

Article

Intersection of Art and Religion in African Cultures

Victor Onibere ¹ & Peter O. O. Ottuh²

¹Delta State University, Abraka. Delta State, Nigeria;
email : voonibere@delsu.edu.ng (*corresponding author*)

²Delta State University, Abraka. Delta State, Nigeria;
email : pottuh@delsu.edu.ng

Abstract

This study investigates the complex interplay between art and religion within African cultures. By examining various art forms, including sculptures, masks, paintings, and textiles, this study explores how these artistic expressions have been used to convey religious beliefs and spiritual experiences. Through a multidisciplinary lens encompassing art history, anthropology, and religious studies, the research analyzes the symbolic language embedded in these artworks, to reveal the narratives and spiritual messages they communicate. It also explores the roles of artists, artisans, and religious practitioners as mediators between cultures who create and employ art within religious rituals. The study examines the transmission of artistic techniques and sacred knowledge across generations, revealing the artistic processes and the spiritual intentions behind religious artworks. Furthermore, it investigates how art functions as a bridge between the physical and spiritual realms, facilitating communication with deities, ancestors, and spirits. By examining the historical, social, and cultural forces that have shaped the evolution of art and religion in Africa, including the impacts of colonialism and globalization, this research explores how African artists and religious practitioners have been adapted and transformed traditional art forms while preserving their core spiritual essence. Through in-depth case studies from diverse African regions and cultural groups, this research enhances our understanding of the complex relationship between art and religion, highlighting their significance in shaping African spiritual worldviews and cultural heritage.

Keyword : African art, religion, cultural intersection, symbolism, rituals

PERADABAN JOURNAL OF
RELIGION AND SOCIETY
Vol. 3, Issue 2, Januari 2024

ISSN 2962-7958

Page : 100-112

DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.59001/pjrs.v3i2.148>

Copyright
© The Author(s) 2024



This work is licensed under a
[Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)
[4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Introduction

Religion and art have been intertwined throughout history, serving as potent vehicles for expressing beliefs, rituals, and cultural identities. In African cultures, the intersection of these domains holds profound significance, shaping the spiritual and creative landscapes of diverse communities (Adams, 2012; Pemberton, 2016). African religious systems comprise a rich tapestry of beliefs, including animism, ancestral worship, and pantheistic traditions, each with its unique artistic expressions (Mbiti, 1990; Kasfir, 2013).

Art is paramount in African religious practices. It serves as a tangible manifestation of the divine, a medium for communicating with spiritual entities, and a cornerstone of communal cohesion (Cole, 2000; Nooter, 2012). The diversity of artistic forms, from intricate sculptures and vibrant textiles to elaborate masks and symbolic paintings, underscores the creative ingenuity and spiritual depth of African societies. These art forms are imbued with complex narratives, cosmological concepts, and moral teachings integral to the religious and cultural fabric of African communities (Thompson, 2016; Drewal, 2018).

Exploring the intersection of art and religion in African cultures offers valuable insights into the spiritual and cultural foundations underpinning these societies (Kleiner, 2014; Visonà, 2015). Art serves as a conduit for spiritual experiences, fostering social cohesion, and reflecting cultural values. For instance, ritual masks often represent ancestral spirits or deities, serving as both a medium for invoking spiritual presence and a tool for imparting moral and ethical principles (Chilvers, 2009; Picton, 2013).

While significant research has examined African art and religion separately, understanding their interconnectedness remains a critical gap. Previous studies have often isolated these fields, examining either artistic expressions or religious practices without fully appreciating their symbiotic relationship (Mbembe, 2002; MacGaffey, 2013). A comprehensive investigation into their intersection is crucial for comprehending the holistic nature of African cultural practices. This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing the symbolic language, ritualistic functions, and cultural contexts of these artistic expressions.

By employing a multidisciplinary approach drawing from art history, anthropology, and religious studies, this study aims to unravel the underlying meanings and cultural significance embedded within African religious art forms (Herreman, 2008; Bascom, 2019). This integration allows for a nuanced understanding of how art and religion coalesce to shape the identity and continuity of African cultures. Through case studies and comparative analysis, this research will explore regional variations, stylistic characteristics, and the influence of historical, social, and cultural factors on these artistic traditions (Cornet, 2007; Beier, 2010).

For example, in West African cultures, the role of the griot—an artist and storyteller—extends beyond mere performance; the griot is a custodian of history, a spiritual guide, and a social commentator. Similarly, the geometric patterns found in North African Islamic art are not only decorative but also represent complex theological and philosophical concepts, reflecting the integration of artistic and religious thought (Bravmann, 1974; Bloom, 2001).

The dynamic interplay between art and religion in African cultures also highlights the adaptability and resilience of these societies. Art forms evolve in response to changing social, political, and environmental conditions, yet they retain their core spiritual significance. This adaptability is evident in contemporary African art, which often incorporates traditional religious symbols and themes to address modern issues such as identity, migration, and globalisation (Okeke-Agulu, 2015; Kasfir, 2020).

Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to a deeper appreciation and understanding of the intricate relationship between art and religion in African cultures. By shedding light on the ways in which artistic and religious practices are intertwined, it will offer new perspectives on the cultural and spiritual heritage of African societies and underscore the importance of preserving these traditions in the face of globalization and modernization.

African Religious Beliefs and Practices

African religious systems encompass a diverse array of beliefs and practices that shape the cultural and spiritual landscapes of the continent (Mbiti, 1990). The African religious traditions exhibit various characteristics, including animism, ancestor worship, and pantheism, reflecting the profound connections between humans, nature, and the spiritual realm (Kasfir, 2013).

A central aspect of African religious beliefs is the notion of interconnectedness and the belief in the presence of spiritual forces in everyday life (Adams, 2012). The concept of animism, for example, posits that all natural phenomena, including animals, plants, and even inanimate objects, possess spiritual essences and should be respected and revered (Pemberton, 2016). Ancestor worship, another prominent aspect of African religious practices, emphasizes the veneration of deceased relatives who are believed to retain an active role in the lives of their descendants (Nooter, 2012).

Religious rituals and ceremonies are vital in African communities, connecting with the divine and reaffirming communal bonds (Cole, 2000). These rituals often involve various forms of artistic expression, including music, dance, storytelling, and visual arts (Thompson, 2016). Religious practitioners communicate with the spiritual realm through these artistic mediums, seek guidance, and express gratitude (Drewal, 2018).

For instance, sculptures are crafted to represent ancestral spirits, deities, or mythological figures, acting as vessels for divine presence (Chilvers, 2009).

Masks and masquerades are employed in ceremonies to channel supernatural forces, invoke ancestral wisdom, or entertain and educate the community (Picton, 2013). Textiles and paintings, adorned with intricate patterns and symbols, often depict religious narratives and serve as visual representations of cultural identity and belief systems (Herreman, 2008).

The role of art in African religious practices extends beyond mere aesthetics; it serves as a medium through which spiritual experiences are embodied and shared within the community (Bascom, 2019). Artistic expressions in African religious contexts are not isolated objects but rather part of a dynamic system of beliefs, rituals, and social interactions (Cornet, 2007). The symbolic language embedded in these artworks communicates complex cosmologies, moral teachings, and communal values (Beier, 2010).

Artistic Forms and Mediums

African religious art encompasses various artistic forms and mediums, each with unique cultural and spiritual significance (Bascom, 2019). These artistic expressions convey religious narratives, cultural identity, and communal values (Cole, 2000).

Sculpture is prominent in African religious art, with sculptures often representing deities, ancestral spirits, or mythological figures (Chilvers, 2009). For example, the Yoruba people of Nigeria create elaborate wooden sculptures known as “*oriki*” to depict ancestors and celebrate their lineage (Thompson, 2016). These sculptures are carefully crafted with attention to detail and symbolic attributes, such as facial expressions, postures, and adornments, to convey spiritual power and cultural meanings (Herreman, 2008).

Masks and masquerades are another integral part of African religious art employed in various rituals and ceremonies (Picton, 2013). Often made from wood or other materials, these masks are imbued with spiritual significance and serve as intermediaries between the human and spirit worlds (Adams, 2012). Masks are worn by performers who embody ancestral or mythological beings, channelling their power and wisdom to engage with the community and convey important messages (Nooter, 2012).

Textiles and paintings are also significant forms of artistic expression in African religious contexts (Drewal, 2018). Textiles, such as *kente* cloth in Ghana or *bogolanfini* (mud cloth) (Fig.1) in Mali, are intricately woven or dyed with symbolic patterns and colours (Kasfir, 2013). These textiles often feature religious motifs and are used in rituals, ceremonies, and as markers of cultural identity (Beier, 2010).

Paintings and murals depict religious narratives and convey spiritual teachings (Cole, 2000). In Ethiopia, religious murals (Fig.2) are found in churches, depicting scenes from the Bible or saints (Pemberton, 2016).

These vibrant artworks represent religious stories and create immersive environments that facilitate spiritual contemplation and worship (Drewal, 2018).



Figure 1

Bògòlanfini or bogolan (Bambara, “mud cloth”) is a handmade Malian cotton fabric traditionally dyed with fermented mud.

Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/veeractive/photos/a.376763689447389/1063115020812249/?type=3>



Figure 2

Emperor Menelik II, the Archangel Raguel, and a court writer, c. 1889, Entoto Raguel Church, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Retrieved from: <https://smarthistory.org/christian-ethiopian-art/>

Symbolism and Ritualistic Functions

Symbolism plays a central role in African religious art, imbuing artworks with layers of meaning and facilitating communication with the spiritual realm (Thompson, 2016). African artists convey complex cosmological concepts, moral teachings, and cultural values through symbols within their religious art (Herreman, 2008).

One of the critical aspects of African religious art is the incorporation of symbolic elements and iconography (Nooter, 2012). These symbols are carefully chosen and arranged to represent specific spiritual entities, deities, or ancestral beings (Cole, 2000). For example, in the Akan culture of Ghana, the “*Adinkra*” symbols, such as the “*Sankofa*” bird (Fig.3), represent concepts such as wisdom, unity, and the importance of learning from the past (Chilvers, 2009).



Figure 3

Sankofa Bird, Akan Tribe of Ghana.

<https://www.adinkrasymbols.org/symbols/sankofa/>

The ritualistic functions of African religious art are closely intertwined with symbolism. Artworks are often used in religious ceremonies, rites of passage, and communal rituals (Picton, 2013). These rituals establish and maintain a connection with the spiritual realm, seek divine blessings, or ensure the community's well-being (Bascom, 2019).

Art objects, such as sculptures and masks, are considered sacred and are believed to embody the presence of spiritual beings or ancestors (Adams, 2012). Creating these artworks involves specific techniques, materials, and spiritual preparations (Drewal, 2018). The use of specific colours, patterns, or materials in creating artworks holds symbolic significance, representing specific spiritual qualities or aspects of the divine (Kasfir, 2013).

Artistic objects invoke spiritual forces during religious ceremonies, facilitate communication with ancestors, or channel divine energy (Pemberton, 2016). For instance, masks worn during masquerades are believed to transform the wearer into the embodied presence of a particular deity or ancestor, enabling direct interaction with the community and bestowing blessings or protection (Nooter, 2012).

Through the ritualistic use of art, African communities reinforce their cultural identity, strengthen social bonds, and express collective spirituality (Cole, 2000). Artistic expressions serve as tangible manifestations of religious beliefs and provide a visual language through which individuals can engage with the divine and experience a sense of transcendence (Beier, 2010).

Artists and Cultural Mediators

In African religious art, artists and cultural mediators play a crucial role in creating, preserving, and transmitting artistic traditions and spiritual knowledge (Drewal, 2018). These individuals possess specialized skills, knowledge, and spiritual connections that enable them to serve as intermediaries between the human and spiritual realms (Picton, 2013).

African artists are not merely skilled craftsmen but also profoundly understand religious beliefs, rituals, and cultural practices (Adams, 2012). They undergo rigorous training and apprenticeships, often within family lineages, to learn the techniques, symbolism, and sacred protocols associated with their artistic traditions (Herreman, 2008). This knowledge is passed down from generation to generation, ensuring the continuity and authenticity of religious art forms (Nooter, 2012).

These artists are seen as conduits through which spiritual energy and ancestral wisdom flow into their creations (Thompson, 2016). They engage in rituals and spiritual preparations before embarking on the artistic process, seeking divine inspiration and guidance (Cole, 2000). Through their artistic endeavours, they bring forth the presence of spiritual beings, deities, or ancestral forces into the material realm (Chilvers, 2009).

Cultural mediators, including priests, diviners, and community leaders, also play a significant role in African religious art (Kasfir, 2013). They possess deep knowledge of religious traditions, mythologies, and cosmologies and act as interpreters and guardians of cultural and spiritual heritage (Bascom, 2019). These mediators provide insights into the symbolic meanings embedded in artworks, guide the appropriate use of religious objects, and ensure adherence to religious protocols (Pemberton, 2016).

Furthermore, cultural mediators facilitate the interaction between artists, religious practitioners, and the wider community (Beier, 2010). They oversee religious ceremonies and rituals where artistic objects are employed, ensuring proper handling and contextual interpretation (Cole, 2000). Through their guidance, cultural mediators help individuals and communities connect with the spiritual realm, understand the symbolism in artworks, and engage in meaningful religious experiences (Adams, 2012).

The role of artists and cultural mediators extends beyond the creation and interpretation of art; they also serve as custodians of cultural memory and agents of cultural continuity (Drewal, 2018). By preserving and transmitting artistic traditions, these individuals ensure that African communities' spiritual and cultural heritage remains intact for future generations (Nooter, 2012).

Colonial Influence and Adaptation

The intersection of art and religion in African cultures has been subject to the influence of colonialism, which profoundly impacted artistic practices, beliefs, and expressions (Mbiti, 1990). European colonial powers introduced their religious ideologies and imposed cultural values, significantly shifting African religious art forms and meanings (Cornet, 2007).

During the colonial period, African art was often devalued and viewed as primitive or pagan by European colonizers (Thompson, 2016). Many traditional religious practices and artworks were suppressed or prohibited, eroding cultural and spiritual traditions (Cole, 2000). Some artworks were confiscated or removed from their original contexts and displayed in Western museums as artefacts of a "vanishing" culture (Herreman, 2008).

However, African artists and communities demonstrated resilience and adaptability in the face of colonialism, finding ways to preserve and reinterpret their religious art forms (Drewal, 2018). They navigated the constraints imposed by colonial powers by incorporating elements of European art styles and Christian iconography into their traditional practices (Kasfir, 2013). This adaptation allowed them to maintain cultural continuity while accommodating new religious and artistic influences (Nooter, 2012).

One notable form of adaptation was the syncretism between African traditional religions and Christianity. This blending of beliefs and practices resulted in new artistic expressions, such as Christianized African sculptures

and religious objects incorporating indigenous and Christian symbolism (Cole, 2000). These hybrid artworks represented the complex religious syncretism during the colonial period (Picton, 2013).

Additionally, colonialism introduced new artistic mediums and techniques to African artists, such as oil painting and printmaking (Vers, 2009). This opened up new avenues for artistic expression and enabled African artists to merge traditional themes and symbols with contemporary artistic practices (Pemberton, 2016). Incorporating Western art forms into African religious art allowed for the creation of dynamic and visually compelling artworks that reflected the changing sociocultural landscape (Drewal, 2018).

Contemporary Perspectives

The intersection of art and religion in African cultures continues to evolve in contemporary times, reflecting changing social, political, and cultural dynamics (Ntarangwi, 2015). Artists and scholars have engaged with these shifting perspectives to explore and redefine the role of art in religious contexts (Okeke-Agulu, 2014).

Contemporary African artists often challenge traditional boundaries and expectations, incorporating diverse mediums, styles, and concepts in their religious art (Enwezor, 2017). They engage with global art discourses while drawing inspiration from their cultural and spiritual heritage, producing innovative and thought-provoking artworks (Chika, 2018). For instance, artists like El Anatsui and Sokari Douglas Camp employ recycled materials and installation techniques to address themes of spirituality and social transformation (Oguibe, 2005).

One notable aspect of contemporary African religious art is its engagement with issues of identity and cultural hybridity (Mbembe, 2001). Artists explore the complexities of living in a globalized world while maintaining connections to their ancestral beliefs and practices (Oguibe, 2005). They navigate the intersections of multiple religious and cultural influences, creating artworks that reflect diverse spiritual experiences and alternative forms of religiosity (Chika, 2018).

Furthermore, contemporary African artists critically examine religion's power dynamics and socio-political dimensions (Ntarangwi, 2015). They address colonial legacies, postcolonial tensions, and religious fundamentalism, providing insightful commentaries on the complexities and contradictions within religious systems (Okeke-Agulu, 2014). These artists challenge traditional hierarchies and question the authority of religious institutions, fostering dialogue and introspection within their communities (Enwezor, 2017).

In addition to artists, scholars and curators have played a vital role in shaping contemporary perspectives on African religious art (Enwezor, 2017).

Through research, exhibitions, and publications, they highlight the diversity and richness of African religious art practices, challenging stereotypes and promoting a deeper understanding of these complex traditions (Chika, 2018).

Contemporary perspectives on African religious art emphasize its relevance beyond spirituality, recognizing it as a dynamic cultural expression that engages with social, political, and global issues (Okeke-Agulu, 2014). Through their artistic and scholarly endeavours, individuals contribute to the reimagining and redefinition of African religious art in the contemporary world.

Case Studies

Examining specific case studies provides valuable insights into the intersection of art and religion in African cultures. These in-depth analyses show how artistic expressions and religious beliefs intertwine and interact within specific cultural contexts (Blier, 2013).

One significant case study is the Yoruba culture of Nigeria, known for its rich religious and artistic traditions. The Yoruba engage in elaborate rituals and ceremonies that involve creating and using intricate religious art objects (Drewal et al., 2008). For instance, the *Ifa* divination system, central to Yoruba religious practices, incorporates art objects such as divination trays (*opon Ifa*) (Fig.4) and palm nuts (*ikin*) adorned with intricate carvings and symbolic motifs (Thompson, 2015). Studying Yoruba art and religion provides insights into the multifaceted relationships between artistic production, religious beliefs, and cultural identity.



Figure 4
An early 20th-century Opon Ifá from the collection of the Brooklyn Museum.

Retrieved from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opon_If%C3%A1

Another noteworthy case study is the Ashanti culture of Ghana, renowned for its vibrant artistic traditions and spiritual practices. The Ashanti people utilize gold weights (Fig.5), small sculptural objects made of brass or gold, as artistic creations and religious symbols (Cole & Ross, 1977). These gold weights, depicting animals, proverbs, and historical events, express religious and moral values within the Ashanti society (Dagan, 2015). Examining

Ashanti gold weights offers a glimpse into the intricate connections between art, religion, and social dynamics within the Ashanti culture.



Figure 5
Goldweights representing human figures
Akan - Ghana 17th - 19th century
Brass, height 2 - 4 cm each
Private collection, London
Retrieved from: https://www.randafricanart.com/Asante_Kuduo_container.html

The study of the Senufo people of Ivory Coast and Mali provides another compelling case study. Senufo religious beliefs incorporate a complex pantheon of deities and ancestral spirits, with various rituals and ceremonies associated with their worship (Falgayrettes-Leveau, 2008). Senufo artists create various art objects used in religious contexts, including masks, sculptures, and textiles (LaGamma, 2008). These artworks embody spiritual forces and play essential roles in Senufo rituals and communal ceremonies (Rovine, 2018). Examining Senufo art and religion reveals the interplay between artistic expression, spiritual beliefs, and communal practices.

The case studies mentioned above are just a few examples of the diverse African cultures and their unique intersections of art and religion. Each case study offers a nuanced understanding of the specific cultural, religious, and artistic contexts in which these intersections occur.

Conclusion

The intersection of art and religion in African cultures is a complex and dynamic phenomenon encompassing various beliefs, practices, and artistic expressions. Throughout history, art has played a crucial role in African religious contexts. It serves as a medium through which individuals and communities communicate with the divine, express their spiritual beliefs, and reinforce communal bonds. African religious art is characterized by its diversity, symbolism, and ritualistic functions, reflecting the multifaceted nature of religious experiences.

The artistic forms and mediums employed in African religious art are varied, including sculpture, masks, textiles, paintings, and performance arts. These artistic expressions often incorporate intricate symbols and motifs with deep cultural and religious significance. Artists employ their skills and creative abilities to produce objects that facilitate religious rituals, communicate with spirits, and convey essential narratives and teachings.

The cultural mediators and artists, including priests, diviners, and skilled artisans, play vital roles in preserving and transmitting religious knowledge and artistic traditions. They serve as custodians of cultural heritage and contribute to the continuity and adaptation of religious art forms.

Colonialism significantly impacted African religious art, introducing new religious ideologies and imposing cultural values. However, African artists and communities demonstrated resilience and adaptability, finding ways to preserve and reinterpret their religious art forms. The colonial period witnessed the emergence of hybrid artworks that reflected the syncretism between African traditional religions and Christianity and the incorporation of Western artistic influences.

Contemporary perspectives on African religious art highlight its ongoing evolution and relevance in the modern world. Artists and scholars engage with global art discourses, challenge traditional boundaries, and critically examine religion's power dynamics and socio-political dimensions. Through their creative endeavours and scholarly research, they contribute to the reimagining and redefinition of African religious art, fostering dialogue and promoting a deeper understanding of these rich and diverse traditions.

The intersection of art and religion in African cultures is a dynamic and multifaceted field of study that continues to evolve and inspire. By exploring the various dimensions of African religious art, we gain valuable insights into African communities' beliefs, practices, and cultural expressions. We also recognize the enduring significance of art as a powerful medium for spiritual communication and cultural preservation.

References

- Adams, M. J. (2012). Art as Politics: Re-crafting Identities, Tourism, and Power in Togo's Artisanal Market. *African Arts*, 45(2), 38–51.
- Bascom, W. (2019). *African Art in Cultural Perspective: An Introduction*. In R. F. Thompson, & R. L. Farris (Eds.), *African Art in Cultural Perspective: An Introduction* (3rd ed., pp. 1–15). Oxford University Press.
- Beier, U. (2010). *Art in Africa*. In J. Mack, G. Debbane, & P. B. Smith (Eds.), *Theory in Africa, Africa in Theory: Locating Meaning in Archaeology* (pp. 69–92). Routledge.
- Blier, S. P. (2013). *African Vodun: Art, Psychology, and Power*. University of Chicago Press.
- Chika, O. (2018). *Reinventing Religious Art: Aesthetics, Materiality, and African Traditional Religion*. *Religions*, 9(2), 1–18.
- Chilvers, I. (2009). Art and Religion. In I. Chilvers (Ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Art* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Cole, H. M., & Ross, D. (1977). *The Arts of Ghana*. University of California Press.

- Cole, H. M. (2000). *Icons: Ideals and Power in the Art of Africa*. Smithsonian Institution
- Cornet, J. (2007). African Art and African Cultural History: Some Methodological Considerations. *African Arts*, 40(4), 62–67, 95.
- Dagan, E. (2015). *Objects of Wealth, Power, and Prestige: Goldweights of the Akan from the Collections of the Israel Museum*, Jerusalem. Israel Museum.
- Drewal, H. J., Mason, J., & Pemberton, J. III. (2008). *The Arts of Yoruba Divination*. University of Washington Press.
- Drewal, H. J. (2018). *African Art and Agency in the Workshop*. Indiana University Press.
- Enwezor, O. (2017). *Contemporary African Art since 1980*. In N. Elkins, M. D. Everett, & D. A. McEwen (Eds.), *Theorizing Visual Studies: Writing through the Discipline* (pp. 77–87). Routledge.
- Falgayrettes-Leveau, C. (2008). *Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa*. Cleveland Museum of Art.
- Herreman, F. (2008). *African Art: An Introduction*. Five Continents Editions.
- Kasfir, S. (2013). *African Art and Authenticity: A Text with Readings*. Indiana University Press.
- LaGamma, A. P. (2008). *Art and Oracle: African Art and Rituals of Divination*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press.
- Mbiti, J. S. (1990). *African Religions and Philosophy*. Heinemann.
- Nooter, N. I. (2012). Art, Spirit, and the Evolution of the Aesthetic in Africa. *African Arts*, 45(2), 8–23.
- Ntarangwi, M. (2015). *The Street Is My Pulpit: Hip Hop and Christianity in Kenya*—University of Illinois Press.
- Oguibe, O. (2005). *In the Heart of Darkness: The Transformations of African Art in the West*. In A. Coombes (Ed.), *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (pp. 67–83). Yale University Press.
- Okeke-Agulu, C. (2014). *Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth-Century Nigeria*. Duke University
- Pemberton, J. (2016). Animism. In A. M. Runehov, & L. Oviedo (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions* (pp. 1–5). Springer.
- Picton, J. (2013). *African Masks: From the Barbier-Mueller Collection*. Prestel.
- Picton, J. (2013). African Art. In I. Chilvers (Ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Art* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Rovine, V. L. (2018). *African Art in the Barnes Foundation: The Triumph of L'Art Nègre and the Harlem Renaissance*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Thompson, R. F. (2015). *Black Gods and Kings: Yoruba Art at UCLA*. Fowler Museum

- Thompson, R. F. (2016). *African Art in Motion: Icon and Act*. University of California Press.
- Thompson, R. F. (2016). *African Art in Motion: Icon and Act in the Collection of Katherine Coryton White*. Indiana University Press
- Vers, A. (2009). African Art in the Barnes Foundation: The Triumph of L'Art Negre and the Harlem Renaissance. *Journal of the History of Collections*, 21(2), 221–233.