was then smeared on the chest of both the father and the son. In some community, two goats were used. One was later used by the diviner to find out if the first sacrifice fulfilled the intention for which it was set to do. The first goat was roasted and eaten. The second goat was normally cooked and eaten by the people. This ritual ceremony took place in the home of the father of the boy (DCN 001).

In Acholi culture sex was considered sacred and any misbehavior during sexual act was highly condemned. For instance, it was unacceptable for a woman to push away a man from her body during the sexual act. A man who withdrew his private parts from a woman during the sexual act as a result of some misunderstanding was considered to have committed a serious abomination and this would also be highly condemned. All these would call for sacrificial ritual practices in which animals were offered to purify the bad act committed. If sacrifices were not offered after these acts, it was believed that misfortunes would befall the family of the people who have violated the moral laws. One of them may die or their children would begin to experience sicknesses and die. A participant made the following comment in line with sacrifice in Acholi society after sexual misconduct of pushing away a partner;

> Sacrifice would be needed if a woman pushed a husband from her chest when he wanted to have sexual intercourse. When this happened, the woman would be made to go back to her ancestral home and bring a male sheep and a male goat. The sheep was slaughtered in the compound of the man where the

> abomination took place. The sheep was then roasted from the bush and it was eaten from there. They also needed sorghum (*lawera*). The sorghum was cooked in a broken pot. When it was ready, they then poured the blood of the sheep in it. The *oput*/*okwaradok* root was then put in the mixture. The woman and the man then partook of the medicine. A skin of a cow would also be used for the search. It was put on the door way. They then looked for the leave of *odugu* tree. They also brought the *pogo* tree and *oboke olwedo*. These leaves were spread over the skin. The woman who pushed the man from her chest was made to hold the mouth of the goat. The goat was then speared to death. The front right leg of the goat was taken and it was cooked in a new pot and given to the two couples (*kigwelo idog*). They entered the house and came out. As they waited for food to get ready, the elders gave instructions to the couple. It was believed that when sacrifice was not done in this case, it would make the couple not to produce children. Sometimes, either the couple or the children might die (DCN 002).

From the above findings, it can be noted that sacrificial practice reveals Acholi beliefs surrounding sexual rejection within marriage as a serious transgression requiring sacrificial cleansing. Through symbolic offerings, ancestral invocation, and elder-led guidance, the ceremony seeks to restore harmony, fertility, and social order in Acholi society. Each item and action from animal sacrifice to herbal mixtures carries moral weight, with failure to perform the practice believed to cause infertility or death. As I observed from the participants, seriousness could be seen from the faces of the respondents and they took this point very seriously.

Similar to the above, some interviewees reported that sacrifice would be needed in case a man or a woman touched their private parts and swore that they would never have sex with their

partners. This was bound to bring challenges in that family. Mysterious deaths could start happening if the two had sex. To avoid misfortunes resulting from this act, sacrificial ritual would be carried out. A participant had this to say about vowing not to sleep with your partner and the subsequent sacrifice that would be made to avoid misfortunes, "sacrifice must be given in case a man or the woman out of anger vowed verbally or by touching their private parts never to sleep with the spouse. This act would need two animals, a sheep and a goat. If the sheep was not there, two goats were used. They began by sacrificing the sheep. The sheep was cut into two halves and the blood was made to flow on the ground. The sheep was roasted and eaten. Apart from giving warnings to the couple, the elders would also use this occasion to pass on instructions to the young people in that community. After one week, a goat was again slaughtered so that the diviners would use it to find out by looking into the intestine if the previous sacrifice was successful (*mono paco*). If the diviner said the sacrifice was successful, then the ceremony ended there. In case it was seen that the sacrifice was not successful, it would recommend the ways forward which might call for the slaughtering of another chicken or any other animal (C 001)." The Acholi traditions held it that when sacrifices were not given in the above circumstances, then there would be misfortunes in that family. These misfortunes would range from illnesses, infertility or even death of children or the offenders themselves. It was only sacrificial rituals that was believed to purify this act.

Still related to the above, some interviewees reported that misfortunes would be expected when out of quarrels and anger, a father picked his penis and pointed to the son or daughter or if the mother picked her breasts and pointed at her son or daughter in anger. This act was believed to be cleansed through the offering of animal sacrifice. The power in that act of a parenting removing his private part and pointing at a child stem from the belief that a parent's body holds strong spiritual force and can curse the child. This is feared as a misfortune and sacrifice is offered to remove its harmful effects. P'Bitek (1971) did a similar documentation and notes

that the Acholi offered sacrifices in some rare cases when a man out of anger touched the private parts and said if I am not your father/mother, then be healthy or when a woman lifts her breast and ask if her son or daughter didn't suck it. Commenting about the above act, one interviewee had this to say, "when a man out of anger or a woman picked the penis or breast respectively and pointed to his/her daughter, there must be a sacrifice. This was considered a serious breaking of the moral order in Acholi culture and the victim would be required to bring a sheep and a goat for sacrifice. The sheep would be killed first and roasted and after one week they would kill a goat and observed the intestine to ascertain if the ceremony had been successful. Sacrifices were offered in this case to avert misfortunes like sicknesses and death that would follow this abomination (DCN 002)."

In the tradition of the Acholi people, the shrines, commonly known as the abode of the ancestors had to be revered through the offering of sacrifices. It was generally believed that if sacrifices were not offered to the gods in the shrines, they would cause misfortunes to occur. There would be problem of drought, diseases, rebel insurgency and sudden death of people. This explains why the Acholi consistently offered sacrifices to the gods in the shrines during bad times like wars and cattle rustling. This finding corroborates with the work of (Mbiti, 1975) when he noted that communal sacrifices were always given by the Africans at the shrines or in other places that were considered holy like sacred trees, hills among others. Similarly, P'Bitek (1971) noted that the ancestors of the Acholi people would sometimes possess people and request for shrines to be built, which made the Acholi to build and offer sacrifices in the shrines. One interviewee in support of this phenomenon of sacrifice said that, "the Acholi sacrificed occasionally to cleanse the shrines, the abode of the ancestors (*kwer me yubu abila*). This was normally done when there were eminent problems like when rebels were capturing and killing people. A male goat (*labwor olam*) was always given for this ritual. The diviners of the society would be there to slaughter the goat and they looked at its intestine. This was a lived reality

and it was reported that this sacrifice was given during the LRA insurgency in Uganda. All the children of that clan that performed that ritual in the shrines came back alive from the bush (C 002)." I was able to observe from the faces of the participants that they valued and attached a lot of meanings to sacrifice offered during the times of war. According to the Acholi people this act of sacrifice saved them from the rebel activities of the LRA.

The Acholi respected mothers-in-laws so much. It was also a tradition in Acholi society that mothers-in-law should be respected and they were not to be touched by their sons-in-law. If a son-in-law touched his mother-in-law, it was considered a serious offense and abomination. This would call for the offering of animal sacrifice. Giving explanation on the sacrifice offered when a son-in-law touched a mother-in-law, a research participant alluded that, "a man who touched his mother-in-law accidentally or intentionally was required to offer a sacrifice and vice versa. This ritual required the nephew (*okeyo)* to separate the two. A male goat would be needed for this ritual. The ritual began with instructions and teachings from the elders. The goat was placed between the man and the mother-in-law separated by the nephew (*okeyo)*. The man held one side of the goat and *okeyo* held the other side so that the two, the man and the in-law couldn't touch one another again. The goat was cut into halves as the two people held it. When the goat had been killed, the mother-in-law walked from the other side and passed round the house and the man followed in the same manner but at a different interval. The *okeyo* remained there and he skinned the goat. He cooked the meat and first took and put it in the mouth of the two in-laws. The rest of the people then ate the meat. The above if not followed would bring problems of sickness to the offenders (Ex 001)." The philosophy behind a son-in-law not touching a mother-in-law could be a deliberate move by the Acholi people to avoid the temptation of the two falling in love. The Acholi would not allow a son-in-law and the mother-in-law to have any physical contact with the intention of avoiding any body stimulation that would come as a result of contact of these two people.

Among the Acholi people, a mother was not to touch the private parts of a male born baby until the baby became three days old. If this tradition was not followed, that boy would never be able to erect and have sex and children in future. This was only put right through the offering of sacrifices. This was considered a reality and participants gave examples of many young men who were touched by their mothers when they were young and they could not erect until sacrificial ritual made them well. According to one of the participants, it was reported that, "the Acholi performed sacrificial giving when a woman happened to touch the private parts of a male baby when it was still young, that is to say, when the baby had not taken three days after birth. In Acholi land, women were not supposed to touch the private parts of their male babies before three days of their birth. If they did so, such babies would not erect in future and they would be incapable of producing children. This would need millet flour, peas, pot, simsim, green vegetable (*boo*). These items were got from the ancestral home of the woman who had touched the baby boy. The medicine person who performed this ritual went and got the above items from the family of the woman but he/she was not allowed to talk to anyone while on the way. The medicine man slept in the same house with the affected child for three days. On the third day, they came out and he/she cooked the peas, green vegetable (*boo)* with millet posho. The local brew was also prepared and the people present would partake of it. This was done to avoid the impotence of the boy (DCN 003)." I happen to be an Acholi from northern Uganda and this was not the first time I heard about this phenomenon of sacrifice. I have heard about many people whom I know them physically who were affected and they went through these rituals and became well. This was a reality and girls were made to be aware of this phenomenon before they even went to their homes and they made sure that they avoided touching the private parts of their male babies.

In Acholi society, a child who had been from defecation was not supposed to be canned. When this was done, the person who did it was supposed to offer sacrifices. Failure to offer sacrifice

would lead to misfortunes like sudden death or severe sickness which would only be treated in the traditional way. One of the interviewees commented about offering sacrifice after beating a child who had defecated and said that, "sacrifice would be offered when someone in Acholi land beat a child who had been defecating or who had just defecated. This was considered unacceptable and it would need a chicken of any colour. The chicken was slaughtered by being split in to two using a spear. The blood of the chicken was collected in a broken pot and some medicine and sorghum (*lawera*) was mixed with the blood. The elder presiding over the ceremony then picked and put the mixture in the mouths of the victim. It was believed that when this sacrificial ritual was not performed, then the child might die suddenly or diarrhea would attack the child which shall never heal. The ceremony took place in the home of the person who had beaten the child and it was presided by the elders (SP 002)."

In Acholi culture, sacrifices were offered when women lost their husbands to death. These women were said to be carrying with them misfortune called *cola.* This was a kind of disease which makes the back of the person to swell. It was believed that when such a widow touches anybody before sacrificial rituals, that person would develop the back problem and this would never be cured until it was treated in the traditional way. This finding confirms the work of Tubi (2022) who argues that the African people in Nigeria offered sacrifices to avert misfortunes and calamities from befalling societies. A participant reported about the misfortune that a widow could cause to someone she touched and said;

> Sacrifice would be needed in case a woman had just lost the husband. This ritual required the use of a goat. That woman on the eve of the day of the ritual slept in the home of the medicine person who would lead the ritual. She slept on the skin of a cow with the legs facing out. She was then brought out early in the morning of the following day at around 5:00 am. She would be taken to the pathway just around the compound. Two people helped in the ritual ceremony.

> They would trim her hair thoroughly. She would be washed also from there. She was then taken and made to sit at the veranda of a house. Then they slaughtered the goat. The goat was roasted and they gave the meat to the woman being purified four times in the mouth. Other people then joined in the eating. The first person to eat the cooked food would be the person being purified. Other people who had never gone through this same ritual would not eat this cooked meat. The person was then tapped on the back and she entered the house and removed her garments used for the ritual and gave them to the medicine person who did the cleansing ritual of sacrificial giving. It was believed that if this ritual was not done, that person would cause kyphosis (*two akwota*) when he/she touched other people (Ex 006).

From the above findings, sleeping on a cow with legs facing out may stand for transition from mourning to cleansing while trimming and washing the widow could mean the physical and spiritual cleansing of a person. The timing, gestures and restrictions given above reflects beliefs about purity, healing, danger and cleansing. I would like to confirm that there were some people in Acholi who have the above-named disease and people say they were touched by widows who did not first go through sacrificial rituals. Thus, this was a common belief among the Acholi people and failure to observe the rituals would cause the misfortune of kyphosis.

Swearing never to get back home by a person who was going away from home because of anger or some disagreement would also call for sacrifice in Acholi society. It was believed that such a person would face calamities in life if he/she happened to come back home. In order to avert the misfortune, such a person was required to offer sacrifice. About performing sacrificial ritual after swearing never to return home, one informant commented that;

> A person who vowed never to come back home was supposed to go through ritual sacrifice. When such a person failed to go through the ritual, he/she would die upon coming back home. When that person came back home, he was made to enter through a *kac* (a gold post kind of item made from *olwedo* timber). The victim together with his/her children passed through the *kac*. Before they entered home, the goat had to be sacrificed, where the elder of the home asked the gods to forgive the sins of the person and welcome the person home. The victim also asked for forgiveness and cast the wrongs he did unto the goat and he asked that the goat should cleanse the abomination. He was made to spear the goat to death. A broken *lut* pogo was put together with an egg where he stepped on it with the right leg and he entered the home. The diviners also observed the intestine of the goat to see if there was no problem. The front right leg of the goat was taken and it was cooked without salt for the victim. Before they began to eat, the main celebrant picked part of the food and put it in the victim's mouth (*gwelo dog*). The other parts of the goat were cooked and eaten by all the members present. If this ritual was not performed, it was believed that the swearing of the person would cause death to that person (C 001).

From the above finding, the Acholi would perform sacrifice to avoid the death of a person who had sworn out of anger never to return home. This was because when sacrifice was not given, the person would die of stomach swelling. I happen to see one experience where someone had sworn never to come back home because of disagreement with his family members. This person went to town but unfortunately, the person passed on. When they were carrying the person back home using the vehicle, the engine of the vehicle stopped just as the vehicle was to enter the compound of the deceased home. It was only until the ritual of sacrifice was given

and the corpse was beaten that the vehicle engine started again. This was a live example that I myself witnessed in my village.

By tradition, the Acholi would not tolerate sexual act by a man in the house of his parents. In a similar way, the father was not allowed to have sex in the house or bed of his son or daughter. This was considered an evil act and when someone did it, the person would be required to offer animal sacrifice. It was believed that misfortunes would occur immediately if sacrificial rituals were not done. For instance, about the above matter, one interviewee said that, "sacrifice would be needed when a man and woman had sexual intercourse on the bed or house of their parents. This would call for the sacrifice of a goat. This ceremony took place in front of the house where the act occurred. The victims (those who did the act) were the ones who brought the goat for sacrifice. The goat was cut into two and the intestinal substance(*wee*) was spread on the bed or the area where the abomination took place. The sinners asked for forgiveness. The same rituals were done when the father had sexual intercourse on the bed of his son or daughter (C 001)."

In Acholi tradition, a man was not allowed to carry his first-born on his back. This would bring misfortunes such as sickness of the baby and sometimes death of the baby. In this case when a man carried his first-born baby on his back, sacrifice was supposed to be offered. Talking about this issue, an interviewee said that, "the Acholi offered sacrifice when a man carried his first-born (*latin kayo*) on his back. This would need a male goat. When this happened, strange things like unique diseases would begin to attack the affected family. The diviner would be called to look into the intestine of a goat to check the things happening in that family. The goat was skinned and the front right leg was cooked and pasted with simsim. The meat was cooked without salt and it was eaten. They first put the meal in the mouth of the person being purified in the ritual (*gwelo dog*). People ate and drank the local brews. The skin of the animal was put on the back of the man three times and that would mark the end of sacrifice (DCN 001)." Other interviewees also reported similar activities that were carried out when a father carried his first-

born baby on his back. Some added that local brews (*kwete*) were prepared on that day and enjoyed by the people. Sacrifice would therefore help to avoid future misfortunes from befalling a particular family after an abomination of a father carrying his first-born child on the back.

Some participants reported that the Acholi would perform sacrifice when a man or a woman failed to control his/her emotions and threw house utensil away. This would cause misfortunes if not cleansed through sacrifice. This finding confirms the work of P'Bitek (1971) who notes that the Acholi offered sacrifice when a woman emotionally takes a pot or dish and throws it away. One participant on the man throwing away cooking material out of anger said, "sacrifice would be needed among the Acholi when out of anger a man or a woman picked and threw away a pot which was on fire cooking food. The woman in this case would be required to go back to her ancestral home and bring a goat from there. She came back accompanied by her brother for the sacrificial ritual. On that day, she was made to hold the chicken with her husband and the goat was cut using the spear into halves. The blood was collected in a broken pot. The blood was mixed with local medicine and sorghum (*lawera*). It was put mildly on fire. The wife and the husband were then given the mixture in their mouths. The goat was roasted on fire. It was then put into pieces and eaten. It was believed that the children would be affected badly if this sacrificial ritual was not done. Children may die or they may experience severe illnesses (E 002)."

Similarly, another participant reported that sacrifice of a chicken would be offered when a woman goes to another woman who was using her saucepan and commanded her to pour food in another saucepan. The woman would be made to go back to her ancestral home and bring the chicken. The chicken was slaughtered and the blood was collected in a broken pot and it was mixed with sorghum (*lawera*). They were made to drink the mixture and instructions and warnings were given to them by the elders (DCN 002). Another informant reported that,

"sacrifice was needed if a man made the woman to run away leaving behind a breast-feeding child during a fight. This might be due to domestic violence. This would require the sacrifice of a chicken. The chicken was killed in front of their house and its meat was roasted and eaten. The blood of the chicken was collected and mixed with sorghum and herbs. It was given to the child, the woman and the man (Ex 002)."

In Acholi society, there were families which would experience misfortunes year and year out. For instance, a family may keep losing children at infant or they keep experiencing illnesses. This was believed to be caused by the ancestors or gods and there was need to offer sacrifice to avert these problems. This resonates with a study by Nwobodo (2024) who notes that the Africans made sacrifices to gods whenever there was sickness or death in a family. The sacrificial ritual was presided over by the medicine man. A similar study was done by P'Bitek (1971) among the Acholi and he noted that in time of severe sickness, the Acholi made sacrifice of a goat to gods and ancestors. About misfortunes that would befall some families, one participant argued that, "in Acholi society, sacrifice was offered if a particular family kept on experiencing infant deaths (*moyo gang*). In this case the elders and the diviner would be contacted to come out with what should be done to counter the problems. A male goat would be slaughtered and the intestine would help in giving the cause of the infant deaths. The diviners looked at the intestine of the goat and they would identify problems that were causing the death of young children. This goat would then be roasted and eaten by the people. Sometimes, to counter the problem, a cow or another animal would be slaughtered to remove all the impurities in the family (Ex 002). Another participant commented that sacrifice would be offered when there was a severe disease that had attacked the entire community. He said, "sacrifice would be given when there were severe sicknesses in Acholi community. This may call for the sacrifice of a goat or sometimes chicken depending on the nature of the disease. On that day, moral instructions were given to the congregation so that sicknesses caused by violating the

moral order were avoided. People were warned against thefts, sexual immorality, murder, abominations among others. The animal, normally a goat was taken into the wilderness and it was killed. This animal was left to rot in the bush. The blood of the animal was believed to wash away impurities in the area and the sickness would disappear (Ex 006)."

In Acholi culture there were certain places that were considered sacred and revered. No one would go to such places without instructions of religious specialists. Sometimes people who would enter such places experienced misfortunes. When that happened, the elders directed the affected person to offer sacrifices. In one case, the participant thought that, "there are certain places like some big trees, caves and mountains that are respected by the Acholi people (*jok ayweya*). In case a person violates the rule concerning those places like going there without permission, such a person will experience problems like mental illness that would only be solved by offering sacrifice of a goat. The goat would be killed and they look at the intestine to see what offense the person has committed (DCN 001). The above study was in line with the work of P'Bitek (1971) when he notes that the Acholi offered sacrifices to free people who had been possessed by the spirits.

There were certain spirits that kept on possessing some people in the community. When such people were possessed, they would offer sacrifices to cast out the bad spirits from people. In line with this casting of evil spirits, an interviewee reported that, "the Acholi would sacrifice if there was unknown spirit or spirits that kept on appearing to a human person and caused disturbance. These spirits were very common during the northern insurgency where the spirits of the people who had been abducted and killed in the bush would come back to disturb the people at home. This would need the use of a male goat. Items used for this ritual were spear, simsim oil, *olwedo* leaves and local herbs (*lanyero*). The ritual was conducted from the bush. The stage was set and the elders presided over the ritual practice. They prayed over the goat and reminded the spirits causing disturbance to let the home people be at peace. After the

prayer, the elders got the simsim oil and roughed it on the chest of the goat thrice using the local herbs and the *olwedo* leaves. The goat was speared and roasted. The front leg was for the person who had been disturbed by the spirits (SP 004)." Another interviewee gave a similar version of the story but added that on the day of the sacrifice a good drummer would be invited to play the drum and there were women who sang and danced as the drum was being played. The spirit was consulted by the medicine person and whatever animal it asked for would be slaughtered. In most cases, they asked for a black goat. Sometimes, it asked for a chicken of a particular colour. The goat was killed and the intestine observed by the diviner to find out if the ritual had been done well (E 002)." These findings are in line with the study by P'Bitek (1971) who reported that there were so many spirits that could possess the people. In order to cast them out, sacrifices would be offered.

There were certain things that happened during burial that were considered bad signs from the living dead. For instance, among the Acholi people, a coffin was not to fall into the grave as it was lowered down. If that happened, it would call for the sacrifice of an animal. Commenting about the coffin falling in the grave, one participant said that, "the Acholi would sacrifice when the coffin accidentally fell into the grave or when it hit any side of the grave. This was a sign that the deceased was unhappy and he/she was communicating something. In that case, a goat would be sacrificed. The goat was beaten to death. The owner of the home took the responsibility of looking for the goat. Similarly, when the grave was dug and a dog or cow entered it, that would also call for this same ritual sacrifice. It would also mean that the deceased was showing some signs that he/she was not happy. This would definitely call for a sacrifice of a goat and after the sacrifice, another animal would also be slaughtered and the intestine was searched to check if full purification had been achieved. The animals used would be roasted and eaten by the people who attended the ceremony (DCN 001)." The Acholi people took extra care when handling the burial rituals to avoid the falling of the coffin in the grave.

Falling of the coffin into the grave was considered a misfortune and several bad things like sicknesses were expected to follow if the ritual of sacrifice was not done.

The above findings generally tell us that sacrifices among the Acholi people are performed to prevent misfortunes such as death, illnesses or infertility. These animal sacrifices were considered important to protect individuals and the entire community from the negative outcome of spiritual and social wrong actions. The finding is therefore in agreement to the work of the great anthropologist called Radcliffe-Brown (1952) who did a documentary on "protective rituals" which looked at sacrifice as a way to avoid harm by giving spiritual protection. The findings above also resonate well with the work of Geertz (1966) about the social functions of religion where he articulated that rituals help to promote the social and individual well-being of the community. This therefore, gives the role of spiritual beliefs in shaping the well-being of the community.

4.6 War and Protection

In Acholi society sacrifices were offered to seek protection or guidance from the ancestors and gods during the times of insurgency and wars. Kanu et al (2020a) and Grove (1926) made a similar study when they observed that the Africans offered sacrifices to ask gods to protect the people from being attacked by the enemies or an outbreak of diseases. The Acholi have had one of the darkest histories of war right from the time of colonialism. In such situations, sacrifices were offered to gods so that the gods would protect the people during the period of insurgency. One interviewee reported about sacrifices made during the time of war and said that, "sacrifice was required during the time of wars. The elders would sacrifice a goat and searched the intestine and could tell people where the rebels would pass from. Even soldiers were directed using this ritual sacrifice. This work was done by the diviner from his home. The diviners were contacted often times by people during times of wars (SP 002)."

Similarly, the Acholi people offered sacrifices when they were threatened by cattle rustlers especially from the Karamojong people. It was believed that sacrifices gave protection to the people during raids. Commenting about the above, a participant said that, "the Acholi would also sacrifice in the shrines during the time of raids and counter raids. On the eve of the day of raid, the spears for the attack would be taken and kept in the shrines. The chief goes and prays over the spears. A goat was slaughtered before the shrine and its blood made to flow into the shrine. This sacrifice would be made by the diviners, medicine men and elders (C 002). Another participant also agreed that sacrifices were offered by the Acholi people when there were constant attacks by neighbouring communities. He said, "when the community was aware that there would be an attack from the enemies, sacrifice would be given (*akereket*). This would require the use of a male brown goat (*nyok labwor*). The goat was taken to a special place where the community worshipped gods. It could be under a big tree or before the big shrine (*nyim abila madit*). The elders then prayed for protection from the enemies. The goat was killed and the elders would look at its intestine. The intestine would tell what should be done. Sometimes, it would require another animal or bird to be sacrificed to purify the land. The animal was roasted and eaten by the people (C 003)."

By traditions, the Acholi would also offer sacrifices in case there was a serious attack by a disease which had affected the whole community. One interviewee in confirmation of the above said that, "sacrifice was given when there were severe sicknesses in Acholi community. This may call for the sacrifice of a goat or sometimes chicken depending on the nature of the disease. On that day, moral instructions were given to the congregation. People were warned against thefts, sexual immorality, murder, abominations among others. The animal or bird was taken into the wilderness and it was killed. This animal would not be eaten and it was left in the bush. The blood was believed to wash away impurities in the area and the sickness will disappear (E 004).

In Acholi community, there were sicknesses that would affect the entire community. This was interpreted to mean the gods were not happy. For example, when covid-19 broke out, the elders and many people believed that the gods were not happy because people had sinned against them. In this case, sacrifices would be offered. One informant confirmed the above when he reported that sacrifice would be needed if the community was affected by severe epidemics (*two gemo*). This would call for the sacrifice of either a goat or chicken depending on the magnitude of the problem. When this became a serious problem and there was need to relieve the community, an elder was given a goat and he walked with the goat very far away, in fact up to the border of another community. This elder then pricked out the eyes of the goat and left it to die in the wilderness. He used the spear to remove the eyes of the goat. When that ritual was done, the rebels would not come back to disturb the community. The community was surely protected from the raiders. They came in the night and by-passed the houses of that parish only to raid from another neighbouring community (Ex 006).

4.7 Conclusion

The phenomenon of sacrificial practices among the Acholi people is a fundamental aspect of Acholi Traditional Religion. The Acholi performed sacrifices during purification and cleansing rituals, appeasement of ancestral spirits and gods, in life cycle rituals, during social harmony and conflict resolution, prevention of misfortune and at the time of wars for protection. The details of what, how, when, and where these sacrifices were offered bring out the complexities and uniqueness of the Acholi sacrificial rituals. The findings of this study can contribute to our broader understanding of African Traditional Religion, demonstrating the diversity and complexities of sacrificial practices across different African cultures.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SACRIFICES AMONG THE ACHOLI

5.0 Introduction

Sacrificial practices in Acholi according to the participants interviewed had cultural, social and spiritual significance to the Acholi people. Sacrifices helped to preserve the Acholi cultural identity and traditions, passing down knowledge from elders to younger generations. They also reinforced the values and norms of Acholi society, such as respect for ancestors and communal harmony. Many informants also said that sacrifices in Acholi society helped to bring communities together, fostering unity and cooperation during the sacrificial rituals. They also served as a means of conflict resolution, helping to reconcile individuals and groups after disputes. Some participants reported that sacrifices in Acholi society helped in spiritual connection as the Acholi offered sacrifices to communicate with ancestors and gods, seeking their blessings, protection or forgiveness. Sacrifices were believed to cleanse individuals and communities of impurities ensuring spiritual and physical well-being. Other informants reported that sacrifices in Acholi served as a deterrent against immoral behaviour, as transgressions often require costly rituals to cleanse the offender. Finally, some participants said that sacrifices promoted good health, fertility and prosperity by appeasing the spirits and ancestors. Sacrifices were therefore seen as essential for the well-being of individuals, families and the community as a whole.

5.1 Health and Prosperity

Sacrifice in Acholi was fundamental because it helped in sending away epidemics that affected the whole society. It was believed that some of the epidemics were due to the anger of the ancestors and gods and in order to respond to them, the Acholi needed to offer sacrifices to them. This finding is in agreement with what other scholars said in their studies. For instance, in chapter 2, Mbiti (1975) argues that sacrifices help the Luo people to ask for good health,

money and safety from the super natural entity. This view is supported by both Alkalah (2016) and Shipton (2014) who write that sacrifices among the Africans were made during time of sickness to ask for relief from gods. This resonates well with what a participant said about sacrifice helping to eliminate diseases in Acholi society reporting that, "sacrificial practices are important because it helps in sending away epidemics from Acholi society. For example, when the Acholi sacrificed during a serious epidemic, the disease disappeared with the power of sacrifice (C 001)." Many participants also commented that when sacrifices were not offered after abominable acts, it caused moral impurities which led to diseases in society that could cause death of people. It was only sacrificial rituals that countered this challenge. Most participants however noted that for these sacrifices to have the power of eliminating the disease affecting the society, they must be offered by the right people, following rules and regulations that govern the offering of sacrifices.

The Acholi also believed that sacrificial practice of celebrating twins helped children to grow up healthily. It was generally believed that when sacrifices were offered to the ancestors and gods, it appeased them which made them to respond by giving blessings and good health to the people. This finding is in harmony with the work of Kanu et al (2020) who found out that sacrifices are offered to appease gods and influence him to grant good things to human beings. In the same vein, Akin-Otiko (2019) notes that sacrifices were offered to the Yoruba gods to appease him to give healing, protection and peace to the people. A participant had this to say about sacrifices helping to bring good health to children in Acholi society, "sacrifices helped to give good health to young children in Acholi society. This was because they made the ancestors happy and they respond by giving good health to our children. For example, when twins were taken through sacrificial ritual, they grew up healthily and that made the parents very happy (SP 002)."

From the above excerpts it can be deduced that the Acholi believed that when they gave sacrifices after the birth of twins, they would receive good health and blessings and when they fail to give sacrifices, there would be calamities and diseases. These were believed to come from the ancestors and gods who would be unhappy because the living Acholi had forgotten about them. A participant proved the above point when she said, "when sacrifices were not offered, diseases attack people and this caused suffering and miseries but sacrifices helped to bring good health to the Acholi people. Children also grow up when they are healthy when sacrifices were offered (DCN 003)." This therefore confirms the work of P'Bitek (1971) when he notes that the ancestors and spirits would sometimes appear to the living and tell them that they had been neglected and this would call for sacrifice among the Acholi people.

The Acholi also believed that sacrifices helped both human beings and animals to be healthy and reproduce. When sacrifices were offered, it was believed that it would make people to produce many children. Even domestic animals like cattle, goats and sheep would multiply and this brought wealth to the society. Other researchers are in harmony with the finding that sacrifice promotes the fertility of people and animals. For instance, Shipton (2014) notes that sacrifices help the Luo people to solve infertility problem of both human beings and animals. Talking about providing fertility as a significance of sacrifice, one informant commented that, "sacrifices helped the Acholi people to produce children. For example, when there was infertility of people and animals, sacrifices were offered and the affected people began to produce children. This contributed to the continuity of the clan and the Acholi tribe in general (DCN 003)."

Still in line with the above findings, another informant thought that, sacrificial ritual practices helped to protect the land of the Acholi people since people offered sacrifices to get rains which is useful in feeding of the people. Land was kept productive through sacrifices that were offered to the gods (SP 001). In the tradition of the Acholi people, any man or woman who was

impotent/barren was considered unhealthy and they were pitied in the society. Such people were considered weak and unhealthy and they were not even given leadership role in society. The elders advised them to perform the sacrificial rituals to get out of their problems.

From the above findings, it can be stated that sacrifices among the Acholi people are believed to bring good health, fertility and prosperity. These were got from gods through the practice of sacrifice. The Acholi people engage in sacrificial rituals to get blessings from gods and ancestors. The work of Frazer (1922) supports the finding of this study as it stated that rituals influence health and prosperity. Besides, the study is similar to what Mauss (1954) presented when he stated that rituals involve the exchange between humans and the divine in which the human beings perform rituals with the intention of getting tangible returns from gods such as heath and prosperity. Therefore, while some people may view traditional practices as outdated or useless, these rituals remain important in maintaining health and prosperity among the Acholi people.

5.2 Moral Regulation

Sacrifices in Acholi community was believed to prevent crimes in society. Generally, the sacrificial practices like jumping over the door (*kalo kika*) would lead to the detection of criminals and cleansing of the crimes committed. Besides, during the ritual ceremonies, moral instructions and warnings were given to the young people which helped so much in containing crimes in Acholi society. The blood of the sacrificial animals that were slaughtered also appeased gods that made them to wash away the impurities in the land. Commenting about sacrifices helping to combat criminal behaviors in Acholi land, a participant said that;

> Sacrifices helped to stop people from committing crimes in society. This was because virtually in all the sacrificial practices, warnings and other moral instructions were given to the offenders and the people who attended the ceremony which made them to behave well in future. Other potential criminals

> were also deterred by warnings given during the ritual ceremony and this stopped them from committing crimes. The blood from sacrifices spiritually helped to prevent people from committing crimes in society. This was because the blood which poured and went to the super natural entity had the power of influencing good behaviour after the sacrificial rituals. People also feared being punished by the ancestors and gods for repeating a particular crime after a sacrifice had been offered (C 001).

From the above findings, a possible explanation might be that sacrificial practices regulated the behavior of people in Acholi society. Some people feared committing crime because of the impact of sacrifices given which was believed to cause serious problems to those who defiled the land by committing crimes. A case in point was the sacrifice offered to get thieves in the community. This sacrifice was fundamental since it prevented people from stealing the properties of other people. When sacrificial practices were observed, the moral compass of people would be guided and people would avoid unethical things. Besides, it promoted hard work among the Acholi people in order to acquire wealth instead of using dubious means of acquiring wealth.

A similar finding to the above revealed that sacrifices helped to teach the Acholi people about the "dos and the don'ts" of the Acholi society. In most of the sacrificial ritual practices carried out, many members of that community attended and the elders used that opportunity to pass on moral instructions to the community which helped so much in guiding the moral direction of the people. A study by Nwobodo (2024) is in agreement with this finding when it notes that sacrifices brought people together as they learn moral instructions from the elderly members of society. Many Acholi people were believed to have learnt through experience and when they witnessed criminals being punished in their sight, it sent serious warnings to them and this helped so much in regulating the moral fabric of the people. In support of this view, a

participant reported that, “sacrifices helped to teach young children to know the norms/dos and don’ts of Acholi society. This made them to live upright lives free from criminal activities (Ex 004).

Some respondents also reported that the sacrificial practice of reconciliation (*Mato Oput*) was fundamental in reforming and rehabilitating criminals in Acholi society. This explains why there was no case of mob-justice in traditional Acholi society. This was because the Acholi believe in restorative justice system, where people in conflicts come and live together after sacrificial rituals. The offenders came in public and wholeheartedly asked to be forgiven. It was in this sense that the offended people also forgave the offenders. The work of Akin-Otiko (2019) is in line with the above finding when he notes in his study that the Yoruba people made sacrifices to gods to repent their sins and ask the gods to cleanse individuals and community from the sins committed which promoted peaceful co-existence in society. On sacrifice helping to reform criminals in society, an informant had this to say, “sacrifices help to change the life of criminals for good. They changed their behaviors and lifestyles after going through the sacrificial rituals and also listening to moral teachings from elders of the society unlike today where these rituals are not followed and we have so many criminal and immoral activities in the society (SP 005).”

The above findings communicate to us that sacrifices are a means of moral control in Acholi community. They hold the wrong doers accountable as they go through purification rituals that are costly in terms of material goods and individual sacrifices. Sacrifices of the Acholi people therefore strengthen moral teachings and act as a deterrent against immoral actions. This is in line with Foucault (1977) who argued in his paper that rituals are very important in shaping the behaviour of people and maintain order in society.

5.3 Cultural Heritage Preservation

The overall response was that sacrificial practices helped the Acholi people in the preservation of their ways of life. According to many informants, this would be beneficial to future generations who would pass on to yet another generation. It should be noted that sacrifice was the most visible aspect of Acholi religion and culture. It gives an explanation of what Acholi culture is, there by giving an identity to the Acholi people as a whole. About sacrifice promoting cultural preservation, one informant reported that, "sacrifices helped in preservation of the Acholi culture. It helped young people to understand the values of the Acholi cultural practices of offering sacrifices to gods and the ancestors for the reception of rains. The young people were made to attend sacrificial ceremonies and learn about their cultural practices which they were expected to practice in future. This therefore led to the keeping of cultural practices for future generation (SP 001)."

One of the cultural significances of sacrifice was that it gave pride to the Acholi people. The uniqueness with which the sacrifices were offered set the Acholi culture apart. Apart from giving pride to the Acholi people, it gave them a sense of identity. According to a participant, it was reported that sacrifice was very important in Acholi society. This participant argued that, "the observation of sacrificial practices gave pride to the Acholi people. The uniqueness and the splendor in which it was conducted made the Acholi people who subscribe to this practice proud of their culture and religious traditions. In fact, sacrifices gave an easy identity to the Acholi society. Consequently, sacrifices brought people from different parts of the world who come to study this religious practice of the Acholi people. He observed that sacrifices helped academics to advance knowledge to the different parts of the world (E 003)." I was able to observe the pride that the Acholi attach to their religious practice of offering sacrifices during the different interview sessions I conducted. The participants spoke with pride and they were very happy to share their experiences with the researcher.

Another interviewee revealed an unanticipated and surprising finding when he said that sacrifices brought respect to the Acholi people. He argued that in a home where people follow the Acholi practice of sacrifice, people tend to respect that family and even the children would get married partners when they become of age unlike in families where people do not know or practice Acholi cultural norms (DCN 002). This finding was unexpected because it is generally believed in Acholi society today that those who practice sacrificial practices are satanic and therefore, they are treated with contempt. Many Acholi people today tend to associate offering sacrifices to witchcraft. This makes the above argument controversial. The reason for the negative attitude of the Acholi people on sacrificial practices is simply and squarely a problem of ignorance about the spiritual significance of offering sacrifices. People have failed to differentiate sacrificial practices from the practice of witchcraft.

The above findings are in line with the work of Turner (1969) who argued that rituals are very important in strengthening group identity and preserving indigenous culture. Hobsbawm (1983), also pointed out that many societies maintain their cultural heritage through established practices like the offering of sacrifices. This means that as societies evolve, sacrifices play a fundamental role in maintaining a sense of belonging and identity.

5.4 Social Cohesion

In Acholi society, sacrifices helped to bring people together hence fostering unity and cooperation among the people. The key finding of the study revealed that at the time of offering sacrifices, all members were expected to be present to witness the sacrificial ritual which promoted a sense of togetherness and belonging among the Acholi people. The African idea of Ubuntu can be reflected during the sacrificial ritual as people gathered together, contributed items for the ceremonies and they ate and drank together. This finding corroborates with the work of previous researchers. For instance, according to P'Bitek (1971), sacrifice promotes unity among the Acholi people as it brought people together. Clansmen and clanswomen used

the occasion to know one another. This view is also supported by Parrinder (1969) who writes that the African sacrificial rituals are communal and they bring people together as they eat and drink together. A participant confirmed the unity brought as a result of sacrificial ritual when he reported that, "sacrificial practices among the Acholi brought about unity and peace in society. When a sacrificial ritual was done, in most cases all people of a particular society would come to witness it which brought about unity and cooperation. Sometimes, people collected the items to be used for sacrifice as a community and they came and witnessed the ritual hence cementing relationship (C 001)."

Another key finding that emerged was that sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion brought about reconciliation among conflicting parties hence promoting social cohesion in the society. The Acholi never tolerated being enemies to members of the same community. Whenever there was a problem between two people, the elders would come together and come out with peaceful solutions to these problems. This measure restored lost relationship due to conflicts, fights and misunderstanding among the Acholi people. These findings are in line with previous scholarly work. Wepener (2021) notes that sacrifice is very fundamental in African societies as it fostered reconciliation and peace among the people. Similarly, Girling (1960) notes that the Acholi of Uganda made sacrifices (*tum*) to bring about reconciliation after an act of killing. One informant commented on how sacrifices helped the Acholi community to promote reconciliation and said that, "in Acholi society, sacrifices helped to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation after conflicts which promoted peace and stability. When a sacrifice was offered, the offended person would forgive the person who had wronged him and this was always done from the deepest part of their hearts. It was real forgiveness and reconciliation. For instance, the *Mato-Oput* (reconciliation) ritual carried out after the act of murder brought about forgiveness and reconciliation between two clans. Accepting to offer sacrifice would mean accepting to wholeheartedly forgive the offender (Ex 005)." It was also said that, after

the reconciliation rituals of *Mato Oput*, the two families could now associate and they could drink and eat from the home of each other. Thus, this means that the Acholi people preferred restorative justice to retributive justice.

The above findings tell us that sacrifices in Acholi society foster a sense of unity, and cooperation in the community since they bring people together for collective rituals. The communal nature of sacrificial practices among the Acholi people helps to strengthen relationships and build community solidarity. These findings speak to the work of Durkheim (1912) when he argued that collective rituals are very important in bringing people together and promoting a sense of togetherness. Therefore, sacrifices among the Acholi people can be used as a stabilizing force in society since it helps to settle conflicts and fostering relationships.

5.5 Spiritual Connection and Protection

Sacrifices held a significant place among the Acholi people during the time of wars and insurgences. It should be remembered that the history of the Acholi people has been full of wars and conflicts. For instance, there were serious troubles during the 2 decades' northern rebellion led by Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels. The Acholi would therefore sacrifice to evoke spiritual protection at such a difficult time. It was believed that when sacrifices were offered following the right procedures, people would be protected from the rebels. This finding confirms the work of Kanu et al (2020) when he notes that the Africans offered sacrifices to gods in times of war to ask for protection. Giving comment about the significance of sacrifices during war time, a participant had this to say, "sacrifices helped the Acholi society during the time of wars and insurgency. The Acholi through sacrifices were able to foretell where the rebels or cattle raiders would pass through their land and this made them to protect themselves and their property from destruction. For instance, during the time of war sacrifices were made and many children who were captured by the LRA rebels returned from the bush unharmed. Besides, our society gave sacrifices

during the Karamojong cattle raiding and we were protected from the attack by the Karamojong. They would just come and bypass our community. All these are attributed to the protection from our gods and ancestors (C 002)." I was able to observe from the informant that he really meant what he was saying, the passion, the love and the meaning that he attached to the Acholi sacrificial practices was amazing. This cultural way of life of the Acholi people had a pride of place in the Acholi society.

Sacrifices in Acholi society helped to address the problem of infertility. It should be noted that when a man or a woman was found to be impotent/barren respectively, sacrifices were offered and this gave practical solution to the problem of infertility. Besides, it was believed that when someone had animals that were not reproducing well, such a person could also offer sacrifices to gods to ask for blessings and fertility. Shipton (2014) made a similar report when he said that sacrifices helped to solve infertility problem of human beings and animals. Commenting about sacrifice leading to production of children, a participant reported that, "sacrifice helped people in Acholi society to solve marriage conflicts that comes as result of infertility. For example, when a man was impotent, no woman would want to marry him but sacrifice in this case would help to make the man sexually active which helped him to get married. In addition, a man who found himself sexually inactive could also make sacrifices and his problem would be solved. The disciple of children raised from families that follow sacrificial cultural practice of the Acholi people was also amazing. This made such children to marry and get married when they became of the right age (DCN 002)."

Sacrifices were believed to bring rain in Acholi land. It was through the act of sacrifice that the Acholi communicated to their ancestors and gods asking them to give them rain and blessings. This was normally done during the time of severe drought when people needed rain for planting their crops. The chiefs and his messengers would carry out this noble duty. After performing rain sacrificial rituals, rain would come and people became very happy. This corroborates with

the work of Kanu et al (2020a) when he notes that sacrifices were offered by the Africans in times of drought in order to appease gods to give rain to people. An informant had this to say about sacrifices helping the Acholi people to get rain from the gods, "sacrificial practices among the Acholi people helped them to get rain from the gods. These rains helped in growing of crops which make the Acholi people to get good harvest that were used to feed the population of the Acholi people. In some difficult years there would be no rain from January to April or even May which prompted people to consult the chief for the ritual of getting rain. It was this ritual that helped to bring back rain in Acholi land. Such rains that were received would not disappear (C 003)."

Some participants reported that sacrifices helped to purify homes, clans and the entire society of the Acholi people. These were the spiritual cleansing of the land that was done by offering sacrifices. The blood of the sacrificial animal was believed to wash away the sins of the people like murder, theft, sexual immorality among others. This resonates with the study by Akin-Otiko (2019) who notes that the Yoruba of Nigeria made sacrifices to gods to repent their sins and ask gods to cleanse individuals and community from acts of sin committed. A participant reported that, "the Acholi sacrificial practices helped to make homes, clans, and Acholi society clean and pure. Acts of abomination like burning someone's house were cleansed by sacrificial rituals. This promoted peace and harmony in society as the society was freed from impurities such as killing, stealing, corruption among others. When these impurities were not cleansed by the people, it would lead to the death of people in the society (E 003).

In Acholi society, it was believed that sacrifices helped individuals, families and society to connect to the super natural entity. It is common knowledge to many Acholi people that the ancestors and the gods be worshipped and respected. The worship and respect of gods was done through offering sacrifices. The Acholi believed that when sacrifices were given, it pleased gods and made them to give blessings of good health, peace of mind and harmony.

This explains why some clans sacrificed to gods from time to time. This finding is in agreement with the work of previous researchers including Mbiti (1975), P'Bitek (1971), and Kanu et al (2020) who argue that sacrifices help the African people to worship and get connected to the spiritual beings. Commenting about how Acholi offered sacrifice to worship gods, an informant said that, "sacrifices made the Acholi people to connect and revere their ancestors and gods. This made them to receive blessings and favour from the ancestors and gods. When animals were offered to gods, they would respond by giving rain, enough sunshine, good harvest, health among others. This created a spirit of offering sacrifices among the Acholi people (Ex 002)."

We can note from the above discussions that sacrifices among the Acholi people help people to communicate to the spiritual beings asking for blessings, protection and forgiveness from the ancestors and gods. This is in line with a study done by Geertz (1966) who argued that religious practices like sacrifices are important elements in many traditional belief systems and they help people to get the meaning of life and get connected to the super natural beings.

5.6 Conclusion

The study revealed that sacrifices played fundamental role in the lives of the Acholi people as a whole, focusing on their impact on cultural preservation, social cohesion and harmony, spiritual connection, moral regulation and health-care promotion. The findings showed that sacrifices play a vital role in preserving the Acholi identity and traditions by reinforcing cultural values, promoting social unity and maintaining spiritual well-being. They also act as a mechanism for moral control which provides a framework for accountability within the community. However, as modernity and secularization continue to have drastic impact on the Acholi people, there is a risk that these sacrificial practices may diminish especially among the younger generation. The next section looks at the influence of modernity on the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people.

CHAPTER SIX

INFLUENCE OF MODERNITY ON ACHOLI SACRIFICIAL PRACTICES

6.0 Introduction

The research question here examines how modernity has rapidly impacted on the traditional sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. Modernity in this context refers to the contemporary era as evidenced by advancement in science and technology, modern religion, economic changes, individualism, urbanization and globalization. I have provided meanings of these terms in definition of key terms section (see preliminary x). These aspects have affected sacrificial practices in ATR. Key findings of this study were that the spread of Christianity and other foreign religions led to the stigmatization of traditional sacrificial practices, often labeling them as "witchcraft" or "satanic." The foreign religions have sometimes destroyed shrines and sacred sites, thereby disrupting Acholi traditional practices. The participants also revealed that economic hardship has made it difficult for people to afford the animals and items needed for sacrifices. An overarching concern was the shift to a money-based economy which has led to a decline in the value placed on traditional practices, as people prioritize economic survival over cultural rituals. Many participants commented that western education, government policies, war and displacement, alcoholism and social changes has significantly contributed to the decline of sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional religion. Besides, some participants reported that modern laws and animal rights movement together with environmental changes has affected and challenged traditional practices leading to legal and social conflicts.

6.1 Religious Influence

The introduction and spread of foreign religions in Acholi land significantly affected sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. A foreign religion in this context refers to a religion that originated from outside the continent of Africa and therefore, they are not indigenous to Africa. These included Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and many others. Most interviewees observed

that the spread of Christianity and other foreign religions has led to stigmatization of traditional sacrificial practices and in most cases the Acholi traditional religious practice of offering sacrifice has been labeled as an act of witchcraft or satanism. These foreign religions also came with their teachings which undermine the traditional ways of life of the Acholi people. This finding is in line with a study by Shipton (2014) and Okidi (2024) who notes that the sacrificial practices of the Luo people have been affected by the teachings of Christianity which forbid the practice of offering sacrifice. A similar study made the same report on the Nigerian people. This was the work of Tubi (2022) who noted that Christianity and Islam have had a considerable influence on the sacrificial practices of the Okun people of Nigeria.

From the Christian religion, the participants commented that the Born-again churches stood out as the most stumbling block that criticized the traditional religious practices of the Acholi people compared to other Christian denominations. Commenting on how foreign religions drastically affected sacrificial practices of the Acholi people, a participant commented that, "the introduction and influence of foreign religion has affected the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. Today, there are so many mushrooming churches that have different teachings which call for the elimination of traditional sacrificial practices. All these foreign religions condemn sacrificial practices of the Acholi people calling them primitive practices. They say that when an abomination has been committed, people should pray to God to settle the problem instead of offering sacrifices to gods. They go ahead to comment that those who sacrifice in Acholi just want to eat meat of the animal slaughtered because such a sacrifice has no meaning (Ex 003)." Another participant commented that "some Pentecostal churches are trying to erase sacrificial practices in Acholi land. Those born-again Christians say that sacrificial practices are satanic and not in line with the teaching of Jesus Christ (DCN 002)." Besides, still on the influence of Christianity, another participant said that some of the born-again Christians have really changed the minds of the Acholi people from offering sacrifices. The born-again

Christians do not want to hear anything to do with sacrifice and they condemn people who participate in offering sacrifices (Ex 003). From the above finding, it can be said Christianity especially the Pentecostals and the Born-again movements has made many Acholi to abandon sacrificial practices. These churches level the rituals as outdated and satanic, urging the Acholi to make prayer instead. Consequently, many Acholi today reject the ancestral practice of offering sacrifices, regarding them as meaningless or shameful. This tells us how modern religion is reshaping cultural identity and breaking long-held tradition. that some Christians condemn offering of sacrifices for whatever the reason might be.

Another outstanding finding was that foreign religions have sometimes advocated for and done the destruction of shrines and sacred sites, which disrupted the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. These sacred places included the shrines, sacred trees, hills and forests. It should be noted that sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion were mostly offered in the shrines to appease the gods. However, participants allegedly blamed Christian denominations especially the Pentecostals (*Morokole*) that they have destroyed the shrines calling them satanic places. This has disrupted the Acholi sacrificial practices by discouraging local people from sacrificing to the gods. Talking about the destruction of the shrines by foreign religions, a participant commented that, "the negative influence of foreign religions has greatly affected the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. For example, the believers in foreign religions like Christianity go and destroy important places like shrines and holy hills that the Acholi people use to perform their sacrificial practices. Certain trees used for sacrificial rituals are also cut and burnt down by the Christians. They also ask those who perform sacrifices in Acholi land to convert to the Christian religion. This has affected the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people (SP 001)." The religious practice of sacrifice among the Acholi is facing serious challenges from believers in foreign religions. Another participant speaking on the role of foreign religion in the decline of sacrifice among the Acholi people said that, "ignorance about the spiritual significance of

sacrifices of the Acholi people made some people today to shun sacrificial practices in Acholi society in favour of foreign religious beliefs and practices. Lack of awareness about the practice make people to neglect it (SP 005).

The above findings from the respondents show that Pentecostal and Born-again Christian teachings have contributed to the decline of sacrificial practices among the Acholi people. Participants reported that these churches condemn traditional rituals as satanic and encourage converts to abandon them, promoting prayer instead. One participant noted that sacred trees and hills used for sacrifices were cut or burnt, though no specific shrine or individual loss was identified. The condemnation of sacrificial practices has led to social stigma, with practitioners being mocked and labeled as witch doctors. This has caused some Acholi to reject or distance themselves from these practices, not only due to religious pressure but also because of diminishing knowledge about their spiritual significance. This is because participant (SP 005) attributed this decline to ignorance about the spiritual significance of sacrifice, not just religious pressure. This points to a dual influence of religious condemnation and internal erosion of cultural knowledge. Scholars such as Asad (1993) have also looked at how the advent of Christianity and Islam have led to the marginalization of traditional practices. Similarly, Higgins (2017), in his work "colonial encounter" had expressed how foreign religions had disrupted indigenous spiritual practices and introduced a dichotomy between what he termed as being the "sacred" and the "profane." The stigmatization of sacrificial practices could lead to the erosion of traditional religious identity especially for younger generations who may shift to foreign religious beliefs and practices and so there is need to create space for dialogue between Christianity and traditional Acholi religious practices.

6.2 Economic Factors

Economic hardship in Acholi subregion today has made it very difficult for the people to afford the animals and other items required for sacrificial rituals. Majority of the people in Acholi

sub-region are poor and they can't meet daily needs of life. This is in line with a report on poverty level in Uganda by UBOS which ranked the Acholi people as the poorest in the whole country with monetary poverty rate of up to 72% (UBOS, 2024). A participant confirmed how poverty has interfered with Acholi sacrificial practices when he said that, "sacrificial practices is declining in Acholi society today due to poverty. Most people suffer from acute poverty and they are too poor to get animals for offering as sacrifices. This means that they cannot carry out any sacrificial ritual since they do not have animals to offer as sacrifices (E 003)."

The influence of money has also affected sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. It was reported by some participants that some of the modern religions in Acholi land today use money and other material items to lure people into their religions. These materials are given to the people and they are taught to shun traditional religious practices like offering sacrifices to the gods. Commenting about how foreign religions use money to lure adherents of Acholi traditional religion, a participant said:

> The influence of money economy has also led to the decline in sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. Some of the modern religions use money to buy even devoted followers of Acholi indigenous religion. For instance, there was a Pentecostal movement that came in this village and they started distributing clothes and sweets to people and that made many young people and some elders who used to follow Acholi Traditional Religion to get converted and start following them (SP 001).

The findings above indicate that the introduction of a money economy has influenced religious conversion among the Acholi, contributing to the decline of the traditional sacrificial practices. Material incentives such as clothes and sweets offered by Pentecostal movements attracted followers, especially youth and elders, away from traditional beliefs. This shift reflects how

economic factors have played a role in changing religious and cultural practices in the Acholi community.

In addition, another common finding from the participants was that today people no longer pay respect to the wisdom of age but they respect those who have wealth. A participant confirmed this when he noted that:

> The influence of money in the world has also affected sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. These days people look at the money someone has. For example, the elders of a particular home may be willing to offer sacrifices but you find that a younger person who has money does not want sacrifice to be offered. The elders because of respect for money would not continue to offer sacrifice. They give the power to guide the family to young people of the family. This has negatively impacted on sacrificial practices (C 001).

From the above findings, it can be observed that most modern people respect those with money instead of respecting the elders who have gone through different experiences. Those who have money are respected even when they are young and have limited knowledge on how society is supposed to be run. This has made many elders to lose their power to the wealthy young men in the family economic hardship has made it very difficult for the people of Acholi to afford animals and other items required for sacrificial offerings. Besides, the preference of economic survival over cultural rituals has drastically affected the Acholi practice of offering sacrifices. These findings are in line with the study by Weber (1922), which articulated that economic factors often inform cultural practices and an economy based on money can undermine traditional systems that are entirely embedded in communal practices. Therefore, the change away from sacrificial practices due to economic challenges may result into the decline of

indigenous religious practices. There is need for economic empowerment in Acholi community to help in alleviating some of these economic pressures.

6.3 Education and Modernization

Many participants commented that western education has led to a decline in the transmission of traditional knowledge on sacrifices. Western education in this context refers to the type of education that came from the western world particularly, the education styles in Europe and North America. This is because young people today spend most of their time in schools and they have very limited time to learn about traditional cultural practices from the elders. In schools within Acholi today, subjects such as Christian Religious Education and Social Studies emphasize foreign religious teachings and moral frameworks, while neglecting the Acholi traditional beliefs, including sacrificial practices. Participants noted that students are taught to view traditional rituals as outdated or superstitious, which has contributed to a decline in their acceptance and practice among the younger generation. This has created a dilemma to the young people of whether to follow traditional cultural values or to go by the western values. In most cases, the young people choose to go by the western values as it is regarded as a modern lifestyle and it appeals to the young people. Tubi (2022) observes that western education in Africa tends to promote foreign cultural values while neglecting indigenous religious traditions. Although his study does not focus on the Acholi, the pattern he describes is evident in Agago district, where participants noted that formal schooling has influenced young people to disregard traditional sacrificial practices. This connection shows how modern education contributes to the weakening of cultural practices in Acholi community.

Similarly, Parrinder (1969) writes that the elders blame western education since it makes children to stay in formal school and despise informal education. An informant had this to say about how western education affected sacrifices in Acholi Traditional Religion, “the influence of western education has negatively affected sacrificial practices in Acholi society. Today,

children start going to school very early in life to attend formal education which makes them fail to learn about cultural practices such as the offering of sacrifices in Acholi. Even the teaching by elders around fire places no longer hold significant position in most homes in Acholi society today. Instead, these children learn about other things from school which may at time be detrimental to Acholi world view (C 002)."

Related to the above, another participant lamented about how western education has made the educated Acholi people to despise the traditional practice. He commented that, "the influence of formal education has also negatively affected sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. Most educated people disregard the Acholi cultural practices in favour of foreign cultural practices. Educated Acholi say that offering sacrifice is something that is outdated and useless. Some educated people have even preferred foreign names to Acholi names (DCN 003)." However, Mdhluli (2023) and Arkaifie & Dichaba (2022) show that formal education can support African traditional practices when indigenous knowledge is included in the national curriculum. Mdhluli explains that teaching African Indigenous Education helps learners link with their cultural roots. Arkaifie and Dichaba also point out that using local philosophies like Ubuntu in schools encourages respect for traditional values and promotes continuity of cultural practices. Both studies suggest that formal education can strengthen, rather than weaken, indigenous beliefs when it reflects the realities and heritage of the learners. These contradict with former scholars' position.

The exposure of the Acholi people to foreign cultures through the mass media and other forms of technology has led to the adulteration of the Acholi traditional practices, as most people prefer to adopt new ways of life. This confirms the study of Kanu et al (2020a) and Tubi (2022) when they argue that modernization has affected the work of traditional priests. As most people noted, today the world is a global village, and this has led to cross-cultural borrowings in different parts of the world. Most people in Acholi have been exposed to other cultures and

some people have adopted these cultural practices. Other Acholi have mixed the Acholi religious practices with foreign cultural beliefs and practices which diluted and changed meanings that the Acholi used to attach to their religious practices. In agreement to the role of foreign culture in diluting Acholi culture, a participant alluded that, "the influence of neighbouring cultural practices like from Bunyoro and Lango has made some people in Acholi land to abandon their cultural practices. For example, when a crime has been committed, people use *Kifaro,* a foreign approach of getting a criminal instead of offering sacrifice in line with the teaching of Acholi culture (C 003)."

The above findings indicate that western education and exposure to foreign cultures through globalization have led to a decline in traditional practices. This has led to a generational gap in cultural knowledge. This is in line with the work of Nandy (1983) who argued that western education system generally undermines indigenous practices by putting more value on scientific and secular knowledge over cultural practices. In a similar way, Appadurai (1996) also opines that globalization often dilutes local cultures which makes traditional cultural practices difficult to survive. This explains why there is need for cultural education in schools to avoid the generational conflicts over issues of culture.

6.4 Government Policies and Animal Rights

It was revealed that government policies have sometimes restricted access to sacred sites, hills, and forests, where sacrifices were traditionally offered. Many informants reported that the government has been one of the obstacles to the carrying out of sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. For instance, the government may block traditional worship in the forest or any other sacred places. The traditionalists in this case would heed to the policy in place. Talking about government policy, a participant had this to say, "government policy has greatly impacted sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. Government may forcefully take away land or forest where sacrifices are supposed to be offered. Sometimes, government

gazette sacred places that were used for sacrifice as tourism centers (Ex 001)." In addition to the role of government in interfering with Acholi traditional practices, another informant commented that, "government policy and government workers have affected Acholi sacrificial practices. They stop people from going for the ritual to receive rains. When the person who has not gone for the ritual is fined, he goes to the government and government officials come and arrest the cultural leaders (DCN 001)." However, some informants gave contradicting view when they were asked about government role in handling sacrificial practices in Acholi society. For example, a participant noted that the government had been supporting Acholi cultural practices by providing money and other materials to the traditional leaders which had helped in the promotion of cultural institutions (C 003). The contradiction in views presented above suggests that government involvement in Acholi sacrificial practices is not uniform. In some cases, government actions may limit certain ritual practices, while in others, support is given to cultural institutions through funding and materials. These differences point to the need for closer examination of how government policies and local experiences influence the way traditional practices are treated and understood by the local people.

There are also modern movements that advocate for the protection of animal rights. The animal rights activists argue that animals do have intrinsic value. Animal rights activists are people who push for the protection of the rights and welfare of both domestic and wild animals. These individuals discourage use of animal for sacrifice and even working of animals in large farms. Shipton (2014) comments that there are animal rights activists in Luo land who advocate for the rights of animals and they take sacrificial practices as a deliberate torture of animals. In addition, there are modern human rights movements that have challenged certain sacrificial practices such as abandonment of abnormal children leading to legal and social conflicts. The presence of these individuals has made some Acholi people to fear participating in sacrificial practices. This is because the animal rights activists even threaten to sue people to competent

courts of law for violating the rights of animals through sacrificing animals. A participant commented about the interference of sacrificial practice by animal rights activists and said, the existence of animal rights movement that advocates for the protection of the well-being of animals is another challenge of sacrificial practices among the Acholi people today. These people threaten to arrest those who use animals for sacrifice. This has made some people to fear offering animals for sacrifice (DCN 002).

From the above findings, it can be observed that government policies, particularly policies related to land control, have restricted access to sacred sites where the Acholi used to perform sacrificial rituals. In addition, the modern animal rights movement have challenged the Acholi practice of offering sacrifices. Foucault (1977) argued that the authority of the state informs social practices and the role of traditional religions, hence government intervention often interferes with religious freedom. It is therefore, important for the Acholi people to engage with government agencies to advocate for the protection of Acholi traditional sites.

6.5 War and Displacement

The long-standing conflicts in northern Uganda disrupted traditional practices of the Acholi people, as people were displaced and confined to IDP camps. This made people to lose access to important cultural sites and the knowledge of sacrificial rituals. The war-situation could not allow people to do sacrificial practices since some of the animals were also taken by the LRA rebels. Commenting on the effect of the northern insurgency on Acholi sacrificial practices, an informant had this to say, “the northern insurgency which took over two decades affected sacrificial practices in Acholi society. Consequently, people were confined in camps which made them to leave ancestral homes. Holy places like shrines, sacred hills and trees were destroyed by the rebels and people ran to camps leaving them behind. The war also made some elders lose knowledge of how sacrifices were conducted to solve problems in Acholi society. The fire places were no more due to the war and yet they used to be very fundamental in passing

knowledge of sacrifices to younger children (SP 001).” From the above finding, it can be deduced that the LRA wars significantly contributed to the loss of knowledge about sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion as it made elderly people unable to pass vital information about sacrifice to the young people.

Similarly, another participant thought that the activities of the Karimojong cattle rustlers also had significant impact on the sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. This participant argued that, “the Karimojong cattle raiders hold a big responsibility in the decline of sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. These Karimojong raided animals like sheep, cattle, and goats that were traditionally used in the offering of sacrifices. This has left the Acholi people without animals to offer as sacrifices (E 003).”

The finding of the study also revealed that many elders who held significant knowledge about sacrificial practices died during the LRA war and this led to a generational gap in cultural transmission. Generally, it is believed that many elders lost their dear lives during the LRA war due to over worrying about the conditions of their children and the Acholi people at large, poor conditions of living in the camps and some died due to live bullets. This made these elders to die with vital information about sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. According to an informant, the death of the elders during the LRA war is a big problem that fundamentally contributed to the decline in Acholi sacrificial practices, he said, “the northern Uganda insurgency (*lweny*) led to the death of many Acholi people including elders. Those elders died with very vital information about sacrificial practices and this has been a big loss to the Acholi cultural fraternity. This has left the Acholi with elders who cannot perform sacrifices because most of them are ignorant. They leave the work to younger people (C 003).”

The above findings indicate that the northern Uganda insurgency (LRA war) caused displacement of people and this disrupted access to sacred sites that were used in sacrificial

practices of the Acholi people. In addition, the loss of elders who held extensive knowledge of sacrificial rituals has created a generational gap which has limited the transmission of cultural knowledge. This is in line with the work of Appadurai (1996) who argued that war and displacement severely disrupt cultural practices as it leads to displacement of people limiting access to traditional sites and also the transmission of cultural knowledge. Besides, Kaplan (2012) in his study of the post-conflict community noted that death of important cultural leaders like elders can have lasting impact on traditional practices. The loss of sacred sites and the death of key leaders have weakened the traditional practices of the Acholi people. There is need to build displaced communities and establish access to sacred sites in Acholi society.

6.6 Alcoholism and Social Change

The increasing level of alcoholism among elders and cultural leaders has led to a decline in their ability to perform and impart traditional sacrificial rituals. Alcoholism in this context refers to the excessive consumption of alcohol by an individual or group of people to the extent that they forget about their assigned duties and responsibilities. According to Tubi (2022), modernization has brought in the use of drugs and western medicine which has affected the traditional practices of the African people. In many communities in Acholi today, many people including elders have resorted to excessive drinking of alcohol which has made them to forget their families as well as their cultural duties. Most men and women leave their homes early and go to the trading centers for alcohol consumption. This has made the cultural practices and the children unattended to. A participant lamented about how alcohol has affected the Acholi sacrificial ritual when he said that, “alcoholism has been a major obstacle to Acholi cultural practices including offering of sacrifices. Most people including elders no longer take their time to teach young people about the value of cultural practices due to addiction to alcohol. The elders who used to pass vital information to the youth about sacrifices no longer do so because most of their time was now spent in places of drinking. This has made the young

people to grow without knowledge of offering sacrifices. Some elders drank alcohol which made them lose their memories of how sacrifices were offered and the circumstances surrounding the offering of sacrifices (Ex 004)."

The modern life styles and social changes have led to a decline in the practice of offering sacrifices as people now focus on economic and social advancement. Modernity has come with its modern way of life which has affected sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. Some people focus on working to accumulate wealth and they do not mind about following any cultural practice. Commenting about the influence of modernity on sacrificial practices of the Acholi people, one interviewee said that, "these days many parents have abandoned the teaching of children around fire places. They no longer put their children to teach them about sacrificial practices and other cultural values of the Acholi people. This has affected the Acholi practice of offering sacrifices." Another interviewee argued that the influence of globalization has affected sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. People believe in the dot.com world and they undermine and shun traditional practices such as giving sacrifice (SP 004)." Another participant blamed scattered families today as a key reason for the decline in sacrificial practices, he commented that, the existence of scattered families of the Acholi people today has drastically affected sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. In the past, people in Acholi used to live together. But today, you find part of the family is in Agago, another in Kampala and yet others live even in another foreign land (SP 002).

Some participants revealed that today, the Acholi culture has been thwarted by the influence of mass media which spread false information about the practice of offering sacrifices. This false information is normally circulated on radios, face book, WhatsApp, televisions, newspapers among others. This has made the young people who like using these social platforms to have negative attitude towards the practice of offering sacrifices. To this effect, one informant thought that, the influence of mass media like radio dancing and television has

also made people to shun sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. Most people go to nearby centers in the morning to drink and dance and they come back in the evening leaving their cultural duties unattended to. Besides, people use their face books, WhatsApp among others to spread false information about Acholi cultural practices (DCN 003).

The above findings indicate that the rise of alcoholism among elders and parents in Acholi society has affected sacrificial practices. Also, the changing social norms has also affected the traditional practice of offering sacrifices among the Acholi people. These findings are in line with the work of Mpanga (2024), who discusses the negative impact of substance abuse on social harmony and leadership. In addition, Giddens (1990) argued that social change, especially in post-colonial context invariably leads to the weakening of traditional practices and customs as people prefer modern ways of life.

6.7 Conclusion

The influence of modernity on the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people have been internal and external. The study revealed that the spread of Christianity, economic hardship, western education, government policies, war, alcoholism and social changes have all played a role in shaping sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. While these challenges pose a serious threat to the survival of the Acholi sacrificial practices, the research also proposes that efforts can be made to preserve the sacrificial ritual practices of the Acholi people, thereby ensuring their continuous significance for future generations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Summary

The dissertation examined the sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. This is the religious practice among the Acholi people that has significant meaning and impact on the lives of the Acholi people yet it is misunderstood by many people both internally among the Acholi and in the outside world. Sacrifice was part and parcel of life of the Acholi people and the Acholi used to have different phenomena of sacrifices. When the Acholi people are confronted with challenges in life, they would run to perform sacrificial rituals which provided solutions to virtually all their problems.

The study used a qualitative research approach and phenomenological research method to analyze the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. Interviews and participant observation were methods used in the data collection. More specifically, the study assessed the phenomenon of sacrificial practices among the Acholi people; examined the significance of sacrifices among the Acholi people and finally evaluated the influence of modernity on the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people.

Based on the findings of this study about the phenomenon of sacrificial practices of the Acholi people, all the chiefs, elders, shrine priests, expiators and death compensation negotiators interviewed agreed that sacrifices in Acholi society were offered during purification and cleansing rituals where acts of abomination were corrected. Sacrifices were also offered during the moments of happiness to appease the ancestral spirits and gods so as to enable people get rain, good health and peace in society. Most of the participants agreed that sacrifices were offered in Acholi society in order to resolve conflicts and restore social harmony. They pointed to the *Mato Oput* (reconciliation) ceremony which was done after murder between two clans

or families. They agreed that sacrifices were part and parcel of important life events and they were offered during time of birth, marriage and death. Sacrifices were offered when there was need to prevent misfortunes from befalling the Acholi society.

According to most participants, sacrifices helped the Acholi people to preserve their cultural values and identity for future generation. It was a means by which the Acholi people are identified and recognized by other people. The participants also agreed that sacrifices brought the Acholi people and their communities together. To them, during the rituals, disputes among different people were resolved hence bringing about unity and cooperation among the people.

Other participants thought that sacrifices helped the Acholi people to connect to the supernatural entities like ancestors and gods which helped them to seek for blessings, forgiveness and protection. Some participants said that sacrifices helped to shape the moral direction of the Acholi people. To them, sacrificial rituals were used by the elders to provide moral teachings and instructions to all the people in the community which helped to regulate the behaviour of members in the society. Participants also agreed that sacrifices were essential for the well-being of the Acholi people as they were offered to promote good health, fertility and prosperity in Acholi land. To the participants, the lives of the Acholi depended on the ritual of sacrifice.

The influence of modernity on the sacrificial practices of the Acholi people were seen from the religious, economic and political perspectives according to research participants. The spread and influence of foreign religions especially Christianity was found to be one of the biggest obstacles to the Acholi practice of offering sacrifices. The participants stated that these foreign religions had decampaigned, stigmatized and in some cases destroyed places, and objects used for sacrifices in Acholi society. Consequently, sacrificial rituals had been leveled satanic and barbaric as a result of the influence of foreign religions. This particular finding was in

agreement with studies done by previous scholars who blamed foreign religions for interfering with sacrificial practices in many societies.

According to participants, economic hardship had made it difficult for the poor Acholi people to afford the animals that should be used in offering sacrifices. In addition, people today prefer accumulation of wealth to carrying out sacrificial rituals. Many participants agreed that western education and globalization had significantly led to the decline of sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. To them, formal education had kept children in school learning foreign culture instead of being taught indigenous cultural practices. Due to formal education, young people had also been exposed to mass media and technology which not only spread western cultural values but also disregard traditional cultural practices.

Some participants also felt that the government had restricted Acholi cultural practices as it sometimes comes out with policies that prohibit going to sacred sites like hills, trees among others. Animal rights movement has also been blamed for advocating for animal rights which stop people from using the animals for sacrifices. Most participants blamed the LRA war in northern Uganda for disrupting traditional practices including sacrifice of the Acholi people. To the participants, the LRA war led to the confinement of people in IDP camps and the loss of animals which made sacrificial offering difficult. In addition, the war led to the death of many elders who had reliable knowledge on how sacrifices were done. Many participants also agreed that the excessive consumption of alcohol by the Acholi elders has made them unable to lead and teach the young people about sacrificial ritual ceremonies of the Acholi people.

7.2 Conclusion

This dissertation set out to examine sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion, focusing on the phenomenon, significance, and the impact of modern influences on this indigenous religious phenomenon. The research was guided by one general objective and three

specific objectives, each of which has been addressed through fieldwork conducted in Agago district in northern Uganda and supported by relevant scholarly literature.

The first objective was to assess the phenomenon of sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. The study involved exploring what sacrifices are, when and where they are performed among the Acholi people, why they are done, and how they are carried out. The findings revealed that sacrifices are central to Acholi spiritual, and social life. These sacrificial practices are conducted at specific sites such as shrines, with clear procedures involving animals, food, and symbolic acts. The responses from participants showed that sacrifice is not only a religious act but it also performs a social function in Acholi society, thereby reinforcing communal ties and moral order in society as a whole. This objective was fully achieved as the study documented the detailed phenomena of sacrificial practices in ATR using the voices of religious specialists in ATR.

The second objective examined the significance of sacrificial practices in ATR. The study found that sacrifice plays very important role in maintaining harmony between the living and the spirits. Participants emphasized that these rituals are deeply embedded in Acholi identity and worldview. Therefore, the findings confirm that sacrificial practices are not merely symbolic but carry practical and spiritual weight in the lives of the Acholi people. This specific objective was also attained as the study revealed the relevance and the meaning attached to sacrificial practices in Acholi society.

The third objective examined the influence of modernity on sacrificial practices of the Acholi people. The study uncovered several factors contributing to the decline of sacrificial practices in Acholi society. Religious movements, especially Pentecostal and Born-again churches, have condemned traditional sacrifices, leading to their abandonment by many followers. The rise of formal education has promoted foreign cultural values while sidelining indigenous knowledge,

causing younger generations to view traditional rituals as outdated. Economic changes have introduced material incentives that encourage conversion and discourage participation in traditional practices. Government involvement was found to be both supportive and restrictive as some informants reported interference and arrests of cultural leaders, while others noted financial support for cultural institutions. These findings show that modernity has both challenged and reshaped sacrificial practices of the Acholi people and this objective was successfully achieved.

In relation to the general objective, the study has successfully examined sacrificial practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. The findings respond to the problem identified in Chapter One, which questioned the survival and relevance of these practices in a changing society. The study shows that while sacrificial practices in Acholi society face enormous challenges, they remain meaningful and relevant in the lives of modern Acholi people.

The implications of this study on sacrificial practices in ATR are important for both theory and practice. Theoretically, it contributes to the understanding of how indigenous religious systems interact with modern institutions such as education, religion, and governance. It greatly challenges the view that traditional practices are incompatible with modern life and shows that they can evolve while retaining their important core values. Practically, the study offers profound explanation for cultural leaders, educators, and policymakers on the need to respect and preserve indigenous beliefs and practices of the African people. It encourages dialogue on how traditional practices can be sustained and integrated into contemporary life.

This research contributes to the body of knowledge on African indigenous religions by documenting the lived experiences of the Acholi people on the discussion about sacrificial practices. It explicitly reveals the importance of cultural heritage and the need to protect it from erosion. For the community, the study affirms the value of sacrificial practices and opens space

for reflection on how these practices can be sustained and integrated into contemporary African societies in ways that honor both tradition and change.

One of the limitations encountered by this study the reluctance of some participants to openly speak about certain sacrificial practices that were considered secret. This may have affected the depth of some responses in my study. Future academic researchers can address this challenge by taking more time in the field as this will enable them to build good relationship with community members during research process.

7.3 Recommendations

The study recommends promotion of interfaith dialogues among the different religious groups in Acholi society. This would help to reduce the stigmatization of Acholi traditional religious practices and it is very important for the promotion of tolerance of all religions in the world. This should be done especially between Christian and Acholi traditional religious leaders like chiefs. The discussion should focus on topics like shared religious values, and respect for cultural diversity which will help to foster mutual understanding and reconciliation.

The researcher urges the government to integrate cultural heritage education in schools. This would help to counter the decline of traditional religious knowledge through the introduction of cultural education programs into the school curricula. The school teachers should be encouraged to collaborate with the cultural leaders to teach the younger generations in schools about Acholi rituals, traditional values and history which would be so helpful in preserving cultural identity while navigating modern educational systems. Besides, there is need to do proper documentation of Acholi sacrificial practices to preserve their historical and cultural significance.

There is need to advocate for the protection of traditional sacred sites and places of worship. The Acholi cultural leaders should engage with government bodies to advocate for the

protection of Acholi sacred sites used for offering sacrifices in order to preserve the physical places where sacrificial rituals are done. These sacred sites and places should be recognized legally as part of the cultural heritage of the Acholi people and they should be protected from infiltration by modern development.

The problem of alcoholism that looks to be the biggest obstacle to the practice of sacrifice among the Acholi people should be addressed. This would restore the ability of the elders and parents to perform traditional rituals. Alcoholism can be addressed through embracing good community health programs that discourage alcoholism.

7.4 Suggested Areas for Further Studies

The researcher recommends another study to be conducted on the perception of younger generations on Acholi sacrificial practices compared to older generations since this area would offer deeper understanding into the future prospects of Acholi sacrificial practices.

Given that many of the traditional sacrificial rituals of the Acholi people are embedded in gender-specific roles, another study could look at the role of women in sacrificial practices of the Acholi people.

Comparative research on how sacrificial practices of the Acholi people compare and contrast with other indigenous cultures undergoing similar pressures from modernity could bring a better understanding of the global dynamics of cultural preservation.

Lastly, more research could be done to understand the role of elders in the transmission of cultural knowledge and how their authority is viewed in modern society. This could offer solutions that can be used for preservation of the Acholi culture.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: WORK PLAN

TIME AND DURATION	ACTIVITY
JUNE, 2024	Concept note writing
JULY, 2024	Proposal writing
NOVEMBER, 2024	
NOVEMBER, 2024	Ethical clearance
NOVEMBER, 2024	Pre-field visit
JANUARY, 2025	Data collection
FEBRUARY, 2025	
MARCH, 2025	
MARCH, 2025	Data analysis
MARCH, 2025	Discussion and the conclusion of the results
APRIL, 2025	Final research report writing and submission
OCTOBER, 2025	

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Dear Respondent,

I thank you for accepting to participate in this research study. This study is investigating Sacrificial Practices in Acholi Traditional Religion. Your responses and time will be highly appreciated.

1. How are the animals and birds selected for sacrifice?
2. Why are certain animals not selected for sacrifice in Acholi Traditional Religion?
3. To whom are sacrifices offered in Acholi Traditional Religion?
4. What circumstances lead to offering of sacrifices in Acholi society?
5. What is believed to happen when sacrifices are not given in such circumstances?
6. Share your memorable experience related to offering sacrifices.
7. Explain the importance of offering sacrifices in Acholi society.
8. How has modernity and foreign religions affected sacrificial practices in Acholi society?
9. What other challenges are faced in maintaining sacrificial practices in Acholi society?

Thank you so much for your valuable time and cooperation. May the Almighty God bless you!

APPENDIX 3: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST FOR PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION OF BLOOD PACT CLEANSING RITUAL

1.Tye of blood pact being cleansed

2. Objects used in the ritual

3. Specific actions performed

4. Ritual specialists involved

5. Physical setting of the ritual

6. Reasons for cleansing

7. Emotional responses from the participants

8. Timing of the ritual

9. Community participation

10. Post-ritual activities

APPENDIX 4: LIST OF INTERLOCUTERS

S/N	NAME	SEX	AGE	SUB-COUNTY
1	Owor Faustino Kiwel	Male	73	Lapono
2	Obol Geoffrey	Male	80	Lapono
3	Lawino Esther	Female	68	Lapono
4	Ocan Marino Okidi	Male	46	Lapono
5	Okidi Bwong Gwok	Male	86	Lapono
6	Ongom Kasimiro	Male	41	Adilang
7	Oloya John	Male	69	Adilang
8	Okello David	Male	53	Adilang
9	Aciro Nighty	Female	78	Adilang
10	Opira Bosco	Male	59	Adilang
11	Ocaya Michael	Male	65	Adilang
12	Gaudencio Owiny	Male	77	Paimol
13	Okumu Philip	Male	70	Paimol
14	Akot Sabina	Female	83	Paimol
15	Odwar Zalon	Male	83	Paimol
16	Anek Korina	Female	75	Paimol
17	Olum George	Male	58	Omiya Pachwa
18	Obonyo Titus	Male	50	Omiya Pachwa
19	Ongom Bosco Olweny	Male	46	Omiya Pachwa
20	Odok Hannington	Male	80	Omiya Pachwa
21	Olanya David Oryem	Male	48	Omiya Pachwa
22	Lamunu Santina	Female	63	Omiya Pachwa

APPENDIX 5: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is **ODONG Robert**. I am a student of Kyambogo University pursuing Master of Arts in Religious Studies. My research study is entitled, **"Sacrificial Practices in Acholi Traditional Religion."** Your selection to participate in this research study is purely based on the expert knowledge that you have on this topic. All the information that you will give shall remain confidential and anonymous, that is to say, all your identities will not be disclosed to anyone. Only consolidated data will be used in the final report for this study.

Should we continue with this study?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature of the research participant…….**Date**……..

Signature of the interviewer……..**Date**……...

APPENDIX 6: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY
P. O. BOX 1 KYAMBOGO
Tel: 041 - 4286792 Fax: 256-41-220464
Website :www.kyu.ac.ug Email: drgt@kyu.ac.ug
Directorate of Research and Graduate Training
Office of the Director

APPENDIX 8: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Date: 03/2/2025

The Chief Administrative Officer
Agago District

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: ODONG ROBERT

This is to introduce to you the above named student Reg: No **23/U/GMARS/1175/PE** Pursuing Master of Arts in Religious Studies, Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Kyambogo University.

He intends to carry out research on **"Sacrificial Practices in Acholi Traditional Religion"** in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of Master of Arts in Religious Studies of Kyambogo University.

The purpose of this letter therefore is to request you to grant him permission to carry out his study in your institution.

Any assistance rendered to him will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Bosco Bua
AG. DIRECTOR

KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY
★ 03 FEB 2025 ★
DIRECTOR
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE TRAINING

APPENDIX 7: KEY TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS (INTERVIEWEES)

SP: Shrine Priest

DCN: Death Compensation Negotiator

Ex: Expiator

E: Elder

C: Chief

SP 001 means the first shrine priest interviewed, **SP 002** stands for second shrine priest etc

DCN 001-first death compensation negotiator and progresses in the same way

Ex 001 means the first expiator; **Ex 002** means the second expiator interviewed among others

E 002 means the second elder, **E 003** means the third elder interviewed

C 001 stands for the first chief, **C 003** stands for the third chief interviewed