

Year 5 Kingdom of Benin Knowledge Organiser

What factors led to the golden age of Benin?



Early Civilisations (Y4)
Where did life as we know it today begin?

Ancient Greece
How have the Ancient Greeks influenced our lives today?

★ Star 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.

Key Facts

THE ANCIENT KINGDOM OF BENIN: AD 900-1900

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.

TRADITIONS

Traditions Although no written histories exist, the people of Benin had a rich oral tradition of histories, myths and legends. Children would not go to school but would learn through storytellers at night by the fire. Contact with Europeans means that encounters with the Edo, descriptions of Benin City and of the Obas are recorded in European and colonial history. In addition, treasures of wood, ivory and metal made their way into Europe through trade or plunder and astounded observers with their high degree of artistry and craftsmanship.

Famous Figures

Ogiso Igodo
The first king (or 'Ogiso') of Benin, under whom the smaller villages joined together to form a Kingdom.

Ogiso Owodo
The last of the Ogiso kings, banished from the Kingdom with his family for bad conduct around 1130.

Oba Eweke
The first of a new dynasty of kings called the Obas, crowned around 1180.

Oba Goole
The king who had the Benin City Wall built around 1283.

Oba Ewuare
He expanded the kingdom greatly and set up trading links with Portugal in 1514.

Oba Ovonramwen
This was the last king of Benin, exiled by British troops after their invasion in 1897.

Key Skills

- Sequence and structure complex subjects and themes.
- Start to suggest reasons for connections over time and across places and cultures.
- Comment on impact and legacy.
- Select, organise and use information from more than one source to construct an informed response and/or opinion.

Timeline:

Timeline of Events								
900 CE The kingdom known as Igodomigodo is created and ruled by the Ogiso.	900 – 1460 CE A huge moat is constructed around the Kingdom.	1180 CE The Oba royal family take over from the Ogiso.	1440 CE Benin expands its territory under the rule of Oba Ewuare the Great.	1470 CE Oba Ewuare renames the Kingdom as Edo.	1514 CE Oba Esigie sets up trading links with Europeans.	1700 CE A series of civil wars within Benin lead to the kingdom declining in power.	1807 CE Britain passes a law abolishing the slave trade, which further weakens the kingdom.	1897 CE Benin City (in modern day Nigeria) comes under British control.