

KOLA NUT IN BONACHRISTUS UMEOGU'S IGBO METAPHYSICS

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Abstract

Kola nut is a white or red coloured nut contained in a pod as a fruit of a tree called Kola acuminata.. Kola nut is the heartbeat of Igbo culture and tradition. It has a symbolic status in Igbo metaphysics. Obviously, the reality and symbolic importance attached to kola nut in Igbo world view have, in the recent years, drawn the attention of many Igbo scholars. In Igbo world view, symbols are generally used to express realities and beliefs. Kola nut occupies an important position in Igbo world of being and practice. It belongs to the mysteries of Igbo history, culture and tradition. It symbolizes the well acclaimed Igbo culture of hospitality and manifests goodwill. It serves also as a link between human and the divine. Against this backdrop, this research reveals the contributions of Umeogu's metaphysical position on kola nut as a valuable symbolic reality that is capable of engendering the creation and constitution of Igbo science and arts. Arguably, pointing out that the recognition of gender inequality in its doctrine is an impediment towards the establishment of Igbo science and arts. Using the method of hermeneutics, this study argues that our political and economic woes could not be healed through the study of kola nut as posited, regardless of the unity, hospitality, tolerance and goodwill kola nut represents in Igbo land as Umeogu emphasized, in so far as it retains gender discrimination in this globalized world.

Keywords: Philosophy, Kolanutology, Assessment, Igbo and Metaphysics

Introduction

Umeogu envisages Igbo man as a *homo symbolicus*- a being that comprehends reality through the aid of symbol. He contends that “the Igbo African thinks in symbols, with symbols, and through symbols. Hence, the system of thought of Igbo African is symbolismic” (Umeogu, 2003:5). Symbol is of course an analytic tool in Igbo cosmology. It is used indispensably whenever reality is been explicated or analyzed. In Igbo world according to (Agama, 2020:22), “symbolism strives to condition reality by integrating it into a system of meaning.” As such, Paul Tillich views symbol as having an intrinsic connection with the reality it expresses or symbolizes. A symbol however, is linked to the reality it expresses. Accordingly, (Omoregbe, 1993:190) argues that, “there is an intrinsic connection between a symbol and the reality it symbolizes.”

Kola nut as universal symbol in Igbo world of experience has become a tool for exploring and explaining reality in Igbo cosmology. It is obvious that Igbo culture is incomplete without the ceremony of kola nut. It is a symbol that is common among Igbo people both at home and in diaspora. Umeogu picks up this symbol as an indispensable tool towards his metaphysics. Hitherto, people have not looked at kola nut from a perspective outside its socio-religious significance in Igbo world; its relevance is more or less limited therein. However, Umeogu views kola nut as a versatile symbol that is not only relevance in Igbo socio-religious environment, but also in all aspects of Igbo life. His metaphysics of kola nut centers on a philosophical interpretation of the symbolisms of kola nut especially towards establishing Igbo science and arts. This is drawn from the point that kola nut is a representation of the Igbo world; no aspect of Igbo world cannot be reached through kola nut. In his words, Kola nut is “the microcosm of Igbo macrocosmic world” (Umeogu, 2019:29).

However, since kola nut stands for all things in Igbo world, Umeogu first of all, explains its origin has been gotten from the forest and domesticated as a sacred symbol. He goes on to argue that Igbo man is a being that comprehends reality through symbol. Symbol is for him, an essential epistemic tool. Nevertheless, it is further established that there is a crucial and undeniable link between a symbol and the reality it represent. Hence forth, metaphysics becomes a science of symbolisms as it tends towards revealing or disclosing the intrinsic or true nature of reality. In this vein, kola nut as a metaphysical tool moves towards disclosing the true nature of reality in Igbo worldview. Umeogu stands on this capacity of kola nut to investigate the true nature of reality in Igbo cosmology and establishes his metaphysics of kola nut. This Umeogu's metaphysics of kola nut which he names “Kolanutology” delves into exploring and explaining reality in Igbo perspective. Kolanutology moves from the socio-religious significance of kola nut to its academic and epistemic relevance in Igbo world of experience. Accordingly, (Umeogu et al, 2019:1) argue that, “If further exploited to the fullest, the communion of *Oji* Igbo can engineer indigenous science and art capable of utilizing its humanistic essence to restore value to a fast degenerating evolution of our society.”

However, Kola nut as a metaphysical symbol reflects the nature of reality in Igbo world. Kolanutology as such, becomes a philosophical investigation into the symbolic nature of kola nut in Igbo cosmology. Kolanutology investigates the nature of reality as kola nut symbolizes in Igbo perspective. It does not study kola nut ordinarily as fruit from kola nut tree because in effect, it is something beyond it. Thus, (Chidume, 2014: 550) contends that, “the importance of Kola nut to the Igbo nation is something socio-ritualistic. It transcends biological and physical dimensions; it extends far beyond the known world into the unknown world of the departed ancestors, spirit beings, and deities.” Kolanutology rather, studies kola nut from its “symbolismic” nature in the words of Umeogu or what it stands for in Igbo cosmology. To this effect(Umeogu, 2019:20) states that, “...as a professor of philosophy and metaphysics, I want to use the kola nut to tell the story of Igbo reality, that is, to give Igbo reality a philosophical expression.” It is pertinent therefore, to examine the concept and nature of kola nut in

order to understand Umeogu's metaphysical perspective especially towards the establishment of Igbo science and arts.

The Understanding of Kola Nut

Kola nut is a nut contained in a pod as a fruit of a tree called Kola *acuminata* and kola *nitida*. According to (Umeogu, 2019:23), “it is a white or yellow or red coloured nut or seed of the tree of the proximate genus, kola, with the specific difference of Kola *Acuminata* or Kola *Atrophora*...” Each pod contains from two to five kola nuts. It is a West African indigenous tree. (Umeogu, 2019:23) in trying to explain the origin of kola nut, he states that, “Kola nut in its universal and/or genetic origin is a tree found by creation or evolution in the tropical and sub-tropical rain forests in the heart of the world, with special reference to the heart of Africa.” Amidst the species of kola: Kola *acuminata*, Kola *nitida*, and *Garcinia* kola famous in Nigeria, this study focuses on the genus proxima of kola known as kola *acuminata*. Kola *acuminata* typologically is the Igbo kola nut commonly known as *Oji* Igbo in Igbo land. Other species of kola nut are culturally irrelevant in Igbo socio-cultural world. To this effect, (Anidobe and Uzoalor, 2010) opine that Kola *acuminata* is the only kola that is recognized in Igbo rituals and ceremonies. This follows from the fact that *Oji* Igbo- kola *acuminata* can be in lobes or lobeless. The number of lobes is always clear whenever it is broken. The number of this lobes or halves or cotyledons is essential to Igbo man. Other species of kola is not regarded in Igbo world because their lobes are insignificant in Igbo socio-cultural world.

Umeogu observes that kola nut resembles human heart when taken out of the pod. For him, this very nature of kola nut symbolizes something of great significance in Igbo cosmology in terms of unism and communalism. Some sages in Igbo land state that kola nut tree is the first tree that was created by God and as such, it possesses a sacred nature. In contrast, Umeogu believes that Kola nut is a wild fruit that is domesticated by the Igbo people. In his view, kola nut migrated through myth and commerce into the Igbo cultural home. He argues that Igbo people dedicated kola nut to sacred use and disconnected it from profane use. It is because of this reason that kola nut is regarded as a sacred fruit and tree in Igbo land. (Anidobe and Uzoalor, 2010: 2) note that, “because of its sacredness, the dry wood of kola nut is not used as fire wood in Igbo land.”

Furthermore, Umeogu avers that holiness is the essential nature of kola nut in Igbo land. Its transcendental nature for him consists in its ability to represent sacred communion. He further reveals that this nature and transcendental nature of kola nut veil it with a nature and transcendental nature that can be influenced by thought, word and action. Kola nut possesses a vital force that can influence the gods, the ancestors and the people. According to (Obiajulu and Nnajiolor, 2015:86), “the Igbo African people use kola nut to compel compliance of listening ear of God whenever kola nut is raised up in prayer.” A prayer made with kola nut is efficacious and influential. That is, kola nut possesses a sacred nature that engenders its sacred use and reverence in Igbo cosmology.

Kolanut and the Establishment of New Bodies of Knowledge

In metaphysics, the central focus is on the nature of reality and the relationship between them. According to (Aja, 2015:106), “Igbo accounts of reality represent a two-world theory: the sensible world and the invisible or spirit world.” It is evident that these two worlds are in nature different but they are mutually connected. To buttress this fact, (Aja, 2015:106) contends that, “the two worlds dovetail.” In the same vein, (Omogegbe, 1990:22) states that, “these two worlds although different in nature are not completely separated, for there are links and interactions between them.” Umeogu envisages kola nut communion in Igbo land as capable of uniting the material and immaterial world. In his word, “... it creates a seamless interaction between the material and the immaterial world, the physical and meta-physical” (Umeogu et al, 2019:1). This portrays the unavoidable connection between metaphysics and other fields of study in Igbo cosmology. As such, Umeogu attempts to explore other areas of life, physical and non-physical, through a devoted study of kola nut in Igbo metaphysics. Just like metaphysics is the root of all sciences so kola nut stands as the pathway to all knowledge in Igbo world view. Umeogu believes through kolanutology, in the connectedness and relatedness of reality in Igbo world view. Following his assertion that kola nut “is the microcosm of Igbo macrocosmic world” (Umeogu, 2019:29), (Umeogu et al, 2019:1) contends that, “the Igbo kola nut perhaps portends an untapped potential capable of influencing and inventing her own science and arts.” After all, what is appreciated as science and arts today are nothing but “offshoots of both the communal and the collective life of a certain people which follows a unique pattern of man's logical attempt to overcome his challenges, subdue his universe and master his environment” (Umeogu et al, 2019:1). The implications of Kola nut studies in Umeogu's metaphysics center on the establishment of new bodies of knowledge that are original to Igbo people. This ideology is nevertheless brainy, *ipso facto* it stems from a conception that kola nut epistemologically stands for all things in Igbo cosmology. As such, Kola nut as a metaphysical symbol embodies Igbo perspective of the world as it touches their life. To this effect, (Umeogu, 2019:61) argues that, “...the kola nut is a multivocal symbol with substantial sense and reference that connects to and is connected by the vital areas of human life in the world.” This for him is “why the kola nut as a substantial multidimensional symbol creates and constitutes Igbo Science, Arts, etc” (Umeogu, 2019:61). This follows from Umeogu's observation that kola nut tradition in Igbo cosmology is not something limited to socio-religious sphere of Igbo life. For him, it encompasses the totality of life. This areas of knowledge engendered by the study of kola nut are for Umeogu original and integrates Igbo moral and religious world view as opposed to Western and modern individualistic and liberal world where the end justifies the means.

Nevertheless, the result of this original science and arts “will be one which integrates the values of the material and immaterial world in social cooperation and solidarity, integrity, justice, equity, peace, sacredness of life in the universal perspective” (Umeogu et al, 2019:2). This could be justified through critical exploration of the symbolic nature of kola nut in Igbo cosmology with regard to some core academic fields like religion, geography, anthropology, sociology and politics. In this regard, this work attempts to

examine kola nut and the being of God, Kola nut and the nature of the world, Kola nut and the nature of man, and kola nut and the structure of the society, with a view of observing how successful Umeogu is in establishing new bodies of knowledge through kolanutology.

Kola Nut and the Being of God

It is obvious that the argument about God's existence is still one of the most enduring difficult arguments. This is because; God cannot be perceived or even be conceived like other particular things. God as a being is immaterial and therefore, non-sensible. No one can argue anything about God with the same amount of certainty you would talk of other material particular things and be believed. Some believe that nothing about God is certain but speculation. This follows from the fact that no one can contend to have touched or felt God as he would touch or feel a neighbour. However, the Igbo people experiences a power that is manifesting itself in the world and the natural response is to look for the giver of experienced reality or the divinity whose power is being experienced. What is the power behind and still within the experienced events? The search for that divinity or the power manifesting itself in the world is the source of Igbo religion. It is this search for the giver of experiences that compels the Igbo to go beyond the material to the spiritual world. Without self-transcendence the Igbo would have no sense of value, meaning, freedom, and morality but would have been enclosed solely in the material world of stimulus and response like the lower animals. Nevertheless, The Igbo do not see the material and spiritual worlds as two independently existing worlds but as one world following the interplay between them. Like the ancestors living in the spiritual and imperishable world, their effects and presence are not wanting in the physical community of the physical world.

However, the Igbo people identify the giver of experiences or life as Chi, Chukwu, Chineke (Great Spirit, the Creator). (Ejiofor, 1984:202) notes that “the Igbo people attribute every event which they cannot understand to the handwork of God or the spirit of the ancestors.” Other powers observed in nature include *Anyanwu* (Sun-god), *Ahianjoku* (Power of Agriculture), *Amadioha* (Power of thunder or god of retributive justice), *Agwu isi* (Power of healing and divination), *Igwe* (Power of the sky), *Chi or Ikenga* (personal guiding spirit) etc. It is when one realizes that spirit-world is vivid in the material world and both are inseparable; one would come near to understanding the Igbo concept of God. It is this belief that the spirit dwells in matter that forms the basis of Igbo religion, philosophy, ethics, etc. God is a reality that cannot be disproved in the Igbo world. Some scholars have expressed doubt on whether there is any supreme being as God in Igbo cosmology. (Nze, 1981:21) contends that, “in Igbo culture, there is no God.” Nze meant this on the ground that Igbo people have no conception of a supreme being such that is obtainable in Christian theology. For him, “there is a Supreme Being that created man; there is a Supreme Being that created trees; there is a supreme god of the Earth. Sun is a God” (Nze, 1981:21). He argues further that:

There is no single instance when the Igbo perform sacrifice to the worship of a single Being of the Christian concept. Because the Igbo perform sacrifices as acts of appeasement and/or worship, and because there exists no occasion when a Supreme Being of the Christian description is appeased or worshipped, it can be said that this Being does not exist at all or exists but is not recognized because he is passive. Our fathers worshipped gods and not a God (Nze, 1981:30).

(Aja, 2015:147) posits that “it was Christian missionaries and Igbo Christian theologians who were concerned about finding the Supreme God in the Igbo Pantheon.” (Umeogu, 2019:61) viewing God from the perspective of a creator and controller of universe maintains that, “...it must be established first that God must exist as an undivided unity before engaging in any form of work or function whatsoever.” If God exists as a divided being, the question of his division, since division implies creation in Igbo worldview, emerges. Also, if God must be seen as a creator, it is obvious that his existence is prior and necessary for the existence of other things in the world. To buttress this idea, (Abanuka, 2019:106) avers that, “if the ultimate reality is not granted, nothing can be nor be conceived.” Therefore, ultimate reality or if you like God cannot be excluded when the existence of reality is being discussed because he is the basis of all that exist or can be conceived.

Consequently, the problem of how the Igbo people could account or explain the nature of God in the presence of other small deities becomes a philosophical issue. Firstly, (Abanuka, 2004:11) acknowledges the fact that those gods Nze highlighted are merely “...explanatory symbols in so far as they give meaning to the values and aspirations of the community, but also as exploratory symbols, i.e., in as much as they are means of searching for the understanding of the one and only true God.” He goes as far as stating that, “they have no reality in themselves; they are naught...even the Earth goddess (Ala) is not exempted from not being real: the earth goddess has no ontological relevance” (Abanuka, 2004:11). Umeogu contends that the Igbo people must have come to the knowledge of God as an undivided unity through the symbolisms of undivided or one lobed kola nut- *Oji-ifilifi*. One lobed kola nut symbolizes the undivided and uncreated God. Since division means creation in the Igbo world of experience, it follows that since *Oji-ifilifi* which symbolizes the epistemic foundation of God is undivided, God as a being is one and uncreated. In his words, “*Oji-ifilifi* is an undivided unity. Creation implies division in Igbo thought and culture. So the undivided unity in the lobless kola nut both establishes the “uncreation” of God and the fact that God is one without a second” (Umeogu, 2019:61). Thus, with Umeogu, kola nut becomes an explanatory and exploratory symbol through which the knowledge of the nature of God could be reached. Accordingly, he opines that, “...the Igbo idea of God, not as an article of faith, but as an article of knowledge, came from the symbolism of the lobless kola nut: *Oji-ifilifi*” (Umeogu, 2019:61).

Kola Nut and the Nature of the World

The problem of the origin and nature of the world is perennial problem in philosophy. Man has the desire to understand the world in which he lives but the nature of the world seems to be incomprehensible. This follows from the fact that “man viewed the world as a totality in its known and unknown, visible and invisible, physical and immaterial aspects” (Abanuka, 2004:29). As (Abanuka, 2004:29) rightly observed, “the world was also perceived in the regularity and irregularity of its events, and as a place where natural qualities are full of contraries.” In order to express the nature and origin of the world, it is pertinent to resort to a common and comprehensible approach that would accommodate the intricacy and vastness of the world within the understanding of a cultural people.

Following the above line of thought, (Umeogu, 2019:61) postulates that “Igbo cosmogenesis is just easily discernible in the Igbo two lobed kola nut: *Oji okala naabo*; whose substantial symbolism indicates heaven and earth.” Heaven and earth are two different worlds that are not separate but interplay in Igbo cosmology. These two worlds, spiritual and material, proceed from one lobed kola nut. In effect, heaven and earth as the representation of Igbo universe are created by God. As the name implies, two lobed kola nut expresses division. As earlier stated, one lobed kola nut is undivided and as such, uncreated. On the other hand, two lobed kola nut is divided and as such created. However, this is an exposition that the world is a consequent of creation performed by an absolute and uncreated being, God. The world for (Umeogu, 2003:4) has two parts to it, drawing from the analysis of the word *Oji Okala naabo*, “*Okala* means half, *Okala naabo* means two halves, but two halves make a whole” which he argued to must have proceeded from the “binary voice of God.” For (Umeogu, 2003:2), the two lobed kola nut “is the binary polar-function of *Oji-Ogbi*.” The world expresses a binary or two functions that are interdependent. It could be viewed in the interrelationship between heaven and earth, light and darkness, male and female, cause and effect, night and day, action and reaction and what have you. Abanuka seems to have the same view on the binary-functionary nature of the world in Igbo cosmology as expressed in his theory of “Ultimate contraries”. (Abanuka, 2014:100) contends that, “the ultimate contraries are mutually dependent corollaries. Consequently, any of the poles loses its meaning if it is taken in isolation from the other.”

Humanly speaking, the two lobed kola nut is cosmic; its gender characteristic is unestablished. Some scholars contend that it is genderless like one lobed kola nut; others view it to be male and female following from the gender roles of heaven and earth in begetting species in the world. (Umeogu, 2019:61) moreover establishes that, “its gender modification being spectacular is cosmic in definition, in the sense that it has not the normal male-female human Igbo kola nut gender modification.” At this juncture, one cannot attribute any gender modification to the world because it is an embodiment of realities inside and outside gender. It is however bigger than man in general and that is one of the reasons why the two lobed kola nut is not eaten in the Igbo world of experience. In this regard, (Umeogu, 2003:2) opines that, “the Igbo man is not always

in a haste to eat *Oji Okala naabo*, because it is too cosmic to be purely human. It represents the whole world of heaven and earth, wherein man is only a little part.”

In sum, the two lobed kola nut is an explanatory symbol of the universe in Igbo cosmology. It expresses the world as originating from God who is absolute and uncreated as expressed in one lobed kola nut or *Oji Ogbi/Oji ifilifi*. The sides or halves obtainable in two lobed kola nut states the reason while the Igbo world is dual and “the dual properties of such a world have the operational modality of binary development” (Umeogu, 2019:62). Also, it expresses the unquantifiable unity that exists between the two worlds as related to God, the ultimate creator.

Kola Nut and the Nature of Man

The origin and nature of man is part of the indigenous knowledge embedded in kola nut system. Umeogu expresses that the nature of man in Igbo anthropology would be better comprehended through the instrumentality of kola nut in Igbo cosmology. Kola nut therefore becomes an explanatory and exploratory symbol towards the establishment of Igbo Anthropology. In the study of the nature of man through kolanutology, our focus will be more or less on the origin of man, his composition and gender functionality.

However, the three lobed kola nut- *Oji Ikenga* expresses the origin of man. Man is a creature of God who is uncreated. It must be pointed out that *Oji Ikenga* comes from *Oji Ogbi* and *Oji Okala naabo*, symbolizing the precedence and supremacy of God and Universe over man. As the Universe is created by God, so man is also a creature of God. As has been argued earlier, there is nothing human in one and two lobed kola nuts. They symbolize things above man. Man came with the three lobed kola nut, which means that he is preceded by God and the world. As such, (Umeogu, 2019:62) contends that “...the first time human beings populated the Igbo world and being was when the three lobed kola nut entered the Igbo world...” Nonetheless, *Oji Ikenga* expresses the three composites of man: body, soul/mind and spirit. For (Umeogu, 2003:2), “the three lobed kola nut, also gives some meaningful insight into Igbo psychology by representing the three sides of man: the flesh/body (aru/ahu), the soul/mind (Nkpuruobi/Uche) and the Spirit (mmuo).”

Nevertheless, the three lobed kola nut is directly preceded by two lobed kola nut which is genderless. Gender therefore emerged in the Igbo world through three lobed kola nut, *Oji ikenga*. Accordingly, (Umeogu, 2003:2) contends that, “*Oji Ikenga* is the first kola nut with the human face. It is the first kola nut with an explicit gender-function and modification.” The three lobed kola nut has nothing feminine in it. All the lobes are male lobes. This portrays for (Umeogu, 2003:2) that, “in the Igbo story of creation, man was created before the woman.” (Umeogu, 2019:52) contends that the 'number three' expresses masculinity, thus, he notes that, “this automatically shows that three is a male or masculine number in Igbo life and being; and by that very fact, it will be improper for the number three to be associated with the female gender or feminine gender-function in any way.” The four lobed kola nut which brings the Igbo anthropology to its

completion expresses the two genders in the Igbo world, following its two males and two female contents. The four lobed kola nut- *Oji Afia naano na ubosi naano* delineates that the woman comes from the man. Umeogu holds that women are not allowed to eat *Oji Ikenga* as man is not advised to eat *Oji Ogbi* and *Oji Okala naabo* for the reasons revolving around supremacy and incomprehensibility. Woman is only advised to eat *Oji Ikenga* when it is prescribed as medicine with some herbs for fertility especially when it involves the need for a male child. Humanly speaking, the three and four lobed kola nut delineate the biological, physiological and psychological features of human beings including their behaviours and development in socio-cultural milieu.

Kola Nut and the Structure of the Society

Thus far, it must be noted that the existence of God, the universe and human being (male and female) have been established through the symbolisms of Igbo kola nut. It is pertinent also to observe that Igbo man lives in the community of his fellow human beings. He does not live in isolation. His strength and self-actualization is reached within the ambience of his immediate community. In this vein, (Chukwuelobe, 2014:86) observes that, “the Igbo do not exist for himself alone; he is not an island. Rather, he derives vitality and life-force from his immediate community.” It is within the community that the Igbo man has his being. In a nut shell, he can be argued to be a social being.

However, having established that Igbo man is a social being that lives in society or community of his fellow human beings; it is pertinent also to examine the nature of this society. Umeogu finds the instrumentality of kola nut which is a universal symbol in Igbo world of being and experience expedient in this regard. Obviously, the Igbo people are more concerned with lived experience rather than engaging in a futile imagination about life. The world, says Merleau Ponty, “is not what I think but what I live” (Omogbe, 1991:36). The priority of 'what is' is held over 'what ought' to be in Igbo cosmology. As such, (Chukwuelobe, 2014:85) contends that, “Igbo thought organizes itself within the ambience of experienced life.”

Nevertheless, the structure, administration and functioning of Igbo society can be observed in Igbo kola nut. Igbo kola nut explores and explains Igbo society as it is and not as it ought to be. One lobed kola nut expresses one who is an island but Igbo society like that of Plato in the *Republic* abhors one who is an island or a hermit. This can be seen through the symbolisms of kola nut's lobes. One lobed kola nut expresses God and God as a creator and an absolute being can be contested to be an island. The need of a second however is not necessary for him. After all, he is the uncreated creator. Man on the other hand is an incomplete being that needs his creator and other beings around him to give meaning to his life. As such, God is seen at the center of Igbo society as is symbolized by one lobed kola nut from which other kola nuts' lobings emerged. According to (Umeogu, 2019:63), “...Igbo society is made up of God/god(s), the world and human beings, signified by the lobeless kola nut and other lobings of the kola nut....”

More so, Igbo society recognizes the absolute authority of God and from God authority gets to the people, especially the elders of the community. Hitherto, it has been observed that the spiritual and material worlds interplay in Igbo cosmology. In the words of (Chukwuelobe, 2014:86), “the spirit land and the human world intermingle.” This expresses how authority passes from God to ancestors and finally to the people, especially the elders. The human society is not far removed from the land of the ancestors. These two lands come together whenever kola nut is raised up in prayer. In effect, Igbo society is not separated from the spiritual world. There is an umbilical cord of interrelationship between them. Umeogu also observes that Igbo kola nut resembles the human heart which is an expression of the unity and harmony that characterizes the Igbo society. The traditional Igbo society is known for peace and harmony, justice and equity, hard work and prosperity and what have you. These characteristics are explainable through the symbolisms of kola nut in Igbo worldview. (Kanu, 2020:53) avers that kola nut “unites the living and dead, and symbolizes a feast of togetherness, love and trust.”

Evaluation

It is obvious that Umeogu has succeeded in making a critical and appreciable move towards the establishment of Igbo science and arts through the study of kola nut. This areas or fields of knowledge which Umeogu tends to establish through a devoted study of the symbolisms of kola nut in Igbo cosmology are more or less original and pragmatic. It goes with itself the original thoughts and experiences of the Igbo people. However, in these fields of knowledge is encoded the moral and spiritual life of the Igbo people. It incorporates the spiritual and material world. One can say that it is not one sided knowledge. Nonetheless, the life span of this knowledge remains questionable following the unquenchable evolution of man and the world. The question remains: could this knowledge withstand the wave of reality in the present and future times?

Nevertheless, Umeogu's Kolanutology is not an abstract cum utopic expression. It stems from a lived experience of Igbo people. It is more of reinvention and modernization of what has always been but currently suffering the disastrous wave of westernization. Possibly, it can be reinvented and institutionalized in order to restore the dignity of man. Evidently, the existence of man is threatened by the uncontrolled and parallel growth in science and technology which instead of been completely subjected to the improvement of man's standard of living has gone towards elimination and displacement of man in a world he is meant to reign supreme. For the sake of humanity and nature, Umeogu's Kolanutology is worthwhile if it fills the observable holes in its doctrine. Pertaining to its life span, it is undisputable that Igbo language is recently battling with the wave of extinction due to the widespread and effectiveness of English language in Nigerian society and institutions but not Igbo ideologies. Evidently, Umeogu's metaphysics of kola nut is written and expressed in English language as an exposition of the flexibility and dynamic nature of this tradition which would enable it to stand the wave of time. It is not limited by space and time. Kola nut communion has gone with Igbo prodigies into

different parts of the world as a tradition that is one with their being. As such, (Ogbalu, 1974:51) argues that, “kola nut is one of the fruits which cannot be removed by the people not even by the Whiteman from Igboland”

Critically, irrespective of the distance covered by Igbo kola nut tradition, Umeogu's kolanutology suffers short life span due to its recognition of gender inequality. The limitation of women in kola nut tradition and distancing them from the symbolism of the number three as a perfect number poses a great threat to Umeogu's doctrine. According to (Ezebuilo, 2019:532), “man and woman have the same dignity and are of equal value ontologically...” Appreciating inequality of any sort be it gender, economy, race and so on is a negation to the egalitarian nature of kola nut and as such, it cannot foster the kind of development Umeogu posits. Accordingly, (Ezebuilo, 2019:539) submits that, “gender equality is vital to the pressing need to tackle poverty and promote the development of wellbeing of the African communities.” Also, it opposes the ideology of this present time from where feminism takes its baton. It is obvious that any academic tradition or discipline that recognizes gender inequality will not stand in this present time. Gender equality is an important aspect of education that must always be appreciated. It is unimaginable in this present time to establish science and arts that give some limitations based on gender, maybe a science that would abhor women from participating in the practical or teaching aspect just like in the breaking of kola nut. Such science and art cannot stand and as such, cannot unite us because there is no unity in the face of inequality. However, the presence and manifest efforts of feminism in this present time would hinder the germination of such science and arts. Thus, pertaining to the presence of women's activists, (Ezebuilo, 2019:535) observes that, “Women's rights activists have been at the center of the revitalization of human rights, struggling to address gender inequality across cultures without lapsing into misguided sentiments.”

More importantly, the exclusion of women from the core traditions of kola nut has contributed to its degeneration. It is obvious that any tradition that is not familiar among the young people suffers extinction. In addition to the fact that kola nut is one of the quick routes to insemminate poison in this present time because it is a tradition everyone is expected to partake in, the weak transmission of its principles have distanced the youth from its communion. Culture grows through socialization and socialization is possible through mothers because they are always present at all stages of the development of their children to inculcate necessary morals and traditions into them, but because they are passive in kola nut tradition, they feel unconcerned and as such fail in inculcating it into their children. The emotional nature of women makes them better knowers and teachers. Their approach to ethics and learning is always “person-centered, stressing care, compassion, trust, mercy, forgiveness, preventing harm, and feelings” (Lawhead, 2002:566). This approach breeds more humane society than any other approach. On this ground, (Lawhead 2002:567) contends that “the pain and anger women feel in response to subtle sexual harassment or injustice allows them to perceive features of the prevailing social structures that are invisible to men.”

Conclusion

Kola nut as a universal symbol in Igbo land should manifest in fullness, equality, fairness and togetherness. Its tradition or ritual presentation should not be segregative. All levels and genders of human species should be equally and equitably represented. Its tradition should be approached by all since it is at the center of the Igbo world. It should not be agent of women suppression and limitation, rather, agent of equity and self-realization. If women continue to suffer limitation, it is obvious that society will continue to suffer imbalance. Thus, (Kanu, 2012:27) observes that, “sex inequality has produced negative effects such as suppressed talents, lowered productivity and reduced creativity.” This would further stunts moral and intellectual development of the society. In this vein, Mill contends that “the subordination of women which has become a principle regulating the existing social relations between men and women is wrong in itself and impediment to national and human improvement” (Kanu, 2012:27).

In this vein, this paper recommends that for Umeogu's kolanutology to achieve its purpose, it has to be restructured in such a way that there will be no noticeable division among genders and individuals. What one refers to as tradition is a subject to change. As such, (Kanu, 2012:26) maintains that “the idea of 'we have been doing it like this for a long time', under the cover of tradition, has also affected efforts towards the liberation for women.” Using Mills philosophy of associationism which asserts that minds are produced by associative laws acting on experience, it is pertinent to note that “if we change the experiences and upbringing of women and what men are made to believe about women, then their mind will change” (Kanu, 2012:26), especially among those who believe “that the subordination of women to men reflected a natural order that women were by nature incapable of equality with men” (Kanu, 2012:26). Umeogu's kolanutology should however be restructured and revitalized to give everyone equal opportunity to express and actualize his/herself. This will enable women to be active and alive in all socio-cultural phenomena. Factually, women are more close to their children than men. Therefore, this restructuring will revitalize kolanutology through the activeness of women which will in turn guarantee children's education of kola nut as an easy means to spread and inculcate its principles.

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