**Engagement in culture preservation: The role of spirits and deities in Ubolo Igbo**

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**Abstract**

Obollo, an anglicized form of Ubollo has a rich culture and belief system that includes many deities and spirits responsible for many natural phenomena in the area, but has not received any proper attention by scholars. Further, with the increase of international and colonial tensions in present day life, there has been a growing awareness of position of Africa, hence, it is important to understand the African peoples and their culture - Ubollo Igbo culture area inclusive. Central, too, is that data on the roles of deities’ and the practices that might give more concrete shape to the provincial and vernacular domains of Ubollo Igbo are uncommonly poor. Aside from oral tradition and a few texts if any, not a single document of deities and spirits’ roles in Ubollo has been documented, to the best of our knowledge. Granting that majority of the populace in Ubollo cosmopolitan area are Christians, it is unwise to avoid other culture that have been considered pertinent to the analysis of human characteristics such as powers, mediations and peacebuilding strategies in human societies. All these prompted my interest to investigate and discuss the various deities and spirits in Ubollo cosmopolitan, their activities and roles in the area and beyond. Data is through oral interview, recording, focused group discussions, and research assistants. The study utilizes descriptive method of data analysis. The study reveals different types of deities in Ubollo culture area such as Ézèmè-ègbàlà, Èbọ̀nyí-Òpéké, Òmè, Àládózù ụkwụidenyi-Okpoọka etcetera, and their functions. This study will promote the teaching and learning of Igbo comology and culture. The study can contribute not only to a more thorough documentation of the deities which serve many purposes in many communities but also contribute to the advancement of Igbo culture.

 **Keywords:** Deities, culture area, Ubollo Igbo, spirits

**Introduction**

Ubollo belief in supreme being that created the universe, as well as many other deities that are responsible for various natural phenomena. Deities and spirits are very essential aspect of cosmology in any given culture in that some names portray the tradition, customs, deities, and spirit prevalent in the areas especially in African societies. Instance of such names in Ubollo Igbo culture area include: Ọ̀*yị́ódò* (friend of the Ódò deity), Ọ̀yíma (friend of a deity), *Ọ̀yị́ọmabe* (friend of the Ọ̀mábé deity), (Òryiànyị̀nya, a woman considered to have performed great things such as buying a horse for a great ceremony and burial of any of her close relations. *Ókété* ('investing), *Ọ̀ryíẹ̀kə̀* (a house wife), *Onochie* (the heir of a family), *Nnamchi* (my Lord is God); Oryieshwu (a woman who has used cow for burial of any of her close relation is given the title *Oryieshwu* due to the great thing she has done), *Chibọ̀ta*, (Whatever the day brings), *Ùrókò* (a strong man), Ọ̀nwénọ (a woman burn on the feast of fourth luna month of Ubollo), among others. Along the line, people born from the lineage of the chief priest of a deity answer the name of that deity, for instance Ebonyi, Aja Ezemeagbala, Ezeme among others. We shall discuss these deities and spirits in detail in the present proceedings. Ubollo, a northern part of Igboland is one of the most notable culture areas in Igbo southeast Nigeria. Ubollo shares common boundary with Idoma (Benue State). Ubollo Dedu Obe (referred to in its present anglicized form, as Ubollo Dédù is the headquarters of Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State, southeast Nigeria. It has an area of about 172 square kilometers. Some part of Ubollo (Ubollo-Afo) is about 14 kilometers from the University town, Nsukka. Ubollo is bounded in the east by Ikem, in the south by Igugu, Umundu and Ezimo in the west by Elugwu Ezike and Iheaka, in the North by Amala and Idoma. Linguistically, Ubollo is an entire Igbo speaking rural but developing nodal town. Currently, due to the influx of people from different parts of the country informed by good express high ways; the town is becoming a multilingual speech community (Ugwuona 2013, 2020). The people live in four distinct but related areas such as Ubollo-Aho, Ubollo-Echichi, Ubollo-Eke and Ubollo Nkwọ. Basically, this community comprises the five ancestral villages in Ubollo namely: Umuezejo, Amutenyi, Umuugbabe, Ohulo and Iheakpu. Each village is surrounded by cultivated fields of species of yam, cassava, and economic trees such as palm trees, kola-nuts, oranges, banana plantations, among others. Each village is further divided into hamlets and each hamlet ideally consists of patrilineages. The patrilineages are ranked relatives to one another, and each village has a head, that is the eldest male of the highest-ranking patrilineage. The anthropology and cosmology of Ubollo about deities and the spirits culturally depict the patrilineal element in their lives.

The history according to Ezekiel Nwaeze (Uroko Ogbagu Eze) and Samuel Aba (oral, interview), contains stories of how a long time ago; Nnam Edu Obe from the East of Abakaliki had among his five sons – Olenyi (the father of Ubollo). He (Olenyi) settled first at Ikem, but later resettled at Ụlọ-N’ubollo. This venture was informed by the fact that when Olenyi was traveling from Ikem to Idah for business transactions, he reached Ugwuezeme in Ụlọ-N’ubollo and lost his way. He killed an elephant there, which he believed was a sign of sacredness of the land, and then resettled there (at Ulo-N’ubollo). Olenyi had four sons – Ezejo, Amutenyi, Ugbabe and Ohulo. As these sons grew, and multiplied, they settled at different places known today as Ubollo. Iheakpu was not of the same parent with the rest. He migrated from Iheakpu- Awka. He was in good terms with Amutenyi. He was given a large hectares of land to occupy. As events unfold, he married and multiplied in Ubollo, and consequently, they have nationalized. They are given equal rights and opportunity as members of Ubollo. His arrival and nationalization automatically made the villages in Ubollo unanimously five.

Ụ́mụ̀nágụ́ and Ògwègwè are the original and core people that existed in Ubollo land before the arrival of Olenyi and his people (Uroko Nwaeze Ogbuagu Ikeagwuuche, oral information). Consequently, Ubollo people use to pay a yearly tribute to Umunagu people for their land and other cash crops. But on the course of time, Ubollo people over powered them and reduced their numbers drastically and then the payment of annual tribute stopped automatically. Hence most remnants ran away and the few that remained affiliated with Amutenyi, Today, Olenyi descendants, Ụ́mụ̀nágụ́, as well as Iheakpu peacefully make up what is known as Ubollo.

**Deities and Spirits: An Overview**

Deities and spirit ancestors are both spiritual entities, but they are often understood and approached in different ways in various cultural and religious trad. Deities are typically seen as powerful, transcendent beings with control over specific aspects of the natural world or human life (Shawn Custer (2023). They are often worshipped and revered through rituals, prayers, and offerings. Deities are often associated with specific religions and belief systems, and they may be part of a pantheon of gods and goddesses. Spirit ancestors, on the other hand, are often believed to be the spirits of deceased family members or community members who continue to influence the living world. They are usually seen as more directly connected to the lives of their descendants and are often venerated through ancestor worship and rituals. Ancestor veneration is common in many indigenous and traditional religious practices

Webster’s Dictionary defines spirit as “a supernatural incorporeal rational being or personality usually invisible to human being but have the power to become visible to human beings at will” or the active sense of the deity serving as an invisible and life giving or inspiring power in motions” Agbedo (2007) in his discussion of Deities and spirits in Elugwu Ezike comments that deity is anything (human, non-human, object etc. that is held in high esteem within a particular society while spirit is the disembodied soul of the dead person, animal or inanimate objects. The foregoing definitions predispose one to infer that deity is a small but might supernatural being (animate or inanimate) which acts as a god or goddess to the believers in a given society while spirit is the mind or soul of a being operating with magi powers. In Ubollo, the idea of a supreme God is conceived regardless of these other deities and spirits. He is being referred to as Ezechitokeabiama (creates of the universe, the unmoved mover). It is believed that God is the author and finisher of all the universes. In the hay days of creation, God use to speak to his people. Instances from the bible include Adam and Eve, Cain, Abraham, Moses among others. Now it is believed that God has withdrawn to that remoteness which is part of his greatness and divinity. As the omniscient God, He is rarely approached. Consequently, the deities act as intermediaries between them and the supreme God. Deities and spirits are God’s representative on earth and sacrifices and prayers are offered to God through them. For instance, Okonkwo (1996) in his discussion of man and deity in Igbo civilization have this to say:

*Ezeulu is the chief priest of Ubu, the founding and principal deity of the six – village federation called Umuaro. His priestly duty involves acting as mediat-or between Umuaro and their protector deity Ulu, and thus ensuring the welfare of the community.*

Similarly, Arinze as cited by Agbedo (2007) remarks that, “God is the supreme spirit, the creator of everything, but this supreme spirit has made many inferior spirits who are nearer to man and through whom man normally offers his worship to Him”. Mbiti (1969) argues that “the spirits in general belong to the ontological mode of existence between God and man. Parrinder (1954) opines that two categories of spiritual beings are recognizable: those, which were created as such, and those, which were once human. Parrinder further argues that spirits are in the main the ancestors and the forces of nature: the powers behind storm, rain, rivers, seas, lake, wells, hills, rocks, etc. In Ubollo, it is largely believed that spirits abode can be found in trees, human beings, rats, cats, owl, eagle, hills, rivers and streams among others. It is also believed that there exists a kind of relationship between deities and spirits. Parrinder advances that such relationship is aptly represented by a triangle. At the apex is the sky, which symbolizes the supreme power from which all life flows and to whom all return. On the right side of the triangle, are ancestors rising up in the hierarchy by their increased power. On the left side are the gods or national forces, which must be propitiated lest they become angry at neglect and cause the seasons to fail. It is the traditional belief in Ubollo that both spirits and deities are related in one way or the other since they are all spirits. Deities have shrines were they are worshiped. Some deities are foreign. That is, they (deities) were brought and instituted by neighbouring towns and villages. The deities are believed by the traditionalist to be representatives of the Ezechitokeabiama who gave birth to other spirits in consonant with God’s deities. Consequently, the supreme deities supervise the activities of personal gods, chi

of each individual-ancestral spirits, and other minor spirits.

**Deities: Their Activities and Roles in Ubollo**

In virtually all African settings, the existence of the supernatural being which is God is recognized and Ubollo in not distinctive in this belief. Other deities are regarded as the subordinates to the Supreme Being – called Chukwu, Chineke, Obasi, Chukwuabiama among others. These names accorded God points to the fact that there exists other minor gods or deities. These deities have different meanings and role to play according to the level need of the people. Parrinder (1954:11), as cited by Agbedo, contends that though a large number of Igbo deities cannot be graded, there is no doubt that gradation of status of some sort exists in nature minds and that some deities stand so preeminently above others that their relative position to one another can be definitely ascertained. Aside from that, the roles and activities are largely recognized and held at esteem by traditionalists. It is pertinent to observe that in each of the five villages in Ubollo, there exist two or more deities. Generally, deities are associated with aggressions as well as serve as agents of justice. The people who are accused of crimes go to their shrines to declare their innocence, lest they face the perileous conseuences.

They are both associated with aggression and serve as agents of justice. People who have been accused of crimes go to their shrines to declare their innocence, less they be struck. However, the entire Ubollo people recognize Ézèmèégbàlà Òshìmìryì. At this juncture, let us consider them one after the other.

**i. Ézèméɛ́gbàlà Òshìmìryì**

Ézèméɛ́gbàlà Òshìmìryì is being considered as the highest deity by the whole traditionalists in Ubollo. However, it is believed that some of the deities in different locales in the area are genealogically related and as such have the same ancestral lineage. For instance, Ome of Úmùnágu is the father of gbala and egbala is the father of Ézèméɛ́gbàlà Òshìmìryì who is the father of Iduezeme. In other words, these other deities are directly under Ome in Umunagu but Ézèmèɛ̀gbàlà is more prominent probably because of its excelling powers. Ézèmèɛ̀gbàlà has a big shrine and a big forest at Amutenyi Ụlọ-N'ubollo. It has a chief priest called Attama Ézèméɛ́gbàlà. He is being a unique character, possessing attributes far too noble, far too abstract and believed to have originated from the pristine thoughts of the ancestors and Ndiishi. Ézèmèɛ̀gbàlà is also venerated in some parts of Idoma Benue State. Like the Idenyi Umunaaja of Olido Eligwu-Ezike and the Arch Deity, Oritse of Itsekiri tribe in the old Benin Kingdom, Ézèméɛ́gbàlà Òshìmìryì is just and impartial Judge, meting powers, protection and prospering on the wicked both in and outside Ubollo. His healing powers, protection and prospering powers afford him the opportunity to wield many influences among the worshipers especially from Idoma and the environs. Ézèméɛ́gbàlà has a chief priest that serves as an intermediary between the worshippers and the deity. Through the chief priests, sacrifices are made to the deity as appreciation for whatever favours he has meted to his subjects. His strategic position as the number one citizen in the nation of deities in Ubollo like Eze Ulu of Umuaro in *Things Fall Apar*t, affords the chief priest the opportunity to act as the reckoner of time, and the season in Ubollo's lunar-based annual calendar. It has a big forest with a mystic three known as Okeresue Ézèméɛ́gbàlà. When the tree was alive, no mortal (i.e., ordinary mortal including animal and trees) can touch the tree and remain alive. It was only the native doctors that can near the tree can touch the three and remain alive. It was only the native doctors that can near the tree and extract the back as medicine. The deity has a lot of goats, cocks and sheep that go about untouched by anybody. The Chief priest (Attama Ezeme) is being respected highly by the devotees. The deity situates at Amutenyi Ụlọ-N’ubollo and its chief priest (Attama) usually comes from Umu-Atamaezeme lineage

**ii. Òmè**

Ome (Ụmụnagụ) is another powerful deity in Ubollo. Ome is believed to be the father of Ezemeegbala. It has protecting powers. He entertains litigations and petitions from devotees. He protects all the people and even their lauded property. For instance, one who justifiably feels wronged by his neighbour has the right to bring the deity's effigy/status and compel the second to swear by it. It the defendant dies within seven native weeks (izu esaa) he is deemed to have been killed by the deity. Consequently, the deceased's including his or her property would be deposited in the deity's shrine. In extreme case, Ome may demand the gift of the late man or woman's daughter as a propitiatory sacrifice to ward off his wrath. If the daughter arrives, she automatically becomes the wife of the deity and will be bearing children to the deity through the chief priest. However, where the defendant survives the seven native week periods, it means that the deity had discharged and acquitted him or her. Ome also situates at Umunagu Amutenyi Ụlọ-N’ubollo Ahọ.

**iii. Máshụ̀á (Ụmụọmame-Àkè Amutenyi)**

Another prominent deity in Ubollo is Mashụa of Umuomame Ake of Amutenyi Ubollo. The deity is mainly reverenced by the Amutenyi people. This deity is also credited with the powers ROLES of omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. The deity is in form of masquerade. He is taller than any palm tree in Ubollo. When he comes out in the sun, no human being crosses the shadow. On violation of this rule, the victim will die instantly. He comes out once a year or during the death of the chief priest or one of his important subjects. Just like other deities in Ubollo, it has protecting, prospering and potency powers. It equally punishes evil doers.

**iv. Òhè and Eya Àmànyì (Ụmụọhajere Umuezejọ Ubollo)**

Ohe and Eya Amanyi of Ụmụezejọ are mighty deities. Eya deity according to sources is from Imufu Elugwu-Ezike. The deity was imported to Ubollo by Ndishi due to its might. Amanyi is from Orba in Udenu Local Government area of Enugu State. Like other deities in Ubollo, they have their chief priests. They protect, heal, and give prosperity etc to the devotees. It is the eldest man from a certain lineage in Ụmụọhajere that use to be the chief priest. People came from far and near to worship and pay homage to it.

**v. Ezugwu and Ebonyi (Ogwu Oshimiryi)**

These are male and female deities in Ogwu Ubollo. It is believed that Ebonyi Ogwu is the honorary wife of Ezugwu. Perhaps, given the matriarchal system of marriage, which the deities operate, Ebonyi's position as the glorified wife of Ezugwu serves as a messenger to a hill named after her husband and a river named after her (Iyi Ebonyi) Ebonyi river respectively. The shrine is very close to the source of Ebonyi River. Their services to the hill and river are very cordial. Their chief priest is from Abaeya lineage (according to our research assistant).

**vi. Aladooz’ and Ebonyi (Ọhụlọ)**

These are powerful deities in Ọhụlọ Ubollo. Their activities and powers largely relate to other deities in Ubollo. These deities are highly respected in Ubollo and beyond.

**vii. Ebonyi Opeke (Iheakpu)**

In Iheakpu Ubollo, there is an outstanding deity known asEbonyi Opeke. The deity has many wives and children. Just like Ome of Umunagu. Offenders usually compensate him with either a beautiful lady (in most cases a virgin) who will automatically become the wife, or cow/cattle as the deity may demand. People from far and near usually come for worships through the chief priest.

Other important deities in Ubollo includes: Àkàràkà of Amaebo Ụlọ-N’ubollo, Azegba of Umuezejo, Íyọja of Ọhụlọ heals leprosy in the olden days, Ájá (Ọhụlọ), Idu Ezeme (Amutenyi Ụlọ), Idenyi Agbụrụga (Eguudele Ubollo Eke), Ènwè (Obegu Ubollo-Eke) and Ukwuidenyi Ụmụọgaleka/Ụmụokpeọka (Ada Ubollo-Eke). Basically, many people in Ubollo answer the names of these spirits as well. It is pertinent to note that Ezemeegbala excels other deities in power, honour and majesty. It seems that he is in charge of all other deities. Things named after him include Òmè-Ezeme (deity named after Ezeme in Ụmụnagụ), Ọ̀gbàrá-Ézèmè title given to one of Ézèmès’ chief priest), Idu-Ezeme (title for one of Ezeme'’ chief priest), Ɛ̀kwụ̀-Ézèmè (Ézèmè's thick forest), Úgwú-Ézèmè (Ezeme's hill), Okeresue-Ezeme (Ezeme's mystic tree) Onu-Ézèmè (Ezeme's shrine), Ụmụ-atama Ézèmè (Ezeme's offspring), ̀Ọwụ́shị́ -Ézèmè (feast in honour of Ézèmè deity), Ọnwaenọ-Ézèmè (feast in honour of Ézèmè usually held every fourth mouth of Ubollo lunar month), ̀Ịnyàmà-Ézèmè (preistess of Ézèmè') among others. Each of these other deities, and things has specific functions and portfolio. The Ézèmè distributes responsibilities to each of them. For instance, ̀Ịnyàmà is the goddesses of fertility. Ị̀nyàmà-Ézèmè like the Oluku goddess of Edo tribe in the Old Benin Kingdom, is associated with human fertility, and bringer of children. Ịnyàmà-Ézèmèis is in charge of human fertility. She works in collaboration with the spirits of dead women in removing crises like bareness on women. The deity is attended to by her priestess as the needs arise. It is assumed that the deity is in many regards connected to every female traditionalist in the community. It usually affects them through inspiration and remains unyielding to sacrifices for appeasement when it chooses its devotee. The one chosen by the deity remains un-negotiable the earthly representative. From then on, the chosen one gets inspired occasionally and becomes unconscious whenever her rules are violated (especially matching on her heels) wittingly or unwittingly. However, red oil is usually given to her to drink to subdue the over reactions informed by her unconsciousness. **Ɛ̀kwụ̀-Ézèmè** (Ezeme’s forest) houses **Okeresue-Ezeme.** Okeresue-Ezeme is a mystical tree which humans, animals, and trees stand in awe because of its shocking, magneting and prohibition powers.

**Ɛ̀kwụ̀-Ézèmè** is the most important and respectable tick forest in the whole Ubollo. Òkéŕesué acts as medicine to the community and beyond. It brings fertility, prosperity and life partners to the devotees. It has its shrine at the foot of the tree (very close to Ugwu-Ezeme).

**Ényánwú-Ézèmè** is the earth deity/or the sun god in Ubollo. It is venerated and reverenced for its significant role as the determinant of agricultural production and secondly as the abode of the ancestor. According to Arinze (1974:15) as cited by Agbedo (2007), The earth spirit is the most important spirit next in rank after Chukwu. She is the greatest mother spirit, the Queen of the underworld, the owner of the men and custodian of public morality in conjunction with the ancestors. Similarly, earth spirit for Parrinder (1954:47) “is the mother of plants, animals and men. Hence it is of great importance to the people”. Besides, the earth is a mystical power of which everybody stands in awe because of its prohibitions and powers. It forbids bloodshed, and so is a sanction of solidarity for Obollians. Every kindred have her own shrine of Enyanwụ (àlà) with the eldest man as its chief priest. The shrine is usually located around ọ́gbụ́ or Ègbè plant with a whole or bró́ken pottery dishes (nwaakèrè, ìtè, and mkpọ́kọ́rọ́ ìtè (broken pots). Within them, sacrificial items are kept. stones, pieces of iron, metal going (ìvóm), red feather (i.e. áwọ̀,) black or white woven textile material (ụ̀gèrè ójì, or ụ̀gèrè ọ́chá) eggs, small bell, ójì, a chalky yellow substance (òdò) are some of the regular items on display at the ényánwụ̀ (àlà).Each kindred hold her enyanwu (ala) shrine in high esteem given its indispensable roles in the life of the members.

**Spirits**

The assumption is that the ancestral spirits are the spirits of the dead forefather. They are held in high esteem in Ubollo because it is believed that they pilot their affairs and daily activities. Kinsmen have one person among them as the eldest man. He is considered to be nearer to the ancestors and interprets prayers offered by a kinsman to them. The shrine of the ancestral spirits is not stationary rather it rotates from the eldest man to his successor normally when the former dies. A successor is expected to erect a shrine where their ancestors are to be called upon and worshiped. Consequently, he has to provide a branch of a piece of a plant of m̀bèmbè/ejiroosis or ègbègé́ plant, one that would likely survive when planted. He plants it in his compound and commences the process of worship with a communal sacrifice.

 i. **Àbèré and Ọ̀mábe**՛ are another spirits that have shrine. They are believed to be the spirits of those who have died long ago. Àbèré is an invisible spirit while Ọ̀mábe՛ is visible. Àbèré’s shrine is most often institutionalized and managed by every male adult traditionalist. The position is usually in a corner by the roadside leading to the family compound. The items of worship for Àbèré and Ọ̀mábe՛ are mostly ground-pea ‘ọkpa’ and melon balls (ịhọ meals) and such worship usually take place at nights of Oryie market day. Àbèré is satiric in nature. It satirizes the faults in a person, family and systems of life in Ubollo. It features mostly at nights.

**ii. The chi**

The chi spirit is the guardian of every individual. It is a common assumption that each Igbo individual has a guiding spirit which is given to him or her at conception by Ezechitokeabiama and which accompanies this individual from cradle to the grave. In Ubollo, every traditionalist has his ọnụ chi, where he/she gives his or her chi food, wine and kola nuts. Everybody is his own chief priest except women who have to ask their husbands to offer their sacrifices to their chi and interpret their prayers respectively. There are wicked spirits. Agbedo contends, “... spirits considered a malevolent includes witches, wizards and other unidentified imps. A witch according to Bradbury (1957) is any person who has the ability to detach his or her life – essence orhio from the body for the purpose of capturing and killing the Ohio of another. He maintains that any person of any age or sex can be a witch but female witches are believed to be stronger and accusations are in fact commonly made against them. In Ubollo, witchcraft is viewed as lawbreaking incarnate and intrinsically evil influence in the universe, which can manifest itself largely on human beings, animals and plants. These spirits are not worshipped instead a witch doctor is consulted to ward them off especially those that operate through human beings and animals.

**The Worship Patterns**

Every religion indulges in worships, which is often taken as the basis and benchmark of conciliation. Every religion welcomes thanksgiving though the different lies on the method, which is unique to a given cultural area. In Ubollo, worship is made seasonable or occasionally as the need arises. It can be an individual, family or village affair. It can be done willingly or as a necessity deriving from consultation with an oracle. As the Igbo cosmology suggests, there is no effect without a cause. In other words, when any evil takes place, it is largely accredited to either one thing or the other. For instance, when a person dies the oracle is consulted to find out why the person died at all because the typical traditional Igbo person does not attribute death to natural causes but most often suspects and point accusing fingers on a spirit, deity or an evil man. On ascertaining the cause, certain steps are taken accordingly to remedy the situation. For instance, the diviner may prescribe certain sacrifice to be offered to the deity or spirit concerned before the deceased is buried mourned and accorded full burial rites.

Another communal worship involves the worship of Ezemeegbala the most famous deity. It is referred to as Ọwụshị Ezeme, and Ọnwenọ Ezeme which takes place at the fourth month of Ubollo lunar month. During the worship, every male adult takes with him a number of tubers of yam, a keg of palm wine, kola nuts, pounded yam and big raps of cooked cowpea prepared by the wife to the shrine of the supreme deity. In addition, every devotee offers his individual prayers to the chief priest, who in turn interprets them to the deity. For the purpose of renewing acquired immunity against diseases, everybody steps forward at the shrine and dips his hand into the deity’s pot where the oil contributed is stored for use. Thereafter, the collected oil is scattered all over the body as a fortification against any impending danger and disease. Aside from this, the chief priest (Attama Ezeme) and Umu Attama Ezeme (original owners of the deity) holds their separate worship of the deity as may be prescribed by the deity. Ezeme may require a certain family to offer sacrifices either to avoid an impending calamity or expiation. When a person from a particular family commits an abomination such as incest, stealing against the deity, the whole family of the culprit would be required to offer certain sacrifices to propitiate and cleanse the land. Different families or kindred also worship their ancestors during what they call ịgọ nna. Some do that during ọnwa essa, ọnwa enọ, ọwọshi Ezeme, ọmabe or Àkàtàkpà time. An individual can equally worship his or her deity, chi or any other deity as the need arises.

**Conclusion**

We have carefully studied the role of deities and spirits in Ubollo Igbo culture area. Regardless of the extent to which traditionalists in Ubollo believe in deities and spirits, they do not in any way constrict their recognition of the existence of the Supreme Being–God, Ezechitoke/Chukwuabiama the creator of the universe and all that is there in. The traditionalist worship God through those spirits and deities. In contemporary times, some of the heart of some deities have been sold out, while some are stolen by some shrewd worshippers. For instance, Ògbógóró Ézèmè (the eye of the deity) and some of the artifacts and effigies of Òmè, Ógbàrá, Ụmụnabọ, Amanyi among others have been abandoned or even stolen. Some deities have been invaded and destroyed by prayer warriors of the catholic charismatic groups and other praying groups from other Christian denominations. ̀Okérésué the mystic tree has died. Ɛ̀kwù-Ézèmè that people dread before to tamper with has been vandalized and sold out by people believed to be the owners of the deity. For instance, large hectares of land of the Ézèmè especially those that are close to the main road have been sold. Large portion of Úgwu- Ézèmè (The hill believed to be the abode of Ézèmè deity) situated at the boundary between Iheakpụ Ubollo and ỤlọnUbollo-Afor village has also been sold. Currently, the hill is being demolished and the sand and stone from it are being sold out. A number of filing stations as well as other business enterprises have taken over the forest. Most of the big economic trees in the forest have been sold out. Other deities in Ubollo are not left out in this kind of vandalization. Àbèré is becoming a thing of the past in the community. A number of prominent houses and shrines of the deities have fallen apart and only the broken pots and stones stand! A good number of Òmabe's abode (ọ̀nụ̀ Ọ̀mábé) have been destroyed and used for buildings or farmland. Many deities have suffered neglect and abandonment.

However, there is an important u-turn to note! In contemporary Ubollo culture area, deities and spirits are gathering momentum again. The devotees and adherents are on the increase informed by the fact that many people especially the youth from far and near are bring back the deities and spirits for many purposes such as rituals, adoring, worshiping and reverencing. The debate over this question of U-turn by some people especially the youth has raged across Igbo culture area, and it is another viable area for further research.

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**Oral Interview**

Below are names of the informants:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **community in Obollo** | **Age**  | **Occupation** |
| 1. Mr Izikiel, Uroko Nwaogbagu Eze (Ikeagwuche)
 | Amutenyi  | 102 | Farmer |
| 1. Samuel Aba
 | Ụmụọnọrụ Akẹ | 87 | Civil servant  |
| 1. Emmanuel Eze (Barbed Wire)
 | Ụmụnagụ | 79 | Civil servant |
| 1. Augustine Ugwueze
 | Amụtenyi ụlọ | 74 | Farmer/civil servant |
| 1. Pastor Raphael Sunday Nwaeze
 | Ụlọnobollo | 63 | Pastor |