

Vol. 6(3), pp. 51-64, November 2025  
ISSN: 2026-9153 (Online), 2026-8009(Print)  
© The Author(s), [2025]  
This is an open access article distributed under  
the terms of the CC BY NC ND 4.0 licence.  
<https://journals.iwm.edu.na>  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64375/1t9m8w07>

Date received: 21 October 2025 Date accepted: 27 November 25 Date published: 30 November 2025

## Investigating the Significance of a Wooden Mug “Oshitenga” in the Aawambo Communities

**Leena Ndengu**

The International University of Management (IUM), Windhoek, Namibia

Author correspondence: l.ndengu@ium.edu.na

---

### ABSTRACT

This research focuses on *Oshitenga*, a wooden mug used by the Aawambo communities in Namibia. Aawambo people predominantly located in the Northern part of Namibia especially from regions such as Oshikoto, Oshana, Omusati and Ohangwena. Firstly, the purpose of the study was to investigate the significance of *Oshitenga* in the Aawambo communities. The research aimed to document the craftsmanship and cultural significance of *Oshitenga*, addressing the gap in written literature about its symbolic meaning. The significance of this artefact is explored through its cultural, historical, and social roles. One specific *Oshitenga* housed in the ethnographic collection of the National Museum of Namibia, prompted questions regarding its origin, use, and cultural value. This study pursued to address these questions by engaging museum staff and various Aawambo communities as informants in the study. The sample was comprised of Nine (9) selected participants from the Aawambo communities. Moreover, the study used interviews and content analysis to collect data. Consequently, thematic analysis and document analysis was used to analyze the data. The study shed more light on the traditions of the Aawambo stemming from the use of *Oshitenga* and it revealed that *Oshitenga* plays a multifaceted role beyond its functional purpose as a drinking vessel. While its design and craftsmanship may vary, its significance as a cultural symbol remains constant, representing hospitality and unity. By examining the different forms of *litenga* (plural of *Oshitenga*) and the engravings applied, this study uncovers the traditions tied to the wooden mug and the values it represents in modern Aawambo society. Finally, the study recommends a consultative attitude that makes cultural education a priority. to promote indigenous knowledge. Museums need to continue to engage communities to remain relevant by focusing on building and contributing to the narrative of cultural preservation, identity construction, and heritage transmission.

**Keywords:** Aawambo, Culture, *Oshitenga*, Significance, Wooden mug

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Wooden mugs are a part of cultural heritage in different parts of the globe. In Namibia the wooden mug is widely used amongst the Aawambo communities. Amongst the Aawambo sub-ethnic groups, the wooden mug is referred to as 'Oshitenga' in Oshindonga and as "Eholo" in Oshikwanyama. The item is a mug made from wooden materials which are then carved, engraved, painted and sometimes burned and polished for the finished look. It is a household item that is usually used at events and cultural ceremonies. The item holds more significance than what meets the eye. Apart from the fact that a mug is used for drinking several beverages, the item also holds other related meanings.

The significance in this context refers to establishing the meaning and use of this cultural belonging. This study focused on the past and current uses of the *Oshitenga* in the Aawambo communities. It uncovered details of its ownership, craftsmanship as well as its cultural utility. The study also identifies and describes different forms of *litenga* and uncovers the differences between these forms. Additionally, the study also focused on the different patterns of engravings and their meaning.

There is a movement leaning towards the use of indigenous knowledge as well as a call on museums to redefine their role and add value to society (Earle, 2013). Museums are faced with several challenges, amongst which include difficulties in measuring their impact and meeting their audience needs. Museums have been called to be spaces for dialogue and debate and to be critical of their collections and their presentations (Emmerling, Gupta, Proença, & Biwa, 2021). In addition, they highlighted that for a museum 'to maintain its significance, it will have to undergo new interpretation by every new generation' (Emmerling, Gupta, Proença, & Biwa, 2021). Therefore, to realize the concept of museums being 'spaces of self-identity construction that comes from within the communities' (Gwasira, 2021) more needs to be done to engage communities and get the relevant information. Although faced with a number of challenges, the National Museum of Namibia is dedicated to fulfil its role to conserve, preserve and restore as well as reconnect important historical artefacts with communities (Nghishiko, 2020). The *Oshitenga* that lies in the NMN leaves a lot to be desired in terms of sharing its history and the significance that it holds for the Aawambo. Capturing these stories will tell the history of the item that seems to have been lost and it will also benefit future generations. This study will fill the existing gap in literature that captures the stories and history of *Oshitenga*.

Aawambo used for years and generations, they had some good uses for it. It is worth capturing these stories and the justifications behind them. Its significance may still be applicable to this day and could help strengthen social systems. Additionally, the study contributes to academic inquiry about Indigenous Knowledge Systems to revitalize and strengthen cultural systems. To empower those who want to share these stories and make use of it to advance forward.

The study aimed to understand and document the significance of "Oshitenga" for Aawambo. To explore how it is perceived, and if it is still relevant in contemporary society.

The following research questions were developed for the study.

1. To establish the context in which Oshitenga is used in the Aawambo culture
2. To determine the importance of Oshitenga
3. To identify the different designs and engravings of Oshitenga and their meanings

This paper is an important read for those who want to understand the culture of Aawambo, certain practices associated with the use of Oshitenga and why they are considered essential. It fills a gap in literature by documenting this significance and additionally makes actionable recommendations for the preservation of and conservation of culture.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of wooden mugs goes way back in history, and their importance surpasses practical uses to reflect the culture, history, and identity of the communities creating and using them. Among the Aawambo communities, the *Oshitenga* has had a special place in Namibia. It is used in traditional ceremonies and social gatherings. Wooden mugs have been around for centuries and are still a popular choice for many people. Fred (2024) argues that wooden mugs are fashionable given the trend towards all-natural products and sustainability. Apart from being very pleasing to look at they are also incredibly durable. Wood is a renewable source of material, meaning it can be harvested without depleting the environment. This makes wooden cups an excellent choice for those who want to reduce their environmental impact. There are many reasons for this, including the fact that they are biodegradable, eco-friendly, and look great. (Fred, 2024).

Wooden mugs are used and part of many traditions around the world. However, more than the actual use of being utilized as a mug used for drinking, wooden mugs show the character of that place. A wooden mug could give information about history, culture and other related information. For instance, in Finland they have a wooden mug which is referred to as a *Kuska*. It is common knowledge that a *Kuska* should never be washed and whoever tries to wash a *Kuksa*, it led to misfortune according to the demigods of outdoor activities (Talka, 2018). Therefore, there is a code of conduct, and a user manual associated with the use of these items in different traditions, there are also beliefs, superstitions and taboos that go along with it. Additionally, it is universally accepted that;

*"It is not recommended to drink coffee out of most wooden mugs because wood is a porous material that could absorb some of the liquid, leading to a weakening of the mug's structure and potentially leaving a woody aftertaste in the drink. Additionally, the steam produced when hot liquids are poured into the mug can cause the wood to warp and become misshapen. Bacteria may also build up in the wood, making it an unhygienic option for drinking beverages".* (Fred, 2024).

In recent decades, cultural heritage has been one of the major interesting research subjects due to the unique and authentic experiences that it provides. In this case of the Aawambo in Namibia, there is a gap that exists in documenting practices and to have these adequately addressed in literature. Information about the use and significance of *Oshitenga* is rather orally passed on from older to younger generations which could be problematic in preserving the culture. As a result, this represents an opportunity for research and contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Therefore, this research seeks to address this gap and have the information captured and documented to close the gap in literature. Ultimately, the study contributes to a broader understanding of cultural heritage of Aawambo in Namibia. A research project like this would fill that gap through documentation of the significance of *Oshitenga*, adding to the ever-broader understanding of Namibia's cultural heritage.

This research becomes important not only for preserving Aawambo traditions, but even more so in showing how these cultural artefacts can create social cohesion and a sense of belonging among its community members. Moreover, by exploring the current validity of the said traditional artefact, this study tries to depict how such indigenous knowledge may continue to bloom within today's contemporary setting.

While there is increasingly more information on the cultural heritage of the Aawambo people in general, there are very few studies related to *Oshitenga* for example the work of Rodin 1985. Most of the information available about this wooden mug has been obtained through oral tradition, which increases the possibility of losing knowledge with time and along generations. In the case

of a complete absence of comprehensive written records, there will be little that researchers can access in the future unless further study is conducted.

While the works of Rodin (1985) and Gwasira (2021) form part of the growing body of literature on Namibian cultural heritage, too little has been focused on Aawambo artefacts to really place *Oshitenga* into perspective. This research paper thus sets out to fill this gap in the literature by giving a detailed explanation of the *Oshitenga* from its historical roots up to its present-day importance. Other research could also be done to investigate the probable economic gains from tourism and artisanal craftsmanship promotion of *Oshitenga*, when considering the probable cultural and economic advantages for the communities producing it. *Oshitenga* is of cultural importance for Aawambo communities, and it may be threatened by alternative form of utensils and an attitude that discard traditional way of life. Museums and institutions of learning are particularly relevant in the documentation and promotion of indigenous knowledge systems. However, there is still an urgent call for more detailed studies that should express the different and specific roles which *Oshitenga* plays among the various Aawambo groups. Therefore, future research should be directed at documenting oral histories, craftsmanship, and symbolic meanings of *Oshitenga* before those traditions get lost in time. Furthermore, interdisciplinary studies on *Oshitenga* regarding their application to modern-day culture would serve in ensuring this important cultural artifact is preserved. This research can form the basis for devising methods that will preserve not only the physical artefacts but also the traditional cultural heritage represented in objects such as *Oshitenga* for future generations.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For this study, a qualitative research approach has been adopted, considering that the study focuses on cultural and symbolic aspects of *Oshitenga*. This method is most appropriate for understanding the intricate meanings and cultural significance of *Oshitenga* as well as capturing the views of those who have acquired traditional knowledge concerning its use.

The study employed an exploratory research design to gain insights into the significance of *Oshitenga* to Aawambo. Exploratory studies have a flexible nature and are instrumental in investigating a subject that may not have been studied or documented as such. A combination of secondary data and research interviews was used to gather information on the research questions. Therefore, through this research design the study aimed to contribute to bridging the knowledge gap on the historical and cultural significance of *Oshitenga* and enhance the discovery of new insights of how it is perceived across different Aawambo communities. The target population was made up of officials from the NMN in the Ethnography department. The other section of the target population is made up of the wider communities of the Aawambo. More specifically, the study aimed to include community elders, traditional leaders knowledgeable in the practice of *Oshitenga*. Other contributors who will have a stake are the museum staff; more specifically, those in the Ethnography department at the NMN as part of their role in the exhibition, preservation and education of cultural artefacts.

The study employed a non-probability sampling methodology with a selection of purposive and convenience sampling. The sample size of this study is total of 9 informants who were interviewed. The selection of participants was done using purposive and convenience sampling and participants were included in the study based on their knowledge of cultural and traditional matters of Aawambo. A qualitative research procedure was suitable for the study as the interest was on obtaining rich information which can only be obtained from people who have knowledge about the meaning and significance of *Oshitenga*.

The research procedure involved two main phases: interviews and secondary research.

1. Interviews: The study made use of convenience sampling to identify participants in the study who are knowledgeable about the subject matter but also easily accessible. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants in the Aawambo communities and from the NMN. Details of each interview were transcribed and analysed.
2. Secondary Research: The study made use of published materials related to the study such as books, journals, blog posts and any other useful published related work. Secondary research helped in the understanding of the greater cultural relevance of *Oshitenga* and such artefacts across cultures.

A semi-structured interview guide was the primary means of data collection. The open-ended questions in the interview guide allowed freedom; hence, participants had an opportunity to share personal stories, cultural insight, and traditional knowledge. The secondary review of data was done from museum catalogues, and historical records. These supplemented the primary data and served to provide a greater background to the research topic.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data collected from interviews. This approach involves the identification of recurrent themes and patterns within the interview transcripts. Secondary data was analysed as a form of content analysis, focusing on how *Oshitenga* and other cultural artefacts are discussed in literature. This helped triangulate findings from interviews and provided a comprehensive view of the significance of the artefact. Permission was obtained from NMN as a key institution selected for the study. Additionally, participants of the study participated willingly with the desire to reach the objectives of the study. Consent from the participants was obtained and they were provided with a clear explanation of all that was required from them as part of participating in the study. Participation was voluntary, and the participants were informed of their rights should they wish to withdraw at any stage of the research process.

#### **4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

##### ***Various Forms of Oshitenga***

There is a variety of *iitenga* available, in their various forms they can be characterised as unique and as different as their crafters. The different forms are a clear testimony of the valuable intangible knowledge and skills required to come up with the various forms. Traditional knowledge and skills are used in the making of *Oshitenga*, knowing which type of wood to use, how it is dried, the curving and its tools, the decorations of it and much more. The skills used to make these items have been passed on from generation to generation. Primarily because the passing on of these valuable skills is also associated with certain values, that is essential in the preservation of cultural heritage. These skills and knowledge are mainly passed on through oral communication, through demonstration and during social gatherings.



Figure 1: Various forms of *litenga*

Photograph by: Author

Figure 1 is a visual demonstration of the variety of *litenga*. There are many forms from small, medium to large with different engravings. It also shows the transition over the years, indicative of the various forms in different years because of the different functionalities meant for different events like weddings, festivals and spiritual practices.

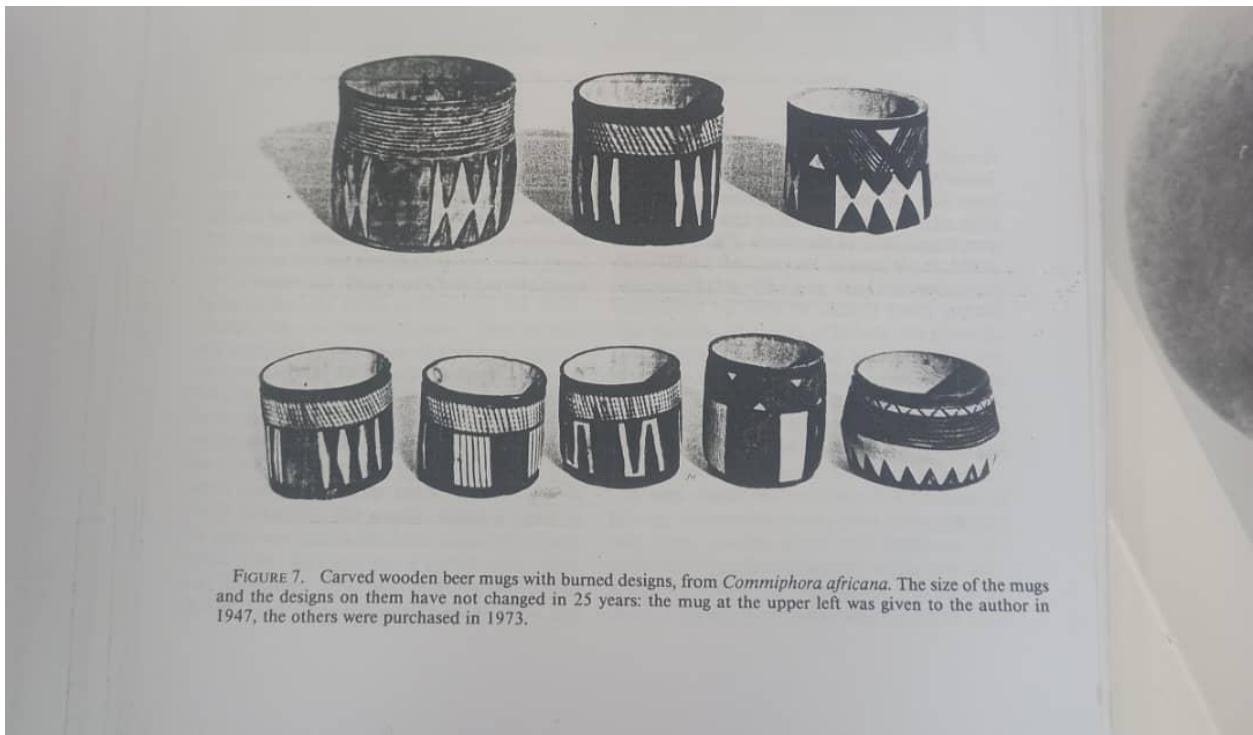


FIGURE 7. Carved wooden beer mugs with burned designs, from *Commiphora africana*. The size of the mugs and the designs on them have not changed in 25 years: the mug at the upper left was given to the author in 1947, the others were purchased in 1973.

Figure 2: *Oshitenga* in 1947 and 1973 Picture adopted from (Rodin, 1985, p.24)



Figure 3: *Oshitenga* from the Hilton Craft open market in Windhoek 2024.

Pictures taken by author at the open market in November 2024

Figure 2 and 3 is a comparison of the transition of the Oshitenga over the years. Figure 2 shows what was common in 1947 and 1973 as documented in Rodins' book (1985) in comparison to what is normally found at the open markets where *Oshitenga* is sold. Figure 3 was taken at the open market near Hilton hotel in Windhoek where cultural items and souvenirs are sold to tourists in the year 2024. In figure 3, on the far left an item such as this would go for a price of N\$80.00 whereas the one in the middle would cost around N\$120 and the one on the far right is priced at N\$250.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### Cultural uses of Oshitenga

*Oshitenga* is a household item that is widely used in the Aawambo rural and urban communities. It is mainly used during events and ceremonies of celebratory nature. Its significance depicts hospitality, respect, honor and unity. The interviews revealed that *Oshitenga* has traditionally been used during important social and ceremonial occasions, such as weddings, *etalo lyelugo* (house and kitchen viewing), and other communal gatherings. All participants emphasised that *Oshitenga* is deeply embedded in their customs, symbolising respect, acceptance, honor, hospitality, strength and community unity.

One participant noted that, "*In the past, you could not host a wedding without serving drinks in Oshitenga. It was a sign of respect to your guests and elders*". These sentiments were echoed by another elder from the Aandonga subethnic, who noted that *Oshitenga* was traditionally used to serve traditional brews (*oshitanga and omalovu gwiilya*), during large feasts and celebrations in various communities. *Oshitenga* is used primarily to serve drinks to elders or special guests, highlighting its role in demonstrating respect. Additionally, *Oshitenga* is used during gatherings and in this way its significance can be described as a way of bringing people together, symbolising unity within the community. The use of *Oshitenga* during such festivities was believed to unify people and symbolise harmony in the community. It does that because of the values associated with it such as togetherness and strength in community. Furthermore, its role in spiritual and ancestral rituals was also noted by participants, for example when it is used at weddings to perform rituals of connecting with ancestors to be part of the wedding ceremony.

One participant recalled and shared memories of a common practice during weddings which is still much prevalent until today. During a wedding ceremony, when one is serving *omalovu gwiilya*, a traditional brew to the bride and groom they will use *Oshitenga* in which it will be filled to its capacity until it overflows. It is said to be a common practice amongst the Aawambo that not only honors the ones getting married, but it is also an indication of elevating those that are getting married to the next level of adulthood. Additionally, the said practice is meant to call upon ancestors to participate and be part of that important event. Therefore, the overflow of the drink is so it can touch the ground in the calling upon of ancestors and sharing the beverages with the ancestors so they can be part of the festivities. The overflowing of the drink also signifies abundance for the couple. On that account, *Oshitenga* serves various functions which are explained in the next paragraphs.

### Drinking

Aawambo mainly had their household items made from local woods. This was convenient as the raw materials were widely accessible and therefore, they would make various household items out of wood such as *iikwatelw yopepata* (household utensils); *uuyaha* (plates), *omatemba* (plates), *oshini*, *omihi*, *omatenga gokukandela* (utensils for milk) and many other items. "Many household containers and utensils are carved from local woods by men' (Rodin, 1985, p. 24). "In 1947, nearly all beer and wine were served in these carved cups (Rodin, 1985, p. 24)". It is popular

to serve marula or other fruit wines or brandy (ombike). In the Aawambo tradition the wood carving and this kind of craftsmanship is designated to be done by men. Therefore, a wooden mug is one of those items Aawambo would make for household use and it is used for drinking various beverages.

### **Celebration**

At many celebrations, *Oshitenga* will take centre stage in serving, honoring and granting respect to participants of the gathering. Used in celebrations of happy nature to serve beverages during an event where family and friends will be gathered. Mostly each household would own and have several *litenga* to serve this purpose.

### **Rituals**

*Oshitenga* is an item that helps in preserving practices of rituals such as honoring and calling on of ancestors of which will be difficult to do in the absence of *Oshitenga*. It is also used in performing healing rituals by traditional healers.

### **Socializing**

Gatherings are common in any society, as they get together they enjoy their leisure time. Making traditional brews, relaxing and having fun and often served in *Oshitenga* an item that often selected and respected to be in their midst. As a result of these gatherings and the use of *Oshitenga*, this is then important in creating connections, bonds of friendship, peace, unity and togetherness the very fabrics that are essential for a well-functioning society..

### **Strength**

The study revealed that *Oshitenga* is made from wood that is carefully selected; it should be light in weight but strong. Commonly made from the *Commiphora Africana* plant species. Which becomes an indication of its strength and endurance that characterizes and demonstrates resilience. As a result, it becomes a symbol of strength because the wood is selected for its durability therefore indicating tenacity.

### **Conflict resolution**

Participants indicated that *Oshitenga* was historically used to restore harmony amongst people who may have a misunderstanding or have grieved each other. It would then be used to facilitate the process of forgiveness by serving the grieved individuals in one *Oshitenga* and establishing that interaction between them. Because they are sharing one *Oshitenga* in which they are drinking they will have to pass it on to each other. Consequently, through the drinking process of using *Oshitenga* they find it easy to relate to one another and perhaps through remembering the values associated with its use they would rather quickly come to a compromise and eventually restore peace.

### **Medical purposes**

Wood with its healing properties can also be an appropriate tool which is used to administer other traditional medicine. This can also be because of its cultural significance, its design and its spiritual representation can be a vessel for traditional healing. Traditional healers use *Oshitenga* to administer healing through the serving of medicinal concoctions.

### **Satisfy hunger and thirst**

There are large variations of the forms of *litenga* and some are rather big and large and some would have multiple openings or attachments. Therefore, the creations of some *litenga* is aimed

at accommodating those who would be extremely hungry or thirsty so they can be served with an appropriate utensil that matches hunger or thirst.

### **Souvenirs**

In view of Oshitenga's artistic nature which is made up of beautiful designs and décor made with traditional knowledge and skills it becomes an attractive item for many who collect it so that they can own it as a souvenir. Of recent that has become a common practice for domestic and international visitors in Namibia.

### **Symbolism of the Engravings**

The results of the study indicated that the symbolism of the engravings on Oshitenga is decorated with geometrical styles. Across Aawambo, the engravings on the wooden mugs carry deep cultural meanings that may often represent fertility, protection, unity, family ties, infinity and ancestral connection. The designs of geometrical configurations are said to be a representation of unitary form, symbolizing harmony. It was explained, for instance, by the participants that a type of carvings that go in geometrical patterns, symbolising fertility and continuation of lineage. An elder explained, "*These patterns are not just for decorations; they carry with it the history of our families and remind us of our responsibilities to continue the traditions of our ancestors*" It was also noted that other additions of the engravings on the cup are also to enhance its aesthetic appeal. The engravings also serve as identifiers of the different groups or the families that make use of them. For instance, a sub-group may have its own form of pattern or style of engraving which reflects its history and cultural identity.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS**

The findings of the study have the following implications.

### ***Implications to theory***

Oshitenga remains a powerful symbol of respect, hospitality, and unity in Aawambo communities. It is primarily used during ceremonial occasions, where it serves as a reminder of the community's shared values and connection to their ancestors. The traditional uses of Oshitenga can be summed up in as; a drinking utensil, used in celebrations, performing rituals, used as a form of socializing, indicates strength and unity, it can be used by traditional healers (ovayakuli), can be used to satiate hunger and thirst and it's used in conflict resolution. The intricate engravings on Oshitenga carry deep cultural meanings, reflecting each sub-tribe's history, spiritual beliefs, and social values.

### ***Implications for Management, Policy and Practice***

The practical use of Oshitenga has significantly declined due to modernisation, urbanisation, and the availability of modern alternatives. It is also noted with concern that the intangible cultural heritage presents challenges in its preservation. Fewer artisans are skilled in crafting Oshitenga, and younger generations are less connected to its cultural significance. Other limiting factors can be attributed to the introduction of new laws protecting plant species.

### ***Implications for Future Research***

There is potential to revitalise the use of Oshitenga through cultural education, tourism, and the adaptation of traditional designs to suit modern tastes. By integrating Oshitenga into cultural festivals, tourism, and modern artistic forms, Aawambo communities can ensure its continued relevance and preserve the cultural values it represents. Additionally, Museums as custodians of

cultural heritage has a key role to play in its preservation as well as research and education. All these could be potential research areas.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This research has explored the cultural, symbolic, and historical significance of *Oshitenga* within the Aawambo communities, drawing on the perspectives of individuals from various subethnic groups and analysing how this traditional wooden mug continues to embody important cultural values. The findings of the study demonstrate that, although the practical use of *Oshitenga* is diminishing in contemporary society, its role as a symbol of hospitality, respect, and unity remains *deeply embedded in the Aawambo culture*.

The key findings suggest that the engravings and craftsmanship carried by *Oshitenga* have rich cultural meanings, which may be not much different for each subethnic group but similar and may be differentiated rather by totem. Subsequently, decorations have connections and make references to community, ancestry, and social cohesion. Then again, modernization has introduced various tests: a shift towards modern utensils, a rapidly reducing number of artisans skilled in making *Oshitenga*, disconnection of the younger generation with traditions, protection of plant species culminating in its reduced use in everyday life. Despite such challenges, there are several opportunities in which *Oshitenga* may regain relevance to contemporary society. *Oshitenga* can be relevant by making it part of cultural education, using *Oshitenga* in tourism, incorporating it as part of cultural events and ceremonies and making it a major theme in museum education. The linking of tradition to modernity will make the values embodied in *Oshitenga* relevant for future generations.

Besides, museums and institutions of learning also have a key role in the documentation and preservation of the cultural heritage of *Oshitenga* including its aspects of intangible cultural heritage. The museum can represent the culture of Aawambo people in a more informative way by capturing the full context of use, if this is done through community consultative engagement, hence contributing to the continued preservation of indigenous knowledge systems.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed to ensure the preservation and revitalisation of *Oshitenga* within Aawambo communities:

1. Cultural Educational Initiatives: To make cultural education in schools a priority where it is well integrated to pass on lessons on the significance of *Oshitenga*. Some schools have introduced the Traditional Life Skills programme (TLSP), which aims to promote and facilitate the transfer of traditional life skills, values, norms and customs from the adults in each community to learners. This idea could be extended to other schools in the country whereby elders and artisans could be made an important part of the education curriculum to share their knowledge, including the history, craftsmanship, and symbolic meanings associated with the wooden mugs. This would help younger generations reconnect with their cultural heritage. As indicated in the interviews there is already a disconnect and a loss in the intangible knowledge associated with the use, significance and craftsmanship of *Oshitenga*. Programs such as these will help in providing the following benefits.
  - (1) Promote parental involvement and strengthen the relationship between the school and the community.
  - (2) Reduce barriers between different cultures and promote tolerance for cultural diversity

- (3) Develop a sense of pride within learners for their cultural heritage and thereby keep their culture alive.
- (4) Promote a creative and entrepreneurial attitude among the learners and equip them with practical knowledge and skills.
2. Museum Exhibitions and Documentation: Museums have an important role to play as custodians of cultural heritage and researchers, conservators and educators. At the same time museums do not have to work in isolation but create platforms to enable social participation and co-curation. A consultative attitude will help to develop comprehensive exhibitions about *Oshitenga* in collaboration with Aawambo communities to ensure that their historical, cultural, and social context is represented regarding the collection. The documentation process should be done with the involvement of community members so that when exhibited, the complete relevance of the artefact is preserved for posterity. Additionally, museum exhibitions should be interactive and cater for different age groups.
3. Craftsmanship Sustenance: There is a need to support traditional artisans so that they are valued, recognized, motivated and continue with the work production of *Oshitenga*. This could be done by providing programs that will conserve the skills needed to make *Oshitenga*. These could also include funding workshops where the young will learn the traditional way from the experienced artisans, thus ensuring some form of continuity regarding this kind of craftsmanship. Therefore, proper investment is essential to empower communities to harness economic potential from their cultural heritage.
4. Promotion of Cultural Tourism: Plans to showcase and promote *Oshitenga* as a representation of the Aawambo could be done to add value to tourism initiatives. *Oshitenga* is worth promoting as a symbol of Namibian cultural heritage through tourism initiatives. Workshops or demonstrations on how to carve *Oshitenga* can be included in the cultural tour so that tourists will understand its meaning and witness the craftsmanship in action. The idea of *Oshitenga* being a typical souvenir item also carries much potential and could appeal to those with a sustainable eye. Other activities related to improving livelihoods for local communities and at the same time providing value for visitors should be further explored as culture plays an important role for economic development.
5. Cultural Festivals and Events: Events celebrating the Aawambo traditions and the use of *Oshitenga* can be used to reinforce its importance. Community-led cultural festivals in which *Oshitenga* is utilized in the performance of traditional ceremonies would yet again serve as a tool for both education, emphasise traditional values as well as instill cultural pride in the younger generations.
6. Making the use of *Oshitenga* relevant to present-day: *Oshitenga* could be made relevant in modern life, artisans could consider designs and other methods that can easily adapt and respond to contemporary demand without compromising its values. Presenting a contemporary expression of the wooden mug for use both as a functional item and a decorative one will not only retain its cultural essence but could affect its popularity and longevity while appealing to modern tastes.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper would like to acknowledge participants of this research including the National Museum of Namibia as well as Dr. Nashilongweshipwe Sakaria of the University of Namibia for their support in this project.

## REFERENCES

NSA), N. S. (2023). *Namibia 2023 Population and Housing Census Report*. Windhoek: Namibia Statistics Agency.

Earle, W. (2013). Cultural Education: Redefining the Role of Museums in the 21st Century. *Sociology Compass*, 7(7), 533-546. Retrieved August 3, 2024, from <https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/soc4.12050>

Emmerling, L., Gupta, L., Proen  a, L., & Biwa, M. (2021). *Museum Futures*. Berlin: T U R I A + K A N T.

Fred, F. (2024, February 21). *Is It Safe to Drink from Wooden Cups?* Retrieved July 02, 2024, from Wooden Earth: <https://www.woodenearth.com/blogs/wooden-blog/can-you-drink-from-wooden-cups-safely>

Gwasira, G. (2021). Re-Presenting Ethnicity in the Owela museum Windhoek Namibia. In L. Emmerling, L. Gupta, L. Proen  a, & M. Biwa, *Museum Futures* (p. 409). Wien - Berlin: Turia + Kant.

Havlicek, L. (2024). *Forest Homes*. Retrieved from Forest Homes <https://www.foresthomesstore.com/blogs/decor-for-wellbeing/use-of-wooden-materials-at-home>.

Khushveer, K. (2023). Role of libraries and Museums to preserve indigenous knowlege and cultural URAL heritage. *GAP Bodhi Taru a global Journal of Humanities*, 48.

Nghishiko, J. N. (2020). *Anniversary Publivcation for the Museum Association of Namibia 1990-2020 Making Museums Matter*. Windhoek: Museum Association.

Otto-Reiner, A. (2007). *From Landesmuseum to National Museum of Namibia: A Chronology of an African Museum*. Windhoek: The national Museum of Namibia.

Rodin, R. (1985). *The Ethnobotany of the Kwanyama Ovambos*. St. Louis: Missouri Botanical Gardens.

Siiskonen, H. (1990). *Trade and Socioeconomic Change in Ovamboland 1850 - 1906*. Helsinki: Vammalan Kirjapaino Oy.

Talka, J. (2018, April 05). *KUKSA – Crafting the traditional wooden cup in Finnish culture, food and heritage* . Retrieved July 02, 2024, from Finland Naturally Experiences: <https://finlandnaturallyexperiences.com/kuksa-crafting-the-traditional-wooden-cup-in-finnish-culture-food-and-heritage/>

<https://finlandnaturally.com/finnish-culture-food-heritage/kuksa-crafting-the-traditional-wooden-cup/>

Tengö, M., Hill, R., Malmer, P., Raymond, C. M., Spierenburg, M., Danielsen, F., . . . Folke, C. (2017). Weaving knowledge systems in IPBES, CBD and beyond—lessons learned for sustainability. *ScienceDirect*, 26-27, 17-25.