

# **THE IGBO-AFRICAN KOLA NUT AS A SYMBOLIC MANIFESTATION OF 'IGWEBUIKE' PHILOSOPHY**

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## **Executive Summary**

*Among the Igbo of eastern Nigeria, symbols are not only important, but have become indispensable in their daily lives. Several symbols used include: Ofo, which is a symbol of authority; Ogu, the symbol of innocence; Ikenga, a symbol of strength, uprightness, success, integrity and ancestry; Mbari, the symbol of culture and aesthetics; Mmanwu, the symbol of the ancestors; Udara, the symbol of fertility, procreation and abundance. All these symbols among the Igbo put together are not as important as the symbolic expressions of the Igbo kola nut (Oji Igbo) 'cola acuminata'. It is among the greatest, if not the greatest symbol among the Igbo, and belongs to the mysteries of Igbo history, culture and tradition. It symbolizes the well-acclaimed Igbo hospitality, and manifests goodwill. It is used to settle disputes and make peace, and serves as a link between human beings and the divine. This work studied the Igbo kola nut in relation to its symbolic expression of Igwebuiké philosophy. Igwebuiké, at the philosophical level, provides an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations. Taking from the Igwebuiké worldview, which places the human person at the centre of the universe, the kola nut was employed to advance the understanding of the human person's relationship with fellow human beings, and the relationship between human beings and the gods, ancestors, etc. This piece discovered that the kola nut*

*expresses Igwebuiké philosophy which is the operative condition of the Igbo universe. For the purpose of this study, the Igwebuiké holistic and complementary approaches were employed.*

**Keywords:** Oji, Igbo Kola Nut, Africa, *Igwebuiké*, Complementarity, symbol, philosophy

## **Introduction**

The African is a *homo symbolicus*, and one does not need to live long among them to discover that symbols occupy a very significant place in their life. As representational beings, they have a distinctive character of creating and using symbols to communicate evocative messages that represent aspects of their lives or those around them. The African is, therefore, not just a symbol-making being, but a symbolizing being. Farchild (1965) describes a symbol as:

...that which stands for something else particularly a relatively concrete explicit representation of a more generalized, diffuse, intangible object or group of objects. A very large part of social processes is caused on by use of symbols such as words, money, certificates and pictures. A true symbol excites reactions similar to, though perhaps not quite as intense as those created by the original object. (p. 314).

It is from the above perspective that Madu (2011) maintains that symbolism implies the practice of using acts, sounds, objects or other means which are not of importance in themselves for directing attention to something that is considered important.

Among the Igbo of eastern Nigeria, several symbols are used to direction attention to significant realities; symbols like the *Ofo*, which symbolizes authority; *Ogu*, the symbol of innocence; *Ikenga*, a symbol of strength, uprightness, success, integrity and ancestry; *Mbari*, the symbol of culture and aesthetics; *Mmanwu*, the symbol of the ancestors; and *Udara*, the symbol of fertility, procreation and abundance. All these symbols among the Igbo put together are not as

important as the Igbo kola nut (Oji Igbo) *cola acuminata*. It is among the greatest, if not the greatest symbol among the Igbo. Of the many cultural symbols in Igboland, none has received attention like the kola nut. It is very important and central to the life and ceremonies of the Igbo.

This work studies the Igbo kola nut in relation to its symbolic expression of *Igwebuike* philosophy. *Igwebuike*, at the philosophical level, provides an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations. Taking from the *Igwebuike* worldview, which places the human person at the centre of the universe, the kola nut, as a symbolic expression, will be studied to see to what extent it expresses the understanding of the human person as a being relationship with fellow human beings and the divine: gods, ancestors, etc.

### **The Igbo Kola Nut in Igbo-African Religion and Culture**

For the Igbo, the kola nut goes beyond the red and yellow seed that you find in trays sold on the streets and in kiosks. It is not just the biannual crop grown and stored in sacks and baskets (Kanu, 2015a). It is a food that must be eaten with relish; it commands adoration and many accolades and must be attended to with deserving feast. It unites the living and the dead, and symbolizes a feast of togetherness, love and trust. The kola nut is a symbol of life *ndu*; this is why the Igbo say: “He that brings kola brings life” (Kanu, 2019).

Uchendu (1965) refers to the kola nut as “the greatest symbol of Igbo hospitality. It always comes first. ‘It is the king’”(p. 74). And because of the important place it occupies, presenting it is very ceremonial. The ceremony begins with the presentation of the kola nut to the guests through the next ranking male after which it is returned to the host. It is usually presented alongside with white chalk (*nzu*), alligator pepper, garden egg, bitter kola, groundnut butter (*Okwa ose*) in a wooden dish (*Okwa oji*). Inside the wooden dish is added a knife for the breaking of the kola. Even if the visitor is just a person, more than one kola nut is presented in case the visitor may need to take one back home. Anything less than two must be presented with apologies

before any other ritual commences. The presentation is followed by a prayer, said by the host if he is the eldest; if not, the prayer is said by the eldest person present. During the prayer, *Chukwu* is invoked with incantations garnished with proverbs and prayers for life, good health, prosperity, children, peace, justice, etc. After the prayer, the kola nut is broken into its various lobes; this is followed by distribution and chewing. It is expected that everyone present would partake in the kola nut to avoid the euphoria of suspicion.



Figure 1: *The Kola Nut: Culled from [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)*

As the heart beat of the Igbo culture and tradition, the Igbo kola nut is used for several purposes, which include:

**1. To welcome a visitor**

To welcome a visitor with a kola is to receive the visitor into one's life. It is also a sign that you wish the visitor life.

**2. To open a prayer**

It is used for prayers and sacred communion because of the special place it occupies among the gods.

**3. For rites, rituals and ceremonies**

It is what the gods, ancestors and men eat together during these ceremonies.

**4. Food and nutrition**

It is a food that contains caffeine, theobromine, tannins, potassium, magnesium, glycosides, etc.

**5. Commerce**

It is bought and sold just like any other goods and services.

**6. Cleansing**

It is used for ritual of cleansing of a person, property or place.

**7. Flavoring**

It is used for flavoring food, drinks and beverages. In 1886, Pendergrast (2000) observes that it was used to flavor coca cola.

**8. Oath-taking, covenant and settlement of disputes**

When used during these circumstances, it is employed to call on God to be a witness.

**9. Divination and prophecy**

Usually it is broken into lobes and cast on the ground, then the diviner makes an interpretation.

**10. Sacrifice and worship**

This is very important as it is a sacred meal, the meal of the gods.

**11. Receiving a new day**

It is used in the morning during invocatory poems and prayers.

**12. Medical and mystical uses**

Because of its nutritive value, it has health consequences. It helps strengthen the tooth enamel surface.

Every kola nut can be broken into lobes, and these lobes signify numbers. And number is very important for the African. Some have one lobe, some two lobes, some three, some four, some five, some six and some seven. One can also find a kola nut with more than seven lobes.

The kKola nut with one lobe is a dumb kola (*Oji Ogbi*). It is also called the kola nut of the spirits (*Oji Mmuo*), round kola nut (*Oji Ifilifi or nkpurukakpu*), kola nut of the mystical circle or zero kola nut (*Oji Akwu na Ogbi or Obi*); it is not eaten by human beings because it belongs to *Chukwu*; *Chukwu* is a spirit (*Chukwu bu mmuo*). A one-lobed kola nut is neither male nor female, since *Chukwu* is one and indivisible in nature.

When it has two lobes, it is called *oji gworu*, symbolizing male and female. It is an elliptical gender shadow of *oji ogbi* and the first child of the one-lobed kola nut. It is the *cola nitida*. Just like the one-lobed kola nut, it belongs to the spirits and is not used for religious and cultural celebrations in Igbo land. However, it can be eaten after some prayers.

Three-lobed kola nut is called *Oji Ikenga* (*Ike eji aga*, *Ikenga* is a spirit of power and achievement) or *Oji Dike* (the kola nut of the brave or valiant), or *Oji Echichi* (the kola nut of titled people). It is the masculine kola. As a matter of principle, it is eaten only by warriors, brave men, the consecrated or the ordained. It is not eaten by women, except for those who may be seeking for a male child.

The kola with four lobes (*Oji Aka ano*) is the kola of peace (*Oji Udo*) and blessings (*Oji Ngozi*), the kola nut of the four market days (*Oji ahia na ano ubosi na ano: Afor, Nkwor, Eke and Ori*). It also symbolizes completeness (*izu zuru oke*, referring to the four market days). It is the kola nut for both male and female genders (*Oji nwoke na nwayi*), and thus considered the most gender-sensitive kola. It is also called the kola nut of the family (*Oji ezinuno*) because it is believed to unite the family.

The kola with five lobes is the kola of procreation (*Oji omumu*), protection, of industry and achievement (*Oji aka na okpa*), of wealth (*Oji una or Oji ubalaka*), progress and good luck (*Oji sirili werere*). Whenever it is broken and shared, it is a sign that things will go well.

It came from the four-lobed kola; however, unlike the four-lobed kola with two males and two females, the five-lobed kola comes with three males and two females.

The kola with six lobes is called the kola nut of the ancestors (*Oji ndi chie*), or the kola that doubles the Ikenga kola (*Oji Ikenga abuo*). It is also called the covenant kola nut (*Oji Ogbugbandu*), the kola nut of communion (*Oji Oriko*) or the kola nut of blood and spirit ties (*Oji Umume na Umuite*). It is the kola of blood and spirit, and thus, indicative of communion with the ancestors. No wonder the smallest part of it is not eaten but given to the ancestors. It is used to make peace, covenant ties, taking of oath and punishment of offenders.

The last is the seven-lobed kola, which is known as the kola nut of perfection of man and spirit (*Oji asaa mmadu asaa mmuo*), consummations, fulfillment, and completeness (*Oji kpurugede*), the kola nut of the titled cow killer (*Oji ogbuefi*), the kola nut of Ozo title and prophecy (*Oji ozo na amuma*), the kola nut of celebration and festivities (*Oji emume na mmemme*), the kola nut of law and judgment (*Oji iwu na ikpe*). It is also the kola of endlessness or eternity. Thus, the Igbo would say: *Uwam uwa asaa; asaa ndu na anwuanwu; ikpa naasaa mmiri naasaa* (Kanu, 2015b).

### **The Kola Nut and the Expression of *Igwebuike* Philosophy**

*Igwe bu ike* is an Igbo proverb and also a typical Igbo name. Igbo proverbs and names are among the major traditional vessels where African philosophy, religion and culture have continued to be preserved. They contain the wisdom and experience of the African people, usually of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression (Kanu, 2018a). Thus, beyond the linguistic expression lies a deeper meaning. It is at the philosophical level that *Igwebuike* is understood as providing an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations (Kanu, 2016a).

The expression, *Igwebuike*, is a combination of three Igbo words. It can be understood as a word or a sentence: as a word, it is written as

*Igwebuike*, and as a sentence, it is written as, *Igwe bu ike*, with the component words enjoying some independence in terms of space. Literally, *Igwe* is a noun which means ‘number’ or ‘multitude,’ usually a large number or population. The number or population in perspective are entities with ontological identities and significances; however, they are part of an existential order in which every entity is in relation to the other. *Bu* is a verb, which means *is*. *Ike* is a noun, which means *strength* or *power* (Kanu, 2016b). *Igwe, bu* and *Ike* put together, means ‘number is strength’ or ‘number is power’ (Kanu, 2017a). However, beyond the literal sense of *Igwebuike*, it means *otu obi* (one heart and one soul) – *cor unum et anima una*. In a metaphoric sense, it is used within the Igbo linguistic setting to refer to relational engagement in the world, accomplished in solidarity and complementarity, and the powerful and insurmountable force therein (Kanu, 2017b). The closest words to it in English are complementarity, solidarity and harmony.

If *Igwebuike* provides an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations, the major question looming at the horizon is how the kola nut symbolizes this mutual relational character. It is in this regard that kola nut symbols of human/human and human/divine relationships will be studied.

### **1. The Kola nut Symbol of Divine/Human Relationship**

The kola nut is a sacred symbol among the Igbo, and it tells the story of the Igbo religious reality. It is, therefore, not surprising that, in relation to its beginnings, the kola nut is presented in Igbo mythologies as belonging to the plant world of the spirits and has remained associated with the spirit world. Umeogu (2019) gives several mythical stories in this regard; however, the following three are of relevance to this research:

1. The autochthonous origin of the kola nut holds that it was planted by *Chukwu* as the first tree planted on Igbo land. It was planted by *Chukwu* so that the fruits would serve as fruits for both the gods and human beings. It was also planted that it may become the gateway of communion between spirits and human beings.



2. A second myth holds that the gods lived on kola nuts and sacrifices. Usually, when they were offered sacrifices, they consumed the sacrifice with kola nut. Human beings used sacrifices to invoke the presence of the gods so as to attend to human needs or challenges. During one of such invocations and the appearance of the gods in Igbo land, they forgot to return with some of the kola nuts that they had brought to eat their sacrifice with. The kola nut then sprouted and became a cherished tree in Igbo land.
3. A third myth has it that the founding fathers of Igbo land paid a visit to the gods. As part of the welcome ceremony, the gods went to their orchard, plugged a fruit and offered it to the founding fathers of Igbo land. On their return home, these founding fathers returned with the kola nut to Igbo land, planted it and began using it in the world of human beings. Since then, it has been used for welcoming visitors, rituals, ceremonies, etc.

Because of the sacred dimension of the kola nut, it has been regarded as a symbol of sacred communion between human beings and the gods, spirits, ancestors, etc. Thus, during the blessing of the kola nut, Osamugha (2006) observes that the prayer below is said:

God in heaven come and eat kola.

Unfathomable God, come and eat kola.

King who is the final arbiter, come and eat kola

Our ancestors, recent and remote, come and eat kola (p. 10).

From the foregoing, the kola nut has been used by the Igbo in their relationships with the divine. It is at this level that the kola nut is understood as a symbol of divine and human relations. Through the kola nut, human beings do for the divine what they cannot do for themselves, and through it too, they appeal to the gods to do for them (human beings) what they cannot do for themselves. This communion between human beings and the gods is symbolized in and attained through the use of kola nut. There are special events when and where

it is used by human beings in their relationship with the divine. These times include:

e. **Prayer**

It is very important in prayer because the kola nut speaks, and also used to communicate between human beings and the gods. It is so important that in every gathering of the Igbo it is employed for the opening prayer. Nzekwu (1966) presents a typical Igbo prayer with the kola nut thus:

Creator of the universe, chew kola nut. Our ancestral spirits, chew kola nut. He who brings kola nut brings life. Wherever a child may be, may it wake each dawn. We will all live. Forward jumps the male monkey; it never jumps backward. If a kite and an eagle perch, whichever says the other should not perch, may its wings break. Whatever one's occupation, may it provide for his old age. (p. 48).

The *oji* (kola nut) and *mmanya-oku* (hot drink) are also important during libations, the food and drink of the gods. It is through libation that the African tries to normalize or balance the relationship between the three worlds. This libation is made to God through the agency of the ancestors and other deities. The Igbo believe that through gifts, like the kola nut, they can gain God's favour.

f. **Divination and Prophecy**

The kola nut is an important element during divination and prophecy among the Igbo. Divination involves a process of inquiry. People who wish to know why certain things happen, how to solve certain problems, and so on, go to diviners. This is usually done through the agency of a particular deity. The Igbo would say *Onye amaghi ebe mmiri bidoro maba ya, anaghi ama ebe okwusiri* (He who does not know where rain started beating him cannot know where it stopped.). The kola

nut in divination speaks the minds of the gods. When it is broken and thrown to the ground, the diviner or prophet interprets what the gods are saying to a particular situation or individual. This interpretation is shaped by the way the lobes fall, whether facing up or down.

For instance, if after the lobes are thrown to the ground or in a plate and they lie open on their backs, it is called *itu mnwiri enu* and is a sign of good things to come, but if they lie on their faces with their backs up, it is called *itu mnwiri ala*, and is a sign of bad omen. When it is a half face up, it is called *itu mnwiri nko enu*. When it is a half face down, it is called *itu mnwiri nko ala*. If the lobes form a circle, it is a sign of life. If they form a cross, it is a sign of conflict or death.

**g. Festivals, Rites, Rituals and Ceremonies**

The kola nut is never absent in Igbo religious festivals, rituals, rites and ceremonies. The reason is simple; the gods cannot be invited for a ceremony without making provision for their food: the kola nut. Religious festivals and rituals, such as new yam festivals, harvest seasons, hunting seasons and planting season festivals, are activities that demonstrate and express belief and faith in *Chukwu* and the spirit world. During these ceremonies, what God or the spirits have done for human beings are commemorated and powers obtained from the spirit world. For instance, the Igbo's celebration of the new yam festival is connected to the month of *Ahiajioku*. It is a time when they give thanks to *Chukwu*, His deans and the ancestors for granting them a bountiful harvest for the year. Igbo traditional marriage ceremonies, etc., also provide an opportunity for communion with the ancestors, as the Igbo invoke their blessings upon the newly married couple.

**h. Sacrifice and Worship**

The kola nut occupies an important place in Igbo ritual home. For some, it is a crop grown in the forests and sold; but for the

Igbo, it is an instrument for a holy communion. Its sacredness explains why it is used by human beings during sacrifices and worship. Through it, the human person is able to reach out to the gods.

**i. Oath-taking, Covenants and Settlement of Disputes**

The five and six-lobed kola nuts are used during oath-taking (*Inu iyi*), covenants (*Igbo ndu* or *Igbo oriko*) and settlement of disputes (*Ikpe ikpe*) to invite the gods and ancestors to be witnesses to the covenant that is made or oath that is taken or agreement reached during dispute settlement. The five-lobed kola is used for the settlement of dispute. If after the dispute is settled and the kola nut is broken, shared and eaten, it is sign that peace must reign between the persons involved. If afterwards, a mischief maker arises from among the persons, he would be in trouble.

**2. Symbol of Inter-human Relations**

The Igbo kola nut symbolizes the unity and togetherness of the Igbo people. This understanding begins from the shape of the kola nut itself: it has the shape of the human heart, and so it is regarded as the heart of the Igbo people. It is in this regard that it is said that ‘the kola nut is the heart of the Igbo people’ (*Oji bu mkpuru obi ndi Igbo*). It does not just symbolize the Igbo people in an abstract sense, it is also a culture that holds the Igbo people together; wherever they meet, the kola nut carries the same meaning and power. Once it is presented, every Igbo person knows what it symbolizes and what should be done. It is within this context that the Igbo say that ‘the kola nut is the culture that holds the Igbo together’ (*Oji bu omenani jikotaru ndi Igbo*). It is at this level of understanding that it becomes easier to connect the Igbo kola nut with *Igwebuike* philosophy which means *otu obi* (one heart and one soul) – *cor unum et anima una*.

This philosophy of *otu obi* that the kola nut signifies is evident when it is presented to a visitor as a sign of reception and hospitality. To offer

a visitor kola nut is to receive the visitor with one's life, and beyond that, it is also wishing the person life, because an Igbo proverb says that 'he that brings kola brings life' (*onye wetara oji wetara ndu*). According to Uchendu (1964), "Kola nut features in all aspects of Igbo life. It is the symbol of Igbo hospitality. To be presented with a kola nut is to be made welcome; and one is most welcome when the kola nut turns out white, whether this is by accident or by design" (p. 448).

The lobes of the kola point to the reality of complementarity in human relationships. When these lobes stay together they remain alive, but when they separate they die and dry off. Their togetherness is a symbol of life, and their separation, death. Life in Africa is about being in relation to the other. To be is to belong, and not to belong is to suffer alienation (Kanu, 2017d and 2016d). The kola nut also symbolizes the African worldview, which is characterized by a common origin, common worldview, common language, shared culture, shared race, colour and habits, common historical experience and a common destiny. The communal-individuality of the African is expressed in the Igbo proverb which says 'If a lizard stays off from the foot of a tree, it would be in danger' (*Ngwere ghara ukwu osisi, aka akpara ya*) (Kanu, 2014). Mbiti (1970) classically proverbialized the community-determining role of the individual when he writes, "I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am" (p. 108). The existence of others assures one of their solidarity and complementarity, without which I cannot be. Achebe (1958) brings the essential nature of the Igbo-African communal relationship to a higher and more fundamental focus when he writes:

We do not ask for wealth because he that has health and children will also have wealth. We do not pray to have more money but to have more kinsmen. We are better than animals because we have kinsmen. An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him. (p. 132).

The kola nut points to the fact that existence is not only meaningful, but also possible only in a community.

## **The Kola Nut and *Igwebuike* Philosophy of Science**

There might have been other sources of knowledge of African philosophy of science; however, the kola nut as a symbol inundated with multiple meanings among the African people must have contributed to or deepened the understanding of African philosophy of science. This is very important, especially as the kola nut is a gift from *Chukwu*, who is Himself the source of all science and knowledge.

### **1. The Kola Nut and *Igwebuike* Physics**

The two-lobed kola nut has implications for an African physics. The two lobes signify actions and events within the African world. Umeogu (2019) refers to it as that force of impression that would move a body and stop a body in motion, and the kola produces cause and effect, action and reaction. It is through the movement and interaction of these forces of nature that reality comes into existence (Kanu, 2020). Instances include:

- a. *Universal Gravitational Force*- Everything works towards the centre of the earth which points to the African concept of the Complementarity of reality. In spite of the multiplicity of reality, reality is one.
- b. *Synthesis Theory of Urea*: This theory believes that the synthesis of inanimate things brings about the formation of animate realities. It points to the interconnected of reality.
- c. *Neutralization Reaction*: It holds that the combination of elements brings about the formation of new ones. For instance, oxygen + hydrogen=water or Acid + Base= salt + water

If it is through the interaction of forces, and sometimes conflicting forces, that new realities come into existence. It then implies that in African physics, alterity is not a problem but a potentiality for the birth of new reality. It further presents the Igbo universe as one of conflicts of opposites: good and evil, light and darkness, hot and cold, wet and dry, male and female, etc. These conflicts do not spell the end of the universe but the hope of sustenance and remaining in being.

## **2. The Kola Nut and *Igwebuike* Astronomy and Theogenesis**

The unity of the lobes of the kola nut, in spite of their divisibility, unrepeatability and uniqueness, registers the fact about the 'commonness' in the midst of alterity in the African universe. It manifests the fact that reality in the African universe is one. It does not just point to the oneness of reality but to the mysterious beginning of the universe (from the one-lobed kola - a symbol of *Chukwu*). It all began from the ONE, with whom there was no second. That ONE is *Chukwu* who alone, in Himself and by Himself, created the universe. We did not create it but found ourselves in it. We are because He does exist, and nothing would be in existence without Him, for everything was made through Him and in Him. The case of the one-lobed kola nut, *Oji Ogbi*, tells His story. It is the first kola from which other kola nuts emerged. It is neither a male nor female, just as *Chukwu* is neither male nor female.

The one-lobed kola nut points to the importance of numbers in the African universe, and how Igbo-Africans devoted much time and interest in mathematics. They did not only develop it, but used numbers to explain the reality of the universe. It is in this regard that 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 lobed kola nuts give profound explanations about the Igbo universe and how realities can be explained in relation to numbers. The one-lobed kola, being the beginning and source of other kola nuts, points to the important place that the number ONE occupies in Igbo astronomy. The number ONE is not only the central number but the centre of the universe and the heart of reality. Every reality began from the number ONE Its destiny is determined by the ONE and would end in the ONE. This One is *Chukwu*.

Since everything exists in and through the frame of the ONE, every reality finds its unity in Him. It is within this context that *Igwebuike* understands every individual reality as part of and the completion of the whole, and thus, there is a unity in the midst of diversity (Kanu, 2019).

### **3. The Kola Nut and *Igwebuiké* Biology and Anthropogenesis**

Focusing on the four-lobed kola nut, which is made of two female lobes and two male lobes, in which the male lobe faces the female lobe and the female lobe faces the male lobe, the source and foundation of the Igbo-African family is traced. It makes it clear that according to Igbo biology, it is from the union of the male and female that other males and females emerged. It is through the crossing of the male and female that every other thing was generated. The male and female speak of the positive and negative polar charges of being that must cross each other before a being of their kind can come into existence. Thus, the four-lobed kola nut speaks of the source of creative light and life. When the male and female lobes cross each other, light is ignited which further brings about life in the Igbo world.

### **4. The Kola Nut and *Igwebuiké* Scientific Method**

The multiplicity of the lobes, which does not in any way make the kola nut two or three or four kola, but united to form a whole, points to a holistic approach in science. Its ‘holisticness’ of the approach is anchored on the fact that all parts of reality are interconnected and find identity, meaning and purpose through relationships. Thus, *Igwebuiké* emphasizes the importance of multidimensionality in research (Kanu, 2017g). An investigation of a particular situation or reality should imply several viewpoints or perspectives so as to arrive at a global, balanced and enriched position (Kanu, 2017h).

The implications of the lobes of the kola nut lying side by side as support to each other establish the importance of interdisciplinary approach in scientific investigations. The interdisciplinary approach is based on the interconnectivity of reality. By interdisciplinary approach, it is meant the combining of two or more established academic disciplines in a process of research (Kanu, 2019). Thus, an interdisciplinary research synthesizes perspectives, knowledge, skills, interconnections, epistemologies, etc. The interdisciplinary method draws knowledge from several other professions, technologies and fields (Kanu, 2016a). This further implies that science as a field of



study is not independent of other fields of human endeavour. While it can give explanations for the causes of certain realities in the universe, it cannot alone give meaning or purposefulness to human existence.

### **Conclusion**

Among the Igbo-Africans, the kola nut remains one of those symbols that have defied the blades of civilization. It is, therefore, not surprising that, in spite of the influx of modernity into the African society, the place of the kola nut remains undiminished, and may have even grown in stature. One of the reasons for its persistence through time is because of its sacredness and place in ceremonies and festivals. It is such that ceremonies like marriage, child birth, naming of a child, new yam festivals, etc., without the kola nut, may be considered incomplete. The kola nut does not only symbolize the essence of the African acclaimed hospitality, it manifests the goodwill employed to welcome a visitor. It is also used to settle interpersonal or inter-communal disputes. From the foregoing, Acholonu (2006) avers that “the kola nut functions at the heart of Igbo-African collective psyche and spirituality” (p. 1).

It is because of the centrality of the kola nut in the Igbo psyche and spirituality that its relationship with *Igwebuike* philosophy, which captures the Igbo-African worldview, becomes unavoidable. This work has unveiled the symbolic manifestation of *Igwebuike* philosophy in the kola nut. The kola nut manifests the reality of being human within the context of a web of relationships with persons and other inhabitants of the universe. The kola nut and *Igwebuike* philosophy understand the human person and other realities around him/her as a social being, rather than a solitary individual. Herein, being human involves an unfolding, evolving and developing dimension, one that has a cumulative experience and wisdom of one's community, locally and globally. It is within this context that the kola is understood as a symbolic expression of *Igwebuike* philosophy.

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