

Speech given by dr SENKA KOVAČ, professor from the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Belgrade University, at the opening of the Exhibition „Ibeji – Twice Born“ at the Museum of African Art, on December 29th 2015

Dear visitors,

Friends of the Museum of African Art in Belgrade,

Your Excellency,

The Museum of African Art presents the exhibition **“Ibeji – Twice Born : Twin Sculptures of the Yoruba People from the Pavlić Collection”** to the public. The objects on display belong to the art collection of the Pavlić family, who collected them with great care at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s.

The curator of this exhibition, Aleksandra Prodanović Bojović, is an anthropologist who has been engaged in the study of African art for 15 years and she is the author of a number of articles and publications. She has independently curated one museum exhibition and two exhibitions as part of a team of curators. She has researched the cultural context of the showcased objects that will, I am certain, provoke the interest of the scientific and broader audience.

Objects from private collections have been exhibited at the Museum of African Art, where they live their second life in Serbia, giving information on particular art styles, religious notions and the religious practice in Africa.

What the collectors have gathered and what Ljiljana and Boris Pavlić have entrusted us with to exhibit, offers possibilities for the wider public to become interested in the displayed items and learn more about the rich cultural heritage of the Yoruba.

The Yoruba represent one of the largest West African peoples, whose cultural identity has been shaped by a complex mythology and religion, as well as the highly developed cultures in this region – Nok and Ife. The link between elite and traditional culture is very pronounced in the art of the Yoruba.

One of the most important features of Yoruba sculpture is its anthropomorphic and naturalistic character.

Aleksandra Prodanović Bojović has researched the very frequent motif of twins in Yoruba art. The Yoruba ascribed supernatural origin to twins.

According to the beliefs of the Yoruba people who adhere to traditional religious notions, “twins are children who are born together with their heavenly double. They are considered to be incarnations of the twin deity – Ibeji, whose name signifies twins in Yoruba language. Twin children are seen as divine blessings and it is believed that they bestow happiness on their family, if they are cared for and respected.”

I am certain that the Museum of African Art in Belgrade will attract visitors with its well-conceived programs in the next six months during which the exhibition will be on display. Through numerous workshops and expert guided tours, my colleagues from this museum successfully transmit their knowledge of African culture to all generations.

I would like to thank the colleagues from the Museum of African Art for inviting me address you and open the exhibition: **“Ibeji – twice born : Twin sculptures of the Yoruba people.”**

Professor Senka Kovač