



'Art' of War: analysis of Weapons of the 19th Century Yoruba Civil Wars [

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text (article)

Analítica

The 19th century was no doubt one of the most turbulent periods in the history of the Yoruba people. For most, the period was characterised by revolution and struggle for independence from different authorities. War was a defining factor during this period and in most cases the determining factor in war was the type of weaponry deployed. This paper attempts an examination of the 19th century civil wars in Yoruba land, focusing on some selected north-eastern Yoruba towns. It traces the evolution of the weaponry system in Yoruba land as contained in historical records and surviving museum artifacts. Towards supporting the significance and justification for such a work, various weapons used during the Yoruba civil wars are also identified and analyzed along the lines of artistry of manufacture and material culture. The paper concludes with a trace of possible effects of syntheses resulting from acquaintance with war equipment from other lands, and that the 19th century Yoruba civil wars revolutionized Yoruba weaponry significantly as contact with the Europeans introduced weapons that were more deadly in an unprecedented manner, particularly judging from the gross increment in fatality. The introduction of European weapons did not however obliterate local weapons as these continued to exist side by side even till the 20th century. Significant contribution to knowledge is derived from the analysis of the military weapons employed in the prosecution of the 19th century Yoruba civil wars, especially the attempt to trace the evolution of military weapons in Yorubaland. This focus is managed without prejudice to how the manipulation of such weapons influenced the course of the wars, with cases in point being the transformation of defeat to victory for the allied forces in the Owu war in 1823 and the Kiriji war of 1876-1893. This work makes use of written and oral sources, relevant artifacts found in north-eastern Yoruba Palaces and surviving museum artifacts

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