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## African art before and after colonialism

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### Abstract

*Africa is a vast continent of diverse cultures that manifest in everything they do, and such cultural manifestations can be observed in their art, marriage, kinship, law, among others. Based on this, this essay dwelt on African art, and it was examined in two epochal periods, viz; before the advent of colonialism, and after colonialism (during colonialism inclusive). Qualitative research design was adopted for the study, using historical and descriptive approaches. It was discovered that, art in precolonial Africa was tied to the culture that produced it, which means art in precolonial Africa was utilitarian in nature. Also, the materials used in the execution of artworks in precolonial Africa were locally sought. In postcolonial era, art produced in Africa is art for art sake, which implies that, the art produced after colonialism in Africa is mostly for its admiration or aesthetic purposes. The materials are either imported or locally produced by industrial machines, and their artworks are mostly imitation of Euro-American art.*

*Keywords: African Art, utilitarian, aesthetics, materials, colonialism*

### Introduction

Africa is a large continent that consists of different ethnic groups with different cultures. These cultures are flexible and fluid which always accept the incorporation of foreign cultural elements into them. As a result of this, African cultures are dynamic. However, Africans are mostly agrarian people who cultivate different crops that are determined by the topographic nature of the soil in each zone. The people in the North Africa usually plant cereal, while those in the forest region cultivate tubers and cash crops. Land was held commonly and could not be sold or bought, although other things, such as cattle, were owned individually.

The culture of Africans is heterogeneous which informed the kind of art

practised in the continent. The people in the North Africa who are herders are the executors of rock art, while the people of forest region execute their artworks majorly in wood, stone, terracotta and metal (Clarke, 2006). The precolonial African artists executed their artworks to control their physical and spiritual environment. They majorly worked with materials in their environment such as woods, stones, terracotta, metals, among others. It is pertinent to note that, the term art is adopted in this study because it is a generic term for sculpture, painting, craft, among others. Also, the term “African art” does not usually include the art of the North Africa areas along the Mediterranean coast, because such areas had long been part of different traditions. For several centuries ago, the art of such areas had formed part of Islamic art.

## **Method**

The research design adopted for this study is qualitative research design, using historical and descriptive approaches. The historical approach was used to unravel the history of art in precolonial and immediate postcolonial Africa, while descriptive approach was used to describe the African art historical events as unfolded. The study also makes use of secondary source of data collection which include relevant textbooks and journal articles in both hard and electronic copies

## **African Art before Colonialism**

Various nations that constitute what is known today as Africa practised one form of art or the other before their colonisation by the various European countries. They expressed their artistic skills in sculpture, painting, pottery, rock art, textiles, masks, body decoration, jewelry, among others. Willet (2002) observes that, ancient African artists were influenced by their environment. This is true if one examines the way in which they produced their various arts. The pastoral people who herded cattle, sheep and goat expressed their artistic prowess through decoration of their bodies and milking vessels. They sometimes indulged in basketwork, since basket is light in weight and can be easily transported. Pastoral people also practised painting and engraving on the rock shelters in places like Birnin Gudu and Geji near Bauchi, Igbeti and Igbara Oke, all in Nigeria, Tassili and Fezzan in Algeria, among others.

The sedentary agricultural people produced most of the well-known sculptures in Africa. Examples of such sculptures are Dogon sculpture, Nok terracotta, Ife art, Benin art, Igbo ukwu art, Bambara art, among others. Their materials such as wood, terracotta, metal and animal blood and feathers (for

rock paintings), among others were locally sought. However, African art was functional; it was created to serve a social, religious, or political function. To buttress this further, Willet (2002) informs that, the Mende of Mali used to setup *nomoli* figures in their rice-fields to protect the crop and make it prosper. *Nomoli* were expected to steal rice plants from the neighbouring fields, and they would be beaten if they did not steal successfully.



**Fig. 1: *Nomoli* Figure, Wood. Retrieved May 1, 2019 from <https://www.ufointernationalproject.com/>**

Carey, Picton, Hess, Wagner and Willet (n.d) corroborate this statement further by stating that, “some African art have value as entertainment; some have political or ideological significance; some are instrumental in a ritual context; and some have aesthetic value in itself. More often than not, a work of African art combines several or all of these elements”. From this, one can infer that African art is tied to the producer’s culture. This implies that the precolonial arts of Africa were utilitarian in nature, and the motive for their creation was complex, and they were made for ritual or other purposes. Eyo (1977) observes that,

Africans are extremely religious people whose lives are marked at every point with rituals and ceremonies. Whether they live in highly organized kingdoms or in acephalous communities, individuals, families, lineages, villages and kingdoms have their own gods whom they consult in time of crisis. These gods which are intermediaries between them and High God are usually sculptured in wood. In this way, millions of pieces of sculpture were produced.

However, the Gelede mask in Fig. 2. illustrates the functionality of precolonial African art. Gelede mask is worn by male to celebrate “Mothers” (*awon iya wa*), a group that includes female ancestors and deities as well as

the elderly women of the community, and the power and spiritual capacity possessed by these women in society. However, the powers possessed by such women are comparable to those of the gods, spirits or ancestors, and these powers may be used for the benefit or the destruction of society. When manifesting their destructive dimension such elderly women are termed *aje* (witches). If angered, Yoruba believe that they can bring down individuals and the entire community (Drewal, 2016).



**Fig. 2: *Gelede Mask*, wood. Retrieved May 1, 2019 from <https://www.thebookbangu.com/>**

It is pertinent to note that, Gelede maskers normally stage Gelede performance to entertain and enlighten the community and “the mothers”. Gelede mask is used to appease, placate and encourage women to use their powers for the well-being of society. Drewal (2016) posits that, “Gelede performances are thus a sacrifice, *ebo*, an appeal to forces in the world using the aesthetic power of masks, costume, music, song and dance to evoke and comment upon social and spiritual matters, helping to shape society and those within it in constructive ways”. Looking at the physical appearance of this Gelede mask, it is a composite figure that depicts both females and males who appear in gendered attires. Apart from the symbolic objects depicted on the mask, there is scarification on the human face which is an attempt to beautify the image.

In precolonial Africa, ‘however, art was not practised for the sake of art, it was primarily practised for life that is why African art is generally regarded as art for life. It is art for life because religious importance is attached to it. Evidence has shown that sculpture was not practised in traditional African society for mere admiration but it was practised to serve as religious or cult object. Adepegba (1995) informs that Igbo ukwu art was prized by local people not because of the love they had for them but because they felt that

these objects had possessed enough spiritual power. Marcel Griaule's report on Dogon Masks shows that many of Dogon's sculptural works were for cult. Leuzinger (1976) equally buttresses this by stating that, "Africans create their art largely as an instrument by which to make contact with supernatural forces; it helps them to overcome the dangers of their environment; it is the expression of their religion". If one examines Leuzinger's explanation, one will be convinced that art in Africa means more than creating aesthetic objects.

African art means different things to African people. In ancient Egypt, art produced was based on Egyptian belief on life after death, that is, this earthly life cannot be the end, whatever position one holds in life is what he will hold hereafter. This is quite similar to what modern religions, Christianity and Islam preach. The only difference is that modern religions hold the belief that one's position hereafter will be determined by what he has done when is alive. This affected art in ancient Egypt and made their art production to be directed towards eternity. Egyptian believed that sculptors are givers of life. Art in Africa means a different thing unless one is deep in African culture before he/she is able to understand African art.

In some African societies, various classes in the society have their art and media. Adepegba (1995) sheds more light on this by informing that,

With the exception of wood carvings, Benin arts were exclusively made for the Oba. The brass casters and ivory carvers used to work for him. Brass, the metal used for casting is not only precious and beautiful, its bright shining colour, especially when polished, is reputed to repel evil and its non-rusting quality, symbolises the enduring quality of the divine kingship. Only royal heads can be cast in brass. Heads put in ancestral alters of the brass casters are only in terracotta, while similar heads used by chiefs are in wood. As for ivory, one tusk of every elephant killed in the kingdom used to belong to the Oba.

From this, it is obvious that each class in some African societies has its separate materials. Jordan (1976) strengthens this argument when he writes,

The materials used in ancient Egyptian art were subjected to the hierarchical order of their social classes. They had greater honour for the Pharaohs, definitely what they used for the representation of their kings was different from that of the commoners and nobles. Stones were used for the kings, clay was used for the nobles, while wood was used for

the commoners.

It is significant to note that, the concept of art in Africa is quite different from what is obtainable in Western world. "Art in Africa is viewed to be the creative imagery of African ancestors as against European definition of art which has to do with human skill" (Enwonwu, 1977). Skill applied to imitation and design as in painting, sculpture, among others. Art in Africa is seen as an art handed down from generation to generation, thus it is inheritable of family or even village groups, for instance, Benin (in the present Edo State of Nigeria). Art in African perception does not mean human skill as opposed to nature, but implies identification with the nature of doing, or of image. Enwonwu (1977) writes, "African art is not really art in Western context, but an invocation of ancestral spirits through giving concrete form or body to them before they can enter into the human world".

Moreover, art cannot come into existence without the artist. African artists are anonymous that is why many of them are not known, and their artworks are identified with the communities where they were found. For instance, the artist(s) of classical Ife art are not known that is why it is named Ife art. Likewise other African artworks are named with the societies where they were found such as Nok terracotta, Dogon sculpture, Esie soap stones, among others. It seems that African artists directed their artistic skills towards communalism. This implies that, the artists used their God given talent to promote the names of their communities instead of promoting their individual names. This has made Willet (2002) to conclude that African artists served their respective communities that is why they are anonymous. Luzinger (1976) informs that,

The social position of an African artist depends upon the form of culture to which his village belongs. In the circumstances of a village, amongst the agricultural peoples of West Africa and the Congo, he is usually a farmer, who carves in his leisure time if there is a particular demand for his work, that he is released from his share of labour in the fields and his works paid for with food and produce.

In Africa, art is seen as family vocation and anybody who is born to the family of African artist is believed to have such inborn artistic traits in him. There is a plethora of evidence to attest to it, in Benin art, the family of *Ineh* the senior title holder of the brass caster has a tradition of the origin of their art. Among the people of Oyo, *Onirese's* offspring are known for calabash carving while *Agoisona* is reputed for leather work. *Alaran* is reputed for excellent

sewing of *Egungun* costumes while *Abogunde* is always acknowledged for his excellent skill in carpentry and joinery.

However, there are certain works which an artist cannot do unless he is initiated into the cult. This is equally buttressed by Leuzinger in Alawode (2010),

In many regions of Africa, cult objects are produced by the smith. He has a special and quite distinctive status and importance. As a powerful, fearless man who strikes, sparks and controls the glowing fire, he is bound to be in alliance with the occult forces. On the basis of this belief he can build a position of dominance over his fellow tribesmen as leader of the secret society or as a priest. Amongst the Bantu of the Congo and Bantoid peoples of West Africa, a smith may sometimes even become a prince, an immediate adviser of the king, and may even, rise to the position of sacred ruler himself.

It is pertinent to note that, African artist work directly, without preliminary sketches; they do have a clear idea of end-product of their works from the time of making the first cut. Their works show a variety of styles ranging from naturalism to abstraction. The proportion of the human body in African sculpture shows large head and short legs, and this is what Alawode (2023) describes as hierarchical scaling. Przybylek (2019) corroborates this by stating that, “African artists often merged selected elements of realism with abstraction in their works. The features of their works are always distorted, exaggerated and elongated”. However, the artists pay attention to the details, instead of paying attention to the overall proportions. It is very common to African sculptors to begin their carving by dividing up the wood into separate parts which will eventually be the head, body, legs and others. In view of this, one can surmise that the proportions of the images created by traditional African artists are deliberately established at the outset and are certainly not due to lack of skill.

Starting from 16th century upward, a large number of African arts found their ways to Europe, most especially during the Benin Punitive Expeditions of 1897. During this period several artworks were pillaged, while those that were not plundered were massively looted. In view of this point and coupled with the “Scramble for Africa” which occurred between 1884 and 1885 was, the annexation and division of the continent of Africa among seven nations of Europe: Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom, aided in the proliferation of African art in Europe (Pennisi, n.d).

Expeditions and travels of the Europeans in search of riches and adventures also helped in bringing African art to Europe.

During this period, several shops, homes and museums in Europe exhibited these newly found treasures. At initial stage, African art were not regarded as art but as objects of curios. Dennis (2008) strengthens this view by stating that, “at initial time, African art were treated as artifacts of colonised cultures rather than as artworks, and held so little economic value that they were displayed in pawnshop windows and flea markets”. The Europeans of that time failed to comprehend the philosophy behind the in-proportionate execution of African art, and this made them to arrogantly give it a derogative appellation of ‘primitive’ art, which connotes underdevelopment and poverty. According to Willet (2002), “the word ‘primitive’ of course is a Protean in its meanings. Its basic sense ‘primitive in time’, and by extension underdeveloped, simple, crude, and unsophisticated”.

The scholarly attention of anthropologists and scholars of allied disciplines was attracted to African art, and these earliest scholars included Gottfried Semper, W.H. Holmes, Hjalmar Stolpe, A.C. Haddon, among others, collected their data from all available means. The view of Willet (2002) is germane as he observes that, “on the whole the works of the earliest scholars of African art were self-critical and still make interesting reading, but their data had to be collected from whatever sources were available, and were often of dubious value. The whole argument rested on inferences made from modern objects about man’s earliest artistic efforts”. It was later that more professional studies that relied on fieldworks were carried out by scholars like Leo Frobenius, Marcel Griaule, Eckart von Sydow, William Fag, C. Kjersmeier, Frank Willet, among others, which unraveled the mysteries surrounding the execution of African art.

As time went on, the creative ingenuities of traditional African artists were recognised during the emergence of avant-garde art movement in Europe. According to *Dictionary.com*, the avant-garde are people or works that are experimental, radical or unorthodox with respect to art, culture or society. From this, avant-garde art movement can be seen as a creative group active in the innovation and application of new concepts and techniques in visual arts. Pablo Picasso was among the avant-garde artists that emerged in France in twentieth century, and for the first time he saw African art at a museum in Paris called *Musee d’ Ethnographie du Trocadero*, now called *Musee de l’ Homme* where African arts were exhibited, and it later had an effect on him and influenced his art practice (Dennis, 2008).

Picasso later got to know other Parisian artists through his friends, Gertrude Stein, a wealthy American writer, and her brother, Leo Stein.



Gertrude Stein held weekly salons at home with Parisian emerging writers and artists. At these gatherings, Picasso met other Parisian artists like Maurice Vlaminck, Andre Derain and Henri Matisse. Matisse was considered at that time as leader of Parisian artists (Pennisi, n.d). Both artists, Picasso and Matisse later developed rivalry and close friendship, and it was as a result of rivalry that ensued between the two artists, which made Picasso to seek for new ways to dethrone Matisse as leader of Parisian artists. It was Matisse that bought a Vili figurine from the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1906 and showed the piece to Picasso, which impressed him and both of them admired it for its abstract conceptual approach to the human form.

This marked the beginning of their interest in African art. The sculptural piece helped Picasso to solve a dilemma he had with an unfinished portrait of Gertrude Stein. Pennisi (n.d) informs that, in 1905, Gertrude Stein sat ninety times for the portrait, but Picasso was uninspired and dissatisfied, he later erased Gertrude's face. It was some months later that Picasso returned to the painting, and being newly inspired by the Congolese sculpture that Matisse had shown him, he painted Gertrude's face without being present with African-mask like features. Since then, African traditional art assumed new status and influenced the western modernist artists who sought alternatives to realistic representation.

## **African Art after Colonialism**

The period of colonisation of Africa was a turbulent period where Europeans extended their territories to Africa. The African rulers submitted their authorities to Europeans either voluntarily or with force. Although before the colonialism, there was slave trade in Africa where able bodied men and women were exchanged for exotic things like salt, chairs, drinks, among others. This had weakened the strength of Africa which made it easier for Europeans to colonise. Africa was politically, physically and mentally colonised around nineteenth century. During the period of colonisation, there was an exchange of ideas between the Europe and Africa. For instance, the French government practised assimilation policy for its colonies, which saw the people of French colonies as Europeans in black skin. The British government gave its African colonies indirect system of government.

However, with this exchange of ideas, new form of art emerged from Africa, which is called modern African art. Modern African art started as a result of influx of foreign ideas and materials to Africa. It emerged in response to this foreign cultural bombardment, and it was built on the already existing structures and processes (Kasfir, 1999). Famule (2014) informs that, "Modern Nigerian art is executed without any adherence to a particular

style, medium, technique or thematic range, which is recognisably African". Kasfir (1999) identifies two reasons responsible for the emergence of modern African art, which are; the colonisation of sub-Saharan Africa by European powers following the Berlin Conference of 1884-85. At the same time, the impact of Darwin's theory of evolution that created the phenomenon of the natural history museum, which was a popular ideology that saw the African colonies as opportunities for specimen-collection. With this foreign cultural bombardment from Europe, a new civilisation emerged, which is referred to as "modern", while the culture in place before the development of modern culture is referred to as "traditional culture".

The evolution of modern African art can be traced to the period when Africa had contact with Europe and Arab. The influences from these two cultures changed the type of art which was in place in Africa before their arrival. Kani and Hisket in Danmalam (1997) inform that, "Arabic became an official language in Sokoto in 1450 A.D, which was strongly practised in Urban Hausa lands, and as a result, Islamic arts were therefore introduced and blended with local arts and materials". Also, Christian Missionaries who accompanied colonists, made a great impact in the development of modern African art. These Missionaries established many schools where art was taught as a subject or course

The influx of Europeans to Africa in the 15th century A.D made an indelible mark in the development of modern African art. For example, Afro-Portuguese artworks were developed around this period. Afro-Portuguese artworks incorporated various foreign images and icons such as Christian crucifix, foreign attire and weapons. The artists of these Afro-Portuguese artworks made ivory items such as spoons, hunting horns, and saltcellars for the Portuguese sailors and traders who were then sailing down the west coast of Africa in their effort to discover a passage to India and the Orient (Dewey, 2011). These artists combined Euro-American art style of naturalism with African art style of abstraction in the production of their artworks, and at times, their motifs were chosen from the Euro-American motifs. For instance, *Saltcellar* (Fig.3) is an archetypal example of Afro-Portuguese art, and it was rendered in Euro-American style of naturalism. The warriors depicted on the saltcellar are Europeans. It is evidently clear that, the attire of the human figures that forms the main body of the saltcellar is European type of dress. In addition to their long beards, the Christian crosses around their necks and the long swords they wear by their sides, mark them as Europeans.



**Fig. 3: Saltcellar, Benin, Ivory, Retrieved October 9, 2017, from [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/)**

Towards the end of 19th and early 20th centuries, Africa was introduced to more foreign ideas than ever before. Adepegba (1995) corroborates this by stating that;

Early in the 19th century, Islam from within decisively wiped off traditional religions in the north and not long after, Christianity started to make inroads from the coast. Still later in the same century, commercial links between the Europeans and various Nigerian groups were established, and above all, various indigenous states lost their freedom either through agreements or on battle fields. The cumulative effect of all these events was a new attitude developed by various Nigerians like other Africans.

The African culture was seriously eroded, and it has effect on the art of Africa. This effect can be felt on the choice of style, theme, technique, motif, medium, among others. The modern African artists mostly adopt western art techniques and materials in executing their works. For example, in painting, gouache and oils are mostly used, while in sculpture, cement, plaster and fibre-glass are normally adopted. Recently, mosaic, stained glass, and tapestry are being executed by African artists. Even the themes in contemporary African art are similar to those of Euro-American art such as landscapes, portraits, and figure compositions.



**Fig. 4: *The Making of Eve*, Segun Ajiboye, Oil on Board, 60.96x91.44cm, 2009, Artist's Collection.**

#### **Photographed by the Artist**

The painting titled *The Making of Eve* (Fig. 4.) is a typical example of modern Nigerian art. A careful observation of it reveals that, it was executed for aesthetic and documentation purposes, which is different from precolonial art of Africa. The work is photographically captured, and in the scene, there is a naked lady sitting down and a naked young man lying very close to the damsel, and at lower part of the board, two hands appear giving the forbidden fruit to Eve. The work documents a biblical story of how Satan tricked Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and how Eve in turn gave the fruit to her partner, Adam.

In the early part of 20th century, various Euro-American types of schools were established all over Africa, and many Africans were trained in European type of art schools (Ogundeji and Oladimeji, 2012). Although the first set of modern African artists were trained in Europe. Mount (1973) buttresses this by stating that, “the schools that seem to be favoured to artists from English-speaking areas of East Africa, Ghana and Nigeria, probably because they are the oldest and best known, are the Slade School of Fine Art of the University of London, the Royal College of Art, and Goldsmith's College of Art, all in London”. Examples of some of the early Nigerian artists who were trained abroad are Aina Onabolu, Akinola Lasekan, Justus Akerdolu, Ben Enwonwu, among others. Also the contemporary Suddenness artists like Ahmed Muhammed Shibrain and Ibrahim El-Salahi were trained at the Slade School of Fine Art, London. The early contemporary Ethiopian artists were also trained in Europe, and examples of such artists are Afewerk Tekle,

who studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, London. Gebre Kristo Desta also attended Academy of Art in Cologne, Germany, while Skunder Boghosian was trained at both the Ecole des Beaux Arts and Academie de Grande Chaumiere in France.

It should be noted that, the artworks of these artists marked the beginning of personal and individualistic self-expressions in visual arts (Adepegba, 1999). Not long as these artists were trained abroad that art institutions designed in European type were established all over Africa. These art schools introduced the use of foreign materials and methods, and their training was focused on skill development and originality. At the initial stage, the academic staff of these art schools were Europeans, and it was later that Africans joined and finally took over from Europeans.

The oldest among these art institutions is Achimota College, Ghana, established in 1936, and it was followed by the establishment of School of Fine Arts, Makerere University, Kampala-Uganda in 1937. In 1946, the Department of Arts and Crafts which later metamorphosed to College of Fine and Applied Arts, Khartoum-Sudan was established. The Department of Fine Arts, Yaba Technical Institute now Yaba College of Technology was established in 1952. In 1953, the Department of Fine Arts, Nigerian College of Art, Science and Technology, Ibadan Branch was established, and it was in 1955 that the Department was moved to Zaria Branch of Nigerian College of Art, Science and Technology (NCAST), and that is where it is now. Since then, many art institutions have been established in Black Africa.

It is not only formal art schools that trained modern African artists, informal art institutions like workshops also contributed to the training of modern African artists. One of such schools was established by Pierre Romain-Desfosses in 1944 at Lubumbashi, former Elisabethville in Republic of Congo. At initial stage, the school was called “Le Hangar” and it was later changed to “L’Academie de l’Art Populaire Congolais”. The workshop started with the accidental painting made by Desfosses’s chauffeur who was later given materials to work with. Desfosses told his chauffeur to invite his friends, and he gave them a place to work and also provided them with materials such as paper, canvas and paint (Adepegba, 1999). Mount (1973) informs that the school existed until the demise of Desfosses in 1954 which made it to be merged with Academie des Beaux Arts et des Metiers d’Art.

However, the stone sculpture workshop run by Frank McEwen at National Gallery in Salisbury now Harare was equally successful. McEwen started the workshop by giving art materials to Thomas Mukarobgwa and Paul Gwichiri whom he had hired as young museum attendants. The workshop started with painting and later shifted to stone carving. The reason

for shifting from painting to stone sculpture was that, there was a political problem between Britain and Zimbabwe. There was an announcement of the Unilateral Declaration of independence (UDI) by Ian Smith's government and he severed his relationship with the British government in 1965 and in retaliation the British government imposed an economic sanction which affected the development of the new art.

Imported art materials suddenly stopped, which necessitated the shift from painting to stone sculpture. Kasfir (1999) informs that, "in 1969 Joram Mariga helped McEwen to move the workshop out of the National Gallery to Vakutu in Nyanga Mountains, to lessen government surveillance and remove the artists from market pressures to sell, and also create a residential community for those artists already trained by Mariga at Nyango". McEwen was inspired by the new location and he reframed the workshop as "Bush School". McEwen's wife encouraged the sculptors to develop themes out of Shona tradition and a monthly prize was awarded for the best example. After the imposition of the economic boycott, McEwen could not exercise control over the promotion of stone sculpture in Rhodesia. As a result, Tom Bloomfield (a tobacco farmer, who had been equally affected by the economic boycott imposed on Rhodesia by the British government. At the same time, Bloomfield had abundant quantity of stones on his farm) engaged the service of Lemon Moses (a sculptor from Malawi), to set up a carving group among his migrant farm workers.

In 1952, Cecil Skotnes was appointed by Johannesburg City Council as Director of Cultural Recreational Centre. Polly Street Art Centre emerged from this, and informal classes were held for black students. The participants were encouraged to create styles so as to establish themselves in the market place. Water colour was a common medium at the workshop and terracotta was equally employed by the sculptors. Browen (2013) observes that, the art produced at Polly Street was of two styles: a township style and neo-African style which was influenced by traditional African sculpture. However, Polly Street Art Centre was replaced by the Jubilee Art Centre during which Ezrom Legae became a student at the Centre and later teacher but this Centre too later closed down.

As Polly Street came to an end, Rorke's Drift Art and Craft Centre was founded in Zululand in 1962 by the Swedish couple, Peder and Ulla Gowenhuis, and the aim of establishing it was to advance South African Art. There were two sections in the Centre, the Fine Art section and Art and Craft section. It is pertinent to note that, the Centre started with women, and as men were drawn into the Centre, the sexes kept their areas of expertise separate: women were in pottery, tapestry, textiles and printing, while men

were in various aspects of Fine Art. The Fine Art section closed in 1982, which resulted into demonstration staged by the urban students who were in Fine Art section because they viewed it as part of apartheid.

In Nigeria, the Oye-Ekiti workshop organised by Fathers Kevin Carroll and Sean O'Mahoney in 1947 was a bold attempt to produce Christian images that would be used in the churches. The essence of this workshop was to employ the traditional artistry for the artistic needs of the Catholic Church (Adepegba, 1995). Father Carroll read bible stories to the artists and allowed them to interpret it based on their understanding. Objections were sometimes made when the artists were to depict sacred figures like Jesus. It was the artists of this workshop that first depicted Jesus' mother, Mary in Yoruba traditional attires, *Buba* and *Iro*.

Another workshop that also contributed to the development of modern Nigerian art is Mbari Workshop which was organised in Ibadan in 1961 to serve as a forum for artists to meet, discuss and exhibit their works. When the workshop was at Ibadan, it attracted various Nigerian art graduates. It was based on the invitation by Duro Ladipo that the workshop was moved to Osogbo which attracted various primary school dropouts. At Osogbo, the workshop name was Yorubaised as *Mbari Mbayo* which means "If I see I will be happy", and it produced a lot of modern artists like Jimoh Buraimoh, Taiwo Olaniyi, Muraina Oyelami, among others.

In 1967, a workshop experiment was undertaken by the Institute of African Studies, University of Ife now Institute of Cultural Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife under Michael Crowther. The workshop was named *Ori Olokun*, which its participants were largely primary school drop-outs (Adepegba, 1995). The author informs further that, "Ori-Olokun Art Workshop was an extension of Mbari Art Workshop because of the involvement of some certain participants, who had earlier participated in Mbari Art Workshop, such as Rufus Ogundele, Muraina Oyelami, Jimoh Buraimoh and Yinka Adeyemi. Other participants who only participated in Ori-Olokun are; James Adebayo, Rufus Orishayomi, Peter Badejo, Gbade Akintunde, Michael Agun, Wale Olajide, Adeniyi Adeyemi and Ademola Williams". Banjo (2013) reports that, "Ola Rotimi suggested the name Ori-Olokun, which he derived from Olokun, the wife of Oduduwa".

It is pertinent to note that, the acquisition of western art education gave the recipient artists a new educational status, and they developed a taste for foreign cultural life style, which made them to embrace the imitation of foreign art styles. Also, the missionaries contributed significantly to the development of modern African art by encouraging the art that promoted their culture and religion, and their encouragement was felt from the establishment of Euro-

American schools and workshops where several artists were trained (Aremu and Makinde, 2004).

## Conclusion

From the foregoing, it can be observed that this study examines art in both precolonial and postcolonial Africa, and it was observed that, there is a contrast between the concept of art in precolonial Africa and postcolonial Africa. Art in precolonial Africa is tied to the producer's culture, and it is utilitarian in nature, while art in postcolonial Africa is mostly art for art sake. However, art in both precolonial and postcolonial Africa is interdependent because postcolonial African art was built on the already existing precolonial art structures.

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