

**RITUAL POTTERY AND ITS REPURPOSING IN  
CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL DESIGN SPACE IN ACHOLI  
SUB-REGION, NORTHERN UGANDA**

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## DECLARATION

I Sanday Rhodest Adong hereby declare that this is my original work and has never been submitted for any award in any university or higher institution of learning.

Signature .....

Date .....

## APPROVAL

This is to certify that this work was conducted under our supervision as university supervisors and is now ready for submission for examination

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Richard Okumu, children Loki Victor Mukica and Wiwo Proscovia, parents Mr. Paulinous Nyeko and Mrs Veronica Nyeko and all sisters and brothers.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GUREC	Gulu University Research Ethics Committee
IDPs	Internally Displaced People's camps
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LCs	Local Council
NCCS	Nepal Ceramics Cooperative Society Ltd.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SOS	Save Our Souls
UN	United Nations
UNCST	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

## ABSTRACT

Pottery constitutes a fundamental element of material culture, deeply embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of communities across the world for millennia. Among the Acholi people of Northern Uganda, pottery has historically played a pivotal role in familial and communal rituals. However, the forces of modernisation and globalisation have engendered misconceptions surrounding both the rituals and the associated ceramic traditions, leading to the secret production and use of ritual pottery, which is the main focus for this study. This study was conducted in the sub-counties of Awach, Paibona, and Pukony in Gulu District with the overarching aim of adapting the Acholi ritual pottery for integration into contemporary social design space. Specifically, the study explored Acholi family rituals that used pots, analysed the significant use of pots in rituals, and engaged in a community-based practicum to explore the potential for repurposing ritual pots within contemporary physical and ideological contexts. Blumer's theory of symbolic interactionism served as the theoretical foundation for the study, which employed ethnographic research design and a qualitative methodological approach. The research population included potters, cultural leaders, elders, and pot users from both rural communities and modern social environments. Purposive and snowball sampling strategies facilitated the selection of twenty-five (25) participants. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions (FGDs), and photographic documentation. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data systematically in alignment with the research objectives. Findings revealed that despite prevailing societal stigma, ritual pottery continues to be produced and utilised within the community. The study documented a range of ritualistic practices involving ceramic vessels, with a specific focus on three primary family rituals: birth, naming, and death. Five distinct ritual pots were examined, some of which were explicitly crafted for ceremonial use, while others were repurposed from conventional pottery. These included twin pots (*Agulu Kirubi*), bathing troughs (*Agulu Otako/Otako Lwok*), serving bowls (*Atabo Lobo*), umbilical cord pots (*Atabo Pen/Lawum Pen*), and burial plots (*Agulu Lyel*). Furthermore, through the community practicum, ritual pottery was reinterpreted and produced for adaptation within the contemporary spaces. The study recommends the implementation of vocational skills training to mitigate the skills gap among ageing potters and to ensure the sustainable transmission of pottery-making techniques. Additionally, the research advocates for the conservation and innovative repurposing of ritual pottery within contemporary design frameworks to foster cultural continuity and enhance the visibility of Acholi material heritage in contemporary social settings.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a context for the study background, positionality based on life experiences, a problem statement, study purpose, objectives, and research questions. It also provides the study scope, significance, and definition of key terms. The study's independent variables included rituals involving pots, pots used in rituals, and repurposing through community practicum. Meanwhile, the dependent variable examined respondents' views on repurposing ritual pots, including how and where the pots could be repurposed.

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Rituals constitute an integral aspect of human societies worldwide, shaping social structures, cultural identities, and communal interactions. As Magnus (2021) posits, rituals are characterised by structured, repetitive, and stylised acts imbued with symbolic meaning, reinforcing collective memory and shared values within communities. The use of pottery, masks, body paints, sculptures, drums, calabashes, baskets, and costumes are essential to ceremonial actions, facilitating social activities such as dances, feasting, and ceremonial drinks acting as platforms for cultural expression (Aalberts et al., 2020).

In various communities, the interpretation of rituals was based on how rituals served as a language devoid of words, mythology brought to life, and culture passed down via strong cultural conservationists. The concerned community focused on the levels of association through acts and actions. They believed that objects and rituals represented the tangible culture of the societies. According to Sánchez (2019), material culture played a significant role in the development of the ancient Mesoamerican civilisation. These developments were observed in the artistic expression, technology, and social structures of the indigenous and European worlds.

In a similar vein, Aalberts et al. (2020, p. 243) note that “rituals involve specific images of the where and when of the rituals, connecting through sense-making rather than

language, and these images and re-imaginings are crucial for the sacred, mystical atmospheric characteristics of rituals.”

In Ghana, the family initiation ritual which marks the transition of young boys and girls into adulthood was deeply valued. Whoever engaged in premarital sexual activity before undergoing the rites was punished publicly to reinforce societal expectations and deter others from doing it (Mawusi, 2013). Punishment was a moral method of teaching the family principles, values, and discipline. Similarly, Nugteren (2019) describes how ritual practice preserves symbolic and cultural order, possessing a unique style and a material component that offers clues for deciphering meaning. Pots with significant characteristics were used for sacrifices during the ritual. Different groups interpreted the pots' presence and use in different ways. Adela (2014) and Mwandayi (2011) contend that because of their symbolic nature, pots served only as symbolic items embedded with magical, spiritual, or legendary knowledge and activities that had to be included in the ritual. The items used, the words spoken, and the level of association during the rituals all influenced their success.

Nugteren (2019) explains the need to focus on people's positive responses instead of their negative ones, as some cultural traditions produce negative reactions that are easily exaggerated. Shumpert (2018) describes how important it is to consider Adichie's ideas expressed in the TED Talk where she elaborated on the fear of concentrating on a single narrative that breeds stereotypes. She observed how items carried meanings that were important to the community; thus, it was important to pay attention to their values, symbolism, and history. Nyamushosho (2017) suggests that although the symbolic meanings of pottery vessels were significant, they might not be the most important social meanings of the vessels given that these meanings may change over time and space. This argument is in line with the question of whether different types of pots were used in different rituals and whether it would be harmful to repurpose the pots or not.

Existing literature on the Acholi people primarily focuses on their social structure, leadership hierarchies, rights, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict, post-conflict reconstruction, and broader socio-cultural issues rather than the spiritual rituals and cultural objects. The Acholi people, similar to other communities in Africa, have

conserved their cultural practices despite the influence of Western modernisation and religion (Yeboa, Owusu & Quayson, 2024; Ohaja & Anyim, 2021; Ntombana, 2015; Nkama, 2022; Schultz & Weisaeth, 2015). The Acholi used rituals to teach the young members of their society family values, life lessons, and morals at different levels. This upholds and respects their practices, strengthening family bonds and promoting communication. According to Atim et al. (2018), despite the people's physical and psychological suffering in internally displaced people's camps (IDPs), the struggle did not deter people from carrying out their rituals. This was because rituals served as a coping mechanism.

Besides pottery, other material culture objects such as traditional musical instruments, calabash, gourds, stools, basketry, and spears, among others, have been significant spiritual and symbolic objects in ritual proceedings not only in Africa but also globally (Gurbanova, 2024; Aslanova 2018, Nega 2021; Talla et al.,2020; Adzei 2018, Muller, 2010, Lewis 2020; Smith, 2016; Gentile, van Dijk & Mors, 2024). In addition, other visual artworks such as figural sculptures and paintings were used in festivals, courts, and churches as symbols of connectivity (Lavy, 2023).

Tom (2006) and Owor and Murithi (2011) explain how pottery objects are used as mediators in the ritual sessions of *Mato Oput*, a traditional justice method for resolving disputes and mending social interactions among the people of Acholi. They believed that the traditional justice strategy was nonetheless supported by the government legal system, the religious community, and the traditional community even after the advent of the modern justice approach and the LRA War, which upended Acholi culture. The traditional approach was said to have been proven to be the most popular method of enforcing justice during both traditional community conflicts and political war crimes committed during armed conflicts, providing a chance for the perpetrators to be granted amnesty. Given that the procedure was sincere and involved drinking a bitter herb and talking while being honest in confession, respect, and forgiveness, the traditional method was chosen and is being adopted in settling disputes.

Pots as a traditional material culture continue to be appreciated by communities all over. Yussif et al. (2018, p. 2) state that “not only did clay shape the human hands for thousands of years, but the objects created by these hands also have shaped the daily

lives of the people who shaped them." It was evident that pottery existed for thousands of years and was the oldest practice in the world, archaeologically visible in the development of cultures in several parts of the world. The archaeological discoveries of the oldest pottery in South and North China, the Russian Far East, Japan, Korea, and Eastern Europe show evidence of how deposits of pottery fragments and vessels were part of the communities' daily use and public ritual practices. Some of the pottery items highlighted by the archaeologists are part of the ritual pots, which is of interest to the present study (Sebillaud, 2020; Mazurkevich & Dolbunova, 2015; Baron, 2012).

Despite archaeological findings indicating the oldest pottery traditions across Africa, especially among hunter-gatherer cultures in the Nile basin, it is unclear when the vessels were used. Nyamushosho et al. (2021) explain the excessive number of archaeological research studies conducted in parts of Southern Africa and northeastern Zimbabwe including those discussed by Thebe 2017, Nyamushosho & Chirikure 2020, Huffman 2022, Mtetwa et al. 2013 and Nyamushosho 2021. In addition, new pottery typologies for museum collections with unclear periods of usage have been discovered during archaeological excavations in several East African regions, most notably the Rift Valley (Posnansky, 1961).

As it was in many African societies, Acholi pottery was given prominence as ritual containers, prestige items, storage, and cookware (Forni, 2007; Kayamba & Kwesiga, 2017; Mutungi, 2017; Grillo, 2014). Pots were utilised in social functions among the Acholi community with various ceremonies surrounding family rituals such as birth rituals, naming rituals, and death rituals, among others. On the other hand, pottery was imbued with taboos that could bless or curse the community (Budka, 2010; Nangendo, 1996; Forni, 2007; Adjie et al., 2015).

Pots continued to be an important part of the Acholi community of Northern Uganda. The grounds behind the continued usage of pots in rural communities were not clear given contemporary views and beliefs. Production would not have persisted to this day if ritual pots had not been important. There is a dearth of literature, particularly regarding the perception of ritual pottery use among the community in the context of modernisation and the emergence of new religions. The contemporary spaces were the current existing physical and virtual spaces where cultural and modern artefacts coexist irrespective of the different views and perceptions towards them. The participants

suggested repurposing items for aesthetic and functional use in homes and public spaces, specifically as flower vessels, serving bowls, and lamp shades in both interior and landscape design. The use of ritual pots Integrating traditional ritual pottery in contemporary design space has been encouraged to promote coexistence, conserve cultural values, and enhance the aesthetic quality, which has been limited by historical and practical aspects (Otieno, 2022; Nortey & Bodjawah, 2022). Because of this, it was essential to obtain the views of the community on reusing pottery for modern settings. Repurposing pottery would help the Acholi community deal with the growing challenge of modernity and religion, which diverts their attention and influence over how they use pottery. The new religions regard family rituals and any object associated with them as ungodly, hence making the community adopt Western customs and beliefs as godly (Adong & Mutungi, 2018).

Although there is ample evidence that traditional pottery may be incorporated into contemporary design spaces, the question of where and how to reuse the pots still arose. As proposed by this study, there are also differing opinions on whether the pots should remain in their traditional shapes or be altered to better suit contemporary styles and techniques that satisfy consumer demands (Otieno, 2022; Czyżewska-Zalewska & Kowarska, 2020; Wynne-Jones & Mapunda, 2008; Cruz, 2011; Osarumwense & Peter, 2017). While it was observed that retaining the original design shapes protected the authenticity of the symbolic meanings and identities, changing the features was found to quicken and promote the extinctions. This explains why the original shapes were maintained.

Even though the majority of contemporary Acholi communities have accepted the use of imported household items, including cooking and serving pots, traditional pots, especially ritual pots, have been used privately through sacred rites. Opinions on their use in contemporary societal circumstances are unknown because historically, they have only been important in forming people's cultural identities. Discrediting the use, on the other hand, has made people more nervous about the rites and the pots. To reduce people's negative views towards the pots, it was essential to integrate them into modern areas to promote their ongoing production and use and also make people get used to seeing them.

## **1.2 My Positionality**

My interest in undertaking this study was sparked/ignited by my childhood close association with my grandmother, who was a potter and who inspired and motivated me. The memories of her pottery production and the stories shared remain fresh to date. Grandmother's home was a stone's throw away from our parents' home, and that explained the frequent visits to her home. Whenever I disappeared from home, my mother was not worried about my whereabouts because she knew where to find her child. In her kitchen, there were plenty of storage pots containing various kinds of smoked bushmeat, piled on top of another in a corner from the biggest to the smallest. Hanging on the ceiling of her kitchen were pots in macramé holders, and at the cooking area were flour and grain pots, among others. She never owned a metallic cooking saucepan, not because she could not afford them but because she chose not to have them. Even when the pots were broken, she never threw them away. She used them to serve water to the chicken, placed at the entrance to her hut and in her bathroom. Together with my young sister, we picked some broken pieces of pottery for playing the "seven stones" game.

Grandmother's company was great; she sent for water and moulding tools and, in turn, gave me some clay. Rolling the clay repeatedly resulted in the creation of small items, which I referred to as pots—an experience I longed to explore. Sitting on her animal skin rug with her legs stretched, she moulded her pots using well-shaped pieces of calabash, soft-shaped pieces of animal skin, and smooth stones. She used decorating tools (roulette), woven from palm leaves with distinct creative abilities that differentiated her works from other potters in the village. People looked for her to buy her pots and praised her for their uniqueness. Her pots were well built, fired, and beautiful with fine finishing. It is most likely that the tiny seed of love for pottery she instilled in me slowly developed. None of this made sense at the beginning of my formal education until university.

At the undergraduate level of education, ceramics was an option that provided a better understanding of pottery, which was partly realised later. The curriculum design was more Westernised, structured to the teaching and learning process of clay preparation, production, firing, and glazing, among others. The main changes and developments from colonial times to independence, as well as subsequent attempts to return to native

themes that support African culture in Uganda's educational system, have been examined by (Kyeyune, 2003; Kakande, 2008; Levy, 2022). Despite all these limitations, the childhood encounter kept lingering in my mind.

At the master's level, the study, "Developed Pots from Indigenous Acholi Ritual Pots for Use in Contemporary Space". After analysing the factors that influenced the production of pots, the process of designing started with the identification of the pots that inspired the study. Drawings and interpretations were made, and a wine pot, a key pot, a bookshelf, and other small decorative wall and table pots were produced for a hotel space in Gulu. The drawings and final products were executed in abstract and semi-abstract forms. The communities appreciated the redesigned shapes; however, they wondered if redesigning would hasten the disappearance of the traditional ritual pots. Furthermore, the study at this level did not provide a detailed understanding of the meanings of the three ritual pots and their significant use. Therefore, there was a need to research further and present the inherent meanings of the pots used in ritual, document, conserve as well as provide alternative means of repurpose to promote new uses in the contemporary design space.

It was clear that the contemporary community had continued to disregard the pottery, given the fact that perceptions and opinions towards the rituals and the pottery items had changed. The people in the community feared being labelled witches, due to the fact that they had embraced the new religions of Christianity, Islam, and other Western cultures that consider African practices and artefacts ungodly. The continued rituals however meant production was ongoing, although not as intense and open as it was previously (Adong, 2018). This shift in perception called for a sensitive approach to cultural conservation encouraging the community to find innovative ways to integrate traditional practices with their evolving identities. By fostering dialogue and understanding, they could explore the significance of these artefacts beyond their ritualistic functions, thereby preserving their history while adapting to modern beliefs.

Building upon the previous study, the current research aimed to contribute to the conservation of Acholi ritual pottery through repurposing. It documented specific family rituals involving pots and analysed their use and the embedded meanings, as well as how they could be repurposed. Repurposing was observed as a method of fostering continuity by respectfully assigning different purposes to the pots within

contemporary social spaces. The family rituals studied were categorised as birth, naming, and death rituals, while the contemporary social spaces included private and public environments where these items serve functional and decorative roles. The private and public spaces included homes, recreation centres, hotels, restaurants, and parks where the pots could be placed to enhance beauty and serve functional use. Some pots could be used as lamp holders, flower vessels, or for serving meals such as buffets or storage, among other things.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Even though global ritual pottery has historically played a significant role in shaping cultural identities, modern perceptions have undermined its use in contemporary social spaces. Western cultures have often sidelined African cultural practices and artefacts as outdated (Abdulquadir et al., 2024; Sibani, 2018; & Kushiator et al., 2020). Despite these negative perceptions, many African societies have continuously integrated pottery into various rites of passage, including funerals, marriage, initiation, births, naming; and other life ceremonies like harvest (Ndemanu, 2018; Madukwe & Madukwe, 2010).

Herbich (n.d.) and Nyandiwa (2024) explain how the Luo traditional beliefs have been infiltrated by the Western beliefs. In both Western and Luo contexts, ritual practices involving pottery constitutes a religious and cultural consciousness with which humans relate and establish connections with the spiritual world. To date, the same practice has continued among the Acholi with ritual pottery at play in various ceremonies, with its use becoming increasingly private due to societal stigma and misconceptions brought by Western perspectives. Although many Acholi rituals are considered essential to the community, the way the public view them has changed. This has slowly affected their existence, leading to secret practices, particularly those pertaining to birth, naming, and death. Due to a dearth of documentation of ceremonial pottery, the questions regarding its meaning and whether special pots are needed for certain ceremonies or if any regular pot can be used in their place remain unanswered.

The ontological and epistemological perspective of the study is in line with Blumer's theory of symbolic interaction. Blumer's perception of meaning-making was based on individuals' and groups' social constructs as that of ontological and epistemological

positions that view meaning-making as following the constructive nature of reality and subjective interpretation of the interactions and experiences of the individuals involved. The belief that ritual pottery holds intrinsic spiritual or symbolic meanings was true; however, the view that they could influence other uses outside of their traditional context needed to be investigated. Ritual pottery did not possess special powers unless it was used during the ritual itself (Gijanto, 2020). Lack of visibility and open discourse surrounding these practices threatens their continuity and promotes fear associated with their use; hence the need for the present study.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to contribute to the conservation of Acholi material culture through repurposing ritual pots and integrating them in contemporary social environments.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

1. To explore family rituals that used pottery among the Acholi people in Northern Uganda.
2. To analyse the significant use of pots in rituals of the Acholi in Northern Uganda.
3. To repurpose the selected pots used in the family ritual for contemporary social design space in Northern Uganda.

#### **1.6 Research Questions**

1. Which family rituals used pottery among the Acholi people in Northern Uganda?
2. How were pots used in rituals of the Acholi community in Northern Uganda?
3. How can pots used in family rituals be repurposed for contemporary social design space in Northern Uganda?

#### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The study was at three levels; geographical, content and time scope.

### **1.7.1 Content Scope**

The content scope of this study provides an insight into the broader cultural, spiritual and social functions of the pots. In order to comprehend the symbolic meanings associated with the pots and whether their physical usage is connected to the rituals that would influence repurposing in modern spaces, it investigated the practical use of the pots in the particular ritual context. In order to meet their new purpose while preserving the authenticity of their forms and shapes, potters created a variety of pot sizes through community practicum after interpreting the respondents' opinions.

### **1.7.2 Geographical Scope**

The geographical scope was limited to Awach, Paibona, and Pukony sub-counties in Gulu District, Northern Uganda. These three sub-counties were previously under Awach sub-county, found along the Gulu-Kitgum road, about 41 kilometres from Gulu city. The three sub-counties are the ancestral homes of the Paibona clan. The communities in these areas have conserved their cultural practices to date, including family rituals that used pots.

### **1.7.3 Time Scope**

While observing the time scope, it was evident that pottery existed alongside humans for centuries. This historical and cultural material supported not only the needs of the Acholi society as functional objects but also had aesthetic values which have evolved. Some of these changes became drastic due to the long stay in the IDP camps from 1996, when they were closed in 2006, and after returning to their ancestral home (post-IDP).

## **1.8 Justification of the Study**

Preserve heritage and foster cultural continuity. Acholi ritual pottery is embedded with historical, spiritual and symbolic meanings that are currently at risk of getting extinct. This is because of the western beliefs and practices and rural-urban migration to the newly created Gulu city. Documenting and studying ritual pottery provide a permanent record for anyone interested in the written records of the Acholi culture and particularly the ritual pots. Promoting its existence in cultural centres, lodges, public art installations and other public places can attract cultural tourism and support local artisan economies.

Integrate pottery to strengthen community identity. Repurposing Acholi ritual pottery in contemporary social design space can reinforce community identity, pride, and a sense of belonging. Exploring the use of ritual pottery in modern contexts promotes design inspiration in the architectural, interior and landscape design practices. This is possible because the material is locally sourced, and it is eco-friendly for sustainable and environmentally conscious design practices.

Reduce the fear associated with using the pots. Repurposing ritual pots helps to link traditional pottery artefacts and skills to modern design demands, promoting their existence and slowly removing the fear associated with their use.

## **1.9 Significance of the Study**

There were three significant aspects of the study including academic significance, community significance and policy significance.

### **1.9.1 Academic significance**

The study holds academic significance for those interested in learning more about Acholi culture, practices, and pottery items for use as citations in academic literature. In the same vein, visual art scholars will have the chance to use Acholi pottery as a source of inspiration for their studio production. By transmitting cultural elements in the living space, the study's contents may be appropriated in changing social and family contexts. The work offers a foundation for future investigations, particularly in the field of using other traditional material culture artefacts in contemporary spaces.

### **1.9.2 Community significance**

To the community, the study will motivate potters in the community to continue producing pottery to support their households. The continuous production will encourage and further preserve the use of pottery within and beyond the rural community. Repurposing it will strengthen the Acholi cultural identity, spread knowledge, raise awareness, and allow individuals from every cultural background to enjoy the spaces' atmosphere. When the dissertation, the articles, and pots produced are shared with the Acholi cultural institution (Ker Kwaro Acholi), the results will have a meaningful impact on the documentation, conservation and alternative use of the ritual pots.

### **1.9.3 Policy significance**

The policy significance of the study to the government and policymakers will strengthen and promote the existence of Acholi cultural artefacts when it is adopted and implemented in the national, regional or even international policies. To address this issue, global policies such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Declaration 28 and 36 observed the changes in the way society produces and consumes goods and services and encouraged the development of tolerance, respect for one another, intercultural understanding, and an ethic of global citizenship and shared responsibility when dealing with culture. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) provide a motivating and inclusive outlook for the future, particularly SDG 12. The goal aims to guarantee sustainable patterns of production and consumption as that of Declaration 28. The means to ensure continuous existence of Acholi pottery have been proposed through production, conservation, and repurposing for contemporary spaces. In Africa, African Union Agenda 2063, Aspiration 5 also seeks to strengthen and promote Africa's rich cultural heritage.

The National Development Plan (NDPIV) Chapter 8 (2024) emphasises the promotion of cultural preservation and conservation and natural heritage. Similarly, the National Culture Policy of Uganda (2006), reviewed in 2019, promotes the identification preservation, and protection of traditional cultural expressions and knowledge in the country's development process for comprehensive appreciation. The policy also acknowledged the existence of cultural diversity and encouraged people to recognise and value cultural diversity in economic development, as it can generate income and serve as a tourist attraction. According to Article 37 of 1995 (as amended in 2018) Ugandan Constitution, a person has a right to associate with, engage in, appreciate, practice, profess, protect, and promote any of their culture. Similarly, Section 9 of the Institution of Traditional or Cultural Leaders Act (2011) gives cultural leaders the powers to advance and maintain cultural norms, beliefs, and practices that uphold the dignity and welfare of the populace.

### **1.10 Limitation of the study**

Cultural sensitivity and accessibility are crucial considerations. Infant and adult godly burials were considered sacred and restricted to only selected family members and elders from the community. The indoor infant burial ritual of placing the body in the

pot was restricted to a few selected family members, and given that the study purpose and objectives were understood by the participants, I was granted the chance to be one of the few people to witness the wrapping of the body; however, photography was forbidden.

Community trust. To be able to obtain authentic information, pre-visits were conducted to introduce and create a close relationship with the cultural leaders, traditional healers, and elders before collecting data. This process delayed the data collection processes a bit, although it ended successfully and within the research timeframe.

Oral tradition reliance and knowledge preservation issues. The oral knowledge and lived experiences of the cultural leaders and elders are at risk of being lost in the near future. This is because the respondents were elderly, with deteriorating health status and no evidence of documentation of the rich knowledge they have. A case in point was the cultural chief of the Paibona clan, who is over ninety years old. Documentation has been utilised to preserve the information and lived experiences of participants through photography and audio recordings, which are presented in visual and narrative form after being transcribed for future use.

Logistical and resource limitations. Given the geographical location of Awach, Paibona, and Pukony sub-counties, it was difficult to traverse and connect from one sub-county to another due to the poor road network. The sub-counties were far apart, and connecting to another sub-county would require that you return to the main road first, making data collection and pottery production expensive and time-consuming. A moto cycle rider was sourced to ease movement.

Funding Constraints. There were financial constraints given that the study was self-sponsored. As a part-time staff member in the same university, my little earnings are seasonal, irregular and pending payment arrears for four semesters. These delays affected the tuition payment leading to borrowing from other sources. In order not to compromise on the quality of data collected, I prioritized the project budget at the time of data collection which turned successful.

Ethical approval requirements. The process of obtaining clearances from the Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (GUREC) and the Uganda National Council for

Science and Technology (UNCST) was very challenging. GUREC examined the proposal, and I presented and defended it online before a group of panelists. Guidance was provided and corrections made. At UNCST, the online process was not easy either; missing a step would mean going back and starting all over again. Even when one was computer literate, it would still take a longer time to succeed. Patience and persistence enabled me to obtain the required clearances before going to the field.

### **1.11 Operational Definition of Terms**

Community practicum:	Engaging groups of potters who participated in the study to produce pottery for repurposing.
Conservation:	Protecting the values of traditional Acholi pots from external influences that may change their physical appearance.
Contemporary space:	Is the existing physical and virtual environment we operate in today.
Continuity:	Promoting the existence and use of pottery in today's space.
Documenting:	Recording and storing information that relates to pottery through written text for educational and future use.
Pots:	Are traditional artefacts moulded out of clay for utilitarian, cultural and decorative purposes both in the family and community.
Pottery:	Is a production process as well as finished products of clay pots.
Repurpose:	Taking the pots designed specifically for family rituals to serve other aesthetic and functional uses in contemporary spaces.
Rituals:	Intended cultural proceedings performed by the Acholi people involving a series of acts or actions following certain repetitive patterns for symbolic enhancement of cultural beliefs and values.
Ritual pottery:	Clay pots designed for ritual proceedings.
Social Space:	Is a common area where people gather and interact freely.
Sustainable Development:	Progressive growth that can stand to meet the needs of the people today and in the future.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the study's philosophical underpinnings of constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, and the theory of symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969). It then interrogates and analyses the related literature, following the set objectives: family rituals that use pottery, the significant use of pots in rituals, and repurposing traditional pots in contemporary social spaces. The objectives are logically structured from global to national level.

#### **2.1 Philosophical underpinning and Theoretical Framework**

The study looked at ritual pottery and its repurposing, identifying constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology as a basis for philosophical underpinnings. This study gives a fascinating opportunity to explore the Acholi family rituals, ritual pottery, identity, and space both in traditional and contemporary circumstances. Constructivist ontology allows individuals to actively construct their mental representation of reality by referencing their interactions with other individuals and cultural settings. This is because it allows us to view these artefacts as not only objects but also conveyors of meanings shaped by the community's practices and beliefs. This viewpoint was relevant to the study of Acholi ritual pottery, given that the rituals that required the use of pots brought the Acholi community together. The production of pottery and associated customs are the dynamos of cultural identity. It allows the Acholi to create shared meanings and social reality and to fortify linkages between their communities. Additionally, an interpretivist epistemology acknowledges the subjectivity of information acquired and the importance of comprehending the participant's views (Pervin& Mokhtar, 2022). Through qualitative data collection techniques rich and lived experiences were obtained from the selected participants. This strategy recognises the complexity of social phenomena (Mukhles and Al-Ababneh, 2020; Wang et al., 2017; and Kaounas, 2024) and gives the community a voice and the ability to interpret priority. These strategies were crucial for repurposing through community practicum to strengthen continuous production and to probably change the story in the contemporary social space design in Uganda.

The theory of symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969) encoded by Herbert Blumer. George Herbert Mead gave a foundation for Blumer to develop this theory, whose interest was in the forms of human interaction within a given environment (Fontana, 2015). Blumer (1969) provides a model of how humans can form meaning either by attributing it to objects, events, or phenomena or by physical attachment imposed on events and objects. He highlights three important principles that underpin symbolic interaction, such as, meaning, language, and symbols. Although some scholars observed that the theory failed to address the problems of social structures and individual choice (Thomson, 2021; Topfer & Behrmann, 2021), many scholars have appreciated the uniqueness and the ability of the theory to demonstrate the elements of the self, society, and environment, although it is an old theory (Husin et al., 2021).

Visual art scholars such as Mubashera and Liao (2024), Houser and Kwon (2014), and Tsikoren and Kalkan (2017) have used symbolic interactionism to guide their art production and interpretation. This theory involves the audience and establishes an atmosphere that communicates through shared meaning, cultural experiences, and opinions. Thomas (2025) explains how visual artists used symbolic interaction theory at a time when verbal communication was impossible. This theory was considered relevant not only in recording facts but also in understanding the context of how symbols and meaning could be recorded (Syamsudin et al., 2022). In entrepreneurship, symbolic interaction theory looked at products as artefacts that individuals can relate with in social life through shared meanings. It is more prevalent in the social sciences than in other fields like politics, history, and entrepreneurship (Schwalbe, 2019; Carter & Fuller, 2015; Halas, 2012; Carter & Fuller, 2016; Houser & Kwon, 2014; Tunnikmah & Irawanto, 2023). Scholars who subscribed to this theory continued to build on the foundation of this school of thought by praising and critiquing it constructively. Visual artists believe that society is a place of human collaboration and reflection, which can benefit their writing and help them gain knowledge and understanding of human behaviour, objects around them, and the meanings they create.

Despite the three principles emphasized by Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism also holds that a person's personality was influenced by society when they engage with symbols, leading to social norms and values. Regarding the symbolic interaction ideas

of the "mind", "society", and "environment", Husin et al. (2021) concurred with Mead (1934). These three ideas express how through mediation of symbols, meaning is created. To derive meaning, the idea of symbolic interaction creates facts based on and guided by symbols. According to Aksan et al. (2009, p. 902), "Symbolic interaction focusses on the question of which symbols and meanings emerge from the interaction between people and examines the meanings emerging from the reciprocal interaction of individuals in a social environment with other individuals." This idea is based on the 'meanings' that the social participants in the phenomenon occupy. Despite their shared belief in meaning-making, these two schools of thought approached the process of deriving meaning in distinct ways. Individuals might draw societal implications from their personal experiences. However, by engaging with the objects, both with themselves and with others, communities can positively influence their societies. Making meanings starting with oneself was important because it eliminated unnecessary assumptions from the process of meaning-making and enabled individuals to make well-informed choices regarding their individual and collective perspectives on cultural artefacts and events (Carter & Fuller, 2015; Carter & Fuller, 2016). For this study, Blumer's theory directs how people ascribe meanings to ritual pots based on their perceptions, interactions and interpretations, which may or may not influence the alternative use. In addition to their symbolic implications, one wonders if the pots used possessed any unique powers. Through this gap, the study obtained the views of participants on repurposing, which ultimately served as a direction for the community practicum.

The philosophical underpinnings and the theory of symbolic interactionism provided better interpretation and understanding of the literature under review in this chapter. As presented in three sections following the objectives and research questions, the philosophy and theory that support the study relate to the literature in the following ways:

1. It describes how social interactions help individuals perceive reality through intersubjectivity during ritual proceedings, interpreting meaning as socially constructed. Blumer emphasised that society isn't a rigid structure; it's continuously constructed and reconstructed through individuals' subjective interpretations and interactions.

2. It observed that individuals act towards objects, symbols or artefacts based on the meanings those things hold for them. In anthropological and design contexts, ritual pottery often carries grouped meanings for ceremonial, historical, spiritual, or communal purposes. A vessel's role may change from communal to aesthetic and sacred to domestic, and their meaning becomes jointly constructed by creators, audiences, and contexts.
3. Repurposing ritual pots in contemporary space design is an interpretivist process which views meaning as not static; it evolves as individuals reinterpret objects through new interactions and contexts. When ritual pottery is repurposed for functional or aesthetic use, it undergoes a process of reinterpretation. Blumer's theory offers insight into the evolving meanings of repurposed ritual pottery. Its symbolic value is renegotiated in relation to new audiences, spaces, and functions.

Contemporary social spaces in this case refers to both the physical and ideological space where individuals view reality through social relations and interactions, with pottery itself being a culture of social space.

The implication of social interaction, construction of knowledge and subjective interpretation of meanings alter the original meanings inherent in these cultural and historical objects when repurposed. Despite these implications and the fact that the world is not static, there is a need to expect change. Oftentimes, these changes result from a driving force (Kenaphoom, 2021). It is important to understand the changes, interpret them, and incorporate them into our daily lives. Philosophical and theoretical perspectives lighten the meaning and functions of pottery and what they symbolise. Repurposing the ritual pots can promote their existence and continuity in modern contexts, easing the fears associated with their original use. Furthermore, it helps to educate the younger generation and those who may want to know about Acholi ritual pots.

## **2.2 Family Rituals that use Pottery: A Cross-Cultural Analysis**

Communities that practice rituals have strong beliefs in symbolic items used during the rituals. Wani et al. (2020) posit that several ritual proceedings are conducted with such symbolic items, including tree worship in the Middle East, Indian Buddhism,

and other parts of the world. Furthermore, Chauhan and Chauhan (2019) explain how worship was considered sacred, linking or connecting the human and transhuman spheres. They posit that during these ritual proceedings, several earthenware jars and plates for water, oil, and incense were used, while flowers, fruits, and roots were offered.

The Buddhist tree worship was respected; the trees were either god's home or god itself, and, in some cases, barriers or open shrines were built around them to allow worship. The Indians believed that man could not exist without trees because the trees represent life, growth, and fertility, among other things, so it was important to offer worship as a symbol of gratitude to the gods. Other tree ritual proceedings that used vessels were observed in Israel with supernatural powers to grant divine blessings to cure and punish the offenders against the saint to whom the tree was dedicated (Dafni, 2007).

Further, research on the topic (Knapp and Ogunbanjo, 2008; Campbell, 2019, Sheetal et al., 2016, Bentham, 2016, and Moeti et al. 2023) describe the various placenta and umbilical cord burial customs that were practised in Ancient America, India, Korea, Mexico, Malaysia, Turkey, Ukraine, Australia, Chile, New Zealand and several African countries. They observed the need to respect, recognise and acknowledge placenta disposal because it provided a valuable link in the traditional culture. The disposal process involved either placing them in pots or baskets, wrapping them in fabric before burial, or alternatively throwing them away, drying, or consuming them. In Thai culture, the placenta, or umbilical cord, was mixed with salt and buried under a tree, while the Turkish buried it at a crossroads because they believed that the child should be religious.

The Egyptians fixed the placenta on top of a long pole and paced in temples, caves as a way of preserving and providing warmth to the baby. Among the Ibo people of Ghana and Nigeria, the placenta symbolises the dead twin of the live child. It was buried under a tree within the home. Because the girls leave the family and marry, the Luo people of Kenya bury the girl's placenta on the left side of her mother's home, signifying impermanence and vulnerability, and the boys' placenta on the right side, symbolising authority and permanence.

Furthermore, some other cultures burnt the placenta and saved the ash for later use; mixed the dried fragments and added them to the mother's meal; used the dried placenta as a tonic in case of anemia; and other barren women ate it to cause pregnancy (Haley, 2015; & Lotus birth, 2023). Some cultures buried the placenta or umbilical cord under trees, while others first buried them and planted a tree on top. The burial signified a spiritual and sacred bond between the child, mother and the land, protecting the mother's fertility and the baby's future. The burial took place in designated locations, which were respected and thought to have power over the mother, the child, and the community as a whole. Ben-Senior 2021; Molina and Castillo 2022; Epelboin and Labrosse 2024.

In addition, African rituals were also associated with fertility. Bonnemere (2009) observed that African rituals were associated with fertility and were frequently conducted by families in the community. He explained how the Ankave-Anga women of Papua New Guinea performed a ritual for the first pregnancy of a man because it was the birth of a young man's first child, evidence that he had reached a full masculine state and status marking the beginning of parenthood. The ritual was conducted by only men in the forest with prolonged feasting and drinking of beer served using pots. The ritual provided the young man with full responsibility to protect and defend his family. It was important to observe the start of life associated with pregnancy, giving birth, and motherhood because the rituals provided good health, fertility, and social bonds (Ohaja & Anyim, 2021). Today, the contemporary community still acknowledges the social, cultural, and spiritual aspects of pregnancy, birth, and naming. They considered and respected not only the family responsibilities but also the spiritual aspect that came with it because the birth and naming of a child exceeded the biological act of birth just like death rights. (Wojtkowiak, 2020).

Believing in life after death in many cases necessitated death rituals in many societies. The Nubian and Egyptian communities prepared for a good send-off when a member of their family died because they believed in life after death, a journey to a new life in another world, and the tomb as the last house for the physical body, symbolising the end of earthly life. The Egyptians surrounded the king's burial space with thousands of precious stones and pottery vessels. They restricted the boundary, marking it as a sacred place because they believed that the King's powers extended to death. The vessels were

presented as decorative items with tiny figurative symbols. Some ceramic jars were used for offerings, serving beer, and storing oil in the tomb. The process involved mummifying the dead, transforming it into a transfigured spirit to partake of the world of the gods, and consummating the deceased's aggregation with the sacred world process of the ritual. The various forms of communication made by the deceased family created symbolic language (Czyżewska-Zalewska, 2020; Schramer & Urban, 2007; Glennise, 2019). The Shona community of Zimbabwe believed so much in life after death, and so they performed seven rituals in respect of the dead, including folding, purification, spiritual inheritance, honour, and appeasement, because they were taken to be powerful vehicles to the next life. The existence of the shard pots and clay figures was confirmed in their settlements (Mwandayi, 2011; and Kamwendo & Manyeruke, 2017).

Similarly, infant burial rituals among the southeastern Bantu-speaking community in South Africa required a jar vessel for the infant burial. Burying using a vessel was significant because it symbolised the act of a woman becoming pregnant again. That was a social-cultural context, a symbol of the material aspect linking the pots, wombs, mother, and the household. During the burial, the foetus in the jar were placed around the riverbanks, in the house, or under a shade as long as it was a cool place (Boeyens et al., 2009). This kind of ritual was complicated to perform; however, it was the only way that the family would find closure and accept their loss.

Accepting death was something families struggled with; however, performing rituals enabled them to acknowledge the reality of death. Oliveira-Cardoso et al. (2020) explains how families worldwide were finding it difficult to cope with the death of their loved ones during the COVID-19 situation, given the restrictions on viewing and handling their bodies. He noted that to prevent complicated grief for the loved one who had suddenly passed away, there was a need to find alternative means to support and comfort the bereaved families to fulfil their last homage as they celebrated the passage rituals.

Asatsa (2014) noted that funeral customs and rites varied among nations, reflecting the distinct ways in which every society worldwide dealt with death and bereavement. Because death rituals brought us to the core of who we were through the tangible inclusion of symbols and the expression of sacred meaning, they often helped adults

deal with significant life transitions. Grieving and suffering served to recapture the value of the ancient tradition of ritual. According to them, rituals serve as a link to mediate tradition and stability, a means of expressing feelings and thoughts, a force of integration around intense joy and the loss of a path for transitions, and more when individuals are unable to speak meaningfully (Nelson-Becker & Sangster, 2019).

According to Kayamba and Kwesiga (2017) in Uganda, several traditional occasions in the Ankole region among the Banyankore necessitated the usage of pots of varying sizes as musical instruments, to which the community danced and observed the noises created. In marriage rites, the "give away" ceremony mandated that the groom offer the bride's family beer using pots known locally as "enjoga z'amarwa" as a sign of interest in the girl. Water and perfume pots were also symbolic of fertility. Guests were served from special bowls, a sign of hospitality, honour, and high respect. Besides marriage ceremonies, they used the beer pots during communal work and settling disputes where the beer was stored, served, and drunk from the pot, portraying signs of unity. The beer pots kept the beer cool on hot days. For married couples, pots were used to burn some special herbs as a way of creating aroma and appeasing the spirits.

Equally interesting was how other communities in Uganda used pots during marriage. Basiime (2015) narrates how elders among the Bunyoro and Tooro tested the skills of the bride to prove how responsible she was by ensuring that she fetched water using a pot and safely returned home without breaking the pot. While in Buganda, an elderly woman served the groom with drinking water, signifying friendship between the two families. These similarities showed how African cultures and cultural objectives created a bond between the two families engaged in marriage.

Similarly, the Jopadhoda community, very close to the Acholi origins, the Luo organised several marriage initiations, twin rituals at birth, naming, thanksgiving, and death ceremonies. During the twin burial, the medicine man performed several rituals using pots, and the burial was different from the normal burial. Furthermore, there was a spiritual naming ceremony that confirmed the acceptance of the child in the clan, a right to true self-naming. In some situations, the names were picked from two individuals who left good records, and the ceremony was determined by using two chickens (Jagire, 2016 Ssemakula, 2021). Furthermore, Basiime (2015) posits that the Bunyoro and Tooro also observed marriage and empaako-naming rituals as significant

rituals of the two communities where family members shared from the same pot. The family members gathered around a traditional clay pot served with smoked beef and ate from it. Slightly different from the marriage and naming rituals was the burial ritual of the male head of the family. This ritual required that only the children of the dead eat from the same pot. Most important of all was that sharing a meal from the same pot signified a shared life, unity, and a mutual obligation to guarantee life to another individual. Elders in the community played roles in ensuring successful rituals.

Although different societies used significant objects to perform various rituals, the success of each ritual was attributed not only to the objects used but also to the participation and unity among the community members involved. Tami et al. (2021) explains the importance of encouraging group rituals in pottery production to present long-standing cultural practices inspired by meanings in modern social family spaces and beyond. He observed how the meaning of a task created during group rituals spread to other people who merely associated with it, even without changing the aspect of the task, creating a meaning transfer. During cultural rituals, objects are historical transporters of meanings, symbolising orders with distinct styles (Nugteren, 2019). This is because rituals engage the sacred, embodied, and effective; they worked when people acted together rather than thought together (Aalberts et al., 2020).

Kyalo (2013) explains how rituals brought people together and connected the body, mind, and feelings through the human life cycles and routine events. Baquiran et al. (2014) described how family rituals positively reinforced family bonds and solidarity. They showed how family relationships were built through family rituals, which could be transferred through family projects to generate income. They noted that, in homes where family rituals were not performed, there was always a chaotic situation destabilising individuals and creating division in the family identity. They believed that rituals allowed family members to enjoy family closeness through experience and involvement and to appreciate cultural artefacts since they derived their meanings from them, making them vital to family life (Sezer et al., 2016). Tami (2021) explains how family gatherings helped the community members work together and enlightened the young members of the family about family relations to avoid intermarriages.

Western religious ideas have a history of labelling African cultural traditions as barbarous, antiquated, and sinful. For instance, Lamwaka (2023) described how DJs

play modern music at funerals instead of traditional Ajo dance, which uses long, hollow drums. This shift has transformed funeral ceremonies into noisy, party-like events, deviating from the traditional mourning practices and causing insecurity within the community.

Conflicts were readily resolved during ceremonies when the society came together to carry them out. Important objects like pots were used by the Acholi people to resolve conflicts. Among other things, the pots were used to mix and serve beer, animal blood, and herbs. According to Jendia (2019), cleansing rites were conducted to resolve disputes and promote peace and harmony among the members of the Acholi community. *Mato Oput*, is one of the reconciliation rites, a practice that involves drinking bitter roots to promote healing and reconciliation, particularly in the wake of carnage. Stepping on chicken eggs, or *Nyono tong gweno*, is a purifying ritual for someone who has been away from home for an extended period, regardless of the cause of the absence. *Lwoko pig wang* referred to rinsing away the tears, which is typically performed for someone who was assumed dead. Among other things, *moyo kum* and *moyo piny* were cleaning rites for an individual who was possessed by evil spirits and a specific location where bad spirits were present, respectively. As part of these customs, the community feasted and drank together while also taking part in and observing the activities. An animal such as a cow, sheep, goat, or chicken was killed for cleansing, depending on the rite.

The literature reviewed in this section uncovered several deity-related or spiritual practices that involved the use of pottery objects. These practices included, but were not limited to, tree worship, the burying of placentas and umbilical cords, first-pregnancy rituals, death rituals, infant burial rituals, yearly cultural festivals, marriage rituals, and twin rituals. Through rituals, new members of the family were recognised and welcomed into the family, conflicts were resolved, and health, growth, and fertility were improved. Death rituals provided the surviving family members with the belief that there was life beyond death. By acting together, social ties were strengthened, and meanings obtained. Acting together functioned as a link between emotions, cognition, and the body. Therefore, in addition to the importance of clay objects in ritual processes, participants' involvement and the process of creating meaning were also considered crucial factors in each ritual's success.

Although this section clearly documents several rituals that used pots, it was not the same with Acholi rituals that used pots. The Acholi elders with rich historical and cultural knowledge have gradually passed away without recording this information. Documenting rituals that used pots will help preserve and contribute to the prevailing knowledge gap, providing valuable insights for people to learn and support scholarly research.

### **2.3 Understanding the Significance of Using Pots in Ritual Practices**

The use of pots in ritual practices has been identified in societies around the world. Huysecom et al. (2009) traced the use of pots about 5000 years earlier in Asia than in the Near East during the prehistoric time between 15,000 and 10,000 BC. In Africa, the earliest pottery was found in the Central and Eastern Sahara and the Nile Valley between the end of the tenth and the beginning of the ninth millennium. The presence of the Nile River explained the existence clay deposits, enabling the Luo Nilotic engage in pottery in different settlements

According to Mithun (2015) and Pathak (2016), pottery was a worldwide practice in different communities for domestic, religious, and ritual functions. In India, among the Hindu community, pottery was used in Hindu religious holy journeys. The religious practice enabled them to produce pots for the village festivals, including marriage ceremonies, where pots were used for fetching and serving guests. They also received special orders to make idols of Lord Ganesha for their religious worship. The archaeological investigations indicated that pottery vessels found in houses, graves, temples, and altars were for utilitarian use, socio-political and ritual purposes presented as gifts, and also used as prestige objects displaying success or power (Tite, 2008). This study resonates with Malhotra (2020), who posits that Indian kitchen utensils portray historical tales that have been largely forgotten as a result of contemporary kitchenware.

Sologestoa (2018) presents evidence of chicken and animal-born remains in the pots for ritual deposits acting as symbolic items in the sacrifice divination and ritual offerings, which survived well into the Middle Ages in Southern Europe, a sign that rituals were conducted during that period. Furthermore, Shambhavi (2024) describes how pottery (Ghada) was seen as a symbol of fertility in Hindu marriage rituals. He

describes how the earth and soil were significant divine elements of prosperity, abundance, and growth, representing a mother goddess. The clay was used to make several pottery items. Shears (2023) explains how pottery represented the spiritual ritual and religious insights of the ancient spiritual beliefs and practices discovered in 1884, exposing the mysterious civilisation in Europe. As a professional potter, he continued to produce several ceramic bull idols symbolising male fertility.

Skibo et al. (2016) observe the use of pots in the Great Lakes region of North America as food processing vessels during rituals. He explains the development and adoption of pots for the ritual processing of fish oil with evidence that, besides pottery being for food processing, it played a role in the ritual processes during the early days as it does to date. Other traces of animal fats, nut oil, and plants were in the pots of the hunter-gatherers. Evidence of various pottery vessels of different sizes, including bowls, jars, and burial offerings of domestic animals; animal skulls were identified and recorded in Nilotic graves of El-Barga and Northern Dongola Research. A sign that pottery vessels were significant in ritual proceedings (Czyżewska-Zalewska, 2020). Hanna Emily, a curator, explained how pots were used in storage, cooking food, brewing beer, and serving beverages in ritual healing, initiatory and funerary rites, especially burial. Some pots were smashed after their owner's death, marking the end of life, while others symbolise many things from fertility to medical content significant in the early social history of pottery. She believed that ceramic production and functions were key in tying contemporary African life to the ancient past (Roberts, 2013; Saidi, 2011).

Al-Najjar et al. (2021) explain how the history of pottery can be traced back to the ancient Egyptian times of civilisation which were broadly influenced by belief, environment and customs. They used pottery for various purposes, associating it with the doctrine of life after death, a symbol of faith and the promise that lies ahead of them. Akande-Adedeji and Kuforiji (2023) described how pottery shapes and forms determined their functions. For example, the belief that pots should serve specific functions influenced traditional worship. They prevented the use of sacred pots outside their specific purpose. The most common of those were the Osun pots, used during the Osun/Oshogbo annual festivals for worship. The pots were mediums for sending messages and knowledge to the people. Many communities in Africa feared

using or associating with pots used in rituals because they believed that the pots were transformed into ritual charms during the rituals, making them significantly powerful items with meanings. Ritual pots were designed specifically for rituals while pots used in ritual included ritual pots and those other pots sourced from utilitarian use and repurposed for rituals. In Northern Ghana, pots acted as ritualistic articles during and after death. A funeral pot with local beer was placed at the entrance to the deceased's room during the funeral period to serve the guests as a symbol of hospitality, even though some people were scared of it (Gijanto, 2020; Kusimi et al., 2020). It was observed that, much as there was fear in associating with ritual pots, there were positive aspects of ritual pots that could be borrowed and strengthened in modern spaces to deliver messages. For instance, in Zimbabwe, pots carried great meanings as tools of communication. Nyamushosho et al. (2021) explain how the pots were used to specifically inform and educate the family during marriage rituals, whether the newlywed bride was a virgin or not. During the couple's first sexual encounter, the family assigned the groom's aunt the responsibility of confirming if the bride bled during the intercourse. She communicated her findings by filling the *mwenga* pot with water to the brim, signifying that, indeed, the bride was a virgin. In an event where she did not see the bloodstain on the bedsheet, the pot was half-filled.

Budka (2015) and Bader (2020) observe that in Egypt, *hes-vases*, large vessels, were used for pouring liquid during offerings to the gods and the deceased. *Hes-vases* gained their name from a ceremony that was very important in their daily life. The vessels were used to support people's daily lives through storage, preservation of foodstuff, and production of beer. During the Osirian ritual festival, votive gifts and several geometrical and figural motifs of pot marks, especially of beer pots, were observed on Umm el-Qaab (mother of pots) at Abydos. Many of these beautifully decorated vessels were looted, and others were shipped to Britain, where they were used for educational purposes in universities and museums, displaying and interpreting them as ancient Egypt from another perspective. These, to a larger extent, promoted Egyptian culture and practices in a foreign space, educated and inspired many foreign tourists to visit not only Egypt but also African countries, promoting African material culture and values in foreign and contemporary social spaces.

In East Africa, pottery production was mainly for domestic, ritual, aesthetic, and commercial purposes. Grillo (2014) explains how the lives of the Samburu pastoralists of Kenya rotated around their livestock and pottery as they moved from place to place in search of greener pastures. The Samburu performed the ritual of circumcision, and before the ceremony, everyone was required to buy a pot for cooking sheep or goat heads during the ceremonies. For their daily use, pots were used for cooking milk, meat, blood, wild plants, and medicine for both humans and animals before they adopted other containers such as aluminium. Despite the influence of modernity, clay pots were still being used for cooking bone soup because the greatest amount of fat and nutrients was generated from the bones, there were reduced bacterial levels, prolonged preservation of food, and increased aroma. Since clay pots boil food at a high temperature, the pot cooks food faster and saves time. Butter was cooked in the pot until it turned into ghee, while water and medicine were also prepared in a pot and given to treat animals that had just given birth, to remove the placenta, and to treat other sick animals. These practices and beliefs were common among the pastoralists in Africa.

Grillo (2014) further elaborates on how pots facilitated the brewing of beer, serving beer, and mixing ritual medicine during the sacred initiation ritual of a boy into manhood. The cultural significance of pottery among the contemporary community of Bakusu in Kenya reflected many aspects of their culture to date. Nangendo (1996) argues that the Bakusu community related pottery to females, associating them with the moon, signifying menstrual discharge, a condition associated with pregnancy, birth, and the process of life. She explains that, just as the process of life starts with birth, maturity, and death, so does the creation of pots, which starts with quarrying clay and making the pots. Pottery was part of their daily lives, and the production process was a sign of the growth circle and life course of human life. The taboos associated with pottery were meant to ensure the preservation of the Bakusu's oldest and still-surviving traditional crafts.

Basiime (2015) recognises how Uganda has a very rich cultural heritage with things that were of great importance to human life, although most often ignored or unknown to many. Different cultures used pots during and after marriage rituals, naming, and burial, among others. Like many parts of Uganda, the Bunyoro Kitara kingdom

officials received water pots from potters to keep drinking water cold. They also made traditional clay plates for serving smoked beef. Contemporary communities continued to use pots for cooking and serving indigenous food among the different tribes even though many homes adopted the use of saucepans, aluminium products, fridges, and plastic cups and plates, among others (Kimani et al., 2020; Djordjević, 2016).

In Uganda, pottery has played a significant role in several rituals. Among the Jopadhola tribe in Tororo, the twin ritual was one of the most valued rituals, which used pots generally referred to as *Agulu rut* for mixing medicine, brewing, and serving millet beer during various ceremonies such as marriage, naming, and death, among others. The use of *Tawo* was observed during marriage initiation. Elders used *Tawo* to serve the bride during marriage initiation at puberty. That particular *Tawo* indeed was considered a covenant pot and was kept for use by another girl during marriage. The belief that the pots were sacred promoted the fear associated with the rituals and limited the production and use of pots. In case there was no twin ritual or marriage, *Agulu rut* and *Tawo* were kept indoors. Although some of these pots were used interchangeably during the brewing, storing, and serving of beer or food, they were still treated as sacred objects, and their use was limited to the household (Owor & Naula 2016; Jagire, 2016; Ssemakula, 2021).

Considering how sacred ritual pots are, every family had their own and kept them indoors until the next ritual ceremony. This respect was extended to the potters in the olden days for their creation in society. In Buganda, potters were given status in the community because they made historical and symbolic contributions to the royal family and Buganda as a whole. The Kimara legend was significant to potters because it preserved the life of the first Kabaka of the new dynasty, who returned not only order but life in the kingdom of Buganda. Royal potters made ritually clean royal pots following strict taboos symbolising a source of health as a way of protecting the health of the kabaka. Production of ritual pots was restricted to a specific group of people in the communities, such as a chosen household of the Mbeva (mice) totem (Giblin & Kigongo 2012; Nyamushosho 2017). In other parts of the world, such restrictions were among certain families, groups of women, and specific clans that produced the pots.

In many cultures, especially during the initial stages, pottery containers were produced in a rather opportunistic way, limiting their use to storage and cooking. Although modernisation had some influence on the pots, they could not produce pots that easily replaced pots for cooling water (D'Ercole, 2017; Cedro & Żurawski, 2019). Budka (2015) explains how the functional use of pots was related to their profiles classified in terms of size, with the large pots used for boiling and fermenting beer, medium-sized pots for serving beer and water for the spirit medium, and bowls with multiple uses for storing traditional stuff used when connecting with the spiritual world. Archaeological findings indicated how the vessels were used for the production of beer/wine; in addition, the ritual pots had discrepancies between the intended and the actual use (Bader, 2020).

Nyamushosho (2017) explains how it was very difficult to differentiate between functional attributes of vessels, given that they could be used interchangeably. He further explains that pots do not have specific functions; that was why pots used in marriage rituals were served during death rituals. He observed how potters in Saunyama produced pots required by the chief but did not have any clue about the specific use of the pots until they reached the function since, they were always invited to take part in the rituals at the palace. The specific vessels had functions exclusively embedded in ritual proceedings such as the chief's ordination, rain petitioning, and harvesting ceremonies. The rain pot (*mukombe wemvura*) was the greatest with multiple functions, significant and sacred. This reasoning is consistent with the interchangeable use of pots, regardless of their inherent significance.

Adela (2014) observed how it was exceedingly challenging to classify ritual pots, given that a single pot might serve both sacred and profane purposes. He argues that any item created and dedicated for the worship of a god or ancestor marks significant occasions in the owners' lives. Therefore, it was safe to use the pots for other purposes when they were not sanctified in ceremonies because they did not contain the meanings associated with rites. The symbolic meanings of vessels could not be transferred, given that vessels were secondary, and their social significance was subject to change over time and location, particularly in contemporary times. Additionally, Nyamushosho (2017) underlined the reason why pots did not have meanings by themselves unless they were used in ritual activities, which frequently involved spoken words and actions that turned the pot into a meaningful symbolic object.

Although literature in this section frequently portrays pottery as a significant artefact of material culture that has existed with humans and is still used today, it is frequently disregarded. Archaeologists have found a variety of pots produced by different societies worldwide, which they refer to as vessels, bowls, and jars, around human dwellings, temples, and altars. The earth and soil represented the divine aspects of growth, fertility, and wealth; thus, the act of making pottery was compared to the life cycle, which begins with conception and ends with death. While pots are used for cooking, brewing, storing, serving, and burying infants or placentas, they were also used as symbolic artefacts to increase fertility. Archaeologists presented evidence of nut oil, feathers, animal and chicken bones, and plants in the discovered pots. Notably, some scholars observed that while ceremonial pots were regarded as sacred and not shared among other communities, others observed that communities shared them. They explained how powerless pots were unless they were used in ritualistic processes. They observed that meaning-making was not apparent until the rites when pots were sanctified and made into ritual charms. As long as the pots were not used in rituals, they were safe and could be substituted for other uses. Furthermore, while some pots were designed for rituals, others were used interchangeably to serve in ritual proceedings and daily family activities such as cooking and serving beer and food.

This section provides evidence of visual and narrative accounts of pottery use with their meanings was discussed worldwide. In Acholi, most literature focuses on the LRA war, post-conflict, and the *Mato Oput* ritual, rather than Acholi ritual pottery. There is a need to document the comprehensive visual evidence gap and encourage meaningful community involvement in production for continuity and reduce the gaps left by ageing potters.

#### **2.4 Repurposing Ritual Pots in Contemporary Social Space**

As Lisovets (2020; p. 193) notes, "art was and is historically the direct and active participant of life of the cities." He describes how contemporary venues have served as hubs for sociocultural activities that foster a variety of cultural materials, creativity, interactions, and rapid development. The Chinese visual artist adopted the use of ceramic sculpture not only to express their artistic styles but also to symbolise Chinese cultural and religious identity and to enhance public modern spaces (Zhang & Singh, 2024). Given the cultural values and traditions associated with ceramic pots, new perspectives

could be offered to these objects, creating fresh meanings and interpretations yet respecting the norms attached to them (Ozidede, 2025).

African art and everything African were long disregarded by the West, which saw them as archaic and evil. As the European colonial powers hurried to conquer Africa, they stole and carried a lot of items with them. These items were eventually shown in British museums between 1876 and 1912, not to emphasise the universal qualities of the antiques or works of art but rather as a source of pride that elevated the historical achievements of the West and conveyed a sense of superiority. Due to this egregiously self-serving behaviour, Africans were stereotyped as being similar to “Black apes” (Lunden, 2016).

The Western world disassociated African artworks from their cultural setting for their own sake, viewing them as handicrafts with purely functional uses rather than as works of art, according to Ajayi (n.d.). Even if it was intentional to undermine African art, the pieces needed to be understood and interpreted within their cultural context. Pennisi (n.d.) describes how traditional African artefacts incorporated several important cultural, aesthetic, and social qualities that not only represent the specific perspective on the world but also have meanings that extend beyond the artwork itself. Although Western colonists ignored these significant meanings and cultural aspects, traditional African artefacts helped to define early modernism. Traditional African art influenced the production styles of Renaissance artists, helping to break the monotony and rigid styles and promoting aesthetic values with significant meaning (Ajayi, n.d.; Murrell, 2008; Essel & Acquah, 2016; Clarke, 2021).

The present study repurposed ritual pottery to mitigate the degradation of African art. Lambert (2019), Osuanyi and Acquah (2016) showed how African art was separated from non-Western areas, selected specific curators for African art, and referred to it as “tribal art,” yet it was the inspiration of modernism. African artefacts tremendously influenced the diverse American culture, especially during the slave trade era when many African slaves were brought from Senegal, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, among others. Some of them were taken to work on the shores of South America in 1600 under harsh conditions cultivating rice. While there, the African slaves engaged in the production of low-fired pottery wares, wooden bowls, and woven baskets to support their daily activities, a tradition they kept for a

long time. This crafted artwork connected them to their history and culture and, at the same time, helped them in their daily domestic work. They used the pots for cooking, storing, and serving food, and the baskets for storing and sorting rice grains, carrying food, and cradling babies while their mothers were in the field working. These African crafts were adopted and integrated into American society (Johnson, 2008; Clarke, 2006).

Technological advancements brought about during the art movements in the twentieth century sparked off industrial developments in Western art. The design principles of African crafts, including patterns and colours, significantly influenced Western art production through replication using modern technology. These movements were essential in bringing contemporary European artists back from artistic laziness and boredom (Ryan, 2022; Omindi & Mwituria, 2021). The development of machinery, tools, and equipment led to high-quality production on a large scale. This development was made possible because of the concept of plaiting, splinting, coiling, and twinning with plant-based materials picked from traditional African techniques and incorporated into Western manufacturing processes (Essel & Acquah, 2016; Novellino & Ertug, 2019). Furthermore, to continue producing a variety of commodities, including mats, baskets, shoes, bags, belts, and apparel, Western businesses mostly depended on African raw materials like leather, ivory, and fibre materials like cotton and flax (Chen et al., 2018). Due to this dependence, more raw materials, like cotton, were produced, and wildlife, such as crocodiles and elephants, were exploited for their tusks and skins to supply companies abroad (Ryan, 2022; Essel & Acquah, 2016).

Furthermore, Djordjevic (2016) emphasised the need for humans to return to nature by raising awareness for pottery to regain its place in the modern lifestyle. She explained that due to industrialisation, traditional pottery was active in Europe until the mid-20th and the start of the 21st century. She, however, observed that even though industrialisation threatened pottery production, the discovery of the potter's wheel did not affect handmade pots, nor did unglazed pots disappear because of the production of glaze. On the contrary, potters have continued to produce pots for cooking in homes, serving in restaurants, and decorating interior spaces, an aspect that the contemporary communities have continued to borrow.

In addition, Bardhan and Tripathy (2019) explained that, unlike other materials that came and went or got outdated, earthen vessels have passed through generations and tested time, maintaining their glory to date because of their level of sustainability, eco-friendliness, and recyclability. They considered pottery as an old livelihood of ancient times in human life that started from the time when man gathered and stored food. The continued production and use persisted to date because pots extensively served utilitarian and ceremonial functions (Wayessa, 2010).

The promoters of the art and craft movement in England had laboured so much to preserve the traditional design and tradition of pottery artefacts by repurposing them in contemporary spaces as outdoor flower pots. They had done that to protect and promote clay pots as environmentally friendly products, given that the manufactured plastic flower pots had become a problem and a threat to the ecosystem today (Sovjak & Fridrichova, 2018). The need to protect pottery from extinction because of its social use is also highlighted. Foley (2013) emphasised the need to protect the rich craft, given that it was at a crossroads between extinction and innovation, affecting its social use. He observed that, instead of prioritising the aesthetic quality of pots, there was a need to protect the social relations that brought life to pottery as it was being promoted now in Socirtas Socialis (SOS). At SOS Children's Village in Sanothimi, they taught both traditional and contemporary ceramics, and at Nepal Ceramics Cooperative Society Ltd. (NCCS). SOS Children's Village is a social club that was founded to raise funds to support orphans.

The protection of traditional pottery was considered important, given the diversity of culture in the community today. Härkönen et al. (2018) advocated for the cultural sustainability of handcraft in contemporary Finnish and Swedish society by elaborating more on the influence of other cultures and the rising interest in rewriting the forgotten cultural history. They emphasised that “the aspects of cultural sustainability were linked to strengthening cultural identity.” In so doing, some potters have gone ahead to redesign the traditional pots to meet not only the interest of the contemporary community but also the standards of the international market to compete favourably. The idea of redesigning was equally important in promoting the artefact, although, to a certain extent, it distorts the original look and meaning, which could have been conserved for identity and future reference.

Although several individuals in Africa have embraced Western traditions, others who have not have been intimidated to continue with the indigenous African practices and beliefs. The covert use of pots in ritual has led to the disappearance of the pots from the community (Kushiator et al., 2020). They recognised the need to preserve and promote the production of cultural items to dispel the stigma associated with using them to teach the next generation about the cultural value of the artefacts in contemporary settings. While some scholars encouraged the conservation of pottery, others maintained that it needed to be modified to fit in the selected contemporary spaces. Mukheef et al. (2021) urged modern ceramicists to accept the changes in modern environments and depart from the norm. They urged potters to quickly start reusing traditional pottery in contemporary spaces now that people were embracing new things daily. This would promote new purposes and eliminate the disappearance of the ceramic art. They described how potters could utilise spaces within their homes, such as walls, floors, and ceilings, to integrate the entire space into the ceramic piece itself, fostering an atmosphere that would allow the public to appreciate the potters' creations from an aesthetic standpoint.

As an invention of new politics and identity of the 21st century in contemporary Iran, Hamid, an art historian, used his social experiences to narrate the aesthetic and style of contemporary ceramics, different from the imagination of designers, architects, and historians of traditional Islamic art that was rooted in vessel and tile production (Echlin, 2021). Over time, the history of pottery evolved slowly to what it is today, with evidence in many parts of Asia where gradual changes were observed in the use of glazes. The beginning of lead-glazed earthenware slowly led to stoneware salt-glazed fired at a very high temperature to provide vitrified, strong, and waterproof bodies of vessels, and alkaline glaze, which were all used to enhance the aesthetic and durability of pottery ware. These developments slowly spread to Europe (Brackner, 2006).

While examining the relationship between the traditional culture of Chinese pottery and contemporary ceramic art, Peng (2016) preferred focusing on designs, materials, and technology to produce hybrid artworks with values for contemporary spaces. He explained how materials such as earthenware advanced to porcelain, unglazed to celadon-glazed pots, and single-colour decoration to colourful underglaze paints, at

times following the elements of design, and advanced technology in handling ceramic production and finishing. Sánchez (2019) explains how Spanish potters in central Mexico adopted various decorative patterns, reinterpreted, and rejected some of the designs. They used techniques and styles portraying dexterity, creativity, and aesthetic roles. The views of modification were in line with what Adong (2018) proposed when she got inspired by Acholi ritual pots to redesign pottery wares for contemporary hotel spaces. These were important for the promotion of indigenous knowledge and the continuity of African artefacts in contemporary social spaces.

Bahreldin (2025) recognised artefacts as powerful public tools that can express cultural identities, beliefs and feelings. Incorporating traditional artefacts into contemporary spaces could highlight the complexity of artefacts and visual reality, integrate art history, enhance contemporary relationships, and influence modern space design (Simoniti, 2014; Tiwari, 2023; and Jicha, 2023). It was essential to find suitable ways to include cultural artefacts for aesthetic and functional use in contemporary space. For the strong force on enhancing the aesthetic look of pottery to fit in contemporary spaces, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2019), explains how pottery as a material culture was viewed as the elementary bond of mankind, which should be jealously protected in the community. The OECD observed the need to protect such material culture objects by raising awareness, encouraging participants and experts to examine culture-driven innovations, and promoting networking and discussions, among others. The understanding of indigenous knowledge was confined to a particular culture or society that needs to be incorporated into the contemporary community to inspire the people and generate finances to support different households. That was because they were a set of information that could be shared and perceived to guide the behaviours of the local community in decision-making at a local level (Senanayake, 2015; Eyoung, 2007).

Furthermore, Slade and Yoong (2014) explain indigenous knowledge as an engine for sustainable development, given that every society has a history of knowledge resources guiding the development process. They observed that extinction was threatening the long-term conservation of the valued indigenous knowledge for future generations. To boost the economic worth of the indigenous knowledge system for economic sustainability and development, it was essential to highlight its use in the business

sector and draw on intellectual resources. Chunmei Li (2013) went into detail on how the Chinese government has been instrumental in making sure that pottery's culture, identity, and power are represented in the modern marketplace. This changed the entire perspective of traditional pottery in China's modern spaces, moving it from the position and identity of traditional pottery to the politics of identity and value.

Archaeologists showed interest in the politics of identity especially in the central and west African kingdoms, as a powerful tool for cultural and economic empowerment (Smith, 2016; Oghnenekevwe, 2024). According to Nwachukwu et al. (2019), African ethnographic and archaeological artefacts offered a tangible foundation for concepts and proof that ought to have been preserved and safeguarded with human history. He criticises individuals who stole and trafficked African cultural artefacts, which were vital to human existence and upheld our national integrity. To continue educating and informing people about the historical and cultural relics of the African nations, these cultural artefacts needed to be preserved in public areas. Given that pots have a historical identity associated with both practical and spiritual uses in South Africa, it was crucial to highlight the necessity of documenting indigenous pottery as a tourism product (Olalere, 2019).

By explaining the necessity of sustainable development in active cultural conservation through integration with the environment for sustainable development, Hoang (2021) stressed the need to preserve and promote cultural artefacts and heritage value for future generations. In addition to having a direct impact on the nation's socioeconomic progress, cultural preservation also serves to instill new values in future generations. Cultural heritage, according to Nilson and Thorell (2018, p. 10), is "the use of the past by contemporary society." In the wake of industrialisation, deliberate means should be put in place embrace aspects that do not facilitate extinction such as mass production.

Panda et al. (2019) describes how industrialisation is endangering these cultural relics, leading to a decline in India's pottery manufacturing and the usage of plastic, aluminium, and iron ore goods for domestic tasks. Many African nations are still affected by these outside influences. Although the demand for traditional pots was being affected by the rise in inexpensive, industrially manufactured plastic and ceramic plates, bowls, and cups from Asia, Ghana and Nigeria recognised that potters needed to uphold and preserve humanity, culture, and means of subsistence to blend

into contemporary social settings. Because metal and plastic products are so widely available and reasonably priced in the local economy, pottery production has decreased in the majority of West African countries (Gijanto, 2014). Nigerian potters have persisted using traditional hand-building techniques in some modern areas despite these influences. But they also welcomed changes in fashion and technology over time and space, incorporating them into manufacturing processes for their aesthetic and practical worth as well as their cultural importance (Nortey & Asiamoaso, 2019).

Potters in Ghana's Vuma state adopted techniques that differed from those used by traditional potters, including rough textures with wave-like depression on the lip. The Yoruba people have demonstrated clear results of preserving the traditional pottery industry and embracing change by adapting their traditional forms to accommodate contemporary consumers, such as using macramé as a new material. To compete favourably, potters were encouraged to improve on the surface quality of pots according to the clients' needs and desires of the modern world (Asmah, Frimpong; Asinyo, 2013). Halluska (1999) examined why contemporary and traditional pottery should coexist. They observed the need to improve production and design techniques by enhancing aesthetically pleasing forms and appearances. He pointed out that while pottery might alter with time, it would always exist.

Cedro and Żurawski (2019) explain why in Sudan the society that was supposed to play a significant role in preserving cultural material artefacts for continuity had not done so despite the abandonment of the earthen water jugs (*azyār*) and large round vessels (*Kubiq*) used for kneading dough and watering domestic animals. They attributed the disappearance of pots to the influence of Western culture and technological advancement, the passing of seasoned, knowledgeable potters who dedicated their entire lives to the craft, and civil wars that had impacted Sudan's traditional pottery production without adequate records (Asante et al., 2013).

Umoru-Oke (2017) explains why the Yoruba society was the custodian of customs and tradition: because, besides supporting their daily domestic, economic, and religious functions, they helped with therapeutic magical purposes. He explains how indigenous pottery vessels were patronised by the rural dwellers and some urban dwellers who were comfortable with the daily use of the products. “Apart from

farming, pottery production in Botswana sustained many families with a steady income, enabling them to construct decent houses.’’ They produced pots for the local markets and made pots for wedding presents, house decorations, flower vessels, storage, and ritual ceremonies (Phenyo, 2016, p. 345).

Nyamushosho et al. (2021) explain why pots were used in everyday meal preparation in families, public gatherings, chief inaugurations, funerals, social-cleansing ceremonies, traditional post-mortem, and among minors, where clay pot vessels were used in child play, copying their parent, encouraging gender roles, and beliefs in a home setting. He observed that although pots were heavily threatened by metal and plasticware in most homesteads, they continued to be visible in the daily lives of modern communities. Although a variety of cookware was used, pottery still existed in homes and was used for various purposes.

Despite contemporary views, several rituals, especially healing rituals, are still performed in East Africa. According to Okwaro (2010), healing rituals have continued in Kenya for a very long time despite modernity. He explains that ritual healings fulfilled certain human needs by using herbalists to treat a wide range of illnesses that European doctors were unable to treat, such as mental illnesses, epilepsy, asthma, impotence, miscarriages, and many more. If this kind of activity continued, the covert use of ritual pots might have decreased if they had been integrated into contemporary areas.

As the shift was pertinent, unavoidable, and crucial for continuity in modern places, M'mbogori et al. (2020) underscored the need to support the sustainable development of pottery use, which they argued should be welcomed. Wynne-Jones and Mapunda, (2008) understood how continuity of pottery production in Mafia Island had been influenced by historical shifts, displacement, and potters moving to other communities. They suggested embracing change by modifying shapes so as to generate demand and relevance for pottery products hence pushing the modern societies to adjust to the changes.

Quinn (2010) noted that throughout colonial periods, African practices were discouraged and forbidden by colonial rulers. After Uganda gained its independence, the British judicial system was introduced, and ancient customs and practices were outlawed to make room for more contemporary cultures. Despite all of the

unfavourable opinions about them, traditional customs and the use of cultural items persisted in various areas of life and coexisted with contemporary values. Under the umbrella of the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative, cultural leaders sought religious leaders, including Catholic priests and Anglican reverends, to participate in the peace and reconciliation ceremonies known locally as *Mato oput*. The Anglican Church, led by the archbishop, publicly acknowledged the ceremony's contributions to the church, despite the Catholic Church's lack of open statements on the matter. The Anglican church recognised the significance of *Mato oput*, a symbol that old cultural practices and artefacts could coexist in contemporary settings, under the theme "Darkness has come upon this country that even young people don't know their culture." Given that the religious leaders recognised the value of *Mato oput*, the same could be with traditional African pots.

Mutungi (2015, p. 497) describes how, under Amin's reign, when food and household goods became limited, local products like pots gained popularity among the people of Ankole during what was dubbed an "economic war in Uganda." Milk pot carvers found a business as people began serving and transporting milk in pottery rather than plastic containers. A variety of pots for cooking sauce, fetching water, making porridge, or brewing beer were designed in line with the needs and standards required by the community. Over time, marriage pots changed in the design pattern with designs inspired by African patterns incorporated with lids.

In Acholi communities, the study argues that despite the ongoing use of pottery in rituals, there was a noticeable hesitation to do so publicly due to the influence of Western beliefs and ideologies. Although Western influence brought certain positive changes, it also profoundly impacted traditional African cultures, leading to the erosion of many customs and practices. As culture evolves, Africans need to reconnect with their roots to revive traditional consumption habits, lifestyles, and artefacts, which are integral to their cultural identity. Culture in Africa encompasses various aspects of life, including religious practices, sacrifices, beliefs, marriage, communal living, and legal systems, and is a significant form of communication and worship some of which required the use of pots (Chulu, 2015; Arowolo, 2010; Sibani, 2018; Ndemanu, 2018; Madukwe & Madukwe, 2010).

Pottery use is so significant in the daily lives of different societies, promoted through production and use. The belief that the vessels transformed into charms during the ritual process and not before use gave assurance that ritual pots could be repurposed in contemporary spaces (Gijanto, 2020). That was because a ritual pot designed and not yet used in the ritual proceedings could be harmless. Twin pots were significant, respected and harmless among the Acholi. The community borrowed and used them for the same purpose. Ritual pots can inspire production regardless of whether they were used in rituals or not. Different researchers presented how traditional cultural practices and items have influenced people's perceptions and production and the need to comprehend the material (Lunn-Rockcliffe et al., 2019).

Literature shows how the artistic presentation of cultural items in public and private areas could foster feelings of cultural interchange and strengthen the bond between humans and their surroundings, removing fears and negativities associated with them. Besides its fragile nature, Fang and Chen (2020) described why pottery as a material culture item has offered more benefits in terms of material use and environmental impact, with a special natural charm that blends nicely with various arts, emphasising the importance of integrating its characters, appearance, and personal touch. Issa et al. (2018) encouraged conservation, documentation, and repurposing of such material culture items to prevent the risk of losing them today. This section's literature review dispels the myth that cultural objects and actions are primitive and outdated, as indicated by the Western world. Instead, it showed how these objects and activities have been at the core of social-cultural growth and development in contemporary spaces. The section shows how traditional African art objects and design patterns greatly influenced modern, postmodern, and contemporary artists. It demonstrated how traditional objects and practices can coexist with contemporary principles in many spheres of life, despite the negative attitudes directed towards them. It was necessary to prioritise traditional material culture objects; it was considered possible to share the important traditional values of pottery with contemporary social spaces in light of the diversity of cultures and beliefs that exist today.

Different literature overwhelmingly supported integrating traditional pottery into contemporary spaces through conservation, protection, preservation, and documentation. The arguments arising from the discussions portrayed two ways of

integrating traditional pottery: repurposing or redesigning. Because there was a need to conserve the originality and authenticity of the traditional pottery, the study chose to repurpose the pots. Literature that encourages creativity strongly emphasises the necessity of fusing traditional approaches and styles with modern tools, resources, and concepts for contemporary advancement. Contemporary social design concepts have been considered for repurposing social-economic, social-cultural, therapeutic, architectural, and aesthetic space design.

Although the literature in this section highlights efforts and the need to conserve, document, and incorporate traditional pottery to promote its existence and use, it does not show how ritual pottery, in particular, has been repurposed in contemporary settings. Addressing these practical gaps is crucial for advancing understanding and exploring how ritual pots can be repurposed and whether they possess special powers that influence this process.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology of the study. It covers the research design, area of study, study population, sampling procedure and sample size, data collection methods and instruments, data analysis, validity and reliability, and ethical considerations. It deploys tools that can ably, bridge the knowledge gap, identified in the previous chapters. The presentations followed the set objectives.

#### 3.1 Research Design

Ethnographic research design, qualitative approach, forms the foundation of this study. Ethnography was selected as the most appropriate design because it systematically studies people in their natural setting and understands their way of life and their interaction with the world around them (Delve & Limpaecher, 2022). Using an ethnographic research design, the study observed family rituals, the significant use of these rituals, and participants' views on repurposing during various events. Although ethnographic research design is common in social sciences, visual art uses an interdisciplinary approach, which helps to understand social lives and material culture to reconstruct design for studio production (Rafee et al., 2015; Jacque, 2016). Sharma and Sarkar (2019) observe how important ethnography is in qualitative research, believing that understanding people's cultures can lead to a naturalistic inquiry or cultural anthropology. Narrative inquiry helped to answer the second research question, giving a better understanding of how individuals construct meanings from their lived experiences.

The data collection method was guided by constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. Symbolic interactionism helped bring to light the meaning created by an individual and a group of people while interacting with the pots during the rituals. This theory helped to understand the use of pots in rituals both in the cultural and three-dimensional context. Ethnography in art enabled participants to interact and share their knowledge and lived experiences through in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and participant observation. Visual evidence and audio recordings

were possible with this method for data documentation (Pelle et al., 2013). The daily social lives of the people, the use of ritual pots in rituals, and the participants' perspective of repurposing guided the community practicum for contemporary space design.

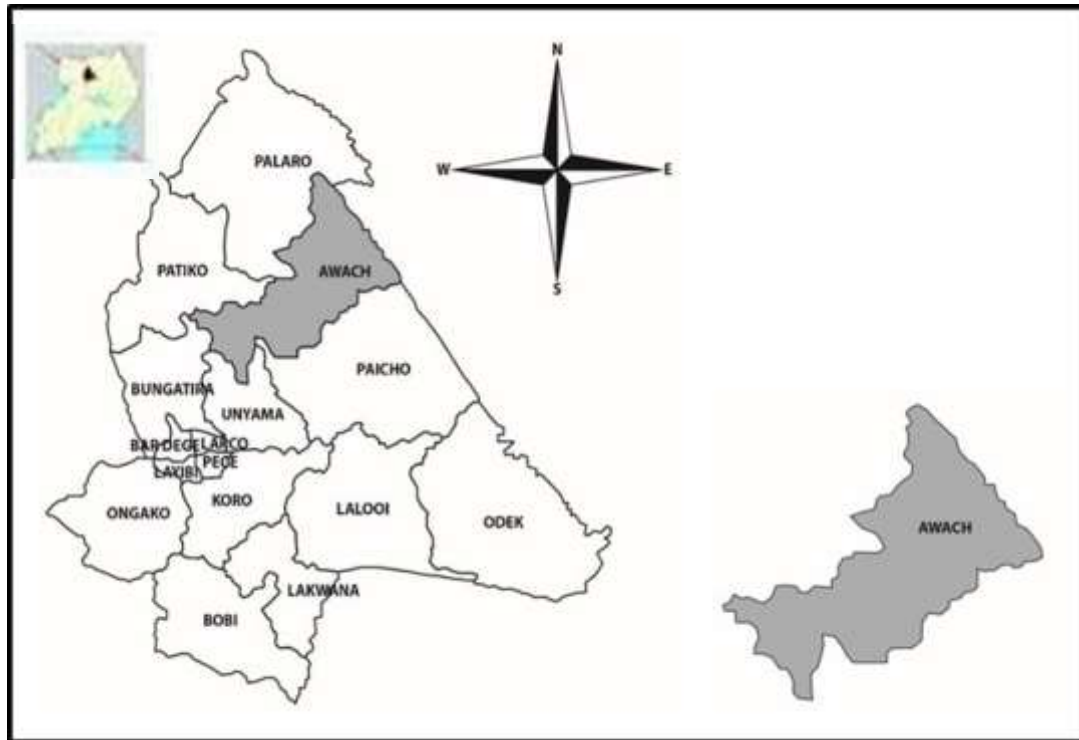
### **3.2 Study Area**

The area of study was Awach, Paibona, and Pukony sub-counties in Gulu District, northern Uganda. Paibona and Pukony are the newly created sub-counties from Awach subcounty. These sub-counties are bordered by five sub-counties: Palaro in the north, Patiko in the west, Bungatira in the southwest, Unyama in the south, Paicho in the southwest and Kitgum district in the east, as seen in Figure 3:1. The study area is the ancestral home of the Paibona clan. The Paibona clan is one of the largest patrilineal clans, headed by a clan chief (Rwot-kaka), Rwot Toorac Raymondo. The Paibona clan consists of several other sub-clans, including Paibona-Payuta, Paibona-Pabal, and Paibona-Kal, among others. It was possible historically to marry across the subclans but not within the subclans; a person from Paibona-Payuta could get married to a person from Paibona-Pabal, and so forth. It was customary to prevent marriages between members of the same sub-clan.

The selection of the three sub-counties was based on the reasons that they shared the same geographic location and cultural norms. In addition, the Paibona clan was believed to be among the clans that have conserved their ritual practices to date. Evidence of ritual pottery and family shrines was visible in different homes across the villages. When Paibona and Pukony sub-counties were carved out of Awach sub-county, life continued as before, with people having families and dwellings across the three sub-counties. The only difference today was that people spent much of their time in Awach sub-county because it provided social and economic services such as stronger road networks, health care, educational possibilities, trade, and employment opportunities.

These communities are predominantly agriculturalists who depend on growing crops such as millet, beans, pigeon peas, simsim, Bambara groundnut, round and yellow cucumber (*Okwee*), and sorghum. They rear animals such as goats, sheep and cattle, and birds such as chickens and ducks. They were also skilled hunters, using hunting

traps, spears, and nets, and were known for pottery production and use, especially for ritual performances. Gulu district is one of the districts in the Acholi subregion in northern Uganda; others include Kitgum, Pader, Agago, Lamwo, Amuru, Omoro, and Nwoya. Pottery was significant, and as a cultural Luo norm, every adult woman in a home was required to exhibit pottery skills by producing pottery items for storage, cooking, rituals, and decoration. (Adong, 2018; Okumu, 2019; Sancho, 2023).



*Figure 3.1: A map of Gulu district showing different sub-counties, and in particular Awach sub county before Paibona and Pukony.*

*Sources Researcher*

### **3.3 Study Population**

The study population consisted of knowledgeable and experienced individuals in pottery and rituals that use pots. The study population included potters, pot users, cultural leaders, elders, a botanist, a herbalist, a medical doctor, a traditional birth attendant, and a traditional healer who resided in Awach, Paibona, and Pukony in Gulu District. The sample size was chosen based on the study population. Six (6) potters, eight (8) pot users (three (3) from urban space and five (5) from rural space), three (3) elders, three (3) cultural leaders, one (1) botanist, one (1) herbalist, one (1) doctor, one

(1) traditional birth attendant, and one (1) traditional healer were among the target population. These categories of respondents were selected to provide primary data.

**Table 3.1: Categories of respondents, their numbers and Pseudo names.**

Category of respondents	No	Pseudo-names	Sample techniques
Cultural leaders	3	CL1, CL2, and CL3.	Purposively selected
Elders	3	E1, E2 and E3	
Traditional birth attendant	1	Traditional birth attendant	
Traditional healer	1	Traditional healer	
Herbalist	1	Herbalist	
Medical doctor	1	Medical doctor	
Botanist	1	Botanist	
Potters	6	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6.	Snowball
Users of pots	8	UP3, UP5, UP6, UP1, UP2, UP4, UP7 and UP8.	Purposively selected
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>25</b>		

*Source: Researcher*

### 3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

The study used both purposive and snowball sampling techniques. In total, 25 individuals participated in the study. Purposive sampling was suitable for identifying and selecting knowledgeable and relevant participants who knew about ritual pottery and pot-related rituals either directly or indirectly. In this case, three cultural leaders, three elders, a birth attendant, a traditional healer, a herbalist, a medical doctor, and eight users of pots were purposively selected. Meanwhile, the snowball sampling technique was suitable for locating potters who were still in production. Being few, yet known among themselves, a potter who was contacted was able to introduce another

colleague for the study. By the time the sixth participant was interviewed, the data had reached the level of saturation; that way, the data collection stopped.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

The data collection methods used; participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, photography/ videography and community practicum were guided by the research objectives and symbolic interaction theory. The data instruments included an observation checklist and an interview guide. The observation checklist guided the identification of specific aspects of rituals, ritual pottery and the community behaviours around the objects and practices. An interview guide was designed, allowing open-ended responses. This instrument helped to probe all the necessary details during the Focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews with the key informants. These methods and instruments were helpful to complement and triangulate the data obtained. It was possible to comprehend the pots' significance for alternate purposes in sustainable development, as well as the rituals that used them.

#### **3.5.1 Participant Observation**

The researcher stayed in the community for over a year to connect with the people and their history, observing overtly and participating in the various daily activities. The data collection method allowed for firsthand experiences of how family rituals were conducted; it also presented details of ritual pots. A checklist was used as a data collection tool. Participant observation, aligned with the constructivist perspective, explained how knowledge was co-created by active participation in what took place. The participant's observation also enabled the study to understand the sociology of meaning through close field observation of social-cultural phenomena, watching how the participants live and behave in their real-life environment (Sharma & Starkar, 2019; Naidoo, 2015; Muller, 2021). Merlijn Van et al. (2015) explain why it is important to observe what people do and find out what meanings they attach to what they do.

#### **3.5.2 In-depth Interview**

In-depth interviews were conducted with the pot users, cultural leaders, elders, birth attendant, traditional healer, herbalist, a botanist and a medical doctor. The probing tool was developed to guide the interview, offering in-depth discussions. There were free interactions with the respondents, allowing the investigator to comprehend the research

issue from the respondents' points of view. Participants were able to contribute their knowledge and life experiences through open-ended questions, and interpretivist epistemology allowed for the subjective understanding of their viewpoints. Thanks to the conversations, respondents were able to express the significance they ascribed to the pots used in the family ritual. This approach made it simpler to comprehend the primary research issues of the study in their entirety.

### **3.5.3 Focus Group Discussions**

Two FGDs were held with potters and their helpers, and one with potters only. The first FGD included four (4) potters and three (3) helpers, the second comprised five (5) potters and three (3) helpers, and the last group comprised six (6) potters who discussed the dynamics of pottery making in the era of modernisation. Considering the respondents' characteristics and geographic location, many of them turned out to be comparable, if not identical. The FGDs were homogeneous, and all participants were known to each other and hence free to express themselves. The potters were only women between the age bracket of 45 and 75. While the women were directly involved in the production, other members of their household sourced clay materials and firewood, prepared clay, and gathered other required materials. Pottery was considered a women's work, and the adult males kept away; instead, they engaged in other social activities with their male counterparts.

The FGD method was used because it allowed free discussion with the potters and their helpers. FGD was suitable for tracking processes that went beyond the observed outcomes, taking into account the experiences, feelings, and thoughts of the participants. The open-ended nature of the discussions allowed the participants to explore previously unidentified topics and the responses of others. Although several scholars acknowledged that there were no restrictions on the number of participants or gender for FGDs, they emphasised the need to select smaller and manageable numbers of participants for relevant interactions between five and ten, six and twelve, and ten and twelve (Manju, 2020; Mishra, 2016; Nyumba et al., 2018). Larger numbers were often believed to make respondents withhold information and, to some extent, lead to heated arguments.

#### **3.5.4 Photography**

To document different ritual pots and the production processes, a number of photographs and video clips were captured. This was done following the ethical procedures. The photographs and recordings were used in understanding the significance of ritual pots in the Acholi community and provided the reality of ritual pots in existence in terms of the shapes, forms, sizes, and meanings.

#### **3.5.5 Community Practicum**

Having collected data, coded it, and identified the emerging themes in relation to the repurposing of the ritual pots, a community practicum was conducted. The community practicum strategy was relevant to this study because it enabled the potters to reimagine possibilities of integrating ritual pots in contemporary environments. Using the field findings and the photographs, the researcher and potters discussed how best the pots could be integrated into the contemporary spaces. Different pots were produced as the processes from greenware to bisque ware were documented as presented in the finding chapter.

#### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure.**

After the research proposal was approved, the directorate of research and graduate training of Kyambogo University provided an introductory letter. Additionally, Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (GUREC) and Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) gave their approval. Under their direction, GUREC noted that since the study was about Acholi material culture, it was more acceptable and necessary to present it to Acholi cultural institutions (Ker Kwaro Acholi) rather than Gulu District. A letter of introduction was issued by the Prime Minister's office at Ker Kwaro Acholi, introducing the study to the clan chief and other members of the same community. The office of Ker Kwaro Acholi served as the entry point for the identification of certain cultural leaders. Upon reaching the research area, more respondents were chosen. The researcher personally selected the respondents and collected the required data. Research questions and guides were translated into Acholi language for understanding. Consent forms were signed before participating in the study, including voice recording and photography. The study purpose and objectives were clearly explained and those who accepted to participate in the study did so at will.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

To aid in the data analysis process, a data processing and analysis table was created, and items of data that were related were clustered and interpreted about how these emerging themes addressed the research questions. The data was carefully processed by analysis, coding, and sorting. The primary themes arose from pot-using rituals, the how and why of their use, and the opinions of repurposing.

Content was systematically analysed by examining and interpreting the symbolic, cultural, and functional meanings embedded in ritual pottery and how these meanings were reimagined within contemporary social design in the Acholi sub-region. Ethnographic records through texts and documentation, oral narratives were transcribed, and visual images were taken through photography, video clips and community practicum.

Data was particularly allowed to determine the themes to be used inductively. The coding process involved identification of recurring themes, classification of pottery attributes and interpretation, comparison, analysis and their continued use. Symbolic interaction theory and placemaking facilitated comprehension. Findings presented the symbolism and values attached to ritual pots and how the views of participants were translated into contemporary social design space, shaping the aesthetics, social interactions, and cultural representation in the Acholi sub-region. Findings were presented in visual forms, narratives, and organograms.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

The research demonstrated a high degree of honesty and integrity, including the administration of plagiarism tests, to embrace research ethics in academic writing and general research activities. The ethical considerations respected cultural sensitivity, which led to obtaining the necessary clearances to achieve the set objectives. The proposal went through the Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (GUREC) and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). The Belmont Report guides the research ethical framework through the three principles of respect for individuals, beneficence, and justice to safeguard the researcher and respondents (Muscente, 2020; Kirsh, 2019). UNCST adopted this ethical framework to guarantee the rights and well-being of human subjects in research by creating four fundamental

research ethics principles: beneficence, non-maleficence and justice, fairness, and respect for persons (UNCST, 2014, and The Belmont Report, 2024).

To give the participants the freedom to choose whether or not to participate in the study, discussions regarding the nature of the research, including the research instruments, duration, and benefits of participating, were held to enable them to sign on consent form only what they understood. Consent forms were designed and translated but also verified by a language expert. Before taking pictures and recording the respondents' voices, they voluntarily agreed to it. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained at all times. All the written hard copies were kept confidential and safe under lock and key. The soft copies, audio files, and visual evidence were saved on a personal laptop with a password. Participants were given pseudonyms to hide their genuine identities to avoid any potential harm.

### **3.9 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments**

Using a naturalistic approach, the current study aimed to comprehend events in context with specific circumstances. Pre-testing was done on the instruments to determine their reliability from the Gulu City suburb of Laroo Division. The pre-test with one (1) cultural leader, two (2) elders, two (2) potters, and two (2) pot users, presumably aware of the Acholi rituals and pots used in rituals, was selected. More so, the tools were verified for accuracy through triangulation to collect the desired data needed for the present study. The tools were found to be reliable in generating reliable data, which was validated for their appropriateness in producing the desired data. Content validity was used, and the interview guides and checklists were tested by asking two independent respondents if the tools were capturing the intended various constructs of the study. This was done to establish the trustworthiness of the findings after concluding the study. While reliability was used to obtain consistent and similar results, validity focused on whether the measure used measured the intended concept.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and visual documentation. Ethical considerations observed included respect for sensitive cultural proceedings, signing of consent forms, and protecting the participant's identity, among others. The study was anchored within constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology and the theoretical frameworks of symbolic interactionism. The findings show how ritual pottery serves various social purposes and how this relates to the design of modern communal spaces. In this chapter, familial rituals involving pots were examined, and their use and repurposing in modern social settings were discussed. The study analysed family rituals that use pottery among the Acholi people of Northern Uganda. There is hardly any evidence of documenting traditional Acholi pottery in contemporary spaces in Uganda, except for the study which redesigned pottery (Adong, 2018; Adong & Mutungi, 2018; Adong et al., 2024). Netshivhambe (2018) contends that it is essential to record cultural artefacts for educational and learning objectives because cultural knowledge has been disregarded by the current generation worldwide. To collect the required data for the study, three main questions were used:

1. Which family rituals used pottery among the Acholi people in Northern Uganda?
2. How were pots significantly used in the rituals of the Acholi community in Northern Uganda?
3. How can indigenous ritual pots be repurposed in contemporary social design space in Northern Uganda?

The study's science followed the study methodology: ethnographic research design, data collection methods and tools, content analysis, and findings guided by the research questions thematically.

The first theme described family rituals that involved pots. The research included ethnographic design and content analysis. The scientific method aligned with the rituals

for easier analysis, and the findings covered birth, naming, and death rituals. The second theme focused on pots used in rituals, with the science concentrating on functional and symbolic analysis. Data collection methods and tools such as observation guides, interview guides, and photography were used. The scientific approach documented the specific functions of the pots and interpreted their meanings by cross-referencing with other authors' views to understand how different communities used the pots. The third theme explored the repurposing of ritual pots based on participants' perspectives through community practicum. The scientific concept of repurposing was applied to experimentation. The analysis relied on the views of various participants regarding how and where to repurpose the pots. The results were evidence-based, showing that ritual pots were produced to serve functional and aesthetic purposes in homes and public spaces, such as lampshades, flower vessels, and for serving meals.

A total of twenty-five (25) participants took part in the research. They included three (3) cultural leaders (CL1-CL3), six (6) potters known as (P1-P6), eight (8) pot users from urban and rural community (UP1-UP8), three (3) elders (E1-E3), one (1) traditional healer, one (1) herbalist, one (1) traditional birth attendant, one (1) physician from Gulu University's Faculty of Medicine, and one (1) botanist. The study was carried out in the sub-counties of Awach, Paibona, and Pukony. According to the clan chief and the Local Council One (LC1) leader of Laban village, the Awach sub-county's superior socioeconomic services are the reason why members of the Pukony and Paibona communities frequently spend the majority of their time there.

#### **4.1 Understanding Acholi Organisation Structure and its Relevance to the Study Context**

This section provides a comprehensive understanding of ritual pots and family rituals involving pots. It explores the when, where, how, and why of their use to examine the historical and cultural values, as well as participants' perspectives on repurposing. The societal constructs including the categories of individuals responsible, and their respective roles including the strands were explained. The study also explained what happens when the spiritual divine cord was broken.

#### 4.1.1 Perspective of Rituals in Acholi Culture

For better understanding, there was a need to explain the concept of ritual and why it was significant among the Acholi community. Rituals in Acholi were beliefs and practices associated with actions and utterances that would appease and evoke the spiritual world for the physical, spiritual, and mental being of individuals. It was conducted to restore or to cast spells on the offenders. The in-depth interview with the cultural leaders elucidated the Acholi community's appreciation of rituals as a means of fostering social cohesion, familial relation, peace, and reunification.

One of the cultural leaders, CL2, described how rituals became a necessity whenever certain situations and conditions required that they should be conducted. He described the ceremonial act as *Kwe kwaro*, in which families and communities came together to make vows with the gods. CL2 observed that, depending on the situation at hand, households and families conducted rituals at family shrines (*Wang Kac/Kac*), while issues that concern society or clans (*kaka*) were conducted at the clan shrine (*Abila*). These explanations were analysed and presented in organogram form (Figure 4.1). The issues of clan shrine (*Abila*) were determined a long time ago by the ancestors (*kwaro*), and whenever any ritual required *Abila*, every clan went to their respective clan shrine. The clan shrines were huge and found within isolated hills (*cere*) and big rocks (*goddi*) or constructed within the community (extended families). Meanwhile, the family shrine (*Kac*) was built within the homestead and, in most cases, at the centre of the home and either protected or left open. Refer to figures 4:21b, where the baby's umbilical cord was buried, and 4:30, where the pot containing the exhumed body was placed. The similarities of the two rituals were that cleansing took place despite the magnitude of the situation at hand. CL2 explained that:

It is difficult to today to notice *Kac* in homes today; many of them are not properly organised, making them almost invisible. Those who have *kac* in most cases disguised them and if you are not critical, you may not see them (CL2 personal communication, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023).

It was discovered that there were hidden and covert family shrines in the community, indicating that the majority of households did not wish to reveal their shrines to others. The idea of hiding the shrines was related to the possibility of negative perceptions of people within and outside the community. The shrines appeared to be unnoticeable;

thus, they were either hidden or constructed far from the open compound, as reported. Individuals who have an idea where twin and breech umbilical cord burials were conducted could easily trace the family shrine.

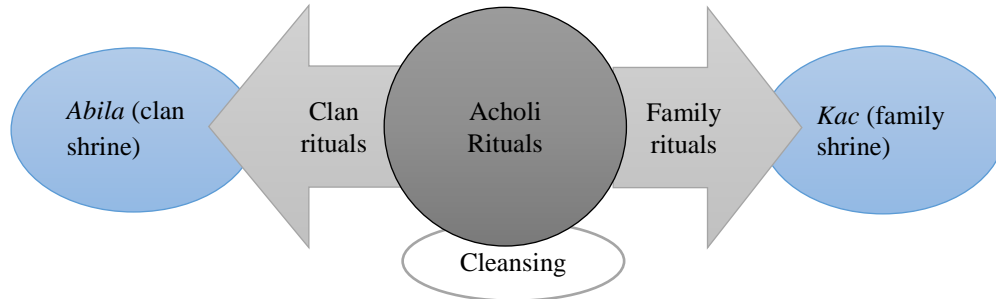


Figure 4. 1: Visual interpretation of rituals in Acholi society conducted within the clan or family shrine.

Source: Researcher

It was evident that familial rituals were more popular in the community than clan or community rituals. The cultural leaders and other knowledgeable elders explained how family rituals involved the immediate and sometimes key individuals in the extended family structure, although most ceremonies required specific individuals from the community. The family or clan rituals were determined by the magnitude of prevailing issues, some of which were within a family, while others were between two families from either the same clan or two different clans. Some of the rituals include *Mato oput* (traditional reconciliation ritual), *Kir* (bridge/sin), *Aywaya* (spiritual rituals), *Kwer pa lutino jok* (godly rituals), and return of remains/spirit (*tibu*), as it is with other cultures among the Buddhists, Philippines, Luo of Kenya among others (Mwaka & Olango, 2023; Nyandiwa, 2024; Shutek, 2025, & Laugrad et al., 2020).

Another cultural leader, CL1, explained how rituals in Acholi culture required spiritual, physical, and psychological interventions through sacrifices (*tum*) and payments in material form (*kwoo*), among others. Furthermore, CL1 explained the circumstances under which rituals were performed, including the time when;

Health is at stake, during a disease outbreak, when babies are born, when divine cords are broken, when hope is lost and there is a need to thank the gods of the ancestors, and when there is a need to restore relationships, among others. This is done annually during the dry season after the second harvest, usually to provide cleansing, and protection, restore hope, appease the spirits, and restore

relationships within the people and with god. Cleansing is a key practice embedded within family or clan rituals or conducted independently (CL1 personal communication, February 4, 2024).

The cultural leaders described the many settings in which the Acholi performed their rites. They stressed the significance of understanding governance, honouring the customs, and the guidance that the leaders need to follow to perform their responsibilities. The guiding principle represented the general social framework, which explained the many cultural practices followed by the Acholi people. Order was restored to the family and the community as a whole by these structures. Latigo (2008) explained how the prolonged LRA conflict disrupted and weakened the community's structure and the elders' power in enforcing the social teachings built on traditional conceptions and local standards. Furthermore, by upholding the ideals of ancient African cultures, Awoniyi (2015) explained how the governance concept established and preserved society's order and underlined the importance of preserving the morals and interpersonal ties that act as its guide.

CL1, a cultural leader, described the ways in which historical and cultural contexts shaped the formation of society. He explained how the rituals of the Acholi community strengthened their sense of identity as Acholi by adhering to specific traditions that had been passed down from the ancestors via their physical, psychological, and spiritual lives. These arguments were based on the perception that in the physical world, pots were used to mix medicine and support specific specialised rituals; to meet the psychological demands of society, one required something unique that might contribute to the societal values and traits; and spiritually, every individual possessed a spiritual existence.

#### **4.1.2 Societal Constructs of the Acholi People**

According to the respondents, Acholi is an ethnical society that was raised in homesteads upheld by clan-system cultural practices, where *tekwaro*, or customs, values, and cultural norms, were highly valued. CL1 provided a detailed explanation of Acholi's social formation under the so-called "governance structure." He used the following to describe the many tiers of authority within the structure:

At its highest point is the supreme god (*Joka ma malo*), who reigns over all of us through the ancestors, and these ancestors are what we call *kwaro*. Ancestors oversee our existence in space. Below these important beings are governance agents (*tela or lu' tela*) who deal with things that make us live: At the highest point of the leadership is the chiefdom (*Ker*); below chiefdom, we have clans (*kaka*); below clans are extended families (*dogola*); below extended families are families (*Ot*); and lastly, households (*Ga'ng*). So, a group of households' forms *Ot*, a group of *Ot* forms *Dogola*, a group of *Dogola* forms *Kaka*, and a group of related *Kaka* forms chiefdom. You see, this is the governance structure of Acholi, and that make us who we are. (CL1 personal conversation, September 19, 2023).

An organogram, which depicts different levels of leadership and power as they exist in any structured system. Despite the different levels of responsibilities; from supreme god downwards, the lowest levels worked closely with those above creating an upward flow movement in consultation with those above. The word “god” refers to the traditional supreme spiritual being that is above all beings and worshipped by the ancestors. '*Jok*' or '*jogi*' (plural) also refers to other small spirits and ancestors. The chiefdom (*Ker*) was guided by the supreme god (*Jok Ma Malo*) through ancestors (*Kwaro*). The organogram was developed by the researcher to provide a visual representation and overview of the Acholi governance structure (see Figure 4.2).

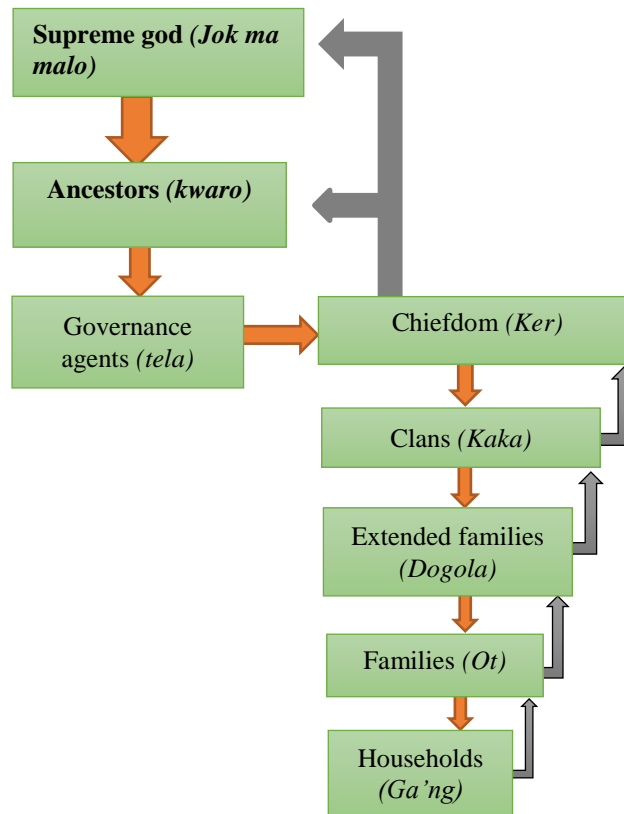


Figure 4.2: Illustrative impression of societal constructs of the Acholi.

Source: Researcher

The familial operational bases were the sociocultural and governance institutions that the strands supported. The clan chiefs demonstrated how hierarchical systems of government maintained the sacred thread of Acholi society while also serving as the foundation for fostering community peace, stability, and order. Similar traditional governance structures have been significant in promoting good leadership, service delivery, land administration, and preservation of social order in AmaZulu kingship, AmaXhosa kingship, the Yoruba kingdom, the Buganda kingdom, and the Toroo kingdom, among others (Madiga, 2016; Olawoyin et al., 2023; Matsiliza, 2024; Kakumba, 2023; Nalumu, 2025). The responses clarified that each level of the governance structure, as depicted in Figure 4.2 above, had its governance functions that operated at either a spiritual structure (*tibu*) or an organised existence on land. Without the strands, the threads supporting these two tiers could not exist.

The first structure, being spiritual, helped the people commune with the spiritual world. The spiritual structure had three (3) strands: the deities/oracles, spiritual mediums, and diviners. The deities or oracles (*jok madit*) included the mother deity of the following

clans: Payira-Kalawinya, Poranga-Olalteng, Patiko-Bakamunu, Palabek-Ogili, Palwo-Pajule-Lagoro, and so on. Deities were the big gods, considered prophets that used to live. The second strand consisted of spiritual mediums responsible for performing sacrifices (*Ateke/Lutum piny*). The last strand of diviners consisted of traditional rainmakers, those who dream about medicine and use it to treat illness, and fortune tellers who use various methods, including animal internal organs and palmistry. CL1, the cultural leader, stated;

that depending on the problem, one can either go to spiritual mediums in charge of sacrifice (*Ateke*) or diviners; however, in cases where the problem is bigger and affecting society, such as ebola, locusts, or Corona, we go to these oracles and pray to them. I am a witness to the action of oracles on Ebola in Eastern Acholi and then locusts, where they went and prayed to Lagoro and Ebola to Olalteng, and they defeated the problems (CL1 personal interaction September 19, 2023).

The second structure was the organised existence on land, which was run by the chiefs (*rwodi-kweri*) and (*rwodi-okoro*) in charge of the land. This structure had three significant strands: the natural endowments, the construction of relations, and the attributes that guarantee identity. The natural endowments that help to nourish; they include land (*ngom*), forest (*bu'nga*), animals (*lee*), waters (*pui*), and rocks (*godi*). The construction of relations shows how we define our relationship ties, commonly referred to as *tudu-wat*. For example, the roles played by the fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles, grandmothers, and grandfathers, among others, and their roles regarding a person within the family. He observed that the uncle (*neru*) was a person to whom our lives were accountable. In case you lost your life, an uncle was the rightful person to question the death of a person. If a child became deviant, an uncle was expected to discipline them, something a father could not do. The aunt was a great teacher. Lastly, the attributes that guarantee identity include norms, values, and practices galvanised into beliefs. A summary of this structure was drawn by the researcher as seen in Figure 4.3.

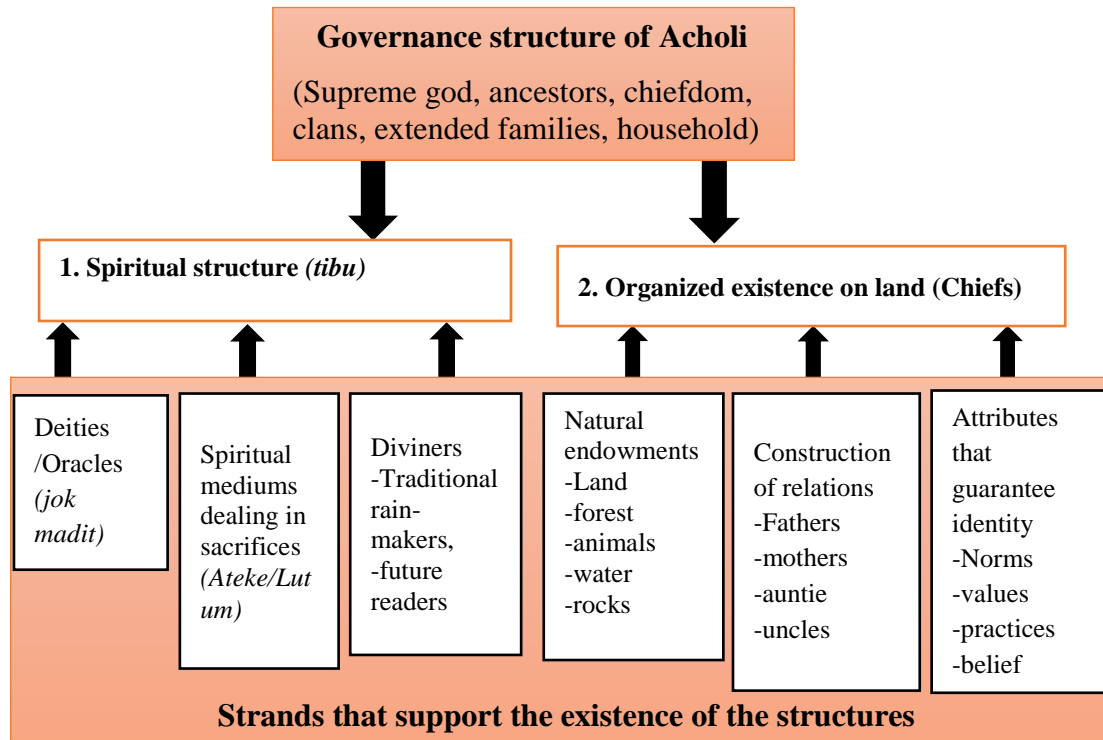


Figure 4.3: Tasks of governance structure supported by trends.

Source: Researcher

The strands of the governance system played a crucial role in organising the society. When colonial powers conquered Acholi territory, literature acknowledged the strength of the Acholi social system through these strands. The community was strongly organised under chiefdoms, and when the colonists abolished all the chiefdoms, they controlled the community. However, when the clan leaders (*wrodi*) were attacked, they lost their authority and obligations to their subjects and turned their allegiance to the colonial forces, who gave them new titles “chiefs” (Paine, 2014 & Bilotta, 2011). The different chiefdoms were reduced to a single ethnic identity, yet these were significant cultural institutions that supported the cultural system (Amone & Okullu, 2014 & Whitmire, 2013). The structure under chiefdom played a great role in influencing society. Fadiloglulari (2023) explains how culture influence people's beliefs and lifestyles, emphasising the need to appreciate diversity as one respect the customs, language, religion, and the cultural wear of other communities.

#### 4.1.3 The Spiritual Divine Cord (*tol-tibu*)

The spiritual divine cord was a practice of observing and maintaining peace and stability so that families and communities live in harmony with each other and with

other members outside their communities. The cultural leaders and key informants explained the significance of the spiritual divine cord. The symbol for the Acholi spiritual divine cord was illustrated in a knot and demonstrated by the researcher as seen Figure 4.4. Knotting the spiritual cord defined the cord that tied all the Acholi people. When one sinned or committed an offence, the divine cord was broken, and once the divine cord was broken, there was a need for reconciliation and the restoration of peace through rituals. A cultural leader, CL3, explained why the biggest command in Acholi culture emphasises why one must not be a first offender. CL3 explained how first offenders were considered the biggest sinners. He argued that the Acholi never looked for trouble since they were peaceful people; when one looks for trouble, the troublemakers face the consequences of their actions. Some of the acts that necessitated mending spiritual divine cords include murder, physical and emotional fights, sexual assault, and malicious damage of property and foodstuff, among others, by individuals within the immediate or extended families or clans.



*Figure 4.4: The symbol of the divine cord knot (tol-tibu).*

*Source: Researcher*

This act of taking responsibility gave rise to the notion that the Acholi people are reliable. The divine cord knot (*tol-tibu*) connects the relationship to the strands supporting societal construction, which is significant in creating harmony. The cultural leaders explained how the divine cord was a basis for understanding the Acholi people. CL1 explains that:

Since the divine cord is what keeps society solid, it must always remain in a state of harmony. Reconnecting is necessary to mend the broken divine cord that occurs when there are problems in society. To mend the broken divine cord, a variety of cultural practices are required; rituals are spiritual exercises for reconnection, and *kir* is a spiritual divine bridge. For instance, the traditional reconciliation method known as *Mato oput* is performed in three

steps: material rituals, which demand payment in the form of material objects like animals (*kwoo*); spiritual sacrifice, which involves animal sacrifice (*tum*); and the third step of drinking a bitter local medicine. The medicine is a mixture of pounded *oput* tree and blood from a slaughtered animal (*mato oput*), which mends the broken friendship. Drinking the bitter mixture from the pot represents a bitter offence that should never be committed again (CL1 personal communication, September 19, 2023).

The cultural leaders explained that whereas the traditional use of pots was significant in mixing the medicine for the *Mato oput* ritual, today they have observed the use of wooden troughs. Focus has been shifted to the benefits: creating harmony and reconciling the individuals, families and the community at large.

Jendia (2019) discussed the value and advantages that the members of the Acholi community receive from the *Mato oput* traditional reconciliation approach, which other communities should embrace, employ, and promote. *Mato Oput* was a ritual conducted between individuals, families, or across clans to restore broken relationships after offences such as murder. The process of *Mato Oput* was never rushed. Before the process starts, tensions must be reduced (Mwaka & Olango, 2023). Research shows that many societies, particularly those in Africa, still use traditional methods to resolve conflicts between resentful parties to promote harmony among social and religious groupings, despite the Western legal system for dispute resolution. This is because African conflict resolution is multifaceted and employs strategies depending on the situation (Nolte-Schamm, 2006; Iwuh, 2019; Ajayi & Oluwafemi, 2014).

Rituals that required spiritual renewal regarded cleansing as a central element during the proceedings. Cleansing was deemed vital to eliminate or redirect ill omens, oppressive spirits, and curses, among other premonitions, for successful rituals among the Acholi. The knowledgeable elders and cultural leaders shared similar views on cleansing through prescribed ritual practices.

Key informant E1 explained why the cleansing during a ritual proceeding was conducted according to the prevailing situation at that time. He explains how a cleansing could be performed as part of a specific ceremony or as a stand-alone ritual focused on a particular act, circumstance, or activity. He said,

A broken piece of pot (*otako*) is used for mixing and serving medicine during the procedure. When there were no pot, calabashes or wooden troughs were used as substitutes. A pot is preferred because it fulfils the ritual of giving the cleansing in its unique way. Other ceramic pieces were used for preparing drinks, serving food, and making local wine and beer. (E1 personal communication, February 7, 2024).

According to other key informants, E2 and E3, purification rites (cleansing) in Acholi culture rejuvenated life, averting bad luck that might have befallen the individual, the family, or the entire generation. E2 insisted that rites of purification were necessary for both planned and situational events; he said,

People commit inhuman, unbecoming, deadly acts of spiritual divine bridges or abominations, “*kir*” in Acholi. Some *kir* include cold-blooded murder, inappropriate sexual acts, or smaller offences such as pouring a wife’s food, throwing a wife’s property out of her marital home, and humiliating a family member by exposing their nakedness. Such practices, if not cleansed through rituals, can result in death. The spirit of death will loom over the offender’s family and mysteriously start killing children, especially toddlers and other young children. Children are bound to die mysteriously when the cleansing ritual is not performed immediately (E2 personal communication, January 24, 2024).

While it is true that cleansing rituals were performed, particularly for those whose lives were snatched too soon, some communities conducted cleansing for other reasons. According to Asatsa (2024), these nighttime rituals were performed to eject the deceased's spirit but, more importantly, to channel the spirit towards the murderer so that it would afflict him. The goal of chasing the ghost away was to stop it from coming back to trouble the family.

Additionally, E3 provided information about situational events, characterising them as “happenings usually beyond one’s control.” Situational events included cases where a person vanished and was assumed to be dead. Another situation was when a person nearly died or unexpectedly discovered a body in a remote location. The purification rites were performed. For a person who vanished and reappeared, cleaning procedures were confirmed necessary by E1, another crucial source. He clarified the need for a ritual to please the dead. The family that lamented and cried was made to wash their faces in a clay bowl (*otako*), a sign of washing away tears, and the water was poured into the victim's bath water. If a family member disappeared for a long time and

reappeared in dreams, the elders consulted the spirit realm to find out if their loved one had passed away. A funeral was organised for the departed, which would help the family to accept the loss; when there was no longer any hope or evidence of return.

In an attempt to make sense of other cleansing rituals, the cultural leaders discussed how hunters and clans prepared for war by performing rituals to guarantee their safety and success. The rituals protected the individuals, but also their families and the community. An individual problem was regarded as one for the family and the community. A cultural leader, CL3, elaborates on how the Acholi people traditionally engaged in clan or tribal wars, especially when provoked. He described the rituals surrounding war and their significance to the community. He observed that,

Before going to war, a ritual is conducted within the clan shrine; in most cases, these are big wars that involve the whole clan. *Min Rwot* (the mother of the clan chief) is required to officiate the ritual to give the fighters *lapii* (blessings). No one went to war without *Lapii*. *Min Rwot* must give blessings to prevent harm to the members and their community. That explains why Acholi is a peaceful society. They tried at every level to promote peace and reconciliation and only went to war when they could not avoid it (CL3 personal interview, August 15, 2023).

Furthermore, CL2 explained how the blessings from *Abila* protected the fighters from Acholi community households without disputes. However, in a situation where a person comes from a household with disputes, such individuals would face challenges due to bad wishes from the family. On return,

A horn is blown from a distance before entering the home to alert the community of their return. At that point, a cleansing ritual is required to remove or prevent the spirits of the people they killed from entering the home as they unite with their families. In this case, the person is believed to have blood stains on their hands. They chant and ululate for victory when they win. The rituals involve slaughtering animals and using a live chicken to do the cleansing. The animal meat is cooked by elderly women or men using a pot. The feasting process includes sharing local beer and wine, brewed and served in pots (CL2 personal communication, September 20, 2023).

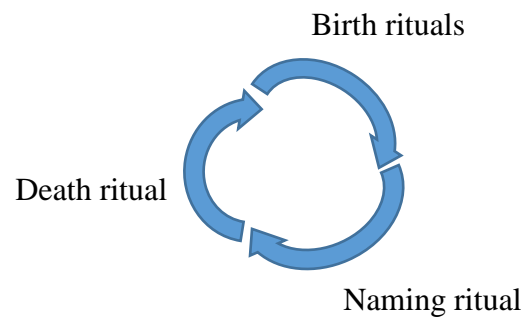
Besides restoring peace, reconciliation, and purification during cleansing rituals, some African communities performed rituals for the mental health and physical healing of victims and their families (Nwoye, 2022). The use of water has been adopted by religious faiths for spiritual cleansing in their places of worship. Blessed water was

used in the sacred rituals of Islam through wudu, Judaism through Sukkot, Hinduism through Ganges washing, Buddhism through bathing the Buddha, and Christianity through baptism. The water symbolised religious initiation, a declaration of one's new faith, a sign of purity, and a weapon to fight the devil (Catholic Identity, 2020; Pereiras, 2020). According to Wepener and Muller (2013), the Corinthian Church of South Africa (CCSA) used water rituals because they were thought to be highly effective rites of passage that indicated a change from the material world to the spiritual realm or even from death to rebirth. They claimed that people's perspectives were influenced by religious rituals, which draw on everyday spiritual realities, conventions and traditions, everyday physical objects and events, and the mystery of existence. The origins of CCSA's water-washing program date back to the twelve-year-old founder of the organisation, who suffered from a serious boil but was healed after being immersed in a big pot of boiling water. In Indonesia, the Acehnese believed that bathing a newborn purified the soul and provided health (Manan 2019). The participants observed the use of water among the Acholi when bathing a newborn for therapeutic purposes and to promote weight gain. During the naming ritual, water was poured on the front roof of the hut and allowed to drip on the baby and the mother as they emerged from the hut. Similarly, the practice of pouring water was repeated when the baby was three months old to enable weight gain. A small calabash or a pot was used to fetch and pour the water.

#### **4.2 The Selected Family Rituals that Use Pots among the Acholi People**

Although the study found numerous rituals, many were very general and did not specifically use pottery. More significantly, these rituals required the general community, irrespective of a person's background. The study revealed a wealth of information about the Acholi ritual that required the usage of pots. E3 explained how, although most communities have embraced Western culture, they have secretly continued to perform rituals. The continued practice of rituals that used pots indicated why pottery wouldn't go to extinction anytime soon, although a section of respondents believed that the secret practice contributed to the decline of pottery production and use. Pottery illustrates how people express their identities, cultural history, and shared values, an argument consistent with symbolic interactionism.

Cultural leaders and informed elders identified several family rituals that used pots. The researcher observed and grouped them into three as shown in Figure 4.5, they were examined and divided into three groups according to the time of occurrence. The family rituals were performed at various stages of life, such as birth, naming, and death, and were significant to every child of Acholi descent, conducted at the household level.



*Figure 4.5: The three main categories of family rituals which used pots.*

*Sources: Researcher.*

The birth, naming, and death rituals among the Acholi consisted of several other rituals, most of which were conducted irrespective of whether the individuals were godly or not. In the selected rituals, the study differentiated between godly rituals and normal rituals. What stood out in the three rituals, though, was the repeated godly ritual of “*bolo laputa*,” performed at birth, especially during naming, during the life of the baby, and at death to promote good health and a long life. This view is consistent with that of Boeyens et al. (2009), who explain the need for childbirth and death ritual celebrations to avert any bad omens and promote the well-being of the family and the community.

#### **4.2.1 Birth Rituals**

A birth ritual is a ceremony that the family performs before or after birth to provide health and initiate the child into the family. According to the participants, every newborn child was subjected to distinct celebrations at birth. Among the Kazakh community in Turkic-Asia, the Hadiya in Ethiopia, and Turkey, the concept of birth rites started before, during and after birth to protect the baby from evil spirits, provide good health and promote the fertility of the mother (Kucuk 2022; Shanko & Ajaje, 2023; Kucuk & Tanriverdi, 2021). All the birth rites presented and discussed in this

study, whether godly or normal, required the use of pots. The godly babies were children born with certain distinctive body features that were different from other normal children, or they were multiple and breech. CL2 made a distinction between normal births and godly births. He explained that,

A normal birth is a birth of a healthy baby, with its head first and without defects. A godly birth however is a multiple birth, of twins or triplets, a baby born with its legs or hands first rather than its head, or one with a physical deformity (CL2 personal communication, September 20, 2023).

Participants discussed several of these birth rites conducted during and after giving birth. The most prevalent were the house rites, which lasted for three or four days. This phenomenon of days is similar in other cultures. Whereas the Acholi ceremony took three or four days, the Acehnese community in Indonesia took seven to forty-four days for their purification and naming ceremonies, prolonging and exposing the baby and the mother to potential health danger. (Manan, 2019; Manan, 2021). Every newborn of Acholi origin went through the three or four house rites irrespective of whether it was a normal or a godly birth. At birth, several rituals were performed while the babies were in the house, when the babies were brought out for naming, and when burying the umbilical cords. The babies were considered special, and their rituals were done similarly. E1, a key informant, referred to godly rituals as “rituals for children born differently.” Another category of godly babies, which were not in many cases celebrated, included those with certain body deformities, such as unproportioned body parts, cleft lips, and extra finger digits, among others. Although they were not recognised with a ritual as those of the twins and breech birth, they were only honoured with godly names.

Two cultural leaders, CL1 and CL2, explained the significance of godly birth to the parents and the family as a way to evoke the spirits to intervene in the lives and well-being of the babies. They explained how the babies’ received words of blessing from the celebrants directed towards them during the rituals. CL2 acknowledged the importance of godly rituals at all stages of life. A renowned herbalist justified the need for rituals; she said, “When rituals are not performed for godly babies, unexplained sicknesses and, in a worse situation, death can occur.” She also observed how many families still perform rituals for their godly babies, although some people abandon the rituals as the child grows up.

The four-day and three-day house rituals were performed for every newborn child in a home, whether godly or not. These rituals required that the newborn be kept in the house for three or four days. E3, a key informant, elaborated on the circumstances under which three and four days of rituals were conducted. He associated the days with the sex of the child, which determined the number of days the baby would spend in the house. The male babies spent three days in the house, while the female spent four days. If the babies were twins of male and female gender, the first child in the birth order determined the number of days in the house. If the birth order was male and then female, the twins would spend three days; if they were female and male, they would spend four days. The first twin child was considered more powerful and godlier than the second twin. A key respondent, the traditional birth attendant, explained that;

The first twin is very powerful; at birth, the first twin will not cry until the second child is born. When the first twin comes out, it waits until the second twin comes out before they cry. In an event where the first child cries, the second child will not survive; it will die (Traditional birth attendant's communication, December 5, 2023).

Despite the differences, the twins were treated equally to avoid any form of segregation. The Acholi community observed and honoured the house rituals to avert future tragedies and regrets. Key informants explained how people in contemporary times still observe and recognise the house rituals after birth. The counting started immediately after birth. The women who gave birth in the hospitals observed the days from the time the baby was brought home. To date, women who give birth in hospitals have followed the three- and four-day rituals both in rural and urban areas. During the house rituals, the mother was expected to keep the baby indoors until the recommended days ended.

CL3 explained that, while observing the house rituals, the infants were bathed using a clay bowl (*Otako*). As long as the infant could still fit in the bathing basin, *Otako* was used. In an event where the mother was a first-time mother, the newborn was bathed by a caretaker who was, in most cases, an elderly person such as a grandmother, aunt, or sometimes a traditional birth attendant. The traditional birth attendant explained how she had been helping mothers give birth for many years. She had practised this for over 45 years until the Ministry of Health regulated her work due to her old age and the risks of contracting HIV/AIDS. In addition to helping women give birth, she also taught them how to take care of the babies and performed the required rites at birth.

When asked about the significance of the four- and three-day rituals, different respondents expressed different social and cultural views on the four-day or three-day ritual. A key informant, a traditional birth attendant, explained how the rituals protected the newborn from visitors with ill will. Similarly, the traditional herbalist observed how the rituals protected the physical and spiritual life of the baby. She explains how some evil persons initiated newborn babies into evil at such an initial stage of life. To prevent that, the community reinforced the measures of placing two sticks at the entrance of the hut to stop unnecessary visitors from entering the house. The presence of the sticks was a sign that there was a newborn, and visitors were not allowed beyond that point. Whenever one saw the two crossed sticks, they were expected to automatically turn away.

The traditional birth attendant encouraged the families to play a vital role in diverting visitors during the three or four days in the house. The caretaker played a big role in enforcing protection for the newborn and the mother. The caretaker's movements outside the home were also regulated to control any eventualities, especially what they termed "*yamo marac*" (bad air). The caretakers were very close family members; priority was given to the maternal aunt, and in case she was not available, the sister of the new mother took care of her. The work of the caretaker was to bathe the baby in a bathing pot (*otako*) and ensure that the mother was in good health. She also served the meals, washed all the clothing, and cleaned where they slept.

The traditional birth attendant emphasised the need for twin protection and proper handling at the early stages of life by the mother (*min jok*) and the caretaker. They were forbidden from holding the male twin's genitals even during bath time. Holding the male genitals was believed to weaken the baby's manhood and affect his reproductive system in the future. The person bathing the child would pass the hands around the private part, but consciously holding the male genitalia was forbidden. E3, a key informant, emphasised the importance of the twins' well-being. He explained how the toddlers were kept indoors, preventing them from contracting airborne sicknesses and other diseases that were always thought to be brought on by outsiders. He explained how the practice strengthened the present and future well-being of the babies.

Even though many participants attributed the significance of four-day or three-day rituals to social reasons, a cultural leader, CL2, observed that the rituals had more cultural significance to human life right from the start. He described how the practice protected male and female sexual health and promoted the continuity of the human life cycle and family lineage. He said,

The three days accorded to the male child celebrated the strength of manhood to give life. The three days represent the two testicles and one penis needed for a boy to be able to give life. Meanwhile, the four days for the female child celebrated womanhood, representing the four days of the menstrual cycle, usually termed “*nenno dwe*,” meaning seeing the moon. The four-day monthly menstrual cycle is a sign that enables conception for any female. The three and four days observed at birth mark the beginning and continuity of life from birth. These four and three days were also observed during other ritual proceedings, including celebrating life and death (CL2 personal interview, September 20, 2023).

E3, a key informant, and CL3, a cultural leader, explained how deviation from observing the four-day and three-day rituals would bring an unexplained situation into the lives of the children. At a later stage, when the elders observed and detected that their male adult child could not have children after marriage, they would consult, and in case it turned out that the mother did not follow the four- and three-day rituals at birth, the man was taken back into the house. CL3 explained that if such things happened,

The man would be taken back to his mother’s hut, where he would spend three days under the care of his mother. She is required to take him through the rituals that she should have done while her son was a baby for three days. She shares her bed with him and treats him like a newborn until the three days are over. That is done to enable the man to gain the strength of his manhood. This practice still exists deep in the community, although secretly, because no man would want people outside to know that he was taken back into his mother’s hut for the ritual. This has proven to be fruitful once it is done. (CL3 personal communication, August 15, 2023).

Notwithstanding these accounts, it was challenging to determine whether the custom of returning the boy child to perform the house ritual was still followed because, in most cases, it was done secretly to preserve the man's identity and avoid embarrassment. Birth rites were as significant as other rites because of the underlying benefits. The communities were aware of the repercussions of breaking the rules. To

avoid repeating the procedure, people dutifully obeyed and respected the ritual even though they were not sure of the consequences.

#### **4.2.1.1 Godly Birth (*lutino jok*)**

Even though a godly birth was one of the most unusual, the Acholi people held it in the highest regard. One of the elders who was a key informant, E1, described godly birth as the birth of babies with deformities such as cleft lips, extra finger digits, and malformed body parts, and most importantly, the birth of twins, triplets (*rudi*) and the breech birth. He observed that while some of these births were marked with naming and death rites regarded as divine, others were recognised with names without special rituals.

#### **4.2.1.2 Twin and Breech Birth**

Twin and breech births were the most recognised godly births that required rituals to be performed. Users of pots, UP1 and UP2, described how twin and breech births were special in Acholi culture and considered a blessing to the immediate and extended family. The ceremony brought all the family members together and connected them to their ancestral roots. In the case of twins, UP1 explained that,

a twin birth is a blessing because it comes with respect from the community. The titles of the parents change immediately. A woman receives the title of *Min Jok*, and her husband automatically receives the honour of being *Won Jok*. This is unusual, and when it happens, it is a great honour because everyone admires the ability to deliver twins. (UP1 personal communication, February 12, 2024).

Regarding the titles given to the twins' new parents, UP1 and UP2 shared the same opinions. They clarified that the names meant "mother of gods" for *Min Jok* and "father of gods" for *Won Jok*. The traditional birth attendant started making arrangements for the babies' arrival as soon as she found out the woman was expecting twins. Breech births were treated with the same regard as twin births, although their godliness was only established at the time of delivery. While the breech baby that emerged from the womb with its hands was just identified by naming, the one who emerged with its feet was recognised with a ritual ceremony.

The Acholi traditional understanding of a breech birth can be understood by knowing the conditions surrounding the birth of the baby. The unborn baby remained with the

head up while the buttocks and feet were in the lower part of the cervix. In some situations, the baby would instead want to come with the hands. The traditional birth attendant explained how complicated such births were and how the mother and the baby would be at risk of losing their lives if the birth attendant was not keen. Being an expert, she described her skills and technique for changing the baby's position during birth as saving the baby's life. She explained the risks of the baby's umbilical cord wrapping around the baby's neck when not carefully handled. She said, "You see how godly these babies are; I would plead with the gods of the ancestors to release the baby." She acknowledged that breech babies derived their spirituality from birthright.

While that seemed spiritual in the traditional settings, there was a need to understand the medical aspect of breech births. The researcher sought the views of a medical doctor who was also a lecturer in the medical school at Gulu University. She was a key informant and knowledgeable about Acholi culture. The participant gave a medical perspective of breech birth and explained how the condition occurs and what could be done to prevent it. She said, usually:

By 36 weeks, a baby is expected to turn in the head-first position, called the vertex position; however, when this does not happen, the baby may remain in any position, and in this particular case, the baby's feet or buttocks are positioned to come out of the vagina first. This can be early in pregnancy, but most of them fail to turn on their own at the time of delivery. This situation occurs when the foetus fails to turn at an early stage, resulting in premature birth, multiple births, too much or too little amniotic fluid, and an abnormal shape of the uterus. We can prevent all these by encouraging expectant mothers to visit the hospital regularly throughout pregnancy so that the doctor may carry out an external cephalic version or schedule a caesarean section, depending on how complicated and risky the situation is. Towards delivery, the medical personnel may turn the baby into a head-down position by positioning the mother's bottom near the edge of the couch or chair and lifting the pelvis into the air, pushing downward with the feet. Pillows or cushions should be placed under the bottom to support the body at approximately a 45-degree angle. Relax and hold in this position for 10-15 minutes; this can be repeated 2-3 times a day (medical doctor personal communication, December 5, 2023).

#### **4.2.1.3 Babies Born with Body Deformities**

Babies born with body defects were considered godly, although no special rituals were organised for them the way they did for twins and breech babies, except for giving them

godly names. When a child was born, it was important to properly examine the body to identify any body defects in case they were present.

The participants explained why babies born with body deformities were viewed as godly, with a belief that the gods were communicating or showing their presence to the family for good or wrong reasons. To appease the spirits, they were given names in respect to their state. Some of these included babies with extra finger digits, cleft lips, and unproportioned body parts. CL2, a cultural leader, described how some individuals in the old days would loosely tie babies with extreme body deformities, such as lameness, on their backs and drop them in the rivers, making it look like it was an accident. This practice, according to him, no longer exists. The extreme body deformities were believed to be a curse and a consequence of sins committed by the family.

Contrary to the view of CL2, the medical perspectives on the birth of babies with cleft lips and those with extra fingers generally regarded them as isolated birth defects, which were sometimes linked to various inherited genetic conditions or syndromes featuring openings or splits in the upper lip, as shown in Figure 4.6a, and the roof of the mouth and palate, as shown in Figure 4.6b (Anzouan-Kacou et al., 2023 & Smile, 2022).



*Figure 4.6: Cleft lip (a) and cleft palate (b)*

*Sources: Berhibro, Ettien (2023), and Smile (2022)*

On one hand, a medical doctor explained that;

Cleft lip conditions affect the development of the facial structures of an unborn baby by not closing completely. These conditions are inherited from the

parent's genes, although most cases are one-offs. Other causes include smoking and consuming alcohol, obesity, lack of folic acid during pregnancy, and taking certain medicines in early pregnancy, such as anti-seizure medicines and steroids. Besides genetic inheritance from parents, preventive measures can be taken to avoid consuming what can cause harm to pregnancy and receive guidance from medical personnel (medical doctor personal communication, December 5, 2023).

On the other hand, she described why a congenital abnormality called polydactyly resulted in an extra finger digit. The doctor recognised how this ailment ran in families, even though smoking and alcohol consumption were contributing factors in other cases. She talked about how the dominant allele of a gene deficiency causing an anterior-posterior patterning disorder made it difficult to prevent the condition, given the genetic linkages involved. Despite this, she noted that male children were more likely than female children to have similar occurrences.

Given their social-cultural benefits to the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of society, birth rites have been embraced in many communities. According to Manan (2019), birth rites in Acehnese, Indonesia, were structured with very important activities that began from the seventh to the forty-fourth day after the birth, a symbol of welcoming the infant and integrating within the community. However, much as this practice was significant to the baby, the family, and the community, the prolonged birth rites endangered the newborn's health. Furthermore, the way the baby was handled could affect the baby's health. More so, the use of herbal medicine and reeds to cut the baby's cord could cause sickness or death (Kucuk & Tanriverdi, 2021; Beinempaka et al., 2014). Similar to other cultures, the Acholi birth rituals are followed by the naming of the newborn and a number of rituals are performed, as explained in the subsequent section.

#### **4.2.2 Naming Rituals (*cako nying*)**

The respondents noted that whether a baby was born normally or extraordinarily was the primary factor in Acholi culture when naming them. Naming was very significant because it gave not only an identity but also a sense of belonging. By giving the child a surname, the father's family welcomed them into the family. While babies born normally receive names based on the circumstances at conception, during pregnancy, or at birth; a godly baby was assigned a predetermined godly name based on their

degree of piety. Most of them were multiple births, breech births, and those with body defects. Pots played an important role in naming rituals for cooking, brewing, and serving food, wine, and beer. The most significant aspect of naming twins, triplets, and breech babies was *Bolo Laputa*. *Bolo laputa* was a big ceremony performed at *Wang Kac* when the babies had ended the three or four mandatory days in the house.

#### **4.2.2.1 Naming Ritual for godly Babies involving Bolo-Laputa and Yiko-Pen**

For multiple and breech births (godly babies), naming rites included the *Bolo Laputa* initiation rite and burying the baby's umbilical cord, all conducted using various kinds of pots. The majority of pot users, key informants, and cultural leaders confirmed to participating in the naming rituals at their residences and in their neighbourhoods. UP8, a pot user, explained how twins were named following their birth orders and gender. While the first male or female twin was named Opiyo or Apiyo, the second male or female was named Ocen or Acen, respectively. Although both twins were respected and cherished, the first twin was considered more divine and gifted with greater powers than the second. The majority of pot users, key informants, and community cultural leaders admitted to participating in naming rituals at home and in their communities.

For the case of a breech child, particularly those that came with their feet at birth, the names Odoch or Adoch was given to the male or female. The elders performed the *Bolo laputa* rite in their honour because this birth was godly. The three followers of a breech baby were given predetermined names, according to users of the pots UP8 and UP4. The first baby born after the breech birth was called Okello, also known as Akello, and was referred to as "*Okello nge jok*," which translates to "follower of the godly child." The names of the second and third followers, respectively, were Odong and Adong, and Oola and Aol, for the male or female followers. The children that came after were given ordinary names as the family pleased. Contrary to those that came with legs, the breech babies that came with hands at birth were named Olyec or Alyec, if they were male or female. UP8 explained that,

while some people believe that Olyec or Alyec are godly babies, others do not. In respect, those who acknowledge the baby's godliness honour it with these names, but those who do not ignore it and choose names that please them. In that case, whether the families gave them the names or ignored them, there was no harm.

Those with physical abnormalities identified from birth were among the other godly babies. This category of birth, named Ojok or Ajok, depending on gender, was recognised by UP8. They believed in *Jok* (god) and considered it to be the source of their divine names. It was claimed that the defects represented God's manifestation of itself. Unlike Olyec or Alyec, UP7 noted children with bodily defects needed to be named Ojok or Ajok; otherwise, they would cry a lot and get sick until their paternal relatives named them. They were identified by name, but they were not given access to divine rites.

The burial of umbilical cords for godly babies (*Yiko pen jok*) was done during the *bolo laputa* naming rituals. It required small clay pots (*Atabo-pen*), believed to be the smallest among all clay pots, for the burial of the umbilical cord. In case the pot was not there, the family would improvise by breaking it into smaller pieces that could hold the cord and cover it (*lawum-pen*). Once the baby's umbilical cord was placed in a *Lawum-pen* or *Atabo pen*, it was buried at the family shrine during *bolo laputa*. The traditional birth attendant highlighted the difference between the burial of the placenta and the umbilical cord. *Pel* (placenta) served as a feeding point for the unborn baby; however, the *pen* (umbilical cord) was cut at birth and allowed to heal. Within three to four days after birth, it fell off. She observed that because mothers give birth in modern health facilities, most times, the placenta is disposed of by the midwife. The pot containing the umbilical cord or placenta was properly covered and sealed with black clay from the water well. The traditional birth attendant explains how the community has exhibited mixed feelings towards burying the umbilical cords. She observed that many people today do not protect their babies' umbilical cords, yet the cord linked the child to the family's paternal lineage.

*Bolo-Laputa* was a special ritual for twins and breech babies. UP7 explained how the naming ceremonies marked the beginning of *bolo-laputa* in the lives of the twin and breech babies, particularly those that came with legs at birth. The ceremony required pots with multiple openings, including two- and three-mouth pots, cooking pots, and brewing pots. The ceremony began when the baby was officially brought out of the house, marking the end of the three- or four-day in-house ritual. *bolo-laputa* initiated the babies into the family lineage and welcomed them into the family. Among the significant activities, there was the burial of the umbilical cord, confirmation of the

names, and the blessing of the infants at the family shrine, *Wang Kac*. The informants observed how *bolo-laputa* continuously assessed the health and well-being of the child and confirmed its presence after death. UP7 and UP8 described how the family and well-wishers assembled at *Wang Kac* to participate and witness the ceremony where different pots were used. This ceremony was common during the dry season, especially after harvest.

The participants explained the process of *Bolo Laputa* and how it started the day before the baby/babies were brought out of the house. They observed that several preparations were made before D-day, including brewing local beer and cooking the ritual meal (*Laputa*). *Laputa* was a sauce made out of black-eyed peas (*Ngoo*). The researcher took a picture and presented it in Figure 4.7. The traditional birth attendant explained how an elderly lady, usually a grandmother, aunt, or any female member of the family, prepared a cooking pot for *Laputa*. This pot of *Ngoo* was left on a low fire to cook slowly for the next day's event. Speaking with a botanist, another key informant, in an attempt to comprehend what *Ngoo* was. He clarified that:

*Ngoo* is *Vigna unguiculata*, and its English name is black-eyed peas. However, many people confuse cowpeas with black-eyed peas, yet these are two different legumes. *Ngoo* is the seed for *boo*, a green vegetable consumed mostly by people in the north and northeastern parts of Uganda, although it has become common in all parts of this country. One can access them from the local food markets anywhere in Uganda (botanist personal communication, January 15, 2024).



*Figure 4.7: Ngoo for Laputa.*

*Source: Researcher*

As part of the requirement, the traditional birth attendant emphasised the need to cook *Ngoo* without salt. When the meal was ready, it was referred to as *Laputa*, the main

meal for the ceremony. When asked what would happen if *Laputa* was cooked with salt, the traditional birth attendant explained that:

When you put salt in *Laputa*, the baby's eyes will swell, and most times, the condition can worsen. No one questions why things are done the way they are because if you doubt the process and do otherwise, there are consequences. In some cases, the baby can even become blind due to an eye infection. Traditional birth attendant's communication, December 5, 2023.

In preparation for burying the umbilical cord, UP7 explained why the black clay was picked very early in the morning. This process signified purity; the beginning of a new day meant a fresh beginning. During *Bolo laputa*, the placenta was placed in the pot and sealed with clay. After everything was in place, the mother (*min-jok*) and the babies were taken outside the house on a goat or cow's skin (*Laa/Odwel*) while the father (*won-jok*) followed them. What followed was the meal, *Laputa*. *Laputa* was served in the clay bowl (*Atabo Lobo*), along with baked millet (*kwon kal*) in a calabash (*Awal*). The lead celebrant held a winnower (*Odero*) with a knobbed stick and half-roasted simsim. As she sang and danced, she kept turning the simsim. They also served brewed beer in *Kirubi pots*, for everyone present to sip and pass to the next person, refer to Figure 4:14 and 4: 16.

UP8, a pot user, explained the procedure. According to him,

*Min Jok* and the babies are carried from the house to *Wang Kac*. Together with *Won Jok*, they sit on the animal skin at *Wag Kac* with their backs facing the shrine. *Min Jok* carries the twins on her lap while holding them with her arms. She sits with her breasts exposed, alongside her husband and *bomo*, tied around their waists, ankles, and wrists. The people participating in the celebration sang and danced around the shrine. They grab the falling *bomo* and throw it in the middle of the family shrine while they dance. In addition, some celebrants are allowed to pick ash and apply it on the chests of the parents. The main celebrant lifts a winnower containing *ogwec* and half-roasted sim-sim and rotates it.

UP8 elaborated more on how he was familiar with the procedure. Besides watching, he had participated in multiple twin and breech naming rituals. He explained how the main celebrant pinched some millet bread from the calabash, formed a bowl shape, and scooped *laputa* from the clay bowl. This main celebrant was always an elderly woman. After scooping, she lifted the food and prayed to the gods for blessings and then lowered it to touch the babies' lips. She raised it again and lowered it so that *Min Jok* could take a little bite and then spit on the sides of the shrine. If the baby was a boy,

that was done three times; if it was a girl, it was done four times. Spitting was observed to be done as follows for the baby boy: first on the right, second on the left, and third on the right again; for the girl, it was done as follows: first on the left, second on the right, third on the left, and fourth on the right, in an attempt to obtain good health and divine blessings. Spitting for the distinct genders symbolised the male child's position of permanency and the female child's place of temporality. This meant that the male child would always remain in the family, while the female child would marry into a different family.

Once the food ritual was over, they did the same with the drinks. The main celebrant sipped the beer from the *Kirubi* (two-mouth pot) and spat on the mother and the babies. It was done three to four times, depending on the sex of the child. Afterwards, the rest of the participants did the same, but this time round spat around the shrine. This process of sipping and spitting was believed to be a way of sharing the drinks with the ancestors, and the intention is to wish the babies and the parents health. As they offered sacrifices and prayers, everyone took turns showering the mother, father, and infants with medicine that had been mixed in a pot or a calabash. When it was all over, the baby's head was shaved. The act of shaving was important because it signified the start of a new life and validated the newly assigned names.

CL3, a cultural leader, elaborated on how the naming proceedings were accompanied by cleansing using two white chickens, a cock and a hen. The elders blessed the twins while swinging the chicken over their heads and uttering words of blessing. After the cleansing, the hen was set free in the compound to allow it to reproduce while the cock was slaughtered and cooked if the family so wished. This was believed to make the hen to lay many eggs that would hatch all. Once the ceremony was over, the mother and the babies were carried back to the house while the father remained with the rest of the celebrants, dancing and rotating around the shrine. He was made fun of by the ladies, who teased him and uttered seductive vulgar words and inappropriate touches to sway him to give them twins.

#### **4.2.2.2 Naming Ritual for ungodly Babies**

'Ungodly babies' refers to babies born normally, with their heads coming first at the time of birth and without any body deformities. Unlike the intricate and purely godly

naming rituals of *bolo-labuta* and *yiko pen*, naming normal babies involved fewer activities, using normal utilitarian pots instead of ritual pots. The similarity was that they both conducted *bolo laputa*, but different ways of disposing the umbilical cords. UP2, a user of pots, explained how utilitarian domestic pots were used for brewing, serving beer, and cooking food for the occasion. She described how non-godly babies were given ordinary names according to the situation at the time of conception, during pregnancy, or the prevailing situation at birth that affected the unborn baby and the parents. While some babies were named after a family member, others were named following birth orders. Ordinary names such as Oyoo or Ayoo, if they were male or female, meant the baby was given birth to when the mother was on the road somewhere. Okech or Akech were names given to a male or female child, meaning famine, implying that the child was born at a time of famine. All the above normal names and much more were not in any way treated as special because they were the usual birth names.

E1, a key informant elder, explained how the naming ceremony for a normal birth was done after three or four days in the house. This ritual did not require going to the family shrine (*Wang Kac*); it was simple, and only a few family members were involved, but it included minor *bolo-laputa*. Very early in the morning, *olel* (a sauce made out of simsim or sesame paste) was prepared using a pot and served in a clay bowl with *kwon kal* (baked millet). E1 explained how simple the celebration was, usually with immediate family members from the maternal and paternal sides. On that day, the mother brought the baby, and the process started with closing the door. The mother then positioned herself behind the door with her legs stretched. The main celebrant, who in most cases was the grandmother or aunt, came to the mother's door with the rest of the family members. They carried the sauce (*olel*) and baked bread (*kwon kal*) in a clay bowl (*atabo lobo*) and a calabash (*awal*), all placed in a winnower (*odero*). The main celebrant carried a mingling stick (*olutu kwon*) and a knobbed stick (*ogwec*).

UP4 described how the chief celebrant knocked on the door using a knobbed stick and a mingling stick. This was done three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby. While knocking, the mother was asked which name should be given to the baby, and she responded by giving the name that her husband's family offered. After that, she opened the door and stepped out of the hut. While moving out, the main celebrant poured water onto the rooftop, allowing it to drip on the mother and the child as they

danced and sang. The sauce was served in a clay bowl, and the food was in the calabash, all placed and presented in a winnower (*Odero*). A portion of the sauce, made out of simsim paste (*olel*), was put on the baby's lips, though some families disapproved of this. As the celebration went on, drinks were offered in calabash and beer pots (*Agulu kongo*). It was observed that the ritual of pouring water varied. UP4 explained how some families administered the water ritual after a few months rather than during the naming ceremony. Pouring water symbolised good health and enabled the baby to grow fat. They referred to it as "*ngwelo lutino*."

No special ritual was performed for the burial of umbilical cords in any normal birth. Depending on the household, different methods were used to dispose of the cords. Some stored it within the baby's garment, where they were often unknowingly swept away. Others buried it under the mother's granary or on the kitchen veranda with or without an *Otako pen*. Some families used *otaku pen* even when the babies were not godly. Potter UP4 justified the use of the *Otako pen* for burying the umbilical cord of a normal baby but with the implication:

Some people do it just for the sake of doing it; those who do it do so to hide it from evil people, especially if the community is not friendly. Although this is the safest way of protecting a child from any evil person, it brings sickness to the baby. After some time, the baby develops itching on the body, a sign that the ants are feeding on the baby's cord. The elders are then required to open the *otako pen* and expose it to stop the itching and relieve the baby from pain (UP4 personal communication, February 25, 2023).

While the study distinguished between godly and ungodly naming rituals and the kind of pots used, *Bolo-Laputa* was a key unifying factor in the naming rituals. The naming and umbilical cord rituals have been performed in various communities, with pottery at the forefront of ritual proceedings. Like the Acholi, many communities have continued to conduct placental/umbilical cord burial rituals. While the Acholi people preferred placing the placenta and umbilical in the pots and burying them, other communities wrapped it in cloth before putting it in a pot. It was then buried in a designated location, such as beside the mother's house, under a tree, or at a crossroads. The rituals promoted the mother's fertility, prosperity, powers, and health of the baby, in addition to protection (Campbell, 2019; Sheetal et al., 2008; Teijlingen & Simkhada, 2016).

Additionally, the study showed how traditions for naming were determined by the type of birth, normal or godly. The godly names were reserved for spiritual infants and marked birth orders and powers; the names given to a normal child depended on several conditions surrounding conception, pregnancy, and delivery. Amone (2014) provides evidence by describing how naming customs in Acholi are given about the place, time, and mode of delivery; any birth that didn't match the pattern was ascribed to the might of *jok* (god). Furthermore, in other cultures, some names were given as a token of respect in honour of close relatives or well-known locals, while others were given pet names (Basiime, 2015 & Ssemakula, 2021). Although some cultures consider naming as merely assigning a name to a person, this was not the case in the Acholi society.

Today, the naming practice has been influenced by Western naming culture, leading many families to choose religious baptism naming customs over some traditional naming customs, especially the godly meaning rites. Dadey (2022) noted that even if these Western customs have taken over infant naming rituals, traditional naming customs still deserve respect because they have moral connotations that help to mould a child's character. Acholi culture allows the mother to provide her child with the first name, usually a Christian name, while the paternal parents give the family name (surname). The Acholi respected naming rituals because of how significant they were to a child's life. Nwadiokwu et al. (2016) elaborated on how rituals serve as symbols for the significant implications of naming depending on the situation. He observed how a person's name had meaning, a sense of identity, and a connection to their fate, which would benefit or bring misfortune to a child's life. Jagi and Gebus (2015) and Doja (2006) acknowledged the bond created by the traditional names to the child and the family history; however, they also emphasised the need for religious names, given that they provided the spiritual connection to the biblical blessings and qualities. Ikechukwu (2019) expressed the need for the coexistence of the traditional and Western cultures in the same location. He explained how Western religion has Africanised naming ceremonies in churches today, allowing for drumming, dancing, and holy music during baptism (Ikechukwu, 2019).

#### **4.2.3 Death/Burial Rituals for godly Children**

Although every burial has a unique procedure, not all require a pot. Only twin and breech children had unique burials because of the use of pots, regardless of the

deceased's age. The burial rites were performed twice: at the time of death and later on, when it was required that the remains be dug, placed in another pot, and transferred to their final resting place. Depending on the size and age of the deceased, different-sized pots were used for each of these rituals.

#### **4.2.3.1 The First Burial Ritual for Godly Children (Infant and Adult)**

The death of a child is heartbreaking, especially to the parents and the immediate family members. UP2, a user of pots, explained what happens when a mother loses a child. After the death announcement, the burial arrangements were expected to start immediately with only family in participation, although the neighbours would sometimes walk in to show their support. The first infant burial was conducted differently from the second burial.

Numerous limitations were imposed to govern the practice of burying infants. Regarding the prohibition of mourners weeping at the burial of an infant, the cultural authorities held similar opinions. They were expected to sob or weep quietly about their emotions, which were seen on their faces. UP2 explained that “godly babies never died; spiritually, they are alive and living with the family.” Burial was conducted early in the morning before the sun’s heat intensified. It was so because the morning hours were believed to be cool, calm, and peaceful, making the start of the day pleasant. In case the child passed away in the afternoon or night hours, burial arrangements were made the following morning within the homestead. Graveyards were usually located near the mother's hut, within the home. The body of the infant was wrapped in sheepskin, *bomo* (Figure 4.26 b), or both and placed in a pot with two drilled holes (Figure 4.22). After sealing the pot, it was placed in a cylindrical grave (Figures 4.23). Families coexisted with their deceased loved ones in the same area, indicating that even though they were no longer physically there, they were spiritually present and seeing everything within the home.

*Bolo-laputa* was performed extremely early in the morning, four or three days after burial, much like the naming ritual, but with different words and gestures because of the state of bereavement. This ceremony had a crucial role in releasing the breech baby and the deceased twins. UP1, a user of Pot, responded to a question about the significance of burial rites by explaining that if the rites were not performed, bad omen

would happen to the family and the surviving twin. The departed child would frequently feel abandoned by the family; when twins were involved, this was particularly problematic. If the dead person was the first twin, the spirits were believed to return and claim the other sibling. The family would suffer from an unexplained illness that would take away the remaining twin. This was common when the firstborn twin passed on first because they were believed to have more powers. The babies were treated with a lot of care and respect. She said,

When the twins have grown up, they are surely aware of their environment. When one of them passes on, the other twin is taken far away from that home so that he or she does not witness the burial of the twin sister or brother. That child is brought back after some days when all the ritual proceedings are done. This act limits the stress that the remaining twin will have when he or she does not witness the burial. This sadness alone is believed to make the dead twin call the sister or brother, and that will mean the remaining twin will die too (UP1 personal interaction, February 15, 2024).

UP1 also advised the family not to treat the twins differently because that might make them uncomfortable. People were encouraged to demonstrate love and equal treatment when gifting them.

Contrary to infant burial rites, adult burial rites were different. A grave was dug within the compound, not far from the family shrine. The body was wrapped in a papyrus mat and carried from the hut to the grave. A few members involved in the burial enter the grave and lower the body. Once in the grave, the mat was removed, and a sheep was slaughtered at the graveside as a sacrifice. The body was wrapped in sheepskin, and *bomo* plant was used to cover the remaining parts, acting as the deceased's clothes. A small pot was placed next to the deceased's head and buried. This ritual was conducted by elders; other members of the family and non-members watched from a distance. A key informant, E3, explained why it was difficult for many people to afford a sheep for sacrifice, given the financial implications and the scarcity of the animal. In such a situation, therefore, a *bomo* plant was obtained and wrapped around the whole body.

#### **4.2.3.2 The Second Infant and Adult Burial Rites**

The second burial involved two steps, which were carried out in response to recurring dreams by family members regarding the deceased, according to CL1, a cultural leader.

In the first step, the deceased appears in dreams to the family members, indicating that an exhumation is necessary. The dreams typically materialised years later than anticipated. When the dream was ignored, the family continued to dream until something was done. CL1 described how the family responded to such dreams. Once the dreams happen;

The elders of the family are summoned for a meeting. They agree on the arrangements and how the burial should be conducted. All the necessary items for the rituals, including a pot of sheep for sacrifice, local beers, and participants, were identified. This cultural practice has existed for a very long time, inherited from our ancestors, and has been carried out from then to date. This rite is conducted because a godly child sees beyond what we see when they are alive and dead. When their wish is not granted, calamities will befall the family (CL1 personal communication, September 27, 2023).

The deceased's body was dug out, and the remains were put in a new pot after the elders convened and decided what to do. UP 2 described how the bones were placed in a large pot and then tightly sealed. The pot holding the deceased's bones was set in a cool spot within the homestead, generally beneath a large tree. Key informant E3 described how death rites were off-limits to young people due to the graphic nature of the scenes, which might cause anxiety and nightmares.

Although the research showed that these kinds of rituals were still prevalent in society, they were carried out covertly inside the immediate homes. The significance of the rituals resided in their upholding and strengthening of the family and social hierarchy. Similarly, rituals are an important way for Nigerian communities to communicate their ideas, customs, and spirituality, which in turn affects behaviour (Loue, 2017). People might come to know one another better while they are grieving for a loved one. Community members engage in a range of activities that allow them to interact physically, emotionally, and cognitively. Meaning-making is achieved at this level because of the belief that rituals uphold social order and foster interpersonal relationships (Tami, 2021; Vierne, 2014; Kyalo, 2013). These viewpoints align with the symbolic interactionism theory of Blumer (1969), which emphasises the symbols and meanings created during interaction and investigates the meanings that arise from social interactions between individuals. While people can create meaning by concluding their educated ideas, rituals strengthen interpretations when others participate in them. Constructivist ontology suggests that meaning is created through

social context and interactions with the pots rather than the pot itself meaning, one had to get involved in proceedings that used pots so as to make meanings out of them.

### **4.3 Pots Used During the Ritual Proceedings**

Pots are significant material cultural items of the Acholi community. Pottery has always coexisted with humans, supporting their endeavours. There is evidence that pottery is a diverse cultural vessel and an important piece of material culture from human history that is used for several purposes by different social classes and is embedded with aspects of relationships, practices, thoughts, rituals, and lifestyle (Abulebda et al. 2020). The current use of pottery has changed the perceptions people have towards pots. This section investigated the status of pottery production in the community, the pots used in the selected family rituals, the reasons for their use, and the symbolic connotations associated with it. The study further investigated if the pots used in rituals had powers that would affect their use in contemporary spaces.

Analysing these findings via the lenses of constructivist ontology, interpretivist epistemology, symbolic interactionism, and spaces for repurposing helped to understand how traditional practices and pottery may impact contemporary space design. CL3 explained why ritual pottery was not just a cultural artefact but rather an object that shaped the identity of the Acholi community and space in a social context. He observed further that pottery use has continued to change over time given the changes in the community.

The participants revealed how pottery fosters social cohesion among potters when they relate and share their knowledge and lived experiences during production. These practices, in the end, shape social spaces and relationships. The practice desires to connect traditional pottery with contemporary spaces under constructivist ontology. While analysing pottery use and context in Northern Ghana, Yussif et al. (2018) observed the need to study, comprehend and document cultural objects that face extinction for current and future consumption. Pottery continued to be used in several rituals; however, it was not known if specific pots were designed for a particular ritual or if any pot was used in the rituals. The study revealed that not all pots used in rituals were ritual pots, and that explained why the researcher preferred to use the phrase “pots used in rituals” rather than ritual pots as previously elaborated.

In that aspect, ritual pots were limited to those designed specifically for rites, including those with multiple openings, while so many other pots designed for domestic purposes, such as cooking and storing, were repurposed for other ritual uses, such as burial. On the contrary, in Ghana pots with specific designs and functions did not affect their alternative use; Moro et al. (2024) describe how traditional Ghanaian pots were influenced by the philosophical concepts of forms rather than the foreign influences. Pots such as bathing buckets, spiritual pots, serving bowls, placenta pots, water-fetching pots, food-cooking pots, and soup pots, among others, were designed to serve specific purposes yet used by different communities across Ghana to serve other purposes. They observed how medicinal pots that were used for boiling local herbs in the northern region were used by those in the Upper East region for closing tombs, representing a channel of communication with the dead. Similarly, the shrines of Dagaaba and Lobi ethnic groups in west Africa used the same pots to store charms for rituals. Western beliefs and practices partly influenced the African traditional. Meaning making of these pots would then change given their functionality.

Besides the Western ideologies and beliefs, P3, a potter in the community, explained how pottery production and use were weakened by other internal factors during the long LRA war, which lasted for over 20 years. This affected people's ways of life, cultural structures, practices, norms, values, and beliefs in the community. Another potter, P5, described how pottery became a mediating item during rituals at a time when people had become physically, emotionally, psychologically, socially, and economically vulnerable. Given that the people in the Internally Displaced People's camps (IDPs) came from different family backgrounds, they embraced new ways of life, beliefs, and practices as a coping mechanism, including the distribution of household items and food relief.

From the time people returned to their respective homes, the community started a new life, which was a blend of Western and traditional Acholi lifestyles. Traditionally, people gradually embraced their culture, although Western religion, beliefs, and practices hindered their progress. Due to that, the current community is comprised of people from different cultural backgrounds who are conscious of watching what people do. The presence of pottery was proof that pottery production was ongoing in the community; this evidence was photographed from the homes of potters and presented

in Figures 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10. There were several pots within the house and in the compound, scattered all over the homesteads. The photos were taken during the dry season when the potters were not in production. Production was carried out during wet season to prevent heat from cracking the pots.



*Figure 4.8: Some of the pots found in the huts of potters and pot users.  
Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county)*



*Figure 4.9: Pots found in the compound of potters under the granary and trees.  
Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county)*



*Figure 4.10: A pot serving domestic birds (a, b) and a discarded water pot (c).  
Sources: Researcher (Pukony sub-county)*

The study revealed several kinds of pots produced within the families of potters, including water pots, cooking pots, wine pots, brewing pots, and serving bowls. The kinds of pots produced were influenced by the needs of the community. One of the potters, P2, explained how she relied on pottery production for economic purposes. She was a widow, and whatever she produced was intended to raise finances to support her family. She produced cooking pots, serving pots, and mostly water pots, among others. On special occasions, she received orders for ritual pots with multiple openings from people who bought from her and later sold them in the open market. Similarly, according to Adong et al. (2024), a potter in the Paibona village created various pots for sale, although *Kirubi* pots were made upon request. The potter (P2) was quoted saying:

I usually make *kirubi* on request because they do not sell so much. The only time I make many of them is when my customer who sells in Gulu town places her orders. I also receive people who buy burial pots, and given that pots for burial are not unique in any way, I always pick them from the available water or cooking pots as long as the size is appropriate to what they want. About two weeks ago, I sold a small water pot for the burial of a twin baby of about three months (P2 personal interaction, February 15, 2024).

To confirm the discussion above, I visited the main market where the ritual pots and other pots were sold.



*Figure 4.11: Visual evidence of pottery items in Gulu's city.*

*Sources: Researcher (Gulu main market).*



*Figure 4.12: Visual evidence of pottery in a craft shop within Gulu.*

*Sources: Researcher (Gulu City).*

In another village, there was a 79-year-old potter, P1, who was an experienced potter and had practised pottery from childhood to date. Her mother taught her how to make pots when she was about eight years old. Pottery was her family activity, and every member of her family was involved in it. She passed on the same skills to her children, although she lost all her children. Similar to P2, P1 produced pots and sold them from home or during market days, which were usually open for business once a month. Several of the pots used in rituals were identified and discussed in detail.

#### **4.3.1 Twin Pot (Agulu Kirubi)**

The twin pot, created especially for twin and breech rites during *Bolo-Laputa's* naming ceremony, was the most well-known ritual pot in Acholi culture. Figure 4.13 presents two mouth pots with different craftsmanship, taken by the researcher. The two-mouth pot was consistently modest in size, with different design finishes applied to it. Figures 4.13b and c show repetitive roulette design patterns incorporated in the material, whereas Figure 4.13a shows a smooth finish. *Kirubi* had a smooth mouth ring to allow the sipping of the beer during the twin ceremony. The two-mouth pot's various opening sizes were an additional feature that made it stand out. While Figures 4.13a and b have identical sizes of the opening, there is a variation in Figure 13c. Although some observers saw little significance in the variation in the opening, others thought it represented the position of the twins' first and second births. They understood it as the

potter's skill without any major meaning. Individual potters' creative touches were also evident in the twin pot, which featured different design finishes.

The cultural leader CL2 clarified why twin pot (*Agulu kirubi*) was commonly known as a ritual pot (*Agulu jok*). The term *Agulu jok* was broader because it did not directly refer to twin pots. The term *Agulu rut* was appropriate, although *Agulu kirubi* would be a more accurate term to use when describing the twin pot. CL2 explained how the term *kirubi* was used to refer to a two-mouthed pot, though it was sometimes used to refer to twin pots with two or more openings.



Figure 4.13: Two-mouth twin pot (*Kirubi la-doge aryo*).

Sources: Researcher (Acholi Cultural Institution)

The pot users described the contents of the twin pots. Although they accepted the existence of other pots with multiple openings, they noticed that the two openings were the most common pots. UP6 explained why *Agulu-Kirubi* was the name given particularly to the two-mouth pot, representing two children (twins). That was in relation with the perception that the ancestral god existed in them.

To show how the pots were used, some respondents demonstrate how a drink would be sipped and passed to the next person. Photographs were taken during the demonstration as shown in Figure 4.14. They explained how everyone took part in sipping and squirting towards the shrine. The first sip and squirt were reserved only for the ancestors' gods; no one swallowed it for fear that the gods would disapprove of them. That served as a food offering, a token of respect, and a way to share with the gods. Singing and dancing in circles, they swallowed the sips that came next.



*Figure 4.14: Participants demonstrating the use of a twin pot.*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county)*

*Agulu Kirubi*, a two-mouth pot thought to have survived for more than 50 years, was presented by P6, and visual evidence was captured (Figure 4.15). P6 was an old woman, in her late seventies, a potter as well as the owner of the pot in question. She explained how she could be 78 years old, although she wasn't exactly sure when she was born. Her first daughter produced the twin pot while she was about eleven years old. Since they also had two sets of twins, the family used the pot for twin ceremonies. Her primary motivation for preserving the pot was to honour her late teenage daughter's memory. Since then, she kept the pot with her, and the community has been borrowing it for twin rituals. She described how the pot had been used in numerous twin rites in the village and her family. A question was posed to P6, one of the potters, regarding whether it was appropriate to share a sacred pot with other community members. She said,

There is no harm in sharing the pot; besides, it gives me good memories of my daughter, and I am more than happy to share this memory with others. *Agulu kirubi* is for a good cause; therefore, everything that comes with it is good. This pot has served many people in this village; you found when they have just returned it (P6 personal communication, February 15, 2024).



*Figure 4.15: Two mouth pots said to have existed for over 50 years.*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county)*

However, as Figure 4.16 illustrates, the pot with three openings was also available and used for twin or triplet ceremonies. Several of these pots were found both in the study area and at the cultural institution. Users of pots acknowledged using either three or four mouth pots for rituals; whichever pot was available was used. They also observed that triplet births were not common, but when they did occur, the three-mouth pot was provided. On the availability of four-mouth pots, one of the potters, P5, confessed to not seeing the four-mouth pot in use, although he thought it was a twin pot.



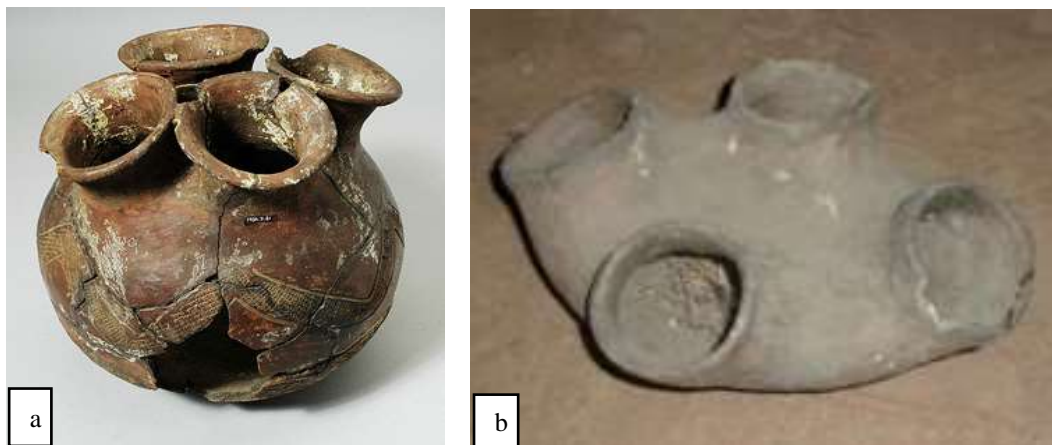
*Figure 4.16: Three mouth twin pot (kirubi la-doge adek).*

*Sources: Researcher (Acholi Cultural Institution)*

The participants acknowledged the existence of four-mouth pots and knew that they were ceremonial, but weren't entirely certain of their primary purpose. The pots were not very common in the community. While some respondents thought that the four mouth pots had the same functions during twin and breech rituals, other respondents had different opinions. Two such respondents were E3, a key respondent, and CL3, a cultural leader. They described how the ancient Acholi people of South Sudan used the

four-mouth pots for the *Jok-Lubanga* spiritual ceremony. E3 and CL3 saw how the Acholi people in northern Uganda adopted the same practice in the early 1930s after experiencing the same disease outbreak given their historical origin. The reason for this was because the community was ignorant about the illness's causes. At the time, it was seen as spiritual and was thought to be a punishment from “god” that stopped a person's growth and caused a large bulge on their back. The locals named it *Jok Lubanga*, meaning "spiritual sickness from god." Whoever acquired it was considered cursed.

Following their battle with the illness, they decided to use the four-mouth pot for ritual sacrifices, including human sacrifices. People who had the illness were not accepted in the community since it was seen to be a curse. Racheal (2006) provides additional context for the annual festival ceremony honouring *Jok Lubanga*, also known as TB of the spine, by displaying visual proof of the four-mouth pot (Figure 4.17a), which was part of Armine Charles' collection that was donated to Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford, in 1939. She described the methods used to murder the afflicted, including the organisation of human sacrifice for the diseased person and the serving of drugged local beer with a four-mouth pot.



*Figure 4.17: The four mouth pots.*

*Sources: (a) Racheal (2006), and (b) Researcher (Awach sub-county)*

The practice of ending one's life has gradually diminished, and new approaches to finding cures have emerged. Given the various forms of tuberculosis and their connection to HIV infections, some African cultures have turned to established medical facilities for treatment, even though the majority still view the illness as spiritual and seek healing from traditional healers and herbalists. Globally, policymakers have taken

into account the fight against tuberculosis (TB) when formulating policies aimed at achieving total eradication (Amoah, Sadjó, Bazzo, Leite, Blavatti, 2014; Audet, Seabi, Ngobeni, Berhanu, Wagner, 2023; Tabong, Akweongo, Adongo, 2021; Watermeyer, Penn, 2018).

A physician who was also one of the key informants was consulted to gain more insight into this specific kind of tuberculosis that affects the backbones. She mentioned that she had heard of Jok Lubanga and that it was also known as spinal or bone TB. She defined bone tuberculosis as:

A destructive form of tuberculosis, also known as Potts disease, is common in children and young adults. The spinal infection is caused by tuberculosis, which can lead to osteomyelitis, kyphotic deformity, and spinal mechanical instability. Many people with this type of TB are not aware they have this infection because it is difficult to see or feel the disease in the spine. In most cases, it is curable if the diagnosis is made early. Patients may show up with typical symptoms, including weight loss, an evening fever, a lack of appetite, and occasionally back pain that doesn't go away with physiotherapy (Medical doctors' communication, December, 2023).

She acknowledged that tuberculosis of the spine used to be extremely common, but that cases had gradually decreased as a result of children under five receiving the TB vaccine. She described how many myths existed about the TB infection, such as the conventional view that it was a spiritual illness, and how the community struggled with it before it was identified. It was confirmed by Tuli (2013) and, Garg and Somvanshi (2011) that TB of the spine exists and that many people died from it before a diagnosis was made. The disease was termed Pott because it acquired its name from Sir Percival Pott following his diagnosis in 1779. Between 1959 and 2011, medical interventions were developed to help those who had the disease, and 95% of the patients recovered from the condition without the need for any medical complications or physical disability.

#### **4.3.2 Bathing Troughs (*Agulu otako/ Otako lwok*)**

The bathing trough was referred to as the *Agulu otako* or *Otako lwok* and was designed specifically for bathing infants. The images presented in Figure 4.18 was taken from CL1's home. The pot had a circular shape with a wide opening and a textured body. The rough texture on the body helped when it was being lifted. One of the

respondents, an herbalist, explained why *Otako Lwok* was very important in the lives of the Acholi community in the old days. First, she observed that the bathing process for the newborn was quite long, involving massaging and stretching the baby; therefore, the clay bowl was recommended because it kept the water warm for a long time. Secondly, she acknowledged the fact that the bowl was the only available container for bathing the babies at that time when man discovered pottery as an item that supported their daily lives. In a situation where one could not access *Otako lwok*, they improvised by either breaking a water pot to obtain a similar shape to *Otako lwok* or by using calabashes.

The herbalist explained how so much changed over time, especially with the introduction of *galaya*, a metallic trough that was introduced by Arabs. Subsequently, plastic containers in the form of basins, buckets, and Jeri cans came along, replacing the traditional pottery containers. She said, “The presence of such containers has eliminated the availability and use of *Otako lwok*.”



*Figure 4.18: Bathing trough (Otako lwok/ Agulu otako).*

*Sources: Researcher (From the home of a cultural leader)*

A pot user, UP6, described how families with godly babies respected the clay trough. The pot complemented the four- and three-days’ ritual proceedings. The trough was used for boiling water and, at the same time, for bathing the infants. Cold water was added to obtain the right temperature for bathing. Bathing a baby followed a procedure that started with how it was positioned during the bath. The mother or caretaker sat with her legs stretched, and the baby was made to sit on the legs. At this point, the baby's face was washed, followed by the nose, head, hand, legs, and stomach, while pressing and massaging it. The legs and the hands were stretched in front and sideways.

The same process was repeated on the back, hands, and legs while the baby was placed on its belly. By this time, more hot water was added to the trough, and the baby's body was smeared with shear-butter oil (*moo-yaa*) and submerged in water. With the stomach facing down, the mother supported the baby to prevent water from going to the face. The baby was left in the water for a while to enjoy the water.

This process was not rushed because the intention was to help the baby get a good body massage, enjoy the hot water, which in many cases eliminates any stomach pain, and help to relax the body. Similar infant hot-water massage bath is conducted across different communities in Africa. The warm water is typically hotter than regular bath water. The infant is fully massaged on the head, chest, nose, eyes, limbs, and back in addition to being bathed with soft sponges, herbs, and shea butter oil. This relieves the baby from body aches, constipation, and other stomach pain as revealed in some studies. It also gave the newborn physical strength and protection from evil spirits, particularly from people with bad intentions (Iganus et al., 2022; Martinez & Maria, 2019; Tulelo & Mulaudzi, 2021).

The traditional birth attendant shared UP6's perspective. She saw bathing as a therapeutic activity that improved the baby's physical well-being and made it feel stronger. Babies with stomach and body aches found relief in many situations from the hot massage method. Cases of bowed legs, pain, and nighttime sobbing were resolved. When the delivery was performed using the pot bathing troughs, youngsters who had tummy aches or those who had taken a long time to pass stool would frequently urinate in the water. It was reported that the baby had recovered thanks to the pot's warm, steaming water. The baby would exhibit signs of relaxation while in the pot and, most of the time, would begin to sleep. When such bathing troughs were employed, the pain and needless crying would cease. For a very long time, tribes in Ghana have been bathing and washing using LubushahkPELLI, a clay pot (Yussif et al., 2018).

Alongside, the traditional Acholi people used large guards as an alternative to the clay bath troughs; however, it was not as effective as a pot bath trough because it was not very stable and did not keep the bathing water warm for long. Calabashes of various sizes were very common then, with the biggest size taking almost fifteen litres of water. They served various utilitarian purposes in homes. With the introduction of a metallic basin known as *a galaya*, the community began using it not only for bathing babies but

for the rest of the family members. *Galaya* was introduced by the Arabs/Asians when they came to East Africa. Today the rural and urban communities have adopted plastic basins and other imported bath troughs for bathing the newborns, yet they do not give the benefits pot bath troughs had to babies. Silva, et al. (2023) observed how Brazilians have adopted the Japanese style of bathing babies using a plastic bucket instead of soaking bathtubs. They explained how the bucket provides a vertical position for the baby, enabling water to reach the umbilical cord without any difficulties.

When asked what other family members used for bathing before the introduction of *galaya*. Ayoo explained how people in the community walked to water wells and took baths from there. Different categories of age groups would always meet in water streams to take a bath, and in situations where an elder was bathing, the children were kept away until he or she finished bathing. However, with the introduction of *galaya*, women fetched water from the well and served their husbands in the bathing shelter. Many communities all over the world have adopted hot baths for body therapy, especially for postpartum mothers. This process relieves them of anxiety and stress and helps them recover after giving birth. Other people use steam baths and natural hot spring baths for health purposes. (Pietrangelo, 2021; Indriastuti & Tahiruddin, 2019 & Ranjit, 2022).

#### **4.3.3 Serving Bowl (*Atabo lobo*)**

The serving bowl was beautifully designed for serving various purposes ranging from domestic to decorative to ritual purposes, as seen in Figure 4.19. The bowl had a roulette design, rough texture around the neck and a smooth body. Unlike other pots, *Atabo lobo* was well designed inside and out using brown-coloured clay material and sometimes ceramic red oxide. The bowl was considered very special and multipurpose because it was used for serving meals both during family meal time and during twin and breech rituals and acted as a decorative and storage bowl.



*Figure 4.19: Serving bowl (Atabo lobo).*

*Sources: Researcher (Gulu Main Market)*

*Atabo lobo* was used to offer foods prepared without salt, such as mutton and *laputa*, while baked millet bread was served in the calabash during the twin and breast naming ritual of *bolo laputa*. This bowl held unique traditional Acholi foods that were offered to the head of the household and special visitors during family feasts. Besides ritual proceedings, *Atabo Lobo* was used to serve special traditional meals such as pigeon peas (*dek-ngo*), chicken, liver, smoked beef, *lakotokoto*, and other dishes. Meal time was unique in Acholi culture; the head of the family and the sons shared the same bowl. Seated in a circle, mothers and children enjoyed the food that was served in this bowl as well. "*Atabo Lobo* kept food warm and provided the aroma that other modern dishes could not," stated UP8. Given the appealing look, the bowls were also used for decoration as well as storage while set in macramé. It hung from the hut's ceiling and served as a storage bowl, keeping groundnut and sim-sim paste, honey, and oil safe from creepy crawlers.

During Acholi cultural festivals, which take place annually in Gulu city, various cultural activities, including traditional Acholi foods, were served in clay bowls. Acholi cultural foods have been promoted through training and showcasing at various festivals organised within and outside the Acholi sub-region. Abbey (2023) explained how the Luo meals were served in *Atabo Lobo* and presented during the Luo festival organised at Hill Top Naguru in Kampala on August 27th, 2023. The main purpose of the festival was to promote the value of Luo culture, as shown in Figure 4.20, where Luo's special food was served in the clay bowl. The festival brought together all the Luo in Uganda, Kenya, and South Sudan, along with other non-Luo-speaking people from all over.



*Figure 4.20: Atabo lobo served with Acholi local delicacies.*

*Source: Abbey (2023).*

#### **4.3.4 Umbilical Cord Pot (*Atabo pen/ Lawum pen*)**

The *Atabo pen* was designed for the twin and the breech birth of umbilical cords burial. This pot was similar to the *Atabo Lobo*, although smaller with a wider opening, as seen in Figure 4.21a. It was designed without the red ochre colour, had a smooth texture all over, and was considered to be the smallest of all the pots in Acholi. A potter, P3, explained how the family prepared *Atabo Lobo* once the traditional birth attendant noticed that the mother was expecting twins. The grandmother was informed to prepare the pot for burying the umbilical cord. She moulded a small pot in preparation to welcome the baby. In an event where the family was not prepared or expected a godly birth, the *Lawum pen* was prepared, as seen in Figure 4.21b. The *Lawum pen* was simply designed by shaping two broken pieces of a pot, one for placing the umbilical cord and another for covering. Once the umbilical cord was placed in the pot, it was sealed properly using black clay, and it was buried halfway within the family shrine. This kind of ritual was also conducted by other communities around the world. Literature revealed evidence of several placental/umbilical cord rituals among the Navajo tribes, Cambodians, Malaysians, Turkish, Ukrainians, southeastern Australians, Asians, Kikuyu and Luo of Kenya among others (Knapp & Ogunbanjo, 2008; Campbell, 2019; Sheetal et al., 2016).



*Figure 4.21: Atabo pen and Lawum Pen in a family shrine.*

*Sources: Researcher (Paibona sub-county)*

#### **4.3.5 Burial Pot (*Agulu level*)**

The burial pot was designed strictly for the burial of godly children, both adults and infants. Every time the family required a new pot to bury a godly child, they bought a water or a cooking pot from either the potters or the market, as seen in Figure 4.22a, and turned it into a burial pot. A key informant, E3, explained why, unlike other pots designed for rituals, burial pots were not designed before death. Naturally, death was not a good thing, and in Acholi culture, no one prepared for it. The process of turning a water or cooking pot into a burial pot required that two holes be drilled in the lower neck of the pot to serve the purpose of burial, as observed in Figure 4.22b. In Africa as well as other regions of the world, pot burial is one of the most popular methods of burial. There was proof that the community included burials of both dignified people and infants. According to Glennise (2019) and Jordeezka et al. (2020), the practice of pot burial originated in prehistoric times, with the oldest examples occurring in the Northern Levant at the end of the seventh and beginning of the sixth millennium BC. It then spread to Egypt approximately 3500 BC and eventually to Sudan.

The burial pot was required at two levels: at the time of death (first burial) and after exhuming the body in preparation for the second burial. Each time a pot was needed for burial, a new pot was obtained. To understand how the burial pot was used, the study investigated and presented the discussions supported by visual evidence.



Figure 4.22: Cooking and water pots (a) used as burial pots (b).

Sources: Researcher (Paibona sub-county)

#### 4.3.5.1 First Burial with a Pot

In response to the question of how different adult and infant godly burials used pots, a user of pots, UP2, observed that, while an infant was placed inside a pot, an adult was buried with a small pot next to it. Furthermore, an infant grave was made in a cylindrical shape, while an adult had a normal seven-foot grave in a rectangular shape, just like other normal graves.

Though CL3, a cultural leader, and E2, a key informant, did not know each other and were interviewed at different times in different locations, they were in agreement with UP2 on how a pot was placed next to the head of the deceased; they both expressed other views on how some people in the community used the pot for adult burial. CL3 and E2 explained how a pot big enough for the deceased's head was obtained and pushed on the head while in the grave. E2 admitted to having heard of a burial with a pot on the head, but he had never witnessed such a ceremony. What he had witnessed was a burial with a small pot placed next to the head of the deceased. They, however, agreed that the presence of the pot symbolised burial in a pot. It portrayed the respect and honour given to godly children. The difference in how the pot was placed did not matter so much given that most cultural practices among the different clans varied.

Unlike adult burial, the infant burial technique was so different from adult burial, yet with the same elements needed for godly burials. Regarding the pots and the designs of burial cemeteries, UP4 and UP2 shared a similar opinion. They saw how the grave's shape was dictated by the form of the burial pot. After a new pot of appropriate size was obtained, either from a cooking pot or a water pot, the bones were placed inside

and buried in the cylindrical grave that had been created. If the twins passed away, they were buried nearby but in separate pots and graves. They recognised that a pot burial was symbolic and completed the procedures of godly burial. While it was true that the community within the village still carried out the practice of burying godly babies using pots, others considered it an outdated ritual practice.

During the study, the researcher witnessed a funeral of an eight-month-old child. It provided an opportunity to observe how the burial pots were used during the ritual. The mother had a breech miscarriage birth and had not visited the hospital after suffering from malaria. Another user of Pots, UP1, the sister-in-law to the bereaved, witnessed the process that evening and sought the services of a traditional birth attendant to help the mother. While assisting the mother in giving birth, the birth attendant confirmed that the baby had passed on. When she noticed that the baby's placenta had stayed inside the womb, she begged the gods to let it come out, and happily, it did. The traditional birth attendant witnessed how risky such births were for both the mother and the child.

Since the woman had a miscarriage in the evening, the funeral took place in the early hours of the next day. UP1 actively participated in the in-house and outdoor burial processes; she collected the black clay and provided the burial pot. Witnessing the private proceedings in the house as a total stranger among the few selected family members was an opportunity that not everyone would get. The baby girl was tiny and beautiful as if she were asleep. The entire bathing and wrapping procedure by a small group of female family members in the mother's hut was observed. Although cameras were not permitted during the private and sacred inside process, questions were accepted and responses received. Since the bereaved family was in mourning, it was morally justifiable to respect their privacy during this ceremony. After the pot exited the hut, photographs were permitted.

After cleaning the baby, it was wrapped in *bomo*; (*coccinia grandis* voigt) witnessing the process of preparing the body encouraged and strengthened the resolve to follow the whole burial process to the end. "It's unfortunate; we cannot afford a sheep for your burial, my girl," lamented one of the old women. "You are with us and always will be, so don't worry; we'll cover you entirely with *bomo*." After making two holes in the pot, one of the male elders delivered the pot to the women in the house. A

piece of broken pottery was used for covering the pot, and black clay was used for sealing the pot. While in the house, the young men outside dug the grave in a cylindrical form, about two feet deep within the compound, given that the family did not have a family shrine (*Wang kac*). The pot containing the body of the baby was brought out of the house and taken straight to the grave. A man entered the grave and positioned it properly before soil was poured slowly around it, as seen in Figure 4.23.



*Figure 4.23: A pot containing the remains of the deceased in the cylindrical grave.*  
*Sources: Researcher (Pukony sub-county)*

While pushing the soil, they kept sprinkling water and compacting the soil to the brim, as seen in Figure 4.24 and 4.25. After the brim was heaped, one of the elderly ladies who participated in wrapping the body picked up the remaining black clay and sprinkled it on the grave. All the tools that were used during the burial were placed by the grave site until the final ritual (*bolo laputa*) was performed on the fourth day.



*Figure 4.24: Compacting the grave with wood and sprinkled water.*  
*Sources: Researcher (Pukony sub-county)*



*Figure 4.25: Heaping the soil on the grave*  
*Sources: Researcher (Pukony sub-county)*

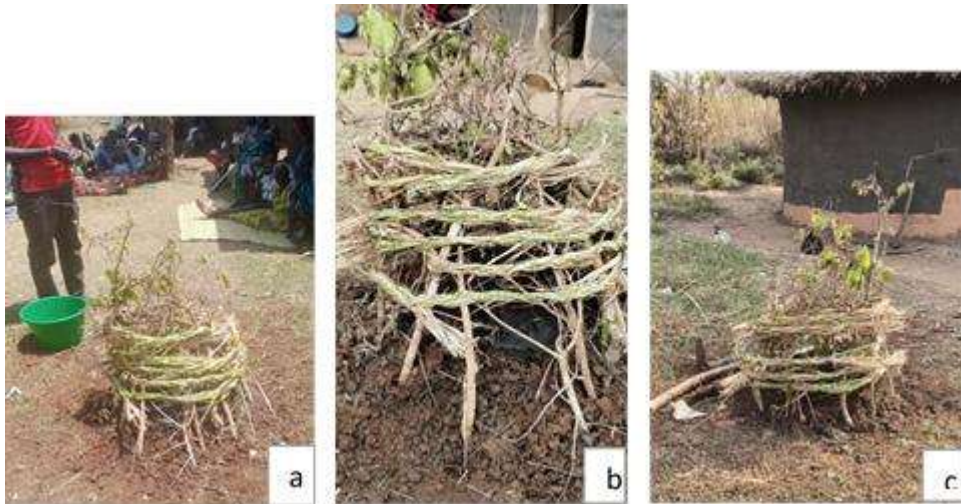
Once the black clay was dropped, *Okango*, a ceremonial tree, was provided to fence the grave, as seen in Figure 4.26a. *Okango* acted as a guard because it was a strong tree, symbolising strength, protection, and the powers of the gods. *Bomo* (*coccinia grandis* voigt), a climbing local herbal plant in Figure 4.26b, was provided during godly ceremonies, and *obiya* (spear grass/ *imperata cylindrica*) was woven to shield the grave and protect it (Figure 4.26c). The grave was fenced and guarded with the materials provided, as seen in Figure 4.27, and after four days, the final ritual was conducted (Figure 4.28).



*Figure 4.26: Okango (a), Bomo (b) and obiya (c).*  
*Sources: Researcher (Pukony sub-county).*



*Figure 4.27: Woven spear grass (obiya) was prepared for binding Okango.  
Sources: Researcher (Pukony sub-county)*



*Figure 4.28: The final look of the grave after fencing (a), and four days after the burial (b&c).*

*Sources: Researcher (Pukony sub-county)*

Similarly, some remains of buried pots were visible within the compound in the community, as seen in Figure 4.29. Since the babies had been buried over fifteen years ago, the broken pots were left exposed, though supported with bricks. A member of the family explained the safety of the remains; thus, the bones of infants would not easily be seen after so many years, given their tender nature.



*Figure 4.26: Remains of godly babies buried in pots within the compound.*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*

#### **4.3.5.2 Second Burial Using a Pot**

In the second burial, E2 explained how the graves of an adult and a baby were dug and the remains collected. He said;

The bones are collected and shifted into a new pot. For the young babies, most times the bones are not visible, but everything within the pot was poured into another new pot. For the adult, the pot that was buried with the deceased was removed, and the empty grave was buried with medicine. The pot containing the remains is covered properly with another pot. This pot is then placed within the family shrine or under a tree within the compound to allow the deceased to rest until they appear again in the dream to be shifted to their final resting place (E2 personal communication, August 23, 2023).

In the first home, the pot containing the exhumed remains was placed under a tree, waiting to be taken to the final resting place. The adult male was exhumed about a week before fieldwork. A user of pots, UP2, and an aunt to the late described how her nephew was exhumed.

My nephew died nine years ago; I can't remember very well, but because he was a breech child, we conducted the rituals required when he died. Later on, he started coming to us through dreams, and we agreed to exhume the body. It will rest here, and then we will transfer him when he requests to be transferred (UP2 personal communication, February 15, 2024).



*Figure 4.30: Exhumed remains for the second burial.*

*Sources: Researcher (Paibona sub-county).*

In the second family, the father, UP8, who was also a user of pots, was asked if they had not received dreams allowing them to shift the deceased to her final resting place. He responded that, even if he had received the dreams, he would not initiate the process because his spiritual life had changed over time. He explained that:

You see, even for the body to be exhumed and placed here, it was my mother who pushed for it. I don't need to disagree with her because she wishes me well. I am uncomfortable with it, though. These rituals are very costly and demanding (UP8 personal communication, February 15, 2024).

When he was asked if he would participate in the ritual in case he was invited, he responded by saying,

I know it's our culture, and the culture is not bad. My mother knows my current spiritual life and has been supportive of not involving me in what I feel doesn't sit well with my religion. I love my child; I pray for her every day, and I wish her well. If that is what she deserves, then so be it (UP8 personal communication, February 15, 2024).

Although he did not explicitly mention that he would or would not take part in the ceremonies, his statement makes it clear that, despite his religious beliefs prohibiting him from doing so, he nevertheless respected the traditional values upheld by his family. He also expressed the need for his family to respect his choices and beliefs, although they may conflict with theirs.

The pots containing the remains had been placed under the tree from the time it was unearthed, awaiting transfer to the final destination. Even though the old pot was securely covered and positioned over the new pot, it eventually cracked because it had stayed for a very long time. Transfer of the remains to the final resting place was conducted to set the spirit free and allow it to move where it wants to go. Rituals that set the spirits of the dead free were also conducted by Botsotso people in Kakamega County (Asatsa 2014).



*Figure 4.3127: Four-year exhumed remains of an infant.  
Sources: Researcher (Pukony sub-county).*

In the third home, a 92-year-old woman, the only surviving mother to several children, had several ritual pots with remains of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. The son, who was 58 years old, was knowledgeable about pottery because he grew up not only watching but also supporting the family during the ritual proceedings and pottery production. He was coded UP1 and included in the study as a user of pots. His family was an extended family with several breech infants and twins; some of them lived to adulthood while others died at birth or as they grew up. Seven pots with remains were exhumed at various points in time and placed under a mango tree in a garden behind the cooking hut, as seen in Figure 4.28. The pots were placed under a tree within the home but left unattended. The space was bushy and isolated,

making the pots almost invisible. I was prompted to ask why they could not clear the overgrown grass and if the family was not scared of a wildfire burning the remains, especially during the dry season. UP 1 explained that:

This place is indeed bushy, but surprisingly, whenever a wildfire comes, it burns and stops that side. The fire doesn't reach the pots. Year in and year out, we have never seen the fire reach the pots, and that is a sign that these family members are present with us. Most of these bodies were exhumed over fifteen to twenty years ago, and they were placed here at different times. We intended not to clean the grass; if we do, the pots will be exposed (UP1 personal communication, February 15, 2024).

Furthermore, UP1 explained how the remains would be shifted to the water streams or the bush, under a big tree, for their final resting place. She said, "These places are chosen because the spirits prefer cool places; they linger around there as long as they can. This practice of burying with a pot in a cool place was not only conducted by the Acholi community of northern Uganda. The southeastern Bantu people of southern Africa use pots in infant burial, usually placed under a shade, on the riverbank, or inside the house. This was symbolic because it promoted the subsequent conception, of a mother, acting as a link between the woman's womb and the home (Boeyens et al. 2009). Given that the remains were placed in the bush, big trees were believed to possess the spirits. UP1 explained why the Acholi community discouraged people from appreciating cool shades whenever they went to fetch firewood or chose to rest under a shade. Appreciating such huge trees meant appreciating the dwelling spirits on the tree. As one appreciates the tree, the spirits were believed to enter the body. People were advised to simply enjoy the shades without appreciating them.

UP1 was asked why the family had taken so long to relocate the remains to their final resting place. He explained how his religious faith does not allow him and described how expensive it was to plan for the ritual. He acknowledged how society held that belief and recognised the importance to the departed and the family. He was worried that the elders had ignored everything as though it were no longer important. He clarified that even though he wouldn't have a leading role, he was still supportive. He pondered whether family members had decided to disregard the dreams or whether it was real that they were no longer having them.



*Figure 4.32: Storage of seven exhumed pots in a homestead.*

*Sources: Researcher (Pukony sub-county).*

In contrast to UP1, Figures 4.33 and 4.34 show that the fourth family, P5, had three remains in the compound. P5 was not only a potter but also a pot user. P5 clarified that there had never been a problem for them transferring the remains to their last resting place. When the time was appropriate, the pots would be taken and placed at the water stream or under a tree, away from home, regardless of whether the members in the community opposed it or not. She explained that;

This is our culture, and whoever is against it has no reason to question us. We shall carry the pots and place them under the identified tree, whether it is in somebody's garden or not. As for the water streams, we don't mind whether people have cleared them or not. Everybody knows this, and when they see the pot there, they are supposed to ignore it and let it be (P5 personal communication, February 5, 2024).



*Figure 4.33: A big pot containing the remains of a teenager.  
Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.34: Pots containing the remains of two young babies.  
Sources: Researcher (Pukony sub-county).*

It was obvious that the Acholi people did not make pots for burial before a person passed away, simply because death was evil; hence, people were not supposed to prepare for it. A burial pot was sourced from the everyday utilitarian pots, and two holes were made in it. Similarly, other communities used various sizes of utilitarian pots, including cooking and water pots, for infant/adult burials or offerings during funeral ceremonies. Although the adult bone remains were visible in the pots, the baby bones were absent because they were too weak to last long. Burial pots were significant

in burial ceremonies because of their social positions in life (Kaklamani, 2020; Rafferty, McCain & Smith, 2015 & Laneri, 2021).

Budka (2014) revealed evidence of broken pottery in Egyptian tombs, a sign that pottery items were intentionally broken during funeral ritual proceedings. The breaking of the pot was considered a ritual given the similarities in the characteristics of the broken pots. The study gave a comprehensive understanding of the pots and also helped to explain how humans created meanings for symbols and objects when they interacted with them. The theory that supports the study explains how humans attribute meanings to symbols or objects, such as pots, when they interact with them and how such objects influence individuals' personalities.

While trying to understand if pots designed for use in rituals automatically obtain meanings even before they are used in the rituals, findings revealed how pots designed for rituals did not carry special powers unless the pots were used during the ritual proceedings. The participants showed how pots designed for rituals (ritual pots) and those not designed for rituals, such as water or cooking pots repurposed for burial, were "powerless" but only symbolic unless used in the ritual proceedings. Cultural leaders observed that, once the ritual pot was used in the ritual proceedings, it was respected and kept aside. Sharing twin pot was not prohibited among the families in the community as long as they were used for rituals. Given that domestic pots could be repurposed for other ritual uses, such as burial, traditional pots could be used interchangeably.

Furthermore Aksan et al. (2009, pp. 902-904) observe that "it is a process that enlivens the reciprocal meaning and values by the aid of the symbols in the mind." They explain how objects obtain meanings from social interactions but not on their own. Blumer (1969) believes that human beings give meaning to symbols, and they express these things using language. He argues that meanings were not inbuilt; objects such as pots could not obtain meanings within themselves or on their own. He further states that meaning was not inherent; it emerged because of people's interaction, which allowed people to produce facts that are interpreted to shape the world through conceptualised thoughts and feelings.

#### **4.4 Repurposing Ritual Pots in Contemporary Spaces**

Another significant finding is the flexible repurposing of ritual pottery in contemporary social spaces. Repurposing is assigning new purpose or use to the pots that were originally designed for other use such as rituals. The contemporary spaces in this particular study looks at the physical and virtual spaces where pottery is a social culture. It was evident that pottery was a part of human history, and because of its cultural and historical significance, it was difficult to disregard pottery in contemporary times. Given its rich, cherished, and as yet unexplored cultural legacy, the Acholi group, like the Yoruba community in Nigeria, has been urged to revive African customs and the African continent (Awoniyi, 2015). In Kwara State, Nigeria, the media promoted the use of ICT in this era of information access to preserve and disseminate African culture, much as traditional health practitioners advised documenting important Indigenous knowledge in the medical field to avoid its loss (Issa, 2018; Omeluzor & Abayomi, 2014). To ascertain if reusing the pots will alter their cultural importance or preserve and promote pottery making and usage to preserve continuity, the respondents' opinions were obtained, analysed and presented.

##### **4.4.1 Respondents Views on Repurposing Ritual Pots**

CL1, a cultural leader, recognised the value of articles or artefacts to the Acholi people and the reasons they ought to be repurposed. Although he observed that their use has diminished, he recognised that they are still so much available in the community. Given their practical role in the community, CL1 believed it was permissible to refer to the ceremonial pots as traditional objects rather than artefacts. However, he noted that new Western cultures and practices, such religion and technological advancement, have made some cultural traditions and articles less significant. New values have emerged as a result. CL1 explains that:

Repurposing traditional articles must have a new purpose, and defining the new purposes is fundamental. You must be clear about what you are repurposing them for, and the purpose must be acceptable, understood, and clear. However, given that the current generation has different views about the pots, what values do you think they derive from them? It means we have to regenerate values and purpose in the people who are going to consume; we must tell our children the significance of those pots; otherwise, they are just like any other things. Why do you think we should look at them as something important? It is because these articles distinguish us, the Acholi people, from others. Being an Acholi

is not just by name; there are so many things attached to it, including believing in these things. This is what we need; what you are doing is not just pottery but reinforcing the sense of identity of people, because those things are what make those people. Those who have grown up in the realms of those things are different; they know who they are, and they give due respect to the articles because they help them to relate better (CL1 personal interview, September 19, 2023).

CL1 underlined the significance of taking into account the three aspects: the artefact's physical significance, the psychological implications it may still have, and its spiritual advantages. He noted that how one maintains the presence of memories determines how the dimensions differ from one another. Physical significance can enhance people's beauty and strengthen their commitments to themselves as Acholi through certain values of humanity, commonality, and unity. The psychological requirements of society ultimately translate into societal stability, harmony, decency, attributes, and values. He emphasised how it was crucial to embrace the new meaning and re-establish the symbolic meaning of ritual-use pottery to reinforce identity. Spirituality emphasises the idea that the world is full of spiritual inferences and that every single person, especially as an Acholi, bears a spiritual being. He however noted that:

It is not necessary to collect Acholi artefacts in one place, as they are in existing galleries, museums, and other collection centres, because the Acholi people lived their culture, and if anyone wanted to learn and experience them, they needed to get involved in the daily activities, observe, interact, and fully participate with the people carrying out or using the cultural items. However, given the current changes in the practice and beliefs of Acholi culture, there should be a deliberate effort to preserve, protect, and document Acholi culture for continuity (CL1 personal communication, February 4, 2024).

CL1 explained that, given the number of individuals who have abandoned Acholi rituals and turned to alternative lifestyles of new religions, reusing pots for different purposes could help eliminate the stigma associated with them, prevent their extinction, encourage ongoing sustainable production, pass on knowledge to the next generation, and conserve the actual artefact. While the shapes and forms of traditional pots could be conserved for continuity, the meaning could change when repurposed. Repurposing the pots provided new meanings because of their new use Ozidede, 2025. Nsibambi, (2018) emphasised the need to establish historical records and community museums as a way of preserving cultural items for future generations in Uganda today.

The current study found that the Acholi culture valued ceremonial pots highly in addition to other pots; for this reason, records of these pots must be kept and maintained. It was necessary to preserve the traditional Acholi pottery not only because they are objects of material culture but also because they are artefacts that can coexist in modern society. CL1 outlined his contributions to his community and how much he helped preserve Acholi culture. Despite spending his early years away from his native country, he later returned to further his awareness and education of his culture. He was extremely resourceful because of his passion and interest in his culture. As a cultural leader, he taught and enlightened several individuals, including researchers, scholars, and visitors from other countries who were interested in learning more about Acholi culture.

When asked how Acholi traditional pottery could be repurposed in contemporary spaces, CL1 revealed how he had started a new project in preparation for his retirement home, where he intends to design the interior and exterior spaces with various material cultures of the Acholi. In the meantime, he collected various Acholi artefacts, such as winnowers, pots of different kinds, drums of different sizes, spears of different shapes, shields, stools, and calabashes of different kinds, among others. In addition, he expressed interest in constructing various types of granaries in the compound of his retirement home. The intention was not only to preserve, protect, and educate the future generation about Acholi culture but also to enjoy the ambience of his home once he retired. Furthermore, he picked one of the items in his collection, *Agulu Otako* (bathing troughs), to use as a fireplace (*wang oo*) in his living room. He said,

I use *Agulu Otako* for setting fire in my living room. I put red, hot charcoal in *Agulu Otako* and enjoy the warmth from it when the weather outside does not permit us to sit out. The fireplace brings my family together as we sit around it and share meals, stories, life experiences, and skills (CL1 personal communication, February 4, 2024).

Other cultural leaders, CL2 and CL3, appreciated the study and acknowledged the disappearance of various Acholi cultures and cultural materials, worsened by the passing on of very resourceful, informed, and experienced members of the Acholi community. They emphasised the need to document the material culture and items of the Acholi for current and future reference. They anonymously agreed to receive the

research outcome at the palace so that they could share it with people within and visitors who visit the kingdom.

The elders (E3, E2, and E1), the key informants and cultural leaders, highlighted the need to preserve the authenticity of pottery as a significant cultural material to conserve and protect its original appearance. They embraced repurposing and thought that an exhibition would be a useful approach to raise community awareness. Tuggle (2024) underlined the potential benefits of pottery as a historical artefact and cultural material of Alabama for both tourists and non-practitioners. She explained how clay pieces may teach people about their ancestry. The participants suggested that the Ministry of Tourism, scholars, media outlets, and curriculum at all levels be included to educate them about Acholi pots, especially those used in rituals.

In addition to providing meals at home and during rituals, the three elders recommended using clay bowls for serving meals at public events and gatherings. They highlighted the diverse range of people who attend annual events like the cultural festival in Gulu and the potential applications for these bowls. Additionally, they promoted the usage of bowls for serving large crowds during events like white weddings and traditional marriage rites. They recommended that clay bowls be produced in a range of sizes so that a big gathering might use them for serving. Furthermore, according to CL3, serving buffets from big clay bowls would be fascinating. Members who serve the meals should also be provided with tiny clay bowls to hold food, fruits, and other items.

The respondents recommended hanging the multi-opening pots in macramé on the porch, within the home, or outside the compound for aesthetic purposes. According to them, the pots could be used for planting flowers or placed for landscape design in hotels, restaurants, recreation centres, and parks. That would improve the area's appearance and enhance beauty. CL1 observed how fascinating it would be for the pots with multiple openings used as lampshades in the gardens and to protect the bulbs from the rain. Additionally, the respondents recommended erecting outdoor ceramic sculpture monuments made of ceremonial pots, particularly those with numerous openings in spaces such as cultural institutions, district offices, schools, recreation

centres, and parks, for not only beautifying the space but also educating the public about Acholi pottery.

The herbalist, one of the key informants, highlighted the necessity to repurpose the traditional Acholi pots for planting medicinal or herbal flowers instead of regular flowers. These plants look good and offer health benefits and protection for a home. She stressed the need for growing different kinds of traditional remedies, which are typically seen as flowers, to save the species from going extinct. As she put it,

Not all that you see as flowers are flowers; many are medicine, especially the nonflowering plants we see with florists. While others attract positivity and act as love charms, others expel negativity and keep away growling insects and animals such as snakes. Imagine the pots with multiple openings with traditional medicine planted in them. I wish to have them in my home (Herbalists' interview, August 16, 2023).

Two members of the hotel staff, identified as UP6 and UP3, and an additional urban pot user, UP5, were chosen to partake in the study (Table 3.1). UP6, a hotel employee, expressed her love for African crafts and artefacts. She mentioned that the presence of African-themed paintings and sketches in the hotel lobby and handcrafted items such as drums and winnowers sent positive energy to guests from other countries. Despite his uncertainty regarding the hotel owner's reaction to the use of ritual pots at the establishment, he applauded the idea of repurposing to educate, preserve, and promote beautiful Acholi pottery. When asked where he thought the pots may be used again, he said;

I recommend that the pots be placed in the hotel gardens where functions are held. Note that, much as I love the idea of repurposing these pots, you know I can't make decisions on this except the hotel owner. I am only giving you my personal view (UP6 personal communication, January 18, 2024).

UP3, the second respondent, a hotel employee, was amazed by the research project. She said that she was terrified about the use of ceremonial pots in contemporary spaces. Concerning the effect that placing pots around the hotel would have on visitors, she said, "Our visiting customers may run away from us." However, she stated that:

Maybe I am wrong; I don't want to judge you but wish you well. Even drums and *dung*, which were considered traditional, later found their space in the church. I fear rituals and anything that moves with them because they are connected to witchcraft (UP3 personal communication, January 19, 2024).

The fear exhibited by UP3 was similar to those expressed by other people through disclosed gestures. Much as there was a will to have the pots repurposed, there was also fear of what people would say. The fear of the 'unknown' arose from the opinions of respondents on rituals that used pots other than pottery items.

UP5, the third urban pot user, liked the notion of reusing pots because a lot of things have changed and a lot of people have stopped performing rituals, hence the need to utilise the pots for other purposes. He urged Acholi cultural establishments to set an example by being the first to use pots in their residences and cultural centres. UP5 thought the idea of repurposing was an excellent effort; his suggestions were to the farmers to promote the use of pots on their farms. He described how poultry keepers would drill holes similar to those of burial pots and use them to place hot charcoal to keep chickens warm.

Similarly, pottery recycling has been a popular practice among farmers; they were placed within a hatch to give mother rabbits a comfortable place to give birth. The use of conventional pots for irrigation is another innovation that farmers have adopted. According to Adhikary and Pal (2020) and Hatungimana et al. (2023), the irrigation technique requires that the plants receive constant water in the soil. With the help of a clay pot, water was filled in it and buried in the soil, and through the porous body, water seeped slowly into the soil, enabling plants to benefit. According to UP5, many people still use pottery for cooking, serving, water storage, and house décor, even though a lot has changed.

According to the interviews, a large number of respondents were in agreement with fusing traditional pottery with contemporary design by experimenting with new patterns and materials, although some of them emphasised the conservation authenticity of the traditional pots. Although the intention of maintaining authenticity was to enable the pots to tell their traditional story, they were willing to let it fit the contemporary spaces. The desire to adapt to the research illustrates the interest of the community in making its history known to the modern community. This concept is in line with constructivist ontology and the creation of spaces. The research reveals how integrating traditional approaches into contemporary designs might positively change the look of social spaces and cultural relevance while respecting our heritage and innovation.

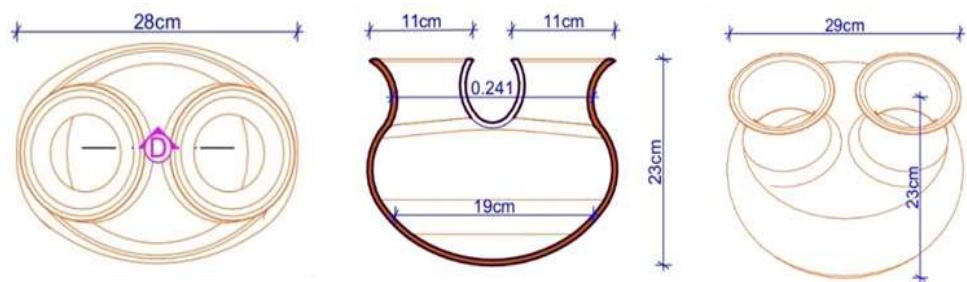
#### 4.4.2 Community Practicum

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with community members to discuss the responses from the respondents. Six potters who participated in the FGD came up with concepts that could be included in the pottery design for modern social spaces, based on the information gathered from various respondents. The study encourages continuous pottery production to enable potters to remain relevant in contemporary spaces. The potters who were engaged in production were excited about the project because it allowed them to share experiences and contribute to the research.

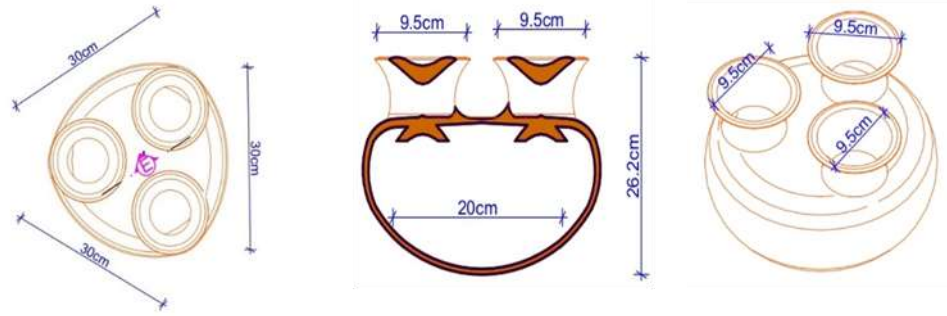
The six potters were aware of the ceremonial pots, although some of them didn't know exactly how they were used. The original shapes and appearance of the ritual pots were maintained as recommended by the different respondents. However, they observed the need to adjust the sizes for better repurposing. The potters did not prepare working plans to direct their output but the researcher did. The potters thought working drawings were not necessary given that they were acquainted with the shapes of the pots. The researcher produced the conceptual designs taking into consideration the measurements in sizes to suit their new use. When the drawings were shown to the potters, it did not change their perceptions towards them, yet the working drawings could still be used by any potter who was not aware of Acholi ritual pots and might want to mass produce them.

##### 4.4.2.1 Visual Presentation of the Conceptual Drawing from Different Angles

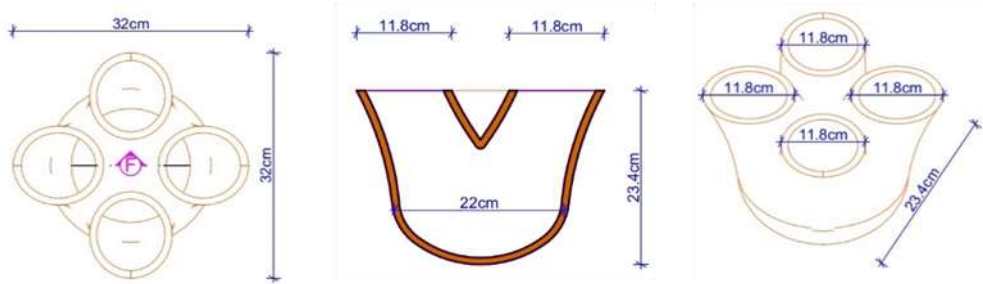
1. Pot A



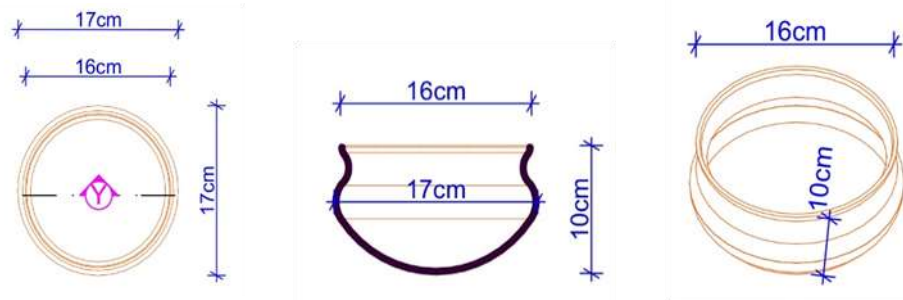
2. Pot B



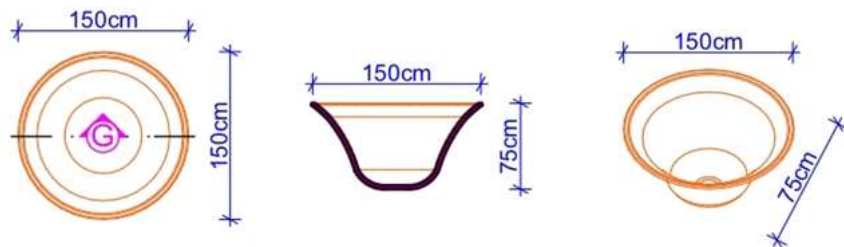
3. Pot C



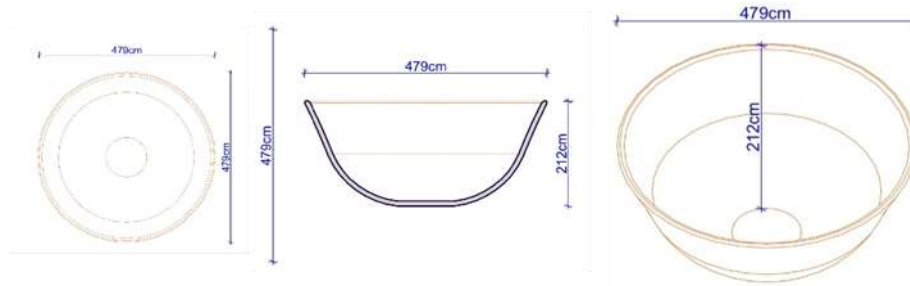
4. Pot D



5. Pot E



6. Pot F



7. Pot G



Sources: Researcher

#### 4.4.2.2 Materials and Tools for Pottery Production

Understanding the material used was necessary to observe the shrinkage levels of the different sizes produced. In southwestern Nigeria, clay types played significant roles in achieving the final product, which may determine their final use in contemporary use, including utilitarian, decorative, religious, and social functions (Abiodun & Akintonde, 2024). The potters collected all the materials required for their work. As shown in Figures 4.36a, b, and c, the materials included sand, brownstones, and clay obtained from the water stream. The sand was crushed and sieved and added to the clay to provide strength. They brown clay for designing the pots, and a variety of hand-decorating tools, including shaped calabash, stones, woven design tools, and pieces of animal skin for finishing (Figure 4.36a, b, c, d). It was observed that not only were the materials sourced locally, but also the tools for production. they included a pounding mallet, a grinding stone to crush and pound clay and a small clay bowl referred to as "*otako*" to start a pot's base during moulding (Figure 4. 37a, b, c).



*Figure 4.35: Materials for pottery production; clay (a), sand (c) and stones for decoration (c).*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.36: Decorating tools; woven decorating tool (a), animal skin (b), shaped calabash (c) and smooth stones (d).*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.37: A mallet, a saucepan and polythene for mixing (a) A grinding stone (b), and a moulding base(c)*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*

#### 4.4.2.3 Production of Pots for repurposing

The potters mobilised all the necessary materials for production. They produced twin pots (*Kirubi*), bathing bowls (*Otako lwok and Agulu otako*), serving bowls (*Atabo lobo*), pots for burying umbilical cords (*Atabo pen*), and burial pots (*Agulu lyel*), as seen in Figures 4.38–4.42. Three days after moulding, the potters decorated some of the pots using red ochre colour. The study observed the use of both locally sourced material and modern materials for decoration, although the potters confessed to having challenges in obtaining modern materials such as ceramic red oxides. They usually crushed brown stones obtained from quarry sides as seen in Figure 4.31c.



*Figure 4.38: Beginning production.*  
*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.39: Producing bathing pots and burial pots.*  
*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.40: Producing pots with multiple openings.  
Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.41: Producing serving bowl and burial pot.  
Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.42: Greenware exposed to harden before designing.  
Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*

The interactions with the potters revealed how potters engaged in small-scale farming in addition to pottery to supplement their household income. Some potters claimed to love pottery because it gave them a way to express their God-given artistic skill, while others explained how pottery kept them occupied and helped their families and

communities. Even if some potters had converted to the Western faith, they continued with pottery production for domestic use. For the case of rituals that required sourcing from domestic pots such as godly burial, potters admitted how difficult it was to tell the use of pots. Surprisingly, one potter, P4, a "born-again Christian," participated actively in the study like the other potters because she recognised the purpose of the study.

The fear of pottery declining and becoming extinct was because pottery had been left in the hands of middle-aged and elderly women, who appeared frail and might not be able to continue producing pottery for very long. To make matters worse, the young people who could have taken up the craft of making pots had shown little to no interest. The young people were said to be focusing more on formal education, which has limited their exposure to the arts of making pottery and other Acholi crafts. Similarly, collaborative efforts have been encouraged to strengthen the traditional and contemporary pottery practice in the formal education system to encourage the younger generation to take over from the older people (Norley, Amoanyi & Donkor, 2023).

Furthermore, there was concern that the amount of pottery produced was decreasing. The senior potters described how limited demand and a low cost of pottery affected pottery production. However, they continued to produce the pots to uphold a long-standing family custom, although most of them were seasonal potters. There was little indication of any kind of communal support for potters by government, cultural institution or non-governmental organisations. Agyei (2023) emphasized the need to advance indigenous pottery for modern application emphasizing aesthetics of indigenous design, using better technology for mass production (Adeniyi & Kashim, 2021).

#### **4.4.2.4 Firing the Pots**

The potters gathered all the materials they needed for firing, and they used the traditional firing method of open firing. The potters used branches from the *Borassus* palm tree, also known as *Tugu* in Acholi, for firing. Contrary to other open fires, the potters did not dig pits in preparation for firing but simply cleared the grounds and set the stones to support the wood, as seen in Figures 4.43 and 4.44. The pots were then positioned upright to prevent smoke from entering and cracking them, as shown in

Figures 4.44, 4.45, and 4.48. The potters explained why pots were fired late in the evening, especially when the sun was setting. At that time, the breeze was manageable, and the heat from the sun and fire was low and controlled.

On the day of firing, the potters started the process a bit early because it was a cool and calm with moderate and manageable breeze. Two fire points were set up simultaneously to fire pots of similar sizes. Setting the fire points started by arranging stones at the four corners and in the middle to support the woods. The wooden sticks were placed across, as seen in Figure 4.43. Afterwards, the pots were placed and supported with wood. They were covered all over with wood and fired (Figures 4.44 to 4.47). The third firing was conducted from one of the firing points for the smaller pots, including serving bowls and umbilical cord pots, as seen in Figure 4.48. Sizes of pots were considered during firing to estimate the required heat level for firing; for example, the small pots required appropriate heat to prevent cracking. After firing all the pieces, the pots were picked out using long sticks after 30 minutes. They were left to cool before shifting inside, as seen in Figures 4.51, 4.52, and 4.53.



*Figure 4.43: Setting up the firing place.*  
*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.44: Placing and arranging the bowls.*  
*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.45: Placing and arranging the burial pot, bowls and pots with multiple openings.*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.46: Covering the pots with wood.*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.47: Setting fire. Sources:*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.48: Firing the umbilical cord pots.*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.49: Removing the fired pots using long sticks.*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.50: Some of the fired pots.*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*

The fired products from the practicum included bath troughs (*Otako lwok*), burial pots (*Agulu lyel*), service bowls (*Atabo lobo*), twin pots with many openings (*Kirubi/Agulu rut*), and a pot for burying umbilical cords (*Atabo pen*). The community practicum's goal was to translate the views of respondents to produce pots for contemporary settings. The participants explained how the pots in Figures 4.51 and 4.52 could be used for exterior and interior spaces both in homes and public spaces as functional and decorative pieces. The suggestion of increasing the sizes justified the reasons for repurposing and creating visibility (Figure 4.51). Figure 4.52 retained its size given

that could still be repurposed as they were. The clay bowls were used not only for serving family meals and rituals but also at cultural events when people from different cultural backgrounds converged for the ceremonies. They considered using the clay bowls to serve buffets at public events such as traditional and white weddings, birthdays and other parties. They encouraged potters to produce various sizes of clay bowls to accommodate different needs. For the case of umbilical cord pots, they suggested repurposing them for burning incense, keeping coins and other small personal items in a home.

The bathing trough maintained its size, and members observed the need even in today's community. It was suggested that the bathing trough be used as an indoor fireplace in contemporary living spaces during cold weather. Hot red charcoal could be placed in the bathing trough to provide warmth. Similarly, repurposing a burial pot was much different given that it was sourced from cooking and water pots. These pots could serve any purpose in the community, as was suggested in the farms, for keeping rabbits and chickens.



*Figure 4.51: Pots with multiple openings.*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*



*Figure 4.52: Serving bowl, Umbilical cord pot, bathing trough & burial pot.*

*Sources: Researcher (Awach sub-county).*

#### 4.4.2.5 Representation of the Weights of the Pot

The weight measurements for Figures 4.51 and 4.52 were taken before firing (greenware) and after firing (bisque ware) to understand the nature of the clay body used and the impact of shrinkage levels as presented in Table 4.1. Given the different craftsmanship, there were variation in the thickness of the pieces which to some extent determined the reduction in size as greenware and bisquiware.

**Table 4.1: Showing different pots with their weights and sizes**

	Pots used in rituals	Coding	Weight of Pots (Kg)		
			Greenware	Bisquiware	Difference
1	Two mouth pot	Pot A	4.1	3	1.1
2	Three mouth pot	Pot B	5.2	4.1	1.1
3	Four mouth pot	Pot C	6.4	5.1	1.3
4	Serving Bowl	Pot D	1.9	1.2	0.7
5	Umbilical cord pot	Pot E	1.6	0.9	0.7
6	Bathing trough	Pot F	8.2	7	1.2
7	Burial pots	Pot G	9.1	6.9	2.2

*Sources: Researcher*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the study's main findings, conclusions, and recommendations on the relevance of Acholi ritual pottery in contemporary spaces.

#### 5.1 Summary

The study set out to contribute to the conservation of Acholi material culture through repurposing ritual pots and integrating them into contemporary social environment. The study explored Acholi family rituals, analysing the significant use of the pots in those selected rituals to find their new uses. Documentation and repurposing were to reduce the fears associated with the use of the pots and promote production and continuity.

The findings revealed that rituals were conducted at the clan shrine (*Abila*) or family shrine (*Wang-kac*), depending on the level and nature of the problem. While rituals performed at the clan shrine required the participation of families and the community from the same clan, the family shrine only required the households (*Ga'ng*) and family (*Ot*). Leadership hierarchy was considered when preparing for the rituals because of the powers of authority over various social, cultural, and spiritual beings, supported by important strands. While the spiritual rituals required consultation with deities, spiritual mediums, and diviners, other rituals were left to the chiefs in charge of natural endowments, creation of relations, or characteristics that guarantee identities.

Additionally, the investigations revealed numerous family rituals that used pots. It also recognised the use of pots in the selected family rituals, which were analysed and grouped into three for better interpretations: the birth, naming, and death rituals. Among the Akan community of Ghana, life, death and after death were celebrated using a special clay cup known as *Abusuakruwa* (Adjei & Asante, 2016). The birth ritual included the three- or four-day in-house rituals conducted for every newborn. The naming ritual required giving names, and the Bolo Laputa ritual was significant in the naming ritual for godly babies. In this case, predetermined names were given to godly

babies, while normal births received situational or conditional names. The third ritual was the death ritual, which was a purely godly ritual conducted at death and sometimes after, irrespective of the age of the child or adult. These specific rituals were selected because they were family rituals involving pots and were the most practised rituals of the Acholi people. The rituals reinforced the community's core principles and respect for cultural norms. They brought individuals, families, and communities together, fostering strong bonds and preventing intermarriages. As the study explored how the Acholi society used pots during rituals, they identified several family rituals; however, those that used pots were selected and grouped in three.

The study uncovered several pots, including the twin pot (*Agulu Kirubi*), bathing troughs (*Agulu otako* or *Otako lwok*), serving bowl (*Atabo lobo*), umbilical cord pot (*Atabo pen* or *Lawum pen*), and burial pot (*Agulu lyel*). The twin pots had two and three openings while the four-mouth pot was historically used in the rituals of people with TB of the spine. Twin pots had multiple openings, including two- and three-mouth pots. The same twin pots were used in the breech ritual of babies born particularly with their feet first, at birth. The second significant pot was the bathing trough, which was used to bathe newborns. The clay trough kept the water warm for a very long time and was therapeutic to the child's body. Equally important was the serving bowl, which was used for serving meals during family mealtime, especially to visitors and heads of the family. Serving bowls were also used during twin rituals. Laputa was served in a clay pot. The serving bowls have been used to serve various traditional meals of the Acholi people during annual cultural festivals. Umbilical cord pots were used in umbilical cord burial for godly babies during naming rituals. Lastly, burial pots were used for the burial of godly babies. The godly rituals that used pots were mostly multiple births, such as twins and triplets, and breech births, specifically babies who came with their feet at birth. Various sizes of pots were sourced from cooking and water pots for infant and adult godly children.

The investigation also showed that eventually not all pots used in rituals were made with ritual performance in mind. Certain pots, like bathing troughs, pots with multiple openings, and pots made for umbilical cords, were found to be specifically made for rituals, while those used for burial were sourced from ordinary domestic pots. Some pots, particularly those used for cooking, brewing, and serving beer, eventually served

ceremonial and utilitarian roles. It was also found out that pots intended for ritual usage but not yet used in rituals were only symbolic. Just like coffins on display, these kinds of pots often scare those who know their use than the users, although they have no special powers attached to them before using. They clarified that once the pot had been used in the ritual process, respect was granted to them because of the spiritual and supernatural link associated with the pot, the ritual, the people, and the ancestral roots.

Lastly, the study sought the participants' views on repurposing ritual pots for aesthetic and functional use, such as architectural design, flower vessels, serving meals, lampshades, and storage in homes and public spaces. It was thought that this would foster a fusion of traditional and modern cultures and allow people to enjoy the ambience of the places. Once it is repurposed, it is believed to dispel people's anxiety about engaging and forming relationships with traditional material culture items and advance the culture of the Acholi people. The fact that the participants agreed to repurpose them was significant for the study and conservation of the Acholi material culture items, notwithstanding their emphasis on authenticity protection and finding a new use, values, and acceptance in contemporary settings. Via community practicum, five types of pots were produced using the participants' views.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The LRA war caused the Acholi to be relocated to internally displaced people's camps for over 25 years, negatively impacting their cultural traditions, customs, values, and beliefs. This situation was worsened by the Western beliefs that view Acholi family rituals that use pottery as evil and ungodly. Aware of Western cultures devaluing African cultural practices, efforts have been undertaken over time to conserve whatever remains of the Acholi tradition. The community proposed various initiatives to restore Acholi culture and cultural values in contemporary spaces. Some of which included the annual cultural festivals, family and community rituals, and stakeholder consultation meetings of elders such as *Kacoke madit*. Others were adhering to some Western cultural and religious doctrines while conducting family and community rituals. Although these efforts were in place, the majority population still had negative perceptions towards the practices and use of the pots, making their existence extremely difficult.

These shortcomings have threatened the continued existence of ritual pots as well as their production and use. Due to ageing, illness, and death, the potters who are currently producing wares are gradually stopping their work. There are no viable alternatives, and if significant steps are not taken to preserve and market the pots, there is a possibility that this production may not continue. Users of ritual pots now operate in secret to escape the unfavorable perceptions of other community members who live with them. Owing to the shortage, other alternatives have been gradually explored to replace the use of ritual pots with calabashes, wooden troughs, and plastic containers for serving meals, bathing babies, and delivering traditional remedies. This practice has facilitated the extinction of ritual pottery in the Acholi community.

As a way of conserving and promoting the cultural values of the Acholi, repurposing the pots used in ritual was considered to provide functional and aesthetic purposes in contemporary space design. These views were in consultation with the respondents through community practicum; several pots were designed for repurposing in contemporary social contexts. The respondents emphasised the importance of protecting, conserving, and promoting traditional pottery in general and ritual pottery in particular.

### **5.2.1 Dissemination**

The knowledge gained from the study will be distributed to scholars in the same field to aid in their understanding of Acholi family rituals and pottery used in rituals for contemporary space design. A portion of the research was presented at the first Uganda Design Summit at Kyambogo University and the Machakos University 5th conference in Kenya. The report will be available to a range of academics through publications and the online repository of the Kyambogo University Library. The pots designed during the community practicum shall be taken to Ker Kwaro Acholi.

The respondents had the chance to interact and learn during the study. The cultural institution will be given the pots produced to enable those from all cultural backgrounds to learn to appreciate and coexist with Acholi cultural items through the continuous supply of pots. Copies of the research report will be shared with the elders and cultural leaders for their records and future use. This will erase the stigma and practice of ignoring the pots—especially when they have additional uses in modern settings—and

assist the next generation in learning about their cultural relics. When potters continue to produce pots, pot users will watch and witness the use of pots.

### **5.2.2 Study Contribution.**

The study contributes to the theoretical knowledge, artistic or visual narratives, and methodological representation.

#### **5.2.2.1 Theoretical Knowledge**

It makes several contributions to understanding how Acholi cultural artefacts, particularly Acholi pottery, can coexist within modern contexts. The transition of ritual pottery from sacred to secular purposes offers theoretical insights that support existing literature and promote conservation in scholarly discourse. This provides a foundation for understanding how indigenous material culture can evolve within contemporary social spaces.

#### **5.2.2.2 Artistic/ Visual Narratives**

The study enhances artistic and visual narratives in several meaningful ways: Visual documentation offers comprehensive evidence of Acholi ritual pottery, which is currently endangered; it includes participant views and interpretations on how ritual pottery could be repurposed through community practicum. By situating ritual pottery within both historical and modern settings, the study challenges negative perceptions associated with these artefacts.

#### **5.2.2.3 Methodological Representation.**

Additionally, the research introduces innovative methodological approaches to studying and representing transitioning material culture. Using a collaborative methodology, participants were carefully selected to share their lived experiences contributing to community practicum. Various methods and techniques of data collection were used. Note-taking, visual, and voice recording allowed detailed analysis and preservation of material culture.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study recommends;

1. That young people be trained in vocational skills particularly a girl's vocational institute to fill the void left by the elderly women in the rural community who is currently dominating pottery production.
2. The use of traditional hand forming techniques should be encouraged to conserve traditional designs and shapes as it is in Northern Ghana, and Nigeria, to boost mass production and the potter's skills, enhance the growth of society and the economy (Ejikeme, 2024; Nanashaitu & Umoru-Oke, 2017; Busari 2021; Yussif & Adu-Gyamfi, 2017; Yussif, Adu-Gyamfi & Tabi-Agyei, 2018).
3. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Sports should assess projects that promote community youth self-reliance and hands-on learning to enhance and integrate the curriculum. Academics and researchers with an interest in this field of study should use what they learn to inform others through writing and referencing.
4. According to the study, the Acholi cultural institution and traditional leaders should update their methods for conserving, safeguarding, and documenting the institutional artefacts and practices. By doing this, they will be able to preserve indigenous cultural items and raise awareness among the present and future generations. One way to achieve this is by creating a local cultural museum with well-organised and recorded Acholi material culture items within the Acholi region. Encouraging the traditional clan heads to collaborate closely with the community is crucial to helping them understand the significance of pottery in the long run.

### **5.3.1 Policy Recommendation**

The study recommends introducing more community practicums not only in pottery but also in other artefacts. This would encourage economic growth through small and medium-sized enterprises promoting cultural preservation, conservation, and natural heritage, as highlighted in Chapter 8 of the NDPIV (2024) and supported by the National Culture Policy of Uganda (2006), reviewed in 2019. Such efforts can enable the community to actively participate in and take ownership of material culture items.

### **5.3.2 Further Research**

According to the study, Acholi pottery, particularly ritual pots, is gradually disappearing as witnessed in the daily lives of the community. Nevertheless, some steps can be taken to preserve and safeguard them, including establishing appropriate government policies, strengthening cultural institutions, and encouraging community involvement in appreciating the historical, traditional artefacts of their culture. More investigation is required on;

1. The possible means of protecting Acholi material culture.
2. The role of pottery in Acholi marriage tradition.
3. The Acholi cultural institution establishing a cultural museum in the Acholi sub-region as a way of conserving and promoting Acholi material culture.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1: Informed consent form for in-depth interviews for elders and cultural leaders**

#### **Title of the study: Ritual Pottery and Its Repurposing in Contemporary Social Design Space in Acholi Sub-Region, Northern Uganda**

**Investigator:** Sanday Rhodest Adong

**Institution:** Kyambogo University

#### **Introduction:**

This study will be conducted by Adong Sanday Rhodest of registration 20/U/GDAD/14349/PE, a PhD student of Kyambogo University, with a study titled **“Ritual Pottery and Its Repurposing in Contemporary Social Design Space in Acholi Sub-Region, Northern Uganda.”** The study will use in-depth interviews explored the family rituals that use pottery among the Acholi people in northern Uganda, analysed the use of pots in rituals, and obtained views of repurposing in contemporary social design space in Northern Uganda. This informed consent explains the study to you. After the study has been explained, any questions you may have are answered. The study is purely for academic purposes, and participants will voluntarily decide whether to participate in the research or not. When you have decided to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent, which you will be given a copy to keep.

#### **A brief description of the sponsors of the research project**

This study is self-sponsored, and the researcher has ensured that the study is not compromised in any way. All the required field and study expenses have been budgeted, and no respondent will meet any costs that relate to this study. The researcher will ensure every participant does not bear any costs that come as a result of participating in the study.

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of the study is to contribute to the conservation of Acholi material culture through repurposing ritual pots and integrating them in contemporary social environments. The findings of this study will help to inform and educate the public on how to repurpose ritual pots in contemporary spaces for continuity as a way of

conserving Acholi material culture, promoting production, and removing the fear that people have towards ritual pots.

**Procedures:**

Your participation in this study will involve giving authentic information about traditional Acholi rituals that use pots, how pots are used during the family rituals, the meanings created, and the views on how the ritual pots can be repurposed into contemporary spaces. The elders and cultural leaders will give their views on how to repurpose ritual pots into contemporary space design.

**Who will participate in the study?**

The researcher will spend an hour interacting with eight (08) key informants, and three (03) cultural leaders, one at a time, from their convenience locations. Open-ended discussions to allow us to interact freely You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are an informed and knowledgeable elder/ cultural leader.

**Risks/discomforts:**

There is no foreseeable risk of harm or discomfort that will arise from your participation in this study. The only risk or discomfort will be the inconvenience in terms of time spent during the interview. A refreshment will be provided during our discussions, and in case you incur some costs on transport, it will be refunded.

**Benefits:**

The research participants will get feedback on the findings and progress of the study during and after the study to motivate and inspire them about their contributions to the study. The report findings shall be shared with *Ker kwaro* Acholi for future reference. An exhibition will be organised in a public space at either Gulu City space or *Ker kwaro* Acholi. This will boost production and help households improve their finances. Meanwhile, *Ker kwaro* Acholi, hotels, restaurants, district offices, and other public spaces will benefit from the ambience created by the pots designed to beautify the spaces. It will also sensitise the public about the values of pottery as a cultural artefact of the Acholi community. In case of any incident that may affect the study that comes up during the study, the participants will be made to know.

**Confidentiality:**

Participants' recordings shall be kept confidential and identity kept anonymous throughout the study, and respondents' names will be coded and other identities disguised to avoid any potential harm during and after the study. Soft copies of the

data will be protected by password, and hard copy files will be kept under lock and key. Confidential information will only be accessed by the principal investigator.

**Alternatives:**

You do not have to participate in this study if you are not interested. You will not lose any benefit in case of no participation.

**Cost:**

There will not be any additional cost incurred as a result of participating in this study. All costs incurred by the participant that relate to the study shall be covered by the researcher.

**Questions:**

If you have any questions related to the study as a research participant, you can contact the principal investigator, Adong Sanday Rhodest, by telephone number 0782337882 or via email at [srhodest@gmail.com](mailto:srhodest@gmail.com).

**Statement of voluntariness:**

Participation in the research study is voluntary, and you may join on your own free will. You have a right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

If you have any issues about your rights and participation in the study, please contact the Chairperson, Gulu University Research Ethics Committee, Dr. Gerald Obai Tel: No., 0772305621; email: [lekobai@yahoo.com](mailto:lekobai@yahoo.com)/[lekobai@gmail.com](mailto:lekobai@gmail.com); or the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, on plot 6 Kimera Road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500.

**Statement of consent**

..... has described to me what is going to be done, the risks, the benefits involved, and my rights as a participant in this study. I understand that my decision to participate in this study will not affect me in any way. In the use of this information, my identity will be concealed. I am aware that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that by signing this form, I do not waive any of my legal rights but merely indicate that I have been informed about the research study in which I am voluntarily agreeing to participate. A copy of this form will be provided to me.

Name of participant..... Signature/Thumbprint.....Date.....

Name of witness.....Signature.....Date.....

Name of interviewer..... signature..... Date.....

## **Appendix 2: Karatac me moko tam/ cwak matut pa lodito ki lutela tekwaro**

**(Informed consent form for in-depth interviews for elders and cultural leaders)**

**Wi lok ma dit:** Agulu me kwer tekwaro pa Acholi me kumalo me Uganda ki bene i kabedo munyo me deyu.

**Lakwed lok:** Sanday Rhodest Adong

Gang kwan: Kyambogo University

### **Nyutu**

Ngat ma doru kwan man obedo Adong Sanday Rhodest, ma nama me kwan mege tye 20/U/GDAD/14349/PE, i rwom me PhD i Kyambogo University, ki lok ma dit ma mako; “**Agulu me kwer tekwaro pa Acholi me kumalo me Uganda ki bene i kabedo me deyu’munyo.**” Kwan man kwedo matut kwer me tekwaro Acholi ma tiyo ki agulu i kumalo me Uganda, dok bene neno kit ma kitiyo kwede ki agulu magi i kare me kwer tekwaro, ki neno kit ma kiromo tic kwede ki agulu magi me timo tic mukene onyo medo deyo i kabedo munyo i kin piny me Uganda. Karatac me moko tam man tito kit ma kwan man bibedo kwede. Iyo’nge tito tyen kwan man, abigamo lapeny mo keken ma onyo gwok itye kwede. Kwed man tye ma mako lok kum kwan keken dok bene, ngat-mo keken ma bigamo lapeny me kwan man bidyere kene labongo dic mo, onyo kwero woko. Ka dong iyee me bedo ikin jo ma bigamo lapeny, gibipenyi me keto cingi i coc me moko caden ki dok bene ki bi miyo boti waraga man ka kirudu.

### **Ngec macek ma tito kit me cul me kwan man**

Latin kwan man cule kene dok bene neno ni gin mo keken pe diyo kwed man iyo mo keken. Jami ma mite ducu ma mako kit me nongo ngec i kin gang ki goyo bajet en bicung I ye. Ngat mo keken ma bimiyo ngec pe biketo lime i kum kwen man. Latin kwan man bineno ni lami ngec pe biculu pi gin mo ma lube ki yee me bedo i kwan man.

### **Tyen kwan/ Kwed:**

Kwed man neno kit me gwoko jami me tekwaro pa Acholi I yoo ma lube ki tic ki mino tic mapat ki ma agulu magi onongo timo i kabedo me deyu munyo. Adwogi pa kwan man bikonyo mino ngec ki pwonyo lwak kit me tic ki agulu jok I kabedo munyo wek tic pa agulu magi omede anyim calo yoo maber me gwoko jami me tekwaro Acholi,

mede ki cweyo agulu jok dok bene me kwanyo lworu ma dano tye kwede i kum agulu jok.

**Yo me tic:**

Moko tami me bedo i kin jo ma nywako tam bibedo i ada ikum kwer kwaro Acholi ma tiyo ki agulu, kit ma kitiyo kwedgi, tyen lok ango ma tye i kit me tic kwedegi, ki dong tam ango ma iromo miyone i kit me tic ki agulu tekwaro i kabedo munyo. Lutido ma dongo ki lutela tekwaro bi miyo ngec kit ma kiromo tic kwede ki agulu tekwaro i kabedo muyo.

**Nga ma obibedo I kin jo ma obinywako tam I kwan man?**

Wabitiyo ki lapeny ma miyo kare me nyamo lok man labongo ayela. Latin kwan man bitero cawa ma romo acel me nyamo tam ki ludito ma miyo ngec aboro (08), ki ludito tekwaro adek (03). Giyeri me bedo ikin jo ma bi nywako tam i kwan man pi en itye ki ngec macalo dano madit / ladit me tekwaro.

**Ngil/ Gin marac ma romo time:**

Pe tye neno mo marac ma bikelo peko kun aa ki i nywako tam mamegi i kum kwan man. Keken ni neno mo marac romo aa ki i kit me tic ki cawa mapol ma wabitero ikare me nywako tam man. Pii amata mo bi bedo tye i kare me nywako tam man dok bene cul mo keken ma lupe ki kit me giwot abiculu ka ce onyo i aa ki kamukene.

**Gin maber:**

Jo ma bidyere me nywako ngec bibedo ki lagam me ngec mabikati i kare me nywako ngec ki bene iyo nge nywako ngec wek ojing cwiny ki omed kero i kum tam ma inywako pi kwan man. Adwogi me ngec ma aa ki i kum kwan gibimiyo ne I *Ker kwaro* Acholi pi lok ma mako anyim pa lwak. Yub me keto agulu ducu ma luyub agulu gi oyubu i kare me kwan man bi time kama lwak gure iye calo i boma madit me Gulu onyo i *Ker kwaro* Acholi. Man bimedro kero i lok mamako yubu agulu ki me medo lim i dog ot acel acel. Ento bene, katic mapatpat bibedo ki mic me namo i kabedo ma kideyo ki agulu tekwaro macalo; *Ker kwaro* Acholi, ka-namo, ki ka-mukene. Man bimiyo ngec bene bot lwak, ber pa agulu i tekwaro pa Acholi. Ka gin mo bikati i kare me nywako tam ma mako kwan man, gibimiyo ngec boti.

**Mung:**

Ngec pa lanywak tam bibedo i mung dok bene nying ki lok kum lami ngec bibedo i mung. Nying mapat onyo alama me lanyut ma kano lami ngec kibi tic kwede. Man bitime me gengo gin mo marac mabibino ma lube ki tam ma ileyo. Lok ducu ma kileyo

dok kiketo i coc kibigwoko gi kun kitweyo wigi woko kama ding. Ngat ma bibedo ki ngec man en aye latin kwan matye ka kwedo lok magi.

**Yoo mukene ma pat:**

Ka cwinyi pe mito, iromo kwero bedo ikin jo ma bi miyo ngec i kwan man. Petye gin mo ma pire-tek ma ibirwenyo ka i kwero dyere me miyo ngec i kwan man.

**Acara:**

Petye acara/cul mo keken ma bimedede ma lupe ki tam ma ibinywako i kwan man. Acara mo keken ma binonge ma lupe ki kwan man, latin kwan bityeko ne weng.

**Lapeny:**

Ka itye ki lapeny ma lupe ki kwan man, iromo kube ki latin kwan ma tye ka kwedo lok man (principal investigator), Adong Sanday Rhodest i nama cim 0782337882 onyo i [srhodest@gmail.com](mailto:srhodest@gmail.com).

**Ngec ma mako dyere:**

Jo ma biye me nywako tam bidyere ken-gi labongo kit dic mo keken. Itye ki twero me kwero mino ngec i cawa mo keken labongo kit agenga mo. Ka itye ki lapeny mo keken ma mako lok me twero ni ki miyo ngec i kwan man, go cim bot wonkom me Gulu University Research Ethics Committee, Dr. Gerald Obai Tel: No., 0772305621; email: [lekobai@yahoo.com](mailto:lekobai@yahoo.com)/[lekobai@gmail.com](mailto:lekobai@gmail.com); onyo the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, i hot nama 6 Kimera road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500.

**Ngec me moko tam:**

..... ogonyo bota tyen lok ma lupe ki ngo ma bitime, peko ma bikati, adwogi maber ma aa ki iye, ki twero ma lube ki ngec ma amiyo i kwan man. Aniang maber bene ni dyere ma anyutu me mino ngec ikum kwan man pe bikela peko iyo mo keken. i kare me tic ki ngec ma amiyo, ngec ma mako lok kuma bibedo imung. Atye ki ngec ni aromo weko miyo ngec i cawa mo keken. Aniang ni keto cinga i karatac man pe kwanyo twero na mo keken ento nyutu ni atye ki ngec ma lupe ki ngo ma kwan man mito ma bene adyere ki cwinya me bedo Iye. Waraga man bene kibimina abedo kwede calo lanyut no kirudu.

Nying lanywak tam..... Cing ..... Ninodwe.....  
Nying lacaden..... Cing..... Ninodwe.....  
Nying lakwed lok..... Cing..... Ninodwe.....

### **Appendix 3: Informed consent form for in-depth interviews of pot users**

#### **Title of the study: Ritual Pottery and Its Repurposing in Contemporary Social Design Space in Acholi Sub-Region, Northern Uganda**

**Investigator:** Sanday Rhodest Adong

**Institution:** Kyambogo University

#### **Introduction:**

This study will be conducted by Adong Sanday Rhodest of registration 20/U/GDAD/14349/PE, a PhD student of Kyambogo University with a study titled **“Ritual Pottery and Its Repurposing in Contemporary Social Design Space in Acholi Sub-Region, Northern Uganda.”** The study will use in-depth interviews exploring family rituals that use pottery among the Acholi people of northern Uganda, analysing the use of pots in rituals, and find out how ritual pots can be repurposed for aesthetic designs in contemporary social space in Uganda. This informed consent explains the study to you. After the study has been explained, any questions you may have are answered. The study is purely for academic purposes, and participants will voluntarily decide whether to participate in the research or not. When you have decided to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent, which you will be given a copy to keep.

#### **A brief description of the sponsors of the research project**

This study is self-sponsored; the researcher has ensured that the study is not compromised in any way. All the required field and study expenses have been budgeted, and no respondent will meet any costs that relate to this study. The researcher will ensure every participant does not bear any costs that come as a result of participating in the study.

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of the study is to contribute to the conservation of Acholi material culture through repurposing ritual pots and integrating them in contemporary social environments. The findings of this study will help to inform and educate the public on the value of repurposing ritual pots in contemporary spaces to remove the fear and negative perceptions associated with them.

#### **Procedures:**

Your participation in this study will involve giving authentic information about traditional Acholi family rituals that use pots, the narration of how pots are used during the family rituals, the meanings created, and views on how the ritual pots can be repurposed into contemporary spaces. The pot user will give their views on whether ritual pots can be repurposed and how they can be repurposed in contemporary space design.

**Who will participate in the study?**

Eight (08) users of pots in the community will participate in the study one at a time to help compare their narratives and enable proper probing using open-ended questions that allow free interactions. The pots studied will include ritual pots kept in the house and those within the compound and family shrines and the views of repurposing. The interactions will take an hour and thirty minutes from the homes of pot users. You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are a pot user.

**Risks/discomforts:**

There is no foreseeable risk of harm or discomfort that will arise from your participation in this study. The only risk or discomfort will be the inconvenience in terms of time spent during the interview, and refreshments will be provided during our discussions.

**Benefits:**

The research participants will get feedback on the findings and progress of the study during and after the study to motivate and inspire them about their contributions to the study. The report findings shall be shared with *Ker kwaro* Acholi for future reference. An exhibition will be organised in a public space at either Gulu City space or *Ker kwaro* Acholi. You will be invited to witness how the Acholi traditional pots will be used during the exhibition. It will also sensitise the public about the values of pottery as a cultural artefact of the Acholi community to remove the negativity associated with the pots. In case any incident that may affect the study comes up during the study, the participants will be made to know.

**Confidentiality:**

Participant's homes shall be accessed with permission from the family head, and all the voice recordings and pictures of cultural artefacts, including family shrines, will only be taken when permission is granted. All the discussions within the family shall only be conducted within that family and with only the accepted members of the

family. No outsider will listen to the discussions with pot users in that home. All information will be kept confidential and identity kept anonymous throughout the study, and respondents' names will be coded or disguised to avoid any potential harm during and after the study. Soft copies of the data will be protected by password, and hard copy files will be kept under lock and key. Confidential information will only be accessed by the principal investigator.

**Alternatives:**

You do not have to participate in this study if you are not interested. You will not lose any benefit in case you do not participate.

**Cost:**

There will not be any additional cost incurred as a result of participating in this study. All costs incurred by the participant that relate to the study shall be covered by the researcher.

**Questions:**

If you have any questions related to the study as a research participant, you can contact the principal investigator, Adong Sanday Rhodest, by telephone number 0782337882 or via email at [srhodest@gmail.com](mailto:srhodest@gmail.com).

**Statement of voluntariness:**

Participation in the research study is voluntary and you may join on your own free will. You have a right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

If you have any issues about your rights and participation in the study, please contact the Chairperson, Gulu University Research Ethics Committee, Dr Gerald Obai Tel: No., 0772305621; email: [lekobai@yahoo.com](mailto:lekobai@yahoo.com)/[lekobai@gmail.com](mailto:lekobai@gmail.com); or the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, on plot 6 Kimera Road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500.

**Statement of consent**

..... has described to me what is going to be done, the risks, the benefits involved, and my rights as a participant in this study. I understand that my decision to participate in this study will not affect me in any way. In the use of this information, my identity will be concealed. I am aware that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that by signing this form, I do not waive any of my legal rights but merely indicate that I have been informed about the research study in which I am voluntarily agreeing to participate. A copy of this form will be provided to

me.

Name of participant.....Signature/Thumbprint.....Date.....

Name of witness.....Signature.....Date.....

Name of interviewer.....signature.....Date.....

#### **Appendix 4: Karatac me moko tam/ cwak matut pa luti ki agulu**

##### **(Informed consent form for in-depth interviews of pot users)**

**Wi lok ma dit:** Agulu me kwer tekwaro pa Acholi me kumalo me Uganda ki bene i kabedo munyo me deyu.

**Lakwed lok:** Sanday Rhodest Adong

**Gang kwan:** Kyambogo University

##### **Nyutu**

Ngat ma doro kwan man obedo Adong Sanday Rhodest ma nama me kwan mege tye 20/U/GDAD/14349/PE i rwom me PhD in Kyambogo University ki lok ma dit ma mako; **“Agulu me kwer tekwaro pa Acholi me kumalo me Uganda ki bene i kabedo me deyu’munyo.”** Kwan man kwedo matut kwer me tekwaro Acholi ma tiyo ki agulu i kumalo me Uganda, dok bene neno kit ma agulu magi gitiyo kwedgi i kare me kwer tekwaro, ka neno kitma kiromo tickwede me timo tic mukene onyo medo deyo i kabedo munyo i kin piny me Uganda. Karatac me moko tam man tito kit ma kwan man bibedo kwede. Iyo’nge tito tyen kwan man, abigamo lapeny mor keken ma onyo gwok itye kwede. Kwed man tye ma mako lok kum kwan keken dokbene, ngatmo keken ma bigamo lapeny me kwan man bidyere kene labongo dic mo keken onyo kwero woko. Ka dong iyee me bedo ikin jo ma bigamo lapeny, gibipenyi me keto cingi i coc me moko caden ki dok bene, ki bi miyo bot in waraga man ka kirudu.

##### **Ngec macek ma tito kit me cul me kwan man**

Latin kwan man cule kene dak bene latin kwan man oneno ni gin mo keken pe odiyo kwan man iyo mo keken. Jemi ma mite ducu ma mako kit me nongo ngec i kin gang ki goyo i bajet dak bene ngat mo keken ma bimiyo ngec pe biketo lim ne i kum kwan man. Latin kwan man bineno ni lami ngec pe biculu pi gin mo ma lupe ki yee me bedo i kwan man.

##### **Tyen kwan:**

Kwan man kwedo ber pa agulu me tekwaro Acholi i kin dano me kumalo me Uganda ki bene i kabedo me deyu munyo. Adwogi pa kwan man bikonyo mino ngec ki pwoonyo lwak kit me tic ki agulu jok i kabedo munyo wek tic pa agulu magi omede anyim calo yoo maber me gwoko jemi me tekwaro Acholi, mede ki cweyo agulu jok dak bene me kwanyo lwooro ma dano tye kwede i kum agulu jok.

**Yo me tic:**

Moko tami me bedo i kin jo ma nywako tam bibedo i ada ikum kwer kwaro Acholi ma tiyo ki agulu i gangi, kit ma kitiyo kwedgi, tyen lok ango ma tye i kit me tic kwed-gi, ki dong tam ango ma iromo minone i kit me tic ki agulu tekwaro i kabedo munyo. Luti ki agulu bi mino tam gi ka agulu jok ki romo tic kwede dak bene yoo ango ma ki romo tick kwede me deyo onyo tiyo tic mukene i kabedo munyo.

**Nga ma obibedo i kin jo ma obinywako tam I kwan man?**

Luti ki agulu aboro (08) i kin gangi. Kibiyero gi i kwan man ki acel acel wek omi kare me neno adaa me ngec ma gitye ka nywako ne. Agulu magi bibedo agulu me tiyo tic Acholi, ki dok leyo tam ki ma kiromo timo ki gin mukene ma pat ki tic me tekwaro. I kabedo munyo. Nywako tam man bibedo pi cawa acel ki nucu. Giyeri me bedo ikin jo ma bi nywako tam i kwan man pi en itiyo ki agulu.

**Ngil/ Gin marac ma romo time:**

Pe tye neno mo marac ma bikelo peko kun aa ki i nywako tam mamegi i kum kwan man. Keken ni neno mo marac romo aa ki i kit me tic ki cawa mapol ma wabitero ikare me nywako tam man. Pii amata moo bi bedo tye i kare me nywako tam man dak bene cul moo keken ma lupe ki kit me giwot abiculu ne ka ce onyo i aa ki kamukene.

**Gin maber:**

Jo ma bi-dyere me nywako ngec bibedo ki lagam me ngec mabikati i kare me nywako ngec ki bene iyo nge nywako ngec wek ojing cwiny ki omed kero i kum tam ma inywako pi kwan man. Adwogi me ngec ma aa ki i kum kwan gibimiyo ne i *Ker kwaro* Acholi pi lok ma mako anyim pa lwak. Yub me keto agulu ducu ma luyub agulu gi oyubu i kare me kwan man bi time kama lwak gure iye calo i boma madit me Gulu onyo i *Ker kwaro* Acholi. Wabi lwongi me bino ka neno kit me nyutu agulu me tekwaro Acholi ma giyubu me deyo bot lwak. Bimino kare bot lwak me nongo ngec ma mako ber pa agulu tewkaro dak bene bikwanyo lworu ma lwak tye kwede i kum agulu magi. Ka gin mo bikati i kare me nywako tam ma mako kwan man, gibimiyo ngec bot in.

**Mung:**

Twero me donyo i gang pa latii ki agulu binonge ki bot wegi gang man dak bene dwon moo keken ki cal ma kibimako malupe ki jemi me tekwaro gibi mako ka wegi gang guyee ni kimak. Nywako tam moo keken ma bibedo i paco man bibedo i mung I kin jo me gang meno keken dak bene wegi gang bimoko ngaa gi ma omito gubed iyee.

Ngat moo keken ma aa ki woko ma pat ki jo ot man pe biwinyo lok me paco wan. Ngec weng pa lanywak tam bibedo i mung dok bene nying ki lok kum lami ngec gibi mungu woko. Nying mapat onyo alama me lanyut ma kano lami ngec ki bi tic kwede. Man bitime me gengo gin mo marac mabibino ma lupe ki tam ma ileyo. Lok ducu ma kileyo dok kiketo i coc kibigwoko gi kun kitweyo wigi woko kama ding. Ngat ma bibedo ki ngec man en aye latin kwan matye ka kwedo lok magi.

**Yoo mukene ma pat:**

Ka cwinyi pe mito, iromo kwero bedo ikin jo ma bi miyo ngec i kwan man. Petye gin mo ma pire-tek ma ibirwenyo ka i kwero dyere me miyo ngec i kwan man.

**Acara:**

Petye acara/cul mo keken ma bimedede ma lube ki tam ma ibinywako i kwan man. Acara moo keken ma binonge ma lupe ki kwan man, latin kwan bitueko ne weng.

**Lapeny:**

Ka itye ki lapeny ma lube ki kwan man, iromo kube ki lati kwan ma tye ka kwedo look me kwan man (principal investigator), Adong Sanday Rhodest i nama cim 0782337882, onyo i [srhodest@gmail.com](mailto:srhodest@gmail.com).

**Ngec ma mako dyere:**

Jo ma biye me nywako tam bidyere ken-gi labongo kit dic mo keken. Itye ki twero me kwero mino ngec i cawa mo keken labongo kit agenga mo. Ka itye ki lapeny mo keken ma mako lok me twero ni ki miyo ngec i kwan man, go cim bot wonkom me Gulu University Research Ethics Committee, Dr. Gerald Obai Tel: No., 0772305621; email: [lekobai@yahoo.com](mailto:lekobai@yahoo.com)/[lekobai@gmail.com](mailto:lekobai@gmail.com); onyo the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, i hot nama 6 Kimera Road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500.

**Ngec me moko tam:**

..... ogonyo bota tyen lok ma lupe kingo ma bitime, peko ma bikati, adwogi maber ma aa ki iye, ki twero na ma lupe ki ngec ma amiyo i kwan man. Aniang maber bene ni dyere ma anyutu me mino ngec i kwan man pe bikela peko iyo mo keken. I kare me tic ki ngec ma amiyo, ngec ma mako lok kuma bibedo imung. Atye ki ngec ni aromo weko mino ngec i cawa mo keken. Aniang ni keto cinga i karatac man pe kwanyo twero na mo keken ento nyutu ni atye ki ngec ma lupe ki ngo ma kwan man mito ma bene adyere ki cwinya me bedo Iye. Waraga

man bene kibimina abedo kwede calo lanyut no kirudu.

Nying lanywak tam..... Cing ..... Ninodwe.....

Nying lacaden..... Cing..... Ninodwe.....

Nying lakwed lok..... Cing lok.....Ninodwe.....

## **Appendix 5: Informed consent form for Focus Group Discussions for producers of pots**

**Title of the study:** Ritual Pottery and Its Repurposing in Contemporary Social Design Space in Acholi Sub-Region, Northern Uganda

**Investigator:** Sanday Rhodest Adong

**Institution:** Kyambogo University

### **Introduction:**

The study will be conducted by Adong Sanday Rhodest of registration 20/U/GDAD/14349/PE, a PhD student of Kyambogo University with a study titled **“Ritual Pottery and Its Repurposing in Contemporary Social Design Space in Acholi Sub-Region, Northern Uganda.”** The study will use **Focus Group Discussions (FGD)** to explore the family rituals that use pottery among the Acholi people of northern Uganda, analyse the use of pots in rituals, and find out how ritual pots can be repurposed for aesthetic designs in contemporary social space in Uganda. This informed consent explains the study to you. After the study has been explained, any questions you may have are answered. The study is purely for academic purposes and participants will voluntarily decide whether to participate in the research or not. When you have decided to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent, which you will be given a copy to keep.

### **A brief description of the sponsors of the research project**

This study is self-sponsored; the researcher has ensured that the study is not compromised in any way. All the required field and study expenses have been budgeted, and no respondent will meet any costs that relate to this study before and during the practicum. The researcher will ensure every participant does not bear any costs that come as a result of participating in the study.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of the study is to contribute to the conservation of Acholi material culture through repurposing ritual pots and integrating them in contemporary social environments. The findings of this study will help to inform and educate the public on how to repurpose ritual pots in contemporary spaces for continuous use as a way of

conserving Acholi material culture, removing the fear that the community has towards the pots, and promoting production.

**Procedures:**

Your participation in this study will involve giving authentic information about pottery production, traditional Acholi rituals that use pots, how and why pots are used during the family rituals, the meanings created, and the views on how the ritual pots can be repurposed in contemporary spaces. Through community practicum, the views of the respondents will be translated by a group of potters into tangible pottery artworks.

**Who will participate in the study?**

You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are a potter. A total of six (6) potters will participate in the study; and during production, they will assist each other. The researcher will spend approximately one hour interacting with 8 to 12 participants in a focus group discussion. The 8 to 12 participants will be from at least two households who live in the same proximity at a time. During production, they will spend one day preparing the clay, at least two days each for the production, and one day for firing. A maximum of two weeks will be required to complete the whole production.

**Risks/discomforts:**

There is no foreseeable risk of harm or discomfort that will arise from your participation in this study. The only risk or discomfort will be the inconvenience in terms of time spent during the interview, production and firing of the pots. All the transport costs and any other costs incurred during the study will be refunded by the researcher. Refreshments will be provided during our discussions and production of pots.

**Benefits:**

The research participants will get feedback on the findings and progress of the study during and after the study to motivate and inspire them about their contributions to the study. The report findings shall be shared with *Ker kwaro* Acholi, for future reference. An exhibition will be organised in a public space at either Gulu City space or *Ker kwaro* Acholi and potters will be invited to take part in the exhibition. Encouraging production for contemporary spaces will promote continuous production, improve household income, and remove fear and negative beliefs associated with ritual pottery. Meanwhile, *Ker kwaro* Acholi, hotels, restaurants, district offices, and other public

spaces will benefit from the ambience created by the pots designed to beautify the spaces. It will also sensitise the public about the values of pottery as a cultural artefact of the Acholi community and remove the fear of using the pota. In case of any incident that may affect the study that comes up during the study, the participants will be made to know.

**Confidentiality:**

Participants' recordings and photographs shall be kept confidential and identity kept anonymous throughout the study, and respondents' names will be coded and other identities disguised to avoid any potential harm during and after the study. Soft copies of the data will be protected by password, and hard copy files will be kept under lock and key. Confidential information will only be accessed by the principal investigator.

**Alternatives:**

You do not have to participate in this study if you are not interested. You will not lose any benefit in case you do not participate.

**Cost:**

There will not be any additional cost incurred as a result of participating in this study. All costs incurred by the participant that relate to the study shall be covered by the researcher.

**Questions:**

If you have any questions related to the study as a research participant, you can contact the principal investigator, Adong Sanday Rhodest on telephone number 0782337882 or via email at [srhodest@gmail.com](mailto:srhodest@gmail.com).

**Statement of voluntariness:**

Participation in the research study is voluntary, and you may join on your own free will. You have a right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you have any issues about your rights and participation in the study, please contact the Chairperson, Gulu University Research Ethics Committee, Dr. Gerald Obai Tel: No., 0772305621; email: [lekobai@yahoo.com](mailto:lekobai@yahoo.com)/[lekobai@gmail.com](mailto:lekobai@gmail.com); or the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, on plot 6 Kimera Road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500.

**Statement of consent**

..... has described to me what is going to be done, the risks, the benefits involved, and my rights as a participant in this study. I

understand that my decision to participate in this study will not affect me in any way. In the use of this information, my identity will be concealed. I am aware that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that by signing this form, I do not waive any of my legal rights but merely indicate that I have been informed about the research study in which I am voluntarily agreeing to participate. A copy of this form will be provided to me.

Name of participant.....Signature/Thumbprint.....Date.....

Name of witness.....Signature.....Date.....

Name of interviewer.....signature.....Date.....

*Appendix 6: Karatac me moko tam/ cwak ma ginyamo kacel I gurub pa luyub agulu.*

**(Informed consent form for Focus Group Discussions for producers of pots)**

**Wi lok ma dit:** Agulu me kwer tekwaro pa Acholi me kumalo me Uganda ki bene i kabedo munyo me deyu.

**Lakwed lok:** Sanday Rhodest Adong

**Gang kwan:** Kyambogo University

**Nyutu**

Ngat ma doru kwan man obedo Adong Sanday Rhodest ma nama me kwan mege tye 20/U/GDAD/14349/PE, i rwom me PhD i Kyambogo University ki lok ma dit ma mako; “**Agulu me kwer tekwaro pa Acholi me kumalo me Uganda ki bene i kabedo me deyu’munyo.**” Kwan man kwedo kwer me tekwaro i gangi Acholi ma tiyo ki agulu i kin luyub agulu i kumalo me Uganda, dok bene neno kit ma agulu magi gitiyo kwedgi i kare me kwer tekwaro, ka winyo tam pa dano kit ma kiromo tic kwede ki agulu magi me timo tic mukene onyo medo deyo i kabedo munyo i kin piny me Uganda. Karatac me moko tam man tito kit ma kwan man bibedo kwede. Iyonge tito tyen kwan man, lapeny mo keken ma onyo gwok itye kwede kigamo dong. Kwed man tye ma mako lok kum kwan keken dok bene, ngatmo keken ma bigamo lapeny me kwan man bidyere kene labongo dic mo onyo kwero woko. Ka dong iyee me bedo ikin jo ma bigamo lapeny, gibipenyi me keto cingi i coc me moko caden ki dok bene ki bi miyo bot waraga man ka kirudu.

**Ngec macek ma tito kit me cul me kwan man**

Latin kwan man cule kene dok bene oneno ni gin mo pe diyo kwed man iyo mo keken. Jemi ma mite ducu ma mako kit me nongo ngec i kin gang ki goyo bajet en bicung iye. Ngat mo keken ma bimiyo ngec pe biketo lime i kum kwed man. Latin kwan man bineno ni lami ngec pe biculu pi gin moo ma lube ki yee me bedo i kwan man.

**Tyen kwan/ kwed:**

Kwan man kwedo ber pa agulu me tekwaro Acholi i kin dano me kumalo me Uganda ki bene i kabedo me deyu munyo. Adwoki pa kwan man bikonyo mino ngec ki pwoonyo lwak kit me tic ki agulu jok i kabedo munyo wek tic pa agulu magi omede anyim calo yoo maber me gwoko jami me tekwaro Acholi, me kwanyo lworu ma dano tye kwede i kum agulu jok dok bene me mede ki cweyo agulu pi kabedo munyo.

**Yo me tic:**

Moko tami me bedo i kin jo ma nywako tam bibedo i ada ikum yubu agulu, kwer kwaro Acholi ma tiyo ki agulu i gangi, kit ma kitiyo kwedgi, tyen lok ango ma tye i kit me tic kwedegi, ki dong tam ango ma iromo miyone i kit me tic ki agulu tekwaro i kabedo munyo. Lucwe agulu bitiyo ki tam magi ducu me neno kit me kati ki agulu ma giromo tic kwede i kabedo munyo.

**Nga ma obibedo I kin jo ma obinywako tam I kwan man?**

Giyeri me bedo ikin jo ma bi nywako tam i kwan man pi en ibedo layub agulu. Lucwe agulu abicel (6) bi bedo i kwan man; I kare me yupu agulu, gi bi tic kacel. Nywako tam man bibedo pi kine cawa acel kun no aguru dog ot ma pe kato aryo i gurup. Gurup man bibedo i kin dano aboro ki aparyo (8-12). Cwec bi tero hare ma romo cabit aryo; yupu lobo pi nino acel, cwec pi nino aryo ki dong wango agulu pi nino acel.

**Ngil/ Gin marac ma romo time:**

Pe tye neno mo marac ma bikelo peko kun aa ki i nywako tam mamegi i kum kwan man. Keken ni neno mo marac romo aa ki i kit me tic ki cawa mapol ma wabitero ikare me nywako tam man. Pii amata moo bi bedo tye i kare me nywako tam man dak bene cul moo keken ma lupe ki kit me giwot abiculu ne ka ce onyo i aa ki kamukene dok bene pii amat ki gin acama bi bedo tye i kare me nywako lok ki yupu agulu.

**Gin maber:**

Jo ma bidyere me nywako ngec bibedo ki lagam me ngec mabikati i kare me nywako ngec ki bene iyo nge nywako ngec wek ojing cwiny ki omed kero i kum tam ma inywako pi kwan man. Adwogi me ngec ma aa ki i kum kwan gibimiyo ne I *Ker kwaro* Acholi pi lok ma mako anyim pa lwak. Yub me keto agulu ducu ma luyub agulu gi oyubu i kare me kwan man bi time kama lwak gure iye calo i boma madit me Gulu onyo i *Ker kwaro* Acholi. Wabi lwongi me bino ka neno kit me nyutu agulu me tekwaro Acholi ma giyubu me deyo bot lwak. Man bi miyo kero bot luyub agulu me cako cweyo agulu me kabedo munyo wek okony kit me kelo lim icing dog ot pa luyub agulu. *Ker kwaro* Acholi, ka-namo ki gang tic me boma me gulu bibedo ki nongo kare me tic ki agulu magi medeyo i kabedo munyo dok bene gi binongo pwonye ma mako agulu tekwaro i kabedo me namo onyo tic. Man bene bikwanyo lworu ma lwak tye kwede i kum agulu magi. Ka gin mo bikati i kare me nywako tam ma mako kwan man, gibimiyo ngec boti.

**Mung:**

Dwon lami ngec cal ma kibimako bibedo i mung dok bene nying ki lok kum lami ngec bibedo I mung. Nying mapat onyo alama me lanyut ma kano lami ngec kibi tic kwede. Man bitime me gengo gin mo marac mabibino ma lube ki tam ma ileyo. Lok ducu ma kileyo dok kiketo i coc kibigwoko gi kun kitweyo wigi woko kama ding. Ngat ma bibedo ki ngec man en aye latin kwan matye ka kwedo lok magi.

**Yoo mukene ma pat:**

Ka cwinyi pe mito, iromo kwero bedo ikin jo ma bi miyo ngec i kwan man. Petye gin mo ma pire-tek ma ibirwenyo ka i kwero dyere me miyo ngec i kwan man.

**Acara:**

Petye acara/cul mo keken ma bimedede ma lube ki tam ma ibinywako i kwan man. Acara moo keken ma binonge ma lupe ki kwan man, latin kwan bityeko ne weng.

**Lapeny:**

Ka itye ki lapeny ma lupe ki kwan man, iromo kube ki lati kwan ma tye ka kwedo look me kwan man (principal investigator), Adong Sanday Rhodest i nama cim 0782337882 onyo i [srhodest@gmail.com](mailto:srhodest@gmail.com).

**Ngec ma mako dyere:**

Jo ma biye me nywako tam bidyere ken-gi labongo kit dic mo keken. Itye ki twero me kwero miyo ngec i cawa mo keken labongo kit agenga mo. Ka itye ki lapeny mo keken ma mako lok me twero ni ki miyo ngec i kwan man, go cim bot wonkom me Gulu University Research Ethics Committee, Dr. Gerald Obai Tel: No., 0772305621; email: [lekobai@yahoo.com](mailto:lekobai@yahoo.com)/[lekobai@gmail.com](mailto:lekobai@gmail.com); onyo the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, i hot nama 6 Kimera Road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500.

**Ngec me moko tam:**

..... ogonyo bota tyen lok ma lube kingo ma bitime, peko ma bikati, adwogi maber ma aa ki iye, ki twero ma lupe ki ngec ma amiyo i kwan man. Aniang maber bene ni dyere ma anyutu me mino ngec i kwan man pe bikela peko iyo mo keken. I kare me tic ki ngec ma amiyo, ngec ma mako lok kuma bibedo imung. Atye ki ngec ni aromo weko mino ngec i cawa mo keken. Aniang ni keto cinga i karatac man pe kwanyo twero na mo keken ento nyutu ni atye ki ngec ma lupe ki ngo ma kwan man mito ma bene adyere ki cwinya me bedo Iye. Waraga man bene kibimina abedo kwede calo lanyut no kirudu.

Nying lanywak tam..... Cing ..... Ninodwe.....  
Nying lacaden..... Cing..... Ninodwe.....  
Nying lakwed lok..... Cing..... Ninodwe.....



\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (please print)      Signature/thumbprint      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of witness (please print)      Signature/thumbprint      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of researcher Obtaining Consent      Signature      Date



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Nying lanywak tam

---

Cing lanywak tam

---

Ninodwe

---

Nying lacaden

---

Cing lacaden

---

Ninodwe

---

Nying lakwed lok

---

Cing lakwed lok

---

Ninodwe

## **Appendix 9: Observation Guide for Potters, users of pots, informed elders and cultural leaders overtly**

Several activities and items are to be observed in the field.

### **A. Community space**

1. Pots produced.
2. Ritual pots used in the community.
3. How ritual pots are used in rituals.
4. Availability of ritual pots in the family/ community.
5. Availability of family shrines.

### **B. Contemporary/public spaces**

1. Identification of the public space
2. Pots in the public space.
3. Types of pots in the public space.
4. Functions of pots in the public space.
5. The nature of materials used for the available pots in the public space.

## **Appendix 10: Focus Group Discussion Interview Guide for Producers of pots**

Good morning/afternoon,

My name is Adong Sanday Rhodest, a PhD candidate at Kyambogo University, conducting a study on **“Ritual Pottery and Its Repurposing in Contemporary Social Design Space in Acholi Sub-Region, Northern Uganda.”** You are selected as a potential respondent in the study and this therefore is to kindly request you to participate in this research. I want to assure you that this information is for academic purposes and helps to formulate policies that will improve household income and well-being. The information shared will remain confidential and specifically used for the above purpose. Photos and recordings will only be taken when permitted by you.

This focus group discussion will be homogeneous, and conducted among at least two families who are directly involved in pottery production within the same area. The guiding questions are unstructured, and flexible to enable free interactions. The conversations may change according to the discussions.

### **A. Which family rituals use pottery among the Acholi people in northern Uganda?**

1. How long have you been in pottery production?
2. What types of pots do you produce?
3. What views do you have on rituals?
4. Which rituals use pots?
5. Are rituals common in this community?
6. If yes, which rituals?
7. What are the community's perceptions towards rituals?
8. What are your views towards rituals?
9. How important is a ritual among the Acholi community?

### **B. Why are pots used in rituals of the Acholi community of Northern Uganda?**

10. How do users of ritual pots access the pots?
11. What views do you have towards the use of pots during the rituals?
12. Are there specific pots for specific rituals?
13. Which pots are not necessarily ritual but are used in family rituals?

14. What other functions do such pots serve besides rituals?
15. What meanings are embedded in the ritual pots?
16. How are pots used during the rituals?
17. Where do you source your clay materials for making pots?
18. How is clay used for making ritual pots?
19. Apart from pottery production what other activities do you do?

**C. How can pots used in family rituals be repurposed for contemporary social design space in Northern Uganda?**

20. What views do you have towards adopting the ritual pots in contemporary spaces?
21. What purpose would you suggest for the appropriated ritual pots?
22. Which contemporary spaces would you suggest for the appropriation of ritual pots?
23. What perceptions do you think the community may have towards the use of ritual pots in contemporary spaces?
24. How will the appropriation of ritual pots benefit the potters in the community?
25. What benefits can the contemporary community get from adopting the ritual pots?
26. What contributions have the potters made towards promoting pottery production?
27. What contributions have the Acholi elders and cultural leaders made towards the promotion of pottery production in the community?
28. What contributions have government, policymakers or non-governmental organisations made towards the promotion of pottery production and use?

**Appendix 11: Focus Group Discussion Interview Guide for Producers of pots  
(Leyo tam ki jo ot pa locwe agulu)**

Icoo maber/ iri maber?

Nyinga Adong Sanday Rhodest, latin kwan i rwom me PhD i Kyambogo University. Atye ka kwedo lok ma mako “**Agulu me kwer i Acholi me kumalo me Uganda ki ber ne i kabedo munyo.**” Itye i kin jo ma kiyero me mino ngec i kum tyen lok man, alegi ni ijol tam ma atye kwede me keti i kin jo ma obimiyo tam. Acike boti ni ngec ma ibimiyo bi lupe ki ngec me kwan man dak bene bikonyo cik mo keken ma gamente bi kati kwede me konyo kit me medo lim i cing jo ot ki ber bedo. Ngec ma ibimino bibedo i mung dok bene bibedo me tic i kwan man keken. Mako cal ki dwon bi time ka iyee ni kimak. Peny magi tye ma wiye twolo wek omi kare me nyamo lok. Nyamo lok man twero loke ma lupe ki kit ma lok tye ka wot kwede.

.....  
**A. Which family rituals are associated with pottery among the Acholi people in Northern Uganda?**

**(Kwer me tekwaro mene i Acholi ma tiyo ki agulu i kumalu me Uganda?)**

1. Icweyo agulu pi kare marom mene?
2. Kit agulu kwer ango ma iyubu?
3. Tam ango ma itye kwede i kum agulu kwer magi?
4. Kwer me tekwaro Acholi mene ma tiyo ki agulu?
5. Kwer me tekwaro pud tye i kin gangi?
6. Ka tye, mene?
7. Tam ango ma lutedero tye kwede i kum kwer me tekwaro?
8. Tam ango ma itye kwede i kum kwer me tekwaro?
9. Kwer me tekwaro pire tek nining bot jo me Acholi?

**B. Why are pots used in rituals of the Acholi community of Northern Uganda?**

**(Pingo kitiyo ki agulu kwer i yub me tekwaro?)**

10. Lutic ki agulu me tekwaro ginongo agulu man ki kwene?
11. Tam ango ma itye kwede i kit me tic ki agulu i kare me kwer me tekwaro?
12. Agulu me kwer, tye pi kwer acel keken kede?
13. Agulu ango ma pe kiyubu me kwer ento kitiyo kwede i yub me kwer me tekwaro?

14. Ngo mukene ma kitiyo kwede ki agulu kwer magi mapat ki kwer me tekwaro?
15. Tyen lok ango ma mako tic ki agulu kwer?
16. Gitiyo ki agulu magi nining i kare me kwer me tekwaro?
17. Inongo lobo agulu ki kwene?
18. Lobo ma ki yubu ki agulu me kwer kiyu nining?
19. Mapat ki cweyo agulu, ngo mukene ma itimo?

**C. How can pots used in family rituals be repurposed for contemporary social design space in Northern Uganda?**

**(Yoo ango ma ki romo tic ki agulu jok me timo tic ma pat ki tic me jok I kabedo ma ormu wan i kumalo me Uganda?)**

20. Tam ango ma itye kwede i kit me tic ki agulu kwer i kabedo munyo ni?
21. Tam ango ma iromo miyo ma lube ki kit me tic ki angulu magi me tekwaro i kabedo munyo ni?
22. Kabedo ango i kin piny munyo ma itamo ni agulu kwer magi kiromo tic kwedgi i iye?
23. Tam ango ma itamo ni jo me kingang twero bedo kwede i kit me tic ki agulu kwer i kabedo munyo ni?
24. Kelo agulu kwer i kabedo munyo bedo maber nining bot luyub agulu?
25. Adwogi maber ango ma jo me kum kare romo nongo i kum agulu magi ka ki cako tic kwedgi i kabedo munyo?
26. Ngo maber ma luyub agulu gutimo me neno ni cweyo agulu omede anyim?
27. Ngo maber ma ludito kaka ki lutela tekwaro gutimo me neno ni cweyo agulu omede i kin gangi?
28. Ngo ma gamente, luco/lumok cik, ki dul ma pe jenge i kum gamente gutimo me neno ni cweyo agulu ki tic kwede omete anyim?

**Appendix 12: In-depth Interview Guide for Key Informants (The Elders and Cultural Leaders)**

Good morning/ afternoon,

My name is Adong Sanday Rhodest, a PhD candidate at Kyambogo University, conducting a study on **“Ritual Pottery and Its Repurposing in Contemporary Social Design Space in Acholi Sub-Region, Northern Uganda.”** You are selected as a potential respondent in the study and this therefore is to kindly request you to participate in this research. I want to assure you that this information is for academic purposes and helps to formulate policies that will improve household income and well-being. The information shared will remain confidential and specifically used for the above purpose. Photos and recordings will only be taken when permitted by you.

**Background Information**

1. May I write your name for personal remembrance?

.....

2. Gender of informant

Male

Female

3. How old are you?

.....

4. Which faith do you subscribe to?

.....

They will be guided by the following questions;

**A. Which family rituals use pottery among the Acholi people in northern Uganda?**

1. Which rituals does the Acholi community conduct?

2. Which rituals are conducted in your family?

3. What kind of pots are used in each ritual?

4. Who are the expected participants in family rituals?

5. What is the benefit of these rituals that use pots?

6. How are Acholi rituals performed?

7. Why are the rituals performed?

8. Are rituals performed openly or secretly?
9. If they are performed secretly, why?

**B. Why are pots used in rituals of the Acholi community of Northern Uganda?**

10. What views do you have towards the use of pots during the rituals?
11. Are there specific pots for a particular ritual?
12. Which pots are not necessarily ritual pots but are used in family rituals?
13. What other functions do such pots serve besides rituals?
14. How are the pots used during ritual?
15. What meanings are embedded in the ritual pots?
16. How are the pots kept after using them in the rituals?
17. What taboos are associated with the use of the ritual pots?

**C. How can pots used in family rituals be repurposed for contemporary social design space in Northern Uganda?**

18. What view do you have towards adopting the ritual pots in contemporary spaces?
19. What purpose would you suggest for the appropriated ritual pots?
20. Which contemporary spaces would you suggest for appropriating ritual pots?
21. What perceptions do you think society will have towards the use of ritual pots in contemporary spaces?
22. What benefits can the rural community get from appropriating ritual pots in contemporary spaces and beyond?
23. What benefits can the contemporary community and beyond get from adopting the ritual pots?
24. What contributions have the Acholi elders and cultural leaders made towards the promotion of pottery production in the community?
25. What contributions have government, policymakers or non-governmental organisations made towards the promotion of pottery production and use?

**Appendix 13: In-depth Interview Guide for Key Informants (Kit me nongo ngec ma tut ki bot jo ma tye ki ngec)**

Nyinga Adong Sanday Rhodest, latin kwan me rwom me PhD I Kyambogo University. Atye ka kwedo lok ma mako “**Agulu me kwere i Acholi me kumalo me Uganda ki ber ne i kabedo munyo.**” Itye i kin jo ma kiyero me miyo ngec i kum tyen lok man, alegi ni ijol tam ma atye kwede me keti i kin jo ma obimiyo tam. Acike boti ni ngec ma ibimiyo bi lupe ki ngec me kwan man dok bene bikonyo cik mo keken ma gamente bi kati kwede me konyo kit me meto lim i cing jo ot ki ber bedo. Ngec ma ibimino bibedo i mung dak bene bibedo me tic i kwan man keken. Mako cal ki dwon bi time ka iyee ni kimak.

**Background Information (Lok ma mako kum in)**

1. Aromo coyo nyingi me nipo?  
.....
2. Itye lacoo onyo dako

Lacoo

Dako

3. Mwaka ni adi?  
.....

4. Niyee ni ocung i kum dini mene?  
.....

Lapeny magi bi nyutu kit ma omyero owot kwede;

**A. Which family rituals use pottery among the Acholi people in Northern Uganda? (Kwer me tekwaro mene i Acholi ma tiyo ki agulu i kumalu me Uganda?)**

1. Kwer me tekwaro mene ma Acholi kwero i kin gang?
2. Kwer me tekwaro mene ma ki kwero i gang wu?
3. Kit wit agulu mene ma gitiyo kwedi i kwer me tekwaro?
4. Jo mene ma mite ni gubed i yub me kwer i gang?
5. Ber pa kwer me tekwaro ma tiyo ki agulu tye kwene?
6. Kwer me tekwaro ki yubu nining?
7. Pi ngo ki yubu kwer me tekwaro magi?

8. Kwer me te kwaro ni ki yubu kamaleng onyo i mung?
9. Ka kiyubu i mung, pingo?
10. Ngo ma bi time ka ludito guweko yubu yub me tekwaro?

**B. Why are pots used in rituals of the Acholi community of Northern Uganda?**

**(Pingo kitiyo ki agulu kwer i yub me tekwaro?)**

11. Tam ango ma itye kwede i kit me tic ki agulu kwer i kare me kwer kwaro?
12. Agulu me kwer, tye pi kwer acel keken kede?
13. Agulu ango ma pe kiyubu me kwer ento kitiyo kwede i yub me kwer me tekwaro?
14. Tic ango mukene ma gitiyo kwede ki agulu kwer ma pat ki kwer me tekwaro?
15. Agulu magi gitiyo kwedgi nining i kare me kwer?
16. Tyen lok ango ma ki nongo ki i agulu me kwer?
17. Agulu kwer magi kigwoko gi nining ka yub me kwer otum?
18. Kit cik me tekwaro ango ma mako kit me tic ki agulu kwer?

**C. How can pots used in family rituals be repurposed for contemporary social design space in Northern Uganda?**

**(Yoo ango ma ki romo tic ki agulu jok me timo tic ma pat ki tic me jok I kabedo ma ormu wan i kumalo me Uganda?)**

19. Tam ango ma itye kwede me tic ki agulu kwer i kabedo me kum kare ni?
20. Tic ango ma itamo ni agulu kwer magi romo timo ne i kabedo me kum kare in?
21. Kabedo ango i kum kare ni ma kiromo tic ki agulu magi?
22. Tam ango ma lukin gang tye kwede i kit me tic ki agulu kwer i kado ma kum kare ni?
23. Ngo maber ma lukin gang nongo ka agulu kwer kikelo i kin lwak me kum kare ni?
26. Ngo maber ma lutela ki ludito Acholi gutimo i kit me medo yupu agulu I kinging?
27. Ngo maber ma gamente, luco cik, ki dul ma pe jenge i kum gamente gutimo me neno ni cweyo agulu ki tic kwede omete anyim?

## **Appendix 14: Interview Guide for Pot Users**

Good morning/afternoon,

My name is Adong Sanday Rhodest, a PhD candidate at Kyambogo University conducting a study on **“Ritual Pottery and Its Repurposing in Contemporary Social Design Space in Acholi Sub-Region, Northern Uganda.”** You are selected as a potential respondent in the study and this therefore is to kindly request you to participate in this research. I want to assure you that this information is for academic purposes and helps to formulate policies that will improve household income and well-being. The information shared will remain confidential and specifically used for the above purpose. Photos and recordings will only be taken when permitted by you.

They will be guided by the following questions;

### **A. Which family rituals use pottery among the Acholi people in northern Uganda?**

1. What kind of Acholi rituals have you heard of?
2. Have you in any way witnessed a ritual?
3. What was the ritual about?
4. Have you participated in any ritual in your community?
5. Which kind of ritual pots do you know that are used during rituals?
6. Which rituals use the pots you have mentioned above?

### **B. Why are pots used in rituals of the Acholi community of Northern Uganda?**

7. Which pots are available in your spaces?
8. How do people get pots for use in rituals?
9. Why are pots used in rituals?
10. How are pots used during the rituals?
11. What meanings are behind the use of the ritual pots?
12. How are pots kept when not in use?
13. What perceptions does the community have towards using pots during the rituals?
14. What perceptions do you have towards using pots during the rituals?
15. Are ritual pots used openly or privately?
16. If used privately, why?
17. What taboos are associated with using ritual pots?

**C. How can pots used in family rituals be repurposed for contemporary social design space in Northern Uganda?**

18. What views do you have towards repurposing ritual pots in contemporary spaces?
19. Which contemporary spaces would you suggest for appropriating ritual pots?
20. How can Acholi ritual pots be appropriated in the contemporary space?
21. What benefits can the rural community get from appropriating ritual pots?
22. What benefits can the contemporary community get from adopting ritual pots?
23. What perception do you think people in public spaces may have towards the use of ritual pots in contemporary spaces?
24. What contributions have the Acholi community, elders and cultural leaders made towards the promotion of pottery production and use in the community?
25. What contribution has the government made towards the promotion and use of pottery?

**Appendix 15: Interview Guide for Users of Pots (Iapeny bot jo ma tiyo ki agulu  
I kin paco ki kabedo munyo)**

Icoo maber/ iri maber?

Nyinga Adong Sanday Rhodest, latin kwan i rwom me PhD I Kyambogo University. Atye ka kwedo lok ma mako “Agulu me kwer i Acholi me kumalo me Uganda ki ber ne i kabedo munyo”. Itye i kin jo ma kiyero me mino ngec i kum tyen lok man, alegi ni ijol tam ma atye kwede me keti i kin jo ma obimiyo tam. Acike boti ni ngec ma ibimiyo bi lupe ki ngec me kwan man dak bene bikonyo cik mo keken ma gamente bi kati kwede me konyo kit me meto lim i cing jo ot ki ber bedo. Ngec ma ibimino bibedo i mung dak bene bibedo me tic i kwan man keken. Mako cal ki dwon bi time ka iyee ni kimak.

**A. Which family rituals use pottery among the Acholi people in northern Uganda?**

**(Kwer me tekwaro mene i Acholi ma tiyo ki agulu i kumalu me Uganda?)**

1. Kwer me tekwaro Acholi mene ma itemo winyo ne?
2. Ineno kwer me tekwaro mo keken dong?
3. Kwer man/magi obedo kwer ango?
4. I bedo i kwer metekwaro mo keken me kingang?
5. Kit agulu kwer ango ma ingeyo ma kitiyo kwede i kwer me tekwaro?
6. Kwer ango ma tiyo ki agulu ma iwaco malo ni?

**B. Why are pots used in rituals of the Acholi community of Northern Uganda?**

**(Pingo gitiyo ki agulu kwer i yub me tekwaro?)**

7. Kit agulu ango ma tye i kin gang kany?
8. Agulu magi kinongogi nining ka kimito tic kwede i kwer me twkwaro?
9. Pingo kitiyo ki agulu i kare me kwer kwaro?
10. Agulu magi kitiyo kwedgi nining ikare me kwer magi?
11. Tyen lok ango ma aa ki i kit me tic ki agulu kwer?
12. Agulu magi ki gwoko gi nining ka pe kitye ka tic kwedgi?
13. Tam ango ma lusingang tye kwede i kit me tic ki agulu i kare me kwer me tekwaro?
14. Tam ango ma in itye kwede i kit me tic ki agulu ikare me kwer kwaro?

15. Agulu kwer kitiyo kwede kamaleng onyo i mung?
  16. Ka kitiyo kwede i mung, pingo?
  17. Cik Acholi/ lageng mene ma tye malupe ki kit me tic ki agulu kwer?
- C. How can pots used in family rituals be repurposed for contemporary social design space in Northern Uganda?  
(Yoo ango ma ki romo tic ki agulu jok me timo tic ma pat ki tic me jok I kabedo ma ormu wan i kumalo me Uganda?)**
18. Tam ango ma itye kwede i kit me tic ki agulu kwer i kabedo munyo?
  19. Kabedo mene me kum kare ma itamo ni agulu kwer kiromo tic kwedi iye?
  20. Agulu kwer pa Acholi kiromo tic kwedgi nining i kare ni?
  21. Ngo maber ma lukin gang twero nongo ne ka kicako tic ki agulu kwer i kabedo munyo?
  22. Ngo maber ma jo me kum kare ni romo nongo i kit me tic ki agulu kwer i kabedo gi?
  23. Tam ango ma itamoni jomakumkare romo bedo kwede i kit me tic ki agulu kwer i kabedo me kum kare ni?
  24. Ngo maber ma lukin gang, ludito ki lutela me tekwaro Acholi gutimo i lok me neno ni cweyo agulu ki tic kwede omede i kin paco?
  25. Ngo maber ma gamente me Uganda otimo i kit me neno ni cweyo agulu ki tic kwede omede?

## Appendix 16: Work plan

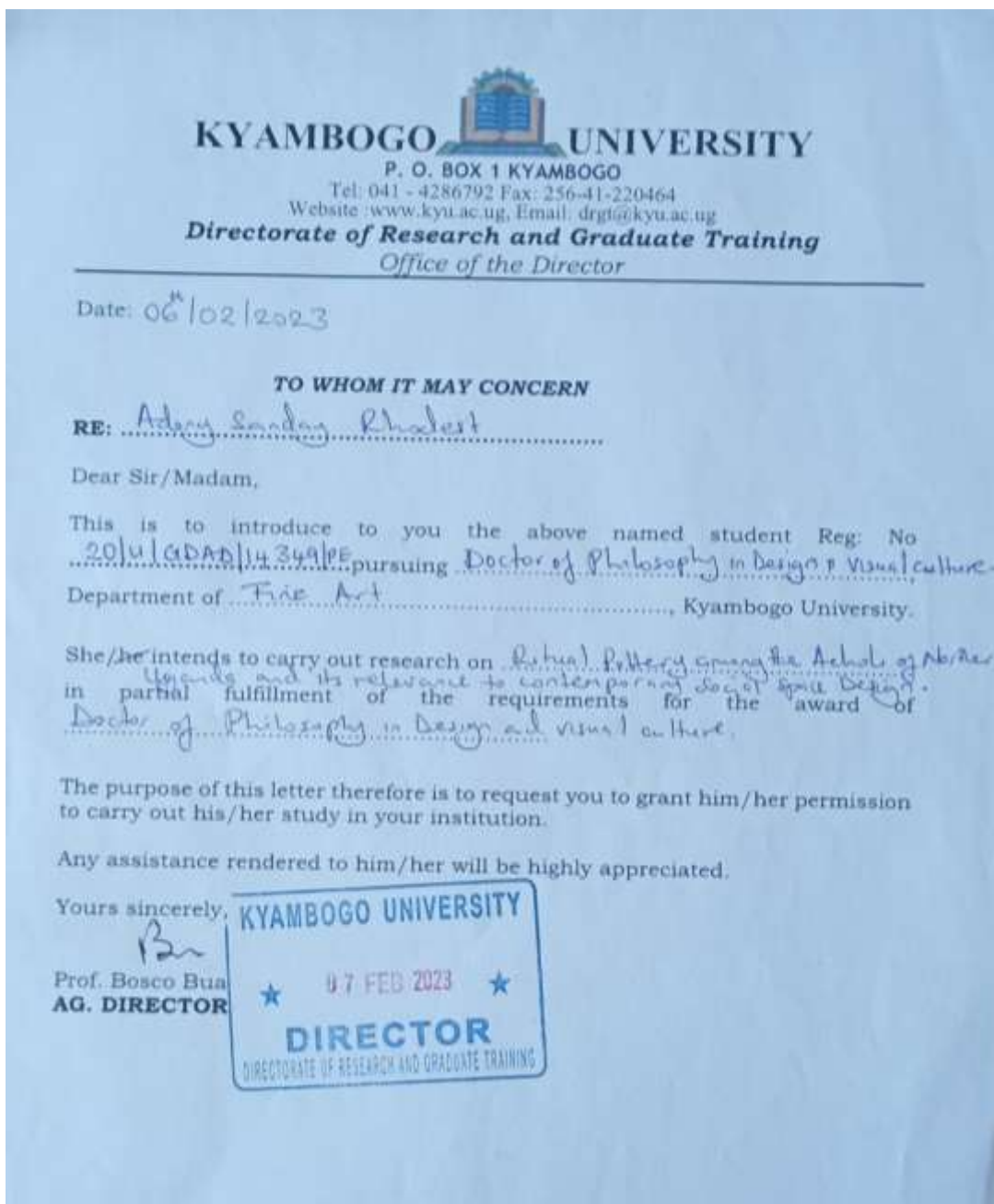
Ph.D. WORK PLAN FOR THREE YEARS FROM MAY 2021 TO AUGUST 2025													
ACTIVITY	MAY 2021 TO MAY 2022												
	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
1. Orientation into PhD program.													
2. Consultations; the library, lecturers and other resourceful people.													
3. Assignments; Learning areas one and two (Reflective essay and Case study).													
4. On-line lectures and discussions													
5. Submitting assignments, receiving feedback and making corrections.													
6. Progress report													
7. Assignments; Learning areas three and four; Ethics paper and Nature of Design and Visual													
8. Submitting assignments, receiving feedback and making corrections.													
9. Progress presentation													
10. Research Proposal writing													
11. Mock presentations of Research proposal													
12. Progress report													
ACTIVITY	JUNE 2022 TO JUNE 2023												
	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
13. Sourcing for literature and reading widely													
14. Proposal defence													
15. Obtaining clearance from the Research Ethics Committee and drafting articles													
16. Consulting key stakeholders, and visiting the study areas.													
17. Progress report													
ACTIVITY	JULY 2023 TO JULY 2024												
	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July
18. Writing and presenting articles.													
19. Data collection													
20. Progress Report													
21. Data Analysis and Reporting													
ACTIVITY	AUGUST 2024 TO AUGUST 2025												
	Agu	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
22. Editing and sharing the research findings with the supervisors													
23. Intention to submit, and filling progress report													
24. Submitting the research dissertation for examination													
25. Mock defence													
26. Public defence													
27. Correcting final dissertaional submission.													
28. Submitting the final dissertation in preparation for graduation													

### Appendix 17: Research Budget for Field Study

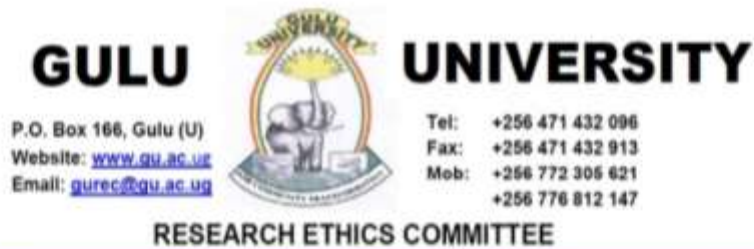
SN	CATEGORY	ITEM	DETAIL	AMOUNT
1.	Personnel	A Research Assistant	15,000 Per day for 20 days	300,000
2.	Research Board	Gulu University Research Review Ethics Committee (GUREC)	The research review committee (REC) goes through the research proposal confirms if it is in line with the guiding principle of the committee and issues clearance for the research to be carried out.	1,300,000
		Approval from Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST)	They confirm if one has the REC certificate and issue a letter for the research to be carried out.	500,000
3.	Movement while in the field	Using a <i>boda boda</i>	Transport from one sub-county to another and within the community.	500,000
4.	Potters	Community practicum	Materials and Facilitation for six potters and six helpers to produce and fire the pots.	1,000,000
			Transporting the pots for exhibition.	500,000
5.	Participants	Refreshments	Each participant receives refreshments during interactions slated at a cost of 5,000x 30=150,000  Unforeseen costs.100,000	300,000
6.	Transport refund	To participants, especially potters who may be requested to gather in a specific location for production purposes.	Each potter receives 7,000x 12= 84,000 for transport.  For two days 84,000x 2=168,000	168,000
7.		Camera	1 Pc (hire)	800,000

	Photography and Recorder	Audio recorder	1 Pc	450,000
8.	Phone services	Router for data	1Pc	200,000
		Air time	Two years	300,000
9.	Publications	For at least three articles	As a requirement, at least three publishable articles should be made, estimated at 700,000/= each.	2,100,000
10	Academic travels	Within and outside Uganda	Conferences and sharing	2,500,000
11	Compiling the findings	After data analysis, the report will be Printed and bounded	Printing and binding	200,000
12	Dissemination workshop	After the research, I intend to organize a dissemination workshop for the practical establishment of ritual pots.	Sharing the research knowledge with stakeholders.	800,000
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>11,918,000</b>

**Appendix 18: Kyambogo University field research introductory letter**



## Appendix 19: GUREC Letter of approval to carry out research



21/06/2023

To: Sanday Adong

+256 782337882

**Type:** Initial Review

**Re: GUREC-2023-567: RITUAL POTTERY AMONG THE ACHOLI OF NORTHERN UGANDA AND IT'S RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SPACE DESIGN**

I am pleased to inform you that at the **99th** convened meeting on **04/05/2023**, the Gulu University REC meeting voted to approve the above referenced application.

Approval of the research is for the period of **21/06/2023** to **21/06/2024**.

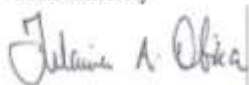
As Principal Investigator of the research, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and addenda to the protocol or the consent form must be submitted to the REC for re-review and approval **prior** to the activation of the changes.
3. Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or any new information which could change the risk benefit: ratio must be submitted to the REC.
4. Only approved consent forms are to be used in the enrollment of participants. All consent forms signed by participants and/or witnesses should be retained on file. The REC may conduct audits of all study records, and consent documentation may be part of such audits.
5. Continuing review application must be submitted to the REC **eight weeks** prior to the expiration date of **21/06/2024** in order to continue the study beyond the approved period. Failure to submit a continuing review application in a timely fashion may result in suspension or termination of the study.
6. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence with the REC of record.
7. You are required to register the research protocol with the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) for final clearance to undertake the study in Uganda.

The following is the list of all documents approved in this application by Gulu University REC:

No.	Document Title	Language	Version Number	Version Date
1	Covid-19 risk management plan	English	2.0	2023-06-07
2	Informed Consent forms	Acholi	2.0	2023-06-07
3	Informed Consent forms	English	2.0	2023-06-07
4	Informed Consent forms	Acholi	2.0	2023-06-07
5	Informed Consent forms	English	2.0	2023-06-07
6	Informed Consent forms	Acholi	2.0	2023-06-07
7	Informed Consent forms	English	2.0	2023-06-07
8	Informed Consent forms	Acholi	2.0	2023-06-07
9	Informed Consent forms	English	2.0	2023-06-07
10	Data collection tools	English	2.0	2023-06-07
11	Data collection tools	Acholi	2.0	2023-06-07
12	Data collection tools	English	2.0	2023-06-07
13	Data collection tools	Acholi	2.0	2023-06-07
14	Data collection tools	English	2.0	2023-06-07
15	Data collection tools	Acholi	2.0	2023-06-07
16	Data collection tools	English	2.0	2023-06-07
17	Protocol	English	2.0	2023-06-07

Yours Sincerely



Julaina A. Obika (PhD)  
For: Gulu University REC

## Appendix 20: UNCST Letter of approval to carry out research



### Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

*(Established by Act of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda)*

**Our Ref: SS1639ES**

**24 July 2023**

Sanday Adong  
Kyambogo University  
Kampala

**Re: Research Approval: Ritual Pottery among the Acholi of Northern Uganda and its Relevance to Contemporary Social Space Design**

I am pleased to inform you that on **24/07/2023**, the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) approved the above referenced research project. The Approval of the research project is for the period of **24/07/2023** to **24/07/2026**.

Your research registration number with the UNCST is **SS1639ES**. Please, cite this number in all your future correspondences with UNCST in respect of the above research project. As the Principal Investigator of the research project, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. Keeping all co-investigators informed of the status of the research.
2. Submitting all changes, amendments, and addenda to the research protocol or the consent form (where applicable) to the designated Research Ethics Committee (REC) or Lead Agency for re-review and approval **prior** to the activation of the changes. UNCST must be notified of the approved changes within five working days.
3. For clinical trials, all serious adverse events must be reported promptly to the designated local REC for review with copies to the National Drug Authority and a notification to the UNCST.
4. Unanticipated problems involving risks to research participants or other must be reported promptly to the UNCST. New information that becomes available which could change the risk/benefit ratio must be submitted promptly for UNCST notification after review by the REC.
5. Only approved study procedures are to be implemented. The UNCST may conduct impromptu audits of all study records.
6. An annual progress report and approval letter of continuation from the REC must be submitted electronically to UNCST. Failure to do so may result in termination of the research project.

Please note that this approval includes all study related tools submitted as part of the application as shown below:

No.	Document Title	Language	Version Number	Version Date
	Project Proposal	English		
1	Approval Letter	English		
1	consent form for elder and cultural leaders	Acholi	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
2	consent form for FGD for producers of pots	English	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
3	consent form for FGD for producers of pots	Acholi	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
4	consent interview form for pot users	English	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
5	consent interview form for pot users	Acholi	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
6	Research tools for potters	English	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
7	Research tools for potters	Acholi	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
8	consent for photography and audio recording	English	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
9	consent for photography and audio recording	Acholi	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
10	COVID-19 Risk management	English	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
11	observation guide	English	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
12	Research tools for key informants	English	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
13	Research tools for key informants	Acholi	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
14	Research tools for pot users	English	Version 2.0	07 June 2023
15	Research tools for pot users	Acholi	Version 2.0	07 June 2023

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Christopher Ddamulira

For: Executive Secretary

**UGANDA NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

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**LOCATION/CORRESPONDENCE**

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KAMPALA, UGANDA*

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FAX: (256) 414-234579  
EMAIL: [info@uncst.go.ug](mailto:info@uncst.go.ug)  
WEBSITE: <http://www.uncst.go.ug>**

## Appendix 21: Letter of introduction from Ker Kwaro Acholi

