

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 "Ibiyini", 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. Uzenosenimi
2. Ugba
3. Ekpudugere I
4. Ijemebor
5. Aigboje
6. Ekpudugere II
7. Ekpudugere 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 Desi (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
- Ugboche-Afe to the West
- Ogugu to the South
- Lampese to the East

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 IgbirraTao (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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