

Year 6 History Knowledge Organiser – Benin

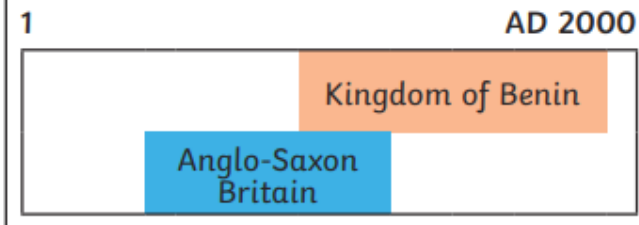
Kingdom of Benin

UKS2

Key Events

AD 400	The Yoruba people start using iron tools which enable them to clear the forest land effectively for the first time. Villages developed and chiefs emerged.
AD 600	The area becomes the Ife Kingdom, one of the earliest kingdoms in the West African Rainforest.
AD 900	The Kingdom of Benin begins to develop and boundaries are established around the region called Igodomigodo in what is now Nigeria.
AD 1091	The Edo people were ruled by the Ogiso , which means 'kings of the sky.'
AD 1100	The last Ogiso of Igodomigodo, Owodo, dies and there is nobody to rule.
AD 1180	Eweka becomes the new ruler and changes the name Igodomigodo to Edo . He calls himself the Oba .
AD 1300-1700	The 'golden age' of Edo . It has a large, powerful army and skilled craftspeople.
AD 1489	It was only when Portuguese made contact with the Kingdom of Benin that the name 'Benin' began to be used. This name is now widely used to describe the entire civilisation from AD900.

Timeline

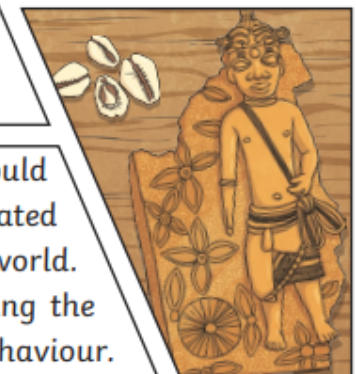


Religion

The people of **Edo's** beliefs were centred around a creator god named Osanobua and his many children.

People believed that, after death, Osanobua would decide their fate. They would either be reincarnated as another person or would join the spirit world. Spirits would live in villages together, watching the behaviour of their families and punishing bad behaviour.

Religion was particularly important to the people of the Kingdom of Benin. Ceremonies were led by an **ohen** and were intended to make the **Oba** seem powerful and great, as well as to worship the gods. There were celebrations held across the year that linked to the season, including harvest. The people of the Kingdom of Benin were all thoroughly involved and provided food and handmade costumes for the celebrations.



The people of **Edo** were **animists**. Leopards, crocodiles and snakes were among the animals associated with the gods.

Key Vocabulary

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.
Oba	The title used by Eweka and subsequent rulers. Eweka was from the Yoruba people and Oba is the Yoruba word for 'king'.
Edo	The name given to the Kingdom of Igodomigodo by Oba Eweka. The people also became known as the Edo people.
Yoruba	The name of the people from the holy city of Ife. The histories of the Edo and Yoruba people are closely linked.
ohen	A priest who performed religious ceremonies.
animists	People who believe that humans, animals and objects all have souls or spirits.
brass	A yellowy metal made of a mixture of copper and zinc.

Brass Heads

The people of **Edo** believed that the head was the most important part of a person, where the intelligence was found. When an important person died, artists would make a head of that person. **Obas'** heads, and those of gods or goddesses, were made from **brass**. People believed that the person's spirit could be contacted through the **brass** head. Artists made their work only for the **Oba** and he rewarded them with gifts.

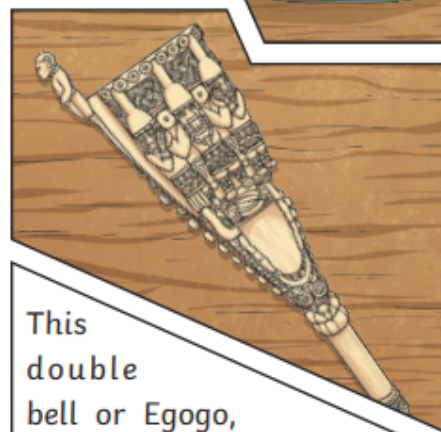
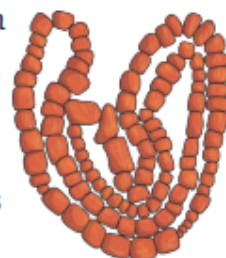


Artefacts from the Kingdom of Benin

Masks were made for use in ritual ceremonies and represented a link to the spiritual world. This mask of Queen Idia, who was the mother of **Oba** Esigie, dates back to the 16th century. It is made of ivory and features intricate carvings showing skilled craftsmanship.



Coral beads have a special significance in traditional **Edo** customs. The beads are made from coral stones from the seas, which are polished and shaped. **Edo** chiefs would wear necklaces of coral beads and the **Oba** would wear necklaces, collars and crowns made from them.



This double bell or Egogo, was used by the **Oba** to scare away evil spirits during religious ceremonies and acts of worship. It is believed to be from the 16th century and it features intricate carvings showing the **Oba** and his followers.