

# History • World History: The Kingdom of Benin

**Key Learning Question:** What was the Kingdom of Benin, and how were European countries involved with it?



## Crucial Knowledge

- The Kingdom of Benin was in a place that is now a part of modern day **Nigeria** in West Africa. It is not in the same place as the modern African nation of Benin.
- The Kingdom of Benin was home to the **Edo** people who, in around 900 CE, began clearing parts of the rainforests of West Africa to build their homes.
- The Edo people worked together to build a community of farmers and craftspeople who traded successfully.
- Small settlements soon grew into the larger kingdom of **Igodomigodo**, which was ruled by kings called **Ogisos** (kings of the sky).
- After being governed by over 30 different Ogisos, the kingdom was then controlled by a new dynasty of rulers, called the **Oba**.
- The Kingdom had many skilled craftsmen who were commissioned by the **Oba** to produce highly sophisticated bronze and brass sculptures that have become known as “Benin Bronzes”.

## Big Ideas:

- Chronology • Evolution & Technology • Beliefs  
• Society • Change Makers • Conflict



## Key Vocabulary

- colonial: relating to a country controlled by a more powerful country
- empire: a number of nations controlled by one country
- dynasty: a line of hereditary rulers of a country
- trade: to buy and sell goods
- guilds groups of people who do the same job
- worshipped: paid respect to
- civilization: A culturally and technologically developed human society
- concurrently: taking place at the same time
- archaeologists: people who study the past by examining remains and objects
- oral tradition: a community’s culture and history passed down by word of mouth



## Important People

### The Ogisos

The Kingdom of Benin began under the rule of a line of mysterious kings called Ogisos. Ogiso means ‘king of the sky’ in the Edo language.



### The Oba

After the Ogiiso rulers came the Oba. The Oba had complete power. He was the head of Edo society, the army, land and trade.



## We Are Building Our Knowledge From

- Romans in Britain (Y4)
- Early Islamic Civilization (Y5)
- Immigration Through Time (Y6)



## Timeline

900	1000	1170	1472	1700	1897	2021
Edo people clear forests and build villages	Villages become a Kingdom	Oba dynasty begins	Portuguese explorers and traders arrive	Civil war caused by uncertain line of succession	British invade and burn Benin City; kingdom becomes part of British Empire	Controversy over the possible return of Benin Bronzes to West Africa