

THE BENIN EDO BRAND 06/2008

By [SEO Ogbonmwan](#)

I do not think we have any identity crisis whatsoever rather we have a complexity in translating our mother tongue into the English language and fitting the mould of the aftermath of the fall of ancient Benin Empire. The Benin Empire has gone into history books and is known all over the world. That is the logical brand to keep. **The 'Benin brand'** and in political correctness terms **The Benin Edo Brand** in keeping with the present political situation.

We are Edo first and foremost.

Oba Ewuare decreed that a long time ago that we should be called Edo in memory of one of his servants Edo who saved his life from the well in Chief Ogiefa's house prior to attaining the throne of his forefathers when he was being hunted by his brother. Edo at the time included all of what is today Edo State and much more to the Atlantic ocean in the south, beyond the River Niger (odighi) to the east, to the present day Ghana in the West and beyond the Kukuruku hills to the north. After the creation of Edo State in 1991, the other ethnic groups now had a legal right to be called Edo people in addition to their original rights of being Edo based on their origin and in linguistic affiliations terms.

We are Ivbi' edo first and foremost. That is our appellation and that is what we are; Edo.

To distinguish the Edo from the south senatorial district from the rest of Edo of Edo State we are regarded and have accepted to be Benins. There is also a decree or pronouncement from the palace to this effect. To be more specific one could call us **Benin Edo** for political correctness.

The Esan, Owan, Auchi, Etsako, Ora (Afenmai) are also Edo based on their origin and linguistic affiliation and in recent times legally as well but in vernacular terms, they are not Ivbi'edo a term which is reserved for the Benin Edo only. The Etsako, Ora etc from Edo North for example are Afenmai but the Esan always like to be affiliated to their town of origin like Ivbi'uroimi; Ivbi'ekpoma rather than the legal term which is Esan Edo.

The Benins from the south senatorial district have the distinction of being Ivbie'edo in vernacular terms. In the same vernacular terms, Benin City is Edo which is a place and Benin people are also Edo (a people) but for political correctness in the present dispensation; we are Benin Edo.

The Benin Edo is also further divided into Ivbi' isi, Ivbi'iyekogba, Ivbi'iyekoorhionmwo, ivbi'iyekovia etc but they are all Ivbi'edo.

Oredo refers to the area surrounded by the moat in Benin City in correct terms although the term Oredo is used loosely to refer to all of Benin City as a whole which is incorrect.

Contrary to your assertions that all of Yoruba people subscribe to being called Yoruba is not also politically correct. It may seem so looking at it from the outside but if you schooled in the West you would have known that the Yoruba are very particular about their origin. The Egba Yoruba will never agree to be called an Ijebu Yoruba just like the Ekiti Yoruba will disallow being called Ibadan Yoruba although they are all Yoruba. This is the same thing in the east of the country amongst the Igbos which is also not monolithic when viewed from within although it seems so from the outside.

The African is very proud of his race and origin. Before 1897 no part of Edo land would have claimed otherwise but the creation of the Nigerian nation, local governments, modernisation and the conquest of the Benin Empire has brought the government and awareness nearer home to the people.

We are **Benin Edo or 'Benins'** for short. The correct spelling is Benin and

not the corrupted spelling of Bini. That information is also by decree from the palace. I stand to be corrected.

We should be proud to be called Benins, as the brand can be sold quite easily round the world and in fact it is being sold already. The Benin brand is already known. We should not only uphold it but help in popularising it further.

The recent display of the work of arts of our ancestors in Vienna in Austria, Berlin in Germany, Chicago in the USA serves as our greatest ambassador as a people. The Benin work of Arts, the Benin Bronze is known all over the world.

Please let us disabuse our minds and accept the realities of the time. In written English and legal terms, we are Benin Edo or Benins for short. In vernacular terms we are Ivbi'edo as we cannot be Ivbi e' Benin. No other tribe in Edo state will call themselves in the vernacular as Ivbi'edo apart from those from the south senatorial districts. The other Edo people are for example Afenmai, Ivbi'uromi. Ivbi'ora etc. Even if you tell an Esan man he is Oviedo, he will argue and never will he agree with you. He is either Ovbi' uromi or Ovbie evbuato or Ovbiekpoma although legally he/she is an Esan Edo which is not only politically correct but legally binding as well.

Remember when we say Edo State, it legally includes all the tribes within I'ts boundaries and as such the Benin Edo alone can no longer claim Edo totally as there are other interested parties from the north and central senatorial districts.

I do not see identity crisis rather I see complexity as we try to translate our vernacular languages into the English language as there is no English word for Edo. We should uphold what has been decreed in our time. Actually this issue have been flogged on these fora previously.

On the other point about the Benin Republic, they acknowledges that we were Benins and lived in Benin City long before them hence they visited the palace of our Oba in Benin City for consultation before their name change in 1975 from Republic of Dahomey to the People 's Republ-ic of Benin.

The Benin brand is timeless so as **Benin Edo**, or **Benins** for short we should uphold it and make the name brighter and better as we hand it over to our children.

Have a great day.