

Art and Religion as Reflected By the Ezon Traditional War-Canoe (Amuu-Aru)

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ABSTRACT This paper is a study of the relationship between art and religion as they are exemplified in the Ezon War Canoe, which for the people is the greatest and most sophisticated form of gunboat that exists. The paper describes the creation of the war canoe from the *Iroko* tree through the craft of a master canoe carver. It also describes the various parts of the war canoe and the activities that take place in them as well as the special people who occupy them. Whereas the bow of the canoe is occupied by a dancer who represents the priest who carries out the functions of appeasing the gods and deities and warding off spells, at the stern is the captain who steers the canoe, using spiritual and physical powers to keep it on course. The lead drum is also situated at the stern. Armed guards stay in the middle and trunk of the canoe. In the depth of it is an inner guard who has two shamanistic charm pots useful in deflecting all arsenals of the enemy shot at the canoe. Besides the description of the war canoe, the rest of the paper deals with the religious and artistic interplay in the Ezon War Canoe. It pays attention to the artistic as well as religious implication of each item in the war canoe. The paper concludes that the use of colour among the Ezon is an important index in interpreting the relationship between mortals and divinities, which though could be mysterious, yet is inspirational and exciting.