**Frobenius, Leo (1873-1938)**

Leo Viktor Frobenius, a German ethnologist and philosopher of culture with a particular interest in African cultures, was a central figure in the German discipline of *Kulturmorphologie*. Frobenius introduced into the discipline the concept of the *Kulturkreis* (‘culture circle’ or cultural region), which refers to the geographic compass of a culture’s influence and to the integrity of a culture—the notion that one should study the individual elements of culture by examining their location and role within the organic whole to which they belong. Frobenius maintained that all cultures are subject to a common law of development and decline. He used the term *paideuma* to refer to the coherence that any given culture displays by virtue of being subject to such internal developmental laws. Ezra Pound held Frobenius’s work in high regard, and complained that neither *Paideuma; Umrisse einer Kultur- und Seelenlehre* (1921) nor *Erlebte Erdteile* (1925-29) had been translated into English. Pound assigned the film-maker, new media artist and essayist Hollis Frampton (1936-1984) the task of producing a translation of the latter—Frampton claimed to have completed that mammoth undertaking, but to have run into problems with the rights (though the translation has not been found among his papers).

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**List of works**

Frobenius, L. (1921) *Paideuma; Umrisse einer Kultur- und Seelenlehre*, Munich: Beck.

------ (1925-9) *Erlebte Erdteile,* 7 vols, Frankfurt: Frankfurter Societätsdruckerei, Abt. Buchverlag.

Haberland, E., ed. (1973) *Leo Frobenius 1873–1973: An Anthology*, Wiesbaden: F. Steiner. (A collection of Frobenius’s most important articles on African history, art and ethnography in English, together with a forward by the poet and first president of Senegal Léopold Sédar Senghor, an insightful ‘Editor’s Postscript’ and a selected bibliography of works by and about Leo Frobenius.)

**References and further reading**

Davenport, G. (1954) ‘Pound and Frobenius’, in L. Leary (ed.) M*otive and Method in the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, New York: Columbia University Press: 33–59. (A penetrating study of Frobenius’s influence on Ezra Pound’s ideas on culture, on his prose writing and on his literary work.)

Heinrichs, H.-J. (1998) *Die fremde Welt, das bin ich. Leo Frobenius: Ethnologe, Forschungsreisender, Abenteurer,* Wuppertal: Hammer. (A monograph on Frobenius, with a good bibliography.)

Wieschoff, H. (1950) ‘Das Schrifttum von Leo Frobenius’, in L. Frobenius *Ein Lebenswerk aus der Zeit der Kulturwende*, ed. W. J. Otto, Leipzig, Koehler & Amelang: 163–70. (Still the standard bibliography of Frobenius’s writings.)