

# IYARE! Splendor & Tension in Benin's Palace Theatre

November 8, 2008 – March 1, 2009

University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

## Timeline



Potsherd pavement dated to 1305 +/-105 years, photo courtesy Graham Connah; cast trophy head, 16<sup>th</sup> century; detail 17<sup>th</sup> century royal shrine figure; detail 18<sup>th</sup> century ivory altar tusk; 1956 photograph of Oba Akenzua greeting Britain's Queen Elizabeth in Benin, courtesy Chief Eduwu Ekhaton Obasogie; contemporary carving; young boy using cell phone in Benin, 2002

Precise dating is only possible when particular reigns can be tied to outside observers who used Western calendars. Numerous kinglists with slight variations exist. This one is based on the order of rulers published by Chief Jacob Egharevba, but incorporates historical cross-references noted by A. F. C. Ryder, unpublished archival references, and a variety of other sources, oral and written, as well as unpublished archival references.

**Red print indicates Oba's reigns**

**Green print indicates outside activities of relevance**

4500-3500 BCE	Inhabitants are living in the Benin Kingdom region, using stone tools and making pottery.
ca. 1000 BCE—500 CE	
1000 BCE—500 BCE	Stone axes clear parts of forest in greater Benin region; farmers cultivate oil palms and yam, aiding population growth
ca. 500 BCE	Iron working in central Nigeria
100 BCE—500 CE	Iron working in Edo/Esan region
11 <sup>th</sup> century	Settlement at Benin City

11 <sup>th</sup> –13 <sup>th</sup> century	First Dynasty of Ogiso rulers
11 <sup>th</sup> century	The Yoruba produce terracotta sculpture at their settlement of Ile-Ife
13 <sup>th</sup> century	Sacrificial offering at the Benin palace consists of 40 young women who are then placed in mass grave
Late 13 <sup>th</sup> /early 14 <sup>th</sup> century	A new dynasty follows a period of chiefly rule
Early 14 <sup>th</sup> century	According to the Edo, after Prince Ekaladeran is banished from Benin, he travels to Ughoton then wanders westward, establishing himself as the monarch at Ile-Ife
14 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> century	The Yoruba produce bronzes at Ile-Ife
Late 13 <sup>th</sup> /early 14 <sup>th</sup> century	Prince Oranmiyan comes from Ife, fathers a son, leaves
Early 14 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Eweka I
	Monarch introduces new crown type with <i>oro</i> projection
1305 + or – 105 years	Potsherd pavement in Benin palace area
Early 14 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Uwakhuahen
Early 14 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Ehenmihen
Mid-14 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Eweḍo
	Oba enters the city and "buys" the land from Chief Ogiamien, representative of the chiefs who had ruled during interregnum.
Late 14 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Oguola
	War with Udo; Benin wins
Late 14 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Eḍoni
Early 15 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Udagbeḍo
Early 15 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Oḥen
	The Ọba kills his Iyase and is killed by his other chiefs

Mid-15 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Egbeka
	Civil wars
	The Crown banishes Prince Ogun
Mid-15 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Orobiru
Mid-15 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Uwaifiokun
	Prince Ogun returns secretly to Benin City, kills his brother, burns the city, and becomes Ọba Ẹwuare
Mid to late 15 <sup>th</sup> century (ca. 1450-70s)	Ọba Ẹwuare
15 <sup>th</sup> century	First known cast bronzes at Benin; some show Ifẹ-like facial striations
	Benin goes to war with Ọwo
	Ọba Ẹwuare's two eldest sons kill one another
1471-73	Portuguese reach São Tome and Principe Islands (off Nigerian coast)
1471-73	Portuguese reach Niger Delta coast
1475-79	War between Portugal and Castile
Late 15 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Ezoti (1470s)
	Ọba Ezoti is shot during his accession ceremonies
	Prince Okpame kills his nephew, the heir to the throne, and his mother; Okpame is banished
	Princess Ẹdeleyọ earmarked for the throne but does not complete coronation ceremonies
Late 15 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Olu (1470s-80s)
	Ọba sends his son Iginua out of Benin for his own safety; Iginua becomes the first Olu, the ruler of the Itẹkiri
1481-1495	Dom João II rules Portugal

1482 Portuguese establish fort at São Jorge da Mina (coastal Ghana)

Republican government after Oba Oluwa's death fails. Chiefs seek Prince Okpame and crown him as Oba Ozolua

Ca. 1485? to 1516/17

Oba Ozolua

1486 João Affonso d'Aveiro reaches Benin City

1486 d'Aveiro returns to Lisbon with a Benin embassy and samples of Benin tailed pepper

1486-87 Portuguese establish pepper factory at Ughoton

Portuguese introduce chile peppers, tomatoes, pineapples, papaya, peanuts, maize, cassava, and tobacco introduced from the Americas post-Portuguese contact; exact dates uncertain

Benin conquers Ijebu and Owo

1490 Portuguese send missionaries to Kingdom of Kongo

1492 Spanish reach the Bahamas through Christopher Columbus

1493 Portuguese increase population of São Tome through policy of sending convicts and Jewish children from Portugal, as well as slaves from the mainland

1495-1521 Dom Manuel I rules Portugal

1500 Portuguese reach Brazil

1500 Portuguese create sugar plantations at São Tome

1505 King Manuel of Portugal sends presents to Oba including a horse, Indian beads and cloth, more textiles and silk shirts

1506-07 Portuguese close pepper factory at Ughoton

1514 Oba orders cannon seized from Portuguese caravel

1514 Oba sends second embassy to Lisbon; they return with priests

1515	Ọba sends an Edo Christian to Lisbon on diplomatic mission
1516	Esigie baptized while a boy; Ọba orders Christian churches built
1516/17	Warrior Laisolobi commits regicide at Uzea war
1517 to late 16 <sup>th</sup> century	Ọba Esiḡie
1516/17	Esiḡie's civil war with Arhwaran begins
1517	Igala attempt to invade Benin; Benin conquers them at their capital of Idah
1517	Priests hope to travel to Benin from São Tome; no surviving records state if they ever did
1530s	Direct trans-Atlantic slave trade from São Tome to the Americas firmly established; Benin plays minor role
1530s	French begin trading with Benin
1538	Portuguese king sends missionaries to Benin
	Ọba holds ambassadors from Allada (presently in Republic of Benin) and Labadi (presently in Ghana) captive
1540	Ọba sends embassy to Lisbon
1553	British come to Benin for the first time
1553	São Tome suspends trade with Benin
1567	French sack São Tome
Late 16 <sup>th</sup> century (1580s)	Ọba Orhogbua
1581	Direct royal line in Portugal dies out; Spain rules Portugal
	Benin conquers Yoruba town of Mahin
	The Edo found a settlement at Lagos

Late 16<sup>th</sup>/early  
17<sup>th</sup> century  
(ca. 1590s-1616)

Ọba Ehengbuda

1590s

Dutch begin trading with Benin

Early to  
mid-17<sup>th</sup> century

Ọba Ohuan

Iyase Ogina rebels and is subdued and exiled

17<sup>th</sup> c.

Yoruba Oyo Kingdom expands

1637

The Dutch take over Elmina on the Gold Coast

1640

Portugal once again independent of Spain

Mid-17<sup>th</sup> century

Ọba Ahenzae

Mid-17<sup>th</sup> century

Ọba Akenzae

1651/52

Spanish Capuchin missionaries travel to Benin

1651-54

War between English and Dutch

Late 17<sup>th</sup> century

Ọba Akengboi

1664

Italian Capuchin Catholic missionaries attempt to go to Benin at Ọba's request; Portuguese interfere and mission does not arrive

Late 17<sup>th</sup> century

Ọba Akenpaye

Ọba dethroned

Ashanti Empire begins to rise

Late 17<sup>th</sup> century

Ọba Akengbẹdo

1689

Italian Capuchin Catholic missionary reaches southern towns in Benin Empire

Late 17<sup>th</sup> century

Ọba Ore-Oghene

1690s

Dutch regularly sell guns to Benin

1695	After a positive exchange of letters, Italian Capuchin Catholic missionary sails for Benin; dies at Ughoton before reaching Benin City
<b>Circa 1701-1710</b>	<b>Ọba Ẹwuakpe</b>
	Public rebels against Oba Ẹwuakpe for much of his reign
1709	Italian Capuchin Catholic mission travels to Benin, Ọba uninterested
<b>Circa 1710-1714</b>	<b>Ọba Ozuere</b>
	Oba Ozuere usurps throne from older brother, supported by Iyase n'Ode. Civil war ensues.
1709	Dutch trade with Benin wanes
1710	Ọba writes to Pope requesting missionaries
1710-13	Italian Capuchin Catholic mission travels to Benin and is warmly welcomed
	Brazilians begin trading directly with Benin
<b>Circa 1714-1735</b>	<b>Ọba Akenzua I</b>
1713-14	Dutch trade with Benin resumes
	Takes throne from younger brother. Civil War with Iyase n'Ode
	Chief Ezomo rises in power after assisting in Iyase n'Ode's conquest
1730s	English trade with Benin increases
<b>Circa 1737-1750</b>	<b>Ọba Ẹresoyen</b>
1748	Italian Capuchin Catholic missionary heads for Benin, turns back at outskirts of kingdom
<b>Circa 1750-1797</b>	<b>Ọba Akengbuda</b>
1770s	Portuguese trade with Benin declines

1771	Landolphe proposes building French warehouse at Ughoton for trade
1778	Landolphe meets with Oba; Oba authorizes warehouse (never built). Landolphe also plans fort on lower Benin River in Itsekiri territory
1792	British destroy Landolphe's fort in Itsekiri territory
Circa 1797-1815/17	Oba Obanosa
1807	British Parliament declares the slave trade illegal and begins patrolling West African coast to intercept ships
	Oba suppresses society of ritual specialists that includes his mother; Iyoba works against him
1809	Benin at war with Itsekiri
Circa 1815/17	Oba Ogbebo
	Ogbebo usurps throne, civil war begins. Burns palace and hangs himself
Circa 1817-1850	Oba Osemwede
1820s	Benin goes to war against Akure, extends it to many parts of Ekiti
1834	At citizens' request, Oba instructs Oba Idwu Ojulari of Lagos to commit suicide; he complies
1848	Olu Akengbuwa dies; several Itsekiri successors die; throne of Warri empty for long interregnum (till 20 <sup>th</sup> century)
1849	British government appoints John Beecroft consul to Oil Rivers in southern Nigeria
1850-1888	Oba Adolo
1850s	Nupe begin to raid Ishan region



1851	Virtual British “protectorate” at Lagos; Oba Kosoko of Lagos reaffirms Benin overlordship, British support exiled Akintoye in civil war; Kosoko overturned
1854-62	Oba Adolo and his half-brother are embroiled in civil war
1862	Richard Burton visits Benin
1873	Second British-Ashanti War in Gold Coast when British drive Dutch away from the coast
1879	George Goldie establishes United African Company (UAC) to trade in Lower Niger River area
1879	British appoint Nana Olumu “governor of the rivers,” he essentially rules the Itsekiri during a long interregnum
1884-5	Berlin Conference divides Africa amongst European would-be colonizers
1884	Itsekiri sign treaty of protection with Britain
1884	Old Calabar comes under British control
1885	British declare “Protectorate” in Southern Nigeria
1888-1914	<b>Oba Ovoranmwẹn</b>
1891	British appoint Claude McDonald Commissioner and Consul General of Niger Coast Protectorate
1892	British take control of Ijebu
1892	Obas' chiefs sign treaty with Niger Coast Protectorate— "Gallwey Treaty"
1894	Nana and Itsekiri in conflict with British; Nana captured and exiled
1895	Ijo trading state of Brass in Niger Delta comes under British control
1896	Oba stops all trade with Itsekiri

1897	James Phillips, Acting Consul-General, Niger Coast Protectorate, and his party set out for Benin, despite Oba's request for postponement and Itsekiri warnings
1897	The British invade Benin
1897	The British exile Oba Ovoranmwun to Calabar for life
1897	British Royal Niger Company takes control of Ilorin and Bida
1899	British capture, try, and execute Chief Ologbosere for his part in the 1897 ambush of the Phillips' party
1901	British open Government School
1902	First Church Missionary Society church of St. Matthew's built in Benin
1905	First bicycle brought to Benin
1905	British build Post Office
1908	British build Government Hospital
1910	British install pipe-borne water system
1910	British build colonial prison
1914-1933	Oba Eweka II
1914-16	World War I--Nigerian soldiers fight under the British army against the Germans in neighboring Cameroon
1915	British abolish slavery in Benin
1915	First car brought to Benin
1916-18	World War I--Nigerian soldiers fight under the British army against the Germans in East Africa in then-Tanganyika [Tanzania]
1918	World flu epidemic strikes Benin
1918-1921	Prince Oko Godfrey Eweka, future Oba Akenzua, attends secondary school at King's College, Lagos
1920	Taxation begins

- 1922 Reconstructed palace burns
- 1923 Baptist church built
- 1924 Roman Catholic church built
- 1927 Palace establishes Benin Divisional Council Craft School

### 1933-1979

### Oba Akenzua II

- 1933 Oba gives uniform to *emuada* (palace pages)
- 1934 Egharevba publishes first edition of a *Short History of Benin*
- 1938 British government returns some of Oba Ovoranmwun's coral regalia (hat, cap, gown) to his grandson, Oba Akenzua
- 1940-41 World War II--Nigerian soldiers fight under the British against the Italians in Ethiopia and Somalia
- 1943-45 World War II--Nigerian soldiers fight under the British against the Japanese in Burma
- 1946 Benin Divisional Council Museum opens
- 1955 Benin becomes part of Nigeria's Western Region
- 1956 Queen Elizabeth visits Benin
- 1960 Nigerian independence
- 1963 Benin becomes part of Mid-West Region
- 1967 Benin becomes part of Mid-Western State
- 1967-70 Biafran War; Benin City under Biafra forces for six weeks in 1967
- 1968 *The Nigerian Observer* newspaper begins publication in Benin City
- 1971 Federal Government establishes University of Benin
- 1972 Bendel Insurance Football Club, aka Vipers, established

	Bishop Idahosa establishes Church of God Mission
1973	Technical college transforms into Auchi Polytechnic
	Nigerian Television Authority establishes station at Benin City
1976	Benin City becomes capital of Bendel State
<b>1979 to date</b>	<b>Oba Erediauwa</b>
1981	Bendel State establishes Bendel State University at Ekpoma, later to become Edo State University, then Ambrose Alli University
1983	Benin-owned Okada Airlines officially begins commercial flights
1986	Lawrence Anini unleashes crime spree in Benin City, is captured and executed
1991	Benin City becomes the capital of the new Edo State
	Edo State Broadcasting TV service begins
1990s	Cellular phones become common in Benin
1999	Igbinedion University at Okada becomes one of Nigeria's first private universities
2002	Benson Idahosa University established at Benin
2005	Benson Idahosa University at Benin City becomes the city's first private university
2008	Virgin Nigeria Airways begins Lagos-Benin City route