

International Journal of Arts and Humanities (IJAH)
Bahir Dar- Ethiopia

Vol. 6(1), S/No 20, January, 2017: 176-187

ISSN: 2225-8590 (Print) ISSN 2227-5452 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v6i1.15>

**The Origin and Development of the Guild of Bronze Casters of
Benin Kingdom up to 1914**

Odiahi, Ese Vivian

Department of International Studies and Diplomacy
Faculty of Arts and Education
Benson Idahosa University, P. M. B. 1100, Benin City
Edo State, Nigeria
E-mail: giftedeseose@gmail.com
G.S.M.: +2348155437520

Abstract

The Benin Kingdom is one of the forest kingdoms located in West Africa which became famous for its arts, especially its art of bronze casting. The art of bronze casting flourished under the guild system established by Oba Oguola in 1280AD. The guild of bronze casters was the most important guild that existed in the kingdom partly because of its function of preserving the history of the kingdom in bronze for posterity sake. A role it continued to play until the late 19th century when Benin kingdom was invaded. The outcome of the invasion was the fizzling out of the guild system. The guild system was however reinstated in 1914, but only the guild of bronze casters was able to re-organise themselves well and remain however not without some changes and developments. This paper investigated the guild of bronze casters of Benin kingdom, an area that has not been given proper attention. It discussed the guild from its inception in the thirteenth century to the changes and developments that took in the guild up to the twentieth century.

Key words: Bronze casters, Brass, Invasion of Benin kingdom

Introduction

The guild of bronze casters of Benin Kingdom performed functions that were indispensable to the kingdom such as recording of events that happened in the kingdom in Bronze thereby depicting memories and achievements of the previous kings and things that happened in the past, they also served the ritualistic needs of the kingdom by casting bronze objects which were placed in the shrine, bronze objects were used in beautifying and decorating the palace. Amongst all the craft guilds of Benin kingdom, the guild of bronze casters rank highest for two reasons; they served as local historians of the kingdom and secondly, because of its ability to turn sand into money which made great value to be attached to its products. Its ability to convert sand to money was reflected in a praise song that was always chanted by the guild before casting:

“Oba gha to kpere. Ivb’Igun n’Eronmwon, yaruya!
No Yeken Khian igho, yaruya”

Which means

“Long live the Oba, children of Igun eronmwon,
here we are: who generate money using sand,
here we are” (Inneh, 2007, pp. 105–106).

According to Benin oral traditions, Oba Oguola whose reign started in c1280 is credited with the organization of the bronze casters of Benin kingdom into a guild. (Akenzua, 2011, p.173) He also gave the title Inneh (which is hereditary) to Igueghae, the first bronze caster of Benin who taught Binis the act of bronze casting. Oba Ewuare whose reign started from c1440 introduced the casting of commemorative heads and other large objects and gave his family the title of Ihama (one of the titled chiefs of bronze casting in Benin). (Ben-Amos, 1980, p.17) From the late 15th century to early 16th century the art of bronze casting in Benin flourished, the quality of bronze casting increased as bronze casters also increased in talent due to the large corpus of copper that was imported from Portugal as during this period Benin already had contact with Europe. Subsequent Obas created positions for titled chiefs in the guild; Oba Orɔgbua(c1550) created the titles of Ebagua and Olague, Oba Akenzua 1 created the title of Ehanire, Oba Osemwende (c1816) created the titles of Obadolaye and Obasogie titles. (Eweka, 1992, p.56)

The flowering of the Art of bronze casting under the guild however depended on the stability of the kingdom. The art continued to flourish until 1897 when a punitive expedition was carried out on Benin and most of the art works of Benin kingdom including bronze works were carted away from the palace, which resulted to a temporary collapse of the guild until 1914 when a new monarchy was restored in Benin kingdom with Eweka II, the senior son of Ovoramwen as the Oba who encouraged the guild of bronze casters to cast replicas of and replacements for the bronze works that

were taken away especially from the royal shrine. The guild formally moved to Igun street (Interview with Kingsley Inneh) where they still reside till this day.

Explanation of the Concepts “Brass” and “Bronze”

Brass is an alloy of zinc and copper while bronze largely comprises an alloy of tin and copper but the quantity of copper in bronze is far larger than that in brass, bronze and brass looks like Gold in colour but brass shines more than bronze, bronze is harder than brass and more durable because of the large quantity of copper it contains, bronze is more expensive than brass. (Interview with Kingsley Inneh and Ehigie) Though the Igun eromwon guild refers to themselves as the guild of bronze casters, their art works especially before the 15th century, were/are mainly made of brass and not bronze materials. As Kaplan stated in her book “Image of power: The Royal Court Art of Benin”. “The term “Benin bronze” is a misnomer because most of the products were made of brass as definitive scientific analysis has shown....” (Kaplan, 1981, p. 9)

Kaplan’s assertion was corroborated by the secretary of the guild of bronze casters, who is a bronze caster himself, he also stated that the difference between a brass work and bronze work after casting is unknown to the layman. However, both brass and bronze are still in use today but brass is mainly used because it is less expensive. This studies uses both concepts, “brass and bronze” interchangeably.

The Guild of Bronze Casters (Igun Eromwon)

The guild of Bronze casters of Benin kingdom, the Igun Eromwon guild is so called as Brass and Bronze which is locally called Oze is regarded and seen as a treasure (Eromwon in Bini) and as the members of the guild of bronze casters resided in a street named Igun which became their permanent abode.

Most scholars and historians studying Benin history including members of the Igun Eromwon guild trace the origin of the guild to c1280 during the reign of Oba Oguola who was said to have formed the guild. This claim is however contrary to the assertion of the first Benin local historian, Jacob U. Egharevba that Oba Oguola introduced the art of brass casting to Benin. However, Akenzua (2011) expressly stated that the guild of bronze casters of Benin kingdom was birthed in 1280AD during the reign of Oba Oguola while the introduction of the art of bronze casting into Benin predates the Obaship era (p. 173). According to oral tradition. it dates back to the Ogiso era and it is of indigenous origin. This was however subject to debate as some held and believed Egharevba’s claim that

Oba Oguola wished to introduce brass casting in to Benin so as to produce works of art similar to those sent him from Ife. He therefore sent to the Ooni of Ife for a brass smith and Igueghae was sent to him (Egharevba, 1968, p. 11).

Overtime, with much academic study and investigation, Egharevba's claim was contested by writers of Benin history and scholars like Eyo Ita, Eweka Basimi, Erediauwa, etc. According to them, the Art of Bronze casting in Benin is indigenous and of internal origin, it is not of Ife origin. The Art was introduced into Benin by a Benin born bronze caster, Igueghae, who was already a well-known bronze caster in Benin before he went to Ife to cast the head of Oranmiyan, (Inneh, 2007, p. 105); a prince of Benin origin who was bred up and lived in Ife because he was already accustomed to the people's culture, it is probably on this basis that Igueghae was erroneously regarded as an Ife bronze caster as Oranmiyan was also erroneously regarded as a prince of Ife origin. Secondly the art of bronze casting is said to be a gift from the supreme or high God to the Binis that is the first indigenous bronze caster, Igueghae did not learn the art from anywhere, He was born with it. Thirdly, Igueghae is not a Yoruba name but a Bini name which means I (The king of Benin) have shared with him (the Ooni of Ife). (Interview with Ikpomwonsa Inneh) Fourthly, according to Bini oral tradition, bronze casting in Benin is as old as the kingdom itself as it is claimed that the Ogisos daughters wore bangles casted from bronze (Eweka, 1992, p. 54). This was supported by archaeological excavations done by Graham Connah which revealed objects of bangles made from bronze. He however stated that these bangle objects were made from bronze smithing and not bronze casting (Connah, 1975, p. 142). Another archaeologist, Gerard refuted Connah's claim that these early bronze objects were produced by smithing, they were rather produced with the lost wax technique of casting as a crucible found during Connah's excavation confirmed it (Inneh, 2007, p. 105).

Connah's suggestion that these early bronze works was done by smithing stemmed from the initial erroneous belief that the technique of lost wax casting was introduced by non-Africans following an argument that the technology involved was too sophisticated to be of African origin. However, in William Fagg's (an archaeologist) view, none of the early Benin bronze pieces show any evidence of contact with Europeans (Omoruyi, 1981, p. 46). The technique of lost wax casting is said to be a general technique for casting bronze in whatever part of the world the art is done but the processes involved in casting could vary from one place to another as Dennis Williams, an archaeologist noted between Ife and Benin bronze (Eyo, 1977, p. 136). It is in this light that the lost wax technique of casting bronze in Benin could be said to be unique and indigenous to the kingdom. "The most marvelous collection of art and Craftsmanship in bronze could be found in Benin than anywhere else in Africa" (Omoruyi, 1981, pp. 47 – 48).

In giving credence to the art of bronze casting in Benin as an indigenous art, which is of internal origin and not of Ife origin, differences between Benin and Ife bronze were identified thus; there are small holes on Ife bronze heads supposedly used for attachment of hair, moustache and beard which are absent in Benin Bronze heads. Secondly inlaid iron pupils are present inside Benin bronzes and absent from Ife

bronzes, the range of objects in the Benin art corpus such as plaques, bells, altar are absent in Ife, there are differences in the casting processes of Ife and Benin bronzes. (Eyo, 1977, pp. 136 & 138) Lastly, the fact that there is no tradition of bronze casting in Ife today discredits the claim that Benin bronze is of Ife extraction as Benin historians argued that it is impossible for a tradition that is well established and have been taught to others to fade out so easily. According to archaeological investigations, the making of bronzes in Ife began in the eleventh or twelfth century and by fifteenth or sixteenth century the art had died out while the making of bronzes in Benin dates beyond the eleventh century and by the thirteenth century a professionalized bronze casting guild had already been established in Benin.

The function of the guild had been to protect and preserve Benin historical artifacts and history for posterity sake. For example, during the coronation of Oba Erediauwa in 1979 there was an argument as to where to place the coronation paraphernalia fortunately a bronze cast of the past wearing the same regalia (which the British invaders may have mistakenly left behind) was made reference to and the matter was resolved. (A Memorandum by Prince Edun Akenzua) other functions of the guild was to protect the tradition of bronze casting in Benin and make sure it does not go extinct, (Interview with Ogbemudia) to regulate the activities of its members in issues relating to bronze casting and to make sure that issues that bother on traditions, customs and beliefs are imbibed, upheld and obeyed by all members (Osawaru and Eghafona, 2004, p. 90). For effective organization, administration, sustenance and protection of the guild different chieftaincy titles were created by different Obas. The first being the Inneh who is the head of the guild and all other titled chiefs of the guild. The Inneh is also the custodian of the art of bronze casting in Benin kingdom. The unifying force of the guild had been the Obas of Benin (before 1897) who were the grand patron of the guild and who regulated its activities and the ancestral shrine of Igueghae (Omoruyi, 1981, p. 50), the house where Igueghae is said to have resided in before his death and where the guild members assembled every Friday for meetings.

The membership of the guild is organized along the family hereditary lines of the guild that is all members of the guild are related by blood and to the title chiefs of the guild, outsiders are not allowed into the guild however there is an exception to persons who have royal permission to join the guild. (Interview with Igbinosun) These persons are regarded as family members of the guild. One instance is the Omodamwen family who are also members of the Igun eromwon guild. Omodamwen, an Omada (staff bearer) was given royal permission by the Oba in the 1950's to learn and practice the art of bronze casting, while he was tutored he resided in Igun and after he have learnt the art shifted residence to Oloton (not far from Igun street) where he practiced the art, his descendant practice there till date. It is pertinent to note that there is no guild in Oloton, they are members of the Iguneromwon guild and see themselves as such, and they participate in the activities of the guild at Igun such as the meetings of the guild held

every two weeks Friday (formally every Friday) and the adhoc meetings called by the Inneh or the other chiefs (Interview with Kingsley Inneh).

The members of the Igun eromwon guild are divided into three age grades: The First is the Ekhaemwen, Oba's group which is the highest grade; it comprised bronze casting chiefs appointed by the Oba of Benin, chieftaincy titles in the guild are hereditary. The second or middle grade is the Urhonigbe or elders group; they are very skilled, members of this group may be appointed as chiefs of the as Benin kingdom by the Oba, the highest favour from the Oba in exchange for their goods and services. The last and lowest grade is the Iroghae group; it is made up of young craftsmen between ages 12 and 30. It is however pertinent to know that only male members of the Igun eromwon guild family are allowed to learn and practice the art, women of Igun families are not allowed to know the art for two reasons; the art requires tremendous strength and manpower, secondly and most importantly to prevent the art from being transferred to the woman husband's family. A strong organizational structure existed within the guild; the twelve chiefs of the guild in order of seniority.

The art of bronze casting in Benin kingdom flourished in the 13th century under the guild and during the reign of Oba Oguola who is said to have given Igueghae the title of Inneh (Igueghae was the first Inneh) and who is credited for broadening the categories of bronze objects beyond casting memorial heads, by using it to represent important events in the kingdom that is the bronze casters became official recorders of events in the kingdom (Inneh, 2007, pp. 105–107). Whenever there were palace events, the guild was there to witness the events, they carefully observed and took mental pictures of the events after which they collectively casted them in bronze. Before collective casting prayers are made by the Inneh and in his absence the odionwere (eldest member) of the guild on behalf of the guild to the ancestor to bronze casting, Igueghae and for the continued peace of the kingdom after which they divide the work into groups according to the other of seniority of titles, the higher titles taking the bigger and more important jobs.

From the 13th century, the art of bronze casting like every other art became a court art responsible to the palace and Oba alone. Unlike other crafts and guilds, the guild of bronze casters was forbidden to cast bronze and sell to anyone outside the palace (Eyo, 1977, pp. 32 & 34). This was so as brass and bronze could not be gotten locally then in Benin and Nigeria; it was gotten through long distance trade and the limited materials that was gotten was for the palace besides it was very expensive to get. According to Osarenren Kingsley Inneh the art was so sacred that nothing (materials or works) was allowed to be carried out of the palace. It is worthy of note here that the guild had other profession which was mostly farming with which they earned a living whenever they were not casting bronze for the palace, they went to farm that is to say bronze casting was an ad hoc activity. (Interview with Igbinosun and Ogbemudia)

In the fourteenth century, the art of bronze casting continued to flourish under the guild. The guild satisfied the needs of the palace ranging from ritual to decorative needs. The art of bronze casting grew to a height in the fifteenth century greater than the previous centuries as plenty of brass manila was brought into Benin by the Portuguese in exchange for Benin slaves, Ivory and pepper. This improved the quality and quantity of bronze work as new designs and forms of bronze objects were introduced (Agbontaen, 1997, p. 52). During Eware's reign brass casters were mobilized to produce various military objects, items such as brass masks were sent to vassal lords by the Oba of Benin as symbols of authority. Oba Eware gave the title of Ihama (hereditary) to his family and he is credited to have made the guild of bronze casters rank the highest guild and head of all other guilds in the kingdom.

In the 16th century during the reign of Oba Esigie the art of bronze casting was taken to greater heights, it was during his reign that plaque making in brass started. There were plaques that depicted the activities of local merchants, hunters, soldiers, Oba's family and entourage, court ritual and life. It is said that there were over nine hundred plaques that depicted court life alone. There was however a temporary seizure in the making of bronze work during this period when an internal conflict ensued between Esigie and Aruaran of Udo, Bronze casters were taken captive by force to Udo to cast bronze there until Esigie won the war (Ben-Amos, 1980, pp. 17, 24 & 34).

By the seventeenth century, the Portuguese monopoly of Benin trade had been broken and Benin began to trade with Dutch, French and the British. This century was replete with internal conflicts which affected the bronze casters guild production of bronze arts. One of such conflicts was the struggle for the throne that ensued after the death of Oba Ohuan as he died childless. During this period after Ohuan's death there was a rotation on the throne among different branches of royal family for six reigns. Ahenzae, was made Oba at the age of 16, his youthfulness was taken advantage of by many to cart away long stored treasured objects of bronze, ivory of former kings in the palace. (Egharevba, 1968, p. 34)

In the eighteenth century, the art of bronze casting under the guild again experienced some growth during the reign of Oba Akenzua 1. He imported a vast number of copper and brass which boosted the production of brass objects, wide range of objects were now casted in bronze. The brass Ikegobo (shame of the hand) which was the art form par excellence of the century was casted during his reign. Oba Akenzua 1 was succeeded by Eresoyen in whose reign bronze casting was developed to greater heights with increased importation of brass. The famous brass stool, five leopard figures and brass cocks could be dated to this period (Ben-Amos, 1980, p. 34).

In the nineteenth century, the production of the art of bronze casting again diminished due to succession dispute. Ogbebor, a usurper to the throne burnt the palace and destroyed numerous bronze works alongside other art works stored in the palace.

Despite this depletion, the art was still produced but on a small scale until the late nineteenth century when Britain invaded Benin and the guild of bronze casters of Benin Kingdom ceased to exist and the production of the art stagnated as the monarchy which the guild existed for and who was the grand patron and regulator of the guild and its activities no longer existed.

The Impact of the Invasion on the Guild of Bronze Casters of Benin Kingdom

At the onset of the invasion, on the first day the Oba fled into the bush until 5th August 1897 when the Oba tired of his unaccustomed roaming bush life returned back to Benin kingdom and surrendered himself to the British invaders, (Roth, 1903, p. xiii) he was tried and exiled to Calabar, the Oba's Palace was burnt after carting away with about 3,000 treasures of bronze and Ivory. Indigenous people who resisted British attack were executed and every house in Benin was burnt (Erediauwa, 1977, p. 30).

The members of crafts guilds including the guild of bronze casters for fear of their lives and especially as their monarch and patron was no longer in the kingdom fled into the bush and neighbouring villages however some members of the Igun eromwon guild notably the chiefs stayed behind in the kingdom. Some of the bronze casters that fled into the bush established or formed new villages and also established the art there for instance it was these Benin bronze casters that fled to Ora and Igueben in Esan that established the art there (Interview with Ogbemudia and Igbinosun) but there was no guild formed in these villages and the practice of the art was not so strong. The art of casting bronze became a way of earning a living while those members of the guild that did not continue the art in their new homes took to farming as a profession. It is pertinent to know that the Igun eromwon guild members that remained in the Benin kingdom were still loyal to their king while in exile in Calabar; during this period written messages were intercepted and screened before leaving the kingdom and so the kingdom spies or palace minders resorted to the use of the bronze casters to inscribe messages as symbols and images in bronze form which was sent to Oba Ovoramwen in exile as only him could decipher the inscribed symbols and images (Nwachukwu, 2012). This was the origin of the establishment of the art of casting bronze in Calabar precisely Oron (formally in Calabar but now in Akwa-Ibom).

The impact of the invasion on Benin kingdom was positively felt by other communities where the act of bronze casting was established by the guild of bronze casters of Benin kingdom but in Benin kingdom where the invasion took place the impact was more negatively felt as the guild of bronze casters ceased to exist and the age long tradition and art of bronze casting in the kingdom stagnated. However, one positive effect the invasion brought to the Benin kingdom was fame; carted art treasures from the palace were stored in British museums and some were sold out to other museums particularly German and United States museums which in turn led to scholarly interest and works

about the Benin kingdom as it was not believed that the Binis “an uncivilized people” could produce such sophisticated art technology.

The Re-Institution and Re-Organization of the Guild of Bronze casters of Benin Kingdom

The colonialists instituted a native council in the absence of a monarch and the original Benin council to govern the kingdom as they needed the help of some indigenous people to rule the Benin kingdom. The native council was however resented by the Benin people who were already used to a monarchical rule and especially as they see their monarch as their protector and God’s representative on earth. The kingdom became divided into two factions, the pro-monarchical rule faction (this faction wanted Oba Ovoramwen and the monarchy back to Benin Kingdom) and the anti-Monarchical rule faction, this faction comprised mainly of members of the newly instituted native council (They did not want Oba Ovoramwen and monarchical rule back to the kingdom as they were already enjoying their new positions). (Osadolor, 2011, pp. 5, 55) In the long run the monarchical structure of Benin kingdom was restored in 1914 after the death of Oba Ovoramwen with Aiguobasimi, (coronated as Oba Eweka 11) the senior son of late Oba Ovoramwen as king.

The restoration of monarchical rule in Benin was followed by a re-awakening of the Benin craft guilds and their arts. At the outset of the restoration of the craft guilds, Oba Eweka II ordered bronze casters to duplicate the bronze works that were carted away during the invasion and many of these works were duplicated. Oba Eweka lifted the restrictions on the sale of art works and built a shed in the palace courtyard where the craftsman worked and sold their wares. (Ben-Amos, 1980, p. 43) However of all the crafts guilds of Benin kingdom, only the guild of bronze casters was able to stand and stay strong (in terms of re-organization) and regain its position as the pride of Benin kingdom. After the invasion, the Benin guild of bronze casters were still able to hold strong to its age long tradition of being organized on family basis and shelving intruders from entering the guild. This was the *raison d’être* for the creation of the youth council arm of the guild, this council is also responsible for bringing offenders (intruders) to the notice of the chiefs of the guild who met out punishment to these offenders which mostly takes the form of asking the intruders to perform a sacrifice which if done averts the curse that have been placed on intruders by the guild after which they might be admitted as part of the guild family and allowed to practice the art but in cases where the intruders refused to do what the guild required of them, they faced the penalty of being cursed by the guild, they were banned from practicing the art, they were driven away from Igun street and members of the Igun-eromwon guild were forbidden to have anything to do with them. (Interview with Agbonmwenra) In this way the guild was able to shelve intruders out of its abode (Igun street) unlike other crafts guilds whose abode was taken over by intruders. It is however worthy of note that some of the Igun-eromwon guild members practice the art of bronze casting outside Igun street as the

Igun family have become so large which have made it impossible for them to all cluster in Igun street. The constitution of the guild does not see these set of people as intruders.

The guild of bronze casters of Benin Kingdom was started again in 1914 by the few bronze casters that stayed back in the kingdom during the invasion (the chiefs of the guild and few other members) (Interview with Ogbemudia and Igbiosun). The restoration of the bronze casters guild of Benin kingdom was followed by changes though some of the past tradition of the guild was still held; The art work of the guild was no longer a court art though the guild still worked for the Oba but they were now paid cash for their work (Interview with Ogbemudia and Agbonmwena. Also, see Akenzua, 2011, p. 175) against the old practice of the Oba sometimes giving them wives and foodstuffs. When the Oba needed a particular bronze work(s) he called the Inneh and told him his specification of bronze work, the Inneh then took the Oba's specification to the guild, the amount for the materials were costed and related to the Oba who paid the specified amount most times more than as tip. The art of bronze casting was now taken as a profession by the guild members, they now had their own studios and shed where they produce and sell bronze works to the public. Commercialization added to the already established fame of the Benin kingdom, as foreign visitors trope into the street to buy bronze art works. However, commercialization of bronze art works resulted in poor workmanship as the bronze casters now made use of substandard materials so as to make quick and more profit (Eyo, 1977, p. 148).

Despite these changes brought by colonization of the kingdom, the guild still maintained some aspects of its pre-colonial past. They still pay homage to the shrine of Igueghae, the founder of Bronze casters guild of Benin kingdom, they still respect the position of the Inneh and see him as their head, they still retain and maintain the administrative structure of the guild, the only noticeable change was the introduction of the position of the secretary and youth council. The position of the secretary unlike other positions of the guild which is hereditary is by appointment from among the guild members. The qualification for the position is ability to read and write (Osawaru and Eghafona, 2004, p. 90). The position became necessary or important when the affairs of the guild especially its every two weeks meeting needed to be documented. The later position of the youth council became necessary when the guild needed to shelve away intruders who are not part of the original family of the guild from practicing the art of bronze casting (Interview with Agbonmwena). The guild still retained its functions with the exception of recording palace events in bronze; this function of recording palace events in bronze has been taken over by video cameras. The membership structure of the age-grade system is still retained, male children of the guild members are taught the art from an early age while female members of the guild are still not allowed to practice the art.

Conclusion

In this present time, the civilization of Africa cannot be fully discussed without mention of Benin kingdom, a forest region located in the southern part of West Africa where an exclusive indigenous technology of bronze casting emerged. Initially, this civilization was erroneously classified as a hermitic technology as it was not believed that the Binis could be so innovative as to create such great technology with their hands. This technology was responsible for the fame the Benin kingdom enjoyed since the invasion of the kingdom in 1897.

It is however worthy of note that the usefulness and essence of this art of bronze casting became fully felt in the kingdom in the 13th century when a guild was established for the art. It was from the 13th century that the guild of bronze casters of Benin kingdom started rendering tremendous contributions to the kingdom which ranged from making objects for ritual, decorative, commemorative to warfare purposes of the kingdom. As earlier stated the nature and growth of bronze casting was determined by the economic growth and stability of the kingdom. The Benin kingdom experienced times of civil unrest and calm until 1897 when the Benin kingdom experienced a final fall which in turn led to the collapse of the art of bronze casting and the guild of bronze casters albeit temporarily as the restoration of the monarchy was followed by a revival of the art of bronze casting.

The art of bronze casting in Benin kingdom has survived under the guild into the 21st century and it continues to be the pride of Benin kingdom. However, from the late 20th century, major focus has been on the retrieval of stolen Benin bronze works during the 1897 invasion.

References

- Agbotaen, K. A. (1997). An assessment of four centuries (15th – 19th) of Benin art production in evaluating the role of craft guild system. *African Study Monographs*, 18(1).
- Akenzua, E. (1996). A memorandum Submitted by to the British parliament at the Benin centenary held in Berlin.
- Akenzua, G. I. (ed.) (2011). *The glorious reign of Omo N' Oba Erediauwa*. Lagos: Inter Press Limited.
- Ben-Amos, P. (1980). *The art of Benin*. London: Thames and Hudson Limited.
- Connah, G. (1975). *The archaeology of Benin*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Egharevba, J. U. (1968). *A short history of Benin*. 4th Edition. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

- Erediauwa, C. F. R. (2004). Opening ceremony address in *The Benin Centenary*, Part 1 Vol. xxx (3).
- Eweka, E. B. (1992). *Evolution of Benin chieftaincy Titles*. Benin City: University of Benin Press.
- Eyo, Ekpo. (1997). *Two Thousand Years Nigeria Art*. Lagos: Federal Department of Antiquities.
- Inneh, D. (2007). The guilds working for the palace. In Plankeinsterner, B. (ed.) *Benin kings and rituals, courts arts from Nigeria*. Chicago: Snoeck publishers.
- Kaplan, F. (1981). *Images of power: Art of royal court of Benin*. New York: New York University.
- Nwachukwu, M. C. P. (2012). A paper on Benin bronze casting. The story of power and royalty: An insight into the great bronze casting works of Benin kingdom, Vol. 3, Issue 4, December, 2012.
- Omoruyi, A. (1981). *Benin anthology*. Benin City: Benin Cultural Publications.
- Osador, O. B. (2011). The Benin royalist movement and its political opponents: Controversy over restoration of the monarchy, 1897-1914. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 44(1).
- Osawaru, I. R. & Eghafona, K.A. (2004). An assessment of the Benin guild of bronze casters for tourism potentials in Nigeria. *South-South Journal of Culture and Development*. 6(2).
- Roth, L. H. (1903). *Great Benin: Its customs, art and horrors*. New York: Barnes and Noble Inc.

INTERVIEWS

- Interview of Agbonmwenra, Alele Alex., 35 years, Youth President of the Guild of Bronze Casters, Benin City, 14/04/13.
- Interview of Ehigie, Edward., 58 years, Elder member of the Guild of Bronze Casters, Benin City, 13/02/13.
- Interview of Igbinosun, Michael., 60 years, Elder member of the Guild of Bronze Casters, Benin City, 13/02/13.
- Interview of Inneh, Ikpomwosa., 50 years, Public Relations Officer of the Guild of Bronze Casters, Benin City, 20/02 /13.
- Interview of Inneh, Osarenren Kingsley., 48 years, The Inneh n'Igun of Benin Kingdom and President of the guild of Bronze casters, Benin City, 13/02/13.
- Interview of Ogbemudia, Eric., 45years, Secretary of the Guild of Bronze casters, Benin City, 14/12/12.