

Group 1: Benin Beliefs

In ancient Benin, religious beliefs were centred around **rituals** and **ceremonies**, and a Creator God named Osanobua. There were lots of other gods that were his children.

Connection: *Do you know any other civilisations that had lots of gods?*

Ceremonies were intended to make the Oba seem powerful and great, and were led by a priest (**ohen**). Through these ceremonies, the Benin people practised their beliefs about the gods.



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Group 2: Benin Beliefs

The Benin people made **human sacrifices**. Usually criminals and prisoners were used for this, although archaeologists have found the bodies of women at the bottom of wells, dressed in fine jewellery and fine clothes, which gives us evidence of other sacrifices.

Connection: *Do you know any other civilisations that made human sacrifices?*



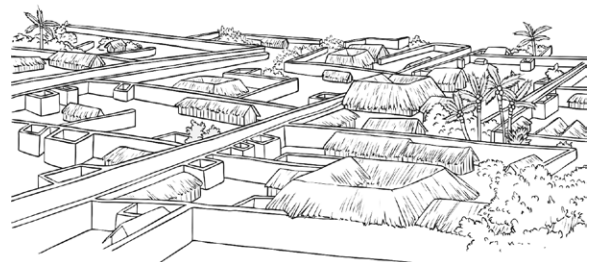
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Group 3: Benin Beliefs

The Benin people believed that after death, people may be either **reincarnated** as another person, or that the spirit joined the Spirit World. The Creator God decided what would happen to a spirit. In the Spirit World, the Benin people believed that spirits lived in villages together, like on earth, watching the behaviours of their families and punishing bad behaviour.

Connection: *Do you know any other religions that believe in reincarnation?*



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Group 4: Benin Beliefs

Animals in the Benin Religion

The Benin people were **animists**. This meant that they believed that animals and objects had **souls** and **spirits**.

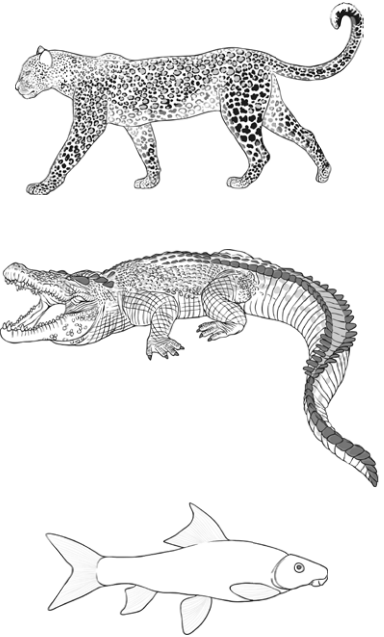
At one time, people **sacrificed** leopards to the gods because they were the symbol of the Oba so sacrificing them, they believed, would keep the Kingdom safe. Many **warriors** wore necklaces of leopards' teeth to keep them protected during battle.

Crocodiles were known as 'policemen of the waters' and associated with Olokun, god of the water.

Snakes symbolised the power of Osun, the god of nature.

Eagles and mudfish also featured regularly in artworks.

Contrasts: *How are animals treated by people today? Can you think of any religions that use or mention animals in their worship?*



Group 5: Benin Beliefs

Heads in the Benin Religion

The Benin people believed that the head was the most important part of a person. People thought that this was where intelligence was found.

When an important person died, artists would pay tribute by making a head of the person. People believed that having a head would mean that the spirit could be contacted.

Obas' heads were made from brass.

Contrasts: *How do different religions today act when someone has died?*

