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Articles and statements

Kola Nut and Conflict Resolution among the *Igala* People of Kogi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined Kola nut and Conflict Resolution among the *Igala* people of Kogi State, Nigeria. In a world ravaged by conflicts, certain Africans have kept the fire of brotherhood, through the breaking and eating of Kola nut. Literatures exist on Conflict Resolution, but no empirical study on the topic in question. The aims are to examine (a) the types of Kola nut cotyledons and its relevance in conflict resolution (b) the myths about Kola nut that enhances conflict resolution, and (c) its role in conflict resolution. The qualitative approach was adopted. The sources of data were primary and secondary. The Primary Sources included 20 oral interviews. Purposive sampling was adopted. Content analysis was used to analyse. The secondary sources included books and an unpublished work. The findings reveal (a) two types of Kola nut, (*cola acuminata* 0-7 cotyledons and *cola nitida* 2 cotyledons), (b) As regards the myth, it is used to invite and welcome the ancestors during conflict resolution, whosoever harbours grudges against a neighbour after the kola had been eaten will come under the wrath of the ancestors, and (c) It is the harbinger of peace. In conclusion, peace can only be guaranteed when there is security and justice, which could be embedded in a unifying factor(s), like the kola nut. Any community that finds this generally acceptable factor will experience a considerable level of peace, especially when acculturated into every aspect of the modern conflict resolution mechanisms, putting into consideration the indigenous socio-religious conflict resolution strategies.

Keywords: *Igala* People, Kola Nut, Conflict Resolution, Peace, Fraternity Brotherhood, Ancestors (*Ibegwu*).

Introduction

The tradition of kola nut dates back to antiquity in the various cultures of West Africa, Nigeria, Kogi state and the *Igala* nation. Indeed, from time immemorial there is no cultural symbol that equals it in significance in *Igala* land. It will be a very high pedestal of folly to plan any meeting or gathering without the kola nut, no matter the amount of food, drinks or meat available, such an occasion will only end in futility; and indeed a mocker.

The aims of this study are to examine (a) the types of Kola nut cotyledons and its relevance in conflict resolution, (b) the myths about Kola nut that enhances conflict resolution, and (c) its role in conflict resolution. This is geared towards the achievement of the primary purpose of developing conflict management patterns that takes into consideration Africa's socio-religious conflict

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management methods, capable of solving contemporary conflicts in Africa, especially those which has become impervious to the western conflict management strategies.

It is therefore, a clarion call for Africans to look within, because if Africa must solve her numerous conflict, she must look within, for the solution to Africa's problems lies within Africans and in Africa. Bob-Manuel made this point clear when she noted: "*if Africa has to put the falling apart together, her original values must be revisited*" (Inebe, 2000). It is therefore, imperative to understand that just as people's faces, societies, cultures, and food differs, that is how their conflict management strategies differs. Copying another society's conflict management pattern and trying to forcefully or persuasively adopt it into another society will only amount to injustice, a fairly better result; will be to have a hybrid pattern and not destroying one completely, to establish the other.

In another dimension Iyere wrote in details; The Socio-Religious Significance of *Obi* (kola nut) among the Igala people of Kogi state (Iyere, 2011). This article described in depth the Kola nut tradition among the Igala. It is upon this article by Iyere this work is empirically based. In this treatise, He was able to unveil to us the roles and significance of kola nut to the Igala community. This otherwise means that kola nut is an indispensable object of ancestral worship or traditional ceremonies rites; such as marriages, and sacrifices. He concluded by saying that in the Igala community, *Obi* (kola nut) is an important item for welcoming a guest to a place which signifies, love, friendship, hospitality, peace, unity and acceptance. He stated the need for the mass media to come and showcase the Igala rich cultural heritage. The major focus of Iyere's work was on the socio-religious importance of kola nut, and its general role in the *Igala* society. The focus was not diverted to the details of conflict resolution, with the sole aim of taking into consideration the indigenous socio-religious conflict management pattern of the people, neither bearing in mind the purpose of developing, and introducing new conflict management strategies that are African in nature, which would tackle the contemporary conflict management challenges faced by African states.

Over the years these conflicts have become impervious in nature to the western conflict management strategies. William made this point clear also when he noted; "*in spite of the various interventions in African conflicts, such as the UN sending nine peacekeeping missions in the 1990s alone*", within the African continent itself, the Organization of African Unity, now African Union (AU) has sent special representatives of the secretary general to the conflict areas such as Congo in 1993. African conflicts remain impervious to these interventions (Zartman, 2012).

The failures of these missions were because the political, military and sociological realities of these states were not fully studied, appreciated, and understood. This therefore, creates the need to look inward and develop, strengthen, and introduce new conflict management strategies that will take into cognizance the indigenous socio-religious conflict management pattern of the people with the bid to developing brand new conflict management strategies, that are African in nature and capable of solving Africa's contemporary conflicts that have become impervious to the western conflict management styles. This gap led this researcher to carry out this study.

Kola nut being a member of the family *sterculiaceae* has a long history in West Africa. The use of kola nut, the major product of kola is intimately interwoven with the various cultures of the people of West Africa. Use of kola nut features prominently, in religious, social and ritual activities in West Africa, where they are used during ceremonies relating to marriage, child naming, funerals and in sacrifices made to the various gods and goddesses of African mythology (Opeke, 1982). It is also believed that; among the Igbo and the Yoruba, Kola nut is culturally very significant, and features prominently in socio-gift exchange. It also features symbolically as an item of consumption on even modern high-society occasions (Njoku, 2001). From the above, it can be deduced that the acts of ancestral worship and high societal occasions in African traditional system cannot be done in the absence of Kola nut and to a great measure, this act of worship is pivotal in the enhancement of peace, and conflict resolution in the community.

The kola nut is the seed kernel of a large African tree grown commercially around the world, particularly in Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Brazil, and other part of South America. It is extremely popular amongst the inhabitants as a caffeine-containing stimulant. The nuts are eaten whole or powdered and mixed with liquid for a drink. The kola nut is primarily derived from three species from the cocoa tree family: *Cola acuminata*, *Cola nitida*, and *Cola vera* which originate in tropical West Africa, but can also be found in pockets of Brazil and West Indies, where they were taken by the slave trade. The trees typically reach a height of 25 meters or 60 feet and its waxy oval

leaves frame cheerful star shaped flowers that are white or yellow with purple accents. Its fruit is pod-shaped, with each of which is nestled about a dozen roundish shaped seeds or kola nuts. The kola nuts may be red, white, or pinkish hue. (Once opened, the exposed seedpod's arrangement looks rather similar in its configuration to an armadillo's armour). The nut aroma is sweet and rose like; and the first taste is bitter, but sweetens upon chewing. The nut can be boiled to extract the cola (Nnenne, 2013).

The lore, history, reality, rituals paradigms and myths that guide the kola nut are evolutionary and as such, are in the main set in codification, oral history, and practice; than by conventions. Naturally there are assumptions variations, controversies and Miscalculations, norms vary from clan to clans, but the universality of the place, of kola nut in the Igbo tradition remains paramount (Ene, 2005). This illustration depicts the customs and traditions in Igbo land, which is also the same with the *Igala* community. There are many definitions of "conflict resolution". Most refer to an outcome or distribution of benefits acceptable to all sides. All focus on the facilitation of solution; however, different emphasis is placed on non-zero-sum rather positive sum win-win and consensus decision making, process, and outcome (Osimen, 2012). Conflict resolution could also mean changing reality either by reducing scarcity of disputed value resource, or by changing the casual factors that have made for antagonism and confrontation in the past (Maluwa, 1989).

Conflict resolution could also be viewed as an effort to increase cooperation among the parties to a conflict and deepen their relationship by addressing the conditions that led to the dispute, fostering positive attitudes and allying distrust through reconciliation initiatives and building or strengthening the institutions and processes through which the parties interact. Conflict resolution can be used to reduce the chances of violence or to consolidate the cessation of a violent conflict in order to prevent re-escalation (Lund, 1987).

Method

The qualitative approach was adopted. The sources of data were both primary and secondary. The primary sources included 15 key informant interviews (KII) and 5 in-depth interviews (II). The secondary sources included books, journals, and an unpublished work.

Participants

Purposive sampling was adopted to involve 15 of those that play prominent role in conflict resolution in the community, and 5 of those whose disputes have been resolved through the use of the Kola nut, making the total of 20 participants between the ages of 40-100. The key informant interviews included 7 traditional rulers, 4 community chiefs and 4 council of elder's members. The in-depth interviews (II) included 5 community members.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyse the data collected through oral interviews, as well as descriptive technique, which involves the description of the integral role of kola nut in conflict resolution.

Research Instruments

For the purpose of this study, an unstructured interview guide was developed. This allowed the interviewer to adjust questions and change direction as the interview was taking place. This was supported by a tape recorder and two research assistants, in order to avoid the likelihood of any kind of omission of any information that was supplied by the respondents.

Procedure

Approval was gotten from the Council of Traditional Rulers of the community in written form for the conduct of this research. Participants were also assured that the entire research is for educational and policy making purposes only, which could be of great benefit to the entire populace. This helped the researcher to get their full consent for data collection.

Results

(A) Descriptive Phase: *The types of Kola-Nut Cotyledons and Its Relevance in Conflict Resolution among the Igala*

This section deals with the relevance of the Kola nut in traditional conflict resolution. This Research reveal two types of kola nut, these are *cola nitida* (*Obi-Akechi*) and *cola acuminata* (*obi-Igala*). The *cola acuminata* comes in different cotyledons, but however, there is one without cotyledon (*obi-oduluku*). It is called the seed of the spirit, meant to be eaten alone. There is one without cotyledons, each cotyledon has its significance in traditional settings as it symbolizes different things in the *Igala* Kola nut tradition and somewhere else in Nigeria. Attempt has therefore, been made to carefully outline the various kinds of cotyledons and its uses to the *Igala* people; pictorial views are also provided to give us a clearer picture of what the researcher mean. However, before we go into that let us take a look into this excerpt from one of my respondents at the field, which will be useful for our guidance:

Respondent 1:

“Normally, according to our tradition, the kola occupies a very significant place in any season of the year, it is a unifying factor, and its presence symbolizes peace, brotherhood and fraternity, although there are different cotyledons, ranging from 0-7 cotyledons in existence, it symbolizes different things, some are eaten alone, like the one cotyledon and some majorly for sacrifices and so on”.

The table below shows some of the different types of kola nut especially *cola acuminata* which features prominently in social exchange, ceremonies, as well as divination, sacrifice, and inter-group reconciliations

Table 1. Kola Nuts Cotyledons, Types and Their Relevance.

S/No	Kola nut cotyledons	Type	Relevance
1		Kola nut with no cotyledon. It is very rare to find, it is called <i>Obi Odukulu</i> in Igala.	It is eaten by one person, it is not shared. It is used to wade off ones enemies or conflict. Seven broken pieces of brown sticks are stocked to it and put at cross-roads after some special incantation.
2		Kola with two cotyledons (<i>Obi-Pameji</i> .) Sometimes one cotyledons is yellowish, the other reddish. It is very rare to get. Its sometime called <i>danjaki</i>	It is used for good luck and purification of oneself (<i>Obi-ola-efe</i>), appeasing of the gods for offences committed. It is usually as a reconciliation between the living and the living-dead(the ancestors)
3		Kola nut with three cotyledons, it is called (<i>obi-Ogwu/Obi-Epameta</i>). It is the chief of all kola nuts.	For good success, happiness, love and peace. It is eaten with seven alligator pepper (<i>Eyo-Ata Mebie</i>) It is also used for oath-taking, inter-group conflict resolution.

4		<p>Kola-nut with four cotyledons (<i>obi-epamele</i>) it is very common. It is sometimes called, (<i>obi-ibegwu,</i>) ancestors kola-nut.</p>	<p>Presented at varying traditional ceremonies. It is commonly presented at traditional wedding. It is used by diviners (<i>Ama-bifa</i>) to know the will of the gods concerning a conflict, issue or how to avert evil.</p>
5		<p>Kola nut with five to seven cotyledons (<i>Obi_epamehu, Efa, Ibie</i>). They are not common, not broken for eating at traditional meetings</p>	<p>They bring about big crises when eaten in a meeting. It is used as a valid tool for fighting one's enemies. This is usually avoided in meetings in order to avoid conflict.</p>
6		<p>It is called (<i>Obi Akechi, popularly called gworo, cola nitida</i>). It usually comes in two cotyledons.</p>	<p>This type of kola nut is not recognized in <i>Igala</i> tradition, because, it is assumed that it does not understand the language of the ancestors</p>

Source: [Abah \(2012\)](#).

(B) Content Analysis Phase: From the interview analysis, three themes emerged. These were as follows:

Theme 1: Symbolic Value of Kola Nut

Theme 2: Ritual Context of Kola Nut

Theme 3: Sacredness of Kola Nut

A detail treatment of these themes were offered in the discussion section.

Discussion

Symbolic Value of Kola Nut

From the findings, the kind of honour and sacredness accorded the Kola (*Obi*) is one that is unequal to any cultural or conflict resolution symbol. Myths in this study will be dealing with the people's symbolic beliefs about kola nut that enhances conflict resolution and why it is held in high esteem. Some of the myths as gathered from oral interviews are as follows:

Respondent 2: spoke on the myths about Obi that enhances conflict resolution:

“Actually, the beliefs existed before I was born, and the tradition was passed down to us, by our ancestors, to some other persons that do not belong here, it is just an ordinary fruit or an ordinary tree, but to us, it is the fruit of the ancestors, a sacred tree, I do not know why it is that way, but as long as it work to unite us, I do not see a problem with it”.

a. *It is believed that he who brings kola nut brings life: this particular myth means that whosoever brings kola nut rekindle the fire of love, unity, oneness and the life of the relationship. It could also mean the rebirth or birth of a new relationship.*

b. *Kola nut is an intermediary between the land of the living and the dead; hence, it could be used to settle disputes between the land of the living and the dead.*

c. *Kola nut is the bible of our traditional religion: The African Traditional Religion cannot be practiced in the absence of Kola; this is because with it, invocations and incantations are made in order to gain access to the spirit world, it enhances communication between humans and their gods and goddesses, as well as their ancestors. When approaching the spirit world, Kola nut is like a key, which grants access.*

d. *Kola-nut can break or mould relationships.*

e. *It is not one of the expensive items for any occasion, but it is the most important, because in its absence; nothing can be done.*

f. *It is believed that; its breaking, and eating, symbolizes unity, peace, love, and acceptance under the protective eyes of Ojochamachala (God almighty) and Ibegwu (Ancestral spirits).*

g. *The keeping of the kola nut tradition means so much to the current generation; hence they see it as the keeping of the legacies or the ancient landmarks of their ancestors.*

Ritual Context of Kola Nut

This section deals with the presentation, breaking and distribution of Kola nut. It is imperative because every part of the Kola nut ritual depicts harmonious living love, peace, and the act of conflict resolution.

(A) Presentation

The presentation of kola nut in any gathering is usually a ceremony that deals with the land of the living and the dead. This is because, the ancestor of the living are special guest in the presentation. It is (kola nut) an item that breaks limitation between the living and the dead to enable communication; as it is often regarded as the food of the spirit.

Respondent 3:

"In the culture of our people (the Igala's) the presentation of obi to a visitor is very vital, it is usually used to welcome the guest, the acceptance of the Kola by the guest is a sign that the guest is welcome and it eventual prayers and breaking of the Kola, and as well taking of water alongside symbolizes hospitality, love, acceptance, peace, unity, and fraternity. It shows that the visitor is welcome to the place".

As stated earlier, the traditional *Igala* people believe that the only language that *obi Igala* (*Igala kola nut*) understands is *Igala* language. Again, Iyere also captured the following beautifully in the course of his interviews; when he visited the chief of Anyigba (Ogohi Abu Okolo) in 2009 and he officially presented *Obi-Igala* to him, he prayed over it in *Igala* language as following:

"Ojo chamachala, Ami-Ibegwu wa obi me kadu me de imaje koju logbo ki domo nuonu wa imaje okpanachi onuwa. Adewa kpai-abili kite. Adewa kpai enwa kite efu ewo-I ojo kpai ibegwu kideju tewa Inah nu ajode kirah nu ilona".

Which means:

God almighty our ancestors, here is kola nut presented, may the reign of our chief be long; may his reign be full of progress for all; may evil spirits never bear us and may misdeeds be far away from this town. May God and our ancestors guide us. May good luck behold the hunter and the passer-by.

After the prayers, the *obi* (*obi Igala* with the three cotyledons) was broken into pieces by the traditional ruler. Before anyone is permitted to eat of the kola nut, a little part of the kola must be thrown to the floor; for the ancestor, saying "*Ibegwu obieme de*" (our ancestors, here is your kola nut). There is an adage in *Igala* that shows the importance of presenting a visitor with *obi*. It states "*ononojo kuma ma du omi nu mo nabe ko obi n ikineju ujenu n*" meaning a visitor who is not offered water or kola nut should not expect food (Iyere, 2011).

(B) Breaking

This section deals with the rituals associated with the breaking of the sacred seed (kola nut).

Respondent 4 noted:

"There are those that are qualified to break the kola nut in any gathering. In Igala tradition, the privilege of praying over and breaking of kola (Obi-Igala) is given to the oldest man in a group. However, the oldest man may delegate this privilege to a younger person (male) to perform the rite of praying over it, Obi ritual is taken seriously by Igala elders, who have not

been contaminated by western cultures. Wherever Igala people are gathered for an important occasion their Ibegwu (Ancestor) are also with them. In this respect, praying over and breaking of Obi should be taken seriously, so as not to attract the wrath of Ibegwu”.

In a similar vein, respondent 5 noted:

A woman has no right to pray over and break *obi*, in any gathering of Igala people. It is, therefore, a taboo (*Elifo*) for an Igala woman to do this in the presence of an Igala man in any meeting. However, where Igala women are gathered for an occasion and an Igala man is in their midst the breaking of *obi* is done by him. The eating can be done by women. Only the female traditional priest can pray over and break the kola and offer it to her ancestors for consumption alone in her shrine.

From the position of respondent 3 and 4 respectively, it is an abomination and breach of ancestral laws to allow an unqualified person partake in the kola nut rituals; hence, priority must be given to those who are qualified to carry on the task in traditional meetings.

(C) Distribution:

The distribution of kola nut after it has been broken can be done by anyone, either a woman or a man and everybody can partake in its eating. When kola nut is broken the plate usually moves round for persons to partake in its eating. At this point if anyone refuses to take the kola nut, he or she is not in agreement with whatever they are doing. So, when it is discovered that some person(s) did not partake in the eating attempt will be made to find out why, and the problem will be given immediate attention as its sharing and eventual eating signifies acceptance, unity, love, hope, and happiness.

Sacredness of Kola Nut

The kola seed is believed to be a sacred tool for establishing a lasting peace alongside alternative dispute resolution methods like arbitration, mediation, third party intervention, even negotiation, and so on. So when disputes are being settled with the afore-mentioned alternative conflict resolution methods, it is further sealed with the presentation, breaking, distribution and the eventual eating of the kola seed. Africans have peculiar ways of resolving their conflicts and so conflict resolution in Africa had spectacular features uncommon in the global space. The notable feature of this conflict resolution stood Africans in the vantage position of demonstrating their culture and according it a radiant splendour and flame. This was why in pre-colonial African societies, peace and harmony somehow reigned supreme and often produced unique atmosphere for peace to thrive and development became dynamic. Hence, we shall take a cursory look at the indispensable role of Kola nut in conflict resolution, such as oath taking, group and inter-personal reconciliation, divination, sacrifice.

1. Inter-personal and Inter-group Reconciliation

From the findings, like some other ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Igala people see kola nut as a symbol of reconciliation. When used during a peace meeting, if there is a dispute between persons, a reconciliatory meeting would be called. After listening to the parties involved, and useful pieces of advice have been given by the elders, *obi* is then brought, the *obi* is prayed over and broken into pieces by the person who is qualified to do so, the eating of the *obi* by the parties involved, and those present is a strong sign of forgiveness, peace, solidarity, and reconciliation. It is, therefore, expected that the reconciled parties that ate the *obi* should in no way harbor hatred towards each other. If anyone does he or she would incur the anger of *Ibegwu* (ancestors) who witnessed the reconciliation meetings.

2. Divination

People go into divination to find out about the mind of the ancestors towards a particular conflict that is beyond them and how they could end or manage such conflict (s) using the wisdom of the ancestors. In doing this, Kola nut is necessary; because for the ancestors to speak to you, you must offer them their food, which is Kola nut as well as wine to escort it. In African Traditional Religion, the place of *Ifa* divination is unique; most traditional sacrifices are done after *Ifa* oracle is duly consulted through divination. *Ifa-ebo* (divination) is widely practiced among Igala.

According to respondent 6:

“Ifa divination is very powerful, it show us the way to go when we are without hope, ways to cure mysterious illness, avert impending doom, or calamity, it gives us access into the realm of

the ancestors that we may know their mind concerning an issue and kola nut plays an indispensable role here”.

Divination is widespread in traditional Africa and even seems to appear as a common everyday practice, anything that happen must have invariably a definite spiritual cause. This belief makes the people to take divination seriously. People embrace the act of divination for the following reasons, these are:

- To find out and know about their future, destiny, wellbeing, and what may possibly happen to them, their family clan, or tribe.
- To gain access to communicate, and be in touch, and contact with the mystical and spiritual powers that can be tapped to meet their needs.
- To gain power confidence, assurance, and boldness to the challenge of life and triumph over them through esoteric and mystical.
- To overcome human limitations, finitude, importance, dependence, and contingency by knowing how they function and affect (Turaki, 2006).

There are many methods that *Abifa* (a diviner) uses for divination, some of them are: (a) *Ifa anwa* (divination with pods), (b) *Ifa ebutu* (divination with sand), and (c) *Ifa obi* (divination with four kola cotyledons). Our main concern here is *Ifa obi*, which some of Igala diviners employ to know the position of the spirit world about a given conflict or dispute. The *obi* with four cotyledons is the one normally used for divination. During the divination, he casts the four cotyledons on the ground. The falling of the convex side and concave side is read, interpreted in the same way as the *Ifa anwa* divination system (Okwoli, 1996).

Respondent 7 noted:

“During the process of divination the Abifa (diviner) often chew some seeds (three, seven or fourteen) of ata (alligator pepper). He spit the chewed ata (alligator pepper) on the dry kola cotyledons he uses for divination. This is to energise the spirit of Ifa for effective communication. It also spiritually empowers the Abifa (Diviner) to enable him to effectively decode the messages from Ibegwu (ancestral spirits)”.

(C) Oath-Taking

Traditional oath-taking is a phenomenon in Igala traditional religion. It is the evoking of sacred and supernatural forces to be a witness of the truth of a statement or the binding nature of a promise. In another dimension, it is the invitation of the almighty God to punish anyone that commits a crime and tries to cover it up or it could be said to be an oath of allegiance, swearing that the gods or ancestors should punish you with death or evil if you go against certain agreement.

Here, respondent 8 noted:

“Oath taking takes place in order to pledge allegiance, or to unveil secrets behind a particular evil, for instance, when a person dies a suspicious death, the family will report the case and the suspect to the court of the elders, if after enquiries and questioning, the person refuses to plead guilty to the charges, it is oath taking that will be used to settle the rest of the issue, if a person is having ill-feelings against family members or inter-group or group crisis or conflicts, parties will be called to order, through the breaking, sharing, and eating of the Kola nut”.

Here are some occasions when *obi* (Kola nut) is used in oath-taking:

▪ Mysterious Death:

If a person dies after a protracted illness and some of the family members of the deceased suspect foul play, oath would be administered to the person or persons suspected to have mysteriously killed the deceased. The suspects are taken to either the deceased’s grave or the grave of a senior member of the deceased’s family. The kola nut with the three cotyledons popularly called *obi-Ogwu* is broken and kept on top of the grave.

Respondent 9 noted that:

“The suspects would take a piece of the Obi one after the other saying:

If I (mentions its name) is responsible for the death of the (mention the name of the deceased), let our ancestors kill me between seven or fourteen days, but if I am innocent, may the ancestors bless me and everything I lay my hands on and give me long life”.

After the above swearing words each of the suspects would eat the piece of kola nut (*obi*) taken from the grave, it is believed, in Igala traditional circle, that if any of the suspects is involved in the death of the deceased, he or she would die within fourteen days after the oath taking.

▪ Agreement between parties:

If there is a business to be embarked on by two or more persons, oath taking would be administered, if there is fear of future betrayal by any of them. *Obi-Ogwu* would be used for the oath taking (*ebo-emo*). Each member would pledge honesty in the deal, and promise no cheating or betrayal. After the pledge the *obi* is broken and each member would take a piece and take a bit and give to other members. The eating of this *obi-ogwu* (three cotyledons) is significant because all the members will be honest to each other. Anyone who breaks the terms and conditions of the business would be visited by the wrath of the ancestors (*Ibegwu*).

▪ Suspicious of ill-feeling or hatred against a person:

If one feels that one's relation is harboring some ill feeling or hatred against him or her, the taking of oath with kola nut would take place. An elder in the family or a traditional priest would be called upon to witness the oath taking (*ebo-emo*) *obi ogwu* (kola with three cotyledons) would be brought and parties involved would say the following swearing words or similar ones as gathered from personal interviews;

Respondent 10:

"I have come here to swear today, that I have no ill-feelings against my relations here. If I do, may our ancestors strike me dead! But if my heart is clean, may the Almighty God and our ancestors protect, and bless me; I hereby eat this kola nut".

After the swearing words by the persons involved in the oath taking, the eldest person or the priest present would break the *obi* (kola nut) into pieces. Each of the swearing persons would take a piece of the kola nut (*obi*) and take a bite and give the rest to his or her swearing partners to eat. The eating of the same *obi* by the swearing persons ratifies the swearing rite. By this swearing with *obi ogwu*, it is believed in *Igala* tradition that the parties involved would not harbour ill feelings or hatred towards each other. If any does, he or she would be punished by *Ibegwu* (Ancestor).

(D) Sacrifice (*Ichebo*)

Whatever form of worship is done in the African society, is to enhance general societal peace and unity among members of the community. Thus when sacrifices are carried out, it is meant to enhance love, unity, progress, and sacrifice as an act of worship is a basic tool for peace building and conflict resolution. Most times, sacrifices are offered to cleanse the society and enhance peace and prosperity. Worship in African traditional religion is incomplete without sacrifices. And it is important to know that sacrificial life is not peculiar to African traditional religion alone for it is carried out in every religion across the globe.

According to Ringgren:

"All over the world throughout history, whenever mankind has worshiped divine being, there is the practice of sacrifice. The Babylonian suffer who gives a lamb to the gods to ransom himself from the sin which was supposed to be the cause of his suffering. The Mexican Aztee who kills a young man and offers his heart to the sun-god in order to secure the vital forces of the sun for his land; the Moabite Mesha who offers his son to his national god in order to win victory over the attacking Israel" [2 King 3, 27] (Ringgren, 1962).

Abimbola also opined:

"Sacrifice is a means to placate the malevolent power which he believe exist side by side with the divinities who are regarded as benevolent; it is also a means to provide the divinities and ancestor with food, for it is the duty of an individual to feed the ancestors and divinities he worships" (Abimbola, 1980).

Achebe was also able to show us the significance of *obi* in Igbo traditional sacrifice by saying;

"Near the barn was a small house, the medicine house or the shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god, and his ancestral spirits. He worshiped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food and palm wine and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives and eight children" (Achebe, 1980).

Sacrifice is therefore an essential part of *Igala* traditional worship and *obi* is one of the valuable items used for sacrifice. Kola nut is broken into pieces before usage or used as a whole in sacrifice. Findings reveal that the kind of kola nut preferred for sacrifice by the ancestors is the one of four, five, or seven cotyledons, depending on the kind of sacrifice and it is the chief priest that reserves the right of breaking the kola nut meant for the ancestors, this responsibility cannot be delegated.

Limitations

Despite the research gap this paper filled, so much more can be done to harness more from the sacred seed. For example the economic aspect, if well harnessed would yield greater economic dividends. Furthermore, in spite of the caffeine content of the kola seed, empirical researches would also reveal some medicinal values. The tradition of Kola nut varies in different communities, it could be revisited with the purpose of developing new strategies to tackling modern conflicts. It will be useful for future studies to document the indigenous socio-religious conflict resolution strategies and apply quantitative measures to demonstrate their relationships with modern trends of conflict resolution strategies.

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