



GREAT KINGS & QUEENS OF AFRICA

EWUARE THE GREAT



Ewuare the Great was the king of the Benin Empire from 1440 AD until 1473 AD. The Benin Empire was located in modern-day southern Nigeria and was one of the most highly developed coastal states in western Africa. After a short battle with his brother King Ewuare the Great (also known as Oba Ewuare) came to power as ruler of Benin in 1440 AD and set about to transform the Kingdom of Benin into an African empire. This period of time was the beginning of the 'golden age' of Benin. Oba Ewuare rebuilt his new capital and gave it the name 'Edo'. The entire northern region inhabited by the Edo people joined the growing Benin Empire and so did areas of Yorubaland. Oba Ewuare established the 'State Council of Benin' which provided a central government for the nation. By 1460 AD King Ewuare had raised new walls around the city of Benin to further strengthen the city against attack from external sources. He also constructed nine gates to enter the city and also expanded the series of moats throughout out the city.

The historian and west African Chief Jacob Egharevba provides us with the following description:

"KING EWUARE FOUGHT AGAINST AND CAPTURED 201 TOWNS AND VILLAGES IN EKITI, IKARE, KUKURUKU, EKA AND IGBO COUNTRY. HE MADE GOOD ROADS IN BENIN CITY. IT WAS HE WHO HAD THE INNERMOST AND GREATEST OF THE WALLS AND DITCHES MADE ROUND THE CITY, AND HE ALSO MADE POWERFUL CHARMS AND HAD THEM BURIED AT EACH OF THE NINE GATEWAYS OF THE CITY SO AS TO WARD AGAINST ANY EVIL CHARMS WHICH MIGHT BE BROUGHT BY PEOPLE OF OTHER COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO INJURE HIS SUBJECTS"

King Ewuare was key in encouraging the expansion of art and culture within the kingdom, he also started the tradition of the kings of Benin wearing red stones and scarlet-colours. Ewuare ruled for a total of 33 years before his son took over ruling the nation. Oba Ewuare died in 1473 AD and is remembered as a highly intelligent and powerful ruler.