



Spiritualism in Art: An ethnographical analysis of how African art forms influenced the propagation of religion in the pre-historic, traditional and contemporary societies

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Before the advent of Christianity, western culture and Islam, Africans have been creating works of art that were based on spirits. Art works at this time were not only meant for beautification but also for functional spiritual purposes. Art was also associated with the gods that the people worshipped and with the ancestors who had lived long ago and who are still believed to be watching over their grand children. Masks and carved figures were also linked with the spiritual world, which was as real to the people as the red earth of their land.

Spirit regarding art, which was popular at this early period, is regarded to as an art that is addressed chiefly to spiritual forces with its object harnessing spiritual power for the assistance of the living members of the tribe. At this early period also, specific art objects were used in ritual display, while carved figures had their significances at all times not only in ritual ceremonies, but also in object of spiritual adornment and worship.

Today, in the countries of Africa, West Africa especially, many old customs and beliefs have died and their art also died with them. Traditional wood sculptures and masks no longer have meanings to many Africans, for they believe that they belong to the time and ways of living that have gone forever. Contemporary African artists are now creating new form of art that expresses their own feeling about life in modern Africa.

