

Knowledge Organiser - Benin

The Kingdom of Benin rose to become a powerful empire in the 16th Century but was destroyed when it was invaded by British forces. It began as a small group of villages that joined together to improve trading and security. The people worked hard as farmers and craftsmen so that the Kingdom had high quality goods to trade with foreigners. The Obas were very powerful and were treated like gods, during their rule the Benin Kingdom expanded its boundaries. Over time there were arguments about who would be the next Oba and this led to civil wars. British troops invaded and gained control. In the 1960s it became part of independent Nigeria.








Significant People and Places

			
Nigeria	Eweka	Ogiso Igodo	Admiral Harry Rawson
Country which now exists where Benin used to exist	The first Oba of the Kingdom of Benin. He came to power in AD 1180	The first king or Ogiso of Benin	Oversaw the British invasion of Benin.
			
Oba Ovanramwen	Ife	Benin City	Edo people
The last king of Benin, exiled by British troops after their invasion	The holy city nearby the Kingdom of Benin, ruled by the Yoruba people	the modern city located in Nigeria. It used to be called Edo and Igodomigodo before that	The name given to the kingdom of Igodomigodo by Oba Eweka. The people also became known as the Edo people

Key Vocabulary

1	Ogiso	The title used by the early rulers of Igodomigodo. It means 'kings of the sky'. It is thought that there were around 31 Ogiso rulers.
2	Oba	The title used by Eweka and subsequent rulers. Eweka was from the Yoruba people and Oba is the Yoruba word for 'king'.
3	Edo	The name given to the kingdom of Igodomigodo by Oba Eweka. The people also became known as the Edo people.
4	Yoruba	The name of the people from the holy city of Ife. The histories of the Edo and Yoruba people are closely linked.
5	ohen	A priest who performed religious ceremonies.
6	animists	People who believe that humans, animals and objects all have souls or spirits.
7	The Benin Bronzes	A group of several thousand metal plaques and sculptures that decorated the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin, taken by British forces during the invasion of Benin in retaliation for the massacre of British envoys.
8	Osanobua	A creator god that the people of Edo's beliefs were centred around.

Timeline

				
900 - The kingdom begins to develop and boundaries are established around the region called Igodomigodo in what is now Nigeria.	1100 - The last Ogiso of Igodomigodo, Owodo, dies and there is nobody to rule. 1180 - Eweka becomes the new ruler and changes the name Igodomigodo to Edo. He calls himself the Oba.	1300- 1700 - The 'golden age' of Edo. It has a large, powerful army and skilled craftspeople.	1489—The Edo people begin trading with the Portuguese, who call the place 'Benin'.	1897—British enter Benin City without permission. Fighting breaks out (the 'Benin Massacre'), only two British officers survive. As punishment, the British launch the 'Benin Punitive Expedition' and destroy Benin City, stealing many treasures. The Oba is exiled and the British colonise Benin.