

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