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"AFRICAN ART AND SPIRITUALISM"

Art started with universal creation, when God said, "Let us create man in our own image". So God created man in his own image. This presupposes the fact that from time immemorial art has been a weapon of spiritual creation, as it could also be seen in prehistoric, traditional and modern arts. "Before the advent of western culture, 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 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 living members of the tribe. At this early period "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 arts have also died with them. Traditional wood sculptures and masks no longer have meaning for many Africans, for believe that they belong to 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.

As stated above, the old traditions are being wiped out and only few are retrieved from the historical records that are expressed in our oral traditions. In order to bring back our lost glory, therefore, it is highly important to research into various ways in which our ancient art works were spiritually used. This will serve not only as a library source for incoming generation, but also as a vital historical document for posterity. To this end, we shall discuss different ways in which spiritualism has affected the arts of Africans during the three periods that have existed in their past and present. The periods are: pre-historic, traditional and contemporary.

