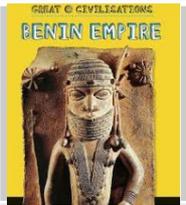
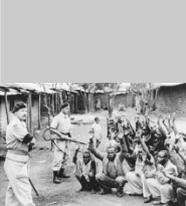
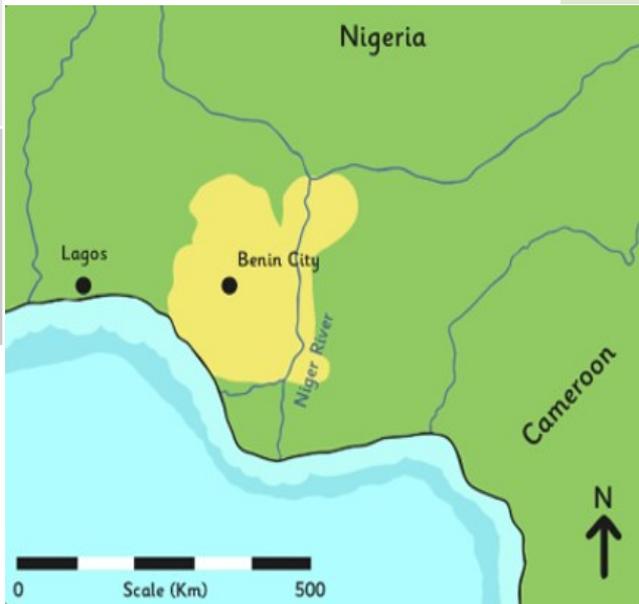
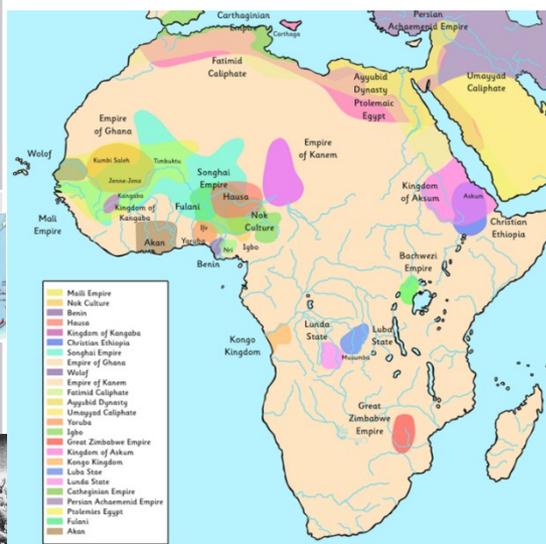


Exploring Benin's Big Picture of the Past | History Focus | Years 5 & 6 | Spring 1

Vocabulary (Goldilocks words)

1	Ancient civilisation	Refers specifically to the first settled and stable communities that became the basis for later states, nations and empires.	
2	Empire	Is a group of countries ruled by a monarch, ruling power or another country.	
3	Colonialism	Is when one country has part or total control over another country. The British Empire ruled over 'colonies' - the many countries under its control.	
4	Figurehead	A person who is called the head of something but who has no real power.	
5	Legendary	If you describe someone as legendary, you mean that they are very famous and that many stories are told about them.	

The Kingdom of Benin is one of those ancient and medieval kingdoms of West Africa. It was in what is now Nigeria. Modern Benin is a country next to Nigeria – so it's easier to confuse between the two! Located entirely within what is now Nigeria, the Kingdom of Benin stretched from Lagos in the west to beyond the River Niger in the east, an area that equates to about a fifth of modern-day Nigeria.



The Rise and Fall of the Benin Empire

Archaeological evidence suggests that the kingdom of Benin began in the 900s when the Edo people settled in the rainforests of West Africa. Benin then known as Igodomigodo was governed by a series of legendary rulers known as Osigos (meaning 'Kings of the Sky').

The Ogiso dynasty eventually came to an end around AD 1100 after the last Ogiso (Owodo) died.

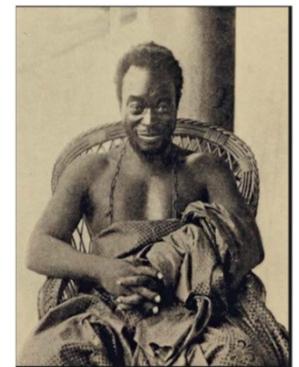
Around c1200 Eweka became the First Oba. He may have been a Yoruba prince from the neighbouring Ife.

C1440-1570 the Benin Empire reached the height of its power and size under a successful series of Obas.

C1570-1700 Benin declined, sometimes suffering from civil war and disputed successions.

C1700-1800 Benin recovered its fortune to a degree, expanding its influence again.

C1800-1897 Benin gradually declined until British occupation in 1897.



An Oba is another name for a Benin king. He is a figure of immense prestige and cultural and religious importance in the Benin society. There is still an Oba of Benin today although the position is more of a cultural and religious figure-head rather than wielding real political power. In the pictures above you can see the contrast between the last ruling Oba and one of the current ones.