

ANCIENT BENIN

KEY FACTS



How do we know about Ancient Benin?

- Many bronze artefacts are stored in Berlin and in the British Museum in London. These bronze artefacts were often used for religious ceremonies and rituals, which formed a large part of Ancient Benin culture.

How was the Kingdom ruled?

- 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, known as the Oba.
- The Obas lived in beautiful palaces decorated with shining brass.
- The kingdom was at the height of its power in the 14th and 15th centuries.
- For 200 years Benin was very successful, but in the 1600s the Obas started to lose control of their people.
- By the 1800s Benin was no longer strong or united.
- The kingdom came to a sudden end in 1837, when a British army invaded and made it part of the British Empire.

How did the people of Ancient Benin make links with surrounding settlements?

- The people of Ancient Benin traded with merchants from Europe and with other African Kingdoms. Instead of using money, they exchanged goods.

What were their religious beliefs?

- Citizens of Ancient Benin predominantly followed a 'Traditional' religious path.
- This was rooted in an indigenous belief system based on a Supreme who was supported by deities and natural forces.
- These deities were believed to act as intermediaries between the divine, and humanity.

ANCIENT BENIN ARTEFACTS



Benin Bronze of Oba



Bronze Head of Queen Idia



Leopard aquamanile



Ivory Mask

KEY VOCABULARY



- Empire:** an extensive group of states or countries ruled over by a single monarch.
- Civilisation:** the society, culture and way of life of a particular area.
- Kingdom:** a country, state or territory ruled by a king or queen.
- Bronze:** a yellowish-brown alloy of copper with up to one-third tin.
- Casting:** an object made by pouring molten metal or other material into a mould.
- Potters:** craftsmen who made pots, dishes and other articles out of fired clay.
- Blacksmiths:** a person who makes and repairs things in iron by hand.
- United:** joined together politically, for a common purpose, or by common feelings.

USEFUL VOCABULARY



- controversy**
- declare**
- designate**
- desperate**
- deteriorate**
- dissent**
- dominate**
- dwell**
- expand**
- exploit**
- hostile**
- prosper**