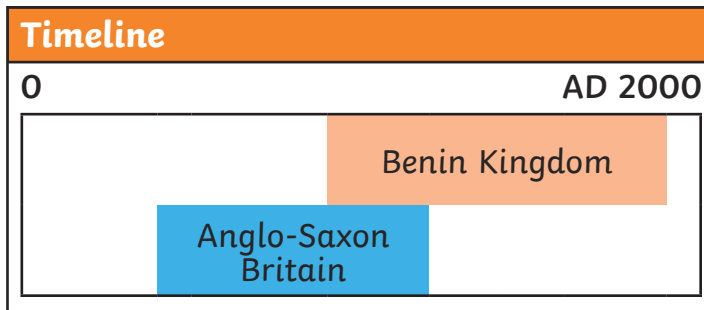


| Key Events | |
|--------------|--|
| AD 900 | The kingdom begins to develop and boundaries are established around the region called Igodomigodo in what is now Nigeria. |
| AD 1100 | The last Ogiso of Igodomigodo, Owodo, dies and there is nobody to rule. |
| AD 1180 | Eweka becomes the new ruler and 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 | The Edo people begin trading with the Portuguese, who call the place 'Benin'. |
| AD 1553 | The first British ships arrive in Benin. Britain becomes a major power in the slave trade and is keen to gain more control. |
| AD 1897 | The British enter Benin City without permission. Fighting breaks out (the 'Benin Massacre') and only two British officers survive. As punishment, the British launch the 'Benin Punitive Expedition' and destroy Benin City, stealing many treasures. The Oba is exiled and the British colonise Benin. |



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.



Ceremonies were led by an **ohen** and were intended to make the **Oba** seem powerful and great, as well as to worship the gods. Ceremonies sometimes involved human sacrifices. Usually criminals or prisoners were sacrificed, although there is evidence of other sacrifices, such as women found at the bottom of wells, dressed in fine clothes.

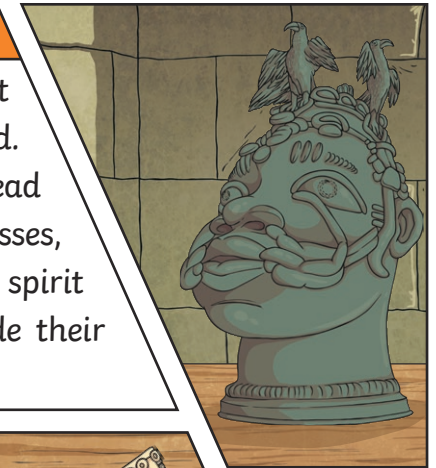
The people of **Edo** were **animists**. Leopards, crocodiles and snakes were among the animals associated with the gods. Many warriors wore necklaces of leopards' teeth to protect them in battle.

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.

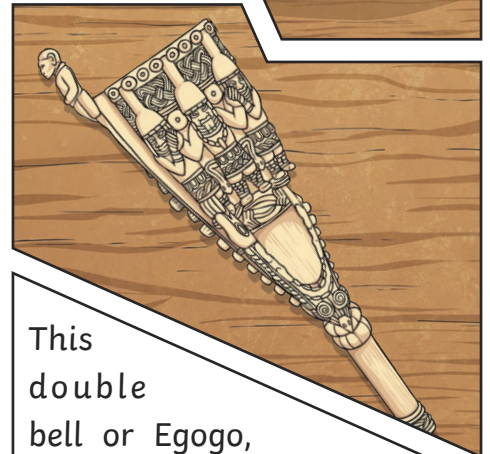
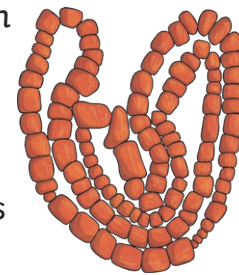


Artefacts from the Benin Kingdom

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 Ego, 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.