

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE CURATOR, NATIONAL MUSEUM, ILE-IFE, MR. BODE ADESINA ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF EXHIBITION TITLED "100 YEARS AGO IN THE EVES OF LEO-FROBENIUS AND HIS EXPEDITION TEAM AT NATIONAL MUSEUM, ENUWA, ILE-IFE.

His Imperial Majesty,

Oba Obunade Sijuwade CFR, DCL, LLD.D, Litt., Olubuse II, Ooni of Ife,

Other Royal Highnesses present,

The Chairman of this occasion,

HRH Oba (Engr) Olayiwola Olalekan Adereti, the Obawara of Iwara, Ile-Ife,

Distinguished Scholars from the Ivory Tower,

Gentlemen of the Press,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Director-General, National Commission for museums and Monuments, Mallam Vusuf Abdallah Usman, I welcome you all to the opening of the pictorial exhibition in honour of Leo-Frobenius, a German ethnologist, who visited Ile-Ife between 1910-1912.

Kabiyesi, distinguished Guests, Leo-Frobenius merely learnt of the sacred city of Ile-Ife as the home of divinities from Voruba Stowaways and ship workers in Hamburg and in November 1910, he visited Ile-Ife and carried out "crude" excavations in Olokun grove and other notable sites where he discovered master pieces of Bronze and Terracotta sculptures in naturalistic

styles. The most famous of these sites is Olokun grove where Olokun Bronze head (Ori-Olokun) was excavated.

His reports and comments about Ife Arts and Civilization being evidence of the lost Atlantis of the Greeks and Yoruba deity, Obatala, as the same Greek god Poseidon, threw Ife into limelight, placed Ife Arts in the world cultural map and invariably attracted the attention of the world and beam research searchlights on Ife. The accidental finds of about eighteen (18) exquisite Bronze heads in one single location in Wunmonije Compound near Ooni's palace in 1938 coupled with excavations conducted in Ife since 1943 revealed large quantities of sculptures dated between 12th and 15th Centuries further confirmed Leo-Frobenius report about the originality of Ife Arts and Civilization.

However, before he left in 1912, he had documented significant events, remarkable and unique cultural traditions and practices in pictures and sketches which formed the bulk of today's pictorial exhibition in his honour. It is to the credit of this great researcher as the first to excavate in Ife besides being the first anthropologist that pioneered the study of African Art as a spread field of study (Willet 2002:33).

Kabiyesi, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, without being immodest, the establishment of Ife Museum in 1954, in a way, could be linked to Leo-Frobenius, whose archaeological excavations and activities succeeded in revealing and exposing the richness of Ife Arts.

In 2007, Leo-Frobenius Institute in Germany in collaboration with the British Museum purchased computer and its accessories for Ife Museum and equally funded the digital documentation of Ife collections. International Exhibition of Ife Arts are now in America after it had gone to Spain and Britain.

It is quite evident that culture and cultural identities are factors shaping the pattern of cohesion between and among nations of the world today. The fact remains that most important distinction among peoples in our contemporary world is not ideological, political or economical, they are essentially cultural.

This, however, brings to focus the importance of this exhibition and the indispensable role of Museums as agent of cultural re-awakening and international unity. Exhibitions are simultaneously being staged in honour of Leo-Frobenius in other places he visited while he was in Nigeria e.g. Vola (Admawa), Minna (Nupeland) and Makurdi (Tiv land).

This address will not be complete without placing on record, the immense contribution of Dr. M usa Hambolu, Director, Research, Planning and Publications of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) whose relentless efforts made this exhibition possible. In the light of the above, there is need for more distinguished citizens offering similar support to amplify the efforts of Leo-Frobenius and others like him in promoting and propagating our rich cultural heritage.

Thank you all.