**Creation Story 2 - Benin**

There is very little written evidence of life in the Ancient Benin Kingdom. People didn’t write or draw, they told their life events and the stories of their culture through a strong tradition of storytelling. We think that story tellers were a combination of entertainers and historians who told stories to Edo villagers, probably at night time and around a central village fire. The stories were fun although they might sometimes be scary. They usually took the form of a fable with a moral at the end. They also recorded and explained early Edo history.

**Below is one of their stories about the creation of the world.**

*Long, long ago before man walked the earth, Olorun (OH-low-run), the sky god, lowered a great chain from the heavens to the earth and allowed it to settle on the calm waters of the vast oceans. Down this chain climbed Oduduwa, Olorun's son. Oduduwa clambered down the chain deftly and eagerly, carrying with him nothing but a handful of dirt, a special five-toed chicken, and a round, glistening palm nut. As he drifted above the gentle lapping waves, he threw the dirt upon the ancient waters and set the chicken down on the dirt. The chicken busily scratched and scattered the dirt, spreading it easily, until it formed the first dry earth. Oduduwa clambered down and, for the first time, set foot on the land. When he found the centre of the land, Oduduwa created the magnificent Ife (EE-fay) kingdom and planted the palm nut deep in the rich soil to show this was somewhere important. The small dark brown palm nut grew into a tall, proud tree with 16 branches, symbolizing the 16 sons and grandsons of Oduduwa.*

*Oduduwa had become the first ruler of the kingdom and the father of all Yoruba. As time passed, he crowned his 16 magnificent sons and grandsons and bid them farewell, sending them off to establish their own great Yoruba kingdoms. As descendants of the sky god, these first Yoruba rulers and their direct descendants were divine kings. Only they could wear special veiled crowns that symbolized their sacred power.*