

THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF EKPESA KINGDOM

Ekpesa

(The Land of Upright People)

Introduction

The history of the Ekpesa Kingdom dates back to approximately 1200 AD (13th century). During this period, the ancient Igodomigodo Kingdom—now known as the Benin Kingdom in present-day Edo State, Nigeria—sought the assistance of Oranmiyan, the grandson of Oduduwa from Ile-Ife (in present-day Osun State), in its struggle against the Ogisos (now known as the Onogies).

Among Oranmiyan's entourage were four brothers named **Ekpesa**, **Onumu**, **Somorika**, and **Ojirami**. They accompanied him to Igodomigodo, where he later played a significant role in reshaping its leadership and culture.

The Arrival of Oranmiyan in Igodomigodo

Upon arriving in Igodomigodo, Oranmiyan recognized the land through his mystical insight and proclaimed "**Tbiyini**", meaning "*this is the place*" in Yoruba. He settled there, defeated the Ogisos, and married a woman from the kingdom who later gave birth to a son named **Eweka**. In Yoruba, the name *Eweka* signifies "*the herbs have worked*."

By 1295 AD, Oranmiyan was recalled to Ile-Ife due to a conflict in the Oyo Empire. Before departing, he enthroned his son **Eweka I** as the ruler of the kingdom that eventually came to be known as the **Benin Kingdom**.

The Journey to Okpameri Land

The four brothers—Ekpesa, Onumu, Somorika, and Ojirami—chose not to return to Ile-Ife. Instead, they journeyed from Benin into the region now called the **Okpameri area**, in present-day Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State.

When they arrived in their new territory, they referred to it as **Akpie-Ekpesa**:

- *Akpei* in Okpameri means "**we are one**."
- *Okpameri* collectively means "**we are one people**."
- *Ekpesa* means "**we forbid curses**."

Interestingly, in Yoruba, *Ekpe* means "**curse**." The choice of the name *Ekpesa* signifies a deliberate cultural and spiritual rejection of curses and conflict.

Separation During the Nupe War

The four brothers lived together in Akpie-Ekpesa until the 1500s (16th century), when the **Nupe Invasion** spread toward their settlements. To ensure survival, they agreed to separate and secure their families:

- **Onumu** settled in rocky surroundings.
- **Somorika** moved up the mountains and into caves.
- **Ojirami** crossed beyond the rivers.
- **Ekpesa** went deeper into the forest, where his descendants still reside today.

Before parting, they swore a sacred oath that **no bloodshed or warfare must ever erupt among their descendant communities**. This oath remains **honored to this day**.

Kingship in Ekpesa

Ekpesa is located on fertile flat land, blessed with dry and arable soil suitable for farming.

There have been nine successive kings, with **seven recognized by preserved oral and cultural history** after the Nupe War period:

1. **Osenosenimi**
2. **Ugba**
3. **Ekpugere I**
4. **Ijemebor**
5. **Aigboje**
6. **Ekpugere II**
7. **Ekpugere III**

*The current king is the 7th recognized and reigning **OBA of Ekpesa**.*

Royal Titles

The king is referred to as **OBA** or **Okpashi**.

- The **first son** of the Okpashi is the **Daudu** (Crown Prince; first heir).
- The **second son** is the **Dania** (second in line).
- The **third son** is the **Deji** (third in line).
- The **first daughter** becomes the **Regent**, especially in the absence of the queen.

Structure of Ekpesa Community

Ekpesa is divided into **three quarters**:

1. **Ekulezu Quarters**
2. **Ubianagba Quarters**
3. **Ayanva Quarters**

Each quarter has:

- A **Dezi** (Quarter Head)
- An **Orina** (Cultural Head)
- An **Orio** (Traditional Head)

The Orinas and Orios serve as **Kingmakers**, guided by the Dezi. All are **Senior Chiefs** of the palace.

There are currently **47 titled chiefs** known as **Ojas**, and **one surviving Ekala Chief**.

The OBA holds the authority to **create, confer, suspend, or remove** titles in accordance with cultural and developmental needs.

Governance and Authority

Ekpesa has a recognized **Chairman (Mayor)** who manages administrative matters on behalf of the kingdom.

However, the **OBA maintains supreme cultural and traditional authority**, including the right to:

- Approve or suspend titled individuals
- Regulate religious and community organizations
- Approve cultural festivals and rites
- Enforce banishment for acts of betrayal or misconduct

Any association operating under the name **Ekpesa**, including diaspora unions, must send **quarterly reports** to the palace.

Peace, Land, and Security

Ekpesa is a **peace-loving community** and welcomes law-abiding settlers and visitors.

However:

- Any attempt to undermine the authority of the OBA may result in **banishment**.
- Any attempt to cede Ekpesa land without the OBA's approval is considered **treason**.

Geographic Boundaries

Ekpesa is bordered by:

- **Ibillo** to the North
 - **Ugboshe-Afe** to the West
 - **Ogugu** to the South
 - **Lampese** to the East
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OKPAMERI: The Land, The People, and Their Shared Heritage

Okpameri means “**We are one.**” It refers to a group of culturally connected communities who share a common language and customs.

There are **22 Okpameri-speaking communities**, including Ekpesa.

Okpameri occupies a large portion of the **Akoko-Edo Local Government Area**, characterized by rolling hills, rocky landscapes, and fertile plains suitable for agriculture. The region is historically known for the **Kukuruku Hills**.

The population of Akoko-Edo was recorded as **261,567** in the 2006 census, with Okpameri people forming the majority.

The land supports farming of **yams, cassava, grains, and other valuable crops**, and the culture has thrived across **many centuries**.

Okpameri: The Land, The People, and Their Origins (Rewritten for Clarity)

Okpameri is a collective name that means “*we are one.*” It refers to a group of communities who share a common language, cultural practices, and historical identity. The Okpameri group is made up of about twenty-two (22) socio-political communities, including:

- Aiyegunle (Osi)
- Lampese
- Bekuma
- Makeke (Umanukeke)
- Dagbala
- Ogbe
- Ekor
- Ogugu
- Ekpe
- Ojah (Oza)
- Ekpesa
- Ojirami
- Eshawa
- Somorika
- Sasaro
- Ibillo
- Ugboshi-Afe
- Ugboshi-Ele (Ayanmi)
- Ikiran-Ile (Afeyeh)
- Ikiran-Oke (Ebune)
- Onumu
- Imoga (Uma)

These communities are located in **Akoko-Edo Local Government Area** of modern-day **Edo State, Nigeria**. The administrative headquarters of the Local Government is **Igarra**, situated about **230 km north of Benin City**, the state capital.

Akoko-Edo consists of **over 40 autonomous communities**, and more than half of these are culturally Okpameri. According to linguistic and population data, **about two-thirds of the land area and population of Akoko-Edo are Okpameri-speaking**. Out of all the communities, **Igarra** is unique for speaking the **Igbirra-Tao (Etuno) dialect**, while the rest speak varieties of **Edo language**.

The **Okpameri language** is shared especially within four major clans:

- **Central Akoko**
- **Eastern Akoko**
- **Northern Akoko**
- **North-Eastern Akoko**

Other language groups within the Local Government include the two **Uneme-speaking clans**, and the **Ososo** people who have their own distinct dialect.

Geographical Setting

Akoko-Edo lies within longitudes **4°55' to 5°45' East** and latitudes **5°45' to 6°35' North**. It is bordered by:

- **Ondo State** to the west,
- **Kogi State** to the north,
- **Owan East** and **Etsako West** (both in Edo State) to the south and east.

The landscape is notable for **rocky hills, slopes, and high ridges**, especially the historic **Kukuruku Hills**, which host settlements like Somorika, Ogugu, Ogbe, and parts of Ososo. The vegetation ranges from **orchard-like bushland** in most areas to **thicker forest zones** in the south near the **Onyami River** and its tributaries.

The fertile soil supports the cultivation of **yam, cassava, grains, and other staple crops**. Over many centuries, the Okpameri people adapted to this rugged but resource-rich environment, developing a distinct **culture and civilization** that continues to thrive today.

The vegetation is somewhat tampered green, generally orchard-bush type, thicker in the south due to the Onyami River and its tributaries and proximity to the tropical Benin climate. The rich soil supports the cultivation of grains, cassava, yam, and other economic crops. It is in this environment that the Okpameri managed changes and challenges, creating a civilization spanning several centuries. Additional Source: © A History and Culture of the Okpameri since Pre-Colonial Times

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