

Capital: Porto-Novo



River-Rayne Robinson  
ULL, Univ 100-H06, November 2024

# Benin

# Personal Interest

When given the choices for our countries, I looked a few up and found Benin to be not only beautiful but truly interesting. Benin has a culturally rich background, and I am excited to show how it affects their clothing.



# Explanatory Case Study of Benin

- This explanatory case study aims to answer the question of why people in Benin wear the clothes they do.
  - The purpose of this case study is to show the phenomena that form Benin's culture, which will determine the clothing worn in Benin.
- This is an investigation of the components of culture and the results of clothes worn in Benin.
  - This study will answer the research questions of why people wear the clothing they do, what they wear, and what cultural components impact the clothing worn.
  - This research study has no control over the occurrence of events and solely focuses on real-life situations.

# Location

- Land: 43 thousand miles (Approximately the same size of Pennsylvania)
- Population: 15 million (World Rank 74<sup>th</sup>)
- Capital: Porto-Novo



[https://ia.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Benin\\_on\\_the\\_globe\\_%28Africa\\_centered%29.svg](https://ia.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Benin_on_the_globe_%28Africa_centered%29.svg)



[https://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn\\_image/exW\\_1200/images/maps/en/bn/bn-area.gif](https://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exW_1200/images/maps/en/bn/bn-area.gif)

# Benin Background Facts

- Climate- tropical
  - Tropical; hot, humid in south; semiarid in north
- Natural Resources- Small offshore oil deposits
  - Limestone and marble
- Ethnicity- 38% Fon and Related
  - 15% Adja and Related (Minority)
- Language- French (Official)
  - Fon, Yom, and Yoruba (National)
- Religion- 28% Muslim
  - 25% Roman Catholic



# Brief History of Benin

- Formerly known as Dahomey
- Occupied by native tribes
- Elite Female soldier corps called Ahosi (The king's wives) were instituted
- French colonized country in 1893
- Country name changed to Benin in 1990



- Kerekou (the First President) Lost to Nicephore Soglo in the 1991 election
- Substantial apology issued by Kerekou in 1999 for Benin's role played in the Atlantic Slave Trade
- Patrice Talon changed the size of the government from 28 to 16 members in 2021
- In 2022 President Patrice Talon inaugurated an exhibition with 26 pieces of sacred art returned to Benin by France

# Cuisine In Benin

## Djewo

- Known as Amiwo in Fon
- Flour dish served with tomato sauce, diced green peppers, and chicken
- Popular in Central and Southern Benin



**Web:** Ebby. (2024, February 29). *A journey through benin republic: Exploring its traditional dishes.* Inspiration with Lois| Lifestyle | Nigeria. <https://loispiration.com/2024/02/29/a-journey-through-benin-republic-exploring-its-traditional-dishes/>



<https://www.graciouskookaroundtheworld.com/blog/benin>

## Yovo Doko

- Street food that translates to “white man’s belly”
- Cooked in peanut oil
- Covered in powdered sugar

**Web:** TasteAtlas. (2016, May 16). *Yovo Doko: Traditional sweet pastry from Benin: Tasteatlas.* World Food Atlas: Discover 17089 Local Dishes & Ingredients. <https://www.tasteatlas.com/yovo-doko#:~:text=Yovo%20doko%20is%20typical%20Beninese,water%2C%20yeast%2C%20and%20sugar.>

## Yam Balls

- Butter, chopped onions, red and green pepper, sardine, egg yolk, salt, thyme
- Main crop of Benin is yam (important and traditional food)



<https://featheredpipe.com/feathered-pipe-kitchen/west-african-yam-balls/>

**WEB:** Radecki, A. (2022, January 6). *Cowboy Boots and African roots: West African yam balls - Allison Radecki.* Feathered Pipe. <https://featheredpipe.com/feathered-pipe-kitchen/west-african-yam-balls/>

# Benin's Tourist Attractions

---



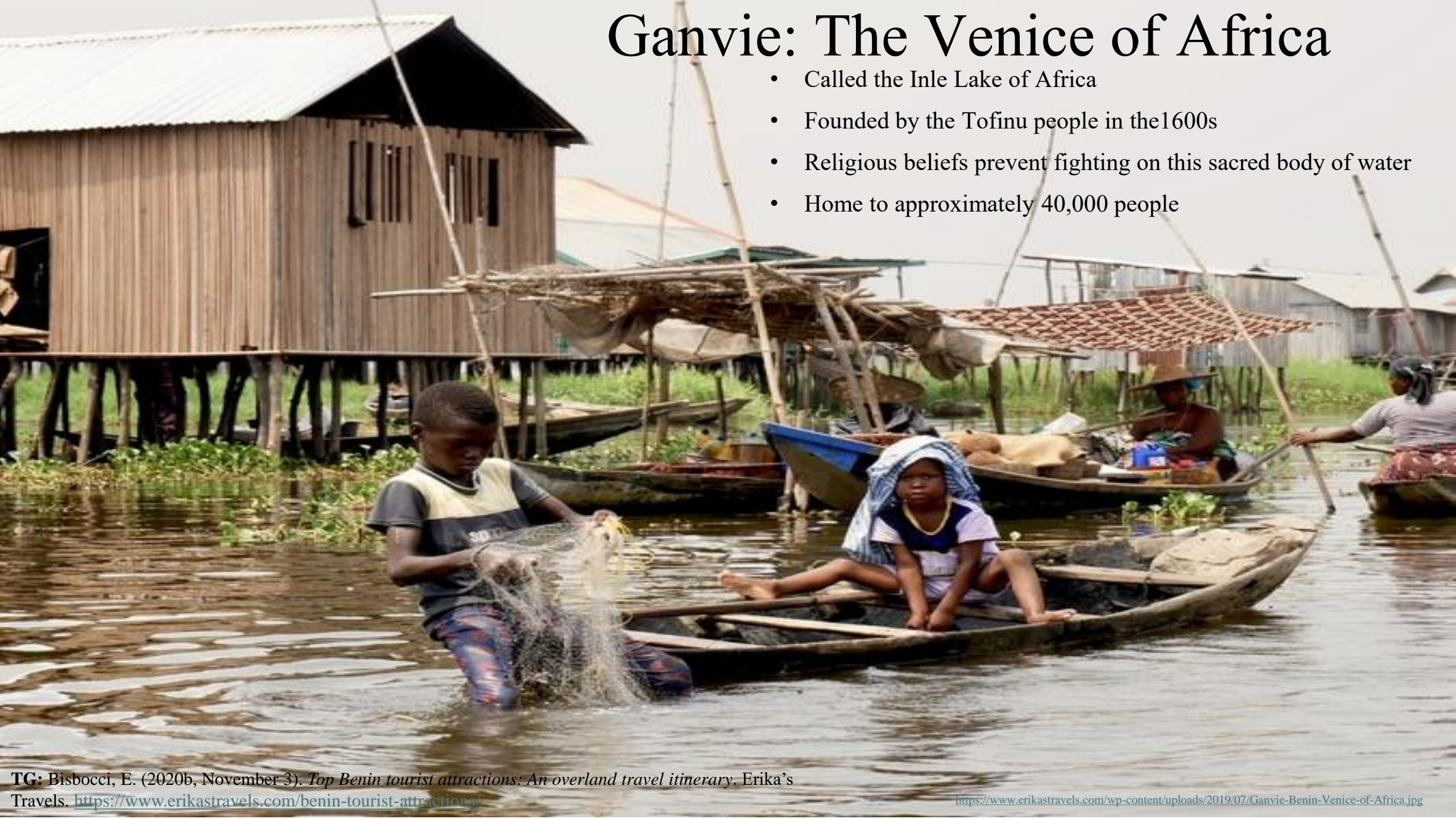
# Royal Palaces of Abomey

- World Heritage Site
- Formal Capital of Dahomey Kingdom
  - Once the most powerful and brutal Kingdom in West Africa
  - Now houses a museum showcasing relics of Dahomey art



# Ganvie: The Venice of Africa

- Called the Inle Lake of Africa
- Founded by the Tofinu people in the 1600s
- Religious beliefs prevent fighting on this sacred body of water
- Home to approximately 40,000 people



# Voodoo Python Temple

- Temple to revere serpent deity, Dangbe
- Contains over 50 lazy pythons
- Surrounded by the Sacred Forest



<https://www.erikastravels.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Voodoo-Python-Temple-Quidah-Benin.png>



TG: Bisbocci, E. (2020b, November 3). *Top Benin tourist attractions: An overland travel itinerary*. Erika's Travels. <https://www.erikastravels.com/benin-tourist-attractions/>

<https://www.erikastravels.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Voodoo-Forest-Quidah-Benin.png>

# People and Society

- Life Expectancy: 63
- Median Age: 17
- Drinking water/sanitation: 75%/37%



# People and Society

- Fertility Rate: 5.34 (5<sup>th</sup> in world)
  - High fertility rate
  - Low contraceptive rate
  - Rise of death during childbirth
- School Life Expectancy: 11
- Literacy Rate: 46%



*The World Factbook*. Edition: Sep 26, 2024. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency. (United States). <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>.

# Economy: Lower-Middle Income

- GDP per capita: \$4,000 (186<sup>th</sup> in the world)
- Below Poverty Line: 38%
- Exports Primary Products: Cotton
  - Gold (27%)
  - \$4 Billion (144<sup>th</sup> in the world)
- Imports Primary Products: Rice (24%)
  - \$5 Billion (152<sup>nd</sup> in the world)



# Gender Equality in Benin

- Demographic and Health Survey data was used to investigate exclusively married women who either own land or a house
  - Women who have a property title are more empowered
  - Strong fallback position, higher bargaining power, stronger voice, greater income, and collateral for credit
  - Changes HIV Prevention strategies, improve children's health and nutritional outcomes, and lead to declining poverty
- Benin is a democracy
  - Customary rights on land are assumed but not clearly defined, Customary law prevents women from inheriting land
  - Women have the same legal rights but tend only to get a portion of
- Unemployed, in polygamous unions, and younger women have less say
  - Polygamy is normal
  - Older women have more decision-making responsibility



# Kassim Lassissi's New Name Brand In Fashion

- Kassim Lassissi
  - Create an African fashion label that tells beautiful stories about his continent
  - His mother is a long-time importer of quality international fabrics
- Collection of summer cocktail and beachwear
- Inspired by Porto Novo (Benin's traditional capital)
- Giving birth to the brand name
  - Born in Benin
  - Moved to Paris at age two
  - Returned to start a brand name
- Nature print and patterns are what represent Africa



<https://media.fashionnetwork.com/cdn-cgi/image/format=auto/m/0133/9b04/a72f/49a6/3614/37be/c8de/f8ca/8b2f/9ebd/9ebd.jpeg>





# Forced Eviction is Fought with Women's Rights

- Forced evictions in Kouvènanfidé village
  - Make way for a holiday resort and coastal road
  - Resulted in multiple violations of human rights
  - Parallel report focused on women's rights
- Right to food and nutrition, right to land, right to water, right to adequate housing, right to health, right to education, right to work, right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, right to cultural life and the right to obtain justice
- They live in precarious conditions with rising poverty
- Community members sleep outdoors and women in particular are exposed to a range of dangers
  - Including sexual violence
  - Caused physical and psychological suffering



<https://www.fian.org/en/press-release/article/cedaw-women-in-benin-facing-violations-of-human-rights-due-to-forced-eviction-3521>

# Guidebook

- Benin is/has
  - Incredibly diverse with over fifty languages
  - Kings, Chiefs, and palaces
  - A big belief in voodoo dolls
  - Voodoo Festival and roadside Voodoo
  - Birthplace of voodoo
  - Door of no return (marks where slaves left Africa for the New World)



# Women in Benin

---

- Women gained more rights after
  - Restoration of democracy
  - Ratification of the constitution
- Human Rights Issues
  - Female genital mutilation (worst case)
  - Prostitution and child prostitution are common
  - Enforcement against these actions is slack
- Work opportunities
  - Selling vegetables at markets
  - Though most women tend to stay home due to violence



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_Benin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Benin)



# Orílẹ̀-èdè Olómìnira ilẹ̀ Benin (Yoruba)

- Republic of Benin national apology
  - Issued by President Kerekou in 1999
  - Country's complicated history and involvement with the slave trade
  - Tribal chiefs considerable profit made by selling their people
- Long-term objective to reconcile with descendants in America
  - Called "the absent ones"

# Clothing





# Urban Casual



# Rural

---





# Business



<https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTmH1NUB4QTUxPFKy0WGd65H6PeiuBvfaQVYg&s>

<https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRUIXqYJfa9Um2P4J5aIzE35icEEr6lRW7gVA&s>

# College



[https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQyiMNMarLV3xzaaHDCC6L0JVA\\_uNkx9d9Vc&e](https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQyiMNMarLV3xzaaHDCC6L0JVA_uNkx9d9Vc&e)



<https://0.wp.com/www.ndokswareporters.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/14-The-Clan-Child.jpg?fit=1156%2C651&ssl=1>

# Holiday



# Common Wedding



[https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0565/1926/2284/files/Traditional\\_Wedding\\_styles\\_in\\_Benin\\_Republic1.jpg?v=1621538812](https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0565/1926/2284/files/Traditional_Wedding_styles_in_Benin_Republic1.jpg?v=1621538812)



<https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQNkAhRq5mYQqzhAu5cyQxv6-ndyQyL7Q&e>

# Wealthy Wedding



[https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcOOaFVSAO1w\\_VnVqR94oTQjO7eHG2x2T\\_fgw&w](https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcOOaFVSAO1w_VnVqR94oTQjO7eHG2x2T_fgw&w)



<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/86/35/03/863503e3f6f6d84b602d388a0aecaabb6.jpg>

# Special Adornments



<https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANU9GcRrAj-Q-WKnSw1G-FzKteZiWgosIVGzSyGFaw&w=1000&h=1000&e=imp>



[https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0565/1926/2344/files/Traditional\\_Wedding\\_Styles\\_In\\_Benin\\_Republic.jpg?v=1621538873](https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0565/1926/2344/files/Traditional_Wedding_Styles_In_Benin_Republic.jpg?v=1621538873)

# Special Adornments



<https://collectionapi.metmuseum.org/api/collection/v1/iii/316591/2218079/main-image>



<https://collectionapi.metmuseum.org/api/collection/v1/iii/318622/674997/main-image>

# Issues

Violence against women and unequal rights



Low contraception and high fertility rates



Unsafe sanitation rates



Diseased country with a travel alert



# Conclusion

- Benin's clothing is based on
  - Culture
  - Religion
  - Tribes
- Most wear traditional clothing with vibrant colors

