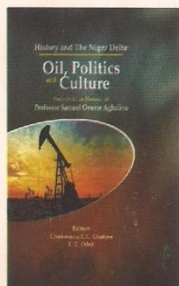


ABOUT THE BOOK

This book entitled History and the Niger Delta: Oil, Politics & Culture is a Festschrift published in Honour of Professor Samuel Ovuete Aghalino for his immeasurable academic and scholarly contribution to the socio-economic, political and educational development of the Niger-Delta region, Nigeria and the world at large. The book discusses the dynamics of Niger Delta history, with particular emphasis on oil, economy and environment. It further discusses the Niger Delta Eco-feminism as well as petro-violence within the region. Some chapters of the work examine the multinationals intervention in the Niger Delta area. Youth restiveness, militancy, popular culture, politics of resource control and peace building initiatives in the Niger Delta area as well as inter and intra-group relations within the Niger Delta area equally received attention. The contributors were meticulous in the choice of topics related to the book title and carried out extensive, thorough and articulated research and analysis of issues on the history of oil, politics and culture of the people of Niger Delta region of Nigeria.



ABOUT THE EDITORS

Chukwuma CC Osakwe, Ph.D is a Professor of Military History with a robust scholarly profile in his area of research interest. He is currently the Head, Department of History and War Studies; and Director, Centre for the Study of Leadership and Complex Military Operations, Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria.

Lemuel E. ODEH Ph.D. (MHSN) Associate Professor, immediate past Head of Department, Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. He holds a B. A. History and International Studies from Lagos State University Ojo-Lagos, M.Sc. International Relations and Strategic Studies and Ph.D. in History from the Benue State University Makurdi, Benue State. He was also Head of Department, Department of History, Nigerian Army University Biu, Borno State. He is currently Director University of Ilorin Archives and Documentation Center. His research area is International Economic Relations with emphasis on China-Nigeria Economic Relations. He was former National Publicity Officer (PRO) Historical Society of Nigeria. He was part of a Grant Award by Nagel Institute for the study of World Christianity, Michigan, U. S. A. His scholarly works are in local, national and International Journals. Email lemuelodeh@gmail.com



ISBN 978-978-982-592-9

History and The Niger Delta: Oil, Politics and Culture

Festschrift in Honour of Professor Samuel Ovuete Aghalino

Editors
Chukwuma C.C. Osakwe
L. E. Odeh

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Professor Samuel Ovuete Aghalino FHSN

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Publishers: Nigerian Defence Academy Publishers

ISBN: Hardcopy: 978 – 978 – 982 – 592 – 9
E-copy: 978 – 978 – 982 – 593 – 6

Printed and Bound in Nigeria
Using environmentally sustainable paper materials
By Pyla-Mak Publishers Ltd.
Kaduna, Nigeria.
Tel: 08023633763

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Aboyeji Justus Adeniyi Ph.D. is currently a Senior Lecturer in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. His research interests straddle Inter-group relations, economic and diplomatic history, with particular reference to the Igbomina sub-group of the Yoruba. This interpolative bearing is not unconnected with the socio-economic and political changes that have come to bear on the Igbomina people. He obtained his Ph.D. in History and has published widely in national and international indexed journals and publications, including notable chapters in scholarly books. He has attended both National and International conferences with papers read. He is also a visiting faculty/lecturer to other institutions.

Aboyeji, Oyeniya Solomon holds Ph.D. Degrees in History from University of Ilorin, Nigeria. For a decade, Dr. Solomon taught History and Citizenship Education at the Kwara State College of Education, Oro, Nigeria. He presently lectures in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin. His research interests include: Cultural Studies, Religion and Society as well as Igbomina Studies. He has a number of scholarly publications in local, national and international peer-review journals.

Adewale Adepoju is a lecturer at the Department of History and Diplomatic Studies Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abiodun S. Afolabi obtained Ph.D. in History from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. His area of doctoral research is economic history, focusing on tax-related revolts in Southwestern Nigeria. He was a 2008 Codesria Fellow for a Writing Workshop in Uganda and a 2011 Fellow, American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). He was until October, 2012 Head, National Archives of Nigeria, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. He currently teaches History in the Department of History and International Studies and doubles as Chief Archivist of the Archives and Documentation Centre (UADC) of the same university. He has credits in reputable academic journals and books.

Ajibola A. Abdulrahman, is of the department of History Kwara State University Malete. He is currently doing his Ph.D. program in the United States of America.

Akachi Odoemene Ph.D. is a Professor of African History and Head, Department of History and International Studies, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. He is the National Secretary of the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) and a Research Fellow of the Collaborative Working Group of the African Peacebuilding Network (APN), Social Science Research Council (SSRC), New York, USA (2018-2020) among others. Professor Akachi

EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF ILORIN WAR WEAPONS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Alabi Oladimeji Mohammed Ph.D.

Introduction

The notion that wars are probably won more often by superior organisation and morale than by superior weapons may not be applicable to all war situations. Even though organisation and management of troops are very critical elements in warfare, weapons played fundamental role in the success of many campaigns in pre-colonial African societies. In the opinion of T. High, weapons are merely tools used to facilitate the practice of war.¹ This assumption seems to depict more of a delusion than reality because whether in traditional or modern, colonial or independent, African or European societies, weapons hold a prime position in determining the success of campaigns. This, perhaps, is why R. Smith posits that weapons are of first importance in forwarding success in war because the result of a battle or a campaign can turn upon them, and often too, they hold the balance between peace and war. Moreover, the weapons and accoutrement of the warrior reflect the technological achievement of a society, and are an index to its art and culture.² Wars cannot be fought without pre-war readiness, and a critical aspect of an army's preparations include being well equipped with sufficient number of capable militia, who are in good possession of physical and metaphysical weapons.³ Smith maintains that the range of basic weapons, which were in use in pre-colonial warfare in West Africa was as wide as that used by Western European armies before the onset of the Nineteenth Century.⁴ This fact of similarity in African pre-colonial weapons and those in Ancient Europe was further buttressed by the work of Archer Jones titled: *The Art of War in the Western World*, where his description of Europe's ancient warfare, as exemplified by the Greeks, depicts great semblance with African pre-colonial approach and weapons system.⁵

The assemblage of weapons was an important element in the success of Ilorin military in the Nineteenth Century due to the presence of different groups in the area. Indeed, the success of the emirate was largely facilitated by this conglomeration of people of different backgrounds who became united in the mission to defend the town. As one of the southern frontier emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate, Ilorin was expected to further extend the Jihad influence to new areas in Yorubaland and this objective had an impact on the structure of its forces. Because the emirate was established among the Yoruba with a mixture of

other groups, she faced the twin challenge of internal cohesion and the defence of its outlying territories. Indeed, 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". 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.⁶ Precolonial Ilorin was a cosmopolitan society where weapons from diverse groups converged, particularly, in the course of the Nineteenth Century. This was due, largely, to her involvement in the Sokoto Caliphate as one of the southern frontier emirates, and also her role in the Yoruba wars of the period. In the discourse of weapon system in pre-colonial Ilorin, two important elements must be articulated. These are the sources and types of the weapons on one hand, and the people that contributed to the collection the fighting tools. This analysis is necessary because of the cosmopolitan nature of Ilorin in the pre-colonial period and also to give proper credence to the various participants in the Ilorin wars.

This study aims at exploring the dynamics of the pre-colonial Ilorin war weapon industry with a view to making contribution to literature on military history in Nigeria. The study is divided into sections to discuss sources and factors that influenced pre-colonial Ilorin weapon system include trade, hunting, blacksmithing industry, diplomatic relations, alliances, spirituality and religion. In field operation, Ilorin warriors comprised infantry and cavalry with relatively different fighting instruments. For instance, while the cavalrymen carried lances, the infantry made use of variety of weapons including swords, bow and arrow, clubs, daggers and spears. Blacksmithing as an age-long vocation in Ilorin, provided a strong support to the city's weapon production and the Nupe played a significant role in this regard.

Sources of Weapons in Ilorin in the Nineteenth Century

Two important factors contributed to the sources and weapon system of Ilorin military in the Nineteenth Century. First was the cosmopolitan nature of the city, comprising Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Kanuri and Bariba. Secondly, by the time of the Ilorin campaigns, major wars, in the main theatres of the *Jihad* in Hausaland, had been concluded which paved the way for greater number of people to participate in the southern campaigns.⁷ The *Jihad* in the main theatres of war in Hausaland came to an end in 1809, but 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 1859.⁸

Ilorin's location in the transitional zone between the north and south of what later became Nigeria, put her at a vantage position to attract weapons from

various people, who had migrated into the area, and also others, whose proximity enhanced the flow of weapons into the town. Ilorin's position as a military outpost of the Old Oyo Empire⁹ placed her in a good stead to attract the empire's weapon system. For instance, there is the possibility that through *Kákánfò* Afonja and his military entourage, traditional Yoruba weapons of war in use in Oyo, found their way into Ilorin. Further still, it is reasonable to believe that Afonja's effort in capturing people of surrounding villages and towns in Ilorin¹⁰ to populate his new creation also contributed to the sourcing of weapons and military technology in the town. This fact is plausible based on the *Ààrè*'s strive to increase his military base for anticipated attacks from Old Oyo, having declared Ilorin independent in defiance of both *Aláàfins* Aole and Maku. Thus, a major primary source of Ilorin military weapon in the Nineteenth Century was Old Oyo.

Furthermore, because the founding of Ilorin has been linked with hunting expeditions as Ojo Isekuse, the acclaimed founder of the town was reported to be a hunter, it is possible that his vocation influenced the town's weapon system. Hunting implement also served, in many societies, as weapons of war. A considerable proportion of pre-colonial armies actually comprised the hunters, who were familiar with the terrain, and were well-grounded in the skills of handling weapons and assailing animals. The hunting implements thus formed a veritable source of weapons to the army. Consequently, there is evidence in Ilorin's history of the roles played by the hunter-warriors in the various wars of the town.¹¹ The hunters did not only have a good mastery and use of physical weapons but they also had great deal of metaphysical weapons, which aided their hunting expeditions against wild animals. All these were employed during warfare. Aboyeji and Adebayo in the work titled "the Role of Hunters in State Formation" buttressed this point by giving a number of towns whose establishments can be linked to hunters.¹² Few of the towns founded by hunters are Ede, Ijaye, Ogbomoso, Abeokuta and Ilorin. Indeed, by the time of Emirs Abdulsalam and Shitta, the various *Balóguns* in the town had been mandated to organise warriors under their command, a considerable number of whom were hunters, who engaged in hunting during peace times and became fighters during war.

Another significant source of weapon for Ilorin military in the Nineteenth Century was trade. The trade was both intra and inter regional in scope. Ilorin was a major participant in the international caravan trade in pre-colonial Nigeria.¹³ Indeed the city was host to traders from different ecological zones and thus had access to variety of products from far and near. The Gambari area of the city was reputed as a location where commercial exchange of an international nature took place on regular basis.¹⁴ Being the quarters of the Hausa, Nupe and other northern traders, it served as a meeting point for the exchange of ideas on various issues including religion and politics. This influx of traders of northern origin also provided opportunity for weapons and other accoutrement of war to be obtained by Ilorin's local population, particularly, the warriors.

The arrival of Al-Salih in Ilorin, at the invitation of *Ààrè* Afonja, also attracted large number of Fulani and Hausa settlers, who also favoured the 'holy mission', into the town. Meanwhile, *Jihad* goes beyond physical fighting and armed confrontation to include all acts aimed at improving the practice of the Islamic religion through the removal of barriers against the faith. Thus, the first attempt by Mallam Al-Salih after arriving Ilorin was to unite the fragmented Muslim communities in the area. Before his arrival, even though, a good number of the inhabitants were Muslims, they still practised Islam in separate quarters based on tribal lines. There were the Fulani quarters under Olufadi, the Hausa quarters at Gambari, which was the home of traders, with Bako as the leader, the Muslim Yoruba-Bariberi quarters at Oke-Suna under Solagberu (Solabairi), and lastly that of the traditionalists Yoruba, under *Ààrè* Afonja.¹⁵ Thus the first move for Al-Salih was to unite these fragmented Muslim communities into a strong *Ummah* (congregation). This does not indicate that the Muslims had any rift amongst them but they were hitherto scattered until the arrival of Al Salih.

As Islam provided a platform for these diverse groups to unite, so did their weapons continue to provide backing for the *Jihad* efforts in Ilorin. The weapons were individually obtained but collectively organised during warfare. It is difficult to conclude that the weapons were the same because each group had weapons, which were peculiar to it.¹⁶ However, what can be said with a measure of certainty is that although the weapons were comparatively similar and had the same uses, they had different names while some varied in physical appearance.

Aside from the weapons sourced among Yoruba warriors, who formerly fought in the *Aláàfin*'s army, there were those from the Nupe warriors under Umar Nagwamatse¹⁷, one of the grandchildren of Usman Danfodio, in his campaigns in Northern Nupeland in Kontagora area. These were people from Ibito, who had the knowledge of the weapons used by Nagwamatse. Some of them came to assist Ilorin army during war. With time, a local weapon manufacture emerged, initially with the blacksmith essentially repairing damaged war implement and later, using the imported prototype to imitate and produce new weapons.

The Blacksmith Industry and the Ilorin Military in the Nineteenth Century
Blacksmiths played prominent roles in military technology in pre-colonial Yorubaland. They were so important in the Nineteenth Century that they formed themselves into guilds. They also enjoyed considerable protection from the leaders of their various localities. They worked on iron, producing iron points for arrows, lance heads (long spears), swords, knives and cutlasses. Blacksmiths worked in close cooperation with the armies replacing exhausted stock of arrows, mending damaged spears and swords, fabricating iron bullets from pieces of waste iron and repairing guns.¹⁸ The remains of blacksmith sheds in few locations in Ilorin buttress the pervasion of the art in the town in the Nineteenth Century.

The smiths played significant roles in Ilorin military technology, as in most societies of this period. This is because of the industry's transformative

impact on the society through the provision of tools for the exploitation of the environment as well as stimulating the emergence and development of other industries. The availability and use of iron in the fabrication of tools was a major breakthrough in the transformation of the pre-colonial Nigerian societies. It is said that knowledge of iron-working in West Africa dates back to the first millennium BC.

By about the fourth century A.D, iron implements, chiefly hoes, cutlasses, iron clubs, knives, spear-heads and swords, marked a great advance on stone and wooden tools. They improved the efficiency of hunters; they made it easier to clear the forest; and they placed more power in the hands of the builders (and destroyers) of towns and states.¹⁹

It is evident that early empires of West Africa owed (to a great extent) their successes to the use of iron weapons and tools. The Soninke of ancient Ghana Empire for example, are said to have acquired the use of iron weapons and tools from the Barbers in about A. D. 300.²⁰ In Nigeria, the strength and resilience of the indigenous technology manifested in the Nok culture complex and in such civilizations as Benin, Ife, Kororofa, Borno and many others, whose glories were met and reported by the Portuguese in their first contact in the 15th Century.²¹ Indeed, the tool industry remained so potent a force in the civilization of most African societies that E. U. Ikoku believes that African technology, by the 15th Century, was not inferior to those of other parts of the world. He writes:

Most scholars now agree (however grudgingly) that man started his history in Africa, and that the continent was not only the cradle of early cultures, it was above all the undisputed mother of tool-making man.... The metal revolution, which first introduced ferrous technology and generated a variety of monumental changes that were crucial and cumulative in their effects on mankind, was of African origin. Thus, the first step ever in man's technological history was apparently taken in Africa.²²

The significance of the blacksmith industry to the Nineteenth Century military in Nigerian society rests on the fact that most weapons were made of iron, and were locally fabricated and repaired by the smiths. It is reported that around Oyo, a complex of highly specialised mining villages flourished during the pre-colonial period, which indicates the strength of the iron industry in the area.²³

Even though the exact period of emergence of blacksmithing in Ilorin is still obscure, it is certain that by the Nineteenth Century, the craft was one of the prominent vocations in the town. Oral sources trace the emergence of blacksmithing in Ilorin to the period of migration of groups into the area. One source maintains that the craft could be traced to Ile-Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba.

From Ile-Ife, the craft is said to have moved to the Old Oyo, from where scores of its practitioners later migrated first to Kuwo, a suburb of Ilorin, before finally arriving Ilorin in the early Nineteenth Century.²⁴

Another source, given by one Baba Elegbeji, claims that his forefather, Baba IjesaJakota Alagbede, popularly known as Ijesa, migrated to Ilorin following constant encouragement from the MagajiOju-ekun. Before then, Baba Ijesa, being a professional blacksmith always supplied iron implement to Ilorin people from Ijesa, in what later became Osun State. In addition to his smiting activities, Baba Ijesa was reported to be a powerful hunter, who had great metaphysical powers.²⁵ This perhaps was in congruence with the tradition of blacksmithing being popular among hunters. For instance, Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron, was also a hunter and warrior. Gradually, blacksmithing craft spread to different parts of Ilorin and became embraced by many. Some of the earliest blacksmith locations in Ilorin are *Adangba, Oju-ekun, Sefura, Okelele, Oloje, Pakata, Isale Koto, Awodi and Baruba*.²⁶

Generally, blacksmithing in Ilorin, like in other pre-colonial Nigerian societies, served as a tool factory for other industries by producing implement, which facilitated their activities. Thus implement such as hoes, cutlasses and knives, helped in agriculture; weavers also relied on the blacksmith for iron implement like iron-spindle, iron-rod (pegs), creel or warping stick, pulley and so on. This was in addition to the fabrication of other home utensils for domestic activities. However, the prevalence of warfare in the Nineteenth Century, placed a greater task on Ilorin blacksmiths for the production of iron weapons for the warriors and the repair of damaged ones. Most of the weapons used by the Yoruba armies and indeed, Ilorin soldiers were made locally by skilled craftsmen. This made the blacksmiths a very important group, as far as Ilorin military was concerned. It is reported that weapons were produced by these smiths in line with the needs of the warriors.

Thus a strong working relationship existed between the smiths and the warriors. They worked on iron, producing iron points for arrows, lance head, swords, knives, and spears popularly known as *Masiin* Ilorin, cavalry accessories, daggers and cutlasses. Blacksmith worked in close co-operation with the army, replacing exhausted stock of arrows, mending damaged spears and swords, fabricating iron bullets from pieces of waste iron, and repairing guns. Blacksmithing therefore became an important appendage of Ilorin military like in many societies in Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century. The vocation, for instance, occupied a prominent place within the Ekitiparapo camp during the Kiriji war (1877-1886). This is confirmed because the smithing site is still easily recognisable as it is marked by a large collection of disused forges and stone anvils.²⁷

Specialization was also visible in the activities of the Ilorin blacksmith. For example, the Baribasmiths (corrupted in Ilorin as Baruba) in the town were known for the production of household utensils like local lamps, sieve, knives, and cutlasses. They also produced armour and other body protectors for the

soldiers. Smiths in Awodi, on the other hand, were noted for fabricating cavalry accoutrements like saddles, stirrups, helmets, shields and horse trappings.²⁸ The importance of this branch of blacksmithing increased in Ilorin after the town became an Emirate and having to rely more on the cavalry in its wars of survival, expansion and consolidation. Blacksmiths also formed themselves into guilds because their job was a highly specialised one. Most of them worked in their family compounds with the protection of the Chiefs. Indeed, blacksmithing was a vocation, according to the smithing tradition, meant only for people born into the business.²⁹

Another important aspect of the Ilorin smithing industry was that it had the opportunity of fabricating both Yoruba weapons and those of other groups. The arrival of Hausa, Nupe, Kanuri and Baruba groups in Ilorin meant that weapons, which originated from these people started to penetrate the town and soon found their ways into the blacksmith sheds either for repairs or imitation. The smith, most times, relied on description and photo-type brought by warriors to them for the fabrication of new weapons. In this regard, a strong relationship existed between the smiths and the warriors; they keep close contact in order to be acquainted with the needs of the army. On the source of iron for the blacksmith, it is reported that places like Jade Ale, Jabata, Isinland in Igbomina area, were important sources of pit iron for Ilorin smiths. This also buttresses evidence of relation between Ilorin and these areas as sources of raw material for the smiths. With the advent of gun in the later part of the Nineteenth Century, blacksmiths engaged in the fabrication and repair of guns.³⁰

Another group, which contributed to Ilorin weapon system were the *Asude* smiths in Okelele area of the town. The name, *Asude*, was coined from their vocation, which revolved around the fabrication of various items from metal subsets like iron, brass, bronze and copper.³¹ They engaged in the making of accessories like rings, gourd, shackles, chains and metal statues of various sizes, to which herbal preparations were latter added to enhance their spiritual potency in battles.

Strength of the Materials Used in Weapons Production

The type of material used in making the weapons determined their weight, strength and durability. Those made of wood like clubs could be affected by weather conditions such as rain or high humidity, which may cause them to decay and disintegrate over time. Indeed, to the archaeologists, wood is an organic material that perishes easily in antiquity because it would eventually be affected by environmental condition regardless of its initial strength. Also weapons made of stones were heavy and irregular in shape, which often made them less effective as weapons of war.

However, with the discovery and use of iron, military tools became transformed in most societies. In fact, unlike wood or stone, evidence of iron weapons are quite bountiful in human history due to its ability to withstand environmental conditions for a longer time. Thus, weapons in Ilorin, like in most

societies in pre-colonial Nigeria, were made of iron (*irin*), bronze (*bàbà*) and brass (*ide*).³² All these are subsets of metal with outstanding durability and portability compared to wood and stone weapons.

One Issa Asude maintained that swords, bracelets, spears, daggers, lances, arrow and spear heads and variety of rings were made of these materials. It was also argued that the high level of durability of these iron implements is buttressed by their availability in spite of the long date of their manufacture and usage.³³ Finds through excavations from the Nok Culture around Jos, the Igbo Ukwu Culture and other parts of Nigeria give credence to the use of iron tools in the early period and its veracity. Meanwhile, before the final production of weapons, certain processes were carried out by the smiths; these were mining and smelting.

Mining - iron was one of the materials which found extensive usage in pre-colonial societies. The first basic step was to obtain the ore, which was done through open cast or grubbing. Other essential materials needed for mining were adequate fuel, water and wind. The fuel could be in the form of charcoal or chamber. Thus, iron mines were always located close to a forest for sufficient supply of firewood, or where there was adequate water and a steady wind for blasting.³⁴

Smelting -the iron ore was first prepared before being smelted. Ore with low iron content needed to be cleaned on the guage clay sands limestone before smelting. The ore was pounded to small particles and then washed up in a running water. It was then roasted to dry the water, which had been chemically combined with oxide to render the ore pure. For the smelting, the temperature needed to work iron was between 1100⁰ C-1150⁰ C.³⁵ Better result could be obtained when the fuel, especially charcoal, was well broken and evenly distributed in a furnace as well as if there was adequate oxygen with the absence of carbon. Impurities such as Silica present in the iron ore combined with continual change to form a slag. It is about the most frequent artefacts obtained at a smelting site. After smelting, the furnace was allowed to cool and the mass of iron known as bloom was removed from the slag and other impurities were detached.³⁶

The iron ore obtained after the processes described above was then used in the fabrication of various objects in the blacksmithing sheds, including agricultural tools, implement for other local industries as well as weapons of war. Thus, the transformation to the use of iron in the production of weapons had far reaching impact on military technology, and Ilorin also benefitted from the change.

Physical Weapons

Weapons of war in Ilorin can be broadly grouped under two headings. These are the physical and metaphysical weapons. The latter will be exhaustively discussed under a separate sub-heading. Physical weapons in this study refer to all

implement of war, which can be handled and used to attack an opponent in war, by hitting, stabbing, cutting, thrusting, throwing, hurling or shooting, either leading to his death or rendering him defenseless and be subdued in war situation. Physical weapons can be further divided into long range, otherwise known as projectile weapons and the short-range, otherwise known as shock weapons. These can be further divided into long and short range weapons. Long range (projectile) weapons include, throwing spear, bow and arrows (*offa*), catapult (*akatampo*), bat and sling, and *Masi*, a broad-bladed throwing spear, with deeply penetrating impact on the enemy. The projectile weapons required the warrior to aim and throw his weapons on the enemy from distance. The short range weapons were knives, stabbing spears, swords (*ida*) of different sizes, clubs (*kumo*), lance, dagger and bracelet.³⁷ Short-range (shock) weapons required the warrior to engage in close fighting with his opponent.³⁸

In the opinion of R. Smith, the region of West Africa had abundance of woods, which were hard, pliant and workable, and of craftsmen skilled in carving and carpentry. Bowyers, shield-makers and similar artificers practised their crafts usually in family compounds, which were under the special protection of town chiefs, and they had their own gods and rituals.³⁹ An important example of this was the *Ògún*,⁴⁰ Yoruba god of Iron, who was a blacksmith and believed to hold great powers in Yoruba warfare, especially on iron implement. Indeed, hunters and warriors, in Yorubaland, always embark on their expedition only after their sacrifices to *Ògún*, had been accepted.

When weapons of war are relatively simple and can be obtained by the warrior at low cost from local artificers, or even made at home for his own use and ownership, an army, composed usually of militia, can be quickly and cheaply raised; such an army, however, is not readily susceptible to central control. That many West African weapons were of this simple type seems at least in part to account for the instability of the armies described by early European observers on the coast, and especially for their inability to sustain a campaign in adverse conditions or beyond the end of the dry season. This weakness was, to some extent countered, in the more centralized states, by the storage of weapons and other munitions, poisoned arrows for example, in royal arsenals.⁴¹

The demand for better-quality and more complex weapons, such as swords with steel blades, firearms and other equipment and means of war, especially horses, had other results. These were expensive items, usually imported from great distances, which were beyond the means of the ordinary soldier. In some cases, and particularly perhaps, as Goody has suggested, where fire-arms were concerned, this contributed to the power of the central authority since the king not only owned the arms but retained them under his control in his palace. In other cases, and particularly those of cavalry horses and armour, the expense of providing war materials might be met by the great men of the kingdom, at least in part, so that a decentralized government of a feudal type tended to emerge.⁴² This became a common practice in Ilorin from the time of Emirs Abdulsalam (1823-1842) and Shitta (1842-1861), especially with the

emergence of the *Balógun* system in Ilorin from which period they were saddled with the responsibility to defend the young Emirate. This duty also permitted the *Balógun* to assemble soldiers and weapons from their various domains through their lieutenants.

Some Physical weapons and related accessories common in Ilorin

Offa - arrows also used for both offensive and defensive purposes.

Àpò-Offa - casing for arrows.

Idà - swords for close fighting with its casing.

Machete - could be the single or double edged machete, used for continuous attack both from the front and from the back, since its' both edges are sharpened.

Ewu Ogun - war garment was a specially prepared garment worn by the soldiers. It was designed with the aim of allowing for free movement during battles. So, it consist of a short sleeved shirt and a short. Such garment was, in some cases charmed for offensive and defensive purposes. It sometimes also included a cap.

Bàntẹ Ogun - a special under-wrapper used by the soldier with charms and preparations for defence and attacking the enemies.

Àpòdùkẹ Ogun - a special bag carried by the warrior and used to house several weapons and other items of war. In it items like *Okini/abere* (niddles) used for removing thorns, and other items accidentally inflicted on the warrior during warfare. The bag also contained *Ajo* - *owuorififila*, for lighting; *kondoro* - water tank for use when resting after every battle; *Ahaya, Etu*- armonitions for loading the gun.

Ìbon-ogun - this was useful in alerting the soldiers; in finding the enemies and in attacking them once they showed their face. Guns were used occasionally and was of varied types; the long and short riffle. They were used according to rank and a soldier may carry more than one gun.

Qkp- the spear was a very popular weapon among Ilorin soldiers. Spears were of various types according to the nature of the bladders at the top. Some spears had broad blades which were made in contrasting or zigzag direction so that when it stuck to the opponent, any attempt to remove it would destroy his flesh. It could be long or short.

Kùmọ - Club, either of wood or metal, was perhaps one of the oldest fighting instrument of man. It consisted of a wood or metal with a heavier head and sometimes barbed to inflict injuries on the opponent when used to attack him.⁴³ Figs. 1-3 on the following pages show some examples of physical weapons used by Ilorin warriors during wars.

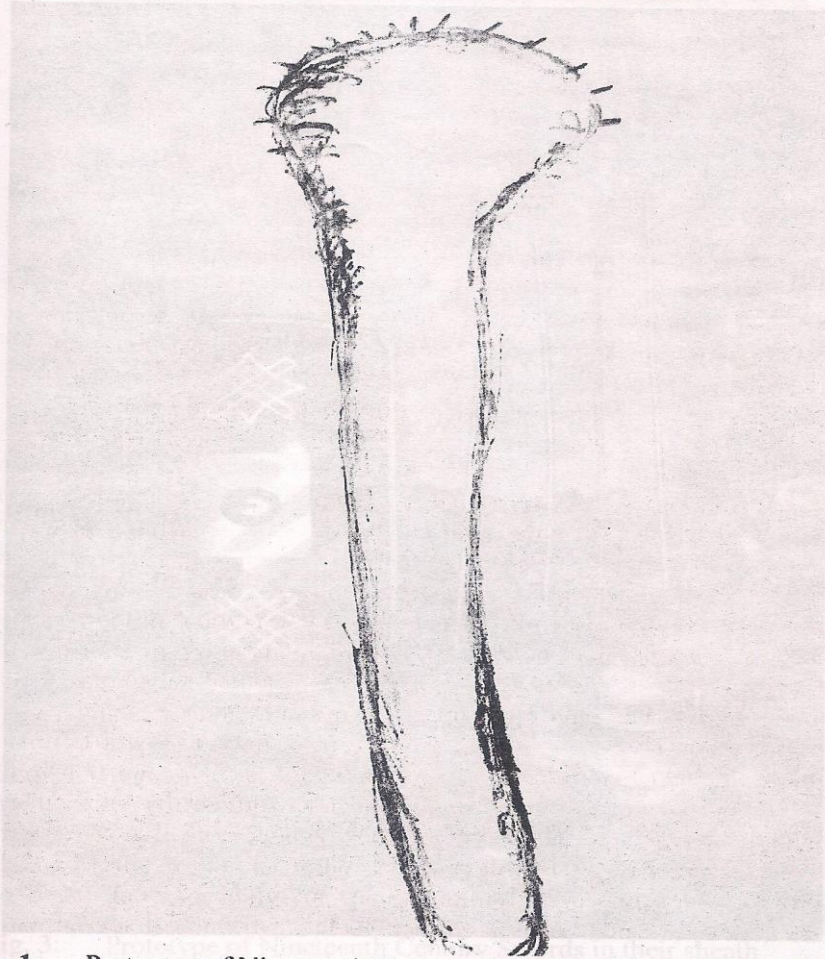


Fig. 1: Prototype of Nineteenth Century Club (*kumò*) used by Ilorin Warriors.
Source: Drawn by the Researcher based on description of informants.

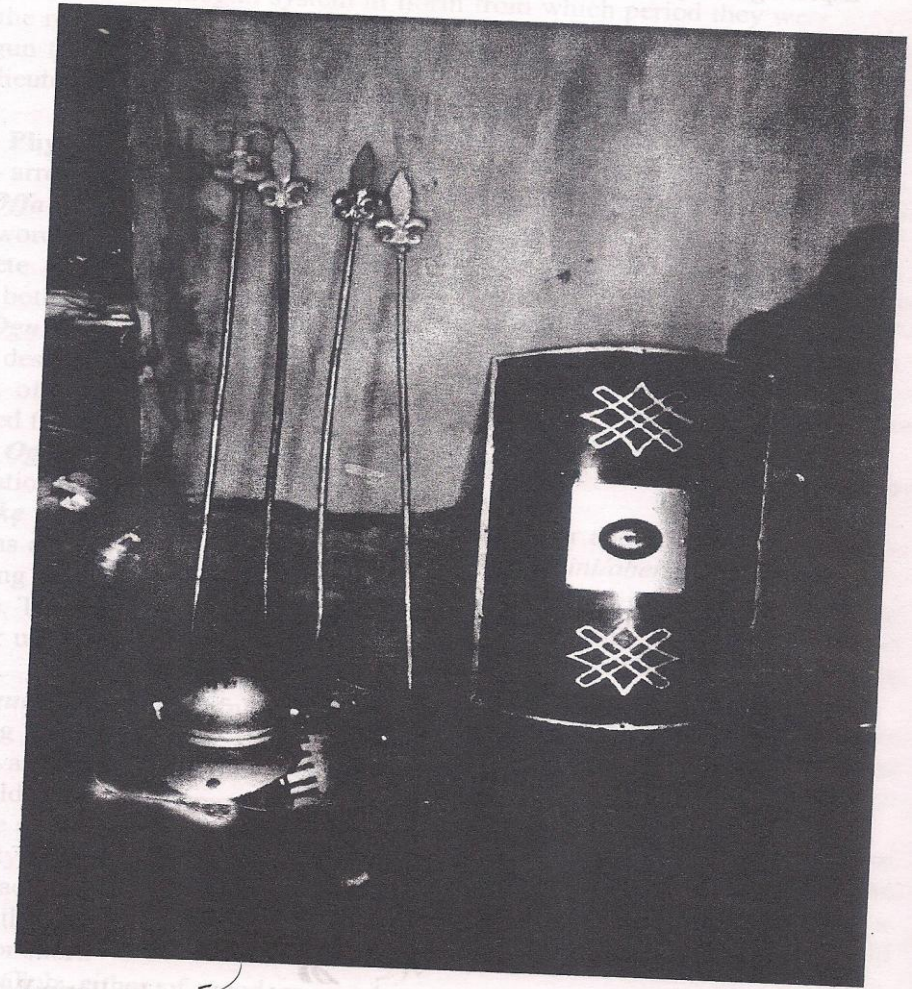


Fig. 2: Prototype of Nineteenth Century Shield, Lances and Body Armour
Source: Armoury at the Emir's Palace, Ilorin, the picture was taken by the Researcher on 9th June, 2017.

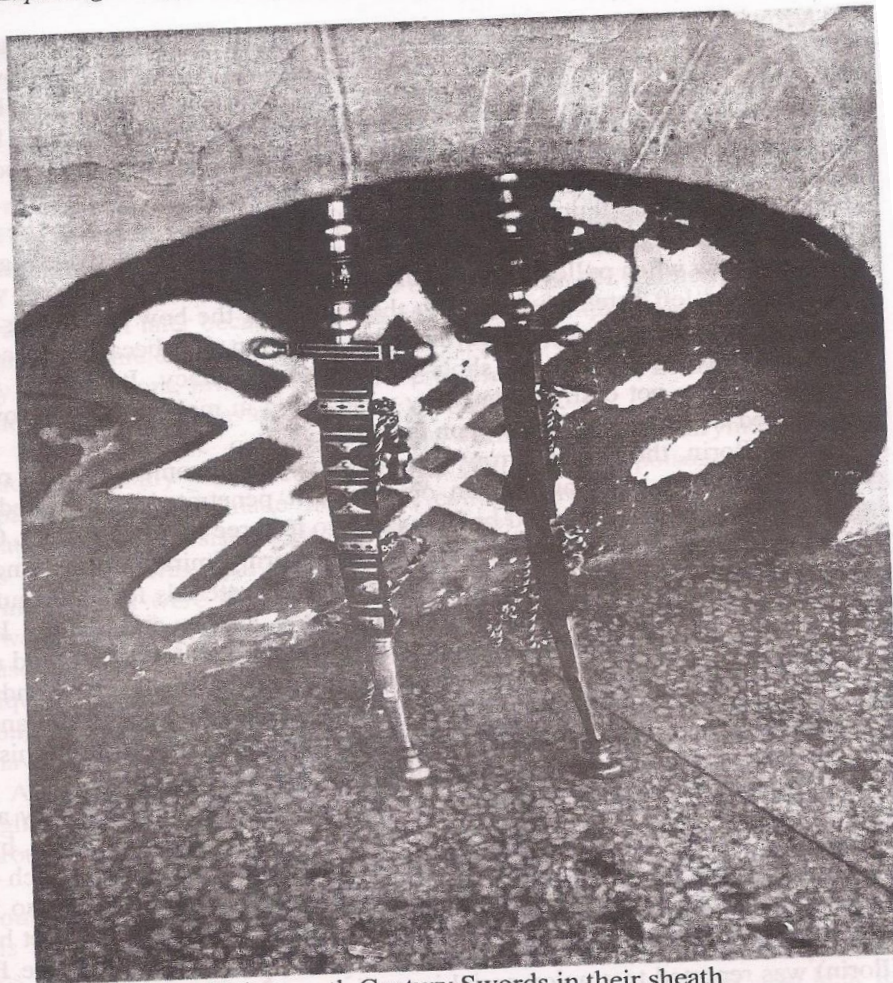


Fig. 3: Prototype of Nineteenth Century Swords in their sheath
Source: Armoury at the Emir's Palace, Ilorin, picture taken by the Researcher on 9th June, 20017.

Archery: bow and arrows provided great utility and outstanding result in the Ilorin wars of the Nineteenth Century. This was perhaps due to its simplicity and affordability which also made it a common weapon. Since archery was already a formidable element in hunting, it was easier to incorporate it into warfare. Indeed, Usman Dan Fodio emphasised the significance of the bow and arrow in warfare during the Jihad, describing it as unsurpassed as a weapon.⁴⁴ A bow consisted of a "bent stave of pliant wood (*orún*) and a string (*isán*) of a sufficient elasticity", the strings tied to the stave were of twisted raw hide cut into throngs.⁴⁵ The string is threaded through holes at the two ends of the stave and then bound and tied.

The arrow on the other hand was of light wood or reeds, which formed the shaft with the arrow head barbed and embedded by a long point or tang. Arrows were carried in a tube-like container known as quiver (*apó*), which could hold between forty to two hundred darts. Rabbah archers, for instance, carried about a hundred arrows in their quivers, while those of Abuja and Nupe carried about two hundred.⁴⁶

Archers used thumb guards and leather bracelets to protect the thumbs and arms against bruises when the bow was constantly pulled during battle. String of a bow when pulled might reach up "to the level of the right ear with the right hand and left extend full holding the middle of the bow".⁴⁷ During battles, archers preferred the long shafted arrow to the short one because it had more weight and provided balanced shots and greater accuracy. Its weight gave it support so it was not easily deflated by wind when in motion. Most arrow darts were barbed with two or more ears on their edge.⁴⁸

In Ilorin, the barbed arrow darts were common some with two or three ears so that when used against an opponent, it penetrated and caused grave injuries. The bow's range could be between two to three hundred metres. Certain factors made bow and arrow to be pervasive in Ilorin Emirate in the Nineteenth Century. These include its simplicity, availability of materials for its manufacture and the prevalent of local artisans like blacksmiths, carvers and tanners. Indeed, local artisans worked in family compounds for the production of bow and arrows making the weapon to be easily accessible to Ilorin warriors. The bow and arrow was a projectile attack weapon which was less cumbersome to handle and thus required little training to master the skills of its application in warfare. This made it to be widely used in Ilorin and most other emirates in the caliphate.

Another important arm of the archery was the use of incendiary arrows which were found quite effective against the quilt armour worn by the cavalymen because the quilt was often made of silk cotton material which easily caught fire when struck by a burning arrow. Incendiary arrows were also found effective when shot at thatched roofs of the enemy; they were used to set houses ablaze to break resistances of the occupants. In a similar situation, the Fulani (Ilorin) was reported to employ aerial incendiary against Algi, a village near Old Oyo with the use of combustibles fastened to the tail of birds and released to the thatched roof of the buildings in the village.⁴⁹ This strategy represented a traditional African projectile weapon, which was used to achieve the objective of modern day ballistic or scud missile in battles.

War Garment and Body Protection

Basically, the outfit of warriors in pre-colonial Africa with elaborate equipment, which would include body armour and shield, was most common with societies that were well organised. For instance, the Egyptians used body armour, while the Mende of Sierra Leone proceeded to the battle field without any body protector. Since most body armours were technologically difficult to construct, with the exception of leather vest, it was unlikely that societies with low social

and economic set up would opt for the accoutrement. However, armours were obtained through local and international trades or sometimes captured from defeated enemies. Examples of these were available in the Sokoto Caliphate, Oyo Empire, Ancient Ghana, Kanem Borno, to mention but a few.

Body protection for Ilorin warriors in the Nineteenth Century comprised mainly of a special cross-belt made of strong ropes worn by the warrior across his chest. This was put over the garment already worn underneath and used to tighten all other outfits of the cavalryman to keep him firm on his horse when speeding. Ilorin's participation in the long distance trade between the southern and northern territories of what later became Nigeria provided her ample opportunity to obtain war garment, shields, and leather armour from groups in other parts of the country. Furthermore, few blacksmiths were able to fabricate metal body armour, even though this was always quite heavy on the body.⁵⁰

However these quilted armours worn by the cavalymen had its limitations especially when faced by archers equipped with poisoned arrows. The quilt particularly those made from silk cotton material easily succumbed to penetration under persistent firing, worse still, when faced with incendiary arrows. The quilt was easily set ablaze by the flame of the arrow. Prototype of these implements were kept in the Emir's palace, compounds of *Baloguns* and other warriors in Ilorin. The Bariba and Nupe groups were particularly noted for their use of poisoned arrows in pre-colonial Ilorin. It is plausible to argue that the techniques of poison making could have been universal in Africa since her people had long heritage of the knowledge of plants, herbs and animals. Poisons could also have been parts of the items of trade in the long distance commerce across West African sub-region. Thus Ilorin possibly had access to poisoned arrows through the caravan trade and also from herbalists and other traditional healers in and around its environment.

Armoury and Custody of Weapons

It was also common in the Nineteenth Century Ilorin to find armoury in the houses of the warriors, especially the war commanders. Such armoury was a special room reserved for keeping weapons of war. Armoury was also kept for the state centrally, where the whole state soldiers took their weapons during campaigns. Apart from this central armoury, individual soldiers had personal armoury for keeping weapons. In Ilorin, the *Baloguns*, in line with their duties as defenders of the state and the requirement of further extending its influence, possessed an array of weapons and designated certain portion of their residence for keeping these items, some of which were considered sacred, particularly, for the spiritual weapons.⁵¹

Indeed, such rooms were highly restricted because of the importance attached to the war weapons therein. For instance, legends on military personalities in Ilorin give account of the powerful armoury of *Balogun* Gambari Danmurogo, whose weapons room was highly fortified and circumscribed such that only himself could enter and make use of the items therein.⁵² Investigation

also revealed that because of Ilorin's cosmopolitan nature, weapons housed in the armoury were diverse as the people who made them. However, the most common were swords of various sizes and types, bow and arrows with different pointed edges, spears of various types and sizes, the most popular was known locally as *Masi*, which could be of single or multiple blades and cavalry accessories of various kinds.

Weapons and Political Economy in Pre-colonial Ilorin

The control of weapons was a critical element in the political economy of pre-colonial Ilorin society. Even though the emir was the head of the emirate, and the chief security officer of the state, the realities of the Nineteenth century Ilorin placed considerable power and influence in the hands of the warriors particularly the *Baloguns* (war commanders). There were several war commanders in pre-colonial Ilorin but four were outstanding and the most influential. These were the *Balogun* Fulani, *Balogun* Gambari, *Balogun* Alanamun and *Balogun* Ajikobi. Indeed, the *Baloguns* were in control of the warriors, even though the emir had the executive prerogative to issue war commands. They were also in control of weapons production and issued instruction to blacksmith on what kind of weapons to be produced. They assembled weapons from within and outside the emirate through trade, warfare, and indigenous production. They had individual armoury where weapons an array of physical and spiritual weapons were kept as earlier discussed. This gave the *Baloguns* considerable advantage over the control of weapons in pre-colonial Ilorin. They also had considerable influence on the cavalry which was the emir's elite force. In short, both the infantry and the cavalry and their weapon system were controlled by the *Baloguns*.

Politically, *Baloguns* were automatic members of the emirate council which gave them influence in the selection of a new emir. Indeed, the emir and his chiefs sometimes disagreed on issues, particularly on matters of war as recorded during the reign of Emir Momo (1891-1895), whose pacific romance with Oyo-Ibadan and later, the British was considered as an act of betrayal by the *Baloguns* under the headship of Alanamu leading to the emir's removal.⁵³ Thus, by the 1890s, the *Balogun* had wielded enormous economic and political influence in the emirate. This was largely facilitated by the wealth coming from trade, trade routes and tributes from conquered territories. Even though the Emir shared in these booties, he was seriously subverted by his war chiefs, who were at the centre of tolls and revenue collection.

Conclusion

The weapon industry in pre-colonial Ilorin was facilitated by factors such as the conglomeration of groups in the city, the influence of the Old Oyo Empire, the blacksmithing industries, socio-cultural interaction through trade and the Islamic religion. In all, both physical and spiritual weapons were assembled in Ilorin anytime there was a battle to be prosecuted. The control of weapon was in the hands of the state through the emir and the *Baloguns*, who had armoury in their

various homes for keeping weapons. There was also a central armoury in the palace of the emir for keeping weapons for the emir's elite force, the cavalry. One unique factor in Ilorin weapons system was the use of faith-based strategy in her battles through the use of prayers delivered by Islamic scholars. However, even with the presence of all these weapons, Ilorin employed alliances, diplomatic maneuvering, trade and religious relations as important elements in statecraft and these contributed to the success of her encounters.

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