



THE KINGDOM OF BENIN



The Kingdom of Benin was located in western Africa in modern-day southern Nigeria and was established in 1180 AD. In the area of Benin the ethnic group of Africans who were the architects of this great kingdom were the Edo people. The Kingdom of Benin had been preceded by a long line of Edo kings named 'Ogiso' (*also known as the Kings of the Sky*). Although the foundations of the city had been started from as early as 850 AD the Edo people continuously expanded it. The Edo king named Oba Ewuare is credited with transforming the central city into an impressive and expansive fortress. King Oba Ewuare constructed a royal palace and then ordered the construction of Benin's inner wall, a 7 mile long rampart surrounded by a moat that was 6 meters deep. King Oba Ewuare also erected nine fortified gates and an outer network of walls that were 8 miles long to protect the city from potential invaders. Benin City's planning and design was done according to careful rules of symmetry, proportionality and repetition now known as fractal design. These Africans thus

designed the city to form perfect fractals where similar shapes were repeated in the rooms of each house, and the house itself, and the clusters of houses were formed in mathematically predictable patterns. The Guinness Book of Records (1974 edition) described the walls of Benin City and its surrounding kingdom as "the world's largest earthworks carried out prior to the mechanical era". According to estimates by the New Scientist Magazine Benin City's walls were at one point "four times longer than the Great Wall of China, and consumed a hundred times more material than the Great Pyramid of Cheops"

Benin City was also one of the first cities in the world to have street lighting. Huge metal lamps, many feet high, were built and placed around the city, especially near the king's palace and fueled by palm oil. The refined royal art of the Kingdom of Benin is well known around the world and was partly developed by the Benin guild of bronzesmiths which was established early on the kingdoms history.