

The Symbolism of Kolanut in Igbo Cosmology: A Re-Examination

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Abstract : This paper considers the symbolism of kola nut according to Igbo worldview. How kola nut helps to shape the people's philosophical ideology, especially in relation to religion. The roles of kola nut within the Igbo socio-cultural context and the values attached to these roles will be examined. The roles of kola nut as a means of socialization, education and transmission of cultural values from the preceding to succeeding generations will come under consideration. Equally, this paper looks at the traditional rules regarding not only the uses but more essentially the mode of kola nut presentation, blessing, breaking and sharing of kola nut. How these rules and kola nut have persisted in the face of social and cultural changes which have affected the Igbo people shall be reviewed. The roles played by kola nut in Igbo religion will come under study, which is to correct some of the misconceptions by writers who are motivated by eurocentric idealism but quite oblivious of the Igbo cultural setting and the place of kola nut in it. The onslaught of Western civilization causing the change of attitude among the young generation towards kola nut as a vital aspect of our culture tends to pose a threat to the future and survival of kola nut. Again, the study of Igbo culture as many have done rarely gives an in depth knowledge on the concept, roles and symbolism of kola nut as one of the sacred objects like Ofo and Shrines in Igboland. Mostly it is forgotten that without kola nut, shrines cannot be attended to. Many people think that the spiritual significance and sacramental symbolism are not worth exploring. They, therefore, refuse to try and discover the ritual ramifications, claiming that to probe into the mystery demystifies the matter. Kola nut symbolism is not mysteriously inexplicable. It is a revered symbol of social intercourse with deep social relevance.

Keywords : communion, consecration, Igbo, kola nut, religion

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