

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: “Edo is the name for the place, people and language of an ethnic group in Nigeria. Also referred to as Bini or Benin ethnic group though currently the people prefer to be simply called Edo, the Edo are the descendants of the people who founded the Benin Empire, which is located in South/Mid-Western Nigeria now called [Edo State](#).” (Wikipedia contributors) “They speak a language of the [Benue-Congo branch](#) of the Niger-Congo language family.” (“Edo”)

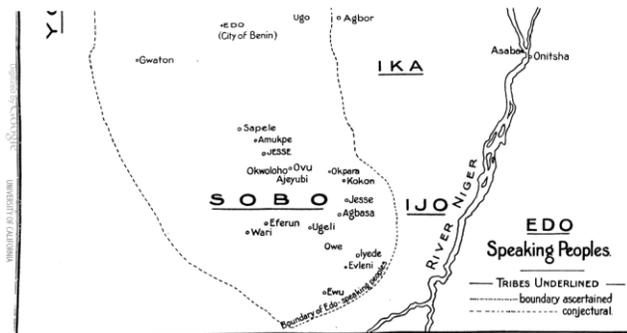
“When the term "Edo" is used linguistically it refers to the Bini dialect of the language. But the term "Edo speaking" covers peoples of the old **Benin**, **Delta** and **Ondo** provinces as well as the **Degema** area of the old **Rivers** province. It applies to those who either speak Bini or closely related dialects as a first language.

It includes:

1. Bini
 2. Ishan (34 village groups)
 3. Ivbiosakon (19 tribes)
 4. Etsako (9 tribes)
 5. North-West Edo (28 village groups)
 6. Ineme (10 villages)
 7. Urhobo (18 tribes/chiefdoms)
 8. Isoko (17 tribes/ chiefdoms)
 9. Engenni (Degema area of Rivers)”
- (OMOIGUI)

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): “Their territory is west of the [Niger River](#) and extends from hilly country in the north to swamps in the Niger Delta.” (“Edo”)



Central and north-east of the central province of Southern Nigeria and a portion of the southern part of the southern Kabba. (Thomas)

1.4 Brief history: “The name Benin is a Portuguese corruption ultimately from the [Itsekhiri](#)'s "Ubinu", which came into use during the reign of [Oba Ewuare](#) the Great circa 1440. The Itsekhiri's "Ubinu" was used to describe the royal administrative centre or city or capital proper of the kingdom, Edo. 'Ubinu' was later corrupted to 'Bini' by the mixed ethnicities living together at the centre; and further corrupted to "Benin" around 1485 when the Portuguese began trade relations with Oba Ewuare.”(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edo_people)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: “The Edo numbered about 3.8 million at the turn of the 21st century.” The Edo live in compact village settlements ranging in size from small hamlets of three or four households to towns of several thousand people Especially in the hill country, we find large populations, perhaps as many as ten thousand, in a small area, recognizing the authority of one head chief (Thomas)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): “They subsist primarily on yams, supplemented by corn (maize), plantains, cassava, and other vegetables.” (“Edo”)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: “Livestock includes goats, sheep, dogs, and fowl” (“Edo”)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- 2.4 Food storage: yams are stacked in ropes of twenty-two or twenty-three, ten ropes make an Ekbo, or stak. (Thomas)
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: males do much of the farming while women stick with domestic chores
- 2.6 Land tenure:
- 2.7 Ceramics: ceramics are highly popular in the making of masks
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:
- 2.9 Food taboos:
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft? no

3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): male – 5 feet five inches
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f):
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f):
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Among the Edo-speaking people we find, broadly speaking, two forms of marriage; in the first (termed in these pages amoiya) the woman becomes the property of the husband; at his death she passes to his heirs, and her children succeed him; this is the normal form in the southern part of the area; in the northern part of the area, so far from the wife being the property of the husband, she is at liberty to leave him at any time if the bride price is repaid, and even this is not essential if she has borne him a child (isomi marriage). (Thomas)
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: average number of living wives of a husband was 1.5, including deceased wives and those who had eloped it is 1.7. (Thomas)
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: “Differential marriage payments among Etsako and some Ishans. (Full dowry confers all the children to the husband while partial payment allows the wife's father's family to own some children)” (OMOIGUI)
In Edo itself there are two forms of marriage which however only differ according to the age of the girl. If she is quite small the suitor approaches her father and when he gives his consent, brings him a piece of cloth, yams, a goat, or some other small present. A family council is then summoned by the girl's father and they meet at his house. The suitor is introduced to the family, and, if they approve of him, he sends them a present of gin. In theory, at any rate, the father is obliged to pay attention to the views of his elder brother, but whether the elder brother has an absolute veto is a point at which evidence is contradictory.
It has been mentioned above that there is a second form of marriage. In this case the girl is already adult, and has no suitor who is paying bride price for her. A man approaches the girl directly and enquires if she has a husband. If she says that she has not, he goes to her father and asks for her hand. The next day he goes again and takes some friends to help him. Then if her father is disposed to accept him, the suitor brings beads worth seventy shillings or so, and in the pre-European days a boy slave. Then he is at liberty to fetch the girl. (Thomas)
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: Broadly speaking, the scheme of inheritance is the same for the whole of the Edo-speaking people, if we except such cases as those of the children of an Isomi wife, to which allusion has already been made in connection with marriage customs. A man's legal heirs are his own children. (Thomas)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): endogamy
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? Children in Edo learn about sex through their parents but mostly through peers. The general attitude toward sexuality education is negative. Discussion of sexual topics is avoided because it is believed that discussing the subject will result in promiscuity and exposure of adolescents to bad influences. People do not easily discuss sexuality topics because it is considered a taboo.
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: “Kinship and lineage is patrilineal and based on primogeniture.” (<http://www.edo-nation.net/edos.htm>)

- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The Edo peoples have a very large standing in Nigeria but have a diverse group of populations from other tribes that surround them, as well
- 4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: four households – 10,000 inhabitants (=)
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): chief position is bought by the highest bidder and payment goes to current chief. The chief cannot be attacked nor arrested at war. (Thomas)
- 5.4 Post marital residence:
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):” In each village the males are divided into three [age-sets](#). Boys enter the junior [age grade](#) in their early teens and perform communal tasks, such as clearing paths and caring for public buildings. The middle grade of adult males do more difficult tasks, such as roofing houses, and perform executive functions for the village council, which consists of the oldest age grade. The council decides on matters related to tax collection, collective tasks, religious festivals, relations with central authorities, and other community concerns.”(“Edo”)
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:
- 5.8 Village and house organization:
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses):
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:
- 5.12 Trade:
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Tripartite division of the males – senior grade is known as elders, next to them comes Igele, and the junior grade is known as the Ologai. The elders are virtually the council of the villages, an din pre-european times they dealt with the minor law cases. The igele, assisted by the junior elders, have to undertake such work as roofing houses, and it is from this rank that carriers are usually drawn. The Ologai carry wood and water, and do some work of cleaning the roads. A boy joins this rank as soon as he is strong enough. The promotion from the Igele to the Elder is obtained by means of payment. (Thomas)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6.0 Time allocation to RCR:
- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): “the nonhereditary village headman is usually the oldest man in the village; he also serves as priest of ancestral and earth spirits. A sacred king, the [oba](#), was formerly the political, economic, and ritual head of state; succession to this office is determined by primogeniture.” (“Edo”)
- 6.2 Stimulants:
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):
- 6.4 Other rituals:
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): Each village or each quarter has its seasonal celebrations, and over all is a supreme deity, commonly called Osa or Osalobula. Osa receives no regular sacrifice in many cases, but he is far from being the ordinary type of the otiose creator, remote from mankind and indifferent to them, not only does he figure largely in their folk tales, but his name is constantly upon their lips, and his emblem, a long pole with white cloth on it, is to be seen in nearly every village. He is regarded as the creator of the world, and a myth is told in which Osanowa, or Osa of the house, has an evil counterpart, Osanoha, or Osa of the bush. Osanowa created man ; Osanoha created animals. Osanoha also made a sickness house, in which were all diseases. When men and women came near this house, on their way from heaven to earth, rain fell and they entered it to escape from it. In this way sickness came to the earth, and Osanoha being the creator of animals, man became their enemy, and so, whenever he sees an animal, he kills it. Another version of this story says that Osanowa and Osanoha agreed to reckon up their riches, and the children of Osanoha were more than the children of Osanowa. Hence they are enemies (Thomas)
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect: "Many Edo are Christians or Muslims." ("Edo")

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: A generalised account of the burial ceremonies may be given. The first act is to wash the body and place it, usually wrapped in white cloth, upon the bed. A goat or a fowl is sacrificed close to this bed to the feet of the dead body, and the reason given for this sacrifice is that it makes the dead person strong to go to heaven. The grave is dug either by relatives of the deceased or, in the villages, by the Igele. During the burial rites traditional burial songs are sung. The burial is attended sometimes by the family of the deceased only, sometimes by the wives also. After the grave is filled in a sacrifice is sometimes offered upon it, and the gravediggers purify themselves with water or with a chicken. Sacrifices go on night and morning for a varying number of days, and where the awaigbe is used, the final act is to purify with afo. On the last night of the burial ceremonies, which are of course prolonged for some time after the body has been put in the grave, and may, if the family is a poor one, be postponed for years after the actual burial, a member of the family dresses up to represent the dead man, whose seat he occupies. An important point to be noted in connection with the burial ceremonies is that the sons-in-law of the dead man have to bring contributions of cloth, yams, coconuts, and other objects, together with one goat. (Thomas)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): "Traditional religion includes belief in a remote creator, lesser gods, mythical or semimythical village heroes, and spirits of the dead." ("Edo")

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

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