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Strategies and Tactics in Ilorin Military Encounters in the Nineteenth Century.

Alabi, Oladimeji Mohammed

Abstract

Ilorin's participation in wars of survival, expansion and consolidation in the Nineteenth Century pushed the military to the fore-front of political activities in her society. Even though, there are literature on Ilorin military and warfare in the nineteenth century, aspects of strategies and tactics in precolonial warfare have not been given adequate attention. The objective of this study is to explore the various strategies and tactics employed by Ilorin in prosecuting her wars of survival, expansion and consolidation in the Nineteenth Century. The historical research method was adopted for the study. This comprised of oral interviews conducted with relevant respondents within Ilorin, and the use of secondary sources obtained from the library. It was discovered that Ilorin's long term objective in the early Nineteenth Century rested heavily on her strive to be independent of the Old Oyo Empire and to become one of the dominant forces in Yorubaland. The downward movement of the Jihad mission in the early Nineteenth Century provided a strong platform for the realization of this aim. However, located in Yorubaland and being a southern frontier of the Sokoto Caliphate with the responsibility to expand the influence of the Jihad, Ilorin faced serious challenge of legitimacy which was shrouded in series of wars. This reality essentially dictated her strategies. Ilorin strategies included both internal and external diplomacy, alliances, divide and rule, espionage and knowledge of the opponents while her tactics revolved around cavalry, mob attack, guerrilla war, attack and retreat and siege warfare. These strategies and tactics were dictated by the nature of opposition and the prevailing situation before and during the encounter. For instance, Ilorin made tremendous gains from the dissension among the Yoruba in the wake of the collapse of the Old Oyo Empire. It is therefore concluded that Ilorin's strategy was to use internal and external diplomacy to weaken the cohesion of her opponents as much as possible so that their ability to attack and defend would be feeble. To that extent therefore, Ilorin's offence and defence capabilities were strengthened. This was done through internal solidarity among the various groups within Ilorin especially after the establishment of the emirate, and also through friendly disposition to other sister emirates like Gwandu, Bida, and Lafiagi.

Key words: strategies, tactics, warfare, diplomacy, alliances, Ilorin

Introduction

History has amply indicated the pivot role of strategies and tactics in the military exploits of precolonial African societies. Indeed, in order to ensure greater military achievement, some precolonial African leaders carried out military reforms to strengthen their strategies and tactics in field operations. For instance, while Shaka of the Zulu nation introduced some innovations in weaponry and fighting techniques in his army, Moshesh, King of the Sotho preferred diplomacy to outright military engagement and he was reputed for using this strategy to save his kingdom. (Ogbogbo, 1996: 88-90) Diplomacy also came to the fore in Nigerian indigenous rulers' relations among themselves as well as their dealings with the British from the late Nineteenth Century. The examples of the *Awujale* of Ijebuland and the Emir Suleiman of Ilorin where the British were convinced that the leaders of these states were cooperative, thus reinstated after their territories were attacked, remain quite instructive. (Webster, 1980: 246) Furthermore, Audu (2018: 173) identifies certain ingredients of diplomacy which were common among precolonial West African societies. These according to him included sending of representatives, creation of alliances, making and breaking of treaties and the use of certain plants and commodities as signs of friendly relation, a practice common among the Tiv of central Nigeria in the precolonial period. The above examples are part of the diplomatic ingenuities of pre-colonial African leaders and also underscore the significance of strategies and tactics in the protection of their states.

Ilorin's involvement in various wars of survival, expansion and consolidation at different periods in the Nineteenth Century justifies the area as a city of warriors like Ibadan in the same period. Akinjogbin maintains that between 1826 and 1840, no less than eleven battles were fought between the Oyo and Ilorin armies in the pursuit of various motives. These, according to him, included the *Ogele*, *Mugbamugba* and *Kanla* battles, which were initiated by the Oyo authorities. Others were the *Pole* battle, *Eleduwe* battle and the last against Ibadan, the *Osogbo* battle, in which Ilorin was defeated in 1840. (Akinjogbin, 1998: 140) Apart from the battles against the Oyo armies, several wars were fought with different communities to extend Ilorin's influence to other parts of Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century. For instance, the war against Idofian, Asaba and Osi; the Yagba War against Yagba people of present Kogi State led by Ali *Balógun* Gambari; Ijeru War, Otun War against the Ekiti, Opin War, Offa War, Ilobu War, Otin War and Erinmope War are some of the popular encounters

between Ilorin and groups in southern Yorubaland such as the Igbomona, Ibolo, Ekiti and Yagba. (Abubakar Akanbi Jos, 2017)

However, it is pertinent to explore the techniques employed in these battles since they were initiated at different periods and against different opponents. Because war is a huge venture, the conduct of its operations may conveniently be treated under the twin aspects of strategy and tactics. Even though, these two components of warfare become blurred in the course of time during military encounters, they can usually be clearly differentiated especially in societies, which have reached the level of political organisation labelled statehood. Thus, strategies and tactics played significant role in Ilorin's military escapades in the Nineteenth Century.

The Concepts of Strategies and Tactics in precolonial Ilorin

Strategy, the art of war in its highest manifestation is, according to Clausewitz, 'the continuation of political intercourse with a mixture of other means'. (Clausewitz, 1968: 87) In strategy, the objectives are long-term and arrangements for their achievement must be based on an assessment of the relative powers, including the will-power of the protagonist himself and of his enemy. On the other hand, tactics, which refers to the conduct of war in the field, corresponds to the work of the diplomatist as he carries out the directions of his government. Tactics were associated with the leadership of troops in contact with an enemy in a campaign or battle, and had shorter-term ends like the destruction of a specific group of armed enemy, the gaining of a tract of land or fortress. This however, required equally careful and original planning, local intelligence, and ability in the use and combination of weapons.

In line with the descriptions above, Ilorin's military relations with the Old Oyo Empire up to the 1840s, the struggles with Ibadan in the long standing rivalry for dominating Yorubaland after Oyo's fall, and the various battles, which ensued between them, all involved war strategies. These were essentially long term plans with the aim of achieving independence for Ilorin, and to make the town one of the dominant forces in Yorubaland. Thus, every battle required planning and painstaking execution since the warriors were expected to anticipate and be prepared for peculiar experience in specific encounter. Therefore, Ilorin used tactics in response to the requirement of specific battles, so the success achieved would be contributing to the general objective. For instance, in the days of her struggle against Oyo, her strategies and tactics revolved around either making friend with or plotting different Yoruba groups against one another.

Strategy and tactics depend more on the motives of the war, which range from booty and wealth, trade, territorial expansion, political control and ideology. These motives were inherent in Ilorin's long term war plan in the Nineteenth Century. To achieve these objectives, long term planning and preparation as well as political and diplomatic moves were needed. It should also be emphasised that strategic objective in either political or military term changed according to the success or failure of the original plan and the exigencies of the contemporary condition at the given period. For instance, Idris Alooma's wars in Hausaland gave a reliable evidence on which we can base our argument for Ilorin's change of strategy. Borno's campaigns against the people of Kano possibly originated as a response to the latter's incursions into Borno territory. This, Ibn Fartua alleges, seem to have been first intended to set up a secure and defensible frontier in the west. (Ibn Fartua, 1967: 2)

This was a limited objective, which having become successful, changed to a more elaborate ambition to dominate Hausaland itself. In similar fashion, the five year war conducted against the Bulala in Kanem seem to have been motivated by the desire to dominate a people, whose dynasty had a vague relationship with that of Borno, the Sayfawa, and on whose territory the Mai had some claims. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Sikki, which demarcated the boundary between Borno and Kanem, evidently in Borno's favour, Ibn Fartua records that "all our commanders and captains rejoiced at our increase of territory." Finally Idris Alooma's policy of denying access to their grazing lands of certain Tuareg groups who had raided his country is an interesting example of deliberate ecological dislocation; although one which should perhaps be classed as tactics rather than strategy. (Ibn Fartua, 1967: 2)

Change in the long term military objectives in Ilorin was similar to that of Borno highlighted above. In the days of Ààrè Afonja, Ilorin's main military objective was to achieve independence and political sovereignty from the Old Oyo Empire and this motive was largely aided by dissension among the states in Yorubaland. However, this became more expanded after the establishment of the emirate. Thus, the Ilorin authority adopted internal and external diplomacy, and fortification as strategies to defend its territories and consolidate, while cavalry, reconnaissance, divide and conquer were some of the tactics adopted for expansion.

Internal Diplomacy and Cohesion in Ilorin

For success in field operations, the first major step taken by Ilorin leadership was to build a strong united front among its diverse groups at home to ensure harmony and solidarity when the army set out for military expeditions. In doing this, diplomacy was paramount as an instrument of the Ilorin political leadership. Diplomacy, like warfare, was an instrument of state policy in the Nineteenth Century Ilorin emirate administration. (Jimoh, 1994: 50, Danmole, ND, 7) The art of diplomacy for which Ilorin was well known among the Yoruba was equally fundamental in the ability of the emirate to survive. Indeed, the employment of diplomacy by rulers of Ilorin could be traced to the pre-emirate period, when Ààrè Afonja made some efforts to increase his military base in the town. This motive prompted him to enlist the support and loyalty of the Hausa slaves and free-born from Ilorin's surrounding villages.

Diplomatic ploy was further employed by the first emir, Abdulsalami, in the early days of the emirate to consolidate his position. Abdulsalami used a combination of diplomacy and military force to deal with his rivals. (Law, 1977: 47.) Whereas he employed tact and diplomacy in dealing with Bako, the then *Sarkin* Gambari at Ilorin, he combined diplomacy with force against Solagberu, the Yoruba Muslim leader at Oke-Suna. (Hermon-Hodge, 1929: 68) With time, the strategy was broadened because Ilorin henceforth pursued a greater objective of extending her influence to new areas of Yorubaland. The emirate's leadership therefore, embarked on internal diplomacy on higher dimension.

Leaders of the major linguistic groups were co-opted as military generals (*Balógun*) and became members of the emirate political structure. The Ilorin leadership regarded this move as expedient considering the strategic importance of the non-Fulani groups in the survival of the young emirate. For instance, Fulani leadership's adoption of *Balógun*, which is a Yoruba title for army general, is apparently in recognition of Yoruba role in the establishment and consolidation of the emirate, and was in itself, a strategy for cohesion. This was also extended to the other groups to enlist their loyalty for the Fulani leadership. Indeed, one unique element in Ilorin military was the emergence of different military titles with various names depicting the multiplicity of groups in the city. For the record, while *Balógun* was a Yoruba title referring to military commanders and was adopted in the emirate, possibly because of the numerical strength of the Yoruba group, there was an array of Hausa titles, which also indicated the contribution of the group to Ilorin military in the early period. Some of the titles are *Maiyaki*, *Madaki* and *Ubandawaki*. (Baba Olomigbona, Ajikobi Amidu, 2016) These

military positions afforded the bearers the opportunity to partake in political decisions of the emirate and they also became partners in the land-holding hierarchy of the state and by extension, had territories and people under their watch. This new strategic diplomatic arrangement resulted in greater measure of success for the Fulani led Ilorin and enhanced her victories in the battles against Oyo, which climaxed with the latter's eventual defeat at the *Eleduwe* War.

This strategy also accorded the Yoruba in Ilorin greater recognition based on their numerical strength in the emirate leadership and administration. Through this strategy, Yoruba loyalty to the Fulani authority increased and they saw the Ilorin emirate as an entity, which they must support to succeed, especially as they also had benefits to reap from its survival. It is however significant to mention that during Ilorin wars of expansion, the *Balóguns* later appeared to have also been motivated by war booty and economic gains apart from the Jihad and Islamic evangelism, which the emirate pursued at the beginning. Also with this internal diplomacy, the *Balóguns* were expected to raise warriors within their domains anytime there was a campaign. (Abdullahi Ajia, 2017) Meanwhile, two things, which were fundamental in the Ilorin emirate's internal cohesion were achieved through this move. The first was loyalty of the other groups to the new authority as headed by the Fulani, and the second was a boost in the emirate's defence capabilities.

Furthermore, to defend Ilorin city from invaders, particularly after the establishment of its emirate, war commanders were commissioned to raise armies in their respective localities. Thus, every entrance of the city had a war commander in charge of monitoring security situation and taking appropriate steps in case there was a breach. For instance, by the time of the *Sobi Adinimole War*, Ilorin had four Major War leaders, each in charge of troops from different parts of the Ilorin city. Doshe was for the Gambari Ward, the domain of the Hausa inhabitants and he coordinated soldiers from that section of the city. Indeed, it was Doshe who led the Ilorin army against Majiya and his Nupe invaders. Other war commanders were Yagbara, for the Fulani troops, Usman for the Ajikobi warriors and Seeni, who co-ordinated the soldiers from Alánàmú ward. This strategy was to ensure that all entrances to the capital was fortified to face any attacks from outside. Therefore, while the Yoruba *Balóguns*: Alánàmú and Ajikobi took care of attacks from the north of Ilorin city, the Hausa and Fulani *Balóguns* defended Ilorin's southern borders. This was similar to Sokoto Caliphate's use of *Ribat*, (defence strongholds), built in strategic locations to guard the *Jihad* headquarters against attacks from enemies. (Muri, 2003). The

major difference was that Sokoto's defence strongholds were located outside the capital while Ilorin's were within the City.

External Diplomacy and Alliances in Ilorin War Efforts

Aside from the internal arrangements, Ilorin war strategies also encompassed friendship and alliance with other groups outside, particularly after the establishment of the emirate. A sterling diplomatic move was the letter sent to Sokoto, through Gwandu, in which Abdulsalami reiterated Ilorin Emirate's undivided loyalty to the caliphate and sought her support. With Sokoto's recognition of the Ilorin Emirate, through Gwandu, under whose watch the southern emirates fell, Ilorin began to relish the support of the caliphate in military assistance, which comprised the supply of soldiers, logistics including weapons as well as diplomatic relations. (Balógun, 1878)

As a frontier emirate of the Sokoto Caliphate, part of the functions of Ilorin was to ensure further extension of the sphere of Islam. (Adisa Onikoko, 2016) Thus, Islam provided the justification for the series of territorial conquests and annexation by the Ilorin political elite in this early period. These chain of conquests were described by Zubair, the third Emir, as attempts by Ilorin to dip the *Koran* into the sea. (Johnson, 2009: 338) Sokoto's goodwill was counted upon as impetus in expeditions embarked upon by the emirates including Ilorin.

In the course of the wars, Ilorin sometimes received support from other Emirates like Lafiagi and Gwandu. The emirate of Gwandu was in charge of all other emirates south of the caliphate. Apart from supporting wars, Gwandu often offered suggestions to Ilorin on Islamic jurisprudence and administrative matters. In acknowledgement of this role, Ilorin sent presents and gifts to Gwandu annually. With this grandiose external relations, by the 1850s, the Ilorin Emirate had expanded, covering several hundred square kilometres. It shared common borders with some major states like Borgu to the northeast, the rest of Yorubaland to the west, south and east, and Bida, Shonga and Lafiagi to the north. (Balogun, 1970: 216)

Another veritable aspect of Ilorin external diplomatic efforts in the Nineteenth Century was her relationship with the Nupe authorities at different periods. Ilorin made herself relevant in Nupe politics for more than four decades through diplomacy, and where diplomacy failed, she resorted to military expeditions. In as much as Ilorin was interested in warfare, she did not close the door to diplomatic avenues if such would achieve the same objective. Ilorin's diplomatic relations with the Nupe aristocrats, was also facilitated by religious

factor, to be specific, the Jihad, which provided a strong basis for comradeship among certain factions of the contenders for the Nupe leadership.

Following the Nineteenth Century outbreak of the Nupe war and its subsumption into the Sokoto Jihad after which the Nupes were incorporated into the Sokoto caliphate, Nupeland was divided among five emirates. These included Rabah/Bida, Lapai and Agaie, all to the north of the Niger, and Shonga and Lafiagi, to the south. (Dupigny, 1920: 9) Temporarily at least, a new king in Majiya, and a new capital at Raba, emerged in Nupe. Jimada's son, Idrisu, the heir to the Gbara throne, and Makolo, late Jimada's military commander, together with some supporters, sought refuge in Ilorin. (Elphinstone, 1921: 30) Majiya was determined to establish himself unchallengeable and to wean himself away from his powerful Jihadist allies whose leader was a Muslim cleric called Mallam Dendo. He sent his forces against the latter and expelled them from Nupe, at which point they fled to Ilorin where another Muslim cleric, *Al-Salih (Alimi)*, had established a considerable political following. At Ilorin, the refugees entered into a rapprochement with Idrisu, heir of the late *Etsu* Jimada and became allies in opposition to *Etsu* Majiya. In a bid to pre-empt the danger brewing on his southern border, Majiya sent a large expedition against the Muslim forces in Ilorin but the attack failed. (Sulu, ND, Dupigny, 1920: 10)

Ilorin's role in the emergence of Idrisu as the *Etsu* Nupe meant that she could also count on the *Etsu*'s support in subsequent campaigns. A good example of such accord was the co-operation between Ilorin and Nupe on slave raids in the Nineteenth Century. Prior to 1900, the joint slave raids of Nupe and Ilorin on Yagbaland resulted in the presence of Yagba people in Ilorin. Masaba, one of the contenders to the throne of Nupe Kingdom while on campaign in Yagbaland to acquire slaves between 1833 and 1840 had to abruptly put an end to the campaign due to revolt in Lafiagi to force him out of Lade, his base capital. He escaped to Egbe, a Yagba community where he raised army to regain his capital, which he reoccupied in about 1845. Between 1850 and 1857, another rebellion by Umar Barbushe forced Masaba to flee to Ilorin. From there he intensified his military campaigns in Yagbaland with the collaboration of Ilorin brought about by the Islamic revivalism of the Nineteenth Century that resulted in the establishment of Sokoto Caliphate. (Apata, 2011: 22)

Since the Ilorin leadership was also filled with the idea of spreading the religion of Islam, series joint Nupe-Ilorin attacks were carried out on the Yagba communities. Apart from this religious motive, Yagbaland was attacked in order to collect tributes and acquire captives to cultivate crops thus, the forceful influx

of Yagba people into Ilorin. The joint Nupe-Ilorin attack brought about oppressive systems that gave little in turn for the burdens imposed on the subjects. In fact, Nupe-Ilorin domination of Yagba communities with its excessive taxation forced many of the Yagba people to abandon their towns for inaccessible hills. With this prevailing situation, Ilorin had made herself quite relevant in Nupe politics and took adequate benefits from the friendship. Indeed, as time went by, a good number of people of Nupe origin began to move to Ilorin to settle. These included warriors, spiritualists, horse-tenders, blacksmiths and Islamic scholars. (Yusuf, 2016: 55-75) These immigrants contributed to Ilorin's war efforts in aspects of weaponry, cavalry and military technology in the Nineteenth Century particularly the Nupe smiths located in the Pataki/Gambari area of the city.

Another fundamental aspect of Ilorin external diplomatic strategies was to capitalize on the prevailing lack of unity among her opponents. For instance, the precarious situation of Yoruba society of in the early Nineteenth Century is adequately reported by Johnson, who states:

The power of the Fulani (Ilorin) was now great and they aimed at nothing short of the subversion of the whole Yoruba country and short-sighted Yoruba chiefs were playing the game for them by their mutual jealousy of one another. One expedition followed after another and the result was the devastation and depopulation of the country...Jealousy and rivalry among the chiefs prevented unity of purpose. Allegiance was no longer paid to the King, not even in the capital. (Johnson, 2009: 240)

One such occasion, which Ilorin adequately profited from, was the conflict between Teyeje, the *Kákánfò* at Ogbomoso and Adegun, the *Onikoyi*, two of the most prominent Yoruba war chiefs who could have united to save the country. Indeed, when their petty jealousy eventually resulted to open war, the Ilorin authority found a better ground to further aggravate their differences, since the two states were now independent with the fall of Old Oyo. Thus the *Kákánfò* formed an alliance with the *Oluwo* of Iwo, the *Timi* of Ede and Solagberu of Ilorin and besieged the *Onikoyi* in his city of Ikoyi. (Johnson, 2009: 240) This further weakened the cohesion among the various Yoruba leaders. Indeed, throughout the long struggle between Oyo-Ibadan and the Fulani of Ilorin, the former were always handicapped by internal dissension and petty jealousies. This schism, the Fulani were not slow to exploit. Disaffected Yoruba chiefs often betrayed the plan of campaign or else deserted at critical moments. For instance,

on one occasion, certain Oyo chiefs sent to the Emir, a symbolic message of soap, flesh, and camwood used for preparing a bride for wedding night. (Hogben, 1996) The significance of this message, we are bringing the bride (in this case the *Aláàfin*) to her husband, was not lost on Ilorin.

Indeed, the extent of success, which Ilorin had in the Nineteenth Century Yorubaland was a result of her open door policy to diplomatic avenues as long as such would provide positive results. In reality, Ilorin was ready to take sides with even Ibadan, her bitterest foe in Yorubaland when she felt necessary and was prepared to abandon the alliance whenever it was more profitable to do so. Danmole (1998: 113-120) gave a few examples to illustrate this point. According to him, at the Batedo war (1844) and Opin war in the 1850s, Ilorin allied with Ibadan. However, during the Ijaye war (1860-1865), Ilorin fought against Ibadan with a view to acquiring more areas of Yorubaland. The behaviour of Ilorin during the Ekitiparapo war (1878-1886) was also not different. She suspended the overtures of friendship with Ibadan for a more profitable motive of benefitting from the war. However, her political and diplomatic efforts to extend the frontier of the Emirate were not successful because Ijaye was completely destroyed in 1865 and colonial government's intervention made the Ekitiparapo war inconclusive.

The Alliance System

Still in continuation of its external diplomatic ploy, Ilorin was involved in the alliance system during the Yoruba civil wars. Generally, the Yoruba states hardly fought their wars alone but in alliance. The preponderance of wars during the Nineteenth Century also precipitated the emergence of more alliances. Perhaps the most elaborated of the alliances were the Ife-Ijebu Alliance against Owu in 1821, the Ijaye Egba Alliance in 1860 and the Ekitiparapo Grand Alliance against Ibadan in 1878. (Oguntominsin, 1998: 99) For Ilorin however, the Ekitiparapo Grand Alliance seemed more significant because of its motives. It was essentially intended to weaken Ibadan, which had, in the course of its expansion, subdued several Yoruba kingdoms. Even though Ilorin also considered enlisting in the alliance for booty, the more important motive in the *Ekitiparapo* coalition was to re-impose control on her former Igbomina vassals and to bring the Ekiti towns under her political sphere. This intention had been subtly expressed in Ilorin's message to *Ààre* Latoosa, ruler of Ibadan in 1878 in this way: "*if a man's wife deserted him and afterwards repented and came back to him, is not the husband justified in receiving her back*". (Oguntominsin, 1998: 99) By Ilorin's calculation

therefore, this alliance was part of the diplomatic maneuvers to regain her lost territories among the Igbomina and Ekiti groups.

Reconnaissance and Knowledge of the Opponent

Information about the opponent was an important aspect of Ilorin war strategy throughout the Nineteenth Century. Adequate knowledge of the opponent determined the best tactics to be employed in dealing with them. Here, character, strength and military intelligence sometimes counted more than weapons and logistics. The view is strongly held that success in war depends more on superior organisation, tactics and morale than superior weapons. An army's successful use of these war elements however depended squarely on adequate information about the opponent. In 1726 for instance, the Oyo cavalry, armed with lances, defeated the Dahomean forces, armed with muskets due largely to adequate knowledge of the opponent. Apart from the noise of the Dahomean guns, which frightened the Oyo horses initially, new and superior as they were to Yoruba warfare, the guns did not appear to have helped the Dahomeans avert defeat. Also in 1829, a large Ijebu army, equipped with snider rifles and abundant cartridges, was defeated by a small British led force. Furthermore, during the Kiriji wars from (1878-1886), the Ekitiparapo possessed superior fire power yet they were unable to defeat the Ibadan. (Olutoye, O. and Olapade, 1998: 213) These instances buttress the point that sometimes, military organisation and tactics were far more important determinants of success at battles. However, for effective military strategy and tactics, adequate information about the enemy was required.

The Ilorin army's tactics depended heavily on reconnaissance and knowledge of the opponent. The method employed involved finding out the strength and weaknesses of the opponent in relation to the size of its army, weapon system and its defence mechanism. In this regard, Ilorin warriors sometimes had friends within the ranks of the opponent so that through them, information could be obtained. This practice was further strengthened with the use of spies and espionage to study enemy camps. An advance army was sometimes sent to the battle front to distract the opponent. More often, the nature of opponent's defences determined the tactics to be employed in the attack. Clapperton in 1829, as quoted by R. Smith, made the following documentation of an attack by the Fulani (Ilorin) on an Oyo community: in 1825, the Fulani, Clapperton was told, mounted an aerial incendiary attack against a group of Yoruba villagers near Oyo-Ile. Clapperton writes:

Algi consists of three walled villages and before it was burnt down, had been of considerable size; they pointed out a rock close to the south of the town from whence the Fellatas (Fulani) flew the pigeons to set fire to it. The mode of doing it was by making combustibles fastened to the tails of the birds, which on being let loose from their hand immediately flew to the tops of the thatched houses while the Fellatas kept up a sharp fire of arrows to prevent the inhabitants extinguishing the flames. (Smith, 1989: 117)

This description, it seems more likely, also relates to attack by incendiary arrow, a method well known to the Fulani. This also goes to suggest that there was no single tactics that was most effective in all situations; rather the approach to every battle was dictated by the prevailing circumstances in the campaign. The fact that the village was walled apparently prevented the Fulani soldiers from gaining entrance, hence the use of incendiary aerial attack, which merely entailed sending combustibles from afar into the roof of the enemy.

The use of espionage through making friends with some members in the enemy camp was also employed by Ilorin in her campaigns as witnessed during Ilorin's 10-Year siege of Offa beginning in 1878. It was reported that vital military intelligence were obtained by the Ilorin camp led by *Balógun* Karara, who had friends (informants) among the Offa group during the siege. However, this breach of Offa security intelligence by Ilorin has been attributed to disunity among Offa people in the course of the campaign. According to Abdulrahman, the discord was due to the protracted nature of the war as well as the imposition of *Oba* Adegboye Atoloyetele, who was chosen to replace *Oba* Okunoye. (Abdulrahman, 2009: 70) Following these developments, a section of dissatisfied Offa, led by *Ojomu* Orisasona, was in close relation with the Ilorin army under *Balógun* Karara. They served as Ilorin's "eye" on Offa military strategies and were reported to have divulged vital military intelligence to the Ilorin camp. Indeed, *Ojomu* Orisasona was reputed for his visits to *Balógun* Karara's camp amidst his supporters to announce the withdrawal of Ibadan soldiers from Offa. This was a vital information in Ilorin's campaign against Offa and *Balógun* Karara was said to have capitalised immensely on this hint.

Meanwhile, Ibadan soldiers' eventual withdrawal from Offa was largely due to this constant security loop-hole in Offa society and failure of efforts to forestall its recurrence. In fact, this security breach led to Ilorin's ambush of some Ibadan war lords like Enimowu, Salako, Winkule and Malade and ultimately

prompted Ibadan War Council to withdraw from Offa. (Abdulrahman, 2009: 70) Sometimes, the static warfare tactics or laying siege was employed, which involved waiting at the gate of the opponent in cases where entrance was not possible due to impregnable walls. This method was adopted in the Offa campaign as led by *Balógun* Karara.

Islam and Jihad as a Military Strategy

Islam and the Jihad was an important factor in Ilorin military strategies in the nineteenth century because it contributed immensely to the process by which the city gained followership for her campaigns. Even though, *Jihad* in the main theatres of war in Hausaland came to an end in 1809, fighting for the establishment of *emirates* as part of a wider caliphate mission continued in some places throughout the first half of the Nineteenth Century. For instance, in the 1820s, the Emirates of Nupe and Ilorin were established, a decade later, Misau and Jama'are Emirates emerged and finally, Kontagora Emirate was founded in 1859. (Ikime, 1980: 303) For Ilorin, Islam provided formidable ground for the military to thrive as it enhanced the political and social interaction among its inhabitants. This was largely facilitated by the feeling of brotherhood and trust, which the faith emphasised among its adherents especially.

This religious cohesion became a significant strategy in the expansion of the Ilorin emirate during the Jihad. Several immigrants including warriors and Islamic scholars settled in Ilorin and contributed weapons, military intelligence and spiritual support to her wars of expansion and defence during the Jihad. J. P Smaldone in his study on *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate*, submits that a broad distinction can be made between the southern frontiers of expansion and the northern "frontiers of defence". (Smaldone 1977 : 56) According to him, unlike the northern Emirates of Katsina, Daura, Kano and Zaria, where a pre-Jihad Islamic tradition existed among the Hausa states, the eastern and southern emirates of Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Muri, Southern Zaria, Nupe, Ilorin, and Kontagora were founded in non-muslim areas characterised by cultural and ethnic fragmentation. (Smaldone 1977: 56)

As a frontier Emirate of the Sokoto Caliphate, part of the functions of the Ilorin Emirate was to ensure further extension of the sphere of Islam. Thus, Islam provided the justification for the series of territorial conquests and annexation by the Ilorin political elite in this early period. In the course of the wars, Ilorin sometimes received support from other Emirates like Lafiagi and Gwandu. The Emirate of Gwandu was in charge of all other Emirates south of the caliphate.

Apart from supporting wars, Gwandu often offered suggestions to Ilorin on Islamic jurisprudence and administrative matters. In acknowledgement of this role, Ilorin sent presents and gifts to Gwandu annually. With this grandiose external relations, by the 1850s, the Emirate had expanded, covering several hundred square kilometres. It shared common borders with some major states like Borgu to the northeast, the rest of Yorubaland to the west, south and east, and Bida, Shonga and Lafiagi to the north. (Balogun, 1970: 216) She also relished the support of these areas for the supply of weapons, horses and intelligence to aid her campaigns in the Nineteenth Century. Islam thus provided a formidable ground for the Ilorin military to thrive as it also enhanced the political and social interaction among its inhabitants. This was largely facilitated by the feeling of brotherhood and trust, which the faith emphasised among its adherents.

Field Tactics of the Ilorin Army

The exigencies of the various battles Ilorin was involved called for the adoption of different tactics in dealing with the opponents. These included conversion of defence to attack as used in the *Ogele Battle*, which yielded huge success. Trapping the enemies within the city walls as adopted during the *Eleduwe War* when the Ilorin troops retreated after a heavy attack. Another tradition records that one major tactic employed in the *Eleduwe War* was distraction which involved Ilorin's use of a naked woman bearing a calabash loaded with some items of propitiation and strategically positioned in front of its army so that the distracted enemy army was caught. Even though, the invaders initially appeared to be winning, this tactic was said to have saved the day. Ilorin city walls also assisted the army in the defence of the city. Another tactic was encircling the enemies from different flanks. This was used in the *Mugbamugba War* also to Ilorin's favour. The last was siege or static warfare as used in the *Offa Campaign*. However, Ilorin's complacency and over-reliance on the cavalry force in the *Osogbo War* in 1840 and the *Jalumi War* around 1878, ended in utter disaster and humiliation in the hands of Ibadan warrior, which employed the surprise attack tactics in warfare. Even though the two failures were recorded within a space of over forty year interval, the Ibadan war leaders displayed greater understanding of the tactics of war. Balogun Oderinlo in 1840 and Balogun Ogboriefon in 1878, who led the Ibadan contingents in the respective campaign employed surprise element which rendered Ilorin cavalry completely impotent at critical moments of the encounters.

Fortification and City Walls as Defence Mechanisms

Either in war situations or periods of peace, serious attention was paid to the security of life, territories and properties among pre-colonial societies. This was imperative because of their nature at the period, most being conquest states. (Uzeoigwe, (1977: 20-47) States were always alert to the possibility of being attacked by others and this concern always determined the siting of settlements in areas considered to offer the best security advantage. Therefore, the first main consideration was given to physical cum geographical features like mountains, hills, caves, trees and forest that could serve as protection from perceived or real enemies and their attacks. However, when these natural features were not available or inadequate, deliberate efforts were made to put structures in place to ensure the protection of the community. Such fortification would safeguard the army, common men, slaves and their lands, from attack and encroachment.

The widespread and numerous remains of fortifications, in particular, the mud-built walls around towns, were recurring and sometimes conspicuous feature in the pre-colonial landscape of Nigeria. The walls not only provided defence, they also served notably, as boundaries, demarcating a town from its farmland, regulating trade and enabling tolls to be collected from travelers. Thus, many town walls, as observed today, follow a course, which seems to ignore tactical opportunities offered by the nature of the ground. Nevertheless, what can be deduced about the evolution of towns strongly bears out the assumption that in origin, the walls were of military significance, providing defence against the enemy and shelter for the inhabitants. There is abundant evidence too that walls continued to be the salient features in defensive warfare. That in most cases, they covered what seemed from the tactical point of view, a dangerously large area, was noticed by several European travelers, but the open farmland and gardens enclosed within them served to feed a town during a siege and also enabled the defender's army to be drawn up and rallied for battle behind the walls. That many, probably most, towns originated as military strongholds, cannot be proved, but there is much evidence for such a contention, both in the sites chosen and in the recorded history of some comparatively are recently founded towns.

Two outstanding examples are Sokoto, which was first inhabited in 1809 as a camp formed by Muhammad Bello, and Ibadan, which evolved from the camp of the shattered Oyo armies about 1830. (Awe, 1964: 77-89) The camp was located on a ridge of hills near the edge of the forest, hence the name "Ibadan"- a Yoruba contraction of *eba odan* – (near the forest). Indeed, Ibadan developed from a military camp occupying the summit and slopes of a range of hills. Further

examples can be seen in the Egba town of Abeokuta, built among rocks and protected on the west by the River Ogun, which informed the name (*Omo abe Olumoh* - people under the *Olumo* rock). A similar example can be seen in the Ekiti region, where the advantage of natural topography was relished to the fullest in the mountains that pervaded the area. (Olusegun, E and Oluwole, 1998: 148)

The formation of a fortified camp distinct from the parent town was usually the first step by the army when it first advanced into the battle field. Such camps were usually on temporary basis, naturally lasting for the period of the encounters. The war leaders were sheltered in tents or by walls of mats while the soldiers slept under such shelter as they could find. Camp followers and auxiliaries such as those who supply fighting implement and other needs of the soldiers soon added to the population and semi-permanent quarters for all were quickly erected according to the varying local patterns. Thus, the military camp acquired the appearance of an ordinary town or village settlements, which often later became permanent and eventually civilianized. (Smith, 1989: 100)

Ilorin had no city wall during the days of Afonja because there was no compelling need for such. The community did not experience any serious threat of military attack except towards the end of Afonja's era, when Ojo Agunbambaru, a son of the deceased Basorun Gaa of Old Oyo, abortively attempted an invasion of the city. Indeed, during Afonja's era, Ilorin was still an expanding community, as the Ààrè made deliberate efforts to incorporate several adjoining settlements into the town to populate the area. Even with Afonja's deviance of the Old Oyo, Ilorin was still considered an Oyo province until the Fulani proclamation of the area as an Emirate.

The Fulani authority themselves realised that declaring Ilorin an Emirate meant an invitation of war from the Oyo authority. Thus, it was this declaration, which prompted the Ilorin leadership, to begin the process of putting defensive mechanisms in place, including the erection of walls round the town. Indeed, it is reported that the combined Yoruba forces on five consecutive occasions invaded Ilorin. These invasions in sequence were known as the *Ogidi War*, the *Ogele War*, the *Mugba-Mugba War*, the *Kanla War* and the *Eleduwe War*.

The significance of defensive frontiers, specifically, walls, in the various battle in these wars cannot be overemphasised. In the first war of aggression against Ilorin led by Ojo Agunbambaru, a son of Basorun Gaa, tagged the *Ogidi War*, Ilorin had not yet been walled. Thus, she had to make do with temporary fortifications, made of logs of locust and shea butter trees (*igi igba and igi emi*)

which were hurriedly reversed or loosened when Ojo's massive army arrived. (Jimoh, 1994: 79)

The need to further fortify the city came after the first series of wars such as *Ogidi*, *Ogele* and *Kanla* wars. This was because experiences in those campaigns showed the need to fortify the city against future aggression; thus, the erection of walls round the city became expedient.

The first Ilorin city wall was consequently built in 1823 by *Emir Abdulsalam* (1823-1842) encompassing Gegele, Enu-Odi, Amule, Asunara and Ago. As the city expanded, the wall was shifted to accommodate the increase in population.

The second city wall built by the *Emir*, went through Ode Onikijipa in Omoda to Ojuekun, Ojagboro, Isale Ajanaku, Ita Kure, Alapata, Ita Ogunbo back to Omoda. The third wall extended the city to Baboko, Pakata, Alore, Abayawo Pakata, Aluko stream and Isalekoto. The fourth and last wall was built in the early 1830s, shortly after the Warukura war. It extended in a southern direction from the bank of the Asa River to Odo-Okun across Old Yidi road. *Emir Zubair Aiyelabowo I* (1861-1868) also attempted to extend the city wall but Ilorin's preoccupation by the encounter against Ibadan made the project to be abandoned in 1864. The *Emir* died four years later, leaving the project for his successor, *Emir Aliyu*, who, even though, revived it towards the end of his own reign, could not build the wall before his death in 1891. (Jimoh, 1994: 79)

Therefore, by the time of the *Eleduwe War*, the Ilorin city walls had been erected and served as great advantage to the army in its withdrawal and retreat tactics. Ilorin suffered series of setbacks in this expedition and its forces were beaten back to within the walls of the city. So massive was the Yoruba army, which invaded Ilorin on this occasion that it established an unbroken battle line stretching from Ogele through Bala to Ogidi. The plan was to stretch the siege further to Shao. At a point, it seemed Ilorin was going to be taken as the odds increasingly counted against its army. The Ilorin cavalry unable to withstand mounting pressures at the war front, tactically retreated into the city and shut the gates to gain respite. But commanders of the advancing and seemingly victorious Yoruba troops pursued their victory too far till they met with disaster.

The Ilorin approach to warfare in the wars of invasion showed the significance of withdrawal and retreat tactics, which was enhanced by the presence of walls in her city. The walls served two primary military roles for the city: first, it assisted in warding off invasion through alert, which was normally raised by the guards at the gates as soon as enemies were noticed. Secondly, these

walls protected the city from being attacked from distance, and when aggressors entered the city walls, they could be easily captured, as witnessed in the *Eleduwe* war, in which the great Borgu warrior, *Worukura* was slain. City Walls indeed gave Ilorin a tactical advantage over her opponent during the invasion and was strategic to the defence of the Emirate against the Oyo-Bariba army in the *Eleduwe* War.

In addition to the construction of city walls, soldiers were stationed at the major entrances to the city to raise alarm about approaching enemies and keep other warriors adequately informed of any impending attacks. One location noted for playing this role of alerting the city about enemy attack was a place thenceforth called *Alore* (Yoruba term which means announcement) in Ilorin. The significance of *Alore* in Ilorin military came to fore during her battles against Old Oyo as warriors from the empire passed through Ogidi through the spot later coined *Alore* before entering Ilorin city.

Conclusion

Ilorin's involvement in wars of survival, expansion and consolidation in the nineteenth century required the city to employ formidable strategies and tactics to ensure success in her encounters. For strategy, Ilorin in the early nineteenth century, was concerned with two main objectives: to be independent of Old Oyo, and to expand and become a dominant force in the process by which Islam would be extended to the Southern Yorubaland and beyond. Therefore, diplomacy, alliances, divide and conquer, espionage, knowledge of the enemy and the use of Islamic propagation as formidable tool became significant factors in Ilorin survival. These objectives could not however be achieved without military engagement. Thus, for tactics, which was concerned with activities of soldiers on the battle field and how the objective of particular encounters were achieved, Ilorin depended on the use of cavalry, aerial incendiary, siege warfare, attack and retreat, use of walls and fortification as defence mechanisms. The hallmark of Ilorin internal diplomacy was to pacify and integrate the different groups that inhabited the city under the leadership of the Fulani. This internal arrangement was done through the creation of the title of *Balogun* for the non-Fulani groups to ensure their unbridled loyalty. Externally, the Ilorin authority made friends with as many groups as possible as long as such would yield positive results. This way, Ilorin always had access to vital information from the opponents to boost her military strategies and tactics. These strategies and tactics even though had their limitations as recorded in the *Osogbo* and *Jalumi* Wars, they facilitated Ilorin

emirate's success in many encounters and her relationship with the British in the beginning of the Twentieth Century.

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Oral Interview

S/N o.	Names	Sex	Age	Place Of Interview	Date
1.	Abubakar Akanbi Jos	M	82	Balógun-Alánàmú Ilorin	Feb., 2017
2.	Adisa Onikoko	M	75	Retired Civil Servant, Pakata Area, Ilorin	Aug., 2016
3.	Ajia Kijan	M	80	Magaji Kijan, Oke Apomu	Sep., 2017
4.	Amidu Ajikobi	M	59	Balógun Ajikobi Compound, Ilorin	Sep., 2016
5.	Baba Olomigbona	M	80	Islamic Scholar, Alore Area Ilorin	Apr, 2015
6.	Musa Maiyaki	M	78	Magaji Maiyaki Ilorin	Feb., 2016