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THE SACRED USE OF HERBS IN RITUALISTIC PRACTICES IN THE ADA TWIN RITES, GHANA

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Abstract

Herbs remain central to African ritual cosmologies as therapeutic and symbolic elements. Among the Ada ethnic society of Ghana, twin rites employ herbs to symbolise healing, cleansing, protection, fertility, sustenance, shelter, and spiritual mediation. Despite their cultural importance, limited scholarship exists on the symbolic meanings and ritual functions of these herbs within twin practices. This study examines the cultural and spiritual significance of herbs in Ada twin rites through qualitative ethnographic methods grounded in symbolic and interpretive anthropology and indigenous aesthetics. Using purposive sampling, direct observation, and in-depth face-to-face interviews with practitioners and scholars, the study identified herbs such as Vitex payos, Cynanchum species, Parkia biglobosa or Parkia filicoidea, and sacred grasses like Aristida diffusa as both medicinal resources and carriers of cosmological meaning within ritual performance. Findings show that these practices strengthen communal identity and spiritual continuity, although modernisation and weakening intergenerational knowledge transmission threaten their survival.

The study concludes that preserving herbal traditions in twin rites is vital for cultural preservation and ecological sustainability in contemporary Ghana.

Keywords: *Herbs, Cultural significance, Ada twin rites, Cultural preservation, Ritual practices, Ghana*

1. Introduction

Globally, herbs and herbal knowledge occupy important positions in indigenous health systems and spiritual worldviews, functioning as therapeutic resources and mediators between the physical and spiritual realms (Abbiw, 1990; Mbiti, 1991). In many traditional societies, herbs are embedded in ritual, healing, and symbolic practices that sustain cultural identity and memory. In Africa, herbs remain central to rites of passage, healing ceremonies, and ancestral veneration, with knowledge mainly transmitted orally across generations (Chaitanya et al., 2022). Herbs are therefore understood not only as biological materials but also as cultural symbols used in ritual performance and spiritual communication. In Ghana, herbs are widely documented in traditional medicine and ethnobotanical studies (Abbiw, 1990; Ayensu, 1978; Mintah et al., 2022). However, most studies focus on their medicinal and economic value while giving limited attention to their ritual and symbolic significance, particularly within ethnic ceremonial systems such as those of the Ada people. Among the Ada ethnic society of Ghana, twin rites (ha kusumi) are important cultural and spiritual institutions in which herbs play central roles. Herbs are used in purification, thanksgiving, healing, protection, and mortuary rituals, serving as symbolic agents linking humans, ancestors, and the spiritual world. Despite their significance, the ritual meanings of herbs in Ada twin rites remain underexplored. Urbanisation, Pentecostal Christianity, and biomedical healthcare systems have also weakened indigenous herbal knowledge and ritual practices (Dei, 2012; Meyer, 1999).

This study examines the sacred use of herbs in Ada twin rites, focusing on healing, cleansing, ancestral mediation, and cultural symbolism. It asks: What functions do herbs serve in Ada twin rites, and how do they reflect Ada cultural identity and cosmology? The study contributes to preserving indigenous knowledge and promoting cultural sustainability in contemporary Ghana.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Sacred Uses of Herbs

Globally, herbs are recognised within indigenous knowledge systems as medicinal and symbolic resources that mediate relationships between the physical and spiritual realms, although biomedical perspectives often reduce them to pharmacological substances (Abbiw, 1990; Mbiti, 1991). In Africa, herbs are deeply embedded in cosmological systems where they serve as agents of healing, purification, protection, and ancestral communication (Mbiti, 1991; Edwards et al., 2009). In Ghana, studies document herbs such as Adansonia digitata, Raphia farinifera, and Ocimum gratissimum for medicinal and ritual purposes, yet scholarship largely emphasises therapeutic value over symbolic meaning (Affo & Akande, 2011; Aikins et al., 2013; Oppong et al., 2021; Turkson et al., 2021).

Within the Ada ethnic society, herbs are central to twin rites (ha kusumi), functioning as symbolic instruments for purification, protection, healing, and ancestral mediation. However, their meanings within Ada cosmology remain underexplored, creating a gap in understanding indigenous herbal knowledge as intangible cultural heritage consistent with SDG 11.4 (UNDP, 2023). From a symbolic and interpretive anthropological perspective, herbs are cultural symbols through which societies communicate meaning, identity, and spirituality (Geertz, 1973; Mbiti, 1991). Their significance lies in ritual performance rather than physical properties

alone. Alifa (2023) notes that sacred plants in rituals connect humans, nature, and the spiritual world, reinforcing cultural continuity.
Among the Yoruba, herbs used in Ibeji rituals function as symbolic agents of appeasement and spiritual balance (Drewal, 1992). However, across many African societies, including Ghana, interpretive studies on the symbolic meanings of herbal rituals remain limited. Globalisation, Christianity, and biomedical dominance have also weakened indigenous herbal traditions, contributing to epistemic erasure (Meyer, 1999; Gifford, 2006; Dei, 2012). This threatens the continuity of herbal symbolism in Ada twin rites and highlights the need for documentation and preservation (UNESCO, 2021).

2.2 Symbolism of Herbs in Rituals

In ritual contexts, herbs function not only as practical materials but also as cultural symbols representing purity, protection, fertility, healing, and ancestral presence (Geertz, 1973; McGee & Warms, 2012). In African societies, herbs are widely regarded as mediators between humans and the spiritual world, reinforcing cosmological order (Mbiti, 1991). In Ghana, many studies focus on medicinal uses, while the symbolic meanings of herbs in ritual practices remain underexplored (Aikins et al., 2013; Turkson et al., 2021). Within the Ada ethnic society, herbs used in twin rites (ha kusumi) symbolise spiritual protection, ancestral mediation, and social harmony, serving as expressions of cultural identity and worldview.

2.3 Rituals for Twin Rites

Globally, twin rituals exist in many indigenous societies where twins are regarded as spiritually significant beings associated with duality and supernatural power (Abbiw, 1990; Mbiti, 1991). In Africa, twin rituals mediate relationships between humans, ancestors, and the spiritual world through naming, cleansing, protection, and offering practices (Mbiti, 1991). Among the Yoruba, Ibeji rites involve elaborate rituals that construct twins as powerful spiritual beings requiring continuous ritual engagement (Drewal, 1992). In Ghana, twin rites across ethnic groups emphasise protection, purification, naming, and ancestral recognition, although studies often overlook the symbolic meanings of herbs and ritual objects (Aikins et al., 2013; Turkson et al., 2021). Within the Ada ethnic society, *ha kusumi* (twin rites) forms a ritual system from birth to death involving herbs, sacred performances, and ritual objects that express beliefs about identity, spirituality, and social cohesion. From a symbolic and interpretive anthropological perspective, these rituals function as cultural texts through which the Ada people construct meaning and maintain cosmological balance. However, scholarly attention to these interpretive dimensions remains limited despite SDG 11.4's emphasis on safeguarding indigenous knowledge and ritual systems (UNDP, 2023).

2.4 Underlying Theory for the Study: Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology

This study is grounded in symbolic and interpretive anthropology, which views culture as a system of meanings expressed through symbols, rituals, and social practices. Geertz (1973) describes culture as a "web of meanings" interpreted through thick description. Within this framework, Ada twin rites (ha kusumi) and the herbs used in them are understood as symbolic systems through which belief, identity, and meaning are communicated. Herbs in twin rites are therefore not only medicinal substances, but also cultural symbols associated with protection, purity, fertility, ancestral connection, and social harmony. Their meanings derive from ritual context and performance rather than physical properties alone (McGee & Warms).
Symbolic and interpretive anthropology also views rituals as performances that sustain shared meanings within society. In Ada twin rites, herbal rituals of cleansing, protection, and healing reinforce social cohesion and cultural identity while sustaining beliefs about relationships between humans, ancestors, and the spiritual world (Mbiti, 1991). This perspective also

supports SDG 11.4, which emphasises the preservation of indigenous knowledge and intangible cultural heritage (UNDP, 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research design grounded in phenomenological and sociocultural approaches to examine the symbolic meanings of herbs in Ada ha kusumi (twin rites). Guided by symbolic and interpretive anthropology, the design enabled an in-depth understanding of ritual practices and indigenous interpretations of herbal symbolism within their cultural context (Geertz, 1973; McGee & Warms, 2012). The study involved seven (7) purposively selected key informants comprising five practitioners of twin rites and two scholars of indigenous ritual knowledge within the Ada traditional system. Purposive sampling ensured the selection of participants with relevant cultural knowledge and experience (Patton, 2002).

Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth face-to-face interviews, and reflective discussions. Observation documented ritual contexts in which herbs were used, while interviews captured experiential and interpretive knowledge from practitioners and scholars. Triangulation of methods enhanced the credibility and depth of the findings (Creswell, 2014). Ethical principles such as informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity were strictly observed. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study in culturally appropriate language, and sensitive information concerning sacred herbal practices was treated respectfully in line with anthropological research ethics (AAA, 2012; Hasan et al., 202; Mirza et al., 2023).

Data were analysed thematically using symbolic and interpretive anthropology. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and reflections were coded to identify themes related to herbal symbolism, ritual functions, and cosmological meanings. Both participants' interpretations and the researcher's analytical perspective informed the analysis, enabling the interpretation of herbs as culturally embedded symbols within Ada twin rites (Geertz, 1973; Fade; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Table 1: Breakdown of Interviews and Observations

Categories of participants/Code	Number	Data collection method	Focus of Engagement
Practitioners of twin rites (ATC-A-1-5)	5	In-depth face-to-face interviews and direct observation.	Ritual performance, herbal preparation, and use of herbs in twin rites (*ha kusumi)*
Scholars of twin rites (ATC-F-1-2)	2	In-depth face-to-face interviews and reflections	Interpretation of herbal symbolism, cultural meanings, and cosmological significance

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in the Ada traditional area in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, comprising the Ada East and Ada West Districts (Amartey, 1999; Owusu-Daaku & Diko, 2017). The area covers about 909 square kilometers with a population of approximately 153,498 (Addai-Boateng, 2019; Frimpong et al., 2021; Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Key communities included Azizanya, Big Ada, Tamatoku, Sege, Koluedor, and Goi, with Big Ada serving as a major cultural center and host of the Asafotufiami Festival (Amartey, 1999; Kabutey, 2011). The study was conducted between July 2024 and February 2025. The local

economy is mainly based on fishing, farming, and trading (Amartey, 1999), while Christianity and indigenous beliefs coexist. Within this setting, ha kusumi (twin rites) remain important ritual practices where herbs are used for purification, protection, healing, and spiritual mediation. Refer to Figure 1 for a map of the Ada Traditional Area.

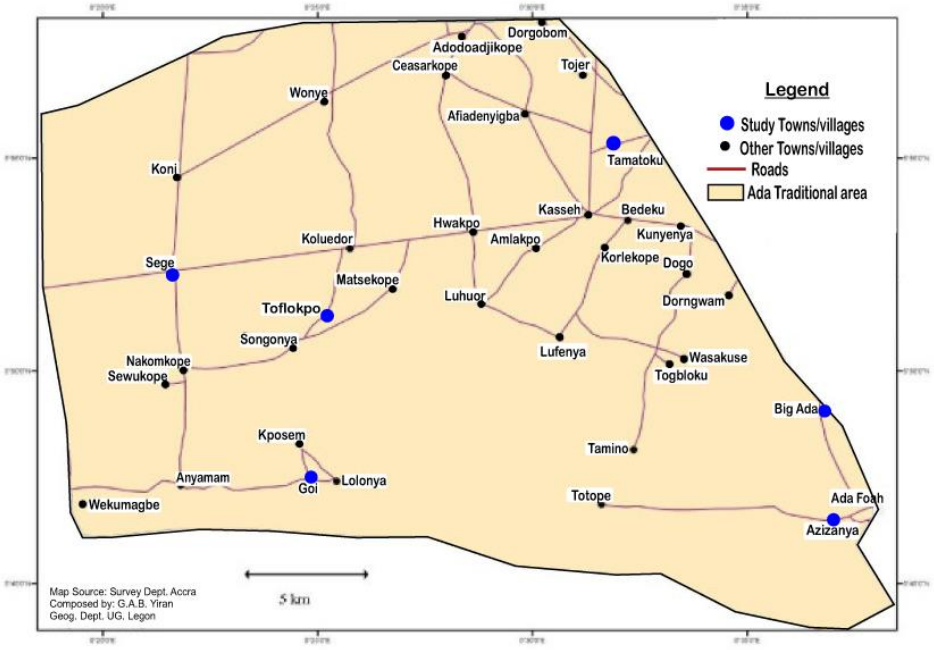


Figure 1: Map showing the Ada Traditional Area.
Source: Ayi et al. (2010).

4. Presentation of Results and Discussion of Findings

Symbolic and Cultural Significance of Herbal Practices in Ada Twin Rituals

The findings revealed that herbs play interconnected ritual and symbolic roles in Ada twin rites. Beyond their material use, herbs function as carriers of socio-spiritual meanings within Ada cosmology. The findings were organised into themes such as purification and blessings, protection and healing, ancestral mediation, food, and shelter, demonstrating the importance of herbs in sustaining the continuity and meaning of twin rites among the Ada people.

Theme one: Purification and Blessings

Sub-Theme One: Nyinyera (*Momordica chirantia*)

The study found that Nyinyera (*Momordica charantia*), a tropical medicinal vine known for its bitter fruit and leaves (Ahmad, 2016), is a significant herb in Ada twin rites. It symbolises purification, protection, and healing, functioning as a mediatory agent between the physical and spiritual realms. The herb is widely used to cleanse spiritual impurities, ward off evil forces, and restore balance in the lives of twins and their families. The role of nyinyera in purification was highlighted by a participant who explained that:

Nyinyera is used in the twin rites to purify the twins and their parents of spiritual impurities, thus ensuring the effectiveness of the ceremonies (ATC-F-2, personal communication, July 20, 2024).

This finding reflects the symbolic and interpretive anthropological view that herbs are culturally constructed symbols rather than merely functional materials. Within Ada cosmology, Nyinyera represents spiritual cleansing and protection, reinforcing the legitimacy of twin rites. The study further revealed that Nyinyera is used during rites for newborn twins and in

ceremonies following the death of a twin, often combined with other herbs for spiritual bathing and offerings. Its repeated use across ritual contexts highlights its role in sustaining ritual continuity and cultural identity. ATC-F-1 & ATC-A 1-3 explained that its use in twin ceremonies designates it as a sanctuary for the souls or spirits of twins (interviews, August 19-27, 2024).
The designation of Nyinyera as a "sanctuary" for twin spirits demonstrates how herbs are understood as active spiritual agents within Ada belief systems. Refer to Plate 1 below.



Plate 1: Nyinyera (Momordica chirantia)
Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Sub-Theme Two: Woma or Aga tso ba (Borassus aethiopum)
The study revealed that Woma or Agɔ tso ba (Borassus aethiopum), a tropical palm species native to sub-Saharan Africa (Michon, 2018), holds important symbolic and socio-spiritual significance in Ada twin rites. It functions as a medium of protection, refuge, and spiritual anchorage, symbolising concealment and safety for the spiritual essence of twins. A scholar and some twin practitioners. ATC-F-1 and ATC-A 1-3 explained that twins are referred to as monkeys in Ada culture and that palm fronds are regarded as a refuge and concealment for their spiritual essence (interviews, September 20-26, 2024).

This finding highlights how the physical features of Woma are symbolically linked to indigenous interpretations of twin identity within Ada cosmology. From a symbolic and interpretive anthropological perspective, the herb represents protection, elevation, and spiritual security. The study further found that *Woma* is used for purification, protection, and ancestral mediation. A scholar and practitioners of twin rites, ATC-F-2 and ATC-A 1 & 2, explained that the practice facilitates spiritual cleansing by removing harmful entities and strengthening the connection between twins and their ancestors (interviews, July 19-27, 2024).
Its multifunctional role demonstrates how herbs are understood as active spiritual agents that sustain ritual continuity and spiritual balance in Ada twin rites. Refer to Plate 2 below.



Plate 2: Woma or Agɔ tso ba (fan leaf or palm fan) of Borassus aethiopum, known as the African fan palm or African palmyra palm.
Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Theme Two: Protection and Healing
Sub-Theme One: Atotohugme tso ba (Abrus precatorius)
The study found that Atotohugme tso ba (Abrus precatorius), a toxic evergreen vine containing abrin (Okhale & Nwanosike, 2016), occupies an important role in Ada twin rites as a herb of protection, healing, and ritual validation. Although toxic, its potency is culturally interpreted as a source of spiritual strength and defense. A scholar and practitioners of twin rites, ATC-F-1; ATC-A 3-4, highlighted the significance of the Atotohugme tso ba in the Ada twin rites: Atotohugme tso ba is one of the key herbs needed for twin rites in Ada, and any divination about these rites will be considered invalid unless it is included (ATC-F-1; ATC-A 3-4, interviews, July 19-27, 2024).

The herb is used to protect twins from illnesses, skin infections, and harmful spiritual forces. When combined with other ritual herbs, it is believed to strengthen the spirits of twins and protect their families from malevolent entities.
This finding reflects the symbolic reinterpretation of danger and toxicity as protective and empowering forces within Ada cosmology. From a symbolic and interpretive anthropological perspective, Atotohugme tso ba represents the duality of harm and healing, reinforcing the integrity and continuity of twin rites. Refer to Plate 3 below.



Plate 3: Atotohugmɛtso (leaves of Abrus precatorius)
Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Sub-Theme Two: Sapropro (Cynanchum spp.)

The study revealed that Sapropro (Cynanchum spp.), a perennial vine in the Apocynaceae family (Pham, 2021), plays an important medicinal and protective role in Ada twin rites. Its toxic properties are symbolically associated with strength, restoration, and spiritual fortification for twins. Accounts from ATC-F-2 & ATC-A-3 indicated that sapropro serves both medicinal and spiritual protective functions in twin rites, particularly in guarding twins against malevolent omens (ATC-F-2; ATC-A-3, interviews, October 16-20, 2024).

The herb is believed to restore and strengthen the spirits of twins while protecting them and their associates from harmful physical and spiritual influences. Its use within shrine practices further emphasises its spiritual significance. From a symbolic and interpretive anthropological perspective, Sapropro functions not only as a therapeutic herb but also as a culturally constructed spiritual agent. Its dual symbolism of toxicity and healing reflects indigenous beliefs linking potency with protection and restoration in Ada cosmology. Refer to Plate 4 below.



Plate 4: Sapropro, leaves of Cynanchum or honey vine swallowwort
Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Sub-Theme Three: Ayor tso ba (Vitellaria paradoxa)

The findings showed that Ayor tso ba (Vitellaria paradoxa), commonly known as the shea tree, occupies an important place in Ada twin rites as a therapeutic, protective, and spiritually sustaining herb (Ojo et al., 2021). The herb is culturally associated with kuahi (monkeys), whose behaviour of eating the leaves after injury is interpreted as a model for healing and restoration. Interviewees explained the ritual use of herbal-infused water in caring for the spirits of human twins:

The spirits of the human twins are bathed in water infused with herbs at their shrine... providing comfort and protection against microbes (ATC-F-2; ATC-A-1, interviews, November 19-20, 2024).

The leaves are used in ritual bathing and spiritual care of twins, functioning symbolically as a substitute for shea butter in cleansing and protecting the spirits of twins. This finding demonstrates the connection between ecological observation and ritual symbolism within Ada cosmology.

From a symbolic and interpretive anthropological perspective, Ayor tso ba symbolises healing, protection, and spiritual continuity. Its ritual use reinforces beliefs about the relationship between twins, nature, and the spiritual world while maintaining balance and well-being in twin rites. Refer to Plate 5 below.



Plate 5: Ayor tso ba (The leaves of Vitellaria paradoxa for twin rituals)
Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Theme Three: Ancestral Mediation and Symbolism
Sub-Theme One: Foryi tso ba (Vitex payos)

The study revealed that Foryi tso ba (Vitex payos), a shrub known for its edible berries and aromatic leaves (Karanja et al., 2022), is a key symbolic herb in Ada twin rites associated with fertility, balance, and ancestral continuity. Its paired growth pattern and association with kuahi (monkeys) symbolically connect it to twinity and dual existence. The herb is considered essential in divination and ritual performance. A participant explained the cultural significance of the practice in relation to twins and ancestral traditions:

*It is associated with twins because it often occurs in pairs… It symbolizes fertility and strengthens ties to the ancestral customs of the Ada people (*ATC-F-2, interview, December 20, 2024).

This finding shows how botanical features are interpreted as cultural symbols of duality and reproduction within Ada cosmology. *Foryi tso ba* reinforces fertility, social continuity, and ancestral connection, sustaining the spiritual integrity of twin rites. Refer to Plate 6 below.



Plate 6: Foryi tso ba (The leaves from Vitex payos
Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Sub-Theme Two: Shede Tsowi (Elaeis guineensis Jacq.)

The study also found that Shede tsowi, the young palm fronds of Elaeis guineensis (African oil palm), symbolises fertility, prosperity, and generational continuity in Ada twin rites (Owoyele & Owolabi, 2014; Okolo, 2019). Its ritual use reflects expectations of growth and lineage

expansion. Participants explained the symbolic significance of *shede tsowi* in relation to abundance, fertility, and multiplicity:

Shede tsowi symbolizes abundance, fertility, and multiplicity in all aspects (ATC-A-1-3 interview, July 19-24, 2024).

The findings further reveal a blending of indigenous symbolism and biblical imagery in reinforcing fertility beliefs. Shede tsowi functions as a cosmological symbol of continuity, prosperity, and generational growth within Ada twin rites. Refer to plate 8 below.



Plate 8: Shede tsɔwi (Elaeis guineensis Jacq.)
Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Theme Four: Food

Sub-Theme One: Dudue tso ba (Parkia biglobosa)

The findings revealed that Dudue tso ba, the leaves of Parkia biglobosa and Parkia filicoidea (African locust bean tree), functions as a symbolic food supplement for spiritual nourishment, fertility, and health in Ada twin rites (Heuzé et al., 2019). The herb is linked to both human and kuahi dietary practices and is ritually extended to the nourishment of twin spirits. Participants highlighted the spiritual significance of the leaf in nourishing the souls of twins:

The souls of the twins require this leaf… to enhance their spiritual nourishment (ATC-1: ATC-A-4, interviews, January 20 & 27, 2024).

This finding highlights the symbolic relationship between food and spiritual sustenance within Ada cosmology. Dudue tso ba serves as a mediatory substance linking physical nourishment with spiritual vitality and well-being. See Plate 9 below.



Plate 9: Dudue tso ba (Parkia biglobosa and Parkia filicoidea, commonly called African locust leaves)
Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Sub-Theme Two: Miele tso ba (Dialium guineense)

The study revealed that Miele tso ba, the leaves of Dialium guineense (Velvet Tamarind), serves as a symbolic and medicinal source of spiritual sustenance in Ada twin rites (Princewill et al., 2023). Its association with kuahi and the symbolic substitution of leaves for fruits reflect beliefs linking leaves with growth, vitality, and rejuvenation. Respondents emphasized the symbolic importance of leaves in the twin rites, particularly their association with growth, renewal, and vitality:

*Leaves represent growth, rejuvenation, and vitality, making them important in twin rites (*ATC-A-5 & ATC-F-2, interviews, January 20, 2024).

The findings show that Miele tso ba functions not only as nourishment but also as a cultural symbol of renewal, vitality, and spiritual balance within twin rites. Refer to Plate 10 below.



Plate 10: Mielɛ tso ba (The foliage of Velvet Tamarind or Black Velvet Tamarind)
Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Sub-Theme Three: Glemi Tso Ba (Grewia villosa)

The findings showed that Glemi tso ba, the foliage of Grewia villosa (Mallow Raisin), functions as a symbolic food source and medicinal support for the spiritual nourishment of twins (Dev et al., 2017). The herb is integrated into ritual dietary practices to maintain the health and continuity of twin spirits. ATC-A-1-3 explained the protective role of the practice in addressing spiritual conditions affecting the well-being of living twins:

*It offers protection by addressing spiritual ailments that threaten the well-being of the living twins (*ATC-A 1-3, interviews, July 19-27, 2024).
This finding highlights the symbolic understanding of nourishment within Ada cosmology, where food-based herbs support spiritual maintenance and protection. Glemi tso ba therefore functions as a mediatory substance sustaining the life force and well-being of twins. Refer to Plate 11 below.



Plate 11: Glemi tso ba (The foliage of Grewia villosa)
Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Theme Five: Shelter
Sub-Theme One: Takoloma or Ohuenakutso (Aristida diffusa)
The findings revealed that Takoloma or Ohuenakutso (Aristida diffusa), a tough grass species common in African savanna regions (Cerros et al., 2011), plays a specialised role in Ada twin rites as a ritual resource associated with rest, revitalisation, and spiritual continuity. Unlike herbs used for cleansing or nourishment, it symbolically provides a resting space for the spirits of twins. ATC-A-1-3 indicate that the practice serves a protective function by addressing spiritual ailments believed to affect the well-being of living twins (interviews, July 19- 27, 2024).

This finding reflects the symbolic understanding within Ada cosmology that spiritual entities also require renewal and revitalisation. From a symbolic and interpretive anthropological perspective, Takoloma functions as a metaphysical resting medium that sustains the protective role of twin spirits. Refer to Plate 12 below.



Plate 12: Takoloma or Ohuenakutso (Aristida diffusa)
Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Finally, the study revealed that Ada twin rites are structured around a stable but flexible system of essential herbs used consistently in divination and ritual prescriptions. Core herbs such as Ayor tso ba, Foryi tso ba, and Dudue tso ba are central to ritual legitimacy and effectiveness, while others including Nyinyera, Glemi tso ba, Woma, and Sapropro support additional ritual functions. The findings demonstrate that the selection of herbs is systematically organised within indigenous divinatory knowledge, reinforcing the continuity, coherence, and ritual authority of twin rites among the Ada ethnic society

Table 1: Summary of herbs used for Twin rites among the people of Ada.

Category of herbs	Plant's Name in Ada	Scientific Name	Purpose/significance (cultural meaning)
Purification and Blessings	1. Nyinyera	Momordica chirantia	Purification, cleansing, protection.
	2. Woma or Agɔ tso ba	Borassus aethiopum	Cleanliness, spiritual purging, and Protection.
Protection and Healing	1. Atotohugmɛtso	Abrus precatorius	Protection, healing, shielding from harm.
	2. Sapropro	Cynanchum	Spiritual protection, strengthening twin spirits.
	3. Ayor tso ba	Vitellaria paradoxa	Protection, healing properties, Comfort.
Ancestral Mediation and Symbolism	1. Foryi tso ba	Vitex payos	Symbolic and ritual significance, fertility.
	2. Shede tsɔwi	Elaeis guineensis Jacq. (palm nut)	Represents abundance, fertility, and multiplicity.
Food	1. Dudue tso ba	Parkia biglobosa	Spiritual nourishment, well-being.
	2. Mielɛ tso ba	Dialium guineense	Spiritual sustenance, growth, rejuvenation.

	3. Glemi tso ba	Grewia villosa	Botanical nourishment, addressing spiritual ailments.
Shelter	4.Takoloma/Ohuenakutso	Aristida diffusa	Provides bedding for twin spirits, revitalisation.

Source: Fieldwork, 2024/2025

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study revealed that herbs in Ada twin rites function not only as healing materials but also as symbolic agents of purification, protection, sustenance, shelter, and ancestral mediation. Ritual practices such as spiritual bathing, libation, and cleansing reinforce the belief that twins occupy a unique spiritual position within Ada cosmology. Although modernity, Christianity, Islam, and biomedical systems continue to marginalise indigenous herbal practices, these traditions remain culturally relevant. However, weakening indigenous knowledge transmission threatens the continuity of Ada herbal traditions and cultural identity, highlighting the need for documentation, conservation, education, and respectful integration of indigenous knowledge systems.

The study recommends documenting and digitally preserving herbs used in Ada twin rites, including their local names, ritual functions, and symbolic meanings, to prevent the erosion of indigenous knowledge. It further recommends integrating indigenous herbal knowledge into schools, tertiary institutions, and community cultural programmes to strengthen intergenerational knowledge transmission and appreciation of Ada cosmology. Collaboration between traditional practitioners, biomedical professionals, and cultural heritage institutions should also be encouraged to support knowledge exchange and sustain the relevance of Ada twin rites in contemporary society.

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