## Indigenous Cultural Practices to Build Peace Following Violent Conflict: A Literature Review

Mainlehwon Ebenezer Vonhm, PhD
*Center for Peace Education Inc.*
*Email: Mevonhm@peaceedu.org*

### Abstract

In the aftermath of violent conflict, Indigenous cultural practices have played a significant role in restoring peaceful relations among former adversaries. Processes such as *Mato Oput* in Uganda, *Gacaca* in Rwanda, and *Kukeleeku ka tonu* in Liberia exemplify community-based approaches to reconciliation and social healing in post-conflict environments. Today, scholarly research has begun investigating and exploring the relevance and applicability of Indigenous cultural practices to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts. These practices have proven effective in addressing conflict and restoring social cohesion within Indigenous, conflict-affected communities. However, a comprehensive synthesis of the scholarly work on this subject is absent. This neglect is twofold: while there is growing recognition of ritual and cultural practices in peace studies more broadly, Indigenous practices remain underrepresented because existing literature often sidelines Indigenous voices and rarely grounds analysis in empirical work led by or with Indigenous communities. This neglect reflects broader assumptions that Indigenous knowledge is unscientific, lacking empirical validity, and insufficient for addressing structural drivers of conflict such as political exclusion or economic inequality. Consequently, Indigenous cultural practices remain underrepresented in conflict resolution and peacebuilding literature. This article seeks to address that disrepair by providing a systematic review of English-language scholarly literature on Indigenous cultural practices in post-conflict peacebuilding. It offers a thematic synthesis of key findings, outlines prevailing scholarly perspectives, highlights research gaps, and identifies directions for future research.

### Indigenization Statement

As an Indigenous author from the Mano and Bassa peoples of Liberia, I approach this review with integrity, respect, and cultural humility. This literature review honors Indigenous contributions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. I remain accountable to Indigenous communities and welcome feedback to ensure respectful, ethical scholarship.

## Introduction

In the aftermath of violent conflict, Indigenous cultural practices often play a critical role in resolving disputes and rebuilding relationships among former adversaries. Despite their significance, there is a notable lack of comprehensive literature reviews of scholarly works that examine peacebuilding initiatives that employ Indigenous cultural practices to end violence and build peace. One likely explanation is the persistent perception that such practices are unscientific or lack empirical validity (Benyera, 2019; Nicholson, 2021; Ugorji, 2019). Another reason is that even when cultural practices are discussed, Indigenous practices are often collapsed into broader categories of *local* practices, obscuring their distinctiveness, and limiting attention to Indigenous-led voices. Consequently, they are often undervalued, under-researched, and under-utilized in the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

This systematic review has four main objectives. First, to compile, synthesize, and analyze English-language scholarly literature on Indigenous cultural practices employed in post-conflict Indigenous settings to end violence and build peace, regardless of authorship. Second, to map the current scope of research on their contributions to peacebuilding. Third, to identify and organize key categories and themes emerging from the literature. Finally, to highlight gaps and propose directions for future research.

The article is structured as follows: A conceptual framework for understanding Indigenous cultural practices in peacebuilding is provided. Then, the methodology, including search strategies and inclusion/exclusion criteria, is outlined, followed by a categorization of findings from the literature. Next, themes emerging from these categories are analyzed, and these results are discussed in terms of their implications and research gaps. Lastly, I conclude with recommendations for future studies.

**Conceptualizing Indigenous Cultural Practices To Build Peace**

The term **'**Indigenous' refers to people, cultures, and institutions rooted in a specific geographical area that experienced colonization (Benyera, 2019). Indigenous people are those who inhabited a region prior to colonization and remained during and after colonial rule. Embedded within Indigenous cultural practices are various connotations including culture, tradition, and custom, which are often used interchangeably in peacebuilding literature but hold distinct meanings that are worth clarifying. Culture broadly refers to the beliefs, norms, and behaviors shared by any group of people, that provide meaning and guide their thoughts and behaviors (Avruch, 1998). Culture embodies the authenticity and distinct identity of a community and helps members make sense of their collective existence (Augsburger, 1992). Tradition refers to enduring norms, values, and belief systems passed down through generations. They represent long-established practices, or what MacGinty (2011) calls mechanisms with a "lengthy historical pedigree" (p. 49). Custom refers to a practice, process, or way of life common to a specific place or group (Benyera, 2019). Indigenous communities often draw on such shared, grassroots practices to resolve disputes and foster peace.

This article employs the term *Indigenous cultural practices* to refer to those used as peacebuilding methods and processes that Indigenous people draw upon to resolve conflict and restore relationships disrupted by violence. While local practices may be relevant or contribute to peacebuilding, the focus here is specifically on Indigenous practices because they carry histories of colonial marginalization and distinct epistemological frameworks. These practices are not externally imposed but arise organically from within the community. Unlike local practices that may emerge in hybrid or modern contexts, Indigenous cultural practices are rooted in pre-colonial traditions and often face systematic exclusion from dominant academic and policy

discourses. Indigenous cultural practices are imbued with symbolic meaning and are frequently expressed through rituals and the use of culturally significant symbols, as discussed below.

### *Indigenous Rituals and Symbols in Peacebuilding*

Indigenous cultural rituals are built on and convey shared emotions, meanings, and intentions. According to Schirch (2005), cultural rituals can play a vital role in post-conflict reconciliation and are distinct from everyday activities. They are symbolic acts that express communal emotions and intentions without relying on direct verbal communication (Nurieli, 2019). Acts, such as performances or feasts, can convey meaning understood by members of the community, often representing shared grief or reconciliation. Cultural rituals are typically performed in specific, meaningful spaces—often neutral, sacred, or otherwise designated environments (Kochomay & Akotir, 2019). These spaces provide a sense of safety and common identity, which is essential for rebuilding relationships after conflict (Roth, 2019).

Also, Indigenous cultural rituals are not one-time events, but ongoing, iterative processes that unfold over time. Their effectiveness lies in their capacity to unfold over time, allowing for gradual emotional and relational transformation (Roth, 2019). As Travis and Saa (2021) note, "Traditional issues go by process" (p.109), emphasizing the importance of duration and continuity in traditional forms of conflict resolution. Moreover, Indigenous cultural rituals are restorative of bonds that are left shattered in the wake of division and violence (Schirch, 2005). Cultural rituals provide a structured framework for addressing the emotional and relational dimensions of conflict, restoring bonds shattered by violence.

Similarly, Indigenous cultural symbols are powerful tools in post-conflict peacebuilding. While symbolic expression is common in all societies (e.g., a gavel in court signifies authority), cultural symbols used in peacebuilding are deliberate and carry deep meaning. As Nicholson

(2021) argues, symbols can serve as transformative mechanisms by reshaping hostile

perceptions, affirming the cessation of violence, and signaling the importance of peace. They

may be tangible (e.g., smoke, objects) or intangible (e.g., smells, tastes, Schirch, 2005).

Also, Indigenous cultural symbols can be emblematic of peace and transcendent

intervention. For example, Travis and Saa (2021) recount an event during the Liberian Civil War

in which a rebel commander, General Leopard, encountered four elephants while en route to the

battlefield. Interpreting this as a divine sign of peace, he and his 36,000 troops laid down their

weapons. In Liberian culture, elephants are widely recognized as harbingers of peace. Their

symbolic appearance can signify the end of violence, even though they do not communicate

verbally. Furthermore, Indigenous cultural symbols can represent and reinforce values such as

unity, community, and interdependence.

Indigenous cultural symbols can embody and enact binding authority, convey respect and

honor. The presence of traditional leaders at a peace settlement often symbolizes the seriousness

of the occasion and a collective desire for resolution (Nurieli, 2019). The elders' presence

conveys respect, honor, and the intent to achieve a peaceful outcome (Onwuka, 2009). Moreover,

Indigenous cultural symbols can serve as emblems of reconciliation. For instance, in Liberia, the

kola nut is a powerful symbol of unity. During dispute resolutions, it is shared and consumed by

participants, representing a return to communal harmony (Vonhm Benda, 2004). The symbolism

lies not in the act of eating, but in the kola nut's structure—two seeds joined in one fruit—

reflecting interconnectedness and shared origin. Consuming it signifies belonging to the same

family or community. In sum, Indigenous cultural practices as illustrated through rituals and

symbols contribute to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Together, these culturally rooted

practices reinforce values of unity and belonging, contributing to relational and communal transformation in post-conflict contexts.

## Methodology

This review adopted the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to ensure a systematic, transparent, and reproducible approach to literature selection and analysis (Page et al., 2021). PRISMA was selected due to its wide acceptance in evidence synthesis and its ability to enhance reporting clarity (Moher et al., 2010). The review process included database searching, screening, and eligibility assessment in line with PRISMA standards (Moher et al., 2010). Studies were selected based not on the authors' origins but on five inclusion criteria: (a) conducted in a post-conflict setting between the end of the Cold War 1991 and 2023, a period marked by a shift from wars between nations to war within states; (b) a primary focus on Indigenous cultural practices, as processes aimed at reconciliation, social healing, and community rebuilding in post-conflict contexts; (c) involvement of local participants such elders, survivors, adversaries, victims, and/or former victimizers; (d) presentation of primary data; and (e) an emphasis on peacebuilding processes rather than solely on peacekeeping, peacemaking, or conflict resolution.

Search terms were developed to capture Indigenous cultural, customary, and traditional practices for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in post-conflict and post–civil war contexts. Databases included: (1) Peace Research Abstracts, (2) Academic Search Complete, (3) JSTOR, (4) ProQuest Research Library, (5) Social Science Database, (6) Anthropology Plus, and (7) Google Scholar. The search strategy combined key terms such as "Indigenous practice," "cultural practice," "traditional practice," and "customary practice" with secondary terms including "post-conflict," "peacebuilding," "peacemaking," and "conflict resolution".

The initial search yielded approximately 1,400 results. Following PRISMA guidelines, duplicates were removed, titles were screened using keywords related to Indigenous cultural practices, and full-text articles were examined for substantive links to post-conflict contexts and peacebuilding. Additional sources, including dissertations, books, and articles, were reviewed using the same criteria. Studies were excluded if they were purely theoretical or secondary in nature, because this review specifically focuses on empirical research that directly involves Indigenous participants and their practical experiences with conflict resolution and peacebuilding. For instance, Irani and Funk (2001) explored Arab-Islamic reconciliation rituals conceptually but did not offer direct insights from field research into the lived experiences and practices of Indigenous communities, which is the core of this review. The aim was to prioritize field-based research where Indigenous voices and community-led interventions are the primary data sources, ensuring that the findings reflect authentic, community-driven approaches to peacebuilding. The absence of field data or participant voices led to their exclusion.

This review includes twelve qualitative studies (see Appendix A), the majority of which focus on the African continent. According to Pettersson (2020) from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Africa has experienced the highest number of civil and internal conflicts since the end of the Cold War, making it disproportionately affected by such violence. The geographic focus reflects this reality and does not imply the intentional omission of Indigenous practices in other regions, including those in Western societies such as Australia, Canada, or the United States.

Analysis was guided by Attride-Stirling's (2001) thematic network framework, which organizes findings into codes, categories, and themes. While systematic review standards offer rigor, they also risk sidelining Indigenous cultural practices that are transmitted orally, ritually, or communally. To address this limitation, future systematic reviews in conflict and peace

studies should adopt more inclusive, pluralistic approaches—intentionally incorporating gray literature such as reports authored by Indigenous organizations, oral testimonies, and practitioner accounts. Accordingly, the findings of this review should be seen as partial, shaped by both the availability of sources and the epistemological constraints of the review process.

## Results

### Indigenous Cultural Practices in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

The literature on cultural approaches to peacebuilding demonstrates that Indigenous communities possess valuable knowledge, skills, and practices that facilitate social recovery after violent conflict (Lederach, 1995; Nicholson, 2021). The findings from this review highlight three central categories through which Indigenous communities actively engage in post-conflict peacebuilding: (a) appeasing the spirits of the dead, (b) restoring fractured relationships, and (c) reintegrating former combatants.

Appeasing the spirits of those who died violently or without proper burial rites is a central mechanism of reconciliation in many Indigenous cultures, as spiritual unrest is believed to fuel ongoing division and insecurity. In many non-Western belief systems, death is not an end but a transition to the realm of the "living-dead" (Murambadoro & Matshaka, 2019, p. 134). Proper burial rites are vital for ensuring peace between the living and deceased. Conflict often disrupts these rites, and the absence of appropriate ceremonies is believed to provoke spiritual unrest, leading to community tensions and social fragmentation (Honwana, 1997). To restore communal harmony, rituals are often performed to appease the spirits of those who died without proper rites (Travis & Saa, 2021). For instance, following the *Gukurahundi* genocide in Zimbabwe, Murambadoro and Matshaka (2019) examined how communities in the *Bubi* and

*Nkayi* districts addressed post-conflict divisions. They found that the absence of traditional burial rites during the genocide contributed to mistrust and disconnection among community members. In response, residents performed the *Chenura* ritual, which included: (a) slaughtering animals and smearing a mixture of their blood and herbs at sites of death; (b) sharing communal meals; (c) singing, dancing, and (d) drinking traditional beer (Murambadoro & Matshaka, 2019, p. 135). These acts were intended not only to "appease the spirits of the deceased", but also to foster renewed connections, rebuild trust, and confer dignity upon the dead (ibid, p. 136). Similarly, Honwana (1997) studied post-conflict rituals in Mozambique following the 1992 peace agreement between the government and RENAMO. Upon returning to villages such as *Munguine* and *Manhica*, residents reported disturbances believed to be caused by unsettled spirits—manifesting as illness, fear, and social discord. One specific case involved the spirit of a RENAMO commander, referred to as "*Mpfhukwa*", who was said to haunt passers-by due to an improper burial (Honwana, 1997, p. 299). As a solution, the community conducted a ritual known as *ku femba*, led by a *Tinyanga* (spiritual medium). The spirit requested offerings of money, cattle, and *capulanas* (traditional cloth). The community pooled resources, and the items were buried with herbs by the *Tinyanga* to prevent the spirit's return. Following the ritual, residents reported that disturbances ceased. These examples demonstrate that ancestral spirits are understood not as symbolic abstractions but as active agents whose appeasement is vital to restoring societal cohesiveness. While spiritual reconciliation is one-dimension, Indigenous cultural practices also work to heal fractured relationships among the living.

Beyond spiritual reconciliation, Indigenous cultural practices play a central role in restoring fractured intergroup relationships. In Liberia, prior to the civil war (1989–2003), Lormas (predominantly Christian) and Mandingos (predominantly Muslim) in Lofa County

coexisted peacefully, sharing land, engaging in trade, celebrating rituals together, and intermarrying (Travis & Saa, 2021, p. 107). However, the war fractured these relationships. Formerly close neighbors became adversaries, resulting in widespread violence and deep communal divisions. By the war's end, intergroup interactions had largely ceased. In a study conducted in Voinjama, Lofa County, Travis and Saa (2021) explored how cultural practices were used to heal intergroup trauma and restore community cohesion. They documented the use of a traditional "Mourning Feast" as a ritual process for reconciliation. The ceremony began with communal gatherings facilitated by elders and *zos* (traditional healers and diviners), who served as mediators—not to assign blame, but to promote collective reflection and restoration. As Travis and Saa (2021) observed, the community upheld a worldview in which "the well-being of each individual is inextricably connected to the well-being of the community, including the spirits and ancestors" (p. 110). Following these initial meetings, the community organized a large gathering of approximately 5,000 people. As part of the ritual, animals were sacrificed. The individuals performing the sacrifice washed the blood from their hands in a bucket, and "the bloodied water was blessed and sprinkled on the ground to nourish the soil so that peace could grow" (Travis & Saa, 2021, p.110). The sacrifice symbolized a plea to the ancestors for peace and unity. Women from both groups prepared and shared food, distributing it into large communal bowls from which *Lormas* and *Mandingos* ate together. Travis and Saa (2021) emphasized that "eating from the same bowl" functioned as a symbolic oath of reconciliation (p. 105). The event concluded with participants forming a circle, joining hands, praying in both *Lorma* and *Mandingo* languages. Drumming, singing, and dancing followed into the night, reinforcing a renewed sense of connection. According to participants, the ceremony provided peace, closure, and a sense of spiritual and communal alignment. Similar restorative practices

were observed in other contexts. Alemie and Mandefro (2018) examined Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms in the *Alefa* district of Ethiopia and found them to be consensus-driven, inclusive, and effective in fostering social solidarity. Khadka (2016) studied the *Barghar-Mukhiya* practice among the *Tharu* community in Nepal's *Bara*, *Dang*, and *Bardiya* districts. This ritual process was shown to promote reconciliation and social harmony. Likewise, Debisa (2022) investigated the *Oromo Gadaa* system in Ethiopia, highlighting its role in promoting peace through values of equality, respect, and tolerance. Across these contexts, reconciliation is not merely symbolic but enacted through shared meals, rituals, and collective commitments that repair ruptured social bonds. Yet peacebuilding is incomplete without addressing the reintegration of former combatants, who often embody the most difficult legacies of violence.

A third critical role of Indigenous cultural practices is the reintegration of ex-combatants, who often return home burdened by stigma, mistrust, and the memory of atrocities. In the case of Sierra Leone, following the official end of its civil war in January 2002, many community members expressed deep resentment toward former combatants—some of whom had committed atrocities against neighbors or even family members (Park, 2010). "Fearing reprisal", many of these ex-combatants initially avoided returning home, instead seeking anonymity in urban areas (Park, 2010, p. 109). Park (2010) conducted a case study in *Bo*, southern Sierra Leone, documenting the use of traditional cleansing rituals as a means of facilitating reintegration and reconciliation. The process began with a public assembly during which the former combatant would prostrate before the community, confess their actions, and seek forgiveness. Once forgiveness was granted, the individual was taken to a nearby stream for ritual bathing—"symbolizing purification and rebirth" (Park, 2010, p. 109). This cleansing marked the individual's moral and spiritual re-entry into society. A communal celebration followed,

involving music, dance, and shared meals. The ceremony concluded with the pouring of palm wine libations to honor the ancestors and spiritual forces, affirming communal acceptance of the reintegrated individual. Comparable practices have been documented elsewhere. In Southern Darfur, Sudan, Wahab (2018) studied the "*Judiyya* tradition, a human-centered model" of reconciliation that emphasizes mediation and community-wide transformation rather than punishment (p. 135). Wrongdoers are not ostracized but are reintegrated through negotiation and collective healing. In Ethiopia, Tafese (2016) reported that the *Anyuaa* people employ "*Nyieya* and *Kowaaro*"— Indigenous mechanisms not only meant to resolve conflict but to reintegrate offenders by restoring broken relationships (p. 31). Similarly, Gebretsadik (2022) found that the "*Gamo*" community favors reconciliation over retribution, using culturally embedded rituals to restore harmony between wrongdoers and victims (p. 12). Mengstie (2022) explored reintegration practices among the *Awi* and *Gumuz* communities, noting the use of the *kale-mehala*—an oath of non-retaliation—as a central element of the reconciliation process (p. 224). Such oath-taking symbolizes a mutual commitment to peaceful coexistence and prevents cycles of revenge. In Uganda, the Acholi people responded to the violence of the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency (1987–2008) with the *Mato Oput* ritual, choosing local justice over international tribunals. Mwaka and Olango (2023) found that *Mato Oput* involves public confession by the perpetrator, expressions of remorse, acceptance of compensation responsibilities, and a shared meal between victims and former perpetrators. The climax of the ritual is the drinking of "*Oput*"—a bitter herbal concoction—symbolizing reconciliation and renewed coexistence (Mwaka & Olango, 2023, p. 19). This ceremony reinforces the principle that even those who have committed grave offenses can be reintegrated as part of a larger communal whole. Collectively, these reintegration processes show how Indigenous cultural

practices transform accountability into a collective journey of healing, treating ex-combatants not as outcasts but as community members capable of renewal. Table 1 below presents an overview of Indigenous cultural practices identified in the literature that have facilitated reconciliation, forgiveness, and reintegration at the grassroots level.

Table 1: Sample of Indigenous cultural practices to build peace following conflict

| *Practices* | *Countries* | *Authors* |
|---|---|---|
| *Jirga* | Afghanistan / Pakistan | Adebayo et al., 2014; Huyse & Salter, 2008 |
| *Ah-nar-deh* | Bruma /Myanmar | Nurieli, 2019 |
| *Bashingantahe* and *Hunhu* or *Hunhuism* | Burundi | Ingelaere & Kohlhagen, 2012; Murwira, 2022 |
| *Tara bandu,* and *Nahe Biti* | Timor-Leste or East Timor | MacGinty, 2008; Swanson, 2013 |
| *Mable, Luba Basa, Gada, Qallu, Gondoro, Abegar, Enashma, Jaarsummaa, Gumaa, Siinqee, Shimagille, Gamo Woga, Abegar, Shimigilina,* and *Oromo Gadaa.* | Ethiopia | Debelo & Jirata, 2018; Yimer, 2022; Debisa, 2022; Dezo, 2021; Gebretsadik, 2022; Gena & Jarra, 2023; Mengstie, 2022; Ogbaharya, 2010; Sansculotte-Greenidge & Fantaye, 2012 |
| *Panchayat.* | India / Pakistan | Kadir, 2019 |
| *Taboo,* and *Miss / leketio belt* | Kenya | Kilonzo et al., 2009; MacGinty, 2008; Sabala, 2019 |
| *Sulha, musalaha, jalasa, jirga, maraca, nanawati,* and *shuras.* | Middle East (i.e.Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Pakistan. | Adebayo et al., 2014; Gang, 2010; Huyse & Salter, 2008; Irani & Funk, 2001; King-Irani, 2000; Roth, 2019; Wardak, 2003; Zartman, 2020 |
| *Magamba spirits.* | Mozambique | Honwana, 1997. |
| *Barghar-Mukhiy.* | Nepal | Khadka, 2016. |
| *Omoluabi, Mutum-Kirki, Ayei,*and *Mbiam*. | Nigeria | Akinade, 2017; Kirk-Greene, 1974; Olusola, 2017; Udofia, 2009. |
| *Gacaca,* and *Abunzi* | Rwanda | Ingelaere, 2008; Malan, 2005; Mutisi, 2009, 2012; Ugorji, 2019 |
| *Kpaa Mende* | Sierra Leone | Alie, 2008 |
| *Ubuntu, Xhosa,* and *Inkundla/lekgotla* | South Africa | Kiyala, 2022; Masina, 2000; Murithi, 2006; Nomonde, 2000 |
| *Judiyya.* | Sudan | Bronkhorst, 2012; El-Tom, 2012; Ogbaharya, 2010; Wahab, 2018 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Mato Oput; Kwanjula; Moyo Kum; Kayo Cuk; Kisaakaate; Kutawulula; Ailuc; Tonu ci Koka;* and *CuloKwor, Ekika.* | Uganda | Mwaka & Olango, 2023; Latigo, 2008; Tom, 2006; Sentongo & Bartoli, 2012; Wasonga, 2009 |
| *Dare* | Zimbabwe | Mutisi, 2011 |

**Key Themes Emerging from the Literature**

From the three core categories identified in the literature—appeasing the spirits of the dead, restoring broken relationships, and reintegrating ex-combatants—six interrelated themes emerge that characterize Indigenous cultural practices to post-conflict peacebuilding. These themes highlight not only the strengths of Indigenous approaches and/or processes but also the contextual challenges they face.

***Context-Specific and Culturally Diverse***

Indigenous cultural practices used to build peace are not uniform; they vary significantly across regions, reflecting unique historical, cultural, and spiritual contexts. For example, the Acholi *Mato Oput* ritual emphasizes reconciliation through public confession and symbolic acts, while the *Tharu Barghar-Mukhiya* process relies on consensus-driven councils to maintain harmony. Despite this diversity, commonalities such as communal participation and a non-adversarial orientation underline the adaptability of Indigenous cultural practices to different conflict settings. This variation demonstrates that Indigenous peacebuilding approaches and/or processes cannot be understood as a single model, but as contextually rooted frameworks that must be studied on their own terms.

### Structured and Deliberate

Although grounded in tradition, Indigenous cultural practices are not spontaneous or improvised; they follow clear procedures, roles, and sequences that lend them legitimacy. Rituals such as the Liberian *Mourning Feast* or the Ugandan *Mato Oput* unfold in stages that may last days or months, involving mediators, symbolic acts, and communal feasts (Travis & Saa, 2021; Wasonga, 2009). These deliberate structures ensure that reconciliation is experienced as a process rather than a one-time event, gradually transforming relationships and strengthening societal cohesiveness. The intentional design of these practices is central to their effectiveness.

### Inclusive and Nonjudgmental

A hallmark of Indigenous cultural practices to build peace is its emphasis on inclusion and collective responsibility rather than blame or exclusion. In Sierra Leone, for example, cleansing rituals brought ex-combatants back into the community through forgiveness and shared meals rather than retribution (Park, 2010). Likewise, Ethiopian reconciliation systems stress communal participation and consensus, where the well-being of each person is tied to the collective. By framing peacebuilding as a communal journey, these practices prevent the stigmatization of individuals and foster solidarity across divided groups.

### Restorative Rather Than Punitive

Unlike many state or international justice mechanisms, Indigenous cultural practices aim to restore social harmony, heal wounds, and rebuild relationships rather than punish perpetrators. In Mozambique, rituals addressed the spiritual unrest of the dead to heal survivors' fears, while in Rwanda, the *Gacaca* courts emphasized confession, compensation, and community service as

pathways to reconciliation (Alie, 2008; Honwana, 1997; Park, 2010). These restorative approaches prioritize rebuilding trust and preventing cycles of revenge, offering a contrast to punitive models that may deepen divisions. By focusing on healing, Indigenous mechanisms and/or strategies embed justice within relationships rather than institutions.

### *Spiritually and Relationally Grounded*

Indigenous cultural practices are inseparable from the spiritual and relational worldviews of the communities that enact them. That is cultural practices are rooted in Indigenous worldviews that connect the living, the dead, and the unborn (Liaga & Wielenga, 2020; Murambadoro & Matshaka, 2019); situating peace within a continuum of generations. Honoring the spirits of the deceased is considered essential for community well-being. For example, disturbances attributed to unsettled spirits in Mozambique illustrate how reconciliation must address both spiritual and social dimensions. These acts are not merely symbolic but constitute moral obligations in many societies. At the same time, globalization and the influence of social media often promote dominant cultural norms at the expense of local traditions, accelerating the erosion of Indigenous knowledge systems. The spiritual grounding of Indigenous practices thus remains a source of strength but also a site of vulnerability in modern contexts.

### *Locally Driven and Economically Accessible*

Finally, Indigenous peacebuilding practices are sustained by local knowledge and resources rather than external funding or institutions. Indigenous cultural practices are inherently local and cost-effective. Rituals often involve modest offerings—such as shared meals or symbolic oaths—that are within the community's means. However, continuity is threatened by generational shifts, urban migration, and modernization, which weaken younger generations'

connections to cultural practices. This tension between local accessibility and cultural erosion highlights the need for scholarship and policy that support Indigenous systems without undermining their autonomy.

Taken together, these six themes demonstrate that Indigenous cultural practices are diverse, structured, inclusive, restorative, spiritually grounded, and locally driven and sustained. They reveal peacebuilding as a deeply relational process embedded in cultural meaning rather than external frameworks. At the same time, they point to the urgency of protecting these practices against erosion while recognizing their value as legitimate and dynamic frameworks for conflict transformation.

## Gaps and Challenges in Recognizing Indigenous Cultural Practices

Despite their significance, Indigenous cultural practices remain marginalized in mainstream peacebuilding scholarship. A notable feature of the existing literature is that most analyses are written by scholars trained in or writing for Global North audiences. This stance shapes what is highlighted and what is omitted and/or marginalized. Even where Indigenous rituals are acknowledged, they are often framed through external categories rather than community-led perspectives, which constrains how these practices are understood and valued.

Beyond issues of representation, the current scholarship is limited in three keyways. First, few studies are led by Indigenous communities themselves, raising questions about voice, ownership, and epistemic justice. Second, much of the literature is primarily descriptive, documenting practices without critically examining their effectiveness or comparative value across contexts. Third, existing studies rarely explore how Indigenous cultural practices are adapted, contested, or reinterpreted in contemporary multi-ethnic or urban settings. These limitations underscore why a systematic review remains necessary.

Practical challenges also persist. Many Indigenous cultural practices lack formal enforcement authority, receive little institutional or policy support, rely on oral transmission, and remain vulnerable to erosion through globalization, generational shifts, and migration (Masenya, 2021; Nicholson, 2021; Tafese, 2016; Travis & Saa, 2021; Ugorji, 2019). Together, these shortcomings constrain both theoretical development and practical application in the field of peacebuilding. Thus, addressing these shortcomings requires more inclusive and context-sensitive scholarship that situates these practices as legitimate and dynamic frameworks for peacebuilding rather than as cultural remnants of the past.

## Conclusion

This systematic literature review compiles and critically analyzes twelve English-language scholarly studies on the use of Indigenous cultural practices in post-conflict peacebuilding. While the number of available works is limited—most concentrated in African contexts—the findings demonstrate that Indigenous practices such as ritual cleansing, symbolic ceremonies, and communal feasting contribute meaningfully to reconciliation, reintegration, and the restoration of fractured relationships. These practices are characterized by their context-specificity, deliberate structure, inclusivity, restorative orientation, spiritual grounding, and local ownership, underscoring their distinct contributions to peacebuilding scholarship and practice.

At the same time, the review highlights significant gaps. Indigenous voices remain underrepresented, with most analyses produced through Global North frameworks (i.e., Contact Hypothesis, Superordinate Goal, etc.) that risk marginalizing community-led perspectives. Much of the literature is descriptive rather than evaluative, and few studies explore how Indigenous practices evolve in multi-ethnic, urban, or globalized settings. These gaps limit both theoretical

development and the practical integration of Indigenous approaches and/or processes into broader peacebuilding efforts.

Moving forward, research should prioritize Indigenous community leadership and scholarship, critically assess the effectiveness of specific practices, and examine how rituals adapt to contemporary realities. Particularly needed are studies that foreground victims' experiences, explore everyday peacebuilding outside of formal ceremonies, and investigate the preventative role of Indigenous practices in sustaining lasting peace. By consolidating these studies, this review offers a foundational reference point for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to engage with Indigenous peacebuilding approaches and/or processes in more systematic and inclusive ways. Rather than treating these practices as symbolic remnants, future scholarship should recognize them as dynamic and legitimate frameworks for building sustainable peace, especially in countries such as Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.

**References**

Adebayo, A. G., Benjamin, J. J., & Lundy, B. D. (2014). *Indigenous Conflict Management Strategies: Global Perspectives*. Lexington Books.

Akinade, A. (2017, January 2). Omoluabi: The heart and soul of being human. *The Guardian*. https://guardian.ng/opinion/omoluabi-the-heart-and-soul-of-being-human/

Alemie, A., & Mandefro, H. (2018). Roles of Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms for Maintaining Social Solidarity and Strengthening Communities in Alefa District, North West of Ethiopia. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, *7*(2),1-21.

Alie, J. (2008). Reconciliation and traditional justice: tradition-based practices of the Kpaa Mende in Sierra Leone. In L. Huyse & M. Salter (Eds.), *Traditional justice and reconciliation after violent conflict: Learning from African experiences* (pp. 122-146). International IDEA Publications.

Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, *1*, 385-405. http://doi.org/10.1177/146879410100100307

Augsburger, D. W. (1992). *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns*. Westminster John Knox.

Avruch, K. (1998). *Culture and Conflict Resolution*. United States Institute of Peace Press.

Benyera, E. (2019). Introduction. In E. Benyera (Ed.) *Indigenous, Traditional, and Non-State Transitional Justice in Southern Africa* (pp.1-16). Lexington Books.

Bronkhorst, S. (2012). Customary mediation in resource scarcities and conflicts in Sudan: Making a case for the Judiyya. In M. Mutisi & K. Sansculotte-Greenidge (Eds.), *Africa Dialogue Monograph Series No. 2/2012* (pp. 121-146). The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes [ACCORD]

Debelo, A. R., & Jirata, T. J. (2018). "Peace Is Not a Free Gift": Indigenous Conceptions of Peace among the Guji-Oromo in Southern Ethiopia. *Northeast African Studies 18*(1-2), 201-230. https://doi.org/10.14321/nortafristud.18.1-2.0201

Debisa, N. G. (2022). Building peace by peaceful approach: The role of Oromo Gadaa system in peace-building. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *8*(1), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.2023254

Dezo, M. E. (2021). Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism in Ethiopia. *Scientific Journal of Culture*, *2*(1), 35-45. https://doi.org/10.33258/lakhomi.v2i1.422

El-Tom, A. O. (2012). From war to peace and reconciliation in Darfur, Sudan: Prospects for the Judiyya. In M. Mutisi & K. Sansculotte-Greenidge (Eds.), *Africa Dialogue Monograph Series No. 2/2012* (pp. 99-120). ACCORD.

Gang, R. (2010). *Community-based dispute resolution processes in Balkh province*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. https://www.refworld.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/en/2010-10/4eba60bc2.pdf

Gebretsadik, H. G. (2022). Indigenous Conflict Resolution: Social Institutions and their Role in Peacebuilding in Ethiopia‟s Gamo Community. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, *VI*(IV), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2022.6401

Gena, A. M., & Jarra, K. I. (2023). An appraisal of the practice of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms in building a culture of peace in Bale zones, Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia. *Heliyon, 9*(4), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e14970

Honwana, A. M. (1997). Healing for Peace: Traditional Healers and Post-War Reconstruction in Southern Mozambique. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, *3*(3), 293-305. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1207/s15327949pac0303_6

Huyse, L., & Salter, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Traditional justice and reconciliation after violent conflict: Learning from African experiences*. International IDEA Publications.

Ingelaere, B. (2008). The Gacaca courts in Rwanda. In L. Huyse & M. Salter (Eds.), *Traditional justice and reconciliation after violent conflict: Learning from African experiences* (pp. 25-59). International IDEA Publications

Ingelaere, B., & Kohlhagen, D. (2012). Situating Social Imaginaries in Transitional Justice: The Bushingantahe in Burundi. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, *6*(1), 40–59. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijr033

Irani, G. E., & Funk, N. C. (2001). Rituals of reconciliation: Arab-Islamic perspectives. In A. A. Said, N. C. Funk, & A. S. Kadayifci (Eds.), *Peace and conflict resolution in Islam: Precept and practice* (pp. 169–191). University Press of America.

Kadir, J. (2019). The Utility of Traditional Justice System of "Panchayat" in Resolving Pakistan-India Interstate Conflict. *Journal of Living Together, 6*(1), 133-143.

Khadka, N. B. (2016). *Tharu Barghar-Mukhiya Indigenous Model: A Case Study of Tharu Community of Nepal.* (Publication No. Number:10256356) [Doctoral dissertation, Nova Southeastern University]. ProQuest Dissertation.

Kilonzo, S. M., Kurgat, S. G., & Omare, S. G. (2009). The Role of Taboos in the Management of Natural Resources and Peace-building: A Case Study of the Kakamega Forest in Western Kenya. *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal*, *2*(1), 39-54.

King-Irani, L. E. (2000). Rituals of Forgiveness and Processes of Empowerment in Lebanon. In I. W. Zartman (Ed.), *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts: African Conflict "Medicine"* (pp. 129-140). Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Kirk-Greene, A. H. M. (1974). *Mutumin Kirii: The Concept of the Good Man in Hausa*. Indiana University Press.

Kiyala, J. C. K. (2022). Indigenous Peacebuilding Approaches and the Accountability of Former Child Soldiers: African Case Studies. In J. C. K. Kiyala, & G. T. Harris (Eds.), *Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa in the Anthropocene* (pp 423-464). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95179-5_18

Kochomay, S., & Akotir, J. (2019). Dialectics of War and Peace: The Pokot Alternate Regimes of War and Peace. *Journal of Living Together, 6*(1), 188-200.

Latigo, J. O. (2008). Northern Uganda: traditional-based practices in the Acholi region. In L. Huyse & M. Salter (Eds.), *Traditional justice and reconciliation after violent conflict: Learning from African experiences* (pp. 122-146). International IDEA Publications.

Lederach, J. P. (1995). Conflict Transformation in Protected Internal Conflicts: The Case for a Comprehensive Framework. In K. Rupesinghe (Eds.), *Conflict Transformation* (pp. 201-222). Martin's Press Inc.

Liaga, E. A., & Wielenga, C. (2020). Social Cohesion From the Top-Down or Bottom-Up? The Cases of South Sudan and Burundi. *Peace & Change*, *45*(3), 389-425. https://doi.org/10.1111/pech.12424

MacGinty, R. (2008). Indigenous Peace-Making Versus the Liberal Peace. *Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association*, *43*(2), 139–163. https://www.jstor.org/stable/45084517

MacGinty, R. (2011). *International peacebuilding and local resistance: Hybrid forms of peace*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Malan, J. (2005). Traditional and local conflict resolution. In P. Tongeren, M. Brenk, M. Hellema, & J. Verhoeven (Eds.), *People building peace II: Successful stories of civil society* (pp. 449-471). Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Masenya, T. M. (2021). Indigenous Conflict Resolution System: Building Cultural Peace and Social Solidarity Among Indigenous Communities in South Africa. In R. Nicholson (Ed.), *Natural Healing as Conflict Resolution* (pp. 226 – 241). IGI Global.

Masina, N. (2000). Xhosa Practices of Ubuntu for South Africa. In I. W. Zartman (Ed.), *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts: African Conflict "Medicine"* (pp. 169-181). Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Mengstie, M. M. (2022). Exploring indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms between the Awi and Gumuz ethnic communities in Zigem Woreda, Ethiopia. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, *14*(3), 244-258. https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-05-2021-0603

Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., & Altman, D. G. (2010). Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: The PRISMA Statement. *International Journal of Surgery, 8*(5), 336-341. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijsu.2010.02.007

Murambadoro, R., & Matshaka, C. (2019). The aftermath of Gukurahundi: Dealing with Wounds of the Genocide through Non-State Justice Processes in Budi (Inyathi) and Nkayi Districts, Matabeleland, North Providence, Zimbabwe. In B. Everisto (Ed.) *Indigenous, Traditional, and Non-State Transitional Justice in Southern Africa* (pp. 123-140). Lexington Books

Murithi, T. (2006). Practical Peacemaking Wisdom from Africa: Reflections on Ubuntu. *The Journal of Pan African Studies, 1*(4), 25-34.

Murwira, A. (2022). Peacebuilding Through Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Lessons from Civil Society Organisations in Zimbabwe. In J. C. K. Kiyala & G. T. Harris (Eds.), *Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa in the Anthropocene* (pp. 191-204). Springer Nature.

Mutisi, M. (2009). Gacaca Courts in Rwanda: An Endogenous Approach to Post Conflict Justice and Reconciliation. *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal, 2*(1), 17-27.

Mutisi, M. (2011). *The Abunzi Mediation in Rwanda: Opportunities for Engaging with Traditional Institutions of Conflict Resolution* [Policy & Practice Brief]. Accord: African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes. https://www.accord.org.za/publication/the-abunzi-mediation-in-rwanda/

Mutisi, M. (2012). Local conflict resolution in Rwanda: The case of abunzi mediators. In M. Mutisi & K. Sansculotte-Greenidge (Eds.), *Africa Dialogue Monograph Series No. 2/2012* (pp. 41-74). ACCORD: University of Pretoria.

Mwaka, A. D., & Olango, M. O. (2023). Reconciliation among the central luo of northern Uganda: The ingredients and process of Mato Oput. *Cogent Social Sciences, 9*(1), 2177395. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2177395

Nicholson, R. (2021). Preface. In R. Nicholson (Ed.), *Natural Healing as Conflict Resolution* (pp. xii-xxvii). IGI Global.

Nomonde, M. (2000). Xhosa Practices of Ubuntu for South Africa. In W. I. Zartman (Ed.), *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts: African Conflict Medicine* (pp.169-182). Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Nurieli, K. (2019). The Intersection Between Anthropology, Drama, Conflict Transformation: A New Method for Research and Practice. *Journal of Living Together*, *6*(1), 3-16.

Ogbaharya, D. (2010, June 24-27). Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in sub-saharan africa:

The role of customary systems of conflict resolution (CSCR). [Paper presentation]. Annual International Association of Conflict Management, 23rd Annual Conference, Boston, Massachusetts, USA. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1612865

Olusola, V. O. (2017). Omoluabi: Re-thinking the Concept of Virtue in Yoruba Culture and Moral System. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies, 9*(10), 217-231.

Onwuka, O. (2009). The ECOWAS Council of the Wise: An Indigenous Framework for Conflict Resolution. *African Peace and Conflict Journal*, *9*(1), 55–36. https://doi.org/10.31920/2050-4306/2020/S9n1a6

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R. C., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., McGuinness, L. A., Stewart, L. A., Thomas, J., Tricco, A. C., Welch, V. A., Whiting, P., & Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ, 372*(71), 1-9. https://doi.org./10.1136/bmj.n71.

Park, A. S. J. (2010). Community-based restorative transitional justice in Sierra Leone. *Contemporary Justice Review*, *13*(1), 95–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580903343134

Pettersson, T. (2020). *UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset codebook* (Version 20.1). Uppsala University. https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/replication_data/2020_ucdp-prio-acd-201.pdf

Roth, D. (2019). From the Diary of a Rabbinic Peacemaker: Case Study of a Traditional Jewish Process of Reconciliation and Conflict Resolution. *Journal of Living Together*, 6(1), 43-52.

Sabala, G. M. (2019). Principles, Effectiveness and Challenges of Traditional Dispute Resolution Mechanisms: A Review of Cases from Kenya, Rwanda, Sunday, and Uganda. *Journal of Living Together*, *6*(1), 162- 172.

Sansculotte-Greenidge, K., & Fantaye, D. (2012). Traditional authority and modern hegemony: Peacemaking in the Afar region of Ethiopia. In M. Mutisi & K. Sansculotte-Greenidge (Eds.), *Africa Dialogue Monograph Series No. 2/2012* (pp. 75-98). ACCORD.

Schirch, L. (2005). *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding*. Kumarian Press.

Sentongo, A., & Bartoli, A. (2012). Conflict resolution under the Ekika system of the Baganda in Uganda. In M. Mutisi & K. Sansculotte-Greenidge (Eds.), *Africa Dialogue Monograph Series No. 2/2012* (pp. 13-40). ACCORD.

Swanson, D. (2013, June 7). Timor-Leste promotes traditional conflict resolution. *Reliefweb*. https://reliefweb.int/report/timor-leste/timor-leste-promotes-traditional-conflict-resolution

Tafese, T. (2016). Conflict Management Through African Indigenous Institutions: A study of the Anyuaa Community. *World Journal of Social Science*, *3*(1), 22-32. https://doi.org/10.5430/wjss.v3n1p22

Tom, P. (2006). *The Acholi Traditional Approach to Justice and the War in Northern Uganda*. Beyond Intractability. https://www.beyondintractability.org/casestudy/tom-acholi

Travis, C., & Saa, W. (2021). Restorative Peacebuilding in Liberia: Traditional Practices of Mourning and Reconciliation. In R. Nicholson (Ed.), *Natural Healing as Conflict Resolution* (pp. 100-125). IGI Global.

Udofia, D. (2009). Peacebuilding Mechanisms in Akwa Ibom State Oil-Bearing Communities in Nigeria. *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, *1*(2), 104-119. https://doi.org/10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.1.2.104

Ugorji, B. (2019). Indigenous Dispute Resolution and National Reconciliation: Learning from

the Gacaca Courts in Rwanda. *Journal of Living Together, 6*(1), 153-161.

Vonhm Benda, M. E. (2004). *The Internationalization of Civil War: Liberia as a Case Study* (Publication No. 1424583) [Master's thesis, American University]. American University Research Archive.

Wahab, A. S. (2018). *The Sudanese Indigenous Model for Conflict Resolution: A Case Study to Examine the Relevancy and the Applicability of the Judiyya Model in Restoring Peace Within the Ethnic Tribal Communities of the Sudan* [Doctoral dissertation, Nova Southeastern University]. Digital Commons.

Wardak, A. (2003). *Jirga- A traditional mechanism of conflict resolution in Afghanistan.* https://www.academia.edu/80972502/Jirga_A_Traditional_Mechanism_of_Conflict_Resolution_in_Afghanistan

Wasonga, J. (2009). Rediscovering Mato Oput: The Acholi Justice System and the Conflict in Northern Uganda. *African Peace and Conflict Journal*, *2*(1), 27–38.

Yimer, B. L. (2022). Abegar indigenous conflict resolution system: a community-based reconciliation. *Systemic Practice and Action Research, 35*, 579-590. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11213-021-09584-7

Zartman, J. K. (2020). Development and Peace Through Traditional, Cultural, Islamic Mediation. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, *15*(2), 164-177. https://doi.org/10.1177/1542316620905788?urlappend=%3Futm_source%3Dresearchgate

## Appendix A

## Summaries of all Referenced Studies

| Authors / Year / Classification | Region / Country | Methods | Participants | Findings |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alemie & Mandefro (2018) / Journal Article | Alefa / Ethiopia. | Qualitative: Purposive sampling, semi-structured face-to-face interview. | Four elders and two police officers. | Alefa Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are more flexible than the formal court procedures. It involves consensus building based on open discussion to achieve a sense of harmony and solidarity, rather than punishment. |
| Debisa (2022) / Journal Article | Oromia Region/ Ethiopia. | Qualitative: interviews, and document review (published and unpublished books, articles, reviews, thesis, and dissertations). | Two Hayyuus, two females, and five academicians. | The findings reveals that the Gadaa system incorporates proactive approaches that facilitate peace, equality, respect, and tolerance, which makes peace-building sustainable. |
| Gebretsadik (2022) / Journal Article | Gamo / Ethiopia. | Qualitative: Semi-structure interview, direct observation, archives (records), documents, physical artifacts, participatory observation. | Elders, judiciary officials, people working in social society, knowledgeable and ordinary individuals. | Gamo Woga is deeply rooted in the customs, norms, philosophy, and traditions of the Gamo people and is geared towards reconciliation, maintenance, and improvement of social relationships. |
| Honwana (1997) / Journal Article | Manhiga, Munguine, Manhica and Boane / Mozambique. | Qualitative: semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. | Field research was carried out between 1993 and 1995, that included traditional healers, diviners, traditional chiefs, spirit mediums, war affected people, ex-soldiers, refugees, internally displaced persons, politicians, leaders of independent churches, established world religions, and many ordinary people. | The findings reported that residents from Munguine in Manhiga performed a ritual which have helped them to remove fear, sickness, or disputes in their local communities. |
| Khadka (2016) / Doctoral dissertation | Tharu / Nepal. | Qualitative: purposive sampling, semi-structured one-on-one interview, | Thirty-eight participants for one-on-one interviews, focus groups discussion consisted of thirty participants. Fifty-six male and twelve female | The findings showed that *Barghar-Mukhiya* practice is inclusive and reconciliatory in nature and that it resolves conflict, maintains peace, |

| | | focus group discussion, and researcher observations. Secondary sources included document collections and archival material. | participants all above the age of eighteen. | and strengthens social harmony. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mengstie (2022) / Journal Article | Zigem Woreda / Ethiopia. | Qualitative: purposive sampling, in-depth interview, and document review. | Two elders from both Awi and Gumuz ethnic groups, one local peace committee member, and one police officer. | *Shimigilina* is well recognized, accepted and respected by Awi and Gumuz ethnic groups. Shimigilina has a series of processes and procedures which concludes with ritual ceremony *kale-mehala* (oath) or promising not to take revenge and harm. |
| Murambadoro, & Matshaka, (2019) / Book chapter | Bubi and Nkayi districts /Matabeleland Province / Zimbabwe. | Qualitative case study: snowball and convenience sampling methods, semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. | Fieldwork from 2014 to 2017. Twenty-eight research participants that included: government officers, civil society representatives, academics, and community members (i.e., victims, survivors). | The findings disclosed that following the *Gukurahundi* genocide, some people were no longer on talking terms and did not trust one another. So, to rebuild social harmony, the findings state that some residents in Bubi and Nkayi districts drew upon ritual ceremonies to restore societal cohesiveness. |
| Mwaka & Olango (2023) / Journal Article | Acoliland / Uganda. | Qualitative: ethnographic, in-depth interviews, secondary data review, direct observation, field notes, purposefully sampling. | Eight cultural leaders and renowned elders (men and women greater than 60 years old). | *Mato Oput* is conducted after a death, that requires the victimizers to admit guilt, take responsibility for the offence, express remorse, seeks forgiveness, accept to pay compensation, provide sheep to slaughter, eat together, and drink the *Oput* juice as a sign of reconciliation and restoration of peaceful co-existence. |
| Park (2010) / Journal Article | Bo / Sierra Leone. | Qualitative case study: semi-structured interviews. | Ninety-seven interviews were conducted between the period of June 2005 and March to April 2007 with: war victims, former combatants, rural community | The findings disclosed that Sierra Leoneans in *Bo*, drew-upon traditional reintegration practices to reintegrate ex-combatants into the community and |

| | | | members, people associated with peacebuilding institutions, including transitional justice institutions, non-governmental organizations, government officials, and officials associated with the United Nations mission in Sierra Leone. | build cohesive relationships between the ex-combatants and local community dwellers. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tafese (2016) / Journal Article | Anyuaa/ Ethiopia and South Sudan. | Qualitive: narrative / direct observation. | Traditional king, *Nyieya*; headman, *Kwaaro* and elder's and family councils. | *Nyieye* and *Kwaaro* are conflict resolution mechanisms to discover the truth about every conflict. Reconciliation, the final process does not ostracize the wrongdoers; instead, they restore relationships between conflicting parties and reintegrate offenders back into the society. |
| Travis & Saa (2021) / Book chapter | Lofa County / Liberia | Qualitative / semi-structured interviews, direct observations | Elders, rural community members, war victims, former combatants, and generals. | The findings revealed that rural dwellers in Lofa relied upon ritual ceremonies that included mourning feast that brought them together; they dined together, reconciled with one another, and built social harmony. |
| Wahab (2018) / Doctoral dissertation | Southern Darfur / Sudan. | Qualitative: Case study—face-to-face interviews, researcher observations, review of document, archival records, and field notes. | 25 participants: five nomadic, five farmers, five federal officials, five local officials and five Ajaweed. | *Judiyya* is a community-based which is transformative and restorative helping communities maintain harmony and peace. |

*Note:* This summarizes key Indigenous cultural practices that contribute to conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding.