

The Kingdom of Benin: What was life like in the Kingdom of Benin and how did contact with Europeans change it?

Important Information

Key Events

- AD 400** The **Yoruba** people start using iron tools that allow them to clear the forest land for the first time. Villages developed and chiefs emerged.
- AD 900** The Kingdom of **Benin** begins to develop and boundaries are created around the area of **Igodomigodo** (now part of 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 calls himself the **Oba**.
- AD 1300-1600** The 'golden age' of **Edo**. It has a large, powerful army, growing wealth and land with skilled craftspeople.
- AD 1489** When the **Portuguese** made contact with the Kingdom of Benin the name 'Benin' began to be used. Trade with Europe grew.
- AD 1600s** Obas started to lose control of Benin
- AD 1800s** The kingdom was in decline
- AD 1897** Benin became a British Colony

*Benin City in Nigeria, is the location of the ancient Kingdom of Benin. It was **NOT** located in the modern country of Benin - this is a different country in West Africa.*



Vocabulary

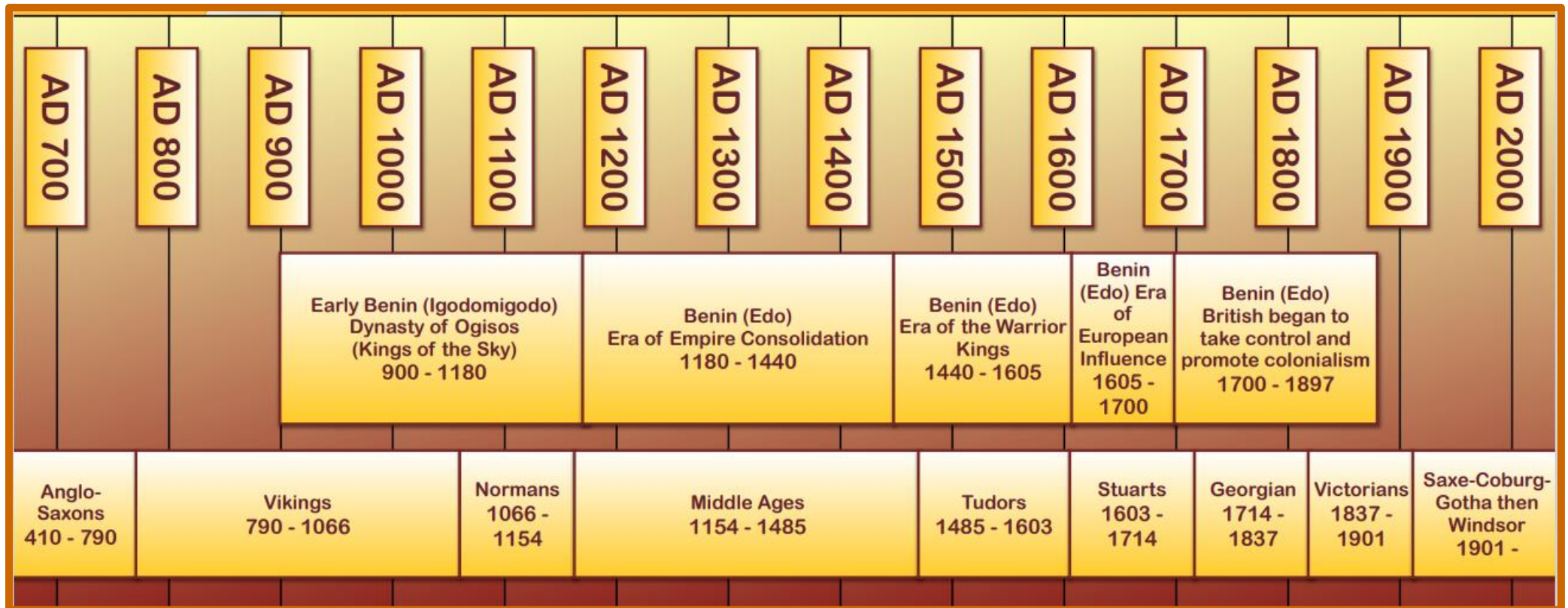
Yoruba	The name of the people who lived in the holy city of Ife.
Edo	The name of the people who lived within the ancient kingdom of Benin.
Ife	The holy city near the Kingdom of Benin, ruled by the Yoruba people
Oba	The Yoruba word meaning 'King'.
Eweka	The first Oba of the Kingdom of Benin. He came to power in AD 1180.
Ogiso	The Edo word meaning 'Kings of the Sky' used by the early rulers of Igodomigodo (the original name of the Benin Empire).
Trade	The exchanging of goods.
Benin City	The modern city located in Nigeria. It used to be called Edo and Igodomigodo, before that Ogiso – the Edo word.
Brass	A yellowish metal made from copper and zinc.
Bronze	A metallic brown metal made from copper and tin.

Top Takeaways

After studying this topic you should be able to:

- Show where the ancient Kingdom of Benin was located on a map.
- Place the Kingdom of Benin on a timeline alongside events in Europe.
- Use sources, including oral histories and artefacts, to understand how we know about the Kingdom of Benin.
- Describe some aspects of life in ancient Benin.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how the Benin bronzes were made and what they teach us about life in Benin.
- Understand changes that took place when Europeans started trading.
- Discuss the reasons the British became involved in Benin and the effect this had.

Timeline



Artefacts

