

## **Udara (African Star Apple): A Symbol of Procreation among Anambra-Igbo People**

**Esther Ogochukwu Akpulu**

Department of Igbo, African and Asian Studies  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

[eo.akpulu@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:eo.akpulu@unizik.edu.ng)

08063010049

### **Abstract**

This research centres on the meaning Anambra people of South-Eastern Nigeria attribute to the African star apple *udara* as a symbol of progeny. So many fruits abound in Igbo land. African star apple *udara* on which this study centres is one of them. These fruits are known not only for their nutritious values but also as sacred fruits from sacred trees. Some of these sacred trees are almost extinct as a result of deforestation. Unfortunately, little or nothing is known about the few that are still in existence based on the change in the value system of Anambra people. For this change therefore *udara* is being mishandled. This study is to portray some cultural beliefs Anambra people have in African star apple especially as it regards procreation. Again, the study intends to create awareness on the mishandling of *udara* by modern Anambra people and let them know the implications of such mishandling. The theories of symbolic interactionism and social change were used for data analysis. This study is a descriptive and survey research. Data collection was by oral interview posed to randomly selected individuals from selected communities which were done at the interviewees' conveniences and at different times. The interviewees' responses formed the data for this study. They were therefore collected, translated, transcribed and analysed. Among the findings of the study is that African star apple is 'progeny', that is, it symbolizes procreation and fertility and originally not meant to be sold in

the market. Another finding is that some communities presently sell it in their markets as a result of economic and social change in the modern society while some others still do not sell it. The study also revealed that as a sacred fruit from a sacred tree, it is revered as a source of blessing to the people. It is believed that the public, both old and young, students, especially culture students and all culturally minded researchers will benefit from this study as it reveals the views of Igbo communities on African star apple.

**Key Words: African star apple, Attribute, Procreation, Anambra people, Symbol**

### **Introduction**

In the primitive society, man had no steady source of livelihood, no permanent shelter and the rest. There was no way he could meet the basic necessity of life. Then, man relied heavily on wandering, hunting and gathering for his daily needs. As he wanders, he gathers every edible fruit he comes across and eat. It is obviously on one of such adventure that man came across African apple fruit. He must have eaten it and observed its fresh sweet taste. When the society grew from hunting and gathering to pastoral, horticultural, and eventually to agricultural society, man settled down in a place he can call a home from where he goes back and forth to fend for his family. Some of the fruits man gathered, ate, and discarded germinated around his settlement. African star apple is one of them and so the consumption continued.

At a point, it was observed that children are so attached to this fruit. For instance, it was discovered that when *udara* is given to a weeping child, he or she instantly stops crying. Also, when it is given to a child who follows and cries around the mother, the child stops crying and following the mother around and instead settles down to play and eat his or her *udara*. From this point, Igbo people started attributing *udara* to progeny or

procreation. Children are usually attached to different fruits but their attachment to the African star apple is unequalled. This is not to say that adults do not enjoy eating *udara* but its attachment to the children is exceptional. There is also a belief among Igbo people that *udara* is a woman which could be judged from the way children are attached to *udara* just as a woman is naturally bonded to children. Right from the time a woman is pregnant, Igbo people consider it dutiful to offer her *udara* which they normally specify saying *were udara a nye nwa* meaning give the child this African star apple.

Moreso, people portray their nonverbal expression wishes to childless couples by presenting them with the gift of African star apple. This typically means that they pray and wish the couple to procreate. *Udara* from time immemorial had been ascribed to progeny. It is then appalling how some individuals and communities in the modern Igbo Anambra mishandle this special and sacred fruit.

This research is therefore very important as it reveals that the attribute of African star apple as a symbol of progeny is neither superstitious nor idolatrous but a construction of meaning via symbolic interaction. The objective of this study is to portray the cultural beliefs the Igbo people of Anambra of South-Eastern Nigeria have on African star apple. Another objective of this study is also to educate the populace especially the younger generation on the symbolism of the African star apple. The research method adopted is descriptive. This study used the theory of symbolic interactionism to buttress that humans interact with things based on the meanings ascribed to those things. The theory of social change was also used to explain the mishandling of *udara* by some persons and communities in Anambra state.

In order to arrange the research properly, brief history of Anambra state will be given. Other scholarly works will be reviewed as they relate to this research. Analysis of findings would be given evaluative attention. Conclusion and summary of findings bring the research to an end.

### **Brief History of Anambra State**

The original Anambra State was created in 1976 when East Central State was broken into Anambra and Imo States. Then, it comprised the present Anambra State and Enugu State including the Abakaliki part of Ebonyi State, with Enugu as its capital. During further states creation in 1991, Enugu State with Abakaliki was excised, leaving Anambra State as presently constituted, with Awka as its capital.

The state derives its name from the Anambra River, the largest, most southerly, left bank tributary of the River Niger. With a total land area of 4,416 sq. km. Anambra State, situates on a generally low elevation on the eastern side of River Niger, shares boundaries with Kogi, Enugu, Imo, Abija, Rivers, Delta and Edo States.

The creation of the present Anambra State resulted mainly from the desire to spread the gains of economic development and arrest the national problem of north-south geopolitical dichotomy evident in the former Anambra State. Then, there was the agitation that the indigenes of the present Anambra State, because of their highly developed manpower, dominated the state public services. But on the other hand, there was some measures of concentration of infrastructural base and government industrial development in the region that is now Enugu State.

Administratively, the state consists of twenty-one local government areas and the state capital is Awka. There are three

senatorial districts in the state and each covers seven local government areas namely (a) Anambra North, (b) Anambra Central and (c) Anambra South senatorial districts. Anambra North comprises of Onitsha North, Onitsha South, Oyi, Ogbaru, Anambra East, Anambra West and Ayamelum. Anambra Central consists of Awka North, Awka South, Anaocha, Njikoka, Idemmili North, Idemmili South and Dunukofia, while Anambra South is made up of Aguata, Ekwusigo, Ihiala, Nnewi North, Nnewi South, Orumba North and Orumba South, [wwwhttps://en.m.wikipedia.org](https://en.m.wikipedia.org). Each of these local government areas has various numbers of communities that constitute it. Because of economic and social change, this study now goes through the zones to discover if they still hold on the same belief.

### **Literature Review**

Literature review is delving into works already done in the area so as to enable the researcher have knowledge of the past and then be in a position to discuss his topic very well. The literature review is divided into three parts for proper analysis. The first part deals on the conceptual studies where important terms used in the study were explained for clearer understanding of the work. The second section is the theoretical studies that help to support the data. The last section is theoretical framework which considers the theoretical concept of Symbolic Interactionism and Social Change, and the summary brings it to the end.

### **Conceptual Studies**

Here are some explanations of some terms used in the study to ensure clarity. The researcher has to discuss some relevant concepts that will be in the work to make the audience have clear understanding of the work. The concepts are as follow,

## **Symbol**

A symbol is a person, an object, a gesture, an event that represents a more general quality or a situation. Haralambos and Mead (1980:544) state that a symbol does not simply stand for an object or event but it defines them in a particular way and indicates a response to them. Oladumiye (2018:17) in his view states that “cultural symbols are ‘signs’ that stand for something else, and are conventionally accepted as such.” Radcliffe-Brown in Madukasi (2019:65) argues that whatever has a meaning is a symbol and the meaning or interpretation is what is expressed by the symbol. That is to say, the translation, explanation, meaning or conceptualization of the sign object would be in relation with subsequent sign representing the object. Giddens (1997:565) defines symbol as something that stands for, represents a person, idea, letter, figure, or sign that expresses a sound, a number, a chemical substance. Thompson (1970) in Cohen (1974:26) views symbol as anything which exists for its purpose of pointing people for itself. Cohen (1974:26) opines that “symbols are objects, acts, relationships or linguistic formation that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of meanings.” Ukpokolo (2015:36) observes symbolic objects to be instruments of group identity construction.

Every symbolic object in a culture conveys meanings which the creators of the symbol make of it. Otuba (nd:170) agrees with this when she states that it is the meaning the owners of the symbol give to it that it carries. Ukpokolo (2015:37) reaffirms that symbolism is manipulated by different peoples in different human societies and cultures to make statements on who they are, what they do and the meanings they hold concerning those things that matter to them, thereby helping people to distinguish between “us” and “them”, and indicate the difference within a group. Greetz (1973:93) in his study observes that “cultural symbols give meaning to existence by providing a “model of” the world as it is and a “model for” the world as it ought to be”.

Leach (1976:331) contends that “symbols, either verbal or non-verbal, distinguishes on class of things or actions from another, helping people to create artificial boundaries in a field that is naturally continuous”.

Nwokoye and Eze (2017:283) opine that Igbo symbols are used to represent or recall some greater reality. They suggest things beyond themselves. This means that Igbo symbols record and express many traditionally cherished values and ethical ideals in Igbo cosmology. In Igbo land, *omu* stands for war, *oji* and *nzu* stand for welcome, *ofo* symbolizes leadership and so on. Symbols are identity, and the greater number of them the people know, the more they identify themselves as responsible Igbo people.

The above concepts of symbol show that a symbol must have something which it meaningfully represents. This meaning the symbol carries is dependent on the people who owns it and the meaning goes beyond the natural context.

### **Procreation**

Prominent in the notion of marriage in Igbo culture is the issue of procreation. Procreation is the ability to produce children or baby animals of the same biological kind. The essence of marriage in the traditional Igbo society has been described by many scholars as the perpetuation of one’s family lineage. Obi and Chris (2019:8868) share the same thought when they opine that one of the major points of investigations carried out on the potential bride before the actual marriage is whether her family has a history of infertility in the lineage. Again they consider the physique of the woman with regards to her ability to withstand pregnancy as well as being able to deliver a baby freely. Nwosu (2018) agrees that “procreation is one major reason for marriage”.

Abasili (nd:1) agrees that in Africa, marriage and procreation are intertwined and inseparable. It is almost presumed that readiness for marriage is readiness for procreation; to get married is an opportunity to contribute freely through procreation to the survival of the lineage and society at large. Obindigbo (2015) observes that “each time an Igbo person thinks of marriage, bearing children first comes to mind. The significance of *omumu* to our lives as an ethnic group is that it ensures the survival of our cultural species”. Isiugo-Abanihe (1995:151) writing on natural fertility among the Igbo of the East-Central states of Nigeria, concurs that having children is the major reason for getting married; indeed, it is the essential part of the definition of marriage since marriage legitimizes procreation and most births take place within marital unions. This is the reason a childless marriage in Igbo land is as good as nothing.

### **Theoretical Studies**

African star apple is a traditional fruit, which is predominant in tropical regions with the fruit parts consumed by the populace and used in folklore to manage diabetes. The fruit is a low land rain forest tree species which belong to the family of “sapotaceae“, Adekanmi and Olowofoyeku (2020:1). It occurs seasonally in Africa. Adekanmi and Olowofoyeku (2012:1) agree with this when they say that in Nigeria, the fruits emerge on the tree in the month of July as dark as green balls and turn yellow or orange as they ripen. Locals believe that the pulp will be sweet if the colour of the fruit is yellow and bitter if the colour of the fruit is a mixture of green and yellow. The ones with orange colour are most preferred. The ripe fruit can be found in the market between December and March.

The African star apple fruit has gained popularity and is widely consumed because of its freshly pulp but the seed is discarded. The botanical name of the African star apple is “*Chrysophllum*



albidum”. Its common names include African cherry, white star apple, Yoruba people called it “agbalumo” while it is called “*udara*” in Igbo. It is also called *agwaluma* in Hausa, *ehya* in Igala, *utieagadara* in Urohobo, Akubor, Yusuf and Obiegunam in Adekanmi and Olowofoyeku (2020:1). In Ghana, it is known as Alasa. In the neighbouring country Benin, the Southerners have variant names for the fruit in their dialect. The names include *azongogwe* or *azonbobwe*, *fon* or *goun*, *azonvivo* or *azonvowve* and *azonbebi* Dah-Dovonon (2000) in Adekenmi and Olowofoyeku (2020:1).

### **African Star Apple as an Economic tree**

African star apple is among the economic trees in Igbo land. Though it is seasonal in terms of its availability, but it is a source of income within the period that it is available. Oboh et al in Adebayo, Orhevba, Adeoye, Musa, and Fase (2012:179) report that the common fruits expended in Nigeria are orange, pawpaw, African star apple, water melon, mango, banana, carrot, cashew among others. Kang (1992) in Adebayo, Orhevba, Adeoye, Musa and Fase (2012:179) observes that the African star apple features prominently in the compound agro forestry system for fruit, food, cash income and other auxiliary uses including environmental uses.

### **African Star Apple as a Sacred Tree and Symbol of Procreation**

Ekwealor (2013:124-125) observes that African star apple is a sacred tree in Igbo land. It is in charge of procreation and people can solicit and obtain children through it. Ekwealor (2013:125) believes that even the liquid content of the African star apple fruit looks like a woman’s breast milk. Some Igbo communities do organize *Emume udara* which is one of rites of passage for their young girls. It is always a day the African star apple is revered as a holy or sacred tree. Ogbalu (2007:94-95) concurs that ancient Igbo people around Awka

and Onitsha organized *ime ụdara* for their marriageable and newly married daughters. It used to be an annual event without which conception would be supposedly difficult. African star apple tree is honoured in a special way on the day of *ime ụdara*. The maidens cook and take their foods to African star apple tree to eat, dance and merry. Ogbalu (2007:95) believes that other communities in Igbo land may have different names for *ime ụdara*.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts the theory of symbolic interactionism which developed from the work of a group of American philosophers who included John Dewey, William James and Herbert Mead. The interactionist perspective focuses on how individuals make sense of or interpret the social world in which they participate. Tischler (2002:21) states that this approach is primarily concerned with human with human behaviour on a person to person level. Schaefer (2005:16) observes that “the interactionist perspective is sometimes referred to as symbolic interactionist perspective because interactionists see symbol as an especially important part of human communication. Members of a society share the social meanings of symbols.” Tischler (2002:21) agrees that symbolic interactionism is concerned with the meaning that people place on their own and one another’s behaviour. Human beings are unique in that what they do with one another has meaning beyond the concrete act. Haralambos and Heald (1980:544) opine that without symbols there would be no human interaction and no human society. Symbolic interaction is necessary since man has no instinct to direct his behaviour. Man is not genetically programmed to react automatically to particular stimuli. In order to survive he must therefore construct and live within a world of meaning.

Herbert Mead who is the major philosopher that contributed to the theory devised a symbolic interactionist approach that

focuses on signs, gestures, shared rules, and written and spoken languages. This theory maintains that people give things meaning and act or react on the basis of these meanings. Tischler (2002:21) expresses that according to symbolic interactionists, “we go about our lives with the assumption that most people share our definitions of basic social situations. This agreement on definitions and meanings is the key to human interactions in general”.

### **Strenght of Symbolic Interactionism Theory**

- The theory recognizes the individuality of the individuals. It accepts the facts that people have their own choices, their ow free will and their and their own understanding things.
- Symbolic interactionism does complement functionalism and conflict theroy in important ways and gives us important insight into how people react.
- Scholars of interactionism study how individuals act within society and believe that meaning is produced through interactions.
- Sees human as active, creative participants who construct their social world, not as passive who , conforming objects of socialization (Bulmer, 1969) in Creel (2011).

### **Weakness of Symbolic Interactionism Theory**

- Symbolic interaction and its various offshots have been critciized for paying too little attention to the larger elements of society.
- Symbols may be interpreted incorrectly or differently among different groups of people.
- The theory overestimates the power of individuals to create their own realities, ignoring the extent to which humans inhabit a world not of their own making (Goffman, 1974:21).

- Manis and Meltzer 1978 in Creel (2011) state that the theory neglects the emotional dimension of human conduct, focusing strictly on logical behaviour.

This research also uses the theory of **social change**. There are three main theories of social change. They include evolutionary, functionalist and conflict theories. This research uses theory of social change based on functionalist perspective because it is the most suitable for the topic under discussion. The functionalist theory of social change states that society is in a constant state of equilibrium. When a change occurs in one part of the society, adjustments are made. Social change occurs when the equilibrium is compromised due to rapidity with which events occur.

Form and Wilterdink (2018) maintains that social change in sociology is the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by change in cultural symbols, rules of behaviour, social organizations, or value systems. Social change can evolve from a number of different sources, including contact with other societies (that is diffusion), changes in the ecosystem which can cause the loss of natural resources or wide spread of disease. The change could also be technological change epitomized by the industrial revolution which created a new social group, the urban proletariat. Social change can also be as a result of population growth and other demographic variables. This theory states that social change is spurred by ideological, economic, and political movements.

Robertson (1977:545) observes that Parsons sees change not as something that disrupts the social equilibrium but as something that alters the state of the equilibrium so that a qualitatively new equilibrium results. He acknowledges that changes may arise from two sources. They may come either from outside the society, through contact with other societies,

or they may come from inside the society, through adjustments that must be made to resolve strains within the system.

### **Summary**

From the above findings, it is obvious that most scholarly works already done on African star apple were based on the food and pharmaceutical values of the fruits, seed, herbs, and barks of African star apple. No scholar to the best of the knowledge of the researcher has delved into the cultural, economic, and social changes that now exist as it concerns African star apple which this study centers on. It therefore proves that this topic deserves attention.

### **Methodology**

Every set goal must have an organised procedure for it to be accomplished. Likewise this study follows a certain method to arrive at its findings.

### **Area of Study**

The areas of study of this work is six communities in Anambra state. Anambra state has three senatorial zones. Two communities were selected from each senatorial zone to ensure complete representation. The communities selected include Isuanaocha and Agulu to represent Anambra Central, Nteje and Nando to represent Anambra North, Owele-Ezukala and Awa to represent Anambra South senatorial zones. These areas were selected because they really justified the theories used in the study. People of Anambra state constructed the meaning which they attribute to African star apple as a symbol which is why communities like Isuanaocha, Awa, Nteje and Nando do not sell it in their markets till date. While communities like Agulu and Owele-Ezukala now sell African star apple in their markets as a result of economic and social change.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The research randomly selected and interviewed individuals mainly five elders from each of the six communities selected and their responses formed the data for this study. This includes visit to the houses of some interviewees and to some markets in the selected communities like Eke Isuanaocha, Nkwo Agulu and Eke Nteje. Scholarly texts were also reviewed to gather the opinion of other writers that have written on topics that relate to this research work.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **The Belief of Anambra People on African Star Apple**

There are some beliefs Anambra-Igbo people have about the African star apple. They hold on to these beliefs as part of their cultural values. These beliefs are as follow,

#### **Planting and Growing of African Star Apple**

It was gathered that African star apple is both a symbolic and sacred fruit in the entire Igbo land. It is a special fruit and free gift from God. Findings show that it not planted by will instead it germinates on its own which could be as a result of dispersal by man or animal. Most of the interviewed persons agree that one can only transplant African star apple seedling to a place of his choice when it has germinated as it not planted like other tropical trees such as coconut, cashew, mango, and others. In the olden days, people do not care much to transplant it rather they allow it to grow wherever it germinated. Consequently one can see the tree any where such as in the forest, in a farm land, in a family compound and at any place it was unconsciously dispersed. People of Anambra state believe that *udara* is entirely a blessing from God.

### **Ownership of African Star Apple**

Wherever the *udara* tree grows, it is for everybody and no one claims ownership of it. The research gathered that when there is *udara* tree in anyone's compound, the community will always name the tree after the man in whose compound it is found like *udara be Chibueze* but that does not mean that Chibueze is the sole owner. This is because there is a general belief and norm that it belongs to all. Findings reveal that even when *udara* tree is in a compound that is walled round with a gate, people can open the gate at will to search for *udara* known as *icho udara* in Igbo. Though in the olden days everywhere is usually open with no barricade and still there were few cases of theft unlike what is obtainable in the modern world. Sometimes, *icho udara* is like a game where everybody tries to outwit the other by going for this search at very early hours in the morning when people are still sleeping in order to pick as many African star apple fruits as possible.

### **Not going in search of African Star Apple with light**

Some of the respondents of this research disclosed that in the olden days, it is a norm not to go in search of *udara* with light be it lantern or torch. There is a belief that such act can cause that particular *udara* fruit to start decaying and having maggot. People are supposed to make the search for the fruit when there is moon light using their legs to trace them. If not they wait till the early hours of morning or the day time. Though no one gets sanctioned for mishandling of the fruit and violating this kind of norm, people seriously frown at it. When a child or some children that go contrary to this norm, any adult around can caution them.

### **Cutting down of African Star Apple tree**

It is also a norm that no man should cut down any *udara* tree in his compound or farm land instead, he must get another person to do it. This is after he must have called the children around

his neighbourhood and make merriment for them known in Igbo as *ime saraka* to solicit for their consent. This is as a result of African star apple being bounded to children thus the Igbo people attribute it to progeny. The concerned person would buy little items that children cherished like biscuit, groundnut and other things one can offer, share to them and the explain to them why the tree must be cut down. Some respondents affirmed to this and added that sometimes, those children may wail to demonstrate their disappointment over the loss. Mr. Leonard Ebommadu from Isuanaocha also disclosed that he did exactly the same thing when his son wanted to build a house and has to cut down the *udara* tree in his compound. No sane person would cut down African star apple tree in his compound or farm land simply because probably children use to destroy his farm. The belief is that anyone that engaged in such act may suffer retributions knowingly or unknowingly.

### **African Star Apple and children are inseparable**

African star apple and children are bound together. According to the respondents, if you want to see a child and he/she is not in his/her father's compound during *udara* season then go to *udara* tree in their neighbourhood the child must be there. Children are always seen playing under *udara* tree waiting for *udara* to fall for them. There is joy in this instance when *udara* falls and every body especially the children try to outrun one another in order to pick the *udara*. In some cases, those people will amicably share it among themselves. Both children and adults enjoy this game of *igba oso udara*.

Some *udara* are sweeter than others, but most children do not mind the taste as they cherish those with both sweet and the sour taste. There are varieties of African star apple. There is a variety of *udara* known as *udara nwa enwe*. This specie is very smaller in size and is believed to attract monkeies just like the famous *udara* attracts children. There is another specie known



as *udara nwa nnu*. *Udara nwa nnu* is usually the one that is orange in colour known for its freshly sweetest taste. Which ever one it is, children will always enjoy it not minding the taste.

### **Striking, Plucking and Selling of African Star Apple**

Another norm among the people of Anambra state which some people now ignore is the principle that African star apple should neither be struck nor plucked from the tree. Instead it is allowed to fall on its own when it is fully ripe. It was gathered that plucking or striking the *udara* is seen as aborting a child in the womb. This still buttresses the attribute of *udara* to procreation among Igbo people of Anambra state. It was observed that no Igbo elderly person will strike *udara* as it is among the folkways they frown upon. Sometimes the children are seen striking *udara* but it is taken as children's delinquency and any elder around is expected to scold and discourage those children from violating such norms. The same thing applies with plucking the *udara* fruits. Findings of this research show that some people are fast losing the values Igbo people are known for as they now pluck *udara* for either their consumption or to sell to other people for monetary gain. This can never happen in the olden days when Igbo people held tenaciously to their ways of life. Though no one gets arrested for violating this principle of the land, there is a belief that the land fights for itself. For instance, one of the informants of this research disclosed that the *udara* in her compound at a point started being wasteful and looked as if burnt when still on the tree. When eventually it falls down it spoils and not good for consumption. All those while, they used to pluck the *udara* simply because the children are impatient to allow it fall at the due time. But as soon as they decided to stop plucking it, the problem stopped automatically. This she said confirmed to them that *udara* is a special fruit. It does not rule out that some people nowadays pluck and sell it.

Originally, Igbo people do not sell *udara* in their markets. They believe that children should not be sold in the market. Some communities still hold on to this norm as findings reveal while some have changed and now sell African star apple in the market. One of the interviewed persons opined that African star apple is attributed to progeny but it is not sold in the market mainly because in the olden days almost every body had access to it. It is located at every corner in the villages so it not a commodity for sale because it is at everyone's disposal. This respondent maintained that at that time, the Igbo nation was homogeneous unlike now that it is highly heterogeneous. All other informants of this research believe that Igbo people do not sell the African star apple as a result of its attribution to procreation. They believe that *udara* is a symbol of progeny. Igbo people of Anambra state constructed the meaning (which is progeny) they gave to the symbol (*udara*) and use it to interact among themselves. This shared meaning supports the proposition of symbolic interactionism that members of a society share the meaning of a symbol.

### **Reasons for the abuse of African Star Apple**

African star apple is now being sold in some markets in Anambra state for some various reasons. Firstly, the Igbo society has grown from homogeneous to heterogeneous. Findings reveal that as the society evolve, they become much larger. Theory of social change believes that social change can be as a result of population growth. There are now more people in urban areas than in rural areas. As a result, most people no longer have access to African star apple. They depend on the rural dwellers who now pick, even pluck, take to markets and sell to the urban or city dwellers. In Isuanaocha, urban dwellers can arrange with their neighbours or friends in the village to pick African star apple for them. On the other hand, when the city dwellers visit home, they collect them as gift and then show appreciation with whatever they deem fit as it is not sold in their

market. Again, there are not many African star apple tree in most areas because development leads to selling of lands and deforestation to erect modern houses and other constructions. Secondly, modernization has contributed to some Igbo people abandoning and losing their old ways which they think are no longer appropriate. Some respondents believe that modernization has caused weakening and even loss of the traditions that helped define Igbo people and gave them a sense of identity. Consequently, some people presently do not value the cultural symbolic meaning attached to African star apple which the theory of symbolic interactionism believes a group of people should share. It was gathered that some communities like Isuanaocha, Awa, Nteje, Nando among others have remained resolute and still resist the change by insisting that African star apple must not be sold in their markets. Informants revealed that people from these communities secretly take African star apple to markets outside theirs and sell.

Thirdly, some sell African star apple as a source of income for them especially as the economic situation of the country is deteriorating. The theory of social change opines that social change can result from economic reasons. Parsons sees social change as something that can come from either outside or inside the society. He explains the change that can result from within the society as a necessity to resolve strains within the system. Economic challenges in the society presently does not encourage single source of livelihood or income. Most women engage in petty trading which includes buying and selling African star apple *igba mgbere udara* as a means to contribute to the families up-keep. Such women understand that times are really hard and their husbands alone can no longer shoulder the economic demands of the families. However, there are women who even when it seems they have enough still go into petty trading to augment whatever they have. For instance, a public servant who during the season of African star apple had the

opportunity to gather at least two polythene bags full of the fruit can decide to sell them to her office mates and recover her transportation fare to the village (that is for someone whose community sell the fruit). The economic strains do not affect only the commoners but the rich as well.

Also, findings show that people who sell it in their markets still attribute it to progeny. They believe that as a gift from God, those that need it and do not have it can obtain from others through monetary exchange or as gift. These group of people completely believe that the norm should change as a result of urbanization. It is not only people who have the tree in their compound or farm land that sell it. Findings as mentioned earlier show that some people trade on it during the season as a source of income. These people go round their vicinity and even in the forest during the early hours in the morning purposefully to pick them and sell particularly in markets situated in the urban areas. The norm of attribution of African star apple to progeny still holds for such people just that they have subscribed to the theory of social change. Meanwhile, there are people who are adamantly opposed to the change. Some respondents state that though their communities presently sell African star apple in their market, they will not sell it. Even if they have it in their compound, it should always be free for everybody.

Obviously, values are stored in common things. The research gathered that no known calamity befall communities and peoples who mishandle African star apple. Although women in different communities have a way to sanction their women folk who tried to go contrary to the norms. When a visitor comes with African star apple to sell in their market, the women will rally round the person and scatter the fruits. One of the interviewed person agreed with this as she stated that though African star apple is sold in Nkwọ Agulu presently, there was a time a woman by name “Ọba Joji” now late would champion

the rally to stop whoever wants to sell *udara* in their market. Now it shows that somehow Igbo people are losing their cultural values because values are stored in common things like *udara* as a symbol of progeny should not be sold. When people underrate and look down on those little things they once placed values on, it means their identity and history will be in jeopardy.

### **Summary of Findings**

This research has been able to disclose that as it is today, in various community markets in Anambra state, it is either African star apple is sold or not. For every community in whose market the African star apple is sold today had a time when it was not allowed. The mishandling is simply adaptation to economic and social change.

Also, the communities where it is not mishandled through selling, plucking, claiming ownership and others are strongly holding on to their norms and being resistant to economic and social change. They believe that the change that comes with modernization should not weaken or make them lose their traditional norms and values.

This research also revealed that no one can plant the African star apple instead it can only be transplanted when it had already germinated on its own. This implies that it is a sacred tree. No wonder some communities revered it in the olden days. Urbanization and modernization contributed to the changes now observed in African star apple in relation with the peoples. Deforestation occurs indiscriminately as lands are sold to erect modern structures. Many people presently reside in towns and cities where they are not indigeneous. Consequently, they no longer have easy access to the fruit and are left with no option than to buy. The sellers as well believe that they are being

helpful to the city dwellers and the same time make their monetary gains.

This study reveals that both communities that sell it and those that do not still attribute it to procreation. Nothing has changed that belief that African star apple symbolizes progeny among the Igbo people of Anambra state. Even with the economic and social change the belief still stands. But there is loss of values attached to the traditional ways of thinking.

### **Conclusion**

Both communities that sell Africa star apple in their markets and those who do not sell it are still holding on the belief that it is a special fruit and blessing from God. But many factors are responsible for the mishandling of the African star apple that prevail in the modern society like selling it, striking it, plucking it, claiming ownership and going for the search with light. Though there are no obvious sanctions for these anomaly but the implication is that a good number of the fruit rot, and are maggot infested while on the tree. The research recommends that these mishandling of *udara* should stop to avoid the wastage they cause. This research is very necessary as it educates the people on the original values Anambra Igbo people placed on the African star apple, changes and the need to preserve the uniqueness of the cultural belief and value system. It is important to change with time but no group of people should mortgage their cultural beliefs and value system just to identify with the change trend.

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