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**IN THE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN**  
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**NNAMDI AZIKIWE**  
**UNIVERSITY, AWKA.**

**“AFA” (DIVINATION): THE MOUTHPIECE**  
**OF THE UNSEEN**

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**SEPTEMBER, 2008**



**“AFA” (DIVINATION): THE MOUTHPIECE OF THE  
UNSEEN**

**BY**

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**2004017001F**

**THE DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD  
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, Ph.D. (IGBO)**

**IN THE  
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AND ASIAN STUDIES  
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA.**

**SEPTEMBER, 2008**

**APPROVAL PAGE**

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Ogbuefi Anedo Igweagu and my mother, Iyom Unoaku Theresa Anedo both of who are late. My mother strived to see me through academically but could not live to enjoy the fruit of her efforts. May the good Lord preserve their souls; Amen

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The journey to the successful completion of this work was long and the task enormous. The researcher could not have brought this study to a successful end without the assistance of various individuals and organizations.

His gratitude goes first and foremost to the Almighty God who was and still is instrumental to his upliftment and sustenance of his life throughout the enormous task. The researcher is indeed immensely grateful to Him.

The researcher also owes a lot of thanks to his academic father, Prof. Obed Muojekwu Anizoba (Ozonwa) who never gets tired in his efforts to see that he (the researcher) is relevant in Nigerian Society. In-fact, the researcher is really in need of appropriate word to express his gratitude to Ozonwa for his fatherly care for him (the researcher). The researcher therefore prays that God may continue to bless him and his off-springs without end.

His gratitude also goes to the Executive Secretary and members of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Dakar, for taking the huge financial burden of this work away from him. He prays that the Good Lord may replenish the members of this organization and the sponsors.

The researcher must not fail to remember his daughters, Mmesoomachukwu Raphaela and Fidelia Somtoochukwu, his wife, Edith Ngozi (Iyom Mmaafuluanya), his friends in-need: Mrs. Ebele Ethel Obiakor and Mr. & Mrs. Chuba Clement Udokwu (Ajibusu) whom God used to sustain him when the going was rough. He prays that the Ever Blessed Virgin Mother may not leave them empty handed.

Anedo, Alex. Alfred Onukwube.

## **Abstract**

Among the Igbo people of Nigeria, **afa** (divination) had been useful in all spheres of their lives. Unfortunately, with the advent of Christianity and subsequent conversion of some Igbo people, it was seen as unchristian. This had contributed to many problems facing the Igbo culture. Consequent upon these, the United Nations had once said that in fifty years time, the language and culture might fizzle out. Now, to protect this ugly development, the researcher embarked on the research, to find out the truth in **afa**, the system of operation, how it affected the lives of the Igbo people viz political, social, economic, religious, and moral lives. In **afa** two or more people were involved, that were the professional and the client(s). The professional was the **dibia afa** (diviner). The diviner normally did his work of divination with certain instruments depending on his methodology. This was to say that there were many methods of divination. These were **ugiri** (beads) method, water method, palm reading method, cola nut method, et cetera. These were studied. It was found that divination was a call, not all comers affair and false diviners gave rise to false interpretation of **afa** messages. For one to become a diviner after confirmation of one's call, one had to undergo training

and initiation proper. The training affords one, the opportunity to be able to understand the alphabets (in case of bead readers) and or the language of the **agwu** (spirit). **Agwu** was the spirit that controlled divination. It's possession of one, marked the beginning of the individual's journey into the profession. It was the spirit that revealed the concealed. The rejection of its call signified invitation to confusion in one's life and acceptance meant better life. It was therefore advised that the Igbo people especially the modern Igbo, should begin now to give **afa** a place in all affairs of their endeavours. In conclusion, **afa** was found not to be devilish rather it helped in establishing a healthy environment for peaceful coexistence of the society.





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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Ever since man found himself in this universe, he has been confronted with many problems. These problems were psychological, economical, socio-political and religious in nature. One of the problems was psychological in the sense that man began to think why he was here on this wide immeasurable empty space called earth. He thought of what would happen to him could the sky that seemed hanging, happened to fall upon him. Man also saw himself being consumed by wild animals and or swallowed by rivers. When night came, there was fear. Sometimes, man saw moon and stars. Sometimes, he could not see them. He therefore became more unbalanced.

Some of the problems of man were also economical as he thought of what to eat and how to preserve his food. Socially, man was afraid to move about. He was afraid of the environment. He could not understand how to interact with his environment. He then began to think about how to conquer his environment. In this process, man began to think that something, who must be a god, was behind the creation of the things around him. He then became more worried on how to reach the creator.

All these were sources of worry to man and as such, there were needs to ask questions: about the happenings in one's environment. This was so because man was not stable. He was in a state of disequilibrium and therefore he needed stability. He needed satisfaction from these questions. To get satisfaction, man needed a second or third person to interpret the minds of the gods. The second or third person here in Igbo world view was the diviner whose work was divination.

This was how the Igbo people of Nigeria came to embrace **afa** (divination). Divination according to Hornby (1974: 341), is "... the act of finding out and saying what will happen in the future." Divination involved two or more people. These were the diviner (expert) and the client(s). The diviner normally did his work of divination with certain instruments depending on his methodology. This implied that there were many methods of divination. They included **ugiri** (beads) method, water method, palm reading method, cola-nut method, et cetera.

This was why Anielo (1992:18) says, "... divining instruments are complex starting from natural objects to non-natural instruments. To the diviner, each item carries a

lot of meaning and helps to wake *agwu* into action, while some serve as his messengers.”

The *dibia afa* (diviner) was never alone in his divining work. There were spirits that guided him in the interpretation of *afa* beads. The spirits therefore revealed the concealed to the *dibia afa* who then, through the interpretation of the *afa* beads, rendered solutions to his clients' problem(s).

### **1.01 Background of the Study:**

Divination in Igbo society was very well established and it was very much believed in. The day-to-day life of an average Igbo man was consciously or unconsciously guided by the quest for the knowledge of the future. The Igbo strongly believed that, whatever happened to them must have some link with the spirit world hence the need for inquiry into the causes of events.

Divination according to Whitehall (nd: 538), is “... the act or practice of trying to foretell future events or the unknown by occult means.” This was to say that divination was the act of foretelling future events or discovering things secret or obscure by supernatural means, unusual insight and or intuitive perception.

Mbiti (1982:178) sees it as “... that which links together in its own way, the physical and the spiritual worlds, making it a religious activity.” The act of divination was a common practice among the Igbo. It connoted that “medicine men” possessed the inspiration of reading the future through their oracles and that such inspiration came from God. Diviners were therefore regarded by the Igbo as either priests or medicine men.

There were various methods of divination among the Igbo. They ranged from interpretation of dreams, water gazing to the use of divinatory objects and simple psychology.

The act of divination was not practiced by every member of the society. It was rather practiced by those who had special calling either by the spirit of divination (*agwu*) or by graduating after years of apprenticeship under a renowned diviner. Furthermore, others inherited the profession. The training for divination involved learning the names and signs of divination, the proverbs and stories associated with it, the practices, rites and cult of divination.

The Igbo nation was a sizeable country of seven states with so many autonomous communities. The people had a strong cultural background which was rooted in divination.

Consequently they had a large number of diviners and medicine men. Whatever happened to them whether naturally or by accident, its cause must be known by consulting a diviner. Examples included causes of barrenness, **ogbanje** (changeling), death and certain abnormalities in life.

A client who needed the diviner's services normally took **akilika** (one piece of roofing grass) and or little money like **kopo** (one kobo), **tolo** (three kobo), **sisi** (six kobo), **ovu ego** (ten kobo) and **ego naabo** (twenty kobo), to the **dibia afa** (diviner) who then disclosed the future or cause(s) of the clients' problems. Diviners did not make so much profit because they saw their services as a sacred duty which they performed for the sustenance of their communities as directed by **agwu** - spirit of divination. To make more profit was to invite the anger of **agwu** to them.

Among the Igbo people, diviners were directed by the spirit of divination. The spirit normally took possession of them after their initiation into the profession. They normally lived solitary lives because they were always isolated from the public immediately after being possessed by the spirit of **agwu**. Usually such possessed persons behaved like people who were mentally deranged. It was believed that during this



period of withdrawal from the public, they were taught the art of divination. The spirit also revealed the herbal usefulness of herbs, barks and roots of trees together. Proverbs, incantations and all esoteric languages useful for the profession were also revealed to them. Such possessed persons then wandered about in the bush and slept in unusual places for a period ranging from 98 to 196 Igbo indigenous weeks. That was between one to two years depending on the degree of the force of the spirit in the possessed persons. After the period of solitary life, such possessed persons put up shrines for the *agwu* and thereafter they became diviners. However, those who inherited the profession at the death of their fathers must get the approval of the *agwu* - spirit of divination before they were initiated into the profession.

### **1.02 Statement of the Problem:**

The Igbo people were curious by nature, seeking to know and understand occurrences around them. Divination was a manifestation of the Igbo people's innate quest to unravel the unknown and establish cause and effect of social and metaphysical phenomena. Divination was an art that was shrouded in secrecy. It therefore became obvious that any study about divination would be confronted with

series of problems because of the nature of the art and the society in which it operated. The professional ethics restricted diviners from revealing some classified information concerning the practice of divination for obvious reasons. Despite this, among the Igbo people of Nigeria, the diviners commanded immense patronage. Also “... in the West many people consult the Chinese ‘Book of changes’ (yijinj-ching)” (Oxtoby, 2002: 332). Indeed, the art was subsumed in myths dating back to the early history of various Igbo societies. Consequently, diviners did not use universal or standardized paraphernalia and could not reach a consensus on cross-cultural issues.

With a plethora of ideas and belief systems engendered by social dynamics in contemporary Igbo society, divination had been faced by challenges of acceptability hence the question, “Does divination really work?” (Oxtoby, 2002: 331). A more problematic obstacle was the question of whether or not divination satisfied the standard scientific methodological procedures and epistemology which required that any proposition be empirically demonstrable to be held as truthful. In the face of these problems, the centre piece of this dissertation was to investigate how divination managed

to hold its ground in such an unstable socio-cultural environment prevalent in Igbo society of today.

### **1.03 Purpose of the Study:**

The objective of the study is to situate the practice of divination within the context of contemporary Igbo society. In the face of rising religious conflicts leading to loss of lives and property in addition to the attendant social instability, it became pertinent to examine the concept of divination, its essence, its limitations and ways of managing the practice to enhance social harmony and sustainable development. The quest to understand current events and predict future occurrences was strong among the Igbo people. The socio-cultural, political, economic, psychological and metaphysical implications of divination for contemporary Igbo society needed to be explored against the backdrop of present day realities where many people still relied on divination to make key decisions in their private, family, and public life despite the overwhelming manifestations of science and technology. Furthermore, as the ever active effect of death continued taking away the old people, who were the custodians of Igbo cultural issues, the need to discover and document every thing about *afa* and preserve them for posterity became more obvious hence this research effort.

#### **1.04 Significance of the Study:**

Since the advent of Christianity in Igbo culture area, the region witnessed several inter-religious conflicts leading to loss of lives and property. These conflicts were connected with crises of confidence as each sect tried to impose its world view on others whom they often snob or denigrate. Adherents of Christianity were the most active offenders in this regard. They regarded divination as uncivilized way of life among the adherents of traditional religion. It is therefore hoped that a successful completion of this study, would help disabuse the people's mind and throw more light on the practice of divination. This would thereafter reduce and eliminate suspicions and conflicts in various Igbo communities and villages.

The knowledge of the truth about **afa** would stimulate the Igbo people into engaging **afa** in all affairs of their lives irrespective of their religious affiliations.

The acceptance of **afa** by modern Igbo would henceforth help in solving various economic, medical, psychological, religious, cultural and socio-political problems prevalent in Igbo nation.

On the other hand, the unearthing of falsehoods and fraudulent manipulations inherent in divination, would help

to expose the bad eggs, enlighten the public and reduce corruption in the profession.

There were certain illnesses beyond laboratory investigation. The acceptance of ***afa*** would help the medical personnels in the treatment of such patients.

The government at all levels would quicken investigation of crimes by police, fight against corruption and dispensation of justice in the law court especially the ambiguous cases if divination was co-opted into the 'modern' processes of settling disputes, investigation of crimes and governance. Oaths administered by diviners were rarely broken among the Igbo while people lied under oath using Bible or Koran at the law courts regularly.

The infiltration of quacks into the art of divination (as in most professions) was worrisome. This research work would provide an insight into the management of such malaise in the society.

Official involvement of diviners in the governance of modern society as a result of this research would also help the government in their prudent management of the people's resources. The government would not engage in any wasteful projects or be deceived by sycophants.

The study therefore is significant in this present day society bearing in mind its potentials in managing social problems and engendering cultural harmony and revival.

#### **1.05 Scope of the Study:**

This study was an attempt at looking at divination generally among the Igbo. The investigation covered every aspect of divination. These included origin and types of divination, training of diviners, reasons for divination, language, works and instruments for divination. It also studied the spirits in-charge of divination, methods of divination and the effect of **afa** chants in realizing the message of **agwu**.

#### **1.06 Research Questions:**

The following research questions were designed to guide and facilitate the study:

1. What really is divination?
2. What are the reasons for divination?
3. When and how did divination start?
4. Which spirit is in-charge of divination?
5. How is divination practiced?
6. How does **afa** chant affect the realization of the message of spirits of divination?

7. What are the effects of divination in the life of Igbo people?

**1.07 Hypothesis:**

The following hypotheses were formulated to give a driving and controlling guide to the research efforts.

- a. The day-to-day life of an average Igbo person is guided by the quest for the knowledge of past, present and future events.
- b. Some of the divining instruments help to stir *agwu* into action.
- c. Divination lacks empirical proof and is thus manipulative and susceptible to fraudulence.
- d. The work of a diviner is analogous to that of a Psychologist.
- e. Divination is a veritable means of social organization, crises management and cultural preservation.
- f. Observation of certain taboos helps diviners to strengthen their inward vision.
- g. The diviner is always in the company of an omnipresent spirit exclusive to their calling.
- h. Messages of divination are real and adhered to.
- I. Divination is truly the mouthpiece of the unseen.
- j. Divination has suffered bastardization in recent

times.

- k. The influence of Christianity and Islam affects the art and profession of divination negatively.
- l. Messages of divination are doubtful and lead to conflicts with members of other religious sects.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2.00 LITERATURES REVIEW**

Divination as a concept has been a controversial issue especially among the Christian faithful in Igbo land. Nevertheless, the urge to discover or demystify the unknown remained strong among the adherents of various religions and this was why ambivalence was now in vogue in Igbo land. Indeed, divination has become the basis for various human actions and decision making in both traditional and modern Christian societies. Many of the day-to-day problems of village and city life were resolved by consulting the diviner who “...will guide them through to a solution” (Booth 1977:98). Yet the results of many divination acts have, in many societies, led to social conflicts with far-reaching implications. Controversy notwithstanding, many people have written on this issue. For the progress of this work therefore, there was a review of related literatures on divination. The purpose of the review of both theoretical and empirical related literature was to widen the horizon of the researcher on the chosen topic of this research effort.

#### **2.01.01 *Meaning of Divination:***

As was noted during the introductory part of this work, Igbo forebears sought to control their environment. They did

this through manipulating the supernatural, through the practice of magic, through the explanation of how or why things happened the way they did, and through the prediction of future events. Prediction of future events was done through divination.

Oxtoby (2002:331), describes divination as “...the search for information about the causes of present conditions or about what to expect in the future.” The information was sought from the spirit through the mediumship of an expert known as a diviner. Understandably, the diviner had a special ability, including extra-super-sensory perception of symbols and events which enabled him to make utterances that disclosed certain patterns of actions that those who consulted him or her should follow. Parrinder (1949:137) sees divination as “...the means through which the diviners seek to interpret the mysteries of life, give guidance in daily affairs and settle disputes to uncover the past and look into the future.” The implication was that they did not only interpret the minds of the spirits, they also advised, prescribed and even treated their clients where necessary. “It entails the practice of attempting to penetrate the past, decipher the present, and foretell the future, in moments of personal and public crises and

darkness” (Ifemesia, 1979: 107). It was discovered that divination involved some form of supernatural manipulation to unravel the unknown. Thus Njoku (2002:130) explains that “... divination entails the use of spiritual foresights to reconnect the past, foretell the future, and read the figure both on earth and in the spirit world.” The spiritual foresight was really what made the diviners different from ordinary person because the ordinary person needed to possess the spiritual foresight in order to decipher any spiritual message.

As the result of the diviners’ spiritual foresight, “Africans recognize them among religious specialists-individuals who by virtue of their innate abilities or extensive training have the power to mediate between humanity and supernatural being” (Bently & Ziegler, 2003:510). The diviners were regarded as intelligent people, usually men though sometimes women as well, who understood clearly the networks of political, social, economic and psychological relationships within their communities. Divination according to Miller (1931:300), is “... the manipulation of the supernatural to discover concealed information.” From the above, it was seen that divination was a particular category of ritual that functioned to

maintain social order. This was why Read (1999: 373) sees divination as “...the act or art of trying to foretell the future or the unknown.” The future was unknown and therefore bleak and insecure. Only divination could dispel the insecurity of the future. In concert with Read, Benton (1964:506) sees divination as “...the process of obtaining knowledge of secret or future things from contact with supernatural or divine sources.” It was a process in that the diviner used to undergo several stages of actions in order to achieve the result for which the clients(s) came to him. The stages involved: the diviner making inquiry of his or her safety in performing the duty, asking the client to say his or her name (if possible), asking the client to mention his or her problem and giving him or her an *ene* (antelope’s) horn to touch while saying his or her problems, inviting the spirits to come around and then throwing the problem(s) of the diviners’ client(s) to the spirits for solution.

In support of Read also O’Boyle (1966:913) says, “Divination is the practice of foreseeing or foretelling future events or of discovering hidden or secret knowledge.” The practice of foreseeing future events or obtaining secret knowledge through communication with divine sources was based on the belief in revelations offered to humans by the

gods and in extra rational forms of knowledge. It attempted to make known those things that neither reason nor science discovered.

Consequently, Bridge (1963:579) observes that “Divination is the searching out of the mysteries of human destiny through omens, oracles, signs and portends.” It was a prediction of future things which cannot be known by any human means. Something that was secret and hidden was equivalent to something that was covered and therefore needed to be uncovered. This time, it was not by ordinary means rather by supernatural means. Uncovering such an event if it was a problem made the solution close at hand since it had been far from sight. However, Brandon (1970:320) admits that “Divination is roughly the attempt to discern events that are distant in time or space, and that consequently cannot be perceived by normal means.” By Brandon’s explanation, it implied that divination was approximately and not exactly an effort to recognize or understand events that are still far away from ordinary human being. However, everyone was entitled to her or his own opinion. What was clear here was that in divination, the ambiguous was disambiguated and thereby giving stability to unstable mind.

### **2.01.02 Types of Divination:**

Variety was said to be the spice of life. This exactly happened in divination. There were several methods of divination just as there were many people in that profession. Recognizing many methods in the profession, Turnbull (1976:131) says:

*There are innumerable forms of divination, mostly involving actions and manipulations designed either to impress the gullible or to actually invoke spiritual assistance. Others may be 'scientific' in that they are thought to rely on inherent qualities of objects (shells, stones, bits of wood) that always fall in certain patterns under certain circumstances.*

Some of these actions and manipulations were used by the diviners to excite their clients about their pronouncements over the clients' problems. On the other hand, some actions and manipulations were initiated only to invite super human forces to aid them in conducting a successful search into their clients' problems. Meanwhile, some other forms were scientific in that they were investigatable. Another diviner could come and get to the same answer given by one diviner on same matter using the same method.

There are several types of divination, for instance, Abani (1988:14) studied divinatory phenomena among the

Igbo of Nigeria and observes that “...there are basically two types of divinatory system common in Afikpo, namely: mechanical and invocatory or incantational system.” The mechanical system was an explanatory device involving the use of special objects such as **okwe**, cowry shells, cola nuts, **ugiri** (beads), et cetera. Invocatory or incantational system involved series of passionate calls upon either the deity or ancestors. This was one of the essential parts of worship in either Christianity or traditional Igbo religion.

Aniello links the proliferation of divination techniques in Africa to economic reasons. Thus:

*With the increase in the economic gain associated with divining exercise, many people have drifted into the profession using different styles and patterns to accomplish their lot. In Africa, thousands and one style appears in divination process each claiming to excel the others (1992:20).*

Indeed, the economic angle remained one of the strong reasons why people cast doubts on the sincerity and efficacy of divination in contemporary times. But the proliferation of techniques had been linked to lineage, sex and heredity rather than materialism, Anekwe (1992:19) argues that “Divination could be practiced through different techniques depending on the lineage.” It could be understood here that though there were many types of divinatory techniques,

whichever one practiced signified inheritance from the family.

Whether the proliferation of ***afa*** techniques was linked to materialism or inheritance, it was discovered that proliferation in ***afa*** was due to involvement of many people in the profession hence various ideas and beliefs. In support of proliferation in ***afa***, Anedo (1987:49) explains that “Divinatory instruments vary in many towns and among individuals. Some use cola nuts, some use water where others use mirror, reading of palm, animal entrails and beads.” Such instruments were considered as “...Mediators between the diviners and the gods” (Zahan, 1979:86) so as to help diviners “... to commune with the ancestors and to relate the problems of their clients to them” (Booth, 1977:47). These statements of Zahan and Booth respectively implied that Sandals as divinatory instruments, that could be listened to, however, showed the presence of spiritual beings who were talking to the diviner.

To Turner (1968:301), “Divination is a widespread practice that takes many forms.” Making wide consultation with several diviners engaged in the various forms of divination in a critical situation, afforded one the



opportunity of getting the real solution to one's problems(s). These various forms included:

*...the throwing of cowry shells and the interpretation of the ensuring pattern; the rubbing oracle in which the diviner rubs his finger up and down a moistened stick, the point at which his fingers stick indicating the answer, and heruspication, in which the diviner examines the entrails of an animal or bird, nowadays usually as chicken. He then gives his answer (Beattie, 1965:228).*

The diviner might say that his client's trouble was due to the practice of sorcery or witchcraft by some living persons; if he did, he would be careful not to be too specific but would leave his client to draw his conclusions, for to impute sorcery was a serious matter.

Another type of divination according to Bascon (1959:274) "... is the practice of some priestesses of holding their hands like an open book while they are under possession." While they did this, they revealed the communication from their gods as if they were reading from a book. To Kalu (2002:361), "Others use mystical means" which entailed practice of incantational or invocatory form of divination where the diviner invited the spiritual force to expose whatever secret he wanted him to unravel. In recognition of this, Dennett (1968:28) admits that "Mystical

means is obtainable if there should be any need of divine interference” especially when matters go wrong with the people. In some cases, if it was a collective problem, they cried to their king who summoned his court to advise him on the affair. It then might be decided that the question was one that man could not settle, and then **dibia afa** was called in and asked to consult his magic mirror and so divine the cause of the evil weighing so heavily upon the people.

Ugonna (1984:30) explains that “In Ozubulu as in most towns, in the central Igbo, two forms of divination (**afa**) are practiced.” He went further to list the two forms as: (a) the **Ikpukpara** based on the principles of the sixteen configuration of **mkpuru afa (afa seeds)**, namely: **ogbi, akwu, ogoli, odii, ululu, agali, obala, okala, ijite, osa, aka, atokpa, ete, ose, ovu, otule**, and (b) **okwe** based on the principle of direct vision. These two forms of divination practiced among the central Igbo people according to Dorson (1979:31), “...involve interpretation of the future through supernatural means.”

In his own contribution, Philips (1971:249) mentions many forms of divination and the places where they were practiced. These were mediumistic method, oneiromancy

(divination by dreams), necromancy, haruspication and ornithomancy practiced by Babylonia and Greece. “Dreams were normal psychological states, used often in the Bible to foresee and prevent future events, as in the cases of Joseph in Gen. 40:41, and St. Joseph in matt. 1:20, 2:13. In like manner, Dominguez (2000) mentions “Zodiac” as a form of divination on the web ([www. religion. cult. com/occult/Asho/divination/htm](http://www.religion.cult.com/occult/Asho/divination/htm) retrieved on 27<sup>th</sup> march, 2007). He further says that: “... 40 million Americans consult it.”

Other forms of divination some of which have been mentioned were; reading auspices or omens, haruspication, ornithomancy and the interpretation of dreams and visions practiced in Rome. According to Philips (1971:249), “It is understood that no Roman would embark upon a major undertaking unless the augurs decided that the auspices are favourable.” For instance, “When one’s life was threatened and one wanted to run, his friends would ask him where he wanted to go, he replied that he did not know yet but would find out by divination” (Werner, 1968:133). Once one’s life was threatened, one’s environment was no longer safe for one. One was therefore left with an option of leaving the environment. In doing so, one had to consult a diviner

whose duty it was to tell the unsafe one where to go and be saved. O'Boyle (1966:913) groups divination into two main forms - natural and artificial or inductive divination. Natural divination was that based on interpretation of dreams and on oracles while artificial or inductive was that based primarily on the observation and interpretation of certain actions of man; animals or other living beings and on human contacts or employment of certain inanimate objects.

However, Charles Mackey (2007) gives a typology of divinatory techniques on the web, retrieved on the 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2007 as listed below:

- Aeluromancy (dropping wheat cakes in water and interpreting the result)
- Aeromancy or acromancy (divination by examining what the air does to certain things)
- Alectromancy or alectryomancy (divination by a cock: grains of wheat are placed on later and the cock "spells" the message by selecting grains)
- Alphitomancy (dropping barley cakes in water and interpreting the result)
- Anthropomancy (divination by interpreting the organs of newly sacrificed humans)
- Arithmancy (divination by numbers)

- Astragalomancy or astragymancy (using knuckle bones marked with letters of the alphabet)
- Astrology (arrangement of the stars, planets, and constellations at the time of one's birth)
- Astromancy (by stars)
- Axinomancy (divination by the hatchet; interpreting the quiver when whacked into a table)
- Belomancy (divination by arrows)
- Botanomancy (divination by herbs)
- Bonchiomancy (divination by studying the lungs of sacrificed white llamas)
- Capromancy (divination by the smoke of an attar or sacrificial incense)
- Cartomancy (by cards, e.g. playing cards, tarot cards, and non-tarot oracle cards, see also Taromancy).
- Catoptromancy or aystallomancy (using mirrors or lenses)
- Cephalomancy or Cephthaleonomancy (divination by a donkey's head)
- Ceromancy (by the melting of wax)
- Chalcomancy (by vessels of brass or other metal)
- Chiromancy (palmistry) cleidomancy (divination by interpreting the movements of a key suspended by a

thread from the nail of the third finger on a young virgins hand while one of the psalms was recited)

- Coscinomancy (divination by a balanced sieve)
- Cromniomancy (divination by onions)
- Crystallomancy (by crystals)
- Dactylomancy (divination by means of rings put on the fingernails or the number of whorls and loops on the fingers)
- Daphromancy (divination using the laurel branch; how did it crackle when buried)
- Dowsing (reaction of water when stone is thrown underground of water)
- Extispicy (divination by examining entrails)
- Fractomancy (interpreting the structure of fractal geometric patterns)
- Gastromancy (by the sound of or marks on the belly)
- Geomancy
- Gyromancy (divination by walking around a circle of letters until dizzy and one falls down on the letters or in the direction to take)
- Haruspicy (inspecting the entrails of slaughtered animals)

- Hepatoscopy or hepatomancy (divination by examining the liver of sacrificed animals)
- Hydromancy (divination by examining what certain things do in water or when taken out of water, such as coffee grounds or tea leaves); hydratoscopy (if rainwater is used); pegomancy (if spring-water is used)
- Kapnomancy (by smoke)
- Katoptromancy (by looking at glasses)
- Kephalonomancy (burning carbon on the head of an ass while reciting the names of suspected criminals, if you're guilty, a crackling sound will be heard when your name is spoken)
- Koskinomancy (by sieves)
- Lampadomancy (interpreting the movements of the flame of a lamp)
- Libanomancy or knissomancy (interpreting the smoke of incense)
- Lecanomancy (dropping precious stones into water and listening for whistles)
- Logarithmancy (by adding and subtracting numbers)
- Macharomancy (by knives and swords)

- Margaritomaancy (divination by the pearl: if it jumps in the pot when a person is named, then he is the thief)
- Metoposcopy (interpreting frontal wrinkles)
- Molybdomancy (divination by method lead interpreting its noises and hisses when dropped into water)
- Myrmomancy (divination by watching ants eating)
- Necromancy (communicating with spirits of the dead to predict the future)
- Oinomancy (divination by wine)
- Omphalomancy (interpretation of the belly button)
- Oneiromancy (interpretation of dreams)
- Onomancy (divination by names)
- Onychomancy (interpreting the reflection of sun rays of fingernails)
- Ornithomancy or orniscopy (interpreting the flights of birds)
- Ovomancy or Oomancy or Ooscopy (breaking eggs into a container of water and interpreting the shape of the egg white)
- Papyromancy (divination by folding paper)
- Podomancy (by the feet)



- Psychometric (divination by touching objects)
- Pyromancy or pyroscopy (divination by fire)
- Rhabdomancy (using divining rod or magic wand)
- Rhapsomancy (divination by a line in a sacred book that strikes the eye when the book is opened after the diviner prays, meditates or involves the help of spirits)
- Rumpology (divination by the sepal-bone or shoulder blade in divination by foot prints in ashes, here the diviner must take active steps to secure the conditions necessary to divination)
- Scapulamancy ( divination by the seaborne or shoulder blade in divination by foot prints in the ashes, here the diviner must take active steps to secure the conditions necessary to divination )
- Sciomancy (shadows)
- Scrying
- Sideromancy (interpreting straws thrown on a red-hot iron)
- Skatharomancy (interpreting the tracks of a beetle crawling over the grave of a murder victim)
- Stereomancy (divinity by the elements)
- Spatilomancy (by skin, bones, etc)
- Spalnchnomancy (reading cut sections of a goat liver)

- Stichomancy
- Sternomancy (divination by the marks from the breast to the belly)
- Sychomancy (by figs)
- Tasseography (reading tea leaves)
- Tephromancy (by ashes)
- Therimancy (divination by breasts)
- Tiromancy (interpreting the holes or mold in cheeses)
- Mineralogy (by numbers)
- Oneironmancy (by dreams)
- Onomancy (by names)
- Ouija (board divination)
- Podomancy (by the soles of one's feet)
- Palmistry (by palm inspection)
- Phrenology (by the shape of one's head)
- Pyromancy, or Pyroscopy (by fire)
- Rune Casting/Runic divination (By Runes)
- Scatomancy (by droppings, usually animals)
- Sternomancy (by marks & bumps on the chest)
- Taromancy (by specially designed cards: tarot).

The list of divinatory techniques retrieved from the web implied that really "...divination took many different forms" (Fried, 1968:292) as a result of involvement of many people

in the profession. The list was inexhaustible. It was as many as different societies in the world. Recently, according to Bascon (1959:293), “Diviners have adopted new techniques as the result of European influences; they employ dice, playing cards, and dominoes in a variety of ways to prognosticate. It was understood that dice, playing cards, and dominoes were not being used by Igbo diviners. Some diviners adopted them as a result of acculturation going on among the Igbo people of Nigeria and therefore contributed to the proliferation of divinatory techniques in Igbo culture area.

### **2.01.03 *Reasons for Divination:***

The practice of divination constituted a cord that bound many people; exacting compliance to norms and ethics, from concerned parties who lived in distant locations. Hence, “... in the circle of life, the diviner is consulted in time of trouble in order to understand why misfortune occurred and how to prevent its future occurrence” (Sieber, 1988:74). Such misfortune used to come in form of storm, unfortunate accident, condition or event. When such issues became complex to a group of people, people sometimes consulted diviners. Naturally, “...people want to know why a relation is sick, why another has died, why a strange thing

happened” (Nwala, 1985:124). In modern societies, many people combined divination with orthodox prayer to ensure efficacy. To such worshipers according to Pelton (1980:133), “The importance of divination in addition to prayer, is an avenue to reach **dorun** who is in charge of one’s destiny.” The role of divination and belief systems could not be ignored as it held a key position in understanding human actions, societal organization, and emergent cultures.

Anekwe (1992:24) admits that “...the problems of man are reduced through divination.” Problems were made lighter or erased completely by divining rightly about them. This time, the spirits responsible for these predicaments would be controlled. This was made possible because when one “...consults a diviner as to know which spirit he should approach for a particular purpose” (Bascon, 1959:36) and eventually discovered it, one “...seeks the aid of good gods, patron ancestors, magic, divination and elaborate propitiatory rituals as counters to the evil forces” (Kalu, 1978:42). Without this, one would take a wrong approach to one’s problem(s) because even “...the ancestors communicate their wishes, vision, dreams and divination to the living” (Anizoba, 2001:5).

On the strength of this, Werner, Thurman, Maxwell and Dearson (1996:102) admit that "...most common health problems could be handled earlier and better by people in their own homes" if diviners were consulted. Understandably, people did not engage the services of diviners only for the existing problem(s). Hence Bascon (1959:283) says, "The person who desires knowledge of events to come, so that he may avoid harm and increases the benefits in store for him, consults a diviner." People desire to know the future because of the future's bleakness and insecurity. In concert with Bascon, Honigman (1977:57) confirms that "...just as under condition of uncertainty and danger, magic enables man to feel that he can cope with threat, so divination, the clairvoyant view of the future, allays uncertainty." Honigman's view implied that divination was a hope raiser to an unstabled person as he or she would be psychologically strong enough to face his or her future. However, though a bad prognosis gave some structure to an otherwise totally ambiguous end. Kalu (2002:361) emphasizes that "...man would want to know the course of future events in order to be better able to control them." One ought not to forget that basically, *afa* art was founded on man's anxiety to understand the mind of the supernatural

beings whose actions were believed to impinge directly on human welfare. Divination played an important role in the Igbo attempt to explain, predict and control events around him. Kalu (2002:361) further narrates that divination "...also features prominently in the religious worship of the people as the services of diviners are often sought to determine the nature of material forms of different types of ritual ceremonies, particularly sacrifices." This was why Ilogu (1974: 47) opines thus:

*The religious aspect of marriage include the preliminary divination by which the young man who seeks a wife is enabled to find out from what clan or lineage his 'chi' (guardian spirit) permits him to take a wife of fortune.*

When the diviner pronounced the family, clan or lineage from where the young man should take a wife, he also advised (according to revelation from the ancestors) on the particular girl to marry. This pronouncement indicated that the marriage would be a fruitful one devoid of impediments. Apart from choice of life partner, Ifemesia (1979:73) says, "Sometimes heads were chosen by divination." This was to avoid choosing a wrong person so as to maintain peace among the people. Otherwise, when a wrong person was chosen to lead the people, there would be lamentations

across the society. This was why Agwagwom (2002: 14) observes that:

*You have the greatest opportunity to save our country from the cancerous corruption and pollution; that has become our symbol. The law abiding and progressive citizens of this country had great hopes when you assumed power as the president of this country on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1999 but I am sorry that their hope has been dashed for lack of focus and consistency of action.*

There was lamentation of this sort whenever in a traditional setting; the people did not seek the aid of spirits in choosing their leaders- religious and political leaders. People usually sought the aid of spirits in a situation like this believing that spirits unveiled the mind to the diviners through divination. As a result of this, Shorter (1974:103) comments that “Divination brings fears, suspicions and conflicts into the light of the day and offers social approval for the course of action that is afterwards taken to resolve the problem.” One reason for divination was that the individual, in appealing to diviner, wished to confirm his or her own suspicions. It implied that human beings should not act on doubtful conscience. To Brandon (1970:243), “Man plans for foreseen contingencies, but is aware that much of the future is menacingly unknown. He has naturally sought to penetrate this unknown by various means.” One of these various

means adopted in attempt to penetrate the unknown was divination. For instance, when efforts to get a sick person back to his or her normal health position failed, "... divination becomes necessary" (Gibbs, 1965:471). It then entailed that divination served as the last resort in solving problems.

#### **2.01.04 Work of divination:**

Divination was often dismissed by skeptics, including the scientific community, as being mere superstition. In spite the disapproval by the scientists, its significance among the Igbo people was beyond any doubt. It touched the economic, religious, psychological and socio-political lives of the people. This was why Anedo (1987:77) said that divination was like what should be done to foresee the future or have insight in the future events through interaction between man and spirit and revelation from the devil, answer of which was got from questions about deity, magic and awful things. It was believed that the diviners and spirits related for good and for bad intentions. This relationship was achieved through divination.

For Pelton (1980:133), "The importance of divination in addition to prayer, is an avenue to reach **dorun** who is in-charge of one's destiny." There was strong belief in destiny



among the Igbo. That was why they used to go to the diviners whose work it was to reveal to them the occupation to take. Juhan Jayne (on the web retrieved on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2007) confirms that Chinese governmental planning relied on divination for long range strategy. The type of divinatory technique recognized here was an omens and men text. It was believed that modern scientific inquiry began with this kind of divination.

Sometimes, people dreamt and dream was a drama where the soul left the body, went to another place and later came back with a message. This was why Booth (1977:17) says, "Dream could be one of the ways messages and protections come." It implied that dream came and interpretation followed. But sometimes where the interpretation was not clear due to ambiguous nature of such dream, the dreamer opted to divination. This was where divination was seen as disambiguation of unclear events. Events might be adventurous. Meanwhile, Zahan (1979:88) opines that "Diviner is a traveler and as well interprets man's relationship with his neighbour on earth." The diviner was capable of predicting the outcome of a pregnancy, name to be given to a new born (the reincarnate ancestor).

In recognition of the above statement, Booth (1977:17) says, "Whenever sickness or death befalls one or a community, it is believed something caused it that needs investigation." The belief that sickness or death had a cause did not negate the idea of sickness or death being caused by germs. Nevertheless, Idowu (1973:104) agrees that despite that, "Diviners believe that they have power to bring to life a dead person through the instruments of divination." This was done in a special way if the diseased relations insisted on knowing if a newborn baby was an incarnate of their dead relation. Among the Igbo, it was done especially when the child had a problem. The problem might be associated with protracted illness, and or delay in development. Normally these and other problems were sources of worry to parents that called for divination. However, Detton (1980: 228) made it clear that divination by using a sacred language to interpret the events beyond human understanding and trying to forecast the future, was a medication to social problem and remaking the world in human relations. It was not unusual to witness disorder in societal relation due to misunderstanding of certain events. To restore normalcy in this situation people therefore engaged divination. Traditional society resorted to divination

according to Honigman (1977:57), on the belief that “What stops enmity is divination or communion sacrifice even though a bad prognosis gives some structure to an otherwise totally unknown end.” To this end, Kalu (2002:361) emphasizes, “When every effort to get the facts from divination fails, a given traditional group or individual would then plan to visit one of the famous oracles that thrived in the traditional Igbo society.” All that was needed here was the truth and oracular institutions for the Igbo being the more developed forms of divination; offered the answer.

For one to embark on a safe journey, Zahan (1979:90) asserts:

*There is need to consult a diviner to find out what would become of the journey, different ways to safety and charms that would protect the traveler in order to have faith in his return, say when he would embark on the journey and the better route to take in order to lessen the problems associated with the journey.*

Because the people were safety conscious and therefore could not act on doubtful conscience, they usually embraced divination for proper arrangement. Even when people embarked on any journey or endeavour and did not succeed, the question that followed was “...did he make any inquiries before his actions?” So to avoid blames and ensure proper

way of solving problems, traditional society did not avoid diviners. That was why Zuesse (1979:64) explains that "... a community that has serious problems use to find out why many things have gone wrong... they invite a diviner to make charms for them."

It was believed that nothing was too difficult for a diviner to solve because he worked with a supper human being. This was why Parrinder (1974:37) therefore states that "...diviners give answers to all these problems." Some instances of these problems were sickness, awful dreams and cases of changeling. The problems were beyond human knowledge and control. But diviners according to Nwala (1985:137) "...reveal all these and many more such things through divination ...and dreams." These diviners did not perform only in time of distress. They operated "...both at the time of mourning and at the time of joy" (Onwuejeogwu, 1981: 10). In every society, consensus was not easily reached during decision taking process. There were dialogues and sometimes lobbying for certain decisions. But when these failed, the leaders at intervals consulted the **dibia afa**. The **dibia afa** according to Onwuejeogwu (1981:141) "...accelerates or reduces the rate of the

crystallization of public opinion by directing their clients' attention to specific issues.”

Accusations and counter accusations were prevalent in the society today. This led the accusing parties to either traditional court or law court. In such a proceeding, the dispute was not between the crown and its subjects but between one of the crown's subjects and another. The function of the public authorities was merely to judge. That was to determine the merits of the controversy. Consequently Ogg (1979:613) says that “The parties may at any time agree to give up litigation and reach settlement out of court” and the only option left for them for final settlement was oracular institution (the more developed form of divination).

Similarly, Shelton (1971:31) explains that the proper time-aside from that which was regularly scheduled for sacrifice to particular spirit to whom worship was not regularly directed, was normally left to the diviner to announce and no one else. In the traditional Igbo society, there were many festivals, each having special time for its celebration. Harvest festivals occurred when the crops had been harvested. But ritual time varied in-so-far- as in many instances it was directed by the ancestors obtained through

divination. Sometimes, in many traditional societies ordinary methods of investigation considered adequate for detection of sorcerers were thought to be unable to reveal the identity of witches. In such situation, Middleton and Winter (1978:22) explain that "...the use of some other techniques such as the poison ordeal was mandatory." The use of the poison ordeal as an oracular form of divination was to give final verdict, from which there could be no appeal.

That was why Miller (1931:300) opines that "Divination is often required in cases of individual affliction such as illness, death, and other life crises." There were illnesses which causes could not be easily detected by human reasoning and laboratory investigation. Sometimes when the causes of such sicknesses seemed to have been found, it would be very difficult or impossible to cure. Such problem sometimes left the physician in a state of confusion and thereby resulting to the death of the patient. For instance, 'a typical pneumonia' was an interim and not a final, definite diagnosis. Its recognition might prompt the physician to consider carefully what the most likely pathogen was. To Ball (1982:149), "Diagnostic confirmation in the acute state is unlikely because serology is the only routine method

available.” Furthermore, complications can occur in certain atypical pneumonia; with neurological, renal, hematological and other features which may bewilder the physicians. Since therapeutic options were limited in these infections the only option left to the infected was divination. It was because sometimes some diseases were caused by spirits or ancestors due to one reason or the other. This was why Beattie (1965: 228) admits that “...in Bunyoro a man who becomes ill or suffers some other kinds of misfortune is likely to consult a diviner to find the cause of his trouble.” Sometimes it served as a first port of call in solving one’s problems. According to Bascon (1959:262) it implied that “...divination usually reveals that the supernatural is in some manner invoked in the patient’s illness.” It was because the person in one way or the other had disobeyed the gods in the past. For that Njoku (2002:130) avers that “...with his spiritual foresight, the diviner can reconnect the past, foretell the future and read the figure both on earth and in the spiritual world.” To Mair (1980:240), in doing this “...a diviner while remaining his normal self, manipulates objects which are supposed to give the answer without intervention.” These objects were the diviner’s instruments for divination. The diviners would not perform without them

because they served as intermediaries between the diviners and the spirits.

In human relation especially where there was need to establish lasting relation, people consulted diviners. Such relationships bordered on economic or social affairs. The diviner therefore through the instrumentality of divination dictated on the future of that relationship. In recognition of this, Park (1967:234) says:

*It may also be required for the corroboration of a marriage-choice involving and in individual or collective moves involving some change in social alignments, or perhaps, calamity, or unresolved conflicts, whether on a personal or a much larger scale.*

It was believed that wherever and whenever members of the society channeled their affairs to divination, they knew the appropriate occasions of its use. For instance, "... among the Yoruba, divination is required for the selection of a site for new house" (Miller, 1931:300). It gave society a clear way in decision-making which otherwise was held to reflect the particular interest of one group, community or individual in locating a project. Park (1967: 301) points out that "...the omission of divination in a situation that clearly calls for it might well result in difficulties for the person or group who acted without it." Park (1967) further explained that



divination gave legitimacy to acts performed following divination, and relieved anxiety by pinpointing a cause and prescribing counteractive measures. Divination as a way of determining serious and ambiguous cases was in essence analogous to modern judicial process, in that its outcome was a determination of guilt and provision for redress to the satisfaction of the injured party. It was therefore according to Turner (1968:26) “...peculiarly sensitive to changes, and especially breakages in the network of existing social relations.”

#### **2.01.05 *Instruments for Divination:***

The act of divination was not practiced by every member of the society. It was rather practiced by those who had special calling either by the spirit of divination (Agwu) or by practicing as apprentices under renowned diviners. These diviners were not alone in their work. They used certain instruments which according to Aniello (1992:18) were “...complex, ranging from natural objects to non-natural instruments.” Some of these natural objects mostly used were animal teeth, fish bones, tortoise shells, seeds of trees, wooden plates, earthen pot, calabash, wooden gong and others. It was inexhaustible. It depended on the society and religious denomination within which it was practiced. To the

diviner, each item carries a lot of meaning. Mbiti (1975:131) confirms that “Diviners, oracle and medicine men use various parts of plants and crops for divination and medical practice.” They helped to wake god of divination into action. However, the diviner according to Nwala (1985:124) “...usually is not told why a client has come to consult him, rather by the process of manipulation of his divining instruments-charms, beads, nuts, etc, and ..., he stumbles on the clients’ problem(s).” Some of these instruments served as messengers of diviners. It implied that without these instruments, the diviners would not see clearly. They usually got their information through the instruments. And because these instruments were believed to be sacred and were capable of eliciting information from the spirits, the diviners relied on them for proper information. Kalu (2002:361) observes the use of these instruments thus: “Some diviners manipulate different types of material objects, usually known as *mkpulu afa* (afa seeds).” Some diviners used mystical means to ascertain information from gods, “...some consult magic mirror” (Dennett, 1968:96) and some others, “...use tortoise shells in addition to the shoulder blades of Oxen” (Oxtoby, 2002:331).

During any diving session, these materials were showcased for easy access. Each of them had a duty to perform. Hence Bascon (1959:258) says, “Method of divination is primarily the fall of cowries’ shells or kola nuts.” The instruments used depended on the method applied. Bascon (1959:283) further says that “...among the numerous divining techniques, the most common one is to throw a handful of palm nuts on the ground and prognosticate by examining the pattern they form.” Recently there were innovations in the instruments and techniques of divination. Some of these innovations were meant to lure some unbelievers into practicing divination and welcoming it into their life affairs. For instance, Bascon (1959) mentioned among the instruments, a statue showing the face of Christ and the Bible. In this aspect, divination was Christianized and as such many Christians directly or indirectly engaged the services of diviners in their life affairs.

Other instruments for divination according to Benton (1964:506) were “...the divining rod, water, suspended ring, Bible and key.” These instruments were mainly found from Europe to China and Japan and had now been adopted by some Igbo diviners. Benton (1964) further mentioned dice, knudle bones and coconut among divination instruments. In

addition to these, Hastings (1954:778) confirms that “Northern Asian use drum in divining, but in some other cases the possessing spirit speak by the mouth of the wizard, as among the Tehi-speaking people, whose priests are possessed, not by spirit, but by gods.” Drum here acted as a mover to the gods of divination. It rekindled the spirits’ interest during the divination session. It then served as a medium to welcoming the gods to participate in the divination. The participation of the gods therefore added to the efficacy of the instruments and the divination proper. To confirm this, Bascon (1969:13) affirms that “...the god is consulted by means of palm nuts”, a kind of divinatory instruments. The use of palm nuts among the Yoruba was believed to have come with the sixteen persons who founded Yoruba. They were said to have brought palm nuts that produced a tree with sixteen branches on mountain **Ado**, which was the residence of the chief priest of **afa** (god of divination). Similarly, the Igbo used four chains of sixteen seed each of which has a name.

To Okodo (1991:30), “Divination uses shells as its main paraphernalia.” These shells mostly chained were cast on the ground and from the configuration, the diviner obtained information which he interpreted to his clients. In concert

with Okodo, Basden (1966:51) avers: “The diviner commences operations by placing an inverted tortoise shell on the ground which contains the **afa**, the medium of divination commonly called ‘charms’. In some instances, the tortoise shell served as a container into which the **afa** seeds were collected while at some other areas it served as a medium through which the diviner received information from the gods. To engage in more serious consultation of the spirits, Oxtoby (2002:334) says:

*There is the divination chair. A miniature modern chair held upright before an altar while incense is burned and the spirit is asked to descend into the chair, which then crashes into a prepared table and traces messages from the possessing deity.*

This assertion got to explain that some instruments were used to invoke spirits capable of giving out information to the diviners. As a result of this, there was invocatory or incantational system of divination different from mechanical system.

In a further explanation of the instruments used in divination, Williamson (1972:4-5) admits that the “...objects include human and animal teeth, cowries, seeds, coins, pieces of bones, and seeds of certain plants.” It should be noted that this collection was kept in a container. Then at the beginning of divination, the diviner dropped them on the

floor. He picked them up and repeated the throwing, one or several times. He then gave his verdict.

In what seemed a summary of instruments of diviners, Anielo (1992:18-19) gave the list of **agwu**'s instruments thus: **ugiri, ikenga agwu, iyi agwu, ufo, ekpili, mpi ene** (the horn of a antelope) tortoise shell, **ofo, udene agwu** (vulture) and **nkita agwu** (dog). These personal and non personal instruments were believed to be of help to both **agwu** and the diviner in deciding the secret information. According to Anielo (1992:8), "While some people use beads, cowries, many use mirror and water, sticks, divining boards and other materials." It was therefore noteworthy that the different types of material for divination were as a result of involvement of different types of people and culture or religion in the profession. But whatever object people used, the common term was divination.

#### **2.01.06 Spirit in Charge of Divination:**

Most definitions of divination pointed to the fact that divination had super natural backing. The **dibia afa** (diviners) believed that they were never alone in their divining work because there were spirits that guided them in the interpretation of **afa** beads. Such spirits therefore revealed the concealed to the **dibia afa** who then through

the interpretation of *afa* beads, rendered solution to the clients' problem(s). Considering this, Arinze (1970:155) confirms that "The vocation to be a *dibia* is possession by *agwu* spirit, who is the special spirit of *ndi dibia*, healers." *Agwu* therefore was the patron spirit of divination and diviners.

Abani (1988:3) studied divination in Afikpo and observes that "In Afikpo, diviners are trained by the spirit of divination and also by renowned diviners under whom they serve as apprentices." Among the Igbo people of West Africa, diviners were either 'trained', 'inspired' or called by the spirit of divination. In case of those "trained" by 'the spirit of divination', they were normally possessed by the spirit and were always isolated from the public. Usually such possessed persons behaved like people who were mentally deranged. It was believed that during this period of withdrawal from the public, the spirit taught them the act of divination, knowledge of curative herbs, barks and roots of trees, proverbs, incantations and all it entailed to be a *dibia afa*. Consequently Mbiti (1975:156) affirms that "...diviners normally work also as medicine men." Such persons then wandered into bush, slept in unusual places from a certain period. Mair (1980:242) confirms thus:

*They must be able readily to fall into a condition of dissociation and speak as though with a voice entering them from outside, they commonly find their vocation after a period of disturbance which a psychiatrist probably call a mental illness.*

The period depended on the degree of force of the spirit on the person concerned. After this, such possessed persons put up their own shrines and practiced as diviners.

This god of divination had different names in different cultures. Among the Igbo of West Africa, it was called **agwu**. Ogbalu (1981:54) takes note of this thus: “**Agwu** is the god of medicine and divination ...**Agwu** chooses his own priests, prophets and all those who become **afa** men or medicine man.” Here Ogbalu tried to portray **agwu** as the deity or spirit which had the sole responsibility of making one a diviner. Lending his credence to Ogbalu’s claim, Ilogu (1974:74) explains that “**Agwu** is seen as god of divination and herbal medicine that belongs to one of the innumerable minor deities which are some times personifications ... of nature and daily life.” It implied that there were other minor deities inhabiting the spiritual world. Of all these deities among the Igbo, **agwu** was the only one bestowed with the power to choose a diviner and guided him in all his deliberations. This was why Bentley and Ziegler (2003:511)



state thus: “When afflicted by illness, sterility, crop failure, or some other disaster, individuals or group consulted diviners to learn the cause of their misfortune. Diviners then consulted oracles, identified the causes of the trouble ... brings about a return to normality.”

To Metuh (1985:162), “The gift of divination is inherited from one’s maternal clan if one is possessed by **agwu**.” Observation here was that **agwu** which followed a woman to her matrimonial home, exercised more power in making one a diviner. Arinze (1970:64) made the position of **agwu** concerning divination clear. According to him, “The clearest and indispensable sign of vocation to be a **dibia afa** is possession by the spirit of **agwu** who is the special spirit of (ndi dibia) healers.” Following all these utterances, one would easily say that this vocation called divination was not all comers affair. It was rather for those specially chosen by the god of divination itself. Meanwhile Basden (1982:54) explains that; “The **dibia agwu**, medicine man like diviners is called on his profession by **agwu** the patron spirit of diviners and medicine men.” This assertion was true in the Igbo cosmology as the Igbo believed that it was **agwu** who called the **dibia** to their profession.

For the Yoruba, an ethnic group in Nigeria, the god of divination was called **Orumila** while divination was **afa**. To Abimbola (1977:1), "**Orumila** was put in charge of divination because of his great wisdom which he acquired as a result of his presence by the side of **Olodumare** when the later created the universe." **Olodumare** in Yoruba meant the Supreme Being. Therefore, one here saw **Orumila** as a messenger of Supreme-Being. Because of the evidence of divination having supernatural backing, Basden (1982:224) concerned himself with the much respect accorded any deity that had the power of divination. He therefore states that "...the deities in-charge of divination serve as the last arbiters." In any situation, divination was believed to be the last hope of man. Any verdict or solution as a result of divination was not in doubt in that it came from the spirit whose duty it was to give the final verdict.

In his contribution, Nwala (1985:125) states; "The calling to divination is a special one too. An individual may be elected to be one. His **agwu** may insist on his becoming one." Involvement of **agwu** in choosing a diviner made it a special vocation. It was not by personal volition. Even sometimes when one wanted to enter into it without recourse to possession, there was crash. The person was

bound to fail because he or she had no base. One's base in this aspect was the spirit of divination who possessed whoever he needed his or her service. In his view, Fried (1968:29) explains that "In contrast to the position of priest, who learns his religious knowledge through a formal training period, in many societies, there is a religious specialist whose powers come directly from the supernatural forces, spirits, or gods." The religious specialist here was the ***dibia afa*** (among the Igbo) or ***shaman*** (among the Zulu).

This led to the concept of divination as "...the manipulation of the supernatural to discover concealed information" (Miller and Miler, 1931:300). It was the practice of foretelling the future by means of preternatural powers. There were events that affected human beings believed to have a supernatural, mystical, or other than human cause. Benton (1964:506) confirmed this and says that 'Divination is the process of obtaining knowledge of secret or future things from contact with superhuman or divine sources.' Future things were far and obscure to human sight but not to divine beings. So in support of Benton, Philips (1971:248) affirmed that it was the "...practice of attempting to acquire hidden knowledge and insight into events ... through direct

or indirect contact of human intelligence with the supernatural.”

From the evidences in the literatures so far reviewed, it was hard to dispute the involvement of a supernatural being in the art of divination. It implied that divination relied on the wisdom of the spirit no matter the culture or religion under which it was practiced.

### **2.01.07 *Methods of Divination:***

Divination was practiced in all grades of culture. Information received during divination was believed to have come from superior, non human sources. There were methods of getting this information from the superhuman beings. According to Okodo (1991:29), “One of them is the case whereby the findings are relayed to the client through the possessed.” It was a situation whereby the superhuman being reveals the information through the diviner. Sometimes it came in form of vision. Sometimes it came as a result of series of actions by the diviner.

However, Benton (1964:506) explains that “Divinatory methods may be classified as internal, conditioned by change in the consciousness of the soothsayer and external.” There were situations when the diviner went into trance and began to reveal whatever information he received

from the supernatural. This situation was the internal method because it was within. But in external divination the process was by inference from external facts. These explained that there were basically two methods of divination. Supporting dualism in divinatory method, Hastings (1954:778) says: “Northern Asia use a drum in divining but in some other cases the possessing spirit speak by the mouth of the wizard, as among the Tehi-speaking people, whose priests are possessed, not by spirits but by gods.” The other was the passing of the information by the superhuman being which might or might not be understood by the client. In some instances the diviner underwent changes in his physical or psychological conditions so that he served the divinatory power as a medium or vehicle. In a situation like this, the diviner was under possession.

On the other hand, Bergher (1978:287) says “Many divinatory techniques are basically by mechanical devices that result in predictable statistical distributions of events.” An example of this was Yoruba **Ifa** divination based on 256 “heads or tails” contributions of eight sequentially ordered seeds, and “**Ikpukpara** based on the principle of the sixteen configuration of **Mkpuru afa** (afa seeds)” (Ugonna, 1984:30). To each combination was attached a set of verses which

were interpreted by the diviner. Ugonna (1984) actually confirmed dualism in divinatory method among the Igbo. According to him, “In Ozubulu, as in most towns in the central Igbo, two forms of divination (afa) is practiced.” The two forms were ***Ikpukpara*** and ***okwe***. ***Ikpukpara*** was a mechanical form based on the principle of the sixteen configurations of seeds. This was said to be scientific in that it was traceable. It was practiced the same way any time, any where; giving the same result as far as it was observed and interpreted by experts. ***Okwe*** on the other hand, was based on the principle of direct vision either by gazing into a mirror, water, empty pot or any thing else.

In most societies according to Fried (1968:292), all these forms of divinatory methods “... can be considered a religious activity in the sense that it deals with the supernatural, and involves an attempt to control the universe.” To control the universe, many things were involved. There were many forms of rites and manipulations. This informed Turnbull (1976:131) to state that “There are many forms of divination, mostly involving actions and manipulations designed either to impress the gullible or to actually invoke spiritual assistance.” Others were scientific in that they were believed to rely on inherent qualities of

objects that always fell in certain patterns under certain circumstances. The objects included the shells, **ugiri**, cola nuts, stones, bits of wood, et cetera. However, whichever method one adopted, Ekwealor (1988:64) says "... the ultimate goal is to communicate with the supernatural being to obtain solution to man's problems."

### **2.01.08 *Literary Studies on Afa Chants :***

Diviners usually started their work with invocation of many deities existing within that culture area. They beckoned on the deities to come and preside over the divining sessions. This prayer in form of poetry, to Preminger (1965:639) "... is a fabricated thing, not found in nature, and therefore contingent on number of factors." Preminger was saying that poetry was not natural rather it was something external.

Ogunyemi (1976:1) sees poetry as "... the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." It was a retrospect of feelings in form of sound. This was why Ogunyemi (1976:1) goes further to call it "... emotion put into measure." Words were the basic properties of poetry. These words were either oral or written. Those observations pointed to the fact that poetry was the result of the curative effort that was caused by

innate tendency to put pictures of reality or imagination in well chosen words. To Okodo (1991:54), “Poetry is not natural because it is the imitation of real while in turn is an imitation of nature, ideal.” So poetry was far away from nature. Finnegan (1970:167) classifies this type of poetry as “mantic”. But Hastings (1954:792) equates this classification with the Egyptian divination thus:

*From more than one point of view, it seems impossible to bring Egyptian divination under the classification of general use in the study of mantic, we cannot make either the ordinary definitions, or the purpose, or even - to a certain extent - the means employed fit in exactly.*

Igwe (1988:20) precisely summed up the contents of divination poetry in Akaeze as “... the problem of life and death, religion and traditional values and norms.” In divination chants, the people’s problems were x-rayed before the gods.

To Okodo (1991:42), “From the divination poetry, nobody is in doubt as to whether Ede Oballa people believe in God.” In divination poetry, evidences of people’s concept of God were revealed. It was a condition under which the diviner called on various names of their gods and objects of worship, to come in readiness of the work. Obasi (1985) also studied divination in Ekwereazu and observes that “...



divination chants contains information about the people's belief and mythology.”

One would rightly say here that collection of chants were re-affirmation of people's firm belief in God. This also served as a prayer of solicitation to the gods. To Obasi (1985:8), “Divination is not a profession which anybody is free to take to. It is a profession for men; hence it is only men that perform divination chants.” Any way, as this work progressed one should find out if it was really only for men.

### **2.01.09 Empirical Studies on Divination:**

Empirical work done on divination has not been much. However, effort was made to study the little number available. One of such studies was Anedo (1987) who said that the root of divination was based on the fact that nothing happened for nothing. He said that it was in effort to get the root of a problem that led one to diviner. According to him, “... the diviner had the power and ability to dig out the cause of a problem and offered solution to that.”

Anielo (1992) was another study on divination. According to him, “...divination serves some cultural purposes. It caters for the emotional, physical, spiritual and moral needs of the individual within her cultural setting.”

To Aniello (1992), “Divination whether true or false had been deep into the minds of ninety-nine percent of the African world with some degrees of telepathy and extrasensory perception of work.” He went further to say that the great popularity of the diviner showed that he had a leading function to perform in a society. This according to Aniello, he did as a mediator and guide in many a quarrel, trouble and sickness. He made one to understand that diviners were sacred people that they helped to solve people’s problems at least emotionally and psychologically.

Though the main theme in Okodo (1991) was **afa** poetry, he made little attempt on other aspects of **afa**. From his findings, he stated: paramount in the content were religion, other cultural beliefs, social, relationships and problems of life and death: finding out problems and offering solution to them.

Another writer with a message on **afa** was Ekwealor (1988). To him, the ordinary man saw the **dibia** as one living in two worlds- human world and the spirit world. He was seen as wise and intelligent man who had solution to almost all human problems. Hence, the public expectations of **dibia afa** were so high that the society demanded that his training should be a very elaborate one.

Obasi (1985) also added his contribution but on **afa** chants. He stated that divination chants from Ekwereazu contained information about the people's belief and methodology. To Ezikeojiaku (1996:385), "The two major types of the Igbo traditional ritual poetry, which is deeply rooted in the worldview of the Igbo and dated from antiquity, is concerned with divination." Abimbola (1977) studied divination among the Yoruba. He observed that **Ifa** was the mouth- piece of the divinities and the ancestors. Abimbola went further to say that it was through the "**Ifa** system that human beings communicated with the divinities and the ancestors."

There was need to mention Igwe (1988) who precisely summed up the contents of divination poetry in Akaeze as "... the problem of life and death, religion, traditional values and mores." These contents very much applied to the divination poetry from other parts of Igbo land.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.00 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The strategies and procedures employed in this study were presented and prescribed in this chapter as follows:

Research Design

Area of the Study

Population of the Study

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Instruments for Data Collection

Reliability of the Instruments

Validation of the Instruments

Method of Data Collection

Method of Data Analysis

#### **3.01 Design of the study:**

The researcher used survey design. The survey design was adopted because of its invaluable help in collation of large quantities of data emanating from the field.

#### **3.02 Area of the Study:**

The area of study was Divination in entire Igbo nation of Nigeria. The Igbo people occupied the five South-East States of Nigeria and some parts of delta, Rivers, Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

### **3.03 Population of the Study:**

The main sources of data for this research were diviners, their clients and some other female and male members of their communities.

### **3.04 Sample and Sampling Technique:**

Three out of the five main Igbo states and one sub-Igbo state of Nigeria were sampled. The randomly selected samples were Anambra, Ebonyi, Delta and Imo States. In each of the three main Igbo States, two local government areas were selected and three towns sampled from each of the local government areas. In the one sub - Igbo State, Delta, one local government area was selected and one town sampled from that local government area. The total number of towns sampled was nineteen. Twenty individuals (fifteen adult clients and five diviners) were used in each of the towns sampled bringing the total sample size to three hundred and eighty (380) individuals – ninety-five (95) diviners and two hundred and eighty five (285) adult clients.

The selection of five diviners from each town of study enabled the researcher to study a reasonable number of forms of divination available and interact with both male and female diviners. On the other hand, the selection of fifteen adult clients from each study town helped the

researcher to ascertain plausible information from men and women, old and young people of all walks of life regarding divination.

### **3.05 Instruments for data Collection:**

The instruments used in this study were of two types: The questionnaire and interview questions. The questions were both unstructured and structured. For the questionnaire (structured), part A of it sought the personal data of the respondents which included: name (optional), age brackets, occupation, sex, marital status, locality and religion.

Part 'B' of the questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section 'A' was rated on a 4- point modified Likert type opinion/attitude scale of 'Agree', 'Strongly Agree', 'Disagree and Strongly Disagree' abbreviated as A, SA, D, SD, (Nwogu, 1991). Section 'B' was rated on a 3 – point nominal scale ranging from "Very frequently" to "Not at all", while section 'C' was rated on a 2 – point scale of 'Yes' or 'No'. The questionnaire consisted of forty-two (42) items.

### **3.06 Reliability of the Instrument:**

Trial testing was conducted to ensure that the instrument was reliable. Test-retest method of reliability testing was used. The validated copies of the questionnaire

were administered to ten individuals and the completed questionnaires were collected and their responses recorded. After two weeks, the same procedure was repeated using the same respondents as in the first test. Their responses were again recorded.

### ***3.07 Validation of Instrument:***

The instrument (questionnaire) was validated through number of approaches. It was given to the researcher's three colleagues for scrutiny to check and return feedback on the clarity, comprehensiveness, appropriateness and arrangement of the items. Only items agreed upon by two of the three colleagues were retained. Others were either modified or dropped.

The rectified draft of the questionnaire was given to other two colleagues in library science for further modification. Corrections arising from the comments on the draft of the instruments were effected. The modified draft was presented to the thesis supervisor for approval.

### ***3.08 Method of Data Collection:***

The instruments used for the collection of data from the source were interview questions administered to the randomly selected diviners and individual clients who could not read and write. The sampled diviners and clients were

interviewed separately at different locations and periods convenient to them. The interviews were oral but the responses were recorded on tape and traversed later. This was augmented with personal notes by the researcher and his assistants. The transcribed and translated responses provided the key materials for analysis.

On the other hand, the questionnaires were administered to the randomly selected individuals and diviners who could read and write. The responses from the respondents were collected and collated to serve as additional data from the source. These responses from the respondents formed the additional materials for analysis.

### ***3.09 Administration of the Instruments:***

As earlier stated, the instruments of this research were of two types – interview questions (unstructured) and questionnaire (structured). The unstructured types of the questions were given to the selected diviners and individual clients for immediate answers. Their responses created room for follow-up questions and responses were collected immediately.

On the other hand, the structured questionnaire was given to the selected respondents for them to tick the



appropriate answers. After two weeks, the responses were collected for analysis.

### **3.10 Method of Data Analysis:**

Divination was grouped into two major forms—mechanical and invocatory. The possible reasons for divination, significance of divination and instrument for divination were identified. Also identified were the spirits in-charge of divination, method of divination and the extent to which chants elicited information from **Agwu**, the spirit of divination. These constituted the unit of analyses of collected data.

Other informations were the myths on the origin of divination, the extent to which **Agwu** spirit controlled divination, and the effect of divination on the life of the Igbo people. They were used in providing answers to the research questions and eventual proof or disproof of the hypothesis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULT**

In this chapter, the data collected were carefully presented and analyzed. Various types of divination were identified and collected from the responses of the sampled adult and younger individuals during oral interviews and from the collected questionnaires. There were two basic types of divinatory systems common among the Igbo. These were mechanical and invocatory or incantational systems under each of these two types of various other forms. The reason for this, according to Aniello (1992:20), is that:

*With the increase in the economic gain associated with divining exercise, many people have drifted into the profession using different styles and patterns to accomplish their lot. In Africa, thousands and one styles appear in divination process each claiming to excel the others.*

**a. The Mechanical System:**

The mechanical system was an explanatory device involving the use of special objects which served as the agencies through which particular effects were produced and a purpose accomplished. It involved the devising and utilization of such objects as cowry shells, tortoise shells, armlets, charms, owl skulls and skeleton of various animals and birds. Others were *nzu* (Igbo native chalk),

and **ogwu** (symbolizing the soul of a client). **Nzu** and **ogwu** were used under necessary conditions to make the mechanical objects active.

There was common agreement among diviners who employed this system to the effect that these objects represented certain forces. It was discovered that the diviners would not either singly or collectively reveal, whether these forces were magical, diabolical or psychic. Generally they held that these forces were residents in these objects symbolizing the spirits of either their dead ancestors or dead predecessors.

The tortoise shell for instance when drummed with the help of two sticks exuded certain powers capable of charging the environment to make it suitable to accommodate the spiritual agents so invited. The cowry shells when jingled from one hand to the other produced a finer and more subtle tone, which when mixed with a skillfully produced whistling by the diviner, conditioned the heart of the spirits and made them to be in friendly moods. This was why Zahan (1979:86) describes these instruments as "... mediators between the diviners and gods." A piece of cola or a piece of traditionally made chalk (nzu) which were scattered around part of which was eaten by the diviner,

was a kind of communion which ensured peaceful co-existence between these instruments and the diviners. This was because it was believed that the scattered cola or **nzu** were consumed by the spirits inhabiting these instruments.

As Anekwe (1992:19) says, “Divination could be practiced through different techniques depending on the lineage.” In support of this, Anedo (1987:49) says that “... divination instruments vary in many towns and among individuals. Some use cola nut, some use water where others use mirror, reading of palms, animal entrails and **ugiri** beads,” all these helped the **dibia afa** (diviner) in discharging his or her duties. Among the people of Ikem (a town in Omambala culture area of Igbo land), **ugiri** (bead) type of divination was more popular. In making it clear, Booth (1977:47) affirms that **ugiri** helps the diviners to commune with the ancestors and to relate the problems of their clients to them. It was this **ugiri** form of divination that Ozubulu people (a town in central Igbo) called **ikpukpara**. According to Ugonna (1984:30), “**Ikpukpara** lies on the principles of the sixteen configurations of **mkpuru afa** (afa seeds), namely; **ogbi, akwu, ogori, odi, ululu, ogali, obala, okai, ijite, osa, aka, atokpa, otule, ete, ose, and ovu.**”

**b. *The Invocatory or Incatational System:***

This system of divination involved series of passionate calls upon either the deity or dead ancestors or those dead colleagues or both, for aid, protection, inspiration and guidance, made by the diviner under controlled conditions on demand by client(s). This was achieved through chanting, singing or recitation of words supposed to carry magical or spiritual powers. In Afikpo (a Southern Igbo town), according to Abani (1988:16), “The majority of diviners employing this system are women.” Some performed outright rites with or without some dramatic ceremonies. These dramatizations were designed to transplant the diviner into the presence of the ancestors. Fundamental to the belief system among the Igbo was the understanding that through proper relations with their ancestors, life would be most meaningful and freedom inevitable hence their readiness to consult the oracles.

The extent of involvement of various peoples of Igbo culture area in divination and the effects of divination on their lives were presented below as directed by the research questions used in data collection for this study.

**4.01 Research Question 1:**

What really is divination?

Igbo traditional society was filled with confusion. There were crises everywhere and people saw their environment as insecure. As no one liked to be imprisoned in an unsecured environment, there arose the need for freedom. Such freedom was thought to be possible if the minds of the gods were ascertained. Since they could not go to the gods directly, the need for a medium arose. The medium was the diviner, seer, sorcerer, prophet, shaman or sibyl who had the powers to interact with the occupants of the spirit world. The medium was called such names as **dibia afa**, **igbo** and **onuigbe** in various parts of Igbo land. It was discovered that there was no gender discrimination as whoever possessed the power was approached for revelation of secrets. His or her profession was **afa** –divination.

Divination according to Philips (1971:248) is, “Practice of attempting to acquire hidden knowledge and insight into events past, present and future – through the direct or indirect contact of human intelligence with the supernatural.” It was the attempt to discern events that were distant in time and space and which could not be perceived by normal means. Contact with the supernatural was usually sought through a medium- a person supposedly endowed with supernormal receptivity by the Igbo people.

Brandon (1970:242) says, "Man's time-consciousness, from dawn of culture, has caused preoccupation with the future." Though the Igbo man planned for foreseen contingencies, he was aware that much of the future was menacingly unknown and insecure. He has naturally sought to penetrate this unknown by various means. These means were supernatural in nature. These means used were divided into two main types. The first was automatic interpretation while second was interrogation of divine intent. The first included – astrology, augury, and auspices. The principle involved was that the pattern of future events was adumbrated in various ways. For example, in celestial phenomena, the entrails of sacrificial victim, flight of birds, or forms taken by oil when dropped in water (mesopot practice) were interpreted. The second had to do with - critical observation and interpretation of falls of divinatory objects such as **ugiri** beads, cowry shells, chains of broken calabash, and pieces of cola nuts by the diviner. Here the diviner threw the objects down, observed the pattern it fell, and asked questions. After the diviner has asked questions, he or she threw the objects down again for observation and interpretation. If he or she was not satisfied with the answer received, there was need for a follow-up question after which

he or she would throw the objects down again. It was a kind of probing questions through which the diviner got to the final answer to the client's problem(s). So in this cases the omens given by such, required expert interpretation by a diviner.

Following these explanations, divination would be seen as any action embarked upon in order to unravel or bring to light what darkness covered. For instance, when one used charm (*ita*) as seen among the Omambala people of Igbo, to let loose the knowledge of unknown actor in a murder case, such action was divination. Very often when there was a case of robbery where no one could be held responsible, the suspects were taken to ***ita*** for proper screening. That action was divination because the covered was uncovered. This was why Hornby (1978:154) describes divination as "... discovery of what is hidden or obscure by supernatural or magical means."

According to a respondent, divination was not peculiar to Igbo traditional belief system alone, it was found at all places and at all times. One reason was that divination was an effective way of giving confidence to people in trouble or uncertainty. Another reason was that the individual in appealing to divination, wished to confirm his own



suspicion. This was why the Western Igbo people normally consulted **Onuigbe** (seer among the **Igbe** religious group of the Delta Igbo and the Urhobo) for any thing which was not clear to them for clarification. So as a matter of fact, when one went to the **Igbe** for problem solving, one has indulged oneself with divination. From this practice among the Urhobo of the Delta State of Nigeria, one could understand Benton probably. To him, (1964:506) "Divination is practiced in all grades of culture, the information received being commonly held to come directly or indirectly from superior, non human sources." Divination included all methods of fortune-telling such as card reading, crystal gazing, palmistry, et cetera. In astrology, the general direction of person's life was read from the position of the stars at the time of one's birth. An example of this was seen in Matt 2:2, which says "We saw his star when it came up in the east."

Among the Igbo, divination was therefore a means through which people investigated hidden events or happenings between people or families. People believed that certain things, such as severe sickness, disunity or strange occurrences in certain quarters would be unveiled through divination. Among the Igbo, it was believed that the outcome of divination was authentic hence they never disputed its

pronouncements. In this regard, Booth (1977:98) says, “Many of the day to day problems of village or city life are resolved by consulting the diviner. He will guide them through to a solution.”

The diviners by virtue of their function were regarded as medicine men or women. Through divination therefore, they contacted **agwu** – guardian spirit of the medicine men, to find out the causes of the problems before them. They also were led by the same spirit to the best remedies to apply. According to Mbiti (1969:178) “Divination is area which adds to the complexity of African concepts and experiences of the universe. It links together in its own way, the physical and the spiritual world.” This was because most times, the hidden knowledge of the unseen world evoked panic in the physical world.

Divination was therefore the endeavour to foretell the future, reveal the unknown and find their wishes. It was also the means of finding an outlet for feelings of joy or tension generated by a particular crisis or an important event. In the early days of the Igbo people, before the invasion of the West, there were no police men and there was no need for them. The gods were the policemen. And the quickest way of finding out the minds of these gods was

through divination. This was the reason behind observation made by Parrinder (1949: 137) when he says, “Divination is the means of which the diviners seek to interpret the mysteries of life, to convey the message of the gods, gives guidance in daily affairs, and settle disputes to uncover the past and look into the future.”

It was discovered that divination was always associated with a situation in which a client or an investigator, wanted a decision to be taken in solving a problem.

#### **4.02. Research Question 2:**

What are the reasons for divination?

Among the Igbo, it was discovered that nothing happened without a cause. An Igbo proverb which made this clear ran thus: ***Awo anaghi agba oso ehie n'efu*** – A toad does not run in day light without a cause. There were so many reasons why Igbo people resorted to divination. One of the reasons was to help them maintain favourable relationships with their ancestors in order to be sure of the ancestors' help in solving their numerous problems. This was because in most cases, diviners helped people in different dimensions to get rid of their problems. For example, if a particular god was offended, the diviners helped the affected person to solve the problem likely to

result from that. The problem of man was reduced through that way. To the Igbo people, diviners were indispensable and that was why they sought the diviners' help whenever the need arose. Sieber (1988: 74) understands it well as he says, "In the circle of life, the diviner is consulted in time of trouble in order to understand why misfortune occurred and how to prevent its re-occurrence." When issues became complex to a group of people, they always consulted diviners.

Some of those complex life issues included barrenness, death during child birth, miscarriage, disaster in business like loss of money, theft and illness. Other situations included wooing a girl for marriage and embarking on any project. Sometimes the diviners prescribed some propitiatory sacrifices either to ward off the evil or to appease the disembodied spirits which were believed to cause the misfortunes. It was discovered that sometimes some spirits such as wicked deities, charms and human souls separated from the bodies inhabiting them caused havoc throughout a community. To stop this, the answer was to consult a diviner whose work it was to prescribe propitiatory sacrifice to settle the spirits so that they would remain calm. This was why Anekwe (1992:24) admits that "...the problems of

man are reduced through divination.” Problems were made lighter or erased completely by divining rightly about them.

Among the Igbo, child bearing was given preference among other achievements of man. This emanated from the people’s belief in extended family hence a barren woman in Igbo society was adjudged “a liability.” In support of this, Ogbalu (1981:31) says, “When a girl is married, what is expected of her is to get pregnant and bear a child.” When this expectation was not met, the couple affected sought the help of a diviner who through his magical or mysterious power would identify the cause of such problem.

In same manner, any woman who encountered series of miscarriages always sought the help of diviners. This was so because it was believed that a particular spirit or evil person could be responsible for such misfortunes. Such spirits could be the disembodied spirits of evil men or the witches that went about in the universe. Often times, when diviners were consulted, the causes of ill-luck were uncovered and the right sacrifice offered. On this, Bascon (1959:36) says that “...one may consult diviners as to know which spirit one should approach for a particular purpose.” Without this, one might take a wrong approach to that problem.

In Igbo social life with particular reference to Ikem, a community in Omambala area of central Igbo, an *ita* operator (a type of diviner) was always visited if there were frequent theft in the clan, family, village or town. This was done to detect the culprit. Although divination provided answers to questions about event that were affecting an individual's life, the diviner was rarely asked an open question and he never gave direct answers. Such questions from clients like "who is harming me?" was never asked. Rather he would present the problem thus, "One of my following relations and friends, all of whom I have reason to think dislike me, steal from me is harming me, which one is it? At times the client who wanted to find out fact about his life problem would ask such questions like, "Am I alive?" If the question was more general, the diviner might answer elliptically, often in a trance or uttering strange words, and the client himself would interpret the reply to confirm his own beliefs.

Among the Igbo people, young men went in for divination when they wanted wooing a girl for marriage. In Nri, the ancestral home town of the Igbo race, according to Aniello (1992:25), "It is believed that before ever couples come in contact, the spirits of our fore fathers must be

consulted.” This was because they believed that the ancestor’s decisions should be final with regard to the marital problems. Where the diviner recommended such marriage, the couple to be would go on to fulfill all rights and live together. But if the couple could not make a happy home, the marriage proposed should be cancelled. Here, Mbiti (1982:104) does not mince words by saying, “When a major family decision is about to be made, or when there is a major illness, we consult the diviner.”

Among the Igbo people, people resorted to divination when any particular family, clan, village, or town was lagging behind others economically, socially or otherwise. Such community did that in order to find the cause of their problems.

Furthermore, the Igbo people went for divination when they wanted to embark on projects like building of houses, buying a car and traveling to far place like overseas. They consulted the diviner to find out the prospects of such projects.

Nwala (1985:124) says, “People want to know why a relation is sick, why another has died, why a strange thing happened.” When a person fell ill according to Gibbs (1965:471),

*The Suku will not immediately resort to divination. It is accepted that illness may be 'natural and the patient will at first be recovered, nothing more was thought of it, and whatever latent suspicions of witchcraft that might have been conceived were abandoned.*

But if the patient grew worse, suspicions that other causes were at play according to a respondent would be investigated. Public warning would be given to unnamed witches to desist from its evil acts and people would begin to speculate about the possible taboos that might have been broken. The goodwill of living elders was secured for the patient by having them express it publicly. Should all these efforts failed, divination became the next option. Here, among the Igbo, a professional diviner was selected and diagnosis made. All efforts would be made to do all that the diviner said in order to solve the problem. Should all these attempts failed, another diviner would be tried, and sometimes a third. If in the end the patient died, it was said that the cause was beyond the ken of any one, and it was referred to the unknowable Supreme Being as the ultimate source of all things.

On the other hand, once the cause of the problem was ascertained, the problems would be handled and controlled as the spirit responsible for the problem was appeased.



Regarding these uncontrollable natures of forces, Kalu (1978:42) asserts:

*In our traditional setting, men were faced with uncontrollable forces of nature; their reason was to imbue these with spirits and to seek the aid of good gods, patron ancestors, magic, and divination and elaborate propitiatory rituals as counters to the evil forces.*

To get rid of these forces, one first of all engaged the services of a diviner in order to know the exact spirit that was the source of the problems. This was because according to Anizoba (2001:5), “The ancestors communicate their wishes, vision, dreams and divination to the living.”

The course of a person’s life would be altered not only by freely perpetrated acts and the uncontrolled assaults of malignant entities but also through prognostication. Igbo people were always on their guard to prevent such in their lives. That was why they consulted diviners even when they had no problem. That was why Bascon (1959: 283) says, “The person who desires knowledge of events to come so that he may avoid harm and increase the benefit in store for him, consults a diviner (abia idizn).” This diviner gained insights from **Abasi** through the intercession of the spirits of divination. However, success at foretelling the future

depended upon previous acts of the client as well as upon ritualistic perfection exercised by the diviner.

In his contribution, Ifemesia (1979: 73) says, "Sometimes heads were chosen by divination." Of course this step was normally taken in most communities among the Igbo whenever succession for a vacant seat existed. According to a respondent, the occupant of the vacant office of a chief priest of a deity was normally determined through divination otherwise the wrath of the god would befall both the chosen person and the community for choosing an undesired candidate. Thus diviners were consulted to avoid choosing a wrong person and therefore maintain peace in the society. Another reason for divination was to confirm people's suspicions that a particular candidate has been chosen by a deity. It was the belief of the Igbo, once a sacred animal belonging to a deity was seen in the compound of a man, that deity has chosen the person as a successor to the vacant post of the priest of the deity. That was why Encyclopedia Americana (1976:197) says, "The individual in appealing to divination wishes to confirm his own suspicions." By this action, any obscurity in one's view about any thing was cleared and progress ensured.

However, in any circumstance, divination served as the last resort in solving problems.

#### **4.0.3      *Research Question 3:***

When and how did divination start?

Divination according to O' Boyle (1966:913) is "...the art or practice of foreseeing or foretelling future events or of discovering hidden or secret knowledge." This art had no one account of origin. There were several accounts of how divination started in Igbo land. Its origin and accounts of its origin were as old as man. Here, two investigated accounts of origin of divination among the Igbo were discussed. These were the origin of divination in Afikpo, Ebonyi State of Nigeria and the origin of divination in Ikem, Anambra State of Nigeria. Both were communities in Igbo land.

##### **4.03.1a.    *Origin of Divination in Afikpo:***

According to a respondent, this was more popular than the other. It traced the origin of divination in Afikpo to one man called Ukpaka Egwu, a fisherman by profession and a member of the Amma Matrilineal descent group. Like one Igbo saying, "A traveler is more knowledgeable than a grey hair man", he received the vocation for divination during one of his regular fishing trips. A strange object imbued with the

power of speech was trapped in his net. Death awaited him whether he took this strange object home or tarried.

Faced with this labyrinthine dilemma, a rescue team was dispatched from home and headed by his son, Egwu Ukpaka. The object was brought home by the son and the father, Ukpaka Egwu, paid for this bravery with his life. Just as Nwoga (1984:35) says, “Thoughts and wishes can also be transformed into **alusi** or **agbara**”, it was the fear of death which the strange object infused in Ukpaka Egwu that threw the fisherman into confusion on what to do with the strange object. Later the son died and he was held responsible for his strange death. But verdict belonged to “Chukwu Ukpabi” who was consulted through divination. Ukpaka Egwu was not responsible for his son’s sudden death. **Chukwu Ukpabi** directed that some rituals should be performed, a shrine constructed and Ukpaka Egwu installed as the diviner since his catch was divination spirit objectified.

#### **4.03.01b. The Oha-Odu Version:**

In Afikpo, the word **oha** was literally interpreted to mean “a people” or “a medieval horde”. **Odu** means tail. In its complete formation, **oha-odu** was a medieval horde, nomadic in character and spiritually inclined temperamentally. So many popular myths had been

associated with these strange people in the whole of Afikpo belief system. According to a respondent, one of these myths was that they brought with them the spirit of divination into Afikpo.

When these two versions of the origin of divination were subjected to more analytical scrutiny, one uncovered some disturbing inconsistencies and contradictions not worthy of being glossed over. The first puzzle was this: If origin was traced to Ukpaka Egwu, why was **Chukwu Ukpabi** consulted? This opposing thought sprang up bearing in mind that “Divination is the art of finding out the future and hidden things” (Sarpong, 2002: 101). It was argued that consultation of **Chukwu Ukpabi** through divination to unravel the mysteries behind the death of Ukpaka Egwu’s son meant that there had been divination in existence before the Ukpaka Egwu’s fishing incidence. Therefore portraying Ukpaka Egwu as the first diviner ever lived was not in order. There should not have been anything like consultation of any sort with a view of finding any thing hidden, before origin of divination itself.

However, divergent explanations had been given by different interviewees. Some held that the story was in order. According to these interviewees, **Chukwu Ukpabi** was the

Supreme Being, the Omnipotent and Omniscient. Divination, being art of foretelling future events through supernatural means like augury, prophecy and instinctive prevision, constituted media of communication with the absolute Being (God).

Following this version, people then claimed that what they did when they consulted oracles or diviners was to call on the spirits of their ancestors to come to their aid. The credibility and reliability of these beliefs did not raise any traces of controversy among the people of Afikpo. But they were questionable when subjected to scientific methodological procedures which prescribed that a statement was to be taken as meaningful only if it was capable of empirical verification.

The second principle or puzzle was predicated on the question as to whether or not any of the versions was sufficiently credible to falsify each other.

#### **4.03.02. *Origin of Divination in Ikem:***

In Ikem, an Igbo community in Omambala area of Anambra State of Nigeria, the origin of divination was traced to one man named Igweagu Akwuo. He was from Idaligwe village of Ikem. According to a respondent, Igweagu was one of the earliest descendants of Ikem. He therefore did not see

the light of formal education but has the ability to counsel a confused person in order to gain stability in life. It was said that Igweagu Akwuo used to receive some messages from unknown being in the night. The unknown being said that she was a deity call **okuku** (Arobinagwu). She also said that Igweagu Akwuo would be her priest and should give her a chick. She told Igweagu Akwuo that he would experience different thing again in the night after he might have offered her a chick. When Igweagu Akwuo carried out the instruction given to him, he was shown in a dream, some leaves which once the liquid from that was dropped into the two eyes, one would be seeing many different secret things. Conjured with these leaves were **igbo** (a tiny clever type of fish) and **uburu** (a chick) used for spiritual sight. Igweagu dropped the liquid from the leaves into his eyes and started revealing those that were **ogbanje** (changeling) and those that engaged in witchcraft (amosu). After some time, people advised him to use something to protect himself against possible attack from those evil spirits being exposed. He therefore made for himself **oba** (broken calabash) which he dropped on ground and said his mind as if he was interpreting the fall of the calabash.

Later in a dream also, Igweagu was asked to consecrate his divining materials (*oba*) with some leaves (*mkpakaakwukwo*) shown to him. This would help him in revelation of secrets. According to a respondent, Igweagu brought the roots of ***ekwu*** and ***abo*** (kinds of trees), ***ofo*** (symbol of truth), ***oseoru*** (alligator pepper) and ***uburu*** (chick). He put all these in the ***oba*** (broken calabash) and tied them together. He then left them in ***ajoohia*** (evil forest) for one week (*otu izu*). That was four days. After four days of isolating the tied objects in the evil forest, Igweagu then brought it home and started using them in divining. In addition to this, Igweagu employed the efficacy of the leaves shown to him in a dream when he was about to divine for people.

The reason for leaving the objects for four days in the evil forest was for the object to learn and understand the language of the spirits which disturbed people. According to Anedo (1987: 28), “The language the spirits speak on ***eke*** day is different from the one on ***oye***, the one on ***oye*** differs from that on ***afo*** day and so is that spoken on ***afo*** day different from that of ***nkwo*** days.” Strong deities of many types have visited Igweagu while divining and he recognized them. Since then, any one that lost his or her possession



always went to Igweagu to be told where the lost possession was. Sometimes, if there was any impending danger before the client, Igweagu would tell the person. Because of this, more people started visiting him for solution to their problems.

There was one incidence of divination by Igweagu which earned him greatness in divination. The appropriation of all he divined about one man called Enemmuo earned him the praise ***Ogbawaokwe n'Idaligwe***. Enemmuo was a great ***dibia***, herbalist from Nando to move outside the shores of Nando to cure people of their ailments.

According to a story, there was one trip which Enemmuo made but he could not come back for thirty years. His people searched far and wide for him and could not get any information about him. They thought he had died. When Enemmuo's relatives went to Igweagu, he told them that their brother was alive. They had doubts because it had been long since he left the town. Their visit to Igweagu was in line with the view expressed by Zahan (1979:89) who says, "Up till now, as we have seen in the diviner's daily life, people visit him whose duty it is to say what would happen or what has happened in future."

In spite of Igweagu's pronouncement on Enemmuo's condition, Enemmuo's relations went ahead and organized his piacular rites. After some times, Enemmuo came back and panic ensued within the entire Nando town. People thought they had seen a ghost and fled Nando. They later came back from where they fled to as a result of fear and Enemmuo explained everything to them. The news of Igweagu went far and near. Some people started visiting him for solution to their problems while some others sent their wards to be trained in the art of divination because of his exceptional intelligence and wisdom. That was why Onwuejeogwu (1981:11) says "The diviners are exceptionally intelligent and lucky and are custodians of wisdom in Nri." This was an attribute to Igweagu among the people of Nando and environs.

The earliest recorded evidence of divination was seen in the Greek tradition. This was during the time of Homer, when the services of a seer was sought to find out the fate of going to war. Hastings (1954:796) records the history of this consultation by saying:

*Agamemnon, for example, does not appear to have consulted any one but the seer of Kalchas with regard to the Trojan War. The famous portent of the serpent and the rest of swallow are interpreted by him, and Odysseus bids the discouraged army –*

*wait a while and see whether Kalchas prophesied alright or not.*

Divination passed through the Roman culture to the modern age. That was why Shakespeare reported that a soothsayer warned Caesar to beware of the 15<sup>th</sup> March. Caesar not only ignored him but also called him a dreamer. The Igbo people believed that dream was a form of divination. They believed that dream was part of the ways through which their ancestors revealed the concealed events of their lives. They did not therefore ignore the messages of dream. And even when the messages were not clear to them, they went to diviner(s) for proper interpretation. To this end, Okodo (1991:27) says, “Perhaps it could be the handwork of God that brought divination into existence.” He narrated one Yoruba myth of creation. The myth had it that **orumila** was the god of divination because it was beside the Supreme Deity, **Olodumare**, during creation and as such it became wise. It became in-charge of divination because it had the wisdom to supply information or messages that were sought.

#### **4.04 Research Question 4:**

Which spirit is in-charge of divination?

Igbo adage says, “For a little bird to dance in the middle of the road, it has a drummer in the bush.” This was exactly what happened in divination. Diviners did not act

alone. There was a super human being that controlled them. According to Okodo (1991: 24), “Every definition of divination points to the fact that divination has a supernatural backing.” The superhuman was the god of divination. Among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, this god of divination was known as **orumila** (Abimbola, 1975:1). In support of this, Bascon (1969) explained that among the Yoruba, divination was **ifa** and what was in-charge of it was **orumila**. Consequently, Abimbola (1975:1) admits Bascon’s statement and says:

*According to Yoruba belief, ifa (otherwise known as Orumila)... was put in-charge of divination because of his great wisdom which he acquired as a result of his presence by the side of Olodumare when the later created the universe.*

For the Igbo people, god of divination was called **agwu**. They believed that **agwu** has control over people’s behaviours especially the diviners. This was why Ogbalu (1981:54) says, “**Agwu** is the god of medicine and divination who has responsibility for the behaviours of men who act as if they have no common sense.”

The responsibility of making one a diviner depended on the type of spirit that lived in one’s **agwu**. This was because **agwu** generally, was believed to be the minister of God in-

charge of the wellbeing of a family. **Agwu**, a minister of God, practiced devolution of power in his ministry. He therefore assigned certain responsibility to certain heads of departments within the ministry assigned to him by the Supreme Being. These heads of departments were **aro, udo, ogwugwu, ovuve, ngene** and other lesser deities. One of these assignments was **ime dibia** (herbalism) and **igba afa** (divination) which **agwu** assigned to **aro** sometimes called **arobinagwu**. **Arobinagwu** according to Anedo (1987:33), "...is a deity in-charge of herbalism and divination in Nando". Among the Omambala people of central Igbo, there were many other deities but the greatest of them was **aro**.

It was discovered that whenever **aro**: the head of department in-charge of herbalism went and lived in **agwu**, it became **arobinagwu**. This meant that **aro** was living in **agwu** and supervising diviners and herbalists. To understand when and how **aro**: found its way into **agwu** a respondent explained that it was a gradual process. Thus, once one had invited or installed **agwu** in one's life or homestead, four things awaited one. First if **akpu** tree germinated at the site of where **ilu agwu** ritual was performed, it meant that **aro** had come to stay in that **agwu**. If eventually **ogilisi** (neoboulder) sprang up there, it

was **udo**. If what germinated there became **oji** (iroko) it signified **ogwugwu** deity where as **nkwu** (palm tree) meant **ovuve**. According to Anedo (1987:34), "... since **oji** signified **ogwugwu** and **nkwu** signifies **ovuve** when **akpu** germinated, it then meant that **aro** had come to live in **agwu**." It was normally a joyful incident for **akpu** to germinate at the site of one's **agwu**. This was because **aro** was believed to mean greatness among the Omambala people of central Igbo. This was because **aro** meant **oke** (male) and to the people of Omambala, only males among God's creatures were great. To them one of the qualities of greatness was ability to give confused ones qualitative counseling. This was why Onwuejeogwu (1981:11) asserts, "**Agwu** tells the diviner the secrets of the world."

It was discovered that what actually possessed herbalists and diviners was **aro** (the great deity) living in **agwu**. Therefore whenever **aro** living in **agwu** worked, it became the handwork of **agwu**. But one thing worthy of note was that whoever that was neither herbalist nor a diviner could own **agwu**. However, whenever the great deity, **aro** came into the **agwu**, it became **arobinagwu** which was in-charge of divination. This was why sometimes when Omambala people wanted to discuss one as a great herbalist

and or diviner; they would say that **arobinagwu** was in possession of one. This meant that the person had been called to be a herbalist and or diviner.

In support of this, Arinze (1970:64) says, “The clearest and indispensable sign of a vocation to be a **dibia** is possession by the spirit **agwu**, who is the special spirit of **ndi dibia**, the spirit of giddiness, rascality, discomposure, confusion and forgetfulness (mmuo kpara uche).” Arinze went further to say that one possessed by **agwu** could hold a key and kept on looking for it inside the house. Speaking while asleep was a sign of **agwu** possession. Presence of **agwu** was a sort of distraction; hence **agwu** was also called spirit of confusion.

Ogbalu (1972:59) lends his credence to Arinze’s declaration and says, “**Agwu** as a god of divination chooses who becomes a diviner.” He went further to say that the call of **agwu** was by possession especially where some were called to be diviners by undergoing training for it. So divining work was by possession.

However, among the Igbo, every community, clan, kindred, family had several names for their various deities. But according to a respondent, attribution of powers to any deity as being in-charge of divination, depended on such

deity's ability to exhibit such powers during divination or revealing itself in a cure of ailment. Whichever name a deity answered, depended on the worshippers and what the deity did for them.



*Agwu (god of divination)*

#### **4.04.1 Agwu Shrine:**

When Arinze (1970) was talking about ***arobinagwu***, he said that in a family, sacrifices to the ancestors were done in the head of family's house. Among the Igbo, the head of family's house was called ***obi*** (house of authority). ***Obi*** was a house where ancestral cult objects, ***okpesi***, ***ikenga***, ***ofo***, were also kept. But the shrines of some deities like ***ifejioku*** and ***arobinagwu*** were found in the nearby bush of the family's compound. It was discovered that the shrine of



**agwu** was never situated in the town rather in the bush. The reason for this according to a respondent was for it to protect the family from mischief of bad spirits and enemies. It also helped to maintain its holiness and to punish the bad elements among the people. This was because people especially women could not get there easily and defy it. Another reason for this situation according to a respondent was to help it be conversant with the languages of both bad and good spirits.

So like all other divinities, **agwu** had its own shrine. Any ritual for it therefore was done in its shrine. An example was the **ilu agwu** ritual. Every kindred or village among various Igbo communities had a place mapped out for the deities of the area called **ohia alusi** (deity forest). Every family had its own portion in such **ohia alusi**. Some shrines of **agwu** were also located within the family compound but should be beside a bush.

It was observed that trees like **abosi, ogbu, oha** and **ogilisi** were used for **agwu** shrine. In support of this, Ogbalu (1982:56) says,

*Some plants are used in offering worships to the idols e.g.; ogirisi, ogbu. Ogirisi is particularly very important, all okpesi are made from it, many idols including Ikenga are carved from it*

*and pieces of it are placed in front of idols before sacrifices are offered to them.*

Those plants used for the shrines differed according to towns. Some used two or more, others used as many as they liked. The shrines were regarded sacred and were out of bound to women. Mbiti (1975:22) contends that "...they regard such places as holy and sacred places where people meet with God." This was significant in the calmness of the area. Some times, due to the bushy nature of some of the shrines, one felt frightened if one was left alone in the shrines. In-fact, from the researcher's observation, if only the stranger could see some of the shrine forests, the stranger would be marveled.

#### **4.04.2 The Structure of Agwu Shrine:**

There were two stages of **agwu** shrine. The stages were the primary or early stage and the secondary or later stage. The primary or early stage of the structure of the shrine differed from that of secondary or later stage. In the first instance, the shrine was constructed with only sacred plants. Such sacred plants were **ogilisi**, **abosi**, **ogbu** and **oha**. The plants were cut into eight pieces. These pieces of plant cut were usually tied round with white clothes. But one significant event in the structure was the later germination of **akpu** tree or **oji** (iroko) tree within the

precinct of the shrine which signified greatness to the owner.

Later, for the fact that those plants were lively, they grew into big trees which covered those shrines and made the structure bushy. This was why sometimes, "... when there is ceremony or ritual to be performed there, people would be asked to tidy up the shrine" (Anedo, 2006:23). The structure of the **agwu** shrine showed that it was man made. Most shrines of other gods and deities of the Igbo people were found nearby forest or even in forest. Some were beside rivers and streams, some on mountains, valleys and other places. Mbiti (1975:19) acknowledges this thus:

*Some of these religious places are man made and may be large enough to look like a big house (which is called a temple). Others are simple natural from people's homes and fields. Even some carved objects like dogs and ofo stick are also kept there.*

#### **4.04.3 Ilu Agwu Ritual:**

**Agwu** was seen by the Igbo people as the god of divination. It was therefore needed in Igbo man's life for man's optimal performance in life. When one was possessed by **agwu**, there was need for one to accept **agwu's** hands of fellowship to avoid disaster in one's life activities. It was this

acceptance of **agwu** into the possessed one's life that was called **ilu agwu** ritual. Arinze (1970:64) explains thus:

*The person so possessed (onye agwu walu) at once consults a fortuneteller who explains to him that Agwu takes no refusal! The possessed person has simply to choose between accepting or running mad or at least being a little insane. He has to accept and perform the preliminary sacrifice (Ilu agwu) before beginning his training and initiation.*

This ritual was performed for one who was being influenced by **agwu** so that he would be free from the embarrassment of **agwu**. When any abnormal behaviour was noticed in a person, his kinsmen took him to a diviner who divined the will of the gods and made it known to the people. The person who came to the diviner would then know what to do. Ogbalu (1982:72) shares this view by saying that "... some worship idols in the time of sickness. They go to diviners and the diviners assign them sacrifices."

It was the **Agwu** personnel (Ezeagwu or Onyeisi Agwu) who were responsible for **ilu agwu** ritual. It was his duty to collect all that was marked for the ritual performance. The following were used for the ritual: eight pieces of yam, a chick, eight pieces of coins, round dry fish (mgbakolu azu), salt, bottle of palm oil, small earthen pot and or plate and a cock (egbene).

According to a respondent, when these were complete and placed in **ukpa** in front of the **ogilisi** trees already placed on ground, some incantations were made by the **agwu** personnel (being the officiating minister then) while preparing some concoction. This eventually was put inside the small earthen plate and placed at where one should call “the seat of the **agwu**”. This was believed to be the spirit of the invoked deity from the maternal home of the possessed.

Having done the above, the fowl (cock) and all that were brought for the ritual were then slaughtered and cooked or roasted. Normally the sacrifice food was placed on **ogilisi** leaves on ground. It was this that the children around had to share among themselves. The aged then shared the bigger part not placed on the **ogilisi** leaves.

Now, if one was to become a **dibia** (herbalist) or diviner, another ritual had to be performed for him. This was called **inu okuku** (consecration of calabash). In appreciation of this, Arinze (1970:155) declares, “... the vocation to be a **dibia** is possession by **agwu** spirit, who is the special spirit of **ndi dibia**, healers”. **Agwu** therefore was the patron spirit of divination and diviners. In this situation where the possession of one by **agwu** was for that person to become a **dibia** after **inu okuku** proper, one had to go in for training

though sometimes, certain things were revealed through dreams and at times when one was in trance. In support of Arinze, Metuh (1985:164) adds:

*Training is done by a more experienced “Dibia”, under whom a trainee must work as apprentice for several years until he can put forward claims to recognition of his own behalf. The initiation ceremonies include the setting up of shrine for one personal ‘Agwu’*

#### **4.04.4 “Aro” (The Great Agwu) Festival:**

In spite of the fact that both men and women could become **dibia** (herbalists or healers) among the Igbo, not every **dibia** could divine and heal the sick, the same time. Some actually combined both healing and divination. This one was a special call. When one had a special call like this, he stood above others hence the saying: **Aro na-eme onye ahu** (The great **agwu** spirit controls the person). Obasi (1985:8) observes that “Divination is not a profession which anybody is free to take to.” It was also said that **aro** (the great **agwu** spirit) led the diviner or herbalist who was progressive in his **mbia dibia** (healing and divining adventure). To this type of diviners, the society accorded them great respect. In concert with this, Basden (1982:224) concerned himself with the much respect *accorded* any deities that had the power of divination. He also stated that

the deities in-charge of divination served as the last arbiters thus: “These deities inspire great awe and they are consulted on various pretexts, and in case of serious disputes, they are the final courts of appeal, and no one dares question their verdict.”

In appreciation of the great works of **Agwu** to the diviners, they usually offered sacrifices to **agwu**. They did this either before embarking on **mbia dibia** (divining adventure) or after their return. When they did this, they did it in hurry. It was because **agwu** was always in hurry. He did not cool down in taking sacrifices offered to it especially the one that had taken long time in preparation. That was why sometimes, the object of sacrifice was roasted else it would be given to **agwu** alive. Some of the objects of sacrifice to **agwu** included: ram, cock, cola nut, yam, and white soup (ofe nsala). It should be noted that women did not take part in such sacrificial meal. It was strongly believed that **agwu** was so strong that herbalists and diviners used to cut its friendship before embarking on divining adventure (ije mbia dibia).

However, the most appropriate time when everyone inevitably sacrificed to one’s **agwu** was in the first month (ona nge) of the native Igbo year, this period fell within the

months of April and May. It was the time when **aro** (the great deity) physically appeared to worshippers in form of **ichakpa** (bush baby) in the night. Ajamma (2005:88) confirms this thus:

*At Abubeagu, the Aro deity was in full control of the night. Aro deity was considered to be god of good fortune, good luck and protection, who accompanied Abubeagu people on their famous journeys across nations, where they practiced traditional medicine.*

The deity was reputed to be sneaking up on people at night in the form of a child or a short man, for the greater part of **ona nge** (first month). For that reason, nobody dared go out late in the night for fear of meeting **aro**. An example of this situation was on (Exodus 20:18-19) thus: “When the people heard the thunder and the trumpet blast and saw the lightening and the smoking mountain, they trembled with fear and stood a long way off.”

Once in a while, there was a claim that someone saw it or that it slapped somebody. This used to go on for about three or four native weeks, that is 12 or 16 days. According to a respondent, **ona nge** was a dreamy month for the youths because with the fear of **aro** the great, no one would venture out for play in the moonlight.



After halving of the moon (izu ato or 12 days of a month), **aro** would one day visit the head of Abube community of Igbo nation (where this happened) in his **obi**, where he was sitting or taking a pinch of snuff by the fireside, during the drowsy part of the night. At that period of the moon, the community head was already on the alert. True to expectation according to an interviewee, one day, **aro** would sneak into the **obi** and moved straight towards the fireside (usoekwu). The community head would then react promptly by picking up burning firewood (onoko), and **aro** would instantly vanish into thin air.

The community head would then move out immediately to the street to throw up the burning firewood shouting; ... **aro bulu puo, aro bulu naa enu ora**. Soon after, his wife or wives would respond by beating their mortars with pestles, echoing ... **aro bulu puo**. The neighbours would afterwards follow suit, and very soon all the villagers would be up beating their mortars and shouting **aro bulu puo**. Then a member of every family would carry a burning firewood to the village square to throw it up, still echoing **aro bulu puo**.

Ajamma (2005:89) recalls that "...it was a memorable experience witnessing such galaxy of lights, beaming like

search lights in the dark serene night of the village, with echoes of **aro bulu puo** piercing the still of the night.” To the adults according to an interviewee, it was an occasion to relish because **aro** had collected and gone with all the evil things that were lurking around in the New Year. But the very little ones shrank in fear under the bosom of their mothers. The process described above was called **isu aro**. It derived its name from the beating of the mortars. **Aro bulu puo** was supplication that **aro** should remove all evil things from the community in the New Year. This marked the end of the **aro** festival.

#### **4.05 Research Question 5:**

##### **How is divination practiced?**

It was discovered that as a profession, divination was not what one could just wake up one day and enter into. For one to practice divination, one had to be trained so as to acquire all the skills in the profession. This was why Mbiti (1982:166) said that he would call the people specialists whose status was special, their wisdom and role in worship exposed them as people of importance, special people and holy ones. Mbiti further said that it was pertinent to point out that since these specialists had outstanding quality in their own group, they had language, symbol, wisdom, role,

learning and what he could call their personal prestige unknown to lay people.

In his contribution, Ekechi (1972: 16) said that the herbalists especially the priests and diviners were specialists, who have got handworks after they have gone through hard and costly training and initiation, and difficult apprenticeship that was so confusing. Based on these statements, Zahan (1979:82) adds his view and says, “A diviner supposes to undergo a long and difficult apprenticeship. It is even necessary to be initiated in a group well investigated and found worthy of changing one who is about to lead a holy life.” Among the Igbo, especially the people of Afikpo in Ebonyi State, Nando, Ikem, Unubi, Nri (all in Anambra state) and Ogwa in Imo state of Nigeria, even if one inherited divination as profession or not, there were vital areas of the profession one had to be trained in and there-after undergo initiation therein. Concession there was that such person would not take the same period of apprenticeship as one who was not an heir.

#### **4.05.01. *First Initiation:***

For hereditary divinatory system among the people, preparation to be a diviner ought to be immediately one was born. It was the belief that any one born in such a divination

society automatically belonged to the clan of diviners. This was explained that when a male was born, the parents took cock to **arobinagwu** (aro deity) to inform it that a potential diviner was born. This practice was compulsory especially in Ikem (a town in Omambala area of Igbo land). According to a respondent, if the parents of the child failed to do this, the **aro** deity would be visiting the child whenever he was lying alone in bed. And as a result, the child would cry on seeing a strange and frightening object. Sometimes when the baby continued crying in that manner, the parents would look for the services of diviner whose work, was to tell them what **arobinagwu** wanted.

However, sacrificing a cock to **arobinagwu** would not make the child a **dibia**, rather it was in fulfillment of the promise that the child belonged to the clan of diviners. If he was later found to be destined to be a diviner, he would be a great one in-deed after he was initiated. The initiation usually started with a ritual called **inu okuku**.

#### **4.05.02 Inu Okuku (Consecration of Calabash)**

**Inu Okuku** was a rite performed by potential diviner in preparation to be a diviner. After the initiation rite, the initiate would be possessed by the spirit of divination and he would start to behave abnormally. Among the diviners, the

abnormality of behaviour by the possessed one was caused by *agwu*. Okonkwo (1976:132) was of the view that “**Agwu** usually was responsible for misbehaviors in man and that was why he calls it god of mischief ...” In view of this, Onwuejeogwu (1981:10) says, “To become a diviner is a thing of confusion. The person, not withstanding his or her age, must be possessed by *agwu* before going for training.”

It was not always difficult for *agwu* to possess someone. This possession was usually manifested in many problems which normally confronted its victim. It was because of this that Skeultons (1974: 85) said that spirit possession of human being resembled sickness such as madness. He says, “This madness may be in different forms. It may be a complicated one and as such prolonged. The seriousness of the problem may range from insanity in one aspect to a mere headache, and body pains on the other end.” Among the Igbo people it was same. It was the belief of the Omambala people that when *aro* possessed one, one began to be weak: the weakness would at times develop into fever, stomach pain and others. Such illness would defy all medication and the victim would continue to deteriorate. This unusual phenomenon would force the family members to make inquiries from diviners. The inquiries corresponded

to Turner's (1968:301) statement that "At the point where we might call on the psychotherapist or the lawyer (depending on the manifestation), the Ndembu call in the diviner." The diviner would then interpret the minds of **arobinagwu** concerning the sick person. The Igbo people embarked on such inquires because according to Nwala (1985:118) "Every major and mysterious happening - misfortune, famine, disasters, death, sickness, drought, floods, etc, are attributed to the action of one deity or the other." When it was discovered that all the problems were signs of a call by the spirit of divination, people would start calling the victim a favourable one. This was why the Igbo say **Arobinagwu na-eme ya** (he is under the possession of **aro** deity). This implied that **arobinagwu** was calling the person to get prepared to serve him. One could resist this one but once the call was confirmed, one had no option other than to accept. This was in consonance with Nwala's (1985:125) view that, "An individual may refuse to be one. His **agwu** may insist on his becoming one."

An Igbo adage has it that "... when the cause of sickness is known, the solution is assured." Thus when one discovered that **arobinagwu** wanted one's service, one started preparing for "consecrating of calabash" (inu okuku).

Things used in performing the rite of ***inu okuku*** included ***uburu okuko*** (a chick), egbene (a cock), ***ji ano*** (four tubes of yam), ***eju*** (a piece of broken clay pot), ***ovu obi akwa ocha*** (a piece of white cloth) and ***oji*** (cola nut). The possessed in company of four diviners or herbalists would take all these to ***arobinagwu***.

On getting there, the white cloth would be tied round the ***arobinagwu*** and the cola nut would be broken and eaten after using it to inform the ***arobinagwu*** about the objective of their visit. At the end, the cock was killed and the blood was used to smear the body of the ***arobinagwu***. The remains of the cock and the yam would be roasted and eaten by the diviner and the chick would be tied to the ***arobinagwu*** while its severed head would be left to the ***aro*** deity, the head of the chick would be put inside a clay pot at the shrine. This done, some herbs called ***owube*** and ***owagu*** would be in the same clay pot. Finally, the pot would be put on fire. It would be on fire till all the things inside it turned into ashes. The ashes would then be collected and put inside the calabash which would be wrapped with white cloth, smeared with the cock's blood and beautified with the feathers. It was this rite that was called ***inu okuku*** (consecration of calabash). Having finished the consecration,

the **okuku** (calabash) would be sacred and so would be **ofo** (a symbol of truth and authority) which was also consecrated after being smeared with the cock's blood and beautified with feathers. Later, all these would be handed to the possessed one and he was expected to be sacrificing to it from time to time to ensure its efficacy. That was why Onwuejeogwu (1981:11) says, "Every diviner owns **agwu**, his family and children offer sacrifice to them to make them become aggressive."

A respondent said that the reason behind giving a new diviner the **okuku** was to remind the newly initiated that the efficacy and sacredness of the **okuku** which visited the founder and originator of divination- Igweagu Akwuo in a dream was still what it was. It was also the same thing with the **okuku**, which Ojenammuo brought from God. With the assurance of the efficacy of the **okuku**, the new diviner could carry his **okuku** along any time he was giving divination services to his clients. The **arobinagwu** which inhabited the **okuku** would also protect the diviner from any evil. The **ofo**, which he also carried along any time he was practicing his profession, was a symbol of authority and justice to convince his client that his revelations to them would not be in doubt.



The *inu okuku* –consecration of *okuku* – acted as a launching pad which shot the new or young diviner into his profession. Immediately after the consecration rites, the new diviner was possessed by the spirit that revealed herbs, roots and branches of trees with which he could solve all problems. The revelation often took place when he was in a dream or a trance. It was discovered that the rite of consecration of *okuku* was normally performed by both herbalists and diviners. The real training in the profession by both the diviner and the herbalist would commence after the performance of the rites of consecrating the *okuku*.

#### **4.05.03 Training of Diviners among the Igbo:**

There were two traditions about how diviners were trained. The first tradition was latent and the second was manifest.

##### **a. The Latent Training Method:**

There was a dialectical relationship between the origin of divinatory system and the method of training associated with it. The latent training method logically was derived from the hereditary divinatory system. In Afikpo according to a respondent, the hereditary system was more popular. The system involved choosing one to be a diviner or herbalist by the spirit of ancestors at conception. In latent training

method, therefore, the ingenuity to perform wonders, the powers of extra sensory perception and other virtues were hidden or latent in the person right from birth. This was why Fried (1968: 291) states, "In contrast to the position of priest, who learns his religious knowledge through informal training period, in many societies there are religious specialists whose powers come directly from the supernatural forces, spirits or gods." On this it was believed that all the latent powers were present in the person but yet unrealized. Although these qualities and possibilities which existed in an individual were still in an undeveloped state, it was thought of as capable of coming into full activity of some future times. As the potential young diviner grew up many unusual phenomena usually took control of his psychic and behaviour. According to popular diviner from Okpanam Nwokoacha Ugbode (a Delta Igbo town), the young man displayed signs of being very prosperous from his youth: he was adventurous and risk-taking; he could get lots of money but they would mysteriously disappear. He could build a hut and storm would pull it down. He would continue with a lot of ups and downs till an oracle were consecrated and he was declared a potential diviner. He refused to assume office on the ground that diviners were

dirty and striking. Eventually when he acquiesced, he would have series of tutorial trances both in the day and more in the nights. All these symptoms were what Turnbull (1976:131) calls "... symptoms usually associated with mental illness."

Nwokoacha Ugbode further narrated how he sometimes in a dream or a trance saw himself feeling sick but could not be cured by all medicine men and diviners invited including those he knew when they were alive as great herbalists. Ugbode said that even his forebears appeared to him. As his forebears appeared according to Nwokoacha Ugbode, each of them strove to present to him special herbs and tree barks. When he (Nwokoacha Ugbode) woke up, he rushed to the bush and got those that he could still recognize. He revealed that when he got all these barks and roots of trees that were shown to him and mixed them, gave to whoever that was sick, the sick person got healed. The diviner also confessed that he used to attend sessions on herbs gathering in the company of his father who was also a diviner when he lived. He inherited some of his father's paraphernalia and apparatus.

A female diviner from Ikem in Anambra State narrated her ordeal when she was called to divination. She lost four

male children and three female children soon after she was called. The revelation started with violent and destructive frenzies. She ran berserk and slept in bushes for eight days with neither food nor drinks. She met with spirit of various likenesses which asked her to pluck and chew a total of twenty three leaves that bestowed on her the powers of extra-sensory perception. Initially, she was given eight pebbles which she placed on her hands and these increased her visual perception.

The training continued when these same spirits asked her to sleep for some nights by the side of Ezu River. There, a water spirit emerged from the river and placed some special pebbles into her palms. This encounter marked the day when her herbal medicine business began. She reported that during trances and sleeps, the spirits waved green leaves and herbs across her face and she then started to use these herbs according to the pharmaceutical prescriptions given by these benevolent spirits. This female diviner's encounter was in line with the statement that "... symbols and spirits tend to become relevant for human action when scientific knowledge is inadequate" (Beattie, 1965:228). It was discovered that the young **dibia** took along with him, the **okuku** (calabash) consecrated for him to wherever he

went for the purposes of healing. This was on the belief that the spirit that led him would as well reveal herb, root and true barks which he would use in healing sick people. A herbalist could start practicing his profession soon after his encounter with the spirit.

However when his function involved divination as well, it was imperative that the person must undergo training. The training involved learning *afa* language or slang. A young diviner would take apprenticeship under a renowned diviner to learn the *afa* alphabets, words, sentences and interpretation. In support of this, Mbiti (1982:178) says, “Diviners accept apprenticeship under others and as well work for them for about three to seven years.” Mbiti further said that training of this form touched on names and efficacy of *afa* beads. The training also involved learning how to offer sacrifices and methods of divination.

**b. Manifest Training Method:**

The manifest method entailed outward training of apprentices by an older diviner. This involved teaching the apprentice the art of medicine which included taking the apprentice into the bushes and introducing known and identifiable herbs to him. Such herbs were usually brought home and all the ceremonies and rituals associated with it

were performed. Sometimes, some of the herbs required being administered fresh dried while some were burnt and administered in ashy forms.

The training would require certain level of dedication and fellowship without which the apprentice could not go on. Usually, there were certain behavioural traits expected of such apprentices. In Ogwa (Imo State), a respondent who was an apprentice listed some of the ways of life of an apprentice. He said that one would not sleep with a woman on some days, during certain ceremonies and must not eat meat of certain animals and foods. Also an apprentice and a diviner must not drink beer. It was because their deities did not take pleasure in taking beer which was alien to the Igbo culture. One must not rape any women. To rape any woman would make such a diviner unholy and therefore would not understand the spirits when they spoke. One must not steal also. The reason for these restrictions according to Anedo (2004:3) is "...to avoid the punishment and wrath of the gods" which called him to serve the people.

During the period of training, the apprentice must accompany his mentor to out-station clinical missions. He was expected to stay close by and help in mini-medicinal and divinatory procedures. He would also learn proverbs,

the rhetorics and poetic formations involved in incantations and invocation.

The training was very strenuous and that was why Onwuejeogwu (1981:11) said that some of the apprentices sometimes discontinue without learning anything. To prevent the apprentices from abandoning their trainings, their trainers normally prepared charms for them. This charm helped them stay and learn the needs of the profession as fast as possible. One of the charms prepared for an apprentice was called *atu*. This helped diviners in establishing good relation, cursing someone and in prophesying.

The duration of the apprenticeship was not fixed. Any body could disengage from one's master and stays on his own. But there was need to reach an acceptable level of perfection on the job so as to reach a high level of credibility and marketability.

#### **4.05.04 *Afa Instruments :***

There were a lot of artifacts which a diviner made use of in his profession. Some of these were peculiar to him. These instruments varied according to the society in which the diviner practiced. It also depended on the type or method of divination being used by the diviner. For instance,

mechanical system of divination employed different instruments from that used in invocatory or incantational system.

In invocatory system, sometimes the diviner used raffia fronds to demarcate the darker part of his shrine where he stayed from the outside room meant for his clients. The client was only expected to hear and not see the diviner during the process of divination. It was only on special arrangement and much persuasion that the diviner accepted to show up his face from his hideout. Commenting on this, Nwala (1985:124) says:

*From early morning till perhaps the end of the day, you find, in the chamber of the diviner, several people lined up and waiting in turns, (as if in a waiting room of a medical consultant) to consult the oracle.*

Some diviners used **oji** (cola nuts), some used water while some used mirror, animal entrails, reading of lines of human palms and interpretation of **ugiri** beads. All these helped the diviner in the effective dispensation of his duty by interpreting the minds of the spirits. Zahan (1979: 86) says that "...**afa** instruments are like media between the diviners and the Supreme Being." Certain processes were involved in using these instruments and each of them had its values. It was discovered that:-



**a. A Calabash:**

Small sized calabashes would be brought singly by the clients who came to find out which of their ancestors reincarnated into the newborn baby. A piece of this calabash would be in turn given to clients who had new born babies before they entered their homes.

The piece of the calabash would be placed in front of the door to the woman's house and water would be thrown up to the roof of the house and be allowed to drop on the calabash. The woman who had just given birth, would match on the calabash and smash it to pieces. This was believed to be capable of protecting the new baby and its mother from evil spirits and people with evil intentions towards them.

**b. Tortoise Shell:**

The diviner usually used a tortoise shell which was claimed as the major instrument of divination. It was said that spirit forces came to inhabit the shell immediately diviner started beating it during divination. Philips (1971: 249) subscribes to this view hence his statement, "In the shang dynasty, shoulder blades of oxen and the bottom shells of tortoise were inscribed and heated." A message was

derived from the pattern of cracks formed across the inscription after heat was applied.



***Okpokoro Mbe (Tortoise Shell):***

***C. Surcer Full of Cowry Shells:***

Cowry shells in a surcer were used by some diviners for divination. Some diviners put these in an earthen pot. In certain areas especially the Delta Igbo people and the people of Omambala in Anambra state, cowry shells were used to determine who actually was called to serve the spirit of divination.

During the process of confirming a person called by the spirit of divination, the possessed would be pushed into the place where the shells were dropped. The person then was expected to use his animal skin fan (azuzu) to draw about

forty pieces with one deep of the fan into the heap of cowries. The cowries would be counted. If they were exactly forty in number after they had been counted by a group of seers, the person was confirmed to be true “seer”.

During divination, the cowries were believed to help in the interpretation. The cowries performed the same function as the *ugiri* bead.

**d. *Ugiri Shells:***

In Igbo communities, *ugiri* is the most commonly used *afa* instrument. Booth (1977:47) showcased *ugiri* as what helped the diviner to commune with the ancestors and thereafter interpret the problems of his clients. The shells were made from *ogbono* seed. They were usually sown together with bones of a type of fish called *usolo* in four rings.

The shells that were sown in four separate ropes would be sixteen in number. These were called *ikpukpara* or *afa* seed. Ugonna (1984:30) rightly points out when he says, “The *ikpukpara* is based on the principles of the sixteen configuration of *mkpuru afa (afa seeds)*. They were *ogbi, akwu, ogeli, odii, ululu, agali, obala, okala, ijite, ora, aka, atulukpa, otule, ete, ose* and *ovu*.”

After the preparation of **afa** seeds, the next was a rite of consecration. This involved taking the **mkpuru afa** to the market or village square where the **dibia**, medicine man, would chew cola nut and spit on it, dig a hole at the center of the square and bury it. This was to enable it to understand the language of both the spirit and those people that passed through the square.

The **ikpukpara** would stay in the hole for days after which it would be collected and washed with egg (akwa okuko). There after, the diviner would start using it in his divination to interfere and reveal the future. This was why Zahan (1979:86) says:

*The interpretation of 'afa' seeds bring in 'afa' instruments and things that help him to fulfill his thought and the authority he has to reveal the future. He solves the problems of the sick through the help of all these.*

This interpretation involved reading and voicing out whatever each of the **ugiri** shells said. Each of them represented a word and at the same time meant something to the diviner. A respondent was of the opinion that **afa** was equivalent to reading a book. In doing this, diviners displayed intelligence. As intelligence was important in education so it was in the interpretation of **afa** because one diviner could be said to know **afa** more than another.

A diviner could interpret the names associated with these **ugiri** shells when they opened and when they closed. The **afa** alphabets were: **ogbi, ete, otule, obala, ora, ose, okala, ijite, odii, ogute, ogheli, atulukpa, ovu, aka, ululu and aghali**. It was these alphabets that the diviner interpreted as they fell and from there told his client what his or her problem was and how to solve it.



**Mkpuru afa**, (divination seeds).

**e. Feathers:**

Diviners used bunch of feathers which was believed to be aiding them during divination. The bunch of feathers exposed the minds and thoughts of spirits during divination.



***Ugbene Okuko*** (feather)

**f. *Water:***

Benton (1964:506) says that “...water divining or dowsing has been widely used”. Actually, even among the Igbo, water was a very useful instrument of divination. It was believed that a greater number of strong spirits lived in the waters. That was why some diviners drew water from the rivers and kept them either in a plate, clay pot or in the hole dug at the centre of their shrine. They did this on the belief that since that water was drawn from the rivers where the spirits lived; there was the possibility that spirits were drawn as well. These spirits usually stimulate the third eyes of the diviners and helped them to understand and interpret effectively the minds of the unseen.

**g. *Mirror:***

Some diviners who made use of mirror in their work claimed that they used the mirror to draw whatever spirit they wanted closer to themselves. This was why they

normally focused their eyes on the mirror as they went on interpreting the minds of the spirits to their clients.

**h. Ofo:**

**Ofo** was a symbol of truth and authority. It was therefore used during divining session to intensify the authority bestowed on the diviner. The diviner, realizing the implication of this, usually said nothing but the truth concerning the minds of the earth, ancestors, and spirits during divination. He would be in trouble if he deviated from the truth.



**Ofo** (symbol of authority)

**i. Gong:**

Gong was used to wake the spirits up and to call their attention to the questions being directed to them by the diviner. According to Hornby (2001:511), “Gong is a round piece of metal that hangs in a frame and makes a loud deep

sound when hit with a stick.” When this was hit in order to make sound, it elicited information from the spirits.



**Ogene** (gong)

**j. Ogwu:**

This was any type of small stick picked to represent a suspect during divination.

**k. Ufo or Okwa:**

**Ufo** or **Okwa** was a type of carved wooden plate used in storing the local chalk called **nzu**



**Okwa nzu na oji** (bowel of cola nut)



### **I. *Nzu*:**

***Nzu*** was a symbol of cleanliness, open mindedness and purity. It therefore signified the purity, cleanliness and open mindedness of the diviners. Diviners used it to draw four lines on the ground signifying four Igbo market days; ***Eke, Ori, Afo,*** and ***Nkwo***. The ***nzu*** therefore was used to invoke the spirits that owe the four days so that they would contribute to the solution of the problem being sought. The diviners also used it to paint their eye lids because it was believed to be capable of ensuring clearer spiritual vision during divination.



***Nzu*** (Igbo native chalk: symbol of purity)

### **m. *Ekpili*:**

***Ekpili*** was made of ***ekpili*** bean seeds. It introduced melodious music which the diviner usually employed during divination to invite the spirits. The spirits were

believed to be enjoying music. Thus as they were in relaxed mood, they would expose every hidden problem being sought.

**n. *Oji:***

***Oji*** (cola nut) is used during divination. It was used to appease the gods and seek for their favours in the solution of the clients' problems. Breaking of cola nut was the first rite normally performed before ascertaining from the clients the reason for their mission. It was a symbol of love and accommodation or hospitality. It was like what Idigo (2002:23) says, "After these inquiries, the father of the house calls the wife to present the visitor with a cola nut."

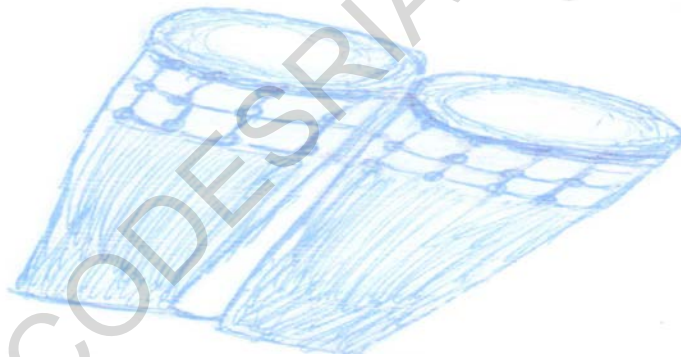


***Oji*** (cola nut)

**o. *Igba Egede:***

***Igba egede*** was a twin long drum used to wake the spirits of divination and ginger them into action. It was the

belief that sometimes the spirits seemed to be asleep and therefore needed to be stirred up into action. The two drums (two in one) produced male and female sounds. Female sound was light while the male was heavy. Sometimes the diviner recited some chants while beating the drums melodiously. This melodious music also affected the clients by psychologically lessening their trouble at that moment. In support of this, Hastings (1954:778) writes: “Northern Asian use drum in divining, but in some other cases the possessing spirit speak by the mouth of the wizard, as among the *Tehi*-speaking people, whose priests are possessed, not by spirits, but by gods.”



***Igba egede*** (Twin drum)

**p. Ring:**

Some diviners used ring as one of the ***afa*** instruments. In doing this, the ring would be suspended and the movement in the air interpreted. Benton (1964:506)

acknowledged this as he says that the instruments for divination are "... the divining rod, water, suspended ring, Bible and key."

**q. Bible:**

It was discovered that due to the impact of Christian religion on Igbo traditional belief system, some diviners in Igbo culture area used the Bible, status of Jesus Christ and that of the Blessed Virgin Mary as divination instruments. These diviners did so in order to convince their suspecting clients of Christian denomination that they, the diviners had added powers. To Bascon (1959:293) "Diviners have adopted new techniques as the result of European influences, they employ dice, playing cards and dominoes in a variety of ways to prognosticate." Younger diviners called upon the Christian God to give them added power, and when Christians consulted them, objects of Christian religion like statue of Jesus were utilized. Some diviners threw the cross on the ground and posed a question. Whenever the figure of Jesus faced up, the answer was "yes", but when it faced down, it was "no".

Another method involved opening the Bible at random and reading the advice contained on the page. Though most diviners could not read, they professed the ability to

ascertain the message from God by using the Bible which revealed the answer to the clients' problems.

**r. Key:**

Some diviners also used key as part of their instruments of divination. Here, the success and failure of such divining affair depended on how freely or hardly the key locked or unlocked. If the key locked freely, it implied success but if it locked or unlocked with difficulties it implies failure.

All these were divining instruments used by diviners of various culture areas of Igbo land. It should be understood here that it was due to the various types of divining instruments that led to many forms of divination being practiced. There should therefore be need to analyze the various forms of divination.

**4.05.05 Methods of Divination:**

Many methods of divination were identified in Igbo culture area. These methods were classified into internal and external methods or forms following the criteria defined by Benton (1964:506).

**a. Internal Method:**

The results of these methods depended on sensory or motor automatisms or mental impressions. Among sensory

automations, crystal gazing was analogous to dreams except that the vision was voluntarily initiated, through little, if at all, under the control of the scryer. In addition to sensory automations and dreams, other methods under this classification (i.e. internal method) were divining rod method; water divining or dowsing; sieve held suspended; suspended ring; Bible and key. In using the Bible and key method, “The book suspended by a key tied in with its wards between the leaves and supported on two persons’ fingers and the whole turns round when the name of the guilty” (Benton 1964:506) was mentioned. Trance speaking as an internal method was also on use in Igbo culture area. This method involved the formation of mental impression of problematic issues and voicing out what the diviner had visualized. In a high stage these utterances were termed or called oracles. Other methods were divining through palmistry and lying of cards. The diviners normally formed mental impression of the palm and or the card and as Benton (1964:506) explained, through the aid of mental impressions akin to clairvoyance, fortunes were told successfully by means of palmistry or by laying the cards.

**b. External Method:**

External divination involved making inference from external facts. Methods under this classification were many. For instance, Polynesia method according to Benton (1964:506) involved spinning coconut like a teetotum to discover a thief. Similarly, at Ikem (a community in Omambala) **Ita** was a method through which a culprit was detected through the use of water and cow tail. Here the suspects were asked to get water from any where and pour it into a plate. Thereafter, they came one after the other and knelt before an **ofo** shaped-like object and uttered some words. After this, the cow tail was dipped into the water which would be dropped into the suspect's two eyes. If the water turned to **chichangene** (little bean seed with black and red colours), the suspect would be adjudged the real culprit.

Other examples of methods of divination included haruspication, or the inspection of entrails of animals; scapulmancy or divination by the spealbone or shoulder blade; divination by foot prints in ashes; observation of the behaviour and cries of birds such as owl, and meeting with omnivorous animals. All these methods involved the ability of the diviner in interpreting the implications of each omen.

O'Boyle (1966) classified divination into natural divination and artificial divination or inductive divination. It was discovered that O'Boyle and Bascon did the same classification but differed in the use of terminologies. Despite the differences in terminologies used by Benton and O'Boyle, the following methods of divination were also discovered.

**i. *Ornithomancy:***

Ornithomancy was divination based on the flight, crying, and eating of various species of birds.

**ii. *Dedonomancy:***

This was divination by observation of human signs, actions and utterances. Examples included sneezing (which the Igbo believed to be a bad sign from enemies), twitching of hand, lips and eye lids.

**iii. *Extipicy:***

Extipicy was divination based on the examination of the entrails of animals.

**iv. *Pyromancy or Empyromancy:***

This involved observation of the actions of wood, bone, eggs, flour, or incense when flown on a sacrificial fire.



**v. *Hydromancy:***

Hydromancy was divination by the use of water. According to O'Boyle (1966:914), "The actions of springs and fountains are observed as offerings are thrown into them." If the offering did not sink, it was regarded as very bad sign. It was commonly practiced with a dish or a basin.

**vi. *Meteorological Divination:***

Meteorological divination involved the interpretation of the heavenly bodies and events. For instance, sometime, among the Igbo shooting stars were interpreted as a sign of a wealthy man's exit from the face of the earth.

**vii. *Astrology:***

This had to do with planets and the stars and their supposed influence on the lives of man. According to O'Boyle (1966:914), this "... had been developed in the near East and spread throughout the Greco-Roman world with further elaboration after the conquest of Alexander the Great." In Astrology, the general direction of one's life was interpreted from the direction or position of the stars at the time of one's birth.

**Viii. *Okwe:***

*Okwe* divination is based on the principle of direct vision. In this method, some diviners used to gaze into a

mirror, some dropped some liquid from herbs into their eyes, some used to gaze into an empty clay pot and then tell their clients what had happened or would happen to them. Some of them like the Igbe group among the Delta Igbo and Omambala people of Anambra state, at the climax of their worship, went into trance and voiced out whatever they saw concerning any of the worshippers. This form was analogous to Benton's internal methods and O'Boyle's natural method.



***Dibia afa mmiri, oji, ugegbe na oku*** (Diviner combining water, cola, mirror and empty clay pot).



***Dibia afa uogbe*** (diviner using mirror).

**ix. Ugiri:**

Some Igbo called this ***Ikpukpara: Ikpukpara*** according to Ugonna (1984:30) “... based on the principles of the sixteen configuration of ***mkpuru afa*** (afa seeds),” this method also was analogous to Benton’s External method and O’Boyle’s Artificial or Inductive method. It was scientific in the sense that it was physically observed and could be traced and re-examined by another diviner using the same device.

**4.05.06. Onu afa (afa language):**

Among the Igbo, it was discovered that diviners could read out the message of ***ugiri*** with the language called ***onu***

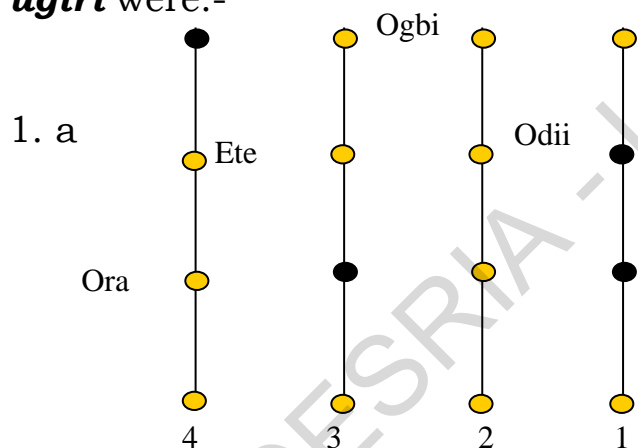
**afa** – **afa** dialect or **afa** language. The diviners spoke **onu afa** while divining. In his opinion Ogbalu (1972:58) says, “**Afa** language is the utterances made by the diviner any time he drops **ugiri** on the ground, picks them and drops them again.”

During divination, the diviner dropped these chained **ugiri** on the ground and arranged them in straight lines. He drew them back and threw them up. When those **ugiri** fell, each of them fell according to the directive of the spirit. Some could face or back the ground. They could fall right and left ways and or on top of one another. As this happened, the diviner knocked on each of them with the little **ofu** called **ogu**. He asked them questions concerning their falls. This time they would tell the diviner in their language which the diviner then translated to his clients in a simple language.

This was why Benjamin (1976:104) says, “... diviners first of all ask certain questions and make efforts to know the problem.” Concerning the language and its interpretation to the client, Pelton (1980:286) says, “... diviner is like a medical doctor who has special language of a specialist but it does not disturb him from having discussion with sickness for better understanding.”

Each of these **ugiri** had names like **ogbi, ora, ijite, atulukpa, ovu, obala, ululu, akwu, ete, ogheli, aghali, ogute, otule, okala, aka, odii** and others. When they were spread on ground, any one that backed ground was called **ogbi**. In reading out the pieces of **ugiri** like A, B, C, D, E, to construct sentences, it could start from the right to the left side or from left to right hand side.

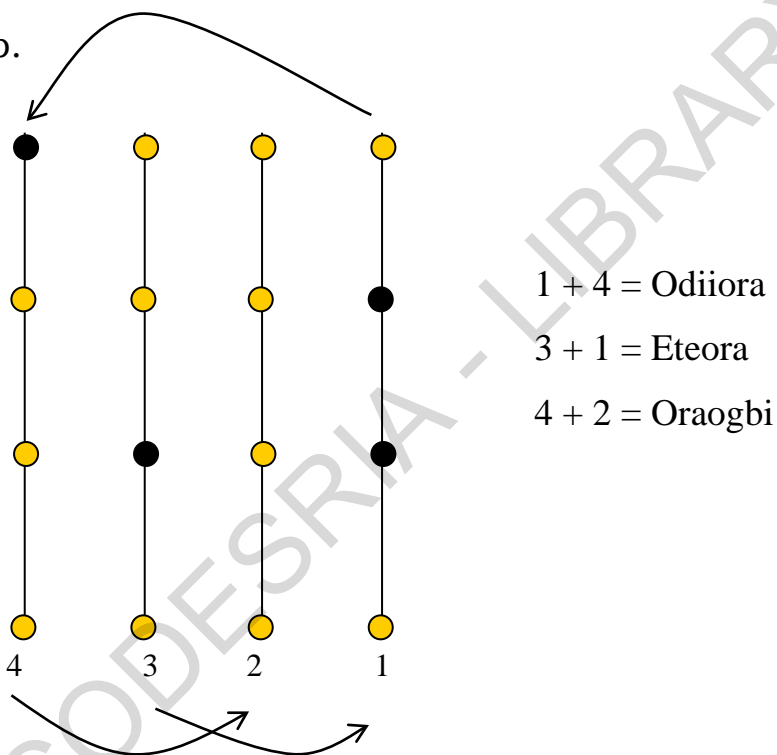
The highlights of the findings on the language of **ugiri** were:-



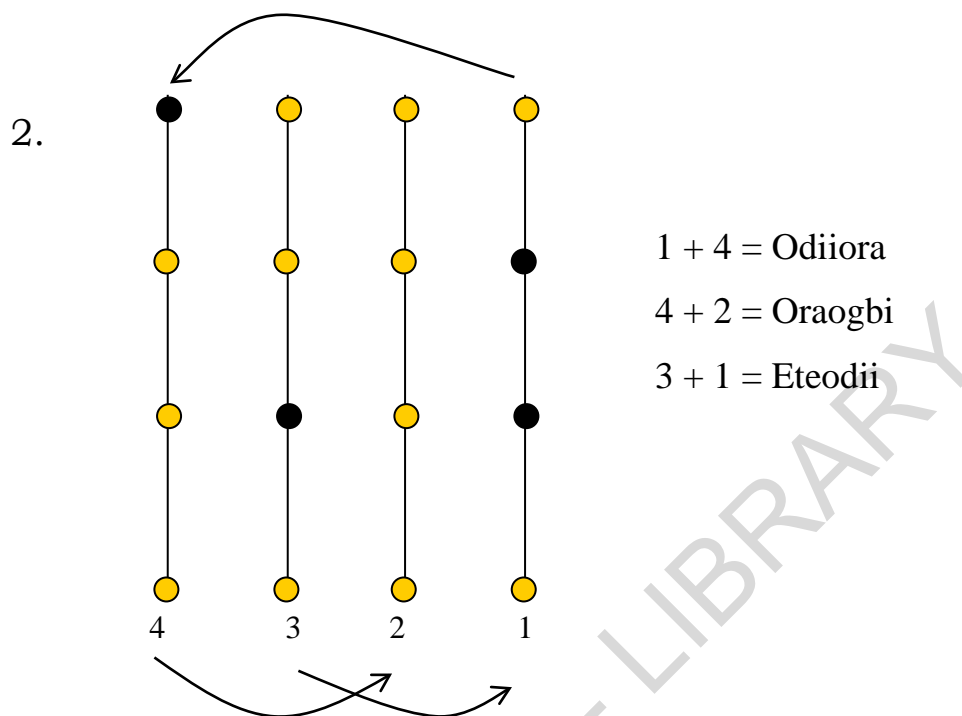
<b>Afa</b>	<b>Igbo</b>	<b>English</b>
Ora	Ihe na-eke ka anu. o buru mmadu, o buru Nwora	Something that shines like sun if a human being, it becomes Nwora
Ete	Ihe mberede	Sudden thing
Ogbi	Iga ogologo ogologo	Going straight
Odi	Ndeli (etiti anasi)	Midnight

If one wanted to interpret one fall of four chains of **ugiri**, (that is one fall of a set), one had to merge the 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> lines and merge the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> lines which would be used to read what **afa** said. In doing this, the arrangement would be:-

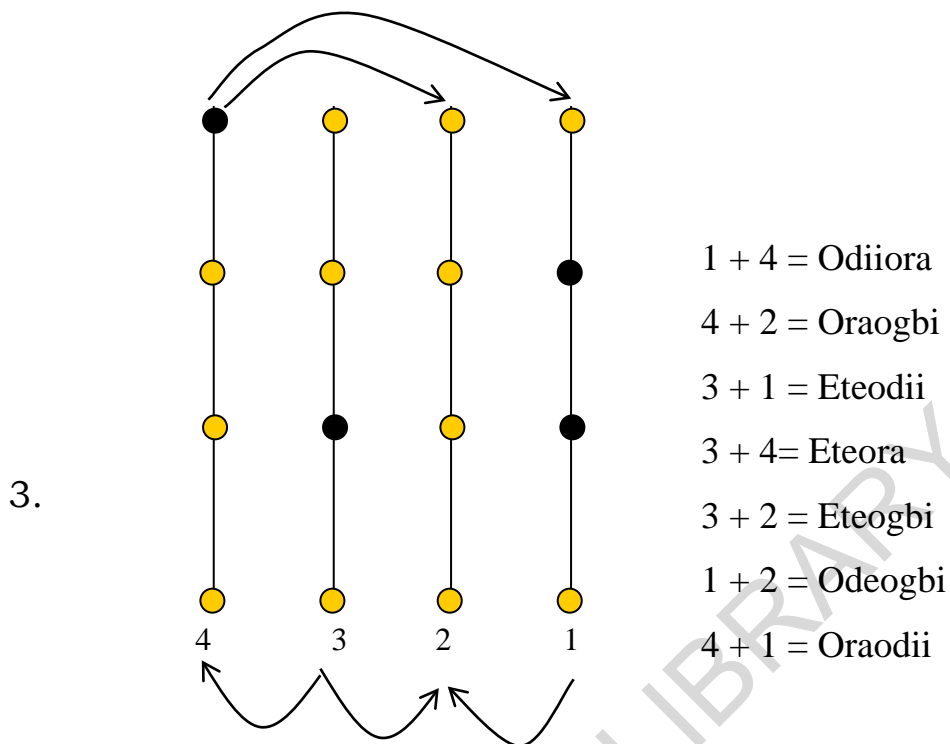
1. b.



<b>Afa</b>	<b>Igbo</b>	<b>English</b>
Odii Ora	E mecha a ya- eku ume (oga-adi ndu)	It will be alright
Ete Odii	Ka e mechie okwu	Lets close the matter
Ora Ogbi	Nwanne	Relation



<b>Afa</b>	<b>Igbo</b>	<b>English</b>
Otule naabo	Ikpe abuo	Two cases
Otule	Ikwu okwu/ikpe	Case
Ogute	Oke ive	Great thing
Ovu	Otu ive	One thing
Otule ogute	Ikpu ive joro njo	To cover bad thing
Ovu otule	Inwe anuri	To be glad



<b>Afa</b>	<b>Igbo</b>	<b>English</b>
Aka naabo Aka	Ojije ive Ihe a maghi aka ya	Journey something that could not be understood
Akaotule Obalaaka	Eji m ofo A kwadolu m n'ihe m na-eme	I am innocent I have a support in what I am doing
Otuleobala Otuleogbi	A kwadolu m n'ihe m llite uva	I will be a winner To have gain

In reading out other sentences, these were discovered

<b>Afa slang</b>	<b>Igbo language</b>	<b>English language</b>
Ogbiakwu Ogbinaabo	Otutu mmadu. Ka anyi jeve, ndi njem abuo, ije ije ugbo abuo, ejeeanaa	Many people. Two travelers embarking on a journey twice, Safe journey.



Ogbiatulukpa	Ikpo izu, idokwe ive, ichu aja	Calling for meeting, propiciation rite, and sacrifice.
Ogbiotule	Anuli,iji ovo,(Ejimofa), Inwe ezi akalaka	Happiness,beingtruthful,(name) having good luck
Ogbiaka	Ojije Ipu mbia dibia	Going Embarking on a healing adventure
Ogbiete	Okuko	Fowl
Ogbiogheli	Uburu, ive di obele	Chick, small thing
Ogbiovu	Igba mbo, ime ive di anaa	Struggling, doing a surprising thing
Ogbiose	Nso, ive di nso	Near , something very close
Ogbiogute	Mgbugbo, ive idi mmadi n'akuku	Boundry, something beside one
Ogbiaghali	Olili, ndaghali, ive idako onu	Feasting, merriment, something happening coincidentally.
Ogbiora	Ive a rapulu arapu, ikute ume ndu	Something surrendered, to have rest.
Ogbiodii	Ive itua n'ukwusi ana	Something being very close
Ogbiokala	Agba e gbulu egbu	Appointment
Ogbiobala	Evivio, ive meli n'evivio.	Daylight, something that is open.
Ogbiululu	Akwa, akwa alili.	Cry, inflicting cry
Eteokala	Nwaanyi a nutali anuta	A married woman.
Eteosusu	Akwuna	Harlot
Eteogute	Akwukwo naato, nwaanyi mulu nwa	Cooking stove, a woman with children.
Eteaghali	Ibo mbo, mbokili	Retaliation, Disagreement.
EteOtule	Oji	Cola
Eteululu	Nwaanyi obuna	Any female humanbeing
Etenaabo	Ive ibide (ive mbelede).	Sudden event (unexpected)
Eteaka	Ive teli aka (ive meli	Something very far (something

Eteakwu	gboo). Mkpotu, uzu, isinne okuko.	of old). Noise, disquietness, hen with chicks.
Eteatulukpa	Nwaanyi (ada)	Female humanbeing (daughter)
Eteovu	Ive idi mma, ive iju oyi	Goodness of a thing, conduciveness, being cool.
Eteose	Eziokwu, iyi, inwu iyi	Sincerity, oath, oath taking.
Eteobala	Ive ghe oghe	Something that is clear.
Eteora	Igba ama	To reveal
Eteodii	Ikwachi ive, imechi ive,	To repair or mend something.
Eteogheli	Okwu mechili emechi	Closed matter.
Eteogbi	Mmili.	Waters.
Ululunambo	Ugwo, ikwu ugwo.	Debt. Payment of debt.
Ululuaka	Ji,	Yam.
Ululuakwu	Ajo nli mmadi lili.	Bad food eaten by someone.
Ululuete	Ede, ndaghachi azu.	Cocoa-yam, setback in life.
Ululuotule	Uva, ilite uva.	Gain, to make profit.
Ululuodii	Akaazu, ajonli, ive nkwukwuli.	Bribery, bad food, dirty business,
Ululuose	Ukwala, ajonli, nsi.	Cough, bad food, poison.
Ululuaghali	Ive olili.	Edible thing.
Ululuogute	Ji	Yam.
Ululuatulukpa	Uva, ilite uva.	Gain, to have gain.
Ululuogbi	Uva, ilite uva.	Gain, to have profit.
Ululuora	Aguu	Hunger
Ululuovu	Nli, ive olili.	Food, edible thing.
Ululuokala	A kacha a kaboo	Disappointment.
Ululuobala	Ili ive, inwe mmeli.	To be happy, to be a winner.
Ululuogheli	Nli, nlibi ive.	Food, to eat poisoned food.
Ijitenambo	Okpolouzo.	Main road.
Ijiteaka	Iwenyi aka ndu enu, aka ikenga.	To be free from problem, To be progressive in life.
Ijiteakwu	Akwali, itili mmadu	Protection, to give one

Ijiteete	akwali.	protection.
Ijiteaghali	Alusi bi na mmili. Anu nveli ukwu nambo.	Water deity.(udo, omalagba) Animal with two legs.
Ijiteose	Udo, ive na-eme nrughali.	Udo deity, untrustworthiness.
Ijiteatulukpa	Ntakwulu mmadu okwu.	To whisper into someone's ears.
Ijiteogbi	Uvo, chi ovuvo.	Brightness, dry season, better days.
Ijiteora	Chi.	Guardian angel.
Ijiteovu	Chi.	Guardian angel.
Ijiteokala	Ukwu, ukwu mmadu.	Leg, human leg.
Ijiteobala	Ukwu isi mmadu ike n'ana.	To be alright. To be firm.
Ijiteodii	Ive na-eji nji, anasi.	Black, night.
Ijiteotule	Anuli, Onu.	Happiness, joy.
Ijiteogheli	Nkiti, ive nkiti.	Nothingness, vain.
Ijiteululu	Avia oye, ima oso.	Oye market day, unhappiness.
Otulenambo	Ikpe.	Case, trouble.
Otuleaka	Mkpu, iti mkpu.	Shout, to shout.
Otuleakwu	Uzu, ivio uzu.	Noise, making noise.
Otuleete	Utu, uta.	Penis or arrow.
Otuleaghali	Iyi	Oath.
Otuleogute	Ikpu ive, ikpu aka n'onu, otinku (okuko a ma na o bu oke).	To cover something, covering mouth with hands, unmatuered male fowl.
Otuleatulukpa	Itakwuokwu, ntamu.	Whispering, soliloquizing.
Otuleose	Ajookwu, ikwu ajo onu.	Provokingtalk, talking carelessly.
Otuleogbi	Ileoma.	Politeness.

Otuleora	Okwu a nulu anu, Inulu okwu.	Understood words, words heard.
Otuleovu	Ileoma	Politeness.
Otuleokala	Igbu agba, ika ive.	Giving appointment, to give date for something.
Otuleobala	Ugo, idi aso.	Ostrich, being holy.
Otuleodii	Ive di nnukwu, egbe.	Something big, gun.
Otuleogheli	Onye evio, evio.	Rascal someone, rascality.
Otuleululu	Ubosi avo/afo.	Afo market day.
Akanambo	Ije	Journey
Akaakwu	Ndiichie	Ancestors
Akaete	Azu	Fish
Akaaghali	Anu	Meat
Akaatulukpa	Oji, nkwado, ikwusiike.	Iroko, support, standing firm.
Akaogute	Ana	Land
Akaose	Iyiojii	Iyiojii deity
Akaogbi	Ikpa elo, ikwado ime ive.	Discussion, preparing to do something.
Akaora	Chi, uno.	Guardian angel, house.
Akaovu	Chi	Guardian angel.
Akaokala	Ive ajulu aju, osu, oru.	Rejected thing, outcastes
Akaobala	Udala, odu, ndi chizulu echizu, (O buru aha mmadu, o buru: Umuodu, Ikiti).	Igbo local apple, Titled men, (Names of people are: Umuodu, Ikiti).
Akaodii	Ajana.	Earth goddess.
Akaotule	Ovo (Ofo), Ofoka, Ofoma for names.	Authority, Sincerity, Ofoka, Ofoma for names.
Akaogheli	Aro.	Aro deity, Year.
Akaululu	Ndiichie no n'obi.	Ancestral cult symbols.

Akwunambo	Onodu, ino ovu isiko	Keeping watch, staying one place.
Akwuaka	Ebunu, ude, nkwo.	Ram, deep sound, nkwo market
Akwuete	Ive na-avio uzu, ebenebe, isinneokuko, mkpotu, uzu.	Something that makes noise such as ebenebe tree, hen with chicks.
Akwuaghali	Anu	Meat
Akwuogute	Izu ezu	Ogbako
Akwuatulukpa	Unooji	Strong house (built of iroko )
Akwuose	Uche	Obstacle
Akwuogbi	Ewu	Goat
Akwuora	Uno, be mmadu.	Home, one's house.
Akwuovu	Chi	Guardian angel.
Akwuokala	Obi	Ancestral house.
Akwuobala	Ndi echichi dika ozo.	Titled men.
Akwuodii	Onwu, inochili mmadi ezi/uzo.	Death, standing on another's way
Akwuotule	Ihe a na-aku na-ada uda dika mgbiligba, ubom, ekwe, ogene.	Something that makes sound when hit such as metal and wooden gong.
Akwuogheli	Irapu uno, onwu.	Leaving home, death.
Akwuululu	Obi ndiichie.	Ancestral house.
Aghalinambo	Ikenga, ezi gbali mkpi ato, nwata nwoke.	Strenght, three joined roads, male child.
Agaliaka	Ive na-agba agba dika akpi, agbisi, dgw.	Something that stings such as scorpion, sand ant, etc.
Agaliakwu	Okuku, Ite.	Consecrated calabash, earthen pot.

Aghaliete	Mbokili, ekweekwe.	Noncompromising.
Agaliogute	Irado ive dika alo, okili.	Installing something showing strong backing for something.
Agaliatulukpa	Ive a na-ewero ive, ive di obele.	Something insignificant, smething very little.
Agaliose	Ivele, Ive ivele.	Shame, shameful thing.
Agaliogbi	Ire ana ere, oya.	Retrogression, illness.
Agaliora	Nseke.	Troublesome.
Agaliovu	Ego.	Money.
Aghaliokala	Nwata nwoke.	Male child.
Aghaliobala	Ndi echichi.	Titled people.
Agaliodii	Ikem, Ivite.	A name of a town, last or third child.
Agaliotule	Ikpo uzu onu, ndi uzu, Oka, okwu a na-ekwu n'onu.	Rekindling fire with mouth, blacksmiths, a town called Awka, oral speech.
Agaliogheli	Umuaka.	Children.
Agaliululu	Ive a julu aju.	Rejected thing.
Osenambo	Ive e ji anya vu, anya, ive ghe oghe.	Something seen with eyes, anya, something open.
Oseaka	Onye evio.	Rascal person.
Oseakwu	Avia.	Market, trade.
Oseete	Inye mmadu ive, iseli ive.	To give someone something, to pick something.
Oseaghali	Olusi, ibo mmadu apa.	Deformity, to inflict injury on someone.
Oseatulukpa	Nsete ive, inwete ive, iganiru.	Picking something up, to get something, being progressive.
Oseogute	Njidesi ive maobu mmadu ike.	Holding something or man tight.
Oseogbi	Ila di, avia.	Sexual intercourse, trading.
Oseora	Uche, iche echiche.	Thought, thinking.
Oseovu	Ori, amosu.	Theft, witchcraft.
Oseokala	Ive a julu aju.	Rejected thing.

Oseobala	Nzu, ichi echichi.	Symbol of purity, title taking.
Oseodii	Iwo maobu iwe.	Anger.
Oseotule	Anuli.	Happiness.
Oseogheli	Iyi, Ive mebili emebi.	Spoilt, something useless.
Oseululu	Ive a julu aju.	Something that is rejected.
Atulukpanambo	Udo, ive e kedolu ekedo.	Udo deity, something that is tied up.
Atulukpaaka	Igbapu oso. Oso.	Running for one's life, run.
Atulukpaete	Ugbo.	Canoe, plane, vehicle, ship.
Atulukpaaghali	Ive mmado.	Something gummy.
Atulukpaogute	Ndi nze na ozo.	Ozo & nze titled men.
Atulukpaose	Ive di obele.	Something thiny.
Atulukpaogbi	Ndi Igbo, aha: Onuigbo.	The Igbo people, name: Onuigbo.
Atulukpaora	Nseke.	Disagreement, setback.
Atulukpaovu	Ive idi juu, oyi.	Something being cool, cold.
Atulukpaokala	Ukwu isi ike n'ana.	Being alright.
Atulukpaobala	Ukwu isi ike n'ana.	Feeling belonged.
Atulukpaodii	Ndi nze na ozo.	Nze na ozo titled people.
Atulukpaotule	Ndi chili echichi.	Titled men.
Atulukpaogheli	Nnukali na nsogbu maobu oya.	Being free from problem or sickness.
Atulukpaululu	Ndiichie no n'obi.	Ancestral cult symbols.
Oranambo	Oku, ive na-eke eke, ubosi Eke, aha: Nweke, Okeke.	Fire, Light, anything that shines, Eke day, names: Nweke, Okeke, Mgbeke.
Oraaka	Nra.	Fine.
Oraakwu	Ngana, ive na-adiro mma.	Dirth, something that is not good.
Oraete	Akwa.	Cry.
Oraaghali	Umunna, Ora, Ive di n'igwe.	Kindred, populace, something in group.
Oraogute	Etiti nwa.	Middle child.

Oraatulukpa	Ada.	Daughter.
Oraose	Uta.	Arrow, sickness.
Oraogbi	Ndi otu okwu.	Group of friends
Oraovu	Nwanne ovu avo.	Relation of one mother.
Oraokala	Nwoke.	Man.
Oraobala	Ugo, Ugbene ugo.	Ostritsh, ostritsh feather.
Oraodii	Nti, ichinti.	Ear, deaf.
Oraotule	Diokpala	First son.
Oraogheli	Nwata nwoke.	Malechild.
Oraululu	Ive a julu aju.	Something that is rejected.
Ovunambo	Avuvu, olu.	Suffering, work.
Ovuaka	Mgbakali.	Freedom.
Ovuakwu	Nzuko, ogbako.	Gathering, conference.
Ovuetete	Mkporu, uru.	Sorrow, mourning.
Ovuaghali	Ive mmee, igbupu obala.	Bloody something, bleeding due to a cut.
Ovuogute	Ive e gbodolu egbodo, ichi aka kwedo.	Blockade, struggling to succeed.
Ovuatulukpa	Ive di mma.	Something good.
Ovuose	Ili nli na-adiro mmadi mma n'ari.	Eating something that is not good to human body.
Ovuogbi	Ajo ije, ije na-adiro mma.	Bad journey, unhealthy adventure.
Ovuora	Okochi.	Dry season.
Ovuokala	Iviocha ukwu na aka	Ablusion.
Ovuobala	Nzu	Igbo native chalk signifying purity.
Ovuodii	Alu.	Taboo.
Ovuotule	Nnuli.	Gladness.
Ovuogheli	Ime evio, iko ikpa,	Rascality, being heady.
Ovuululu	Njo, ive jochali njo meche di mma.	Bad, something that was bad and later became good.



Okalanambo	Ive a zogali azoga.	Something that was fought over.
Okalaaka	Alu, ita alu, ive nata alu dika nkita.	Bite, biting, anything that bites like dog.
Okalaakwu	Ovia, ajooagu, Igbariam.	Bush or forest, evil forest, a town called Igbariam.
Okalaete	Akpu, akpu nli.	Tip-torn tree, cassava.
Okalaaghali	Ive a bosali abosa.	Something that has been dissolved.
Okalaogute	Agwu.	Spirit of divination.
Okalaatulukpa	Nkaliuka	Discussion.
Okalaose	Ogwu, nsi.	Medicine, poison.
Okalaogbi	Ikpa alo.	Contribution of ideas.
Okalaora	Ogwu.	Medicine, charm.
Okalaovu	Nkwu, Ukwu nkwu.	Palm, palm tree.
Okalaobala	Awuwo.	Cuning.
Okalaodii	Isu ude.	Wallowing in pain
Okalaotule	Ezigbo okwu.	Good talk.
Okalaogheli	Ekwensu, uke.	Devil, bad spirit.
Okalaululu	Agwo.	Snake.
Obalanambo	Ive ghe oghe, ndi Enuagu, Amagu.	Open something, Enuagu or Amagu people.
Obalaaka	Nkwadolu maobu isulu mmadu alo n'ive.	Supporting or backing someone in something.
Obalaakwu	Ive ibu uka, ive ikpa ike, mkpuru.	Uncontrollable, something becoming dangerous.
Obalaete	Ive ibu uka, ikpa ike, mkpuru.	Uncontrollable, getting out of hands.
Obalaaghali	Ive mmee.	Bloody something
Obalaogute	Agwu.	Spirit of divination.
Obalaatulukpa	Onye na-aba mba, iba mba.	One scoulding another, scoulding.
Obalaose	Ogwu.	Medicine.

Obalaogbi	Ikuota.	Being worried.
Obalaora	Ogwu.	Medicine.
Obalaovu	Mmanyanya.	Any type of wine.
Obalaokala	Awuwo.	Deceit.
Obalaodii	Iba mba.	Scoulding.
Obalaotule	Dibia ava, dibia aruike.	Diviner, Herbalist.
Obalaogheli	Ajija, mkpuluobi ino mmili.	Being worried
Obalaululu	Ngwugwu.	Wrapped item.
Odiinambo	Ndeeli, ochichi, abani	Midnight, darkness, night.
Odiiaaka	Ibu.	Suffering.
Odiiakwu	Iwo.	Anger.
Odiiete	Egwu.	Fear.
Odiighali	Isa ivi, isa asisa.	Open confession.
Odiiogute	Ana.	Land.
Odiiatulukpa	Oche.	Grand mother.
Odiiose	Iwo.	Anger.
Odiiogbi	Udo.	Peace.
Odiiora	Iku ume ndu.	To settle down.
Odiiovu	Avo ime.	Pregnancy.
Odiiokala	Nne ochie, nne nne.	Grand mother.
Odiobala	Nne nne.	Grand mother.
Odiiotule	Nna.	Father.
Odiiogheli	Ogwugwu.	Ogwugwu deity.
Odiululu	Ikwunne, ndi ikwunne, ndi ogo.	One's maternal home, one's maternal relations, inlaws.
Oghelinambo	Onye na-aku ota, iku ota.	Somebody that is complaining, complaint.
Ogeliaka	Onunu, ikwa aya mmadu.	Taking all that one has, collecting one's property.
Ogeliakwu	Ive a kwabatali akwabata.	Something that is brought in.
Ogeliete	Aro (alusi).	Aro deity.

Ogeliaghali	Nwaanyi ipu n'ama, ino na nso.	A woman being in her monthly period, or meansurating.
Ogeliogute	Ovuve (alusi nwanyi)	Ovuve deity (female deity).
Ogeliatulukpa	Nwaanyi.	Woman.
Ogeliose	Ivele, ive ivele.	Shame, shameful thing.
Ogeliogbi	Eso, Nsogbu.	Trouble, Problem.
Ogeliora	Oya.	Illness.
Ogeliovu	Avooolulu.	Stomachache.
Ogeliokala	Nwaanyi tulu ime.	Woman that have had children.
Ogeliobala	Onwu, ive maobu onye nwulu anwu	Death, something or someone that is dead.
Ogeliidii	Igado akaukwu.	Holding or blocking someone.
Ogeliotule	Alusi ovuve.	Ovuve deity.
Ogeliululu	Nwaanyi ajadu, igbankpe.	A woman mourning her husband, mourning.

These were inexhaustible. They could also be used in making sentences such as:

Afa: I na- eyikwe obala ovu?

Igbo: I na-anukwa mmanya?

English: Do you drink wine?

Afa: Ora ogheli tuali n'akwu ora, o ji ovu otule?

Afa: Nwoke avu biali be gi, o ji ive di mma?

English: The man that came to your house, has he something good?

Afa; Kedu nwa ora ogheli tuali n'akwu ora?

Igbo: Kedu nwoke di ihe a biara be gi?

English: who is that man that came to your house?

Afa: Ete okala tuali n'akwu ora

Igbo Nwaanyi no n'ulo

- English: woman is in the house  
 Afa: Di otule, o tuali n'akwu ora?  
 Igbo: Di gi o no n'ulo?  
 English: Is your husband at home?  
 Afa: Ora ovu, Kedu ovu naabo I na-ebu?  
 Igbo: Nwanne m nwoke Kedu, ihe I na-eme?  
 English: My brother what are you doing?  
 Afa: Ovu naabo ose ogbi  
 Igbo: Ana m azu ahia  
 English: I am trading  
 Afa: Ose naabo odokwoli ya ode ogbi?  
 Igbo: Anya o dikwa ya mma?  
 English: Is he in sane?  
 Afa: Ovu naabo  
 Igbo: Ime ihe  
 English: Doing something  
 Afa: Ose ora atuakwali gi n'ogbi odi?  
 Igbo: I jikwa uche gi?  
 English: Are you with your senses?  
 Afa: Nwa ora ogheli, gbatali ogbiaka, ogeli ora tuali n'akwu ora ya  
 Igbo: Nwoke a biara maka ogwu, e nwere oria di na be ha  
 English: The man that came for medicine, there is a hereditary sickness  
 in his house  
 Afa: Ogeli ora dadolu ose ogute, o bu ora ogheli ka o bu ete okala?  
 Igbo: Ori a jidela nwoke ka o bu nwaanyi?  
 English: Has the sickness infected a man or a woman?  
 Afa: Kedu ovu naabo o ya - ebu n'aka nwa ora ogheli ka o wee di ya  
 Ode ogbi?

Igbo: Kedu ihe a ga-eme iji hu na nwoke diri mma?

English: What should be done to see that this man gets well?

Afa: Ogeli odii ji nwa ora ogheli ogeli ora di ya ode ogbi ka aluwapulu  
Ogeli akwu na ijite naabo

Igbo: Oria ahu ji nwoke ahu diri ya mma kemgbe a chusiri aja n'okporo uzo

English: The sickness that infected the man has left him after the propitiatory Sacrifices at the main road

Afa: Atuali m n'akwu ora ka m takwuolu ya ijite atulukpa ogute ya

Igbo: Abiara m na be gi igwa gi okwu

English: I came to your house to tell you something

Afa: Ora obala na-agwo obala ora ji ete naabo

Igbo: Alusi na - eme ogwu na-egbochi ihe mberede maobu ajo chi

English: Deity that prepares charms stops accident or hard luck

Afa: Akwu aghali na agali akwu

Igbo: Dibia gbusara obara n'elu okuko ya

English: Diviner painted his consecrated calabash with blood

Afa: Agali akwu a na-eyili ose ogheli akwu aghali

Igbo: Okuku a na-egbusere anu

English: Calabash that is given meat

#### **4.05.07 A Typical Divining Session:**

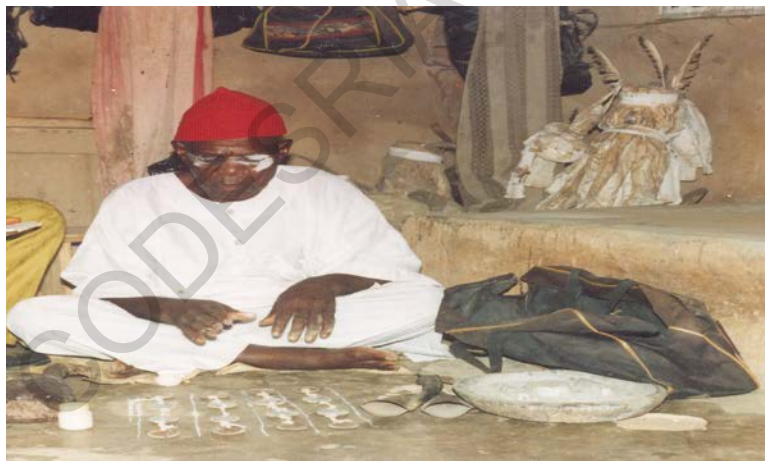
A typical divining session was divided into nine stages.

Those stages were:

##### **a. Display of Divining Instrument:-**

The diviner would bring out his **afa** instruments called **ugiri** or **ogbono aga**, small **ofo** otherwise called **ogu**. Both the **ogu** used by the diviner and that brought by the client

signified human spirit or the spirit involved in divination. In explaining the display of instrument of **afa**, Basden (1966:51) says, "... diviner starts by placing tortoise shell which contains charm that runs errand for **afa** on ground." He went further to place symbol of **agwu**, small **ikenga** (symbol of strength) whose energy and support enabled the diviner to reveal the secret without fear. The diviner also brought in small clay pot of water known as **udu arobinagwu** from which he received the messages sometimes; he brought in drum (Igba egede agwu) and **ekpili**. He faced the position of his **arobinagwu** and placed his consecrated calabash (okuku) in front of him.



**Onye na- agba afa** (diviner in action)

b. **Offer of cola to the Client:-**

Immediately the diviner finished with the display of his divining instruments, he offered cola to his client. This was

to show the client(s) that he or she was welcomed and therefore should feel free to tell the diviner his or her problems. When the cola was broken, it would be shared by the diviner and his client (s).

c. ***Payment of Divination fee:-***

This was the third stage in a typical divination session. It involved a request for a favour from the spirit of divination. The client normally dropped what ever he or she had as a fee on ground. Diviners did not charge much money for their services though some do.

That was why Bascon (1959:273) observes, “If divination fees are too high, the diviners will lack clients.” However it was the belief that the fees paid by clients were for the ***Aro*** deities hence the reason for dropping them on ground.

d. ***Invitation of the Divination Spirit:***

Basden (1966) explained that before a diviner started his work, he could squat and start chanting. In consonance with this, Ekwealor (1988: 11) quoted Ogbalu thus: “The incantations were words uttered as the diviner dropped the ***ugiri*** on ground on and on.” In form of a poem, the diviner beckoned on the Almighty, the deities, gods and ancestors to come around in order to help him have a successful divining

session. As the diviner sang his song, he also beat the tortoise shell in order to charge the environment to accommodate the spirits that were invited. He shook the cowry shells from one hand to the other, combining it with whistling. This was believed to condition the hearts of the spirits to friendly mood.

The diviner after this, chanted again for a while and then informed the client(s) that **Aro** deity had come to take part in divination (Arobinagwu bialu n'afa). He then went on to welcome the **Aro** with the shaking of the cowry shells (ekpili) thus “**yom, yom, yom, kpom, kpom kpom.**”

**e. Inquiry about Diviner's Life:-**

Now that the diviner had succeeded in inviting the spirits he inquired into what the day could bring, good or bad? Another thing the diviner did was investigating into his own life. He consecrated himself using alligator pepper by touching it on all parts of his body, asking for ancestral protection during the divining session and throughout the day.

**f. Client's Presentation of Problem:-**

After making inquires concerning the day's favours and his own life, the diviner then asked his client to present his problem(s). However in some cases like internal method or



natural method of divination, the diviner did not need to ask the client to present his problem(s). He just stumbled on client's problem(s) hence "... the diviner usually is not told why a client has come to consult him" (Nwala, 1985:124). In external or artificial method of divination, the diviner went further to divine for the life of his client. This in Igbo was called *ina ndu*.

**g. Response by Client:-**

After the client had inquired into his own life and the life of his family, the diviner picked up his *ugiri* and threw them down. He asked them question about his client's life. He then called on the client to greet *ogwugwu*. The client greeted *ogwugwu* as he was told. The diviner asked his client to raise his palms up in order to enjoy long life. The client was also asked to stand on his or her feet and repeat this sentence thus: "I have received my life in this world."

**h. Invitation of Other Spirits:-**

The client, having done and said all the things which the diviner told him to do and say, was asked by the diviner to touch a horn of antelope (*mpi ene*) which the diviner was holding. By touching the *mpi ene* according to a respondent, everything about the client was no longer concealed to the spirits invited.

Immediately after the client had touched the *mpi* ene, the diviner started singing thus:

<b>Igbo</b>	<b>English</b>
<p>Chukwu abiamā,  Chukwu ee!  (o yoo itokili o chi n'aka)  chon chon chon  Chukwu nee nzu  (o welite nzu, mepelu  nwantakiri, tusa n'ilo  mepelu ntakiri ozo tusa na  mpi ene ahu, tusakwa na  mmiri di n'ime efere)  Eze ndi eze, onye oma bi n'  elu;  Nne muru Nando bu  Iguedo  Ajanaukwu Nando  Nne muru Ikem; Ezu Ikem;  Nzu unu na-atu bu nzu  ndu, nzu ego, nzu ogologo  ndu na ahu isi ike.  (o were nzu kaa akara ano</p>	<p>God the entertainer  God ee!  (he picked up a bunch of  tiny bells and rang)  God see nzu  (he picked nzu- white  chalk, took a little and  throw outside, took a little  again, dropped on antelope  horn and inside water in a  plate ) King of kings, the  good one living in heaven.  Mother of Nando called  Iguedo  Earth godless of Nando  Mother of Ikem; River Ezu;  You are receiving the white  chalk of life, chalk of  money, long life and health.  (he drew lines on the alter</p>

n'elu ihe nchuaaja ebe ngwa afa ya di; o gara n'ihu kuo mgbiligba ya)	on which his divinatory artifacts were placed, then rang the bell on the alter )
Anyi wee na-ario unu na o bu ekpere ka anyi biara taa. (o tusa nzu n' ime mmiri di n' ime oba di n'elu ihe nchu aja)	We are pleading with you that we have come to pray today (he dropped chalk inside the water in a basin on his alter )
Ihe onye a biara ka I meelu ya maka na o gi bu Chukwu nwe ike.	Work for this person what he brings to you because you are God with all powers
Anyi na-ario Eke	We plead Eke
Anyi na-ario Ori	We plead Ori
Anyi na-ario Afo	We plead Afo
Anyi na-ario Nkwo	We plead with Nkwo.

With these chants, the diviner then invited other spirits especially the spirits in charge of the four Igbo market days viz: **Eke, Ori, Afo, and Nkwo**. Other spirits invited were earth goddess (Ala), **Aro, Ogwugwu, Ovuve, Idemmili, Iyieri, Omalagba, Iyiojii, Uko, Okpanso, Okpalionaa, Otuuvio, Inyiaruru, Akpamavia** et cetera. The names of the deities invited depended on the

environment. Whatever name, the purpose was to calm the malevolent ones down and spur the benevolent ones into action. Thus; "... now we invite you ... to come before this altar" (Oxtoby, 2002:333) and "... divine the cause of the evil weighing so heavily upon the people" (Dennett, 1968:96).

i. ***Divination Proper:***

The diviner would pick the small ***ofa*** and touch the client. He then would start receiving the revelation. As he received this, he voiced out the revelation in ***afa*** slang and went on to interpret same to the client. In recognition of the stages of a divination session, Turner (1968:301) states, "Several distinct stages are involved in divination: the recognition of problem; the decision to appeal to divination; the divination ritual itself; perhaps an additional ritual to confirm the verdict; and appropriate repressive ritual."

**4.05.07b *Divination for a Client:***

Here the divining event where a client wanted to know the profession that would benefit him in life was presented. The client asked the diviner to tell him which profession - academics or trading would bring him prosperity. The process was summarized and presented below:-

When the client wanted to know his fate in going into trading, the diviner said that the client would be robbed if he

(client) took to trading. But he had to go to a witchdoctor and obtain a charm that would prevent robbery. The diviner told the client that that was the only way for him to succeed in trading.

When the diviner was asked about taking to academic, he said that it was a nice thing rather it had no end. It was because he would like to obtain one certificate after another. Another thing was that the client would be a teacher.

A man going to a diviner did not go with his family. When he got there, he made inquiries over every one's life, one after another. This was called **ika ugu or ika ute**. This **ogu** brought by a client represented client's soul. One could take any stick as **ogu** though it was better if it was **ogilisi** (newboldia) or **omu** (palm frond). Supporting this, Mbiti (1975:131) says, "Diviners ... use various parts of plants and crops for divination and medical practices." It was observed that before this stick brought by a client, could represent the client's soul, the client had to kiss it and drop sand on it. Before a diviner would commence inquiry concerning every soul, he first used his own **ogu** to touch on other **ogu** brought by the client.

It was believed that sometimes, these **afa** seeds might not be telling the diviner the truth. The diviner understood

this trick when the **ugiri** did not speak the language which the diviner could understand. According to a respondent, when this happened, the **ugiri afa** (afa instrument) was made to swear an oath. It usually swore by the big **ofo** which stood for truth and justice. In recognition of divination for a client, Gibbs (1965:471) says:

*When a person falls ill, the Suku will not immediacy resort to divination. The patient will at first be given the ordinary herbal medicines. Should all these fail, divination becomes necessary. A professional diviner is selected and his diagnosis is acted on. If all these attempts fail, another diviner may be tried, and sometimes a third.*

If the client did not accept what the diviner told him, he had option to try another diviner.

#### **4.05.08 Afa Ikpo (Group Divination):**

Group divination was usually held when there was serious confusion in a situation. **Afa ikpo** was the type of divination where more than one diviner converged at a time to take decision on a particular situation. Here, one of them, read out the fall of the **ugiri** of all of them one after the other. At the end, the majority decision was upheld for onward solution of the situation. Divination of this type resembled a “Nations Court of Appeal”. During the **afa ikpo** the diviners usually sat in a circle, facing one another with a set of **ugiri** in front of each of them.



***Ndi na-agba afa ikpo*** (group diviners performing)

According to Ogbalu (1972:58) “Sometimes, many diviners come together where each of them spreads his ***ugiri***, one of them will be an interpreter and he reads out the minds of the different sprits.” Ogbalu went further to say that if eventually, they did not reach consensus in the various messages of their various ***ugiri***, they fixed another day for proper and more diligent session. A case of this type arose when it concerned many interest groups of people.

During the divination, all the diviners usually picked up their ***ugiri*** at the same time and spread them the same time.



***Ndi dibia afa ikpo na-achilite mkpuru afa ha.*** (Group of diviners picking their afa seeds up).

When they did this, each of them read out the message of his ***ugiri***. When all of them had read out their various ***ugiri***'s messages, one of them then stood up and summarized the whole messages as the ***afa*** message. This was called ***ike afa*** (literarily - sharing of divination but meaning – pronouncement of verdict). Investigation into a difficult problem was never insurmountable in this type of divination.

Onwuejeogwu (19981:23) says “Diviner picks two lines of ***afa*** with right hand and another two with left hand and drops them straight on the ground.” In Nando, diviners made use of four lines of ***ugiri*** at times, one could use eight lines. The important thing there was that the number of lines determined the period each ***afa*** session would take.



Using only two lines would take longer time for one to get the minds of the gods.

Group divination was used in solving group rather than individual problem. For instance, in Ikem, when an age group, kindred or village wanted to find out the cause of youth death, deadly diseases and other difficult problems, they would adopt ***afa ikpo*** (group divination). When an individual client could not get solution to his problems, he resorted to group divination. The importance of group divination relied on clearing all problems and knowing the truth.

#### **4.06      *Research Question 6:***

How does ***afa*** chant affect the realization of the message of the spirits of divination?

In an effort to provide answer to this research question, the researcher engaged some of the diviners in interview sessions one after another on different occasions and at different times. Summary of outcomes of some of these interviews would be displayed hereunder. But before the interview proper, the researcher on different occasions, asked the diviner to divine for selected clients on certain interests.

Without wasting time, each of the diviners on different divining session, brought out pieces of alligator pepper and touched all parts of his or her body.



**Ose oru** (alligator pepper)

He started singing and meditating, calling on various gods and deities to be close to him. An example went thus:

<b>Igbo</b>	<b>English</b>
Omemma	Performer of good
I na-eme mma	You do good
Chukwu bi n'elu	God that lives in heaven
Eke kelu ubosi	Creator of the day
Eke na ogulugu	Creator and rainbow
Mmili lucha o gbachaa	After cloud comes brightness
Udoo, udoo, udoo	Peace, peace, peace
Udo ka anyi na-acho	We look for peace
Chaa! Chaa! Chaa!	Chaa! Chaa! Chaa!
Okilikili ka a na-agba ukwu ose	Pepper tree can only be run round and can not be climbed

Maka na a naghi ebu ala ebu	Because no one carries the land
Nkiti, nkiti!	Nothing, nothing
Nkiti ka ha na -eme	Their efforts are in vain
Maka na egwu anaghi atu afo, afo ebulu uzo	Because stomach does not fear hence its front position
Eke ee o!	Eke ee o!
Unu anokwa ya?	Are you around?
Onye ujo anaghi ebe mmanwu	Fearful person does not masquerade
Gbanu izuzu gba	May all of you, come close
Maka na a nyukoo mamiri onu o gboo ufufu	Because the effect of urinating at one place is foaming.

After the chants, he paused a little and asked the client to touch a horn of antelope (*mpi ene*) which he (the diviner) was holding and mention his intention. Immediately after the client had touched the ***mpi ene***, the diviner started chanting again thus:

Onye o na-eme omume omume, na-ebe obube obube	One who suffers, always keeps on crying
Mana o bu ebe nwata na-atututa ozu ene ka o na-agamgbe obula	But it is where a child often picks an antelope that he goes every time
Maka na ebe nwata na-alu aka, o bulu na nna	

Maka na ebe nwata na-alu aka, o buru na nne ya anoghi, nna ya anoro ya	Because where a child points, if the mother is not there, the father must be there
Aro ikwu nne m, onye dunyere m ozi a;	Aro of my maternal home that sent me on this errand
Omalagba na Ezedu, unu bi na mmiri wee na-akpa ike. Iyiojii, Iyieri, nne m Mbaaali o luenu n' omume	Omalagba and Ezedu, strong deities of the river. Iyiojii , Iyieri , my mother Mbaaali It is time for action
Chetanu na oku a gunyeli nwata n'aka anaghi elegbu ya O bu ndu! Ndu nwata a ka a na-aju ese ya. Kedu ihe m ga-gawa ya? Na- ekwu nu na mu na - anu. Eke oo!	Remember that fire given to a child, does not inflict injury on the child. It is life! Life of this child is being asked of. What am I going to tell him? Continue talking for am listening. Eke oo!

The chanting lasted as long as the divinatory session.

From the interviews granted by the diviners after the divinatory sessions at different times and places, it was observed that chants was the first thing that happened during divination session. It was the communication that traversed between the diviner and the spirits before and during divination session. It was a kind of language through which diviners got in touch with the spirits to keep them on alert and receive information from them. This was why Mbiti (1975:156) observes that "... diviners like other

religious leaders, often have their own language, sometimes they get in touch with the spirit directly or through the help of mediums who work with them.”

At the beginning of any divining session, the diviner usually uttered some chants as a means of welcoming the spirits. It was usually a heart warming welcome to the spirits, **agwu**, gods and ancestors. This was what Elliott (1955:170) had in mind when he says:

*He who shakes the heavens comes from the west riding on a tiger and a dragon, bearing a holy seal ... your voice like thunder makes the shen (spirits) and devils tremble... you can save a myriad of people. Now we invite you ... to come before this alter. With your sword you can kill evil spirits ... wake, wake, and save us.*

In all Igbo culture area, it was discovered that the diviners sang and uttered incantation in order to draw the interest of the spirits and keep the divining session lively. These songs, chants and incantations served as reinforcement to the spirits for their continued help to the diviner.

#### **4.07. Research Question 7:**

What are the effects of divination on the life of the Igbo people?

Divination among the Igbo was well established. It was discovered that its credibility among them was not in doubt. The day to day life of an average Igbo person was consciously and unconsciously guided by the quest for the knowledge of the past, present and future events. The Igbo strongly believed that whatever happened to human being must have some link with the spirit world hence, the need for inquiry into the cause of events. Every Igbo person believed that through divination all events made secret and obscure to the ordinary human being, would be easily revealed by the diviners who were imbued with extraordinary intuitive perception. To put it succinctly, the Igbo people saw divination as “That which links together in its own way, the physical and spiritual worlds making it a religious activity” (Mbiti, 1982:178). This was the usefulness of divination. Divination was easily visible to any researcher in all the religious, economic and socio-political lives of the Igbo people.

Religiously, diviners occupied important positions in the affairs of the people. Most diviners were priests to various community deities. “Diviners occupy a very important place in Igbo traditional religion; and throughout the land divination cults abound” (Nwala, 1985:124).

Every major mysterious happening such as disasters, death, sickness, misfortunes, famine, drought, and flood were attributed to the action of the spirits. Such actions were always interpreted by diviners; "... they may attempt to discern the will of the gods which enables them to gain control over future events or to plan around them" (Fried, 1968:292).

Diviners' role in Igbo culture area became increasingly important as the religious beliefs and practices formed the greater part of the basis for social behaviour. Thus feasts for deities were fixed by elders of the community but the day and time of sacrifice to the deities was left for the diviners to fix after consultation with the ancestral spirits. It was discovered that one could choose from a variety of spirits those with whom one would be associated with and to whom one wishes to make scarifies. "He may consult a diviner as to know which spirit he should approach for a particular purpose" (Bascon, 1959:29).

In the economic sphere of Igbo people's lives, it was discovered that they did not want to embark on a wasteful venture. To ensure this, they therefore "... seek advice from the spirits" (Oxtoby, 2002:331) through the medium ship of diviners. To the Igbo, the outcome of a farming exercise

could not be predicated. So to ensure good result during harvest time, farmers consulted diviner to choose for them, the parcel of land on which to cultivate, they type of crop to cultivate and the time to cultivate. The Igbo observed this on the belief that "... a diviner may attempt to discern the will of the gods, which enables the group to gain control over future events or to plan around them" (Fried, 1968:292). While the farming was on, if eventually there was uncontrollable outbreak of disaster affecting the crops, the Igbo farmer ran to the diviner to discern the minds of the gods.

The hunters among the Igbo were not left out in consulting diviners. Most often Igbo hunters would not go in search of games without first getting to know about their mission. They would want to know whether to embark on the hunting mission or not. The diviner would tell them the area likely to make some catches after consulting his oracle.

*The hunter obeys the oracle which ever way it turns out. As a result he may head in a direction that he never could have chosen if left to himself and there by he reaches a relatively unfrequented area with game (Honigman, 1977:58).*



The case of a hunter was also applicable to the fishermen because for a successful fishing expedition, inquiry mattered a lot.

Igbo men and women were mainly traders. They engaged the services of diviners before any type of business they would embark upon. That was why Nwala (1985:124) says "... they want to know if a business venture will be successful or not and then if it will be best to embark on it, what to do to get something." Even as the business progressed, the Igbo kept on visiting diviners from time to time to ensure the steady progress of the business. They did this always on the belief that "Divination in addition to prayer is an avenue to reach **dorun** who is in charge of one's destiny" (Pelton, 1980:133).

Igbo people were great travelers and there was no where around the world one could not find an Igbo person. They usually consulted diviners before setting out on any journey. "For the average Igbo therefore, distant travel of any kind was undertaken only under unusual circumstances while persons were fearful of being seized by anybody if they went far from their home" (Anedo, 2004:76). They were also fearful of being captured by oracle agents, and this was an important factor in keeping communities and individuals

localized and isolated. Such insecurity was further intensified by the security patrols which most villages organized to protect wards from kidnappers, thieves and lawless men. They always did this because they believed that:

*There is need to consult a diviner to find out what would become of the journey, different ways to safety and charms that would protect the traveler in order to have faith in his return, say when he would embark on the journey and the better route to take in order to lessen the problems associated with the journey (Zahan, 1979:90).*

In the social sphere of Igbo life, it was discovered that divination exerted great impacts on the social life of the Igbo people. No Igbo person liked to get into problem in the name of marriage. Such was the reason why “divination was required for the corroboration of marriage” (Miller, 1931:300) in-as-much as one wanted a blissful time. Blissful time in marriage entailed many things. In a traditional Igbo society, a young man did not choose a young lady for marriage because she was beautiful or very attractive. In-fact, a girl of extraordinary attractiveness ran the risk of not getting a marriage partner in her life.

“The principle that dictates the choice of a marriage partner is based on the Igbo notion of life and existence”

(Edeh, 1985:57); in the same manner did not the girl about arriving at a decision hence full scale inquiries. Before the contracting of marriages, the Igbo usually conducted a lot of inquiries. One of such inquiries was done through divination to enable a young man to find out from what clan or lineage his **chi** would like him "... to take a wife of fortune" (Ilogu, 1974:47). When the diviner pronounced the clan and lineages from where the future wife would be found, he also prescribed the sacrifices to be offered to the ancestor to prosper the young man and to help him find a good wife. This resembles the practice in India hence Honigman (1977:57) says thus: "Parents of a young couple in India consult an astrologer to learn whether the match they have arranged is suitable for two specific young people."

After conducting a successful marriage, "... what is expected of her is to get pregnant and bear a child" (Ogbalu, 1981) as "... children are the consolation of parents" (Azi, 2007:22). When this expectation was not forthcoming, the couple resorted to divination.

The Igbo people were peace lovers. They therefore had laws that allowed peaceful co-existence of individuals. They did not like to do anything that would jeopardize

relationship among themselves. But if it happened that one found fault against another, they had ways of settling any dispute. There were many agents of judiciary among the people - the age group, family unit, the village representatives, elders and others. But if peace failed to take its course among two or more persons, they invited the diviner as the final arbiter. In modern Nigeria society, "The power of courts to wade into disputes extends to persons, authorities, governments whether federal or state" (Okpalakuru, 2005:15). As a result of this, cases were either deferred severally and thereby justice abused. Thus: "The five hour session saw counsel to the Governor, Puis Akubo protesting, vehemently that the setting should be differed following on court injunctions to that effect" (Agboola, 2006:6).

Among the Igbo people, when there was difficult in determining cases, the people normally resorted to divination especially the oracular form of divination. This was why Kalu (2002:361) says, "When every effort to get the facts ... fails, a given traditional group or individual would then plan to visit one of the famous oracles that thrived in the traditional Igbo society."

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.01 *Summary:*

Divination among Igbo ethnic nationality in Nigeria was well established and commanded enormous creditability. The day-to-day life of average Igbo person was consciously or unconsciously guided by the quest for the knowledge of the future as women and men sought to find explanations for past and present happenings. The Igbo strongly believed that whatever happened to human being had some links with the spirit world hence the need for inquiries into the causes of events. This was to say that divination was the art of foretelling future events or discovering things secret or by supernatural means, unusual insight and intuitive perception. To Mbiti (1982:178) "Divination is that which links together in its own way, the physical and the spiritual worlds, making it a religious activity." The act of divination was a common practice among the Igbo. It held that "medicine men" possessed the inspiration of reading the future through their oracles and that such inspiration came from God. Diviners were therefore either priests, priestesses or medicine men

and women. The importance attached to divination even in modern settings explained the secret or open employment of diviners or marabouts by public office holders, be they monarchs or elected officers.

There were various types of divination practiced among the Igbo. It ranged from interpretation of dreams, water gazing, fortune-telling, and hypnotism, and telepathy, paranormal and psychic research. The act of divination was not practiced by those who had special calling by the spirit of divination (Agwu) or by practicing as apprentice under renowned diviners. While some under a kind of formal training, others inherited the profession. The training involved learning the names, objects and signs of divination, the esoteric language and myths associated with them; the procedures, rites and cult of divination. During the training also, the diviner got acquainted with the taboos associated with the profession. Full observation of the taboos was said to impact positively on the diviner's performance while its violation put the diviner in serious problems regarding his performance. It was the result of the fact that the pact between the diviner and the god of divination was "give and take". So when the diviner submitted to the laws of the gods,

the gods reciprocated by backing him or her in his or her deliberations.

The Igbo nation (the study site and sample) was a sizeable geographic region of seven states with several autonomous communities. It had a strong cultural background where divination played a significant role despite the proliferation of Christian denominations. Despite religious inclinations, many Igbo referred serious cases to diviners. Such cases included **ogbanje** (changing), death, madness, poverty, repeated misfortunes and other abnormalities of life. Normally, “The diviners deal with the question of finding out why something has gone wrong. They tell who may have worked evil magic, sorcery, or witchcraft against the sick” (Mbiti, 1975:156). Divination involved two or more people: the diviner (expert) and the clients. The diviner normally did the work of divination with certain instruments depending on his or her methodology which included **ugiri** (bead casting). To Booth (1977:49) “**Ugiri** helps the diviner to commune with ancestors and to relate the problems of their clients to them.” Aniello (1992:18) affirms “... divining instruments are complex starting from natural object to non-natural instruments.” To the diviner,

each item carried a lot of meaning and helped to wake **agwu** into action, while some served as the messengers.

The **dibia afa** (diviner) believed that they were never alone in their divining work because there were spirits that guided them in the interpretation of **afa** beads or revealed the secret directly to them (in case of invocatory form). Such spirits therefore revealed the concealed to the **dibia afa** who then, through the interpretation of **afa** beads, rendered solution to their clients' problem(s). This was why Arinze (1970:155) says, "The vocation to be a **dibia afa** is possession by **agwu** spirit, who is the special spirit of **ndi dibia**, healers." **Agwu** to the Igbo therefore was the patron spirit of divination and diviners.

Diviners did not usually make much profit from their service since the calling was regarded as a part-time social service rendered to mankind in distress. To Bascon (1959:273), "... if divination fees are too high, diviners will lack client." But this ideal was being bastardized by some charlatans who engaged in divination as full-time job and demanded heavy and sacrificial items from their clients. Among the Igbo, diviners were either "trained" or "called" by the "spirit of divination". They might also be trained by renowned diviners under whom they served as apprentice.



In case of those “trained” by the “spirit of divination”, they were normally possessed by the spirit and always isolated from the public.

Usually such possessed persons behaved like people who were mentally deranged. It was believed that during this period of withdrawal from the public, the spirit taught them the act of divination, knowledge of curative herbs, barks and roots of trees, proverbs, incantations and all it entailed to be a ***dibia afa***. That was why Mbiti (1975: 156) affirms that “Diviners normally work also as medicine men.” Such person then wandered into bushes, slept in unusual places for certain period. Indeed, “They must be able readily to fall into a condition of dissociation ... after a period of disturbance which a psychiatrist would probably call a mental illness” (Mair, 1980:242). After this, such possessed persons must put their own shrines and practiced as diviners. Another way diviners came about among the Igbo was by inheriting the profession at the death of their parents who were diviners but this was subject to approval by the spirit of divination. Mbiti (1982:166) agrees that “... diviners take the apprenticeship period of three to seven years.” Whether diviners were formally or informally trained, they observed taboos, abstained from defilement and used

various concentration techniques to strengthen their inward vision and second sight.

Divination was a major source of solution to Igbo people's problem(s). In religious affairs, most diviners were priests to the various community deities. They therefore occupied a very important place in Igbo traditional religion and "... through out the land divination cults abound" (Nwala, 1985:124). Diviners were mediators between man and gods hence the people took all their spiritual problems to them for solution. For instance, there were a times some uncontrolled nature of forces in people's life. To get rid of these forces, the Igbo engaged the services of a diviner.

Diviner's role in a society extended beyond religious reasons. Socially, on allegation of theft, the diviners were invited to detect the culprit. In a choice of trade, work, wife or husband, the diviner played an important role. In fact, the diviners' role for peaceful, united and progressive society was indispensable.

### **5.02 Finding:**

In this last chapter of this report, effort was made in discussing the formulated research questions by using the data collected. After the analysis, and interpretation of the

data, the discussion gave rise to the following research findings.

The day to day life of an average Igbo person was consciously or unconsciously guided by the quest for the knowledge of the past, present and future. This was why they engaged the services of diviners. It was found that the Igbo people engaged divination in whatever they did in order to maintain favourable relationship with their ancestors, their personal **chi** and their patron spirits. They did so because they believed that whatever happened to them had a spiritual backing.

It was discovered that the Igbo people visited diviners to avoid crises in their economic, religious and socio-political life.

It was discovered that divination encompassed nine stages. These stages were

- a. Display of divining instruments;
- b. Offer of cola to the client;
- c. Payment of divination fee;
- d. Invitation of the divination spirit;
- e. Inquiry about diviner's life;

- f. Clients presentation of problem;
- g. Response by client;
- h. Invitation of other spirits; and
- i. Divination proper.

The divination instruments helped to wake the divination spirit – **agwu** into action. The divination instrument were: gong (ogene), bunch of tiny bells (itokili), big size bell (mgbiligba), cowry shells (ekpili), tortoise shell (okpokoro mbe) and twin long drum (igba egede). These were used to produce melodious chants, song and incantations which sustained the interest of the patron spirits during divination session. For instance, one of the diviners interviewed explained that once she rang the bell, she was in essence calling on the inhabitants of the river to gather and listen to her. She further explained that cowry shells were used to beckon on the spirits to draw nearer and take part in the divination session.

It was discovered that one must undergo training in the art and language of divination to be in a good position to interpret the symbolic messages revealed to him.

It was discovered that there were different types of divination and that were invocatory and mechanical divination.

The work of a diviner was analogous to that of a psychologist.

Divination was a veritable means of social organization, crises management and cultural preservation. Observation of certain taboos helped diviners to strengthen their inward vision. The diviner was always in the company of an omnipresent spirit exclusive to his calling. It was found that as in every other cultures and religions of the world, symbols and symbolisms were prominent in Igbo culture. They were also prevalent in divination.

Divination was truly the mouth-piece of the unseen. Divination had suffered bastardization in recent times. This problem led to the proliferation of divination.

The influence of Christianity and Islam did not affect the art and profession of divination negatively.

### **5.03 Recommendations and Suggestions:**

The study had gone a long way in examining the effects of divination in the life of the Igbo people. It is therefore pertinent to make suggestions, which if carried out, would

help in building accountable, healthy, corrupt free, united, peaceful and progressive society.

There is need for the government at all levels to recognize the services of diviners in all their endeavours. Recognition and employment of diviners in all government ministries will help the government and the ministries in planning and execution of government business. It will help in the security apparatus of the government and make the work of the judiciary easier. It will not only help in detecting or selecting qualified candidates to head all levels of government, it will play an advisory role in appointing ministers, commissioners and directors of boards of ministries. More lives will be saved in the transport sector as the Airport Authority for instance, will have to consult the diviners before plane takes off. The medical doctors also will have a helping hand in quick and appropriate treatment of patients.

The religious denominations in the country that have not accorded official recognition to diviners' activities should do so. This will help their faithful to boldly consult diviners whenever the need arises without hiding. Hiding makes them half baked followers and therefore whenever they have problems more than they can chew, they fall out. This will

also help the religious leaders to monitor the excesses of the diviners. Recognition of the diviners by religious leaders of various denominations will help the diviners of all sects to come under one umbrella. And when they do this, they will be able to check the activities of the fraudulent ones.

There is need to create divination departments and or courses in divination in the nation's universities. This will help the illiterate ones among them to be literate. It will therefore enhance their operation. Creation of courses in divination will also make it easy for those who may wish to learn the art of divination, to do so. When more people learn about the language and the interpretation of the falls of ***mkpuru afa*** (mechanical form), it will be difficult for the experts in the art to defraud their clients. This is because even though one may be talented in the art, one (as a client) can as well follow the trend as divination goes on.

Drivers and passengers should clarify with the diviners at motor parks before embarking on a journey as this will reduce the incidences of casualty on the nation's roads.

There is need also for individuals and groups to check with diviners before engaging in any endeavour. This will however reduce loses in their dealings.

Diviners should recognize differences in religious beliefs and therefore reflect such in their recommendations to their clients from different religious faiths. This will help them to gain more patronage from other religious groups different from theirs.

In doing these, one should remember one Igbo adage which says, ***a jughi aju wee riwe, butere a riaghi aria wee nwuo*** (eating without asking question leads to dying without sickness). It is therefore nice and right that individuals, groups and governments should engage diviners before embarking on any endeavour. It is said that ***onye ajuju anaghi efu uzo*** (one who asks, does not miss road). So, divination is a source of re-direction when one seems to be confused in life.

In-as-much-as the researcher had tried in analyzing all the research questions posed in this study, he can not say to have exhausted all the researchable options available in this work. He therefore suggests that further studies be made in the areas of secrecy in the profession. This will help disabuse the minds of the remaining doubting thomases that still wallow in ignorance and make preventable mistakes in life.



#### **5.04 Conclusion:**

Since the future appears bleak and insecure, many Igbo persons of Nigeria did not engage in any endeavour without first consulting a diviner for clarity. They were so inclined to divination that even the Christians and Moslems amongst them had devised a modern way of executing the art. They went to what they called “prayer houses or spiritual churches where they were given the message of what would happen in near future. In whatever guise one engaged in divinatory work, diviners did not seem to operate alone. There were super human elements believed to reveal the concealed to them. It was also understood that some of the divining instruments of diviners helped to wake *agwu* (the spirit in charge of divination) into action.

Diviners often claimed the power to make their clients stable emotionally, psychologically, and otherwise by investigating the causes of their problems and helping them to manage their individual, group and communal life crises. It had also been found that the messages of divination were real except few cases due to infiltration of quacks. And this was the area where non – conformist considered it as fraudulent. It was as a result of misinterpretation of these

messages by the non-possessed quacks that were in the profession for money venture.

However, it had been found that due to its immeasurable values to the citizenry in solving personal and group problems, many (educated, uneducated, rich, poor, Christians, Moslem and traditional worshippers) still patronized diviners. In view of this, traditional Igbo society normally used divination to solve or seek solutions to their numerous problems that seemed hard to come by. Understandably, most of these problems were spiritual and were not seen. Also the agents through which the solutions to these problems were revealed were not seen, hence divination was seen as "... the manipulation of the supernatural to discover concealed information" (Miller, 1931:300). In view of this therefore, divination is seen as the mouth-price of the unseen.

Bearing this in mind, it should be right to state clearly that an individual, a people, and even a nation cannot afford mistakes in the management of their resources. Such mistakes lead an individual, a people or a nation to crises. So, to avoid this ugly trend, state governments of Igbo nation, the government of the federation of Nigeria and other countries of Africa should

urgently accord official recognition to diviners and their services.

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**THE RESEARCHER AND SOME DIVINERS DURING DIFFERENT INTERVIEW SESSIONS.**

