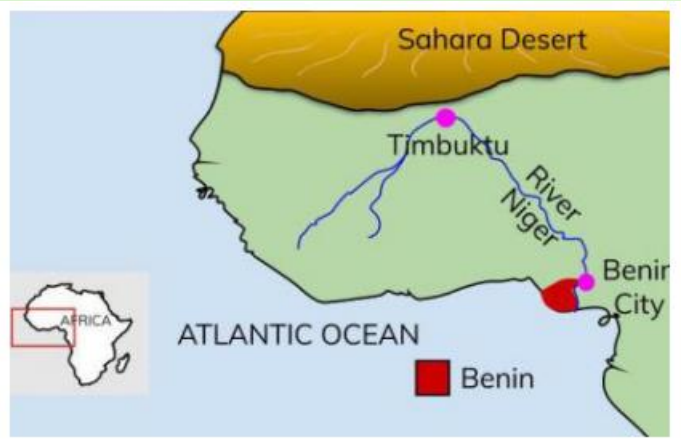
What and where was the Kingdom of Benin and how did it end?

Where in the world was the Kingdom of Benin?



Key facts

- The Kingdom of Benin was in a place that is now a part of modern day Nigeria in West Africa. It is not in the same place as the modern African nation of Benin.
- Around 900 CE, the Edo people began clearing parts of the West African rainforest to build homes, forming communities of farmers and craftspeople that grew into the Kingdom of Benin.
- The Kingdom of Benin became a powerful and advanced civilization. It was known as a trading centre for the region. Its skilled craftsmen, were commissioned to create the highly sophisticated bronze and brass sculptures now called the 'Benin Bronzes.'
- In 1897 CE Benin City was destroyed by British troops and comes under Britain's control. The Benin Bronzes were taken to Britain.

Repatriation of the Benin Bronzes

FOR	AGAINST
They belong to Nigeria - The bronzes were made in the Kingdom of Benin, so they are part of Nigeria's history and culture. **They were taken unfairly** - The bronzes were taken by British soldiers during the invasion of Benin in 1897. **Nigerians should be able to see them** - People in Nigeria should have the chance to see and learn from their own treasures.	**They are well looked after in museums** - Some people say European museums can protect and care for them better. **The whole world can see them** - When they are in big museums, people from many countries can learn about the Kingdom of Benin's culture. **Safety and cost** - Some worry that returning and keeping the bronzes safe in Nigeria could be difficult or expensive.

Key vocabulary

Benin Bronzes	*Beautiful metal artworks made in the Kingdom of Benin.*
Artefact	*An object made by people in the past, like a tool or statue.*
Repatriation	*Sending something, or someone, back to their original country.*
Empire	*A large group of lands ruled by one leader or country.*
Oba	*The king or ruler of the Kingdom of Benin.*