



# Yr 6 History: Benin



## Summary

- **The kingdom of Benin** was a wealthy kingdom that grew in western Africa from 900CE onwards.
- Several small tribes settled in the rainforests around **modern day southern Nigeria**.
- From these modest beginnings, the Kingdom grew up to be a **powerful empire** by the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It controlled a large amount of land, and **traded goods** with other African Kingdoms and beyond.
- The Kingdom of Benin was particularly well known for its **brass, crops and arts and crafts**.
- **Benin Kingdom was eventually brought under the control of the British Empire from 1897.**



## Timeline of events

### Beginnings

Generations of people had lived in the rainforest clearings in the area. The rich natural resources and ideal climate conditions meant that this was an ideal place for hunting, gathering and agriculture. Benin City is thought to have sprung up around 1000CE, in a forest that could be easily defended.

### Reign of Ogiso Oduwa (917-967)

From early in Oduwa's reign, village chiefs wanted to go to war with him. They were unhappy that the leadership was passed to him, rather than him being chosen. This damaged the reputation and power of the Ogisos. Oduwa did build some valuable trade relations within the kingdom and with other local civilisations.

### Reign of Ogiso Arigbo (1012-1059)

Ogiso Arigbo is best-known for having been a great merchant. He built strong relationships with other kingdoms and established successful trade routes. He also introduced slave workers to the Kingdom, capturing men, women and children from other areas to serve those within the Kingdom.

### Orunmeyin – The first Oba (c.1170)

The Edo people became dissatisfied with the rule of the Ogisos and Owadu, the last Ogiso, was eventually banished. Fearing their country would fall into chaos, the Edo asked their neighbour, the King of Ife for help. He sent his youngest son, Prince Oranmiyan to rule as the first Oba. Under the Obas, the Kingdom expanded.

### British Expedition of 1897

By the end of the 1800's, the Obas had lost much of their power and struggled to exert control. The British wanted to take over Benin, so that they could get rich from its palm oils and rubber. The Obas had tried to cut off all contact with Britain, but the British insisted on trading. In 1897, the British sent a group of officials to visit Benin. However, warriors drove them back and many men were killed. In retaliation, the British launched the Expedition of 1897, in which they sent around 1200 soldiers to attack Benin city. They captured the city and burnt much of it to the ground, ending the Kingdom of Benin.

## Timeline of events

### Pre-050 AD

Family groups clear rainforests and settle

### 071-917

27th Ogiso Ohuede

### 917-967

Reign of Ogiso Oduwa: a chaotic time in the Kingdom

### 967- 1012

Reign of Ogiso Obioye.  
Currency reform

### 1012 - 1059

Ogiso Arigbo establishes slavery. Builds up trade with other kingdoms

### 1100s

Struggles for power and the Ogiso's lose control

### 1170

Orunmayin of Ife sent to become first Oba

### 1897

British officials try to visit Benin but warriors kill them. British retaliate with destruction of Benin city.

### 1960

Benin becomes part of Nigeria

## Key vocabulary

**Edo**: The name of the group of people who lived within the ancient kingdom of Benin.

**Ogiso**: The Edo word meaning "king of the sky".

**Oba**: The Yoruba word for "king".

**Ife**: A city near the kingdom of Benin, ruled by the Yoruba people.

**Yoruba**: The name of the group of people who lived in the city of Ife.

## The Benin Moat

