

# Year 6 World History: The Kingdom of Benin

## Key Learning

The Kingdom of Benin began in the 900s when the Edo people settled in the rainforests of West Africa.

By the 1400s they had created a wealthy kingdom with a powerful ruler called an Oba.

They also started trading with merchants from Europe.

### The People of Benin

Most sources tell us about the rich and powerful people from the Kingdom of Benin. Little is known about the ordinary men, women and children.

Historians believe that **most** people:

- were farmers, growing crops like yams and plantains or clearing huge areas of land,
- had two or three different jobs
- may have been part of guilds of craftsmen producing goods for trade.

They believe others may have been:

- warriors,
- entertainers,
- builders.

Women were responsible for:

- looking after their families,
- making domestic objects such as cooking pots.

Children:

- did not go to school but learnt everyday from storytellers.



### Daily life in Benin

Many people lived in small towns and villages.

The army was made up of warriors who served the Oba.

They made their houses out of mud, woods and palm leaves.

The people made impressive sculptures carved out of bronze.

The British people were shocked that this nation could create such intricate pieces.

This changed their view of Benin and they wanted its wealth for themselves.



Benin is a country in its own right today. However the Kingdom of Benin was located on the South Coast of West Africa in what is known today as Nigeria.

### Artefacts



Art work made out of ivory and bronze.



### Trade

Ivory, palm oil and pepper were popular commodities traded with Portugal, Denmark and Britain.

Britain wanted control of Benin to steal their wealth.

## Key Vocabulary

Ogiso	The title used by the early rulers of Igodomigodo. It means 'king of the skies'.
Oba	The title used by Eweka and following rulers. Oba is the Yoruba word for 'king'.
Edo	The name given to the kingdom of Igodomigodo by Oba (king) Eweka.
Yoruba	The name of the people from the holy city of Ife. The histories of the Edo and the Yoruba people are closely linked.
animists	People who believe that humans, animals and objects all have souls or spirits.
merchants	A person or company that trades (buys and sells) goods.

## Significant People

Oba Eweke	The first of a new dynasty of kings called the Obas, crowned around 1180.
Oba Oguole	Had the Benin City Wall built around 1283.
Oba Ewuare	Expanded the kingdom greatly and set up trading links with Portugal in 1514.
Oba Ovonramwen	The last king of Benin, exiled by British troops after their invasion in 1897.