

**COSTUME AS A REFLECTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY TO
BENIN 2016 CORNATION CEREMONY.**

BY

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**DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY,**

JULY, 2021

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS,
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A. HONS)
DEGREE IN THEATRE ARTS**

JULY, 2021

DECLARATION

I declare that this project is based on a personal research undertaken by me in the Department of Theatre Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin city.

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CERTIFICATION.

This is to certify that this project was carried out by Agbonze Osadebamwen Anthonia under my supervision.

Mrs. Owens. P. Eromosele.

Date

DEDICATION.

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for making it possible for me to complete it.

This project is also dedicated to my lovely parent, Mr. and Mrs. Agbonze for all their support in my life.

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ABSTRACT.

Costume is a very important aspect of the people cultural identity. It is one amongst others ways you can identify the culture and personality of the wearers. It function serves more than covering of the body, it is a unique identity that is particular to the people it is identifying. The researcher observed that costume is not mere a fashion but rather as an indispensable tools in cultural reflection thereby showing its element of culture and a means of identifying class, status, group, position, as well as religion. This research is aimed at examining the traditional Benin society, in general and studies the costume use at 2016 coronation ceremony in particular. The research method adopted in carrying out this study is qualitative method of research, using pictorial representation and analyses. The findings of the study reveals that costumes communicate meaning and beauty of the Benin people and it

reflect their social, status, and cultural heritage, it therefore recommends that there should be a platform where citizens especially youth should be educated about the significance of costume in cultural practices.

CHAPTER ONE

C INTRODUCTION.

1.1 Background to the study.

Costume is a very important aspect of the people's cultural identity. It is one amongst others ways you can identify the culture and the personality of the wearer. Thus, costume more than covering of the body, it is a unique identity peculiar to the people which identifier and information carrier about the wearer.

It has been known over the years that costume play a vital role in human endeavor in portraying man's identity. Costume generally is known as the distinctive style of dressing of an individual or group. It reflect class, gender, profession, nationality, as well as occupation amongst others. It is use to describe some certain activities such as a riding costume, dance costume. The general usage of costume has become more limited to unusual clothing and to the attire intended to evoke a change in identity such as theatrical costume. It is a visual element of a performance traced back to the early men and dramatic ritual that enact the action of man in his environment in bid to survive. Costume serve as a vibrant medium through which communicate is passed from the performance to the audience to the audience via visual medium. Apart from its feature as an item of clothing worn by the people to make statement, it also serves the purpose

of cultural identification by showcasing the cultural aesthetic artistic styles and tradition
representation of the people.

According to Schemer in his book *Man and Art Figure*, he say "the transformation of the human body, its metamorphosis, is made possible by the costume the disguise "(133).

Costume and makeup emphasize the body identity. They express its nature or the purposely misleading about it, they stress its conformity to organic or mechanical laws or they invalidate
this conformity.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, it defines costumes as clothes that are worn by someone (such as an actor) who is trying to look like a different person or things. Also it defines costume as clothes worn by a group of people especially during a particular era or time in the past. Also costume could be seen to an outfit worn to create the appearance or characteristics of a particular period, person place or things.

The free dictionary define costume as style of dress, including garments, accessories and hairstyles, especially as characteristics of a particular country, period or people. A set of clothes appropriate for a particular occasion or season.

While the American Heritage dictionary, defines costume as a complete style of dressing, including the garments, accessories hairstyle etc worn by at that time, especially as a

characteristics of a particular country or people. From the definition given by different scholars and dictionaries, we can conclude and say that costume are those clothes worn by an actor on stage depicting a certain era and specific kind of people. According to Brockett in his book essential of the theatre, costume is seen as “The fabrication of clothing for the overall appearance of a character and the specification in the style of dress particularly to a nation class or period. "(383).

Costume is an element of culture, the culture of a person can be ascertained from the dressing of that person.

Culture is the sum total of attitude custom and belief that distinguish one group of people from another. It is also transmitted through language, material, object, ritual, institution and art which is transferable from one generation to another. In general it is seen as the way of life of the people, which capture their behaviour, eating habit, dressing, greeting and worship of the people. Culture is highly valid especially to the Africa people at large and Nigeria people in particular.

Every traditional ceremony has its cultural symbolism which is displayed during the ceremony. There are various cultural ceremonies in Africa and Nigeria in particular. These traditional ceremonies are avenue created to display the importance of the people’s culture. Every cultural event can be identified through these cultural element such as the costume, songs,

dance, drama, movement. These elements are key for instance to the events because it is created to promote the people culture. The Benin people are well known for rich cultural display.

They have lined up of cultural activities such as festival, coronation, marriage and burial ceremonies. Costume serve as a vibrant medium of performance during this various ceremonies.

It also serves as cultural identification among the people as it promotes and project the Benin culture and tradition. Costume also help to identify the nature of event and the personality or key personalities in the events.

It is against this background, this research hope to examine costume as a reflection of cultural identity. Using the Benin Coronation ceremonial event of the 2016 which was done from on the 20th of October 2016 as a paradigm.

1.2 Statement of problem.

This study is to provide necessary information and to show that costume is not mere fashion rather as an indispensable tool in cultural reflection thereby showing its element of culture, and a means of identifying class, status, group, position as well as religion and many more.

Culture as it concern costume amongst others is gradually taking another dimension of losing its sacredness and aesthetic value in traditional African society due to influence of modernization for example in Benin society, majority of the rituals as well as costume that are

done and used before installation of a new Oba are no longer done and used, due to modernization which have greatly influenced the people.

This Research work is critically focused on the costume used at the Coronation ceremony of the Benin Oba of 2016.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the study.

This research is aimed at studying costume as a reflection of culture using the 2016 Benin Coronation ceremony as a case study. It shall therefore establish the following objectives.

1. To study the nature of dressing of the Benin people.
2. To research into the traditional Benin society in general and to study the costume use at Coronation 2016 ceremony in particular.
3. To identify the significance of each costume in relation to the various events.
4. To documents the importance of costume in Benin traditional society.

1.4 Scope of the study.

The study is limited in scope to the significance of costume as an element of culture in Benin society it shall examine the form meaning and significance of costume to the Benin people and identify the type of costume used at the 2016 coronation ceremony. It shall also generally understudy the concept of costume as it relates to the people's culture.

1.5 Research Methodology.

The methods of research is adopted for this study are primary and secondary research methodologies. The primary research method entails conducting of interview with appropriate persons and data collected will be analyzed effectively. While the secondary method involves consultation of relevant literatures to the study. Such as Books, journals, internet as well as published and unpublished works that are related to the study.

1.6 Limitations to the study.

This study is constrained in following ways.

Limited time factor is one vital challenge encountered during this research study due to the fact that the researcher has to devote her time to academic works.

Finance is also one factor that may pose hindrance to the research because the cost printing the work and other bills that are involved in research may affect the smooth running of the project.

Human resources also pose some problems in assessing vital information. This is because people are not receptive to dealing with such matter that relate to ceremonial activities.

All effort has been made to do all that is necessary to come up with a research that will benefit those who will have accessible work.

1.7 Significance of the study.

This research study is significant in the following ways:

1. It will help in preserving our culture through proper documentation in the costume use for Coronation ceremony.
2. The study will significantly serve as reference material academics and researchers of like minds in the researching of costume in general.

3. This study is significant because it will emphasize the need for a creative and meaningful choice of costume in theatrical production as well as our traditional festival activities, as this factor will improve cultural values and identification of a tribe, people or group.
4. It will be a useful in the documentation of what kinds of costume used at the Coronation ceremony of 2016.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1 The Nature of Costume in African Traditional Society.

Costumes are visual element of a performance which can be traced back to the early men and the dramatic ritual that was enacted in the bid to survive. Costume is one of the major modes of non-verbal communication in a performance, thus, plays significant role in the play production to a very large extent. According to Igbinovia, seems costume as Costumes are clothes worn by the all human element including animals but in the discipline of the theatre all clothes worn are referred to as costume. (Lecture note). Also according to it another submission on the concept of costume, "Costume have the primary aim of transforming a performer into a character while passing across information to the audience."(384).

This quotation above expresses the relevance and role of costume in a production and in human life. Costume serves a vibrant medium of communication in a performance, it is a tools for cultural reflection and cultural identification of people's culture.

African traditional society value culture as one of the peculiarities shared by person which is a part of their culture. The culture of a people is what differentiates them distinctively from other human societies.

In African society costume constitutes one of the most formidable and versatile cultural agents or the transmission of knowledge and value across ethnic national and international boundaries. The Independence Day celebration of Nigeria (1st October of every year) and that of Ghana on 6th of March, for instance brings together all forms of costume as used by the various ethnic group throughout the countries. It is remarkable that during this occasion, in many of the ethnic groups, regardless of any scientific, social, political, and other advancement, many communities especially the royals finds it expedient to project their identity and powers through the wearing of distinct dresses; some of which are symbolic of a specific ethnicity. (Dzramedo 2).

Stage costume occupies a virtual position in enhancing the character's ability to project his or her mood, profession, status, age, sex and culture religion and ethnicity without any form of verbal communication. In line with the above, scholar like Dzramedo affirms that in analyzing human behaviour the first four minutes of contact with a stranger, the understanding of that person's nature and personality will be based on three primary but unequal factors:

1. That the appearance will be scored 55 percent.
2. The tone of his voice will be scored 38 percent.
3. And what the person says will be scored 7 percent. (Dzramedo 3).

This submission denotes that truly appearance or what people wear is important because it transmits information about the person from visual perspective. In this light, actors like ordinary people make use of costume not to cover the body only but also to present and create a lasting impression about the wearer and give a valid information about the character to the audience. Wilson reinforces this assertion by stating that; "theatre clothes send signal similar to everyday costume; but as with other element of the theatre there are a significant differences between the costume of everyday life and those in the theatre." He assert that stage costume communicate the same information as ordinary clothes with regards to sex, position and occupation, yet on stage during performance, this information is magnified because every element in the theatre is in a spotlight (20). In other words, Wilson is saying that the purpose of costume is to serve as a communicator of everyday life, expressing socio- economic status and class, as well as the culture of the character.

Costume deals with everything worn by an individual which include underwear, hair dress/headdress, accessories such as umbrella, handfan, jewellery and footwear. The concept, design and appearance of all these items are the concern of the costume designer on stage, and she/he must be able to manipulate the design of each character's costume to project and transmit specific personal information about the character since costume worn by an actor can profoundly affect the audience's perceptions of the character.

The purpose or place of costume in African can be fully understood when juxtaposed with the demands it has to meet during any given ceremony. Among these requirements, the costume is expected to aid the audiences understanding of the ceremony the identification of the kind of event and meaning of the performance as well as the cultural background. Culture reflects a people's way of life and this is manifested in their political, social, economic and religious lives for which clothing plays a dominant part.

In African society the art and life of the people symbolically reflect each other Africa art has its own history its aesthetic concept as well as a powerful emotional content. The Africa costume has an inherent aesthetic in its usage. Its usage, its colour and style are symbolic in itself. This reflect the identity of the culture its devotes.

2.2 The Concept of Culture as a Form of identity.

Edward B Taylor is reputed as the scholar who confined and define culture in his world primitive culture (1871) and reprinted in 1958 Taylor saw culture as the complex whole which include knowledge belief art, mortal, law, customs or any other capacities and habit acquired by man and a member of society. This definition capture the exhaustive nature of culture one would have expected that this definition would be a universal one but this is not so in fact there are scholars who are interested in the phenomenon. Culture embrace a wide range of human phenomenon, material achievement, norms, belief, feelings, and manner, of life. It is the

patterned way of life shared by a particular group of people that claim to share a single origin or decent in an attempt to capture the exhaustive nature of culture. According to Bello,

culture is the way of life evolve by a people in their attempt to meet the challenge of living in their environment which give order and meaning to their social, political economic aesthetic and religious norms which distinguishing them from their neighbors (189). Also according to Aziza, on the concept, Culture refers to the totality of the pattern of behaviour of a particular group of people, it includes everything that make them distinct from any other group for instance their greeting, habit, dressing, social norms and taboos, food, songs and dance pattern, rites of passage from birth, though marriage to death, traditional occupation, religious as well and philosophical beliefs (31).

Culture is passed on from generation to generation and the acquisition of culture is a result of the socialization process fafuttiwa wrote that,

"The child just grow into and within the cultural heritage of the people he imbibes it culture in traditional society, is not

taught, the child observe imbibes and mimes the action of the elder and sibling he watches the naming ceremonies, religious services, marriage, ritual, funeral obsequies he witnesses the Coronation of a king or chief, the annual yam festival the annual dance and acrobatics displays of guard and age group or his relations in the activities the child in a traditional society cannot escape his cultural and physical environment(48). "

The full study of culture in all its vastness and dimension belongs to discipline known as anthropology which studies human being and takes time to examine characteristics and their relationship to their environment. Culture as its usually understood entail a totality of traits and characters that that are peculiar to a people extent that it identify them out from other people or societies. And these particular trait go on to include the people's language, dressing music, work, art religious, dancing and soon on. African culture as a heritage that is passed down from one generation to another will be highlighted.

This show that every human being who grows up in a particular society is likely to become infused with the culture of that society, whether knowingly or unknowingly during the process of social interaction. We don't need to have all the definition of culture and it definitely

characteristics to understand the Concept and meaning of culture as there are writers with great similar ideas on the Concept of Culture. This singular underlying characteristics is the attempt to portray and capture culture and the entire or total way of life would anybody among other things what the people think of themselves and the universe in which they live their lives in order to ensure their survival it can be safely stated that there can be no culture without a society. It can also be said that culture is unique human and shared with other people in a society. Culture is selective in what it absorbs or accepts from other people who don't belong to a particular cultural group. (Etuk 13).

Culture is to be understood as the way of life of a people. This presupposes the fact that there can be no people without a culture.

In this research project, the focus is on examples drawn from Nigeria culture. In Africa, there are diverse cultures with various ethnic nationalities with different languages, modes of dressing, eating, dancing and even greeting habits which are inspired by their various cultural beliefs. Culture is a means of identity of a people, According to Sofola; "A culture is a learned pattern of behaviour, ideal, belief and artifact shared by a people and society transmitted by them from one generation to another".

The culture of a people is what stands to make them out distinctively from other human societies in the family unit and the society at large. What is accepted in one society may likely be

an abomination in other society. So therefore culture is an all embracing concept as far as man is concerned. It is a functioning, active, efficient, and well organized unity, which must be analyzed into component institution in relations to one another, in relation to needs of human organisms and in relation to the environment man -made as well and natural, Malinowski (31). Culture encompasses every bit of man life and experience which has made concept to be attractive in various schools of thought which revolve with similar meaning. In drawing inferences from the above culture is all embracing concept having a broad interpretation it embraced religious belief language dress style of living political organization and other aspect of life. Culture according to Adeboye and Olagunju is used as a tangible and intangible products, habits, customs, thought as well as the arts technology, music, literature theatre, health, drama and education. Africa inherit their culture heritage from the proceeding generation which is pass on to the succeeding ones (236-238).

People learn by observing and are basically thus influenced by the place and people around them. In Nigeria like all other world many people learn equally from stories told to them. These stories relate information and experience of life as well as various custom and traditions and such memories are transmitted from parent to children.

Culture is not solid and lasting but always changing with each generation contributes its experience of the world drop things that are no longer useful for them.

According to E. Ukpokunu, Culture is learned. It is acquired when a man is born, and not before he is born. The process by which we acquire culture is also known socialization. A child is born and in the process of development, the child socialized with the mother, father and other family members which is passed from generation to generation (99).

Nigeria culture is centered on promoting and educating the people on their identity. Culture as it we're bring about understanding of who a person is, the social political life of a person as well as other aspects of their belief is learned as part of their culture

2.3 Elements of costume.

There are two part of the elements of costume: the visual and the practical material needed to create a costume. The visual elements are:

1. **Silhouette:** It is the curvature of the costume and the first important element of a costume, which combines its line and mass. Silhouette is the fattest way to identity the time and place of a period costume. It tells what parts of the body are emphasized, hidden or displayed by the clothing. There are three basic type of silhouette which include: the crapped line, fitted line and combination.
2. **Colour:** Combination of colour are very important part of the costume element, proper choice will help establish the plays and mood and personality of the character. Colour has its four

properties: Hue, intensity, saturation and valued lightness. We associate certain colour with comedy versus tragedy or with other kinds of moods. Colour must be used with less subtly than in normal life to compensate for the distance between audience and actor.

3. **Texture:** The first element of textures in the fabric itself satin are smooth and shiny while lace is light and highly textured and tweed is heavy and highly textured. Two dimensional textures are provided by the fabric patterns. Paisley, plaid and polka dots have a busy visual texture, for example many costumes are composed of multiple fabrics making up multiple article of clothing plus accessories, making an elaborate visual texture.

4. **Space:** This is less a factor for costuming because their canvas is always the human body.

5. **Composition:** Composition is an important element in costume; it is the put where all the separate elements come together to form a whole. A successful composition means that you have arranged, distributed, aligned and complied your costume design in a way that not only looks good but is also highly functional and effective.

6. **Line:** Line has different aspects including direction, thickness, sharpness of edge and length. It provides the visual dimensions of length and width. When lines offered a path of vision for the eyes when wearing an outfit. Line has several functions shape, indicate direction, establish a point of emphasis create an illusion, indicate dimension of length and width and to enclose space. There are only two kinds of lines can take four directions. Vertical, horizontal, diagonal or Zig

zag. A curved line may be extreme approaching a full circle or it may be very gentle or subtle almost straight.

7. **Mass:** Mass refers to the weight, density or relative solidity of a form, this element can be tricky because mass can be actual or visual. Actual mass is a physical solid item that fills space. Now, visual mass refers to materials that are used to fill the space without their truly being any man present.

2.4 Types of Traditional Costume.

Traditional Costumes are the ensemble of garment, jewelry and accessories rooted of the past that are worn by an identifiable group of people. Through slight changes over time in colours and materials are acknowledged the assemblage seems to be handed down unchanged from the past it conjured up image of rural people dressed in colourful layers exotic clothing from an idealised past in some places.

According to Titi Euba, in the living culture point out that, "Dressing can be broadly be defined to include garments hair style, head wear, body decoration cosmetics, jewelry and accessories of all kind "(29). She include the ordinary day to day wear of the people.

In Yoruba costume for male are Agbada, Buba and Sokoto while women sew Buba and iro".

The iro (wrapper) and gele(head tie) are made from a rectangular pieces of cloth which is cut and joined with designed measurements while Buba (Blouse) usually round necked had sleeves that extend almost to the wrist or beyond the elbow. The Sokoto is a pair of trousers while the Agbawu is a voluminous over flowing top. The Yoruba woman costume is the "Iro and Buba and Asoke" other fabric that are commonly used to design the Yoruba costume are damask lace. The woman costume is aimed at showing off the wealth of their husband.

Hausa costume are divided into groups the Kiga and Kigannaki or Danckiki, Kiga is a piece of fabric that is cut into a rectangular shape, which runs from the front to the back length without any form joining at the shoulder and is folded into two equal with a neck hole at the centre stripe of the same fabric are sown to the sides to join the front flap with the back flap. This enable the lower edge of the costume to flare. The Kiganki had sleeves and a slit that forms a kind of opening which is designed with embroidery around the neck and other opening such as pocket embroidery is also used to design the bottom of trousers which have a loose baggy shape and a result of the additional fabric in between the leg. A small round cap like "Mecca cap" is worn in the head. Hausa female is simply a wrapper, blouse and head-tie their costume is made from fabric called Hollandaise.

The Igbo costume, the Igbo women tie a wrapper which is tied around her waist and drapes down to the ankles, another piece of the same cloth is tied around her chest and drapes to cover the top

part of the first one that is tied around the waist. A head tie which is made of silk cover the head while simple or coral bead are worn as necklace.. The Igbo women also wears beads around her chest waist which is know Jijida. although it is mostly worn by young girls. The Igbo man also dress with the Isiagu is worn to important functions and depict the wearer status in the society.

Urhobo/Isoko traditional Costume. The male usually dress with Georgian wrapper and wearing a lace short with a cowboy hat and walking sticks and beads are worn on the hands and neck. While women usually dress in Georgian wrapper and a blouse with beads on their necks and hands with gele (head-tie).

Benin costume, the Benin women wear Buba and wrapper which are worn occasionally during an events. They also tied wrapper around their chest and beads also while the men are known of wearing Embluku skirt and shirts, they also tie wrapper around their waist and beads on their neck that is reaching their navel

2.5 Function of traditional costume.

Every ethnic groups in Nigeria has traditional attire that are unique to their culture. This traditional attire is determined by occasion, tradition and people and out of many on purpose. Every culture has a unique dressing pattern, colours, the major tribe remain the Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa Fulani for centuries many of these tribe wore styles as well as designs that identify them

in their culture. The colours, styles and design constructed is determined by the event as well as other factors, like social status, sex, religious status, political status and other status.

The function of traditional Costume are;

1. It help to indicate the state, cultural or religious identity that period of the time and one place in the society.
2. It help to represent our culture and identity it is necessary to hold on to them if we wish to preserve our tradition.
3. It help to show and reflect the position age grade, class and hierarchy of the individual that are participating.
4. Traditional costume help in symbolic unity among us through our way of dressing.

CHAPTER THREE

BENIN PEOPLE LAND AND CULTURE.

3.1 Historical background of the Benin people.

Historical accounts are vague as to when and if the Benin (Edo), migrated from the Nile valley. What is not in doubt is that the earliest rulers of Benin were called Ogisos. Thirty-one Ogisos in all ruled the kingdom of Benin between 900 - 1200 AD, which is the earliest period so far accounted for in Benin history.

The Benin monarchy demonstrates strong affinity with ancient Egyptian gods and Pharaohs, with which it shares identical authority, grandeur and a great deal of reverence from their subjects. In fact, the hair style of Bini chiefs is similar to Pharaoh Ramses II's famous helmet, while the small circles on the helmet appear also on many Benin bronzes. Benin Queens wear identical hairstyles to that of Pharaoh Mycerinus (Fourth-Dynasty), and Pharaoh Sesostris I (Twelfth Dynasty). The kings (Ogios) of Benin (Bini) also adopt grand Osirian titles of the 'Open Eye,' signifying omniscience and omnipotence. The Benin cosmological account of the universe draws significantly from the Egyptian one. The Egyptian version, which later formed the basis of genesis in the Bible, is that the universe was created from chaos and primeval (or ancient) ocean. After a hill (called tatjenen) arose from the bottom of the ocean, a son-god (God's child or baby god) called Atom (which is the Sun without which life on earth is impossible), appeared on the

land created by the hill. The son-god or Atom then created eight other gods which together with himself made nine gods. These nine gods are presumed by modern science to be symbolized by the nine major planets of the universe.

The Benin version is that, in the beginning there was no land only water everywhere. In the middle of the water stood a tree on top of which lived (Owonwon) the toucan. Osanobua (The Creator) decided to populate the world so The Creator sent three sons, each with a choice of peculiar gift. One of the three sons chose to have wealth and the next chose magical skills. As the youngest was about to make his choice known, Owonwon cried out to him to settle for a snail shell. This he did. When the canoe the three children were travelling in reached the middle of the waters, the youngest son turned his snail shell upside down to release endless stream of sand resulting in the emergence of land .The three sons at first were afraid to step on the land from the canoe. To test the firmness of the land, they sent the Chameleon, which is why Chameleons walk with hesitation. Osanobua then came down on a chain, from the sky, to demarcate the earth and allocate responsibilities. Osanobua appointed the youngest son as ruler of the earth. The son called the earth (Agbon) and promptly set up his headquarters at Igodomigodo.

The oldest son was given control of the waters by Osanobua. The Benin call this son, Olokun (meaning the god of the river). The other son was allowed freedom to use his magical powers to balance out the negative and positive forces of nature. He apparently represents evil

and the Benin call him Ogiuwu (or Esu sometimes) meaning the harbinger of death. Ogiuwu is supposed to own the blood of all living things. In other words, no living thing can live forever.

Osanobua then settled in the realm of the spirit world across the waters where the sky and the earth meet. While Osanobua and Olokun represent aspects of life such as good health, long life, good luck, prosperity and happiness to which man may appeal through ritual purity, Ogiuwu represents mourning, evil omen and diseases. The youngest son, the ruler of the earth represents innocence and so is susceptible to the powers of the other deities. These same good and evil influences form the basic elements of all modern religions, with man endowed with the power to make choices.

The importance of the emergence of the tree before man on earth is not lost on modern science, which recognizes that without the tree manufacturing oxygen, life on earth would have been impossible. Modern science has also confirmed the Benin cosmology that birds, insects etc preceded man to earth. The Benin myth of creation was earth based in scope.

The Ogisos (meaning rulers of the sky) because of their direct lineage to the youngest son of Osanobua (God), from the sky, were of course, accorded divine qualities by the Bini. These, the Ogisos naturally tried to strengthen in a variety of ways, including not allowing themselves to be seen eating in public and so suggesting that they can live without food. They are not mortal but god-kings with celestial mystique attached to them. Because the kings (Ogisos) of Benin are

considered divine, they are worshipped by their subjects who speak to them always with great reverence, at a distance and on bended knees. Great ceremonies surround every action of the Benin king. Benin kings have immense political powers, as ultimate judges in court matters, the deliverers of death penalty, the receivers of taxes and tributes, the regulators of trade, the nominal owners of the land of the kingdom, chief executives and law makers, and principal custodians of customs and traditions. However, their immense powers are hedged with checks and balances to prevent excesses. The king's powers are held in trust for the entire community and cannot be exercised without consultation with other levels of authority, such as the kingmakers, known as Edionisen.

The first Ogiso king was called OgisoIgododo and his kingdom Igodomigodo was at Ugbekun. OgisoIgododo's successor, Ogiso Ere, transferred the capital from Ugbekun to Uhudumwunrun.

This detailed history of Benin is being provided to illustrate the formidable authority and influence welded by monarchs in African kingdoms and demonstrate how ancient people tried to breathe life into myths. Whether it is the son-god of the Benin Egypt or the Christian religion, ancient people translated myths into reality. There is, therefore, nothing special about Jesus Christ. The idea of the Son of God or Son-God is as old and ancient man in Africa.

Ogiso Ere was a very resourceful king. He introduced the guild system of carpenters and wood carvers, which eventually developed into the world celebrated wood works and bronze casting of

Igun Street in Benin City. Ogiso Ere also built the first ever Igodomigodo market known then as Ogiso market and in modern times as Agbado market. Ogiso Ere, a lover of peace, invented the famous African kingship paraphernalia which includes a sword of honour (Ada) , a sword for dancing (Eben) ,a royal stool (Ekete) , a rectangular stool(Agba) and a leather box (Epoki).

Ogiso Ere was succeeded by Ogiso Orire, maintaining the primogeniture (son succeeding his father) principle. The fourth dynasty on the death of Orire introduced the system of gerontocracy (the oldest person in the community rules), until the death of the twenty-second Ogiso when the primogeniture system was restored. The twenty-third Ogiso extended the primogeniture rule to all his frontline chiefs known collectively as the Edion (Elders). The Edion included Chief Oliha, Edohen, Ero, Ezomo and Eholo-Nire. Ogiso Ibioye, another resourceful king introduced the use of cowries as currency to Igodomigodo.

The last of the Ogiso kings was called Owodo. He reigned in the 12th century AD and had only one child (a male) despite having many wives. In attempt to unravel the cause of his wives' barrenness, he sent his first wife Esagho and three male messengers to consult an oracle. The oracle named Esagho as the cause. To avoid the wrath and punishment of the king, Esagho threatened to lie to the king that the male messengers had carnal relationship with her (an act carrying death penalty), if they revealed the oracle's declaration. The messengers, in connivance with Esagho told the king that the oracle fingered his only son, Ekhaladerhan as the cause of his

wives' barrenness and that Prince Ekhaladerhan had to be killed to reverse the situation. The king, angered by the development but reluctant to take the life of his only child, banished Ekhaladerhan and his mother to a place called Ughoton on the outskirts of Igodomigodo kingdom. Three years after the banishment, Owodo's wives were still barren so he sent another set of messengers to the oracle. It was then that the truth about Esagho's treachery was revealed. Esagho was executed as punishment and still the king's wives remained barren. Apparently, the problem had to do with the fertility status of the king himself but nobody dared to raise such ideas in those days. Women were always blamed for barrenness. However, Ogiso Owodo, apart from his domestic problems, was not a very popular king and his execution of a pregnant woman for some misdemeanor, proved to be one offence too many for his subjects and frontline chiefs who banished Owodo from his throne. Owodo took refuge at a place called Uhinwinrin, where he died miserably a few years later. During the period of Owodo's banishment, a monster that appeared to be coming out of the Ikpobariver, (although the Igodomigodos believed it was coming from the sky), attacked and devoured people at will at the Ogiso market. The Igodomigodos as a result, nicknamed the Ogiso market, Agbado Aigbare, (meaning we go there together we never return together), which is how Ogiso market acquired its current name of Agbado market. Every effort to tackle the monster, including spiritual means failed until Evian, a member of the Ogiso royal family, succeeded in throwing a fire-hot iron into the mouth of the

monster. The feat appeared to have sent the monster to its eventual death and endeared Evian to his people, because the monster never bothered the people of Igodomigodo again.

The death of Ogiso Owodo created leadership vacuum for the first time in Igodomigodo's history.

The people were not prepared to countenance a mere mortal from a non-Ogiso lineage ruling them. It had to be the God-son's first son or nothing. It was during this period of confusion that the elders, known as Edionisen, including Chiefs Edohen, Ero and led by Oliha mounted a search for their banished Prince Ekaladerhan. In the meantime, Ekaladerhan had set up a settlement he called 'Ilefe,' (meaning, successful escape) and had changed his name to 'Izoduwa,' (meaning I have chosen the path of prosperity). Izoduwa's new home, 'Ilefe' was in the heart of Yoruba land and because of his immense magic powers soon endeared himself to his Yoruba community which included some Uzebu (corrupted in Yoruba to Ijebu) who had followed him into exile from Igodomigodo, and were treating him as a god. The Yoruba corrupted his name Izoduwa to 'Oduduwa' and his camp, 'Ilefe'.

Oduduwa became the spiritual leader of the Ifa divinity. The Yoruba (who call The Creator, Olodumare), saw Oduduwa as a direct descendant, which he claimed as a result of his God-son lineage, although his banishment link with the God-sons (Ogisos) was kept a secret from the Yoruba. In fact, the Yoruba believed he was a deity from the sky as he claimed and accorded him great reverence as their leading ancestor. The Ifa myth of creation draws significantly from

the Bini and Egyptian corpus. It claims that Olodumare (The Creator) sent Orunmila (another name for Oduduwa) down to the earth with a cock (rooster) which carried a quantity of sand in its claws. Before then, the entire earth surface was covered with water. The cock dropped the sand on the water and spread it with its claws to create land. Oduduwa subsequently had eight children who later dispersed to found and rule other Yoruba communities. The Yoruba myth of creation is community based confirming lineal relationship with it's (earth based Bini and universe based Egyptian) mother sources. Oduduwa's first son was by a Yoruba woman called Okanbi. This son was called 'Omonoyan,' (meaning precious child in Bini) which the Yoruba corrupted to 'Oranmiyan.'

When the Edionisen of Igodomigodo finally traced Ekaladerhan (Oduduwa) down to Ile-Ife, they could not persuade Oduduwa to return to his father's throne in Igodomigodo. The Edionisen, out of frustration for not being able to persuade Izoduwa to return home to his throne, installed a temporary administrator, the hero whose name was Evian, to oversee the affairs of Igodomigodo.

Evian was a popular administrator. He invented the acrobatic dance called Amufi and the traditional dance called Emeghute. He ruled until very old age and before his death, nominated his oldest son, Irebor to succeed him. Most of the people of Igodomigodo and senior chiefs would not have this. They rejected Irebor on the ground that his father Evian was not an Ogiso and, therefore, lacked divine authority to bequeath kingship (Ogieship) to his heir, Leadership vacuum was again created in Igodomigodo and after a period of uncertainty, the Edionisen

decided to once again reach out to their son, Izoduwa, who had by then acquired the Yoruba title of 'Ooni.' After much pleading by the Edionisen, for the Ooni to allow his first son to ascend to the throne of Igodomigodo, the Ooni decided to put the people of Igodomigodo to a test. He gave the Edionisen some lice and instructed them to bring them back in three years to get their answer.

Chief Oliha kept the lice in the hair of one of their slaves and after three years returned the lice to Izoduwa who was surprised at the level of preservation and development of the lice. Izoduwa (Oduduwa) concluded that if the Edionisen could so adequately take care of the lice, his son was likely to be in good hands.

In the meantime, Irebor was warning the people of Igodomigodo against what he called (Ogie a mien, Aimmien Oba), meaning it is an Ogie that rules Igodomigodo and not an Oba, in protest against the intrusion of the Ife Prince. The word Ogiamen then became the nickname of Irebor and subsequently the hereditary title of the ruler of Irebor's Igodomigodo.

Ogiamien Irebor prevented Prince Oranmiyan from entering the heart of Igodomigodo kingdom. The people of Igodomigodo built a palace for Prince Oranmiyan at Usama. Prince Oranmiyan, unable to bear the animosity for very long, renounced his office and called Igodomigodo land, Ile Ibinu (meaning a land of annoyance and vexation). He declared that only a child of the soil, educated in the culture and traditions of Igodomigodo could rule the kingdom.

Prince Oranmiyan, on his way home to Ife, stopped briefly at Ego, where he preganated Princess Erimwinde, the daughter of the Enogie of Ego. Princess Erimwinde's casual encounter with Prince Oranmiyan resulted in the birth of a baby boy who couldn't talk in his early years but loved playing the game of marble.

When Oranmiyan, who had in the meantime established his Alafin dynasty in Oyo was informed about his son's predicament, he sent the child's mother seven marbles. While playing with the marbles and other children, one of his throws hit the target and in the excitement screamed: ' Owomika,' (meaning I hit the target). This is how his title of Oba Eweka was derived and he ruled over Usama renamed Ile-Ibinu outside Igodomigodo. In the meantime, OgiamienIrebor who ruled Igodomigodo had been succeeded by OgiamienUbi by the time of Oba Eweka's reign in Ile-Ibinu.

Oba Eweka's reign was not particularly eventful. He was succeeded by Oba Ewuahen, Oba Ehenmihen and the Oba Ewedo. Oba Ewedo changed the name of Ile-Ibinu to Ubini, which the Portuguese corrupted to Benin or Bini. Oba Ewedo moved his palace from Usama or Ubini to its present site in Igodomigodo, causing a bitter war between the Oba and Ogiamien Ode who was the ruler of Igodomigodo at the time. The fight was considered purely a family matter by the people and elders of Igodomigodo. To prevent it leading to the death of too many innocent lives, the elders prevailed on the adversaries to settle their quarrel amicably. Oba Ewedo requested

Ogiamien Ode to sell the land to him. A treaty was struck requiring Ogiamien as the traditional landlord of Igodomigodo kingdom, to sell part of the land to the Oba at the coronation of every successive Oba. The Oba elect first had to present gifts to the Ogiemien which include two male and two female servants, a royal stoll, a wooden staff, a rectangular stool and a round leather box.

The Oba-in-waiting and the Ogiamien would then meet at their common boundary called Ekiokpagma, where the Ogiamien would take sand from the ground and put it in the hand of the Oba while he says: "I have sold this part of Benin land to you but not your son and when you pass away your son will buy the land from me as you have done."

Oba Ewedo's reign was followed by that of Oguola, Edoni, Udagbedo, Ohen, Egbeka, Orobiru and Uwaifiokun in that order, none of which was considered particularly spectacular in Benin history.

The mid-15th century AD through the 16th century AD, witnessed the period of the warrior kings in Benin history. Ewuare the great, Ozolua, Esigie, Orhogbua and Ehengbuda consolidated, developed and expanded the kingdom through innovative leadership ideas, closely knit, disciplined community organization, warfare and conquests. A British adventurer called Ling Roth, was the first to refer to Benin as great, a tribute not only to the extend of the Benin empire but also to the elaborate, detailed and efficient administrative machinery the people had evolved over a period of more than 1,000 years.

At its height, the Binis controlled vast Yoruba land with populations several times larger than that of Benin. The Benin kingdom extended in the West to Lagos, where the Binis set up a military camp of occupation which they called Eko, in the North-east to Ekiti, Owo, Ondo, most of Delta state and all of the North-west to the river Niger. The Binis established their influence and authority along the West Coast of Africa and through dominance lent their name to the Bight of Benin. The Benin have very close affinity with the Ashantis of Ghana and are considered of similar or common stock. However, the frontiers of the Benin Empire were constantly expanding and contrasting as new conquests were made and as vassals on the borders rebelled only to be reconquered. The Benin spread their culture and traditions, particularly their Obaship ideology and system by sending royal brothers to rule over tributaries, or holding hostage, sons of conquered chiefs to be trained in Benin City or by sponsoring candidates for thrones of conquered territories.

Objects such as Ada and brass masks were introduced to vassal lords as emblems of their authority and these symbols have endured in virtually all the territories that experienced Bini control. Even in places outside direct Benin influence, such as in the Niger Delta area, the reputation of the Oba of Benin was such that leadership disputes were brought to him for arbitration and the winners took back home, Benin regalia to form part of their leadership traditions. The city of Benin, like the ancient Egyptian cities walled against predators, has a giant protective moat dug around it between 1280 - 1295 AD, without using mechanical equipment. The engineering feat still marvels in modern times. The Benin moat is described in the Guinness

Book of Records as second in magnitude only to the Great China wall. Ewuare, the first Bini warrior king, was himself forced into exile as a young prince and nearly would not have ascended the Benin throne. With death penalty hanging on his head as a result of some misdemeanor, he fled into the woods although regularly, secretly visiting the city of Benin at night.

The elders (Edionisen) heard about his secret visits and set a trap to capture and kill him. Just as he was about to be caught, he escaped to the home of OgievaNomuekpo, who hid him in a well-covered on top with leaves. Ogieva then went to invite the elders to come and arrest Prince Ogun as he was called then. While Ogieva was on his way to call the elders, Edo, the head servant of Ogieva's household alerted Prince Ogun about his master's diabolical plan and helped the prince to escape. Ogieva returned with the elders to find that he had been betrayed and he severely punished Edo for this. After several years in the bush, Prince Ogun began to grow weary of his vagabond life and accepted to be crowned Oba Ewuare of Ubini land around the mid-15th century AD. The father's throne had been vacant for a while then and he was the oldest heir. On the throne, one of his first acts was to reward Edo with many valuable gifts. After Edo's death, he bought his corpse from Ogieva and buried it at the entrance to the palace's inner tower. Then he decreed that the land of Ubini should henceforth be known and called Edo. This was later expanded to Edo O'Evho Ahire, meaning Edo the city of love, in appreciation of Edo's love that saved young Prince Ogun's life and gave Benin her greatest king.

Oba Ewuare the great, as he later came to be known, was the most dynamic, innovative and successful Oba in the history of Edo kingdom. Under him, Benin was completely transformed religiously, politically, socially and physically. Houses originally built with poles or palm ribs and padded with mud were rebuilt with packed mud. The city was re-planned and neatly laid out, with roads radiating from the center. It was divided into two distinct segments with Ore ne Okhua, constituting the public sector and the Oba's sector (Ogbe) the other. The population of Ore ne Okhua was organized into wards with each specializing in a peculiar craft or ritual services in allegiance to the king. The palace, which did not have a permanent site in previous reigns, was constructed on a massive scale covering several acres of land at its present location and turned into a beehive of activities as the political and spiritual nerve centre of the vast kingdom. The Binis have a saying that in the Oba's palace there is never silence. The complex includes shrine areas, meeting chambers for a variety of groups of chiefs, work spaces for ritual professionals, royal artists and craftsmen, storehouses, residential sections for the Oba's numerous wives, children and servants.

“The king's palace or court is a square, and is as large as the town of Haarlem and entirely surrounded by a special wall, like that which encircles the town. It is divided into many magnificent palaces, houses, and apartments of the courtiers, and comprises beautiful and long square galleries, about as large as the Exchange at Amsterdam, but one larger than another, resting on wooden pillars, from top to bottom covered with cast copper, on which are engraved

the pictures of their war exploits and battles, and are kept very clean. Most palaces and houses of the king are covered with palm leaves instead of square pieces of wood, and every roof is decorated with a small turret ending in a point, on which birds are standing, birds cast in copper with outspread wings, cleverly made after living models."

Ewuare re-organized the government by centralizing it and he set up three powerful palace association chiefs. The political elite of the kingdom was made up of titled chiefs and members of the royal family. The seven highest-ranking chiefs who were elders of Benin were constituted into Uzama with leadership authority next to the king. The brothers of the king who tended to be potential rivals were sent as hereditary rulers (Enogies) of administrative districts. The mother of the king was given the title of Queen mother and set up in her own palace in the town of Uselu just outside the city. Ewuare restored the annual cycle of royal ceremonies the most important ones being Ugie Erha Oba in honour of royal ancestors and Igue to strengthen the mystical powers of the king. The present day elegant ceremonial costumes of the kings and chiefs of Benin originated from Ewuare's reign.

Ewuare set up a war machine that extended Benin notion of kingship, objects, aesthetic ideas and power across the West Coast of Africa. The arts, particularly brass casting, flourished during his reign. The kings of Benin from the reign of Ewuare the great until the 17th century AD were

Ezoti, followed by Olua, Ozolua, Esigie, Orhogbua, Ehengbuda, Ohuan, Ahenzae, Akenzae, Akengboi, Akenkpaye, Akengbedo, Ore-Oghene, Ewuakpe and Ozuere.

When king Ozolua died, a bitter struggle for power ensued between his two sons, Esigie in Benin City and Aruaran in the town of Udo, about 20 miles from Benin City to the northwest. Udo then, was an important centre almost as large and powerful as Benin City. Esigie triumphed just as he did in the war against the Igala people from north of Nigeria who had attacked the kingdom during his reign. The Binis drove the Igala soldiers back across the river Niger and established their king, the Ata, as a vassal of Benin. The Portuguese first reached Benin which they called Beny or Benin (although the Binis called themselves, their language, capital city and their kingdom, EDO), during the reign of Ozolua between 1472 and 1486 AD. The Portuguese found a highly developed kingdom with unique and very sophisticated political, artistic, linguistic, economic, cultural and military traditions in the process of territorial conquests. Between 1504 and 1550 AD, the Portuguese, a major European power at the time, happily negotiated and established diplomatic and trade relations with Oba Esigie and his kingdom of Benin. Portuguese mercenaries fought alongside the Binis in many territorial wars after the treaty. Trade between the Portuguese and Benin was mainly in coral beads, cloths for ceremonial attire and great quantities of brass manilas which Bini craftsmen melted for casting.

In exchange for Portuguese goods, the Binis offered tobacco, spices, kolanuts, ivory, earthenware, jewelry, artifacts, domestic slaves etc. European slave trade in West Africa started

with the acquisition of domestic servants, and warrior kingdoms like Edo had plenty of them captured as war booties. It was forbidden to sell or take a native Bini into slavery and so elaborate identification marks on faces and chests were contrived. Binis, therefore, were hardly ever captured by Arabs or Europeans into slavery.

One of the numerous elite palace associations was assigned the responsibility of conducting affairs with the Portuguese. Until this day, a secret language which some claim is derived from Portuguese, is spoken by members of the association. The seventeenth century witnessed another period of internal turmoil in Benin history. After the death of Ehengbuda, the last warrior king in the late 16th century AD, his son Ohuan ascended the throne but he did not reign for long and he produced no heir. With his death, the lineage that produced the Eweka dynasty ended. Powerful rebel chiefs established private bases and selected kings from among their ranks. This produced a series of kings with doubtful claims to legitimacy, which seriously weakened the Benin monarchy. At the turn of the 17th century, a very powerful Iyase (head of chiefs and the supreme military commander of the kingdom), rebelled against Oba Ewuakpe and after the Oba's death, supported a rival brother to the heir apparent, who won and became Akenzua I. This rebel (the Iyase ne Ode), is remembered in Benin oral history as a threatening foe and a very powerful magician who could transform himself into an elephant at will. Oba Akenzua I, from 1715 AD and Oba Eresonyen from 1735 AD, successfully fought the rebellious chiefs and restored power and legitimacy to the Benin monarchy. Their reigns were followed in 1750 by that of

Akengbuda; 1804, Obanosa and Ogbebo in quick succession; 1815, Osemwede and 1850, Oba Adolo. During the British invasion of Benin City in 1897, Oba Ovoranmwen Nogbaisi (meaning the great) was on the throne. The British, viewing Benin as the main obstacle in their expansion drive into the agricultural interior of the West African coast from the river Niger, decided to provoke the kingdom to get an excuse to sack it. The British stubbornly sent their scouts to Benin against the advice and tradition of the Binis, during a sacred national ceremony when foreign visitors are not welcomed. The British mercenaries were eliminated as hostile intruders, which was the excuse the British wanted. The British then launched a full-scale war, which lasted for eight days and went in their favour because of their superior weapons. After capturing the ancient city of Benin, they scattered the inhabitants to villages and farms. While the Binis were out of the way, and the invaders had exiled Oba Ovoranmwen to Calabar (in South-east Nigeria), they ransacked the Oba's palace, all Bini shrines and chiefs' homes, stealing thousands of sacred Benin works of art and other valuables which today adorn the leading museums in Europe and America, Not content with their looting, they burnt the entire city down to the last house. From accounts of members of the British army that invaded Benin City in 1897, we learn that the floors, lintels, and rafters of the council chambers and the king's residence in the palace were lined with sheets of respond decorated brass covered with royal geometric designs and figures of men and leopards. Ornamental ivory locks sealed the doors and carved ivory figurines surmounted anterior. A brass snake, observed for the first time by a European in the early

eighteenth century, was still to be seen on the roof of the council chamber house. All of these the invading British, in the name of their king and country carted away. What they could not steal or burn, they destroyed. And sitting on the ruins, the British subdued and indirectly ruled this outstanding African civilization for another 63 years as part of their Nigerian colony. Despite the British abuse of Bini culture and marginalization of Benin history, the splendor of Edo civilization continues to this day to astound and exile the world. Benin artifacts are among the most exquisite and coveted in world's history and the kingdom of Benin remains famous for its sophistication in social engineering and organization. The Bini Obaship institution is still one of the world's most revered apart from being one of the most ancient.

Eweka II ascended the throne of Benin in 1814 and Akenzua the II became Oba in 1933. Between them, they restored a great deal of the tradition and dignity of Benin people and rebuilt, although on a smaller scale than the Ewuare palace, the grandeur, triumph and supremacy of Bini traditions. Large walled areas have now replaced the numerous compounds of former kings with enclosed individual altars for each of the three immediate predecessors and one general altar for the rest. Decorated sheets of brass adorn the rafters and lintels and terra-cotta plaques recount the exploits of former kings. The current king of this great African kingdom and one of the most vibrant, colourful and enlightened civilizations in the history of the world, is Oba Ewuare Uku AkpoloKpolo, the Omo N' Oba N' Edo.

3.2 The Benin people land and culture.

Benin city is the capital and largest city of Edo state in southern Nigeria. It is the fourth largest city in Nigeria after Lagos Kano and Ibadan with total population of 1,782,000 as of 2021. The Benin people are well known for Nigeria rubber industry and oil production is also significant industry.

The indigenous people of Benin are the Edo people (the Benin people) and they speak the Edo language and Edoid language. The people of the city have one of the richest dressing culture on Africa continent and are known for their beads, body marks, bangles anklet, raffia work and the subsistence farming of yam, plantain and cassava.

Benin city is still the principal city of the Edo kingdom of Benin which flourished during the 13th to the 19th century. It was destroyed in 1897 by the British after the Edo assaulted an earlier British expedition, which had been told not to enter the city during religious festival but nonetheless attempted to do so, before burning the city down, the British pillaged it, taking many of its famous bronzed ivory, and other treasures.

Although traces of the old wall and moat remain the new city is a close packed pattern of houses and streets converging on the palace and compound of the Oba (sacred king) and the

government offices. In the main square sits a statue of Ewuare a woman honored for assisting a 15th century prince attempting to regain power and who later became Oba Ewuare. The present

Oba retained traditional and advisory roles in government.

The indigenous people of Benin city are Edo and they speak the Edo language and other Edo language. The people of Benin city are known as the Edo or Benin. The people of the city have one of the richest dress culture on the African continent and are known for beads body marks, bangles, anklets, and raffia work. Attractions in the city include the national museum, the Oba palace, Igbo Ora (famous for bronze casting and other metal works). Other attractions include the various festivals and the Benin moats (Measuring about 20 to 40 ft), the king square (known as Ring Road) and its traditional markets.

The Benin are known for bronze sculpture its casting skills, and their arts and craft. Benin city is also the home of one of the oldest sustained monarchies in the world. Various festivals are held in Benin city yearly to celebrate various historic occasions and seasons. Igue festival is the most popular of the festivals where the Oba celebrates the history and culture of his people and blesses the people. It is celebrated at a time between Christmas and New year.

3.3. Historical background of coronation ceremony.

The coronation ceremonies of an Oba of Benin usually last about 10 days. They begin from Egua-Edaiken, the traditional residence of the heir-apparent to the Benin Throne. On a day fixed by the Edaiken, he is escorted by his Uselu people on his journey back to Benin City. On the way he stops at an historical palm tree named "Udinama-miesonaimiuwa" (translated to mean "work before pleasure") which the Edaiken "climbs" symbolically. This little ceremony dates its origin to the time of Oba Ewuare the Great whose life as heir apparent to the throne was characterized by long suffering which included periods when he personally had to climb palm trees on this spot to cut the fruits for a living. This act of suffering by the father of the first Edaiken has ever since been re-enacted in a symbolic way by every Edaiken. From the palm tree the Edaiken continues his journey to Benin City; but at the first moat called (Iya-akpan) in the vicinity of where the firm of Mid-Motors (Nigeria) Limited now stands, the Uselu chief in the procession take leave of the Edaiken and return to Uselu while the Edaiken is thereafter escorted into the City by Oredo Chiefs. The Edaiken enters the City via Iguisi (now Lagos Street) and proceeds to Eko-Ohae (bachelors camp) where he stays for three days. After three days at Eko-Ohae the Edaiken continues his journey to Usama, the venue of the traditional Coronation rites. Usama was the site where Orominyan, the father of Eweka I, built the first Palace and all succeeding Obas from Eweka I were crowned and lived there, until Oba Ewedo in the 13th century moved the palace to the present site in the centre of the town, The Edaiken remains in Usama for 7 days performing all the rituals and ceremonies of the Oba. Before the expiration of 7 days, he visits Use, a village

a few kilometers outside Benin, where he performs the ceremony for choosing the name he will answer as the Oba of Benin. This tradition started during the period of Oba Eweka I whose maternal grand-father, Ogie-Egor, lived in the next door village of Egor. When Prince Oromiyan left Benin, he left behind his Bini wife who was pregnant in the care of her father the Ogie of Egor. The woman delivered a male child who was dumb from birth. The maternal grand-father then sent him to Use, the mother's village, for treatment, but when he grew up and still could not talk, words were sent to his father at Uhe. His father sent 7 magical akhue with which the dumb Prince participated in the popular village game known as akhue. With only one seed remaining on the ground and every player having failed to strike it, the young Prince used the magical akhue from his father and succeeded in striking down the remaining seed. Excited by this feat, he spoke for the first time exclaiming in Yoruba, Owomika (my hand has struck it). He later assumed this expression for a title which became corrupted to Eweka.

Having picked a name at Use, the Edaiken returns to Usama where the crowning ceremony is performed by Oliha, the leader of the Uzama and proclaims Edaiken in his newly acquired name as the Oba of Benin. It is significant to note that until the ceremony at Use, the Edaiken never knows before-hand what name he is going to be crowned with. From this moment also the Edaiken ceases to use his personal names and he is henceforth known by the new name of an Oba. Also significant is the fact that both at Egor and Use, there still exist almost in their original form the shrines established by the diviners and the native doctors who brought the magical

akhue seeds from Uhe. After the crowning ceremony the new Oba then leaves Usama on the 7th day for the town centre to be proclaimed and presented to Benin people.

On his way to the City he stops at Isekherhe to perform the ceremonial crossing of a bridge, a reminder of the day Oba Ewedo on a similar journey erected a bridge to enable him pass Isekherhe territory without stepping on the ground. After crossing the bridge the Oba and his entourage engage in a mock battle with Ogiamien and his followers. The resistance of Ogiamien forces collapses while the Oba and his entourage proceed to Urho-Okpota. Urho-Okpota (the gate of Okpota) dates its existence to the era of Oba Ozolua about 15th Century, and it is the area now known as "Ring Road" including where Exhibition Centre and the Local Government Secretariat now stand. Okpota was a powerful native doctor who prepared a charm of good luck for the Oba. It is said that the charm which was buried at the gate of the Palace brought prosperity to the Kingdom. The Oba lodged Okpota in a house near the Palace in the area of the present day Exhibition Centre. The verandah to his house soon became a meeting place for the elders, even for the Oba, and Urhokpota has ever since remained a Centre for meeting and useful deliberations. For the same reason Oba Eweka II chose the site for building the new Native Court, now known as Exhibition Centre. The ceremony at Urhokpota completed, the new Oba then moves into the Palace as the Oba of Benin. But he still has Ogiamien's challenge to meet and so 7 days after, he assembles his troops and proceeds to Ekiokpagha where he engages in a mock battle with Ogiamien, a reminder of the real battle between Oba Ewedo and Ogiamien in the 13th

century when the latter attempted to prevent the former from entering the City from Usama. By the treaty between the two, Ogiamien surrendered his claim to the ownership of land to the Oba.

3.4 The nature of dressing among the Benin people in hierarchy order.

An overview of Oba's dressing.

The Oba of Benin's costume is designed in an elaborate way from the head to toe. The Oba wears a local cloth (Akuhankhuan) he also uses a crown (Ede) and shirt (Ikekeze) they are made up of the tiny coral beads woven into a mesh hand bangles (Ikiri) the ankle Eguan is a cross bead is a bead that drop some inches below the chest. These are also the side robes Egbele and Ugogoro, a device to rest the hand. The Ada (scepter) features in Benin ceremonial bearing. The scandal are made of leather.

The Oba has other types of costume design use for other occasion like flowing white gown which usually have a longer lapel compare to the ones of the chiefs that has a short lapel.

The Dressing style of the Benin women.

Edo women are very beautiful and have great style of dressing that double their beauty. Edo women have their hair made into a unique hairstyles known as Eto-okuku a coral beads are then sewn into hair to form of a crown, the head gear known as the okuku.

The Edo women wear a beautiful wrapper made from a variety of fabrics including velvet, lace and Native fabric. They also wear a beaded cape or blouse (Ewu_ivie), the Edo women adorn their neck coral beads known as (Ure-Ivie) and wear a hand beads(ivie obo) and beaded earrings. Their handbag is made out of coral beads as well as the (Ekpa- ivie).

The Benin women also wear buba and wrapper which are worn occasionally during an event and their day to day costume too.

Benin chief's Costume.

There are various categories of chief in Benin kingdoms and each of the chiefs have their various costume. The Ezomo title is also on warrior costume. The costume is also reflective of ancient Oba ceremonial attire, but is designed with less expensive beads, the cap worn on his head is made with transparent cloth. Then the beads are sewn into it in a circular design with extension which create the cheeks. The neck is completely covered by a ring collar of beads. The short sleeved shirt is entirely made of a mesh of beads. Stiff rings of necklace adorn the neck and the coral waist dress the lower arms, and a many layered wrapper which reaches to the ankle is also worn.

Chiefs from the Uhumwogho chief wear intricating tied large, white wrapper on their waist.

The Benin chiefs wears red (Egbeigbe) is the royal attire worn by Benin chief during occasion and each chief in Benin have their different cultural attire used in different occasion to identify them in their chieftaincy position.

Benin men costume.

The Benin untitled men wear large wrapper of imported material in a toga -style over the left shoulder. The wrapper is usually between nine and twelve yard long. It is worn to the ankle or touching the ground and is wrapped according to its length and the size of the wearer normally it

begin from behind the back, thrown round the left shoulder then taken below the right arm finally resting over the left shoulder again. Typically young boys wear a thread yard long cloth drawn under the armpit from the back crossing the chest and knotted at the nape of the neck.

While the title men wear shirt and skirts made up of different type of fabric and beads around their neck and hand. While some tied wrapper around their waist and a long beads that is touching their navel.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Pictorial interpretation Analysis of the costume in coronation ceremony.

The coronation ceremony is one of the most outstanding ceremony of the Edo people. The overwhelming spectacle of the ceremony is to show the rich cultural heritage of the Benin people.

Below are the photograph showing various costume element of the Oba and chiefs that are employed and aesthically display during the ceremony.



<http://www.Edo.world.Net.com>.

Fig 1: Oba Ewuare 2nd on a Red Blouse and Skirt a night before the coronation ceremony.

The Oba is seated on a traditional stool, he is on a red blouse and red skirt (Ebuluku and Ovbiewie). He is also using a small crown and other accessories the round neck bead (Ikele) and hand bead (Ivie-obo).



<https://www.Edo.nation.net.com>.

Fig 2: The Oba is at the centre, he is wearing a white blouse with a white skirts, he is also using accessories.

The Oba is putting on white skirts (Ebuluku) made up of white linen material and he is using a red cap also a cross bead (Eguan) and a rounded beads on his neck. He is accompanied by his chiefs who are tying white wrapper and are using the rounded neck bead (Ikele) with hand bead (ivie-obo).



<https://www.edo.nation.net>

Fig 3: Oba Ewuare at the centre on complete beaded costume.

This particular picture in fig 3 reveal the Oba on his complete beaded coronation outfit. This particular costume has ritual meaning and very symbolic in the coronation ceremony. When the Oba is on his beaded costume, it is believed that the Oba is wearing close to 400kg of coral, iron and brass each of the beads has ritual meaning and very significant on the traditional coronation ceremony. He also make use of variety of accessories with different ritual meaning. It

is a complete head to toe beaded costume use for coronation of an Oba.



<https://www.Edo.nation.net.com>.

Fig 4: Chiefs tying a white wrapper with a round neck bead (Ikele) and hand beads on the day of the Coronation ceremony.

Chiefs tying a white wrapper with a round neck bead (Ikele) and hand beads on the day of the Coronation ceremony.



Https: www.Edo.world.Net.com.

Fig 5 The Ekasa dancers on a white cotton wrapper with a long neck bead(Uguogon).

The costume used by the Ekasa dancer is usually white wrapper which is tied around the waist of the dancers. The performers are mainly male because of the nature of the dance.

4.2 The Significance of Colour in the Coronation Ceremony.

During the coronation of Oba of Benin, the Benin people usually have of Colorfully dressed which is displayed round the city of from one street to the other the usage of costume and colour has both aesthetic and ritual meaning to the various events lined up during take coronation ceremony. The costume and colour varies depending on the role a particular group of person is playing at a particular events there are warriors, Ifato, Ekasa dancers and other important cultural events with different dressing for each of them. The warriors puts on black, coloured costume, the Ifieso puts on brown skirt costume, the Ekasa dancers put on white costume if a chief usually dress with either red or white wrapper while ordinary citizen are in multi colours in the possession.

CHAPTER FIVE.

5.1 Summary.

This project aim is to examine the costume. Costume play a vital role in human endeavour in portraying man identity costume in generally help you distinguish between the various type of dressing of a people in particular in chapter one the scope of study was limited to the Benin people in generally their various costume that are worn during the coronation. In chapter two we were able to see how the researcher carried out research on the various type of traditional Costume in Africa society and concept of concept meaning of culture. The chapter three the researcher find out about the historical background of the people and historical background about the coronation ceremony of the Oba of Benin and various dresses worn by the Oba, chiefs, male and female in Benin during coronation ceremony. The researcher also make use of pictorial interpretation to represent and showcase the various costumes and activities that are done during the coronation. The researcher also find out that coronation displayed at different events in coronation ceremony with the aim to inform, educate, and create awareness on the important of cultural identification through the various kind of dress being worn.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the research finding on the significance of costume in cultural identity of the Benin people. This research has the following recommendation.

1. There should be a platform where citizen especially youth should be educated about the significance of costume in cultural practices.
2. There should be a tools of empowerment education and provision to youth to set the stage for discussion on how to project a particular culture through costume.
3. That some aspect of the Coronation should also be documented for easy asses by researcher of like mind so that information can be easily assessed.
4. There should be proper documentation of Coronation and the types of costume worn during the celebration.

5.3 Conclusion

It is evident from the literature review and the discussion of findings that costume play important role in the culture of a people. And that costume play vital role on the reflection and identification of culture. And that costume is very important in the every society that should be properly documented from future purpose using video clip.

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