

## **Isinipilemu: Divination Forms Among the Epie-Atissa People in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.**

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### **Abstract**

This paper studies divination systems among the Epie-Atissa people in Yenagoa Local government area of Bayelsa State investigates and discuss the various divinatory systems found in the area. With insights from phenomenological method, paper details the peculiarities of the Ololo, Agba, Ubafu and Ugbogbo divinatory systems. Investigative resources have not been adequately given to the peculiarities these divination systems. The findings indicate that many of these divination systems have been discontinued or are becoming moribund because of the influence of Christianity and globalisation. Primarily affected are the Ugbogbo, Agba, Ololo and Ubafa divination tradition. The paper concludes by calling for the revival of the divinations systems which are vital component of the religio-cultural identity and heritage of the people of Epie-Atissa.

### **Introduction:**

Divination is a worldwide practice. In many cultures, including the Epie-Atissa, the practice is an integral part of the of the religio-cultural identity of a people (Emama, 2020). It will continue to survive into an indeterminable future because of the various services that it renders to individuals and to societies. However, among the Epie-Atissa people some types of divinatory systems are going into extinction. For example, the Agba, Ololo or bottle, ubafu and iglasi divination among others. The practitioners or diviners adept at these practices are dying out and no deliberate attempt has been made to document the *modus operandi* of their divinatory system. This work is therefore driven by the need to document these belief systems for posterity. The phenomenological method was used to carry out the study.

The Epie-Atissa people are not well known as the other major ethnic groups in Nigeria, as such, not much have been written about them but there are some aspects of their culture that deserves a close study. This is what the paper is attempting to accomplish. This article treats divination or *Isinipulemu* systems as it is known in Epie Atissa. Like Eriwo (2003, p89) would say, 'their divinatory systems do resemble divination systems elsewhere particularly in Yoruba, the Otuo people of Edo state and other systems of divination in the world' hence it is expedient for us to document them.

### **Literature Review**

Divination; according to Parrindar (1971, p81) 'is a method of seeking to discover the unknown or foretell the future'. Danfulani (1995, p12) define divination as 'a standardized process of deriving hidden or secrete knowledge from a learned cultural tradition based on extensive body of knowledge'. Divination according to Gabriel (2012, p10), is the art to obtain information about the past, present or the future from the realm of the sacred through the instrumentality of either an oracle or the medium'. It is mostly directed to foretelling coming events. It may also be sought to find out for example what is going on at home while the enquirer is abroad. Ancient and as well as modern thinkers have repeatedly denounced it but nevertheless, it is still practiced all over the world. Even under the highest religions for example Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity, diviners have continued to flourish. Like the observation of Dime (1983: p107), 'Divination is very dear to African Traditional Religion or indigenous religious belief'. Divination is a very popular practice in the Epie-Atissa traditional setup. It is a sacred religious institution within the Epie-Atissa traditional belief system.

### **The Diviner or *Oyonobu***

Unlike the Yoruba who have a tutelar divinity *Orumila*, in charge of divination, the Epie-Atissa people have no divinity or deity whose specific portfolio is divination. As Eriwo (2003, p86) would say 'consequently the diviner qua-diviner can scarcely be regarded as priest, although many diviners are generally priests or priestesses of some deity'. The word, the diviner is known in Epie-Atissa as *oyon-abu* male or *Afina-abu* female diviner, which literally means native doctor. He is thus a doctor of divination. He is an expert in divination, here when we say he we are referring to both male and female diviners. He is able through the system to communicate with the unseen and supersensible world, and transmit message from ancestors, spirits and divinities to his clients, he is not only able to see into the future, but also to uncover the past. (Eriwo 2003, p86). The above assertion is very close to the suggestion of Essien (2008, p20). She says:

Diviners believe that they possess the method, skills and charisma of probing into the secrets of life, into the minds of the gods to know what is responsible for a specific problem, they also claim to know the hidden knowledge about the will of the deities on any given issue.

### ***Isinipulemu* Types and Methods in Epie-Atissa**

Divination in Epie-Atissa is performed by the various diviners in their various shrines *Ogulaa*, and in strict consultation with the divinities concerned (Fefegha 2001, p66). This therefore makes the actual practice of divination in Epie-Atissa to be ritualistic and spiritual.

There are Six major divinatory types in Epie-Atissa. They are, the looking mirror or *Idiama* gazing type, the *Igilasi* or tumbler gazing type, the *Aganaga* or ‘Ladder’ divinatory system, the *Ugbogbo* or clay pot type, the *Ololo bottle* divination, the *Ugbolo stick* divination and lastly, the *Agba or mortar* divination.

Each particular type make use of specific ritual objects which are identified with it. These ritual objects are known as *Isinimaasam* meaning symbols something which represents something else (Fefegha 2001, p66). The *isimasaam* is a compound word in which *isini* refers to any inanimate object, which when ‘venerated’ *Kene* get animated and become *idiomu* deity or spiritualized.

### **The Looking Mirror or the *Idiama* Gazing Type**

In this system, it starts with the client of the diviner who on arrival at the diviner’s abode presents a litter or bottle of *Kaikai* or *ogogoro* **Local gin** to the diviner in question and some money as consultation fee as the case may be. The amount varies from one diviner to the other. The client intimates the diviner the purpose of his mission, followed by an interrogation of the visitor by the diviner. At the end of this, the diviner consults the deity in charge by gazing at the mirror and communicates back to his client the cause of the problems and may even go further to prescribe the solution to such misfortune which if the client is willing, the healing ritual will then be carried out. This submission resembles the suggestion of Turner (1967, p3) which he wrote concerning Muchona, an Ndebu diviner of repute. He says:

Whenever there is a misfortune such as death, sickness, bareness, but most especially death, the diviner’s job is to disclose the cause of such misfortune through a series of interviews and interrogations. He diagnosis the cause and usually, it is either caused by human or spiritual, social and moral rifts that have given rise to affliction. The next state is a special healing ritual carried out in the term of exorcising spirits predicted to be responsible for the problem.

### **The *Igilasi* or Tumbler Divination:**

This type is the most common especially among the diviners that are Votaries of aquatic spirits. In this case, the client at his arrival provides a bottle of *Ogogoro* and the divination fee to the diviner. After the usual interview sessions, the diviner would then with the *Ogogoro* that the visitor has provided libate and pour some into a transparent glass or *igalasi* and began to observe it. He then begins to communicate with the deity who is believed to have appeared inside the *Igalasi* and in turn explain and prescribe the remedy or the solution of the problem to the votary.

The *Igalasi* in some cases are put inside a saucer and placed at the portion of the floor ringed with *Utiin*, native chalk. The diviner is subject to many taboos, some of them forbid the consumption of certain foods. Others forbid mundane activities on days set apart for their communion with the deities (Tasie 1993, p156). The diviner before going into the ritual proper uses the native chalk *Utiin* to *poko-adu* or rings his or her right eye and *Kee-ubo* or make a mark or split the right hand properly before embarking on the ritual. This suggestion is close to what Fefegha described in his work titled ‘Religion and spirituality concerning the importance of the native chalk *Utiin* in the Epie-Atissa divinatory scenario’.

He says:

The importance of native chalk *Utiin* as an important cultic and divinatory symbol in Epie-Atissa cannot be over – emphasized. This is because it has its main root from ceremony of *Okumo* to which the traditional concept of *Poko-adu* ‘ringing of the right eye’ and *Kee-ubo* “splitting of the right hand” properly belong. Since these are basically marks of chivalry and power, divination in communal shrines does not and cannot begin without the priests and the important devotees putting on these marks with the chalk *utiin*. (Fefegha 2001, p76).

### **The Aganaga or Ladder Divination:**

This is the most elaborate or comprehensive divinatory system in Epie-Atissa. Fefegha (2001, p76) confirmed this when he submitted thus ‘The *aganaga* ladder divinatory instrument, is the most symbolic instrument of consensus and order in Epie-Atissa’. The *aganaga* in those days was used as instrument of divination in two ways; It was consulted to know both the cause or causes of calamities and to provide proper solutions proffered to them and secondly, the *aganaga* was also consulted as a necromantic oracle. It is the latter that is the most elaborate. The former is what is known as *Ugbolo* divination that we may treat later in this work. The *aganaga* is a four-sided Ladder like oracle constructed with bamboo poles.

### **Aganaga as a Necromantic Oracle:**

The traditional Epie-Atissa man attached much importance to where one spends his or her eternity. They believed that a person’s conduct in this world and the manner of his death determines where he or she spends eternity. There is this belief that for one to become an ancestor, one must live a life worthy of emulation, an exemplary life and such person must not be a witch or a wizard, or a sorcerer, thus in Epie-Atissa when one dies, the first thing that they do is to consult *aganaga*, in order to ascertain the person’s spiritual life style in the physical world so that such person could be accorded the type of burial that fits him. But ironically, these days, the *aganaga* belief is being watered down in the area. Christians are vehemently against it, and the rite is gradually atrophying. These days, many Christian families bury their dead without consulting the *aganaga*. This development is very unhealthy with this aspect of the people’s cultural heritage and if nothing is done, the rite may die a natural death. They often back up their argument with portions of the Holy Bible for example, Deuteronomy Chapter 18, verse 10 and 11 which says:

There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or her daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a Necromancer.

However, they have forgotten that the practice is being carried out in order to deter people from engaging in the malevolent act of witchcraft and sorcery, which they themselves condemn. For those who respect good life, in fact the fear of the people’s life being x-rayed even at death through the *aganaga*, and appropriate sanctions meted out to them like the suggestion of Wotogbe-weneka (1988, p150) ‘are some of the apprehensions that have guarded and guided the social morality of the people and are still very much influential in curbing the people’s moral excesses.

Sorgwe’s suggestion is also like the above assertion when he says:

The Epie-Atissa community developed a religious attitude aimed at deterring the people from engaging in anti-social or evil practices such as witchcraft and sorcery. By using *aganaga* divination method to detect such evil persons, the religion of the people helped to check such practices. The practices of giving the deceased a poor burial ceremony if found guilty of being in possession of witchcraft or sorcery power while the deceased was alive further helped to control anti-social practice among the people. The deceased found guilty were traditionally thrown away at the riverbank or buried in the evil forest. In some cases where the corpse was mistakenly buried in the proper place, the corpse was exhumed, and the skull was buried in the evil forest. (Sorgwe 1996, p107)

Necromancy is a term derived from two (Greek words, *nekros*, a dead body and *manteia* divination) means the art of divining the future by conjuring up the spirit of the dead and questioning them. Mention is made of this ancient superstitious rite in the Old Testament of the Christian Holy Bible, for example in Deuteronomy 18:10 & 11. The 28<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel relates the well-known story of the witch of Endor who raised up the soul of Samuel to gratify Saul’s desire.

It is an act used in communicating with the dead, usually in order to obtain insight into the future or to accomplish some otherwise impossible tasks. Such activities were current in ancient times

among the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and Etruscans in Italy. Necromancy was especially popular in the Middle Ages and Renaissance in Europe. In many parts of ancient Greece, there were oracles of the dead, and necromancy was practiced in the temple by priests, or other religious functionaries. In Thessaly, a region in Greece, it was practiced by a professional class called psychologies. In Epie-Atissa, the professionals in the act are known as the *Igbani pulu-aganaga*, the people that consults the ladder oracle.

Like in various part of the world, reasons for necromantic vary in Epie-Atissa. In some cases, it is a means of knowing the future through the dead, in other cases, it is employed as means of identifying the causes of death or sickness. In Epie-Atissa, the practice is also geared towards moral sanity, both physical and metaphysical by the extirpation of the dead witches, wizards and sorcerers of the clan, in order to serve as decorum to the traditional Epie-Atissa indigenes. The practice of *aganaga* among Epie-Atissa people dates back to the origin of the clan itself, it is geared towards the encouragement of moral behaviours in the clan, which would ensure peace and tranquility among the people.

As earlier indicated, the traditional *aganaga* necromantic act is carried out in Epie-Atissa through the help of the *aganaga* oracle (detector) so as to find out the following; Whether the deceased was a witch, wizard or sorcerer. Whether the deceased committed offences against the ancestors and the deities of the land. To find out the cause of the person's death and find solution to stop further deaths in the family if the person's death was as a result of offence committed against the ancestors, the clan deities among others.

In Epie - Atissa cultural practice, the deceased identified to have possessed witchcraft and sorcery power suffers the following: denial of burial in the *azjerie* good bush or cemetery, and also denial of being venerated as an ancestor. He becomes an outcast. His elevation to the position of an ancestor is also thwarted because he is denied the necessary burial ceremony that would enable him to assume that position. While in the bad bush, the spirit of the dead witch, wizard or sorcerer loses his identity as a member of the family. Like the suggestion of Isiramen (2000, p115 & 116), 'he becomes handicapped and will never have access to the community to cause havoc and even to reincarnate since the necessary rites that would have allowed this never took place'.

Among Africans generally, and among the Epie-Atissa in particular, the ancestor is equivalent to a guardian angel. Anyone possessed with the power of witchcraft and sorcery does not possess the qualities of a guardian. He is a destroyer. Burial of his corps in the *azididieli* bad bush thus makes him impotent of witch hunting the clan. Thus, to deter others from deriving interest in this wicked power of witches, wizards and sorcerers such deceased corpse is buried in the bad bush.

Among the people in reference, except in few cases, no burial rite takes place without consulting the *Aganaga*. In fact, whether or not the burial rite would take place at all will depend upon the findings of *Aganaga*. If one die in Epie-Atissa, what the people first ask is *Opuluni Aganaga minigba*, have they consulted the *Aganaga* or ladder oracle? Certain crucial questions must be settled by consulting the *Aganaga* before burial can take place. Did the deceased die a natural death? Who killed him? Was he or she killed by a witch, or a sorcerer or a divinity? Or was he or herself a witch? If yes, how many people did he kill? Hence on the death of any person in Epie-Atissa, the town elders in consultation with the relatives of the deceased, will order for the construction of the *Aganaga* and except in very rare cases, the *Aganaga* is constructed in the name of a deceased person. After the usage, if the person was a witch, the *Aganaga* is immediately destroyed and thrown into the river, but if the reverse was the case, the *Aganaga* is kept and preserved at the oldest man's house or the village shrine for further usage. It will be both helpful and instructive at this point for us to review the details of the construction and the use of the *Aganaga* (Gabriel 2016, p210).

Usually, the construction of *Aganaga frame* take place at the water-front or at the entrance to the sacred grove of the community in question or at the front of the community's *Ugulaa* or shrine of the town or village. The selection of the frame consists of two long bamboo poles, *Ukoo* with the flat sides facing up and rounded sides facing down. Each of these is about five feet, six or six and a half feet long as the case may be, with three lines for male and four lines for female made on each of the two ends. These are then tied together by three sticks of about 2<sup>1/2</sup> feet long at three points, at the two ends and at the

centre. Specifically, the stick used is that made from a plant called *obelebele* or new *bouldia* tree, it is called *akoko* in the Yoruba land, and securely tied to the bamboo pole or *Ukoo* with special ropes called *Iden* ‘cane’ which is from the *genus calamus*, (Nabofa 2002, p38). All the materials used are native to the land. Nothing foreign such as nails, twines or wires are used in the construction of *aganaga*.

Once the construction work is completed, ritual acts are performed for cleansing and the *aganaga* is consecrated for use as a divining instrument. These rituals are performed right at the waterfront, or the front of the *Ugulaa* or the sacred area where the *Aganaga* was constructed. The first ritual is purification rite known as *Punmun* which literally mean “cleansing”. Its aim is to remove the profane and the effect of any unwitting error or acts of defilement that may have occurred during the process of preparation of the divining frame. It is performed by the Chief priest of the shrine or *Ogulaa* or Chief priest of *Utoeken* as the case may be who is invariably a staunch traditionalist. He puts *Kaikai*, gin in a glass and make the following incantations:

<i>Isini didieli bodini ezenimi</i>	All the profane elements and
<i>aganaga ne, ayi yana mii</i>	evil spirits that might have
<i>Ozu Aganaga ye, Ayi daa idinezaa</i>	inhabited this structure.
<i>Ayi yana. Ikpeso ibene, babo</i>	<i>should take a drink and leave.</i>
<i>yii kpannami aganaga ne</i>	They should cease to
<i>Ba Kpanaza gili ogili Ozuba.</i>	<i>inhabit this oracle.</i>

The Chief Priest will then pour the libation. The *Aganaga* is now ready for use as a mantic instrument.

### **Aganaga Divination Session**

Generally, *Aganaga* divination period in Epie-Atissa is an anxious moment to the members of the family of a deceased especially if people have been wagging their tongues concerning the character of the late person. After the cleansing and the performance of the invigorating rituals, four hefty young men quickly carry the divining frame on their shoulders, and a series of preliminaries begins. Animated by the ancestral spirits of the village in question, the *Aganaga* first ‘salutes’ the body of the deceased person by bowing three times before the corpse if the deceased was a male four times if the person was a female. It then moved the men from here straight to the shrine of the community’s ancestral *Ugulaa* where it again ‘salutes’ the ancestors by bowing three times. When this happens, in most cases, there is shout for joy among the members of the family of the deceased person. This is because the *aganaga* *Ighanididieli*, the *aganaga* of a bad person or a witch never came near the great ancestral shrine, and by bad *aganaga*, we mean either the deceased was a witch or a sorcerer or both.

The preliminaries continue as the *Aganaga* goes to the water-front and ‘look’ at the flowing and the ebbing tides thus making courtesy call on all the divinities, that is, greeting them. It then goes to ‘urinate’, for this purpose the *Aganaga* moves the bearers *ighani voni aganaga* to a side of the grove, then they drop the *Aganaga* on the ground and each would actually urinate. After this, the *Aganaga* would call again on the deceased. This second call is known as *Ozudiemuu*, ‘a look at oneself’. An adage in Epie-Atissa says ‘unless *Aganaga* looks at its body, it never started to talk’. After looking at the body bowing or going round the mat or coffin where the deceased is lying in state, it moved the bearers backward and turn round and round. It is now ready to entertain questions and suggestions. This is not in all cases any way.

*Aganaga* works in a yes or no principle. The presiding priest or diviner put several questions to the *Aganaga* to which the *Aganaga* return negative or affirmative answers. For affirmative answer, the frame or the *Aganaga* moves the bearers forward and strike the ground. For a negative reply, the frame moves backwards, and the bearer raised it up at its pull. In other words, the animated *Aganaga* pulls itself back to indicate negative. The *Aganaga* interrogator addresses the frame thrice by the deceased person’s name and the *Aganaga* responds. The *Aganaga* divination sessions follow the same general order with only slight negligible variable from one community to the other, (Gabriel 2012, p158 & 159).

### **Phenomenology of Aganaga Divinatory Practice in Epie and Atissa**

This stanza of the article discusses a typical *Aganaga* séance. For the purpose of this paper, the name of the deceased involved in the séance session that the author observed and recorded would not be mentioned. This is in order to avoid embarrassment to the members of the deceased family that are still alive. We may refer to him as Mr. A. Mr. A from Akaba community was declared by the *Aganaga* oracle guilty of witchcraft and sorcery act, and pertaining to the *Aganaga* séance of Mr. A, after all the necessary

rituals that come before every *Aganaga* séance, the interrogator or *Oyon pulu Aganaga* put the following questions to the *Aganaga* before the declaration of Mr. A as a witch.

*Oyon Pulu Aganaga*  
*Mr. A, Mr. A, Mr. A*  
*Onona ininii onuwonii Osunuwo*  
*to koko wor?*  
*Aganaga: Hin*

**Interrogator**  
The interrogator called the name  
of Mr. three times for he was a  
male, and asked if that was  
the name given to him by his parents.

The *Aganaga* responded in the affirmative by touching the ground with its anterior end.

*Oyon Pulu Aganaga*  
*Mr. A wowumini,*  
*beliwo numiniye, wo*  
*dalini inibudum?*  
*Aganaga: Hin*

**Interrogator**  
Mr. A, you have died, as you died.  
you are now a spirit.  
The *Aganaga* answered in affirmative.

*Oyon Pulu Aganaga:*  
*Mr. A, Beliwo wumiye*  
*wobo gili ubowo kasa Igbani*  
*okpoye mii esuenwo.*

**Interrogator**  
Mr. A, now that you are dead, you should  
now ‘turn your hand’, to tell us the  
lifestyle that you lived while you  
were living in the physical world.  
(Simeon Timbiri Personal Interview)

*W obo gili Ubowo,*  
*gili ubowo kasa igbani*  
*Okpoye mii adunii wo zemii*  
*Okpoye?*

At this point, the four men carrying the *Aganaga* begin to exemplify a form of spiritual ecstasy. The *Aganaga* then turned through the left-hand side to the right, four times, indicating that the deceased was a witch.

Then, the interrogator continued with the interrogation:

*Oyonpulu Aganaga*  
*Wogilini ubowom,*  
*beli wogili ubowoye,*  
*Wo idaa, wovili*  
*Ibi didieli yaa?*  
*Aganaga: Hiiin, Hiiin, Hiiin*

**Interrogator**  
you have ‘turned your hand’, as you  
have done, does it mean that you are  
a witch and also a sorcerer?  
The *Aganaga* affirmed by using its  
anterior end again to touch  
the ground three times.  
(Simeon Timbiri Personal Interview)

Usually, the *Aganaga* is dropped after exhausting all the confessions that the deceased is supposed to make through the *Aganaga*. After some other rituals and incantations, the *Aganaga* was dropped.

### **The Epie Bottle or *Ololo* Divination**

The *Ololo* or bottle divination is a type of divination system that was practiced in the Epie axis of the twine clan. It was practiced by one self-acclaimed prophet *Orioko Dangolo* of Kpansia community, Epie clan, Yenagoa Local Government Area, Bayelsa State. The divination starts with a bottle *Ololo* been position on a table and a candle lit in front of it. The client would then sit and look concentratedly at the ‘bottle’ *Ololo* from the opposite direction of the burning candle.

Before doing so, the client is asked to drink a very concentrated dose of a concoction which they called ‘Flour’. It is mandatory for all clients to drink this mixture. Usually, the diviner sets up the divinatory paraphernalia and some votaries spend days looking intently at the *Ololo* before them, hoping it would be the means by which solutions to their problems would be made manifest.

After the concentrated viewing at the bottle, the answers to the problems for which the person came may finally be displayed like a television screen in the bottle. But, in order to get to that state, the devotee must drink enough of the “flour” concoction, the greater the quantity, the better. Thus, if someone reported a missing object, money or other important items, it is believed that by looking at the *Ololo*, the good spirits or *osionie* are asked to bring into focus those evil spirits or *Osiodidieli* that caused the man to steal. The evil spirits would then bring the person who stole such items and the items involved to focus in the *Ololo* screen. If the criminal came from a different town or village, then his particulars such as his name and address and even image will appear on the *Ololo* “Screen” for easy identification. The client could then simply copy the information on the screen and use such to take appropriate action in order to recover the missing property, (Fefegha, 1998).

### **The *Ugbolo* or staff divination.**

The *Ugbolo*, staff divination is also a very potent divinatory type that was in-vogue in Epie-Atissa. The *Ugbolo* is usually kept in either the Shrine of a community deity or *ugulaa* or in the shrine of the Chief Priest of a particular primordial deity. The *ugbolo* divination’s *modus-operandi* is similar to that of the *aganaga pulemu*, and the *ugbolo* divination is a variation of *aganaga* divination that we have earlier discussed. The *aganaga* and *ugbolo* divinatory forms were communal divinatory systems. The *ugbolo* divination works in a yes or no principle too. For affirmative answer, the frame of the *Ugbolo* would move the bearer forward and strike the ground, for a negative reply, the frame would move backward, and the bearers raises it up at its pull. The animated *Ugbolo*, pull its self-back to indicate negative response.

The diviners have the wherewithal to decipher the symbolic interpretations of the turns and the movements of the turns and the movements of the *Ugbolo* and interpreted such to the client. The *Ugbolo* divinatory symbol is borne by two persons as opposed to that of the *aganaga* that is usually borne by four diviners, one at the front and the other at the rear. The diviner at the front leads the process and an interrogator put the questions to the *Ugbolo* and in turn the *ubgolo* responds to the questions put to it through symbolic language that would in turn be interpreted to the votary.

Before the divination *séance* is commenced, the client is asked to produce the traditional bottle of *Kaikai* local gin which is mandatory in all such enquiries. After the problem of the votary has been defined, the actual cost of divining is decided later. After the traditional bottle of *ogogoro* is produced, the process starts.

Meanwhile before the main divination take place, the lead diviner or interrogator would swear and commit the process into the guidance of the deities and ancestor of the village where the exercise is taken place so that the diviners involved would not manipulate the system, (Japan Ayansarah Oral Interview).

### **The *Ugbogbo* or Clay Pot Divination**

The *Ugbogbo* or clay pot divination is another divinatory form that was in vogue in Epie-Atissa in the then old days. However, it is not very popular in the area these days. This may not be unconnected with the near absence of inter-village wars in the area. *Ugbogbo* is believed to holds the potent power of deities in shrines or *Ugulaa* in Epie-Atissa and it has been a cultic name *Asain*, holder of potent power of deities.

The use of *asain* gained prominence in Epie-Atissa in the days of intertribal and inter village warfare. In those days, Epie-Atissa community would not go to war without consulting the *Asain*. During warfare, when the *Ugbogbo* or *Asain* is consulted, or during emergencies, it would either boil over, thus showing victory or it would remain calm indicating defeat. A potent *Ugbogbo* or *asain* is capable of boiling over without application of fire. The consultation is done on behalf of the community with the assistance of the chief priest of such shrine. Ordinarily, it is called *Ugbogbo*, clay pot, but it ceases to be an ordinary clay pot as soon as it becomes a spiritual symbol in the shrine, *Ogulaa*, (Fefegha, 1998).

### **“Agba: or Mortar Divination**

The *Agba* or mortar divination was practiced or carried out in Epie-Atissa by a lady called Ina Idesi from Ikolo community in the Atissa axis of Epie-Atissa. She died some years ago but like in most cases in African Traditional religion, no body inherited the art from her. The *Agba* divination consisted of one item only, the *Agba* a little one of course. The *Agba* is a wooden vessel carefully carved, such that the hollow part of it is used in pounding ingredients and other food items such as foofoo, pounded yam

among others. The pounding is done with a pestle. The *Agba* that we are discussing was designed for divination purposes alone.

The diviner placed it on her head, and if it fell, then the client was guilty of what he came to enquire about. But if it remained without falling, the client was innocent of the matter that he came to enquire about. *Agba* was consulted for whatever reason on the payment of a token fee.

It was suggested that the token fee ranges from 3 to 6 pence, and up to one shilling in the early 1940s depending on the seriousness of the problem. Close relations of the diviner were not normally charged but were asked to fulfill the formality by bringing a little piece of thatch removed from the thatched roof of the diviner's residence. The *Agba* diviner had her own personal deities, as such, this act was simply to inform the diviner's deity that the client involved was a relation, (Fefegha, 2001).

### **Conclusion:**

In this paper, we have tried to examine the divination types or *Isinipulemu* among the people of Epie-Atissa in Bayelsa State. In order to achieve this, the paper started with an introduction in which its statement of problem was stated. This was followed by the main discussion which encompassed the definition of divination, the diviner, or *Oyon-abu*, occasion for consulting the diviner, the *Isinipulemu* or divination types and processes of the art, among others.

Regarding the sources and methods used to carry out the study, the researcher relied heavily on the observation of the divinatory processes involved in the work and personal experience. Written records were also consulted. However, the findings are that some of the divinatory systems discussed above in the area of our study have been discontinued. A good example of them is the *Agba, Ugbogbo, Ololo, and igilasi divination types*. Even the patronage of the *Aganaga* and the *Ugbolo* divination that is still practiced in the area too has dwindled. At this point, it is necessary to say that divination has been of great importance to the traditional Epie-Atissa man and so, it should be encouraged to survive. Some of the issues that government is finding it difficult to unravel, especially issues that have to do with investigations of financial crime cases and crime itself could be solved through the traditional way and that is through divination. As such, Government should come up with measures that will check the rapid declining nature that some of our traditional heritages are dying out, divination systems inclusive. For example, the establishment of Nigerian society for Psychical research centres in our tertiary institutions. This has already been done in some countries among such countries are for example, Great Britain and Canada. Government should also establish departments of Para Psychology and the study of extra sensory perception and other unusual powers in our tertiary institutions. The results of the outcome from these institutions could help in preserving some of the traditional systems that our forebears were using to solve mysterious cases. More research be done on divination generally and even other mantic concepts in Nigeria. If we do that, most of the bizarre investigative problems besetting the country would have solution.

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