

WELCOME ADDRESS TO THE VISITING DELEGATION

By

Dr. Charles O. Akinde

Field Supervisor

Oke Idanre Cultural Landscape.

(Oke Idanre Management Committee)

ALL PROTOCOLS ARE DULY OBSERVED

It is our great delight in this community to welcome you to this unique cultural landscape called Oke Idanre, a community about which Prof Wole Soyinka, the Nobel laureate wrote his longest poem *Idanre and Other Poems*.

Some of you may have visited this place at one point or the other, but I should think that this is the first time that you come to this place as part of a powerful representation of our administrators and technocrats from the South West.

Let me put a notion straight which many people have erroneously thought was correct. This is that Idanre is not just this place where you are now, but a generic name which is shared by over 400 villages and hamlets. Therefore, Idanre is rather a district than a town. Idanre spread from Owena to Oniserere, and shares borders with Edo State, Akure, Ondo, Owo and Ikale Local Governments of Ondo State. It has one of the largest forest reserves in this State or perhaps in Nigeria. That is why Idanre produces the largest tonnage of timber and by far the largest producer of Cocoa beans in the South Western Nigeria.

Perhaps coincidentally, or by God's design, Idanre produced, in 1956 the first minister for Agriculture and natural resources in the old Western Nigeria before Nigeria became independent; this in the person of the then Chief Gabriel Akinola

Loko, under the administration of Chief Oshinubi Awolowo. It is at a later time became the Iba of Idanra Kingdom.

Due to the foresight of High Chief Akin Doko and Chief Awolowo, Idanra is one of the best farm settlements in the country. It was established in the Israeli system of farming. Hence, we produce the highest range of our beans in Ondo State and Nigeria.

Idanra comprises of three large towns with an Oba in each and several smaller towns each headed by an Oba. The three principal towns are Odo, Odo, and Odo, now, Alade and Atasin. The head of all these towns, the paramount ruler, is His Majesty, Oba Dr. Frederick Adegunle Afolayan J.R.O.P. The Oba of Idanra Kingdom, Kabiyesi the Oba of Idanra is the direct grand son of Oba of Idanra who was referred to by the first white man who visited Idanra in 1894 called an "European ruler". His father the immediate past Oba of Idanra was the one who brought civilization to the entire Idanra district. The drop of civilization to Idanra community had caused rippling far and wide. Following the introduction of Christianity, schools sprang up every where and the people of Idanra have enjoyed the benefits of civilization since the people moved down hills from 1928. In 1938, they settled at Alade, and then the second town settled at the present location, Odo Idanra.

Odo Idanra which now becomes very popular worldwide as a tourist resort. The people of the entire district for over 300 years. There had been an Oba up there before the present Oba. People say he was wandering why there had been no written account of Idanra. In the various versions of Yoruba history, this can be explained as follows. Oba of Idanra called the name

Deko, under the administration of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. He at a later time, became the Lisa of Idanre Kingdom

Owing to the foresight of High Chief Akin Deko and Chief Awolowo, Idanre can boast of one of the best farm settlements in the country. It was fashioned after the Isreali system of farming. Hence, we produce the highest tonnage of cocoa beans in Ondo State and Nigeria.

Idanre Comprises of three large towns with an Oba in each; and several minor towns each headed by an Olu. The three principal towns are, Odode where you are now, Alade and Atosin. The Head of ^{and} ~~all these~~ towns, the paramount Oba of the district is His Majesty, Oba Dr. Frederick Adegunle Aroloye JP. OFR, The Owa of Idanre Kingdom. Kabiyesi the Owa of Idanre is the direct grand son of Arubiefin I, who was referred to by the first white man who visited Idanre in 1894 ^{as} ~~called~~ an "intelligent ruler". His father the immediate past Owa of Idanre was the one who brought civilization to the entire Idanre district. The drop of civilization into the sea of Idanre community, had caused ripples far and wide. Following the introduction of Christianity, schools ~~spring~~ ^{sprang} up every where, and the sons and daughters of this land have enjoyed the benefits of civilization since the people moved down hills from 1928. First they settled at Alade, and then the second batch settled at the present location, Odode Idanre.

Oke Idanre which now becomes very popular worldwide as a tourist resort harbours the people of the entire district for over 800 years. There had been 25 Obas up there before the present Oba, making 26. People may be wondering why there had been no written account of Idanre with the various versions of Yoruba history. This can be explained by what High Chief Ojomu Akintan called the urge

to hide our identity, which unfortunately sides our history with it. One of the questions that begged the minds of the people is why the people chose to go and live up to and amongst these mountains. The main reason was the urge to help and to preserve the Olofin's possessions in the town. These materials were brought from the site after the demise of Oduduwa. Olofin identified those Oduduwa's royal regalia which included a crown, considered to be the oldest in Yorubaland, today.

There is no doubt that Oke Idanra is a veritable haven for tourists who enjoy developed. As far back as 1894, Sir Gilbert Thomas Carter described Oke Idanra as a luxuriant environment with mountains in their embraces, a beautiful view of heads like hippopotamus through the forest. As a ground of scientific and historical interest, Gilbert Carter said that "I have noticed many plants and animals which have not been observed in Yoruba country." He added "the district would I am sure be a very valuable

paradise for the Botanists or Naturalists..." These statements though made in 1894 and sixteen years ago, 1894, many recent discoveries of fossils plants such as Aloe Vera in large quantities and others confirms what Gilbert Carter said about

Oke Idanra.

As a World heritage, Oke Idanra's natural landscape being a source of life and inspiration for the present and the future are irreplaceable assets that must be preserved. When fully utilized as a World Heritage site it will not only be of great benefit to the local communities but will be an economic source for the State and Nigeria. Besides, as a world heritage, it will put Ondo State on a world map of places of scientific and cultural interests for tourists all over the world. Ondo State people will through this be able to earn a rich cultural and natural heritage with the entire world. Once again on behalf of the Oyo of Idanra Kingdom and the entire people, you are welcome to the beautiful Idanra to maintain the heritage.

to hide our identity, which unfortunately hides our history with it. One of the questions that bugged the minds of visitors is why the people chose to go and live up on and amongst these mountains? The main reason was the urge to hide and to preserve the Olofin's possessions in the town. These materials were brought from Ile Ife after the demise of Oduduwa. Olofin inherited those Oduduwa's royal regalia which included a crown, considered to be the oldest in Yorubaland today.

There is no doubt that Oke Idanre is a veritable haven for tourists when fully developed. As far back as 1894, Sir Gilbert Thomas Carter described Oke Idanre as a luxuriant environment with mountains in their eminences ...burrowing their heads like hippopotamus through the forest. As a ground of scientific enquiry Sir Gilbert Carter said that "I have noticed many plants and ferns which I have not observed in Yoruba country" He added "the district would I am sure be a veritable paradise for the Botanists or Naturalist..." These statements though made one hundred and sixteen years ago, 1894, many recent discoveries of herbal plants such as Aloe Vera in large quantities and others confirms what Gilbert Carter said about Oke Idanre.

As a World heritage, Oke Idanre Cultural Landscape being a source of life and inspiration for the present and the future are irreplaceable assets that must be preserved. When fully enlisted as a World Heritage site it will not only be of great benefit to the local communities, it will be an economic source for the State and Nigeria. Besides, as a world property, it will put Ondo State on a world map of places of scientific and cultural interests for tourists all over the world; Ondo State people will through this, be able to share its rich cultural and natural heritage with the entire world. Once again on behalf of the Owa of Idanre Kingdom and the entire people, you are welcome to the amiable Idanre community.