

SEPT. 2024

# With Love, from Edo

Koyo!! [Benin] Obokhian!! [Esan] Abee!! [Afemai] Hello [English]

*Join us to celebrate Edo State at*



**11TH EDITION**

# PUBLISHER'S SCRIPT



Welcome to the September edition of the 'With Love from Edo' digest. It was just like yesterday when we published the new year edition of the digest and now it is less than 100 days to Christmas. In the words of Mark Twain, time flies fast when you are having fun.

At the Edo State Tourism Agency, we have been very active and excited in sharing our various articles with you. These cut across most segments of travel, hospitality, and culture this fall. This month of September marks the beginning of the 'ember months' and this season, we have seen the return of the rains after an extended dry spell. Global warming has wreaked havoc in the North-East region of Nigeria with the Maiduguri flood disaster. Our hearts and prayers go out to the victims of this humanitarian tragedy.

In our last edition, we spoke about the bright side of democracy. Elections, as you know, are a litmus test of democracy in practice. We are hopeful that this weekend, Nigeria will demonstrate maturity and tolerance as we head to the polls once again. We are optimistic about the growing contribution of tourism to the economies of emerging markets in general and the Edo kingdom in particular.

The commissioning of the Benin City Mall in August 2024 is a valid testimony to the ever-increasing tourism footfall in Edo State. In this interesting edition, as usual, we have a variety of articles that will keep you fully engaged from cover to cover. As we always say, reading is believing.

With love,

**Obehi**



## IN THIS ISSUE

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- Benin Stool: The everlasting throne
- Meet former government officials of Bendel and Edo States
- The Benin City Mall





# WE ARE EDO @ 33



## THE GLORY OF THE NEW EDO NATION

Created on August 27th, 1991, Edo State recently celebrated its 33rd anniversary. The weeklong event, with the theme “The Glory of the new Edo nation,” occurred between August 25th and 31st, 2024. It featured the launch of the strategic thirty-year Edo development master plan intended to reshape Edo State for future generations. The venue of the launch was the prestigious Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub in Benin City.

The celebration started with a thanksgiving service held in the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium. The second-day activity was an education-based program tagged, ‘Our Children, Our Treasure’. Following the launch of the Masterplan was a groundbreaking ceremony at the 6,000-capacity Edo Arena site, held on the fourth day. As part of the initiative to enhance the state’s tourism potential, the arena was named after the Benin-born musician Divine Ikubor, known as Rema. Scheduled to perform on Friday 30th, Rema’s highly anticipated homecoming concert occurred again at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium.

Last but not least the official commissioning of the Benin City Mall on Sapele Road. The mall includes various restaurants, retail stores, a nightclub, and a cinema theater.



**33 YEARS OF  
TRANSFORMATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**





# From Bendel To Edo:

The Enduring Legacy of  
Nigeria's Heartbeat



**Edo State, Nigeria**

The inception of Edo state as a sovereign marked the beginning of Nigeria's rhythmic pulse. Although the Edo civilization is well over 6000 years old, the origin of Edo state can be traced to the fall of the Benin empire. Benin City was the seat of power of the Benin Empire, one of the most influential civilizations in the 15th and 16th centuries. Its authority spread as far as the northwest of the Niger River, the coast of the Benin Republic, the Niger Delta, and Onitsha to the east. However, in 1897 the capital city fell to British forces led by Harry Rawson, and Edo land was placed under the authority of the southern protectorate

Due to the Benin and Delta (Bendel) people sharing common origins, religious practices, and belief systems, a political consciousness was birthed. This consciousness was headed by the late Oba Akenzua II and was fueled by the desire for the sovereignty of Bendel. Subsequently, a referendum was held on July 27th 1963, and 87% of voters backed a separate region for the Bendel people. This led to the Midwestern Region Act of 1962 being enacted on the 9th of August 1963, creating the Midwestern region with Benin City as its capital.

The Midwestern region was changed to the Midwestern state due to Nigeria's restructuring from four regions to 12 states on the 27th of May 1967. However, the desire for further sovereignty remained. On the 3rd of February 1976, the political administration further decentralized Nigeria's states from 12 to 19 states. This led to the Midwestern state changing to Bendel state, with Edo's birth now ever so close to fruition. On the 27th of August 1991, Edo state was birthed while retaining its current capital Benin City. Since then, Edo has been a center for tourism, peace, economic growth, and cultural flourishing. Edo State clocked 33 years on the 27th of August 2024. 33 years of Nigeria's heartbeat remaining ever strong.







## Benin Stool: The Everlasting Throne

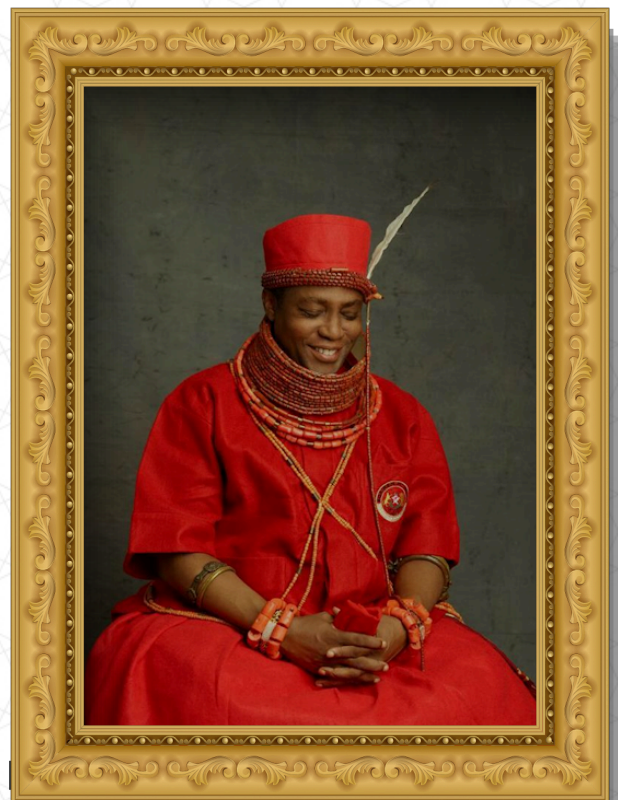


**“The king’s court was as large as the city of Haarlem...and with galleries as large as the Exchange at Amsterdam.”**

These words by Olfert Dapper speak to the legacy of all Obas and their thrones, which have transcended centuries and echo timeless significance. Throughout history, the throne of Benin has served as a powerful symbol of authority and influence, beginning with the reign of Oba Eweka I and continuing to the present day with Oba Ewuare II. Although the throne has come under burden, its significance has spanned over 800 years, during which the Benin monarchy has played a crucial role in shaping the region's cultural, political, and social landscape.

The legacy of the throne was tested as early as the 16th century when the Igala people attempted a military conquest of the Benin kingdom. Oba Esigie was able to defeat the Igala and expand the Kingdom eastwards, gaining ascendancy and political might over what is today mid-western Nigeria. The largest test of the throne was, arguably, when the British invaded the kingdom in 1897. Despite Oba Ovonramwen’s valiant efforts, Benin was captured, with houses, sacred sites, and ceremonial buildings burned down. Although the Oba is greatly remembered for defending the throne, its legacy seemed to be forever lost.

Fast forward over a century, and the Benin kingdom has still been installing Obas, who have adjusted to the demands of modern times. Today, the Oba retains authority over land disputes, with his rulings often referenced in local courts. Internationally, foreign dignitaries continue to pay homage to the throne. In 2016 the Oba hosted the King of the Netherlands, William-Alexander and Queen Maxima, on their state visit to Nigeria. These are but merely a glimpse into the lasting legacy of the Oba’s throne, which has gone through its share of glory, trials, and moments of dismay. May the throne continue to be a beacon of authority, hope, and everlasting grace, /see.





# Meet a Former Commissioner of Bendel State

**Name:** Dr. John Utomi Aire

**DOB:** 24th July 1940

**Place of Birth:** Opoji, Edo State

**University:** New York University (NYU)

Bachelor of Science (1961 - 1964)

Master of Business Administration (1964 - 1965)

Doctor of Philosophy (1966 - 1969)

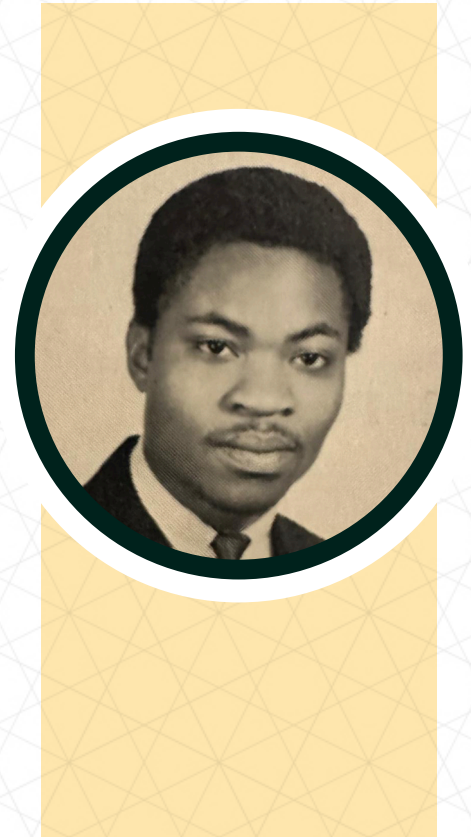
**Secondary School:** Edo College (1953 - 1958)

Government College Ibadan (1959 - 1960)

**Position:** Commissioner for Trade and Industry, Bendel State (1975 - 1977)

Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftancy Affairs ((1977- 1978)

**Post Government Employment:** Leventis Group of Companies (1978 - 1995) Retired as the Deputy CEO.





## Your thoughts:

### » **Who was the Governor of Bendel State during your time as Commissioner?**

- Colonel George Agbazika Innih (1975 - 1976)
- Commodore Husaini Abdullahi (1976 - 1978)

### » **How was the civil service of Bendel State?**

It was good. Quite a number of the civil servants were from the former western region. We were dedicated to our jobs and had a sense of duty to the people and the government. Joseph Boyo was the secretary to the Military Government and Head of Service, Bendel State Civil Service at the time. He was thorough in handling the affairs of the service.

### » **What was the infrastructure like then?**

The government, in order to accommodate all the various ministries, rented some private buildings as government offices before the secretariat was built. I was allocated two cars and a driver (Mercedes 230 and Peugeot 504). My salary was sufficient to take care of my family and we lived within our means.

#### *Duties:*

I was responsible for supervising the work done in the Asaba Textile Mill and Delta Glass. There was also a Saw Mill in Benin and the Okpella Cement Factory that fell under my portfolio.

### » **Did you consider the government as corrupt or decent?**

It was very decent. The government was a corrective regime which instilled a measure of discipline and accountability.

### » **If you could go back, what would you do differently?**

Nothing.

### » **Advice for this government?**

Carry out projects that would have a long term impact on the people. Edo State is blessed with many natural resources including forestry, agriculture and oil that can boost industrialization and foreign investment.

Continue to encourage private sector investments. Help small scale businesses.

I wish Edo State all the best.





# Meet the First Governor of Edo State (1992 - 1993)

**Name:** Chief John Odigie Oyegun

**DOB:** 12th August, 1939

**Place of Birth:** Warri, Delta State.

**College:** University College, Ibadan (1960 - 1963) (Bachelor's Degree in Economics)

**Secondary School:** St. Patrick's College, Asaba (1952 - 1957)

In 2022, the John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA) was set up in Benin City by the Edo State Government as a Learning and Development Institution.







## GLOBAL TOURISM

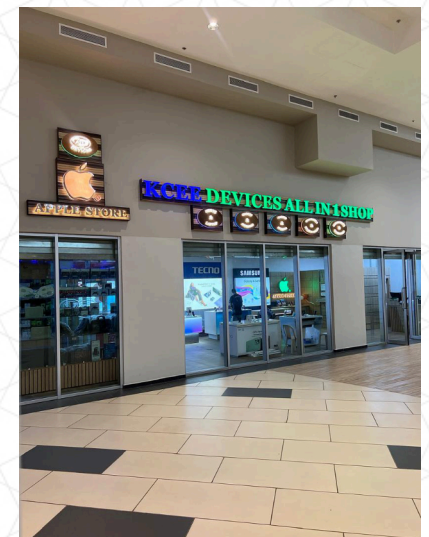
- Rome may begin curbing access to the famed Trevi Fountain.
- Disney World to Reopen Blizzard Beach Water Park on November 4.
- Thailand's tourism industry is closing in on pre-pandemic heights.
- The US National Park Foundation Will Take On Overtourism With a historic \$100 million grant, the largest ever in its 60-year history.
- Saudi Arabia scraps hotel licensing fees to boost tourism.
- Tourism at Congaree National Park brought in over \$14 million and created 170 new jobs, supporting economic growth in South Carolina, US.
- Daytona Beach's tourism board will increase funds set aside to support Daytona International Airport by more than 160% in a new version of its 2024-25 budget.
- Tourism to Haleakalā National Park, located in the Hawaiian Island of Maui, United States, contributed \$72.1 million to the Maui economy in 2023.



# Benin City Mall

The Benin City Mall is located within the Benin Cultural District. The area is 13,300sqm, making it one of the largest shopping complexes and entertainment destinations per square meter in the southern region of Nigeria. With ShopRite as the anchor tenant, the mall boasts contemporary amenities such as a spacious parking lot, restroom facilities, and round-the-clock security surveillance. The attractions include a wellness spa, a cinema theater, lounges and bars, retail stores, eateries, restaurants, nightclubs, children's entertainment centers, and the Edo State Digital Library.

## A walk through the mall





# The Benin City Mall





# The Benin City Mall







**27TH SEPTEMBER**



# Shoutout to Edo's in Diaspora



We see you, cultural ambassadors, proudly preserving our rich Edo heritage globally.

We recognize your investments and the vital remittances (\$5bn) that fuel development back home.



And we appreciate your strong ties with family, friends, and communities, strengthening our bond despite the miles.



**Thank you for being  
a bridge between  
Edo State and the  
world.**





## DID YOU KNOW

1

On the West African coast, Benin was the first state visited by the Portuguese?

2

You are not allowed to wear a complete black outfit when visiting the Oba of Benin?

3

Benin's bronze and artwork is said to have inspired Picasso?

## EVENTS

### Ukpe-Ekpahe

October

Masquerade

### Ukpe

October

New yam festival

### Uba

November

Initiation into womanhood

## WORD PUZZLE

FROM THIS EDITION

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DIASPORA  
THIRTY  
THREE  
HISTORY  
GOVERNMENT

ANNIVERSARY  
BENDEL  
SOVEREIGN  
SHOPRITE  
RELIGION

DEITY  
RADISSON  
THRONE  
PROVINCE  
FESTIVAL



## LINGO

