

Symbolism of Aganaga Divination in Epie-Atissa, Yenagoa Local Government Area, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study titled “Symbolism of Aganaga Divination in Epie-Atissa, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria” investigates Aganaga (Ladder) divination and the symbols involved therein in Epie-Atissa Clan. The study examines the Symbolism of Aganaga divination and the explanations involved in it using the phenomenological approach. The researcher also used participant observation and oral interview methods to collect data for the purpose of the study. Against this background the study reveals that the Aganaga as a divinatory instrument speaks to the people through signs to ascertain how a typical deceased Epie-Atissa person lived his life while alive. The Epie-Atissa people use the Aganaga to post –mortally, examine to establish the cause or causes of an Epie-Atissa man’s death whether the person “died well” uwuvie, therefore whether he or she be giving a befitting burial. The findings of this study explains the various symbols involved in typical Aganaga séance and their meanings. This aspect of the people’s culture had not been researched upon before and that is what this study had done. The product of this work will create literature on the subject matter for the younger generations to know how this aspect of the people’s culture was carried out because modernism has caught up with their culture. People that knows these things are dying out, as such the findings of this study will serve the purpose of posterity, to the younger generation of this group of people and researchers.

THE INTERPRETATION OF AGANAGA SYMBOLISM

Introduction

The focus of this paper is the examination of symbolism in *Aganaga* divination. By that, I mean the interpretation of the meaning and the place of symbols in a typical *Aganaga* divination séance of the Epie-Atissa people.

Symbols are core elements in religion. They are concepts which religion uses to explain phenomena and experience of reality that cannot be proven through the so called exact science, (Kemdirim1997:116).

Aganaga is a post-mortem divination employed by the Epie-Atissa people to establish the cause, or causes of death among them. It is also intended to establish whether a deceased “died well” technically known in Epie-Atissa dialect as *Uwuvie* meaning good death, therefore whether he or she be given a befitting burial, whether a deceased practiced witchcraft or sorcery and therefore should be treated as a “bad death” and a curse, technically known as *Uwu didieli*, (Fefegha 1988:381).

The Epie and the Atissa People

Epie and Atissa clans are inhabited by the Epie-speaking people in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. They are believed to have migrated to their present places of abode from the famous Benin Empire. The twin clans of Epie-Atissa have about 30 communities, it is the host of the seat of Government of Bayelsa State.

Interpretation of Symbolism Involved in *Aganaga* Séance

There are many on symbols inherent in every *Aganaga* séance that needed to be interpreted for example the calling of the deceased person by his name given to him or her by his parents while alive.

In a typical *Aganaga* séance, the interrogator calls the name of the deceased person three times if he was a male and four times, if she was a female. This is in line with the people’s cosmology and their philosophy of life. They believed that the world is made up of the tangible and intangible. They also believe that the dead man is still living but in another realm, and that is the spiritual realm, and so he is still known even in the here-after by that name, and that if called by his name he would respond.

In the aspect of the number of times that the deceased individual is called, in Epie-Atissa number symbolism, the number three is assigned to the male folk while the number four is designated for the female gender, hence the deceased is addressed appropriately according to his or her gender.

Because of the people’s belief in the here – after or *ekeniwemu*, before they will ask the deceased to turn his “hand” they also summon the spirits of the ancestors of the community of the deceased person to demonstrate to the deceased who according to the people’s belief is a toddler in the ancestral abode. He was asked to take a cue as to the dips and the turns that the ancestors would exemplify through *Aganaga*.

In response to the interrogator’s questions, the deceased, through the *Aganaga* nods or uses its *adu*, the anterior part of the frame to hit or touch the ground, when this is done, it is an affirmation but when the *Aganaga* retreats or goes back in form of back pull, it is negative answer to the question been put.


With regards to the turns, again in Epie-Atissa philosophy of life, negativity is associated with the left and positivism associated with the right position, and so if the *Aganaga*

of a deceased turn through the left, he or she is said to have died a “bad death” and when it is through the right, the person is believed to have died a “good death” and by implication exonerated by the *Aganaga* from act of witchcraft and sorcery. Here again, number symbolism has come to play, because even the turns are usually three times on any side for male and four times for female. If the person involved was only a sorcerer, the *Aganaga* would turn two times both ways. However, in Akaba community, the turns are four times for both male and female and two times both ways for a sorcerer or sorceress.

In the process of *Aganaga* séance, the *Aganaga* usually make symbols on the ground or even in the air. If the *Aganaga* make “x” sign on the ground, it is believed that the deceased offended the ancestors, thus sinned against the land and that has caused his death. When the *Aganaga* of a deceased person always touches leaves or weeds, it is an indication that the deceased was a sorcerer. The question that whether the person practiced sorcery would then be asked.

In the case of a witch, the *Aganaga* after “turning its hand” would make vertical strokes like for example “I” on the ground. Each stroke represents a person that such person has killed with the power of witchcraft, and so if the *Aganaga* made ten strokes, it means that the deceased killed ten persons before his death.

If the *Aganaga* touched the people around the arena of the séance, it is an indication that the deceased has something to confess through the *Aganaga* concerning the persons involved.

When the *Aganaga* make a square like symbol on the ground “ Δ ” that is an indication that the person died as a result of committing incest, thus attracting the wrath of the ancestors. If the sign is like, “” it means that the family of the deceased is instructed to offer sacrifices to the ancestors otherwise more death would still occur in the family. When the *Aganaga* goes to the water front to gaze at the river or waterside, two things are involved, it is either the deceased died as a result of offending the aquatic spirits or in the case of the death of a very old man, it has gone to salute the water deities of the clan.

The same thing is also applicable when the *Aganaga* goes to the forest to gaze at it. The *Aganaga* has gone to greet the forest creatures, spirits, deities among others.

After “turning his hand”, if the *Aganaga* is pointing always to the sky, it is an indication that the person died a natural death. Questions relating to that would then be asked. Such *Aganaga* sessions used to be very brief since the death is from God, and according to the people’s belief, no one can question God and so they would not have much to ask the deceased again through the *Aganaga*.

In some cases, during *Aganaga* séance, the *Aganaga* would refuse to move. If this happens, in most cases, it is either the spirit of the deceased had not been served drink and so he or she is annoyed or the deceased is protesting against the absence of a dear one, most probably a next of kin that he would want to relate or confess something to in connection with his or her death. Questions in relation to that would then be put to the *Aganaga*. It could move only when the appropriate answer or response to the protest had been given, (Gabriel 2012:185-189).

Meanwhile according to *Aganaga* diviners, the *Aganaga* of a witch is usually heavier than the *Aganaga* of a good person. When asked why it is usually so, Mr. Japan Anyasarah oral interview submitted that ‘it is natural, I do not know why, ever since I have been involved in this business, that is the *Aganaga* business, the *Aganaga* of a witch is usually heavier and as such, we use to not know from the beginning who might probably be a witch even before

concluding the *Aganaga* session”. However, in some cases, the deceased spirit was ashamed to confess his evil deeds and so would be reluctant to react to the questions.

The consultation of *Aganaga* generally in Epie-Atissa as we have seen is a major religious activity. The philosophical implication of their divinatory system are equally impressive. Even though, they believe that every person in the universe lives in strict accordance with his or her destiny or *Isinipuluyemu*, this does not mean fatalism, the Epie-Atissa people are not fatalist. The people believed that there are ways of escape, and one of such is the through the *Aganaga* divination. Here is the full texts of questions asked in a typical *Aganaga* divination séance.

In a typical *Aganaga* divination session, so many questions are put before the *Aganaga* and the *Aganaga* would in turn provide answers to the questions through signs. Below are some of the questions.

Yun pulu Aganaga:
Wogbamini Me ye puluwomii

Aganaga: Hiin

Oyon pulu: Aganaga
yi te mini ooh?

Aganaga: Hiin

Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Igbani egeneye Yiteminio

Aganaga: Hiin

Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Ebeneken geyii teminkon?

Aganaga: Hin

Oyonpulu Aganaga:
Inibuduekenge yemini.

Aganaga: Hin

Oyonpulu Aganaga:
Wotedioeni inubu

gene ekenmini?

Aganaga: Hin.

Oyonpulu Aganaga:
Woytzedieni inibudu ekem?

Aganaga: Hiin.

Diviner or interrogator:

You requested that I come to put Onu aah?
questions to your *Aganaga*?

Aganaga: It dips forward,
that is affirmative respond.

Diviner: Now, I am here.

Aganaga: Dips forward to
indicate affirmation but stopped

Diviner: All the town elders are
now seated?

Aganaga: Affirmative

Diviner: The town –head himself
has taken his seat here

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Diviner: All the great ancestors
have also gathered here today?

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Diviner: You have paid
courtesy call on the Great
Ancestors?

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Diviner: You have greeted the
community ancestors?

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon pulu Aganaga:
wodieniozuwo mini

Diviner: You have also looked
at yourself:

Aganaga: Hiin.
Oyen pulu Aganaga:

Aganaga: Affirmative.
Diviner: Thus, you have taken a look at yourself.

Bele wodieni Ozu
wogemini

Aganaga: hin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon pulu Aganaga:
kili idiomu eken ge miniih?

Diviner: Have you also paid
courtesy call on the divinities?

Aganaga: hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Wo vani inuani kini
eni bodi Miniuh?

Diviner: You have greeted
everybody?

Aganaga: hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Wo lelegini ozuwomini
Isini ne ni eni pulu Womini?

Diviner: Are you ready for the
questions proper that we are
going to ask you?
You have greeted everybody?

Aganaga: Unun.
Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Wominitemi beli
womeme isini,
enipulu wooh?

Aganaga: Not yet (Negative)
Diviner: It is not time yet for the
full questions.

Aganaga: hiin.
Oyon pulu Aganaga:

Aganaga: Affirmative
Diviner: You have not been given a single shot of
drink?

Aganaga: Hiin
Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Wormiine gili ubowo
mini idayanii
ida mooh?

Aganaga: Affirmative.
Aganaga: You have not publicly
declared your innocence with
regards to the possession of
Witchcraft?

Aganaga: Hiin
Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Wo dani idi, wo bo

Aganaga: Affirmative.
Diviner: no
After a drink, you will now

gili ubowo aah?

declare your innocence or guilt?

Aganaga: Hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

*Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Wobo pulu idi mii
ubo ovoni waah?*

Now you may indicate
'personally' from whom
you want drink!

Aganaga: Hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative

The Aganaga would now move the bearers of the *Aganaga* to touch whoever that the deceased wanted to provide him drink. It is usually the native gin (*idi izon* or *Kai Kai*). The person concerned, that is always the Chief mourner would now present the drink. A glass full of the drink would now be served and poured at the anterior part of the *Aganaga* and some drink on the ground. The remnant can be served to everybody around and the process will then continue.

Yonpulu Aganaga

Wodaa ni idi ye mini?

Interrogator or Diviner

You have now refreshed 'yourself'?

*Aganaga: hiin
Oyon pulu aganaga
Ifiene eteni beli wogili
Ubo womini!
Aganaga: hiin
Oyonpulu Aganaga:
Wobo ubowo zaa
Edi be bodii bo monii!*

Aganaga: Affirmative.
Diviner:
Now, what is left is for you to declare publicly your innocence or guilt.
Aganaga: Affirmative.
Diviner:
You may go and declare your innocence so that everybody would know whether you were a witch or a sorcery!

Yonpulu Aganaga

*Beleiwogbamene wo idaa
Mooh?*

The Aganaga goes out and turns round and round through the right three times showing that the deceased was not a witch and so died good death. The Aganaga also responded in the affirmative three times when asked, whether he was not a witch sorcerer.

Aganaga hiin hiin hiin:

Aganaga answered in the Affirmative three times.

The crowd shouted: Hip, hip, hip, hurray!!
The crowd: Hip, hip, hip, hurray!!!

Oyonpulu Aganaga

<i>Wogiliniubowo mini?</i>	Diviner: Now you have declared your	innocence?
<i>Aganaga hiin</i>	Aganaga: Affirmative	
<i>Oyonpulu Aganaga:</i>	Diviner:	
<i>Bele mepuluwo mii</i>	Are you ready for the questions	
<i>Isini kiiliiniokoze?</i>		
<i>Aganaga: unuun.</i>	Aganaga: still not yet (negative).	
<i>Oyonpulu Aganaga</i>	Diviner:	
<i>Enite pulu wo mii isini</i>	You are not yet ready for full	
<i>kilii?</i>	questioning?	
<i>Aganaga hiin</i>	Aganaga: Affirmative	
<i>Oyonpulu Aganaga:</i>	Diviner:	
<i>Aganaga hiin</i>	Affirmative	
<i>Bele en yaah inisama wo</i>	Diviner: Now you want us to give you	
<i>Kii woaah?</i>	your tittle name?	
<i>Aganaga: hiin.</i>	Aganaga: Affirmative.	
<i>Oyonpulu Aganaga:</i>	<i>Diviner:</i> You have not been given	
<i>Womine tor inisama wooh?</i>	your title or praise name?	
<i>Aganaga: hiin</i>	Aganaga: Affirmative	
<i>Oyonpulu Aganaga:</i>	Diviner: It is only after all this is	
<i>Bele wo gbamini wo ton ni</i>	done that you are ready for the full	
<i>ninisana wo, wo bo</i>	session of consultation!	
<i>gba isini ozu wo?</i>		
<i>Aganaga: hiin</i>	Aganaga: Affirmative	
<i>Oyonpulu Aganaga</i>	Diviner:	
<i>Eni bodu delibomini</i>	Of course, we all know your name	
<i>Iniwo Moses, misebanaah?</i>	you are Moses! Aren't you?	
<i>Aganaga: Unuun</i>	Aganaga: No, not at all (strong	
	negative)!	
<i>Ayonpulu aganaga</i>	Diviner: Mention who	
<i>Wobo gba oyon nii edelini</i>	or indicate who knows your name?	
<i>Ini wo boh?</i>	Okay?	
<i>Aganaga: Aganaga ye</i>	Aganaga (Went into the crowd and brought	
<i>Dialamii utu ediba teh</i>	one Mr. I)	
<i>tii edibe.</i>		
<i>Oyon pulu Aganaga:</i>	Diviner:	
<i>Wo naa oyon ye aah?</i>	Are you the person?	
<i>Aganaga: Hiin</i>		
<i>Oyo pulu Aganaga:</i>		
<i>Wo-mo ni mini me</i>	Diviner: Do you see that I will die?	
<i>Wu wah?</i>		
<i>Aganaga Unuun</i>	Aganaga: No (Negative)	

Ayon pulu aganaga

Diviner:

*Wo-moni-minii me nii
delini ini sama wo bo?
Aganaga: hiin*

You came to me because I am the
One who knows your (title name)?
Aganaga: Affirmative

*Ayo pulu Aganaga:
Ini sama wo
Ko ko mini
Kuro gbum gbum?*

Diviner:
Your only title name that I
know is *Kuro gbum gbum?*

Aganaga: hiin

Aganaga: Affirmative

*Oyonpulu Aganaga:
Kuro gbum gbum
na iniwo oh?
Aganaga: hiin*

Diviner: Kuro gbum gbum!
Is your real title name?
Yes, the *Aganaga*, almost
floored the bearers with its vigorous
response.

Oyon pulu Aganaga

Diviner:

*Ezegili bele wobogili
ubowo*

Now are you ready to declare publicly your
Innocence of witchcraft and sorcery.

Aganaga: hiin

Aganaga: Affirmative

*Oyon pulu Aganaga
Wo toni ini sama wogo
mini oh?*

Diviner
You have also taken your praise name or
Title?

Aganaga hiin

Aganaga: Affirmative.

*Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Bele, wo lelegini ozuwo
mii belii wo bo meme
Isi ni nii me pulu wowo?*

Diviner:
Are you now ready for other
questions?

Aganaga: hiin

Aganaga: Affirmative.

*Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Wote diye ukodumo mii
beli wo gbeni igbeni uzu
Wooh?*

Diviner:
Please, do not look this way and that
way! While answering the questions?

Aganaga:hiin

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Wo bo gba isini nii
egbeyewo?

Diviner:
Now you want to say exactly what
killed you?

Aganaga: hiin.
Me gbaniye bo.

Aganaga: Affirmative, of course, yes.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:

Diviner:

Wote gba isini nii me
Gbiye wo booh.

Do not say what did not kill you.

Aganaga hiin.
Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Wo te gba isini ni wo
Momonibo?

Aganaga: Affirmative.
Diviner:
Do not say what you do not see?

Aganaga: hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Wo bodeli minii inibudu
Ibeye yaazeeni edie wooh?

Diviner:
Remember, *utoeken* or the ancestors
are at the corner to verify the validity of your
statement?

Aganaga: hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Ukpini yaa oh beli wo
gbani ikpe?

Diviner:
There are also powerful curses on
you if you confessed falsehood?

Aganaga: hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Wo bo diye ozuwo, me
pulu wo mii onuniwo?

Diviner:
Now be ready, I am about to question
you?

Aganaga – hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Izibe! Izibe! Izibe!
Eni pulu wo wo, wo wulu
isini pemi ubo Izibe yaah?

Diviner:
God! God! God!
I am asking you, did
you commit sin against God?

Aganaga – Uun uun.

Aganaga: Negative, no.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Wo mowulu isini pemu
ubo Izibe, Uwu
ne mise uwu Izibe?

Diviner:
You have not wronged *God* so your
death was not from *God*.

Aganaga – hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Uwu neniwo wu zeye
I diomu ibene nii gbiyeni
wo ahh?

Diviner:
was it the deities of the clan that
killed you?

Aganaga: Unun.

Aganaga: Negative (no).

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Uwu wo ne, inibudu
Eken nii gbiyeni wo aah?

Diviner:
This your death, is it the ancestral
spirits that caused it?

Aganaga: Uun Uun.

Aganaga: Negative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:

Diviner:

Inibudu eken mee
gbiye wo?

Why, the ancestors did not cause it
because you did not sin against
them?

Aganaga: hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Inibudu mee bene ubo bo
mii uwuwo?

Diviner:
The ancestors have nothing to
do with your death?

Aganaga: hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Beli inibuduge me gbiye
Wo bo ye eni mini gbeni
Igbeni ini ayi oh?

Diviner:
Since your death is not as a
result of the ancestors we may
overlook this point also?

Aganaga: hiin

Aganaga: Affirmative

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Uwu neni wowu je ye
Idiomu amini nii gbiye ni
Wo aah?

Diviner:
I'm asking you about what
killed you, was it the water
Deities?

Aganaga: Uun Uun.

Aganaga: Negative.

*Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Idiomu mii amini mee
gbiye wooh?*

Diviner: It was not the water
deities that caused your death?

Aganaga: hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

*Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Uwu wo, idiomu amini
Mey gbiye wo?*

Diviner:
Why should the water deities
cause your death when you did
nothing wrong against them?

Aganaga: Hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

*Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Ibididiel, ibididieli, wo vili
Ibididieli ni inibudu eken
bo gbiye ni wo woaah?*

Diviner:
Diabolism, diabolism, I'm about
to ask you whether you were
diabolic and that was why the
ancestors killed You?

Aganaga: Uun Uun.

Aganaga: Negative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:

Diviner:

Ibididieli magbiye wo?

Diabolism has nothing to do with your death?

Aganaga– Hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

*Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Wo me wulu isini pen bo
mii utoeken, nii mise
Utoeken nii gbiyeni wo bo?*

Diviner:
You have done nothing wrong
at all so that had nothing to do
with your death?

Aganaga– Hiin

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:

Diviner:

*Uwuneni wowuzeye Igbani
eken or iple osunu wo nii
gbiye ni wo aah?*

Your father's town! your
father's town! Your father's
town, I'm asking you, is this
death from your Father's town?

Aganaga– Uun Uun.

Aganaga: Negative.

*Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Uwu ne mise igbani eken
Osunuwo nii gbiye ni wo?*

Diviner:
Your death is not at all from
Your father's town?

Aganaga – Hiin.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:

*Wo mowulu isini pen bo
mii ikpese eken osuno, wo
ana isiyee nii uwuwo modu
eken osunu yii zee?*

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Diviner:

You have done nothing wrong
in your Father's town hence
your death could not have
come from your father's town?

Aganaga – hiin

Aganaga: Strong affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:

*Eken inaa wo, eken naa wo,
uwu ne Odu eken inaa wo
nii ye aah?*

Diviner:

Your mother's town! Your
mother's town, I'm asking
you about your mother's
people?

Aganaga – Uun Uun.

Aganaga: Negative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:

*Uwu ne mo du eken inaa
Wo ge yii ze?*

Diviner:

Your death is not from your
Mother's town at all?

Aganaga – hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon pulu Aganaga:

*Imo anii wo, imo anii wo,
uwu ne nii wo wo wuze,
Imo aniwo nii gbiye ni
woo ahh?*

Diviner:

Your wives! Your wives! I'm
asking you about your wives?

Aganaga: Me kieonu.

Aganaga: No response.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:

*Beli wo me gbeni igbeni
bodu,eni me deli isini
nii egbiye ni woboh?*

Diviner:

as you are not responding we can only
know what killed you
respond?

Aganaga – Hiin

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon pulu Aganaga:

*Na beli womo me kieonu
ye, ubo imoh aniwo yaa
mii uwu wo ze aah?*

Diviner:

In the actual fact your wives
have a hand in your death?

Aganaga – Hiin!

ubo igbaniye yaa!

Aganaga: Of course, yes!

Oyon pulu Aganaga:
wo beneni ifina isaa ni bo,
igbani ye ovoni bo gbiyeni
Wo aah? Akpani affina ye
nii aah?

Diviner:
Who among them is involved?
Is it the senior among them?

Aganaga:
Miise ayi, Uun, Uun.

Aganaga:
Not at all (strong negative)

Oyon pulu Aganaga:
Na aniwo mii ogbeliye nii
gbiye niwo aah?

Diviner:
Is it then your second wife?

Aganaga – Hiin

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Ayii bene ni ubo bomii
uwu wo?

Diviner:
She has something to do with
your death?

Aganaga – Hiin

Aganaga: Of course, yes

Oyon Pulu Aganaga
Naa ayi tor ida nii
gbiye woah?
Aganaga – Me kien ukunu

Diviner:
Is it by through witchcraft acts?
Aganaga: No response.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Ayi me tor ida gbiye wo boo?

Diviner:
No, it is not at all not by
witchcraft power?

Aganaga: me kie onu .
Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Ayii tor wo to Somi ogbo
Igbaniidaah?

Aganaga: No response.
Diviner: She ‘sold’ you to the coven of
witches?

Aganaga: Hiin

Aganaga: Yes, Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:
Belewo gbamini igbani ida ni
gbiyeniwo, ana aduni wo
Pulu bo ye aah?

Diviner:
Is this in accordance with
your destiny?

Aganaga: Hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon pulu aganaga:

Diviner:

So anaa aduni wo puluyiboye?

So it is in accordance with your destiny?

Aganaga: Hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:

Diviner:

Mise mini wo puluniye ze gba

Do we overlook it since it is

Igbaniye momoni wo gbiyeze?

in accordance with your destiny?

Aganaga: Hiin

Aganaga: Affirmative

Oyon Pulu Aganaga

Diviner:

Uwu wone, uwu gbara gbara,

Your death is a premature

Uwu woye uwu wo wo ooh?

Death.

Aganaga: Hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:

Diviner:

Onono uwu wo wo ooh?

This is a very sudden death?

Aganaga: Hiin.

Aganaga: Affirmative.

Oyon Pulu Aganaga:

Diviner:

Beli eni puluyesenii

Now we have discovered who

Isinine egbiye wom,

and what killed you, we want

Bele eni dibeze wo wo?

to now put you down, that is to discontinue the consultation.

Aganaga: Hiin.

Aganaga Affirmative.

(Simeon Timbiri Oral Interview)

The *Aganaga* would now be dropped: The questions always put to the *Aganaga* during the divination session follows this pattern, however, there might be some negligible variation in some special cases. The question about the *Aganaga* indicting who killed the deceased is not always asked these days because of the fear of legal action to be instituted against the diviners in case of false accusation.

Meanwhile the *Aganaga* itself is an ordinary structure, it is made up of ordinary materials like bamboo, cane rope and the branches *ebelebele* or new bolder tree but as soon as it is cleansed after the construction, it has become a sacred instrument, an oracle. The profane aspect is removed and sacredness imbedded in it. Thus it has become a spiritual oracle of truth.

Conclusively, it will not be an overstatement to suggest that symbolism is an important aspect of human religions. It is common to all religious traditions of the world of which the Epie-Atissa people indigenous religion is part. Symbols especially the ones associated with the *Aganaga* divination have performed certain functions for example, providing the basis for the Epie-Atissa people to understand the phenomenology of the *Aganaga*. It has also helped to preserve historical facts toward re-enacting and reconstructing past events of the people's religious tradition and has provoked emotional response and stimulated appropriate actions and inactions in relation to the *Aganaga* ritual and as such it deserves attention.

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