

# Ilorin Emirate Military Force Structure in the Nineteenth Century

*Oladimeji Mohammed Alabi*<sup>1</sup>

---

---

Warfare was a common concern among the people of precolonial Nigeria because most of their states thrived on military conquest. States paid adequate attention to the military to ensure internal and external security through offensive and defensive strategies. This study explores the force structure of the Ilorin emirate army in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The study employed a historical research method, which comprised oral interview as the primary source, and the use of textbooks, journal articles, and other written materials as the secondary sources. Due to cultural and historical connections, the old Oyo military tradition influenced Ilorin. However, the Ilorin military became more elaborate after the establishment of her emirate system in the 1820s. The Ilorin emirate military force comprised of infantry and cavalry, while the fighting troops included professional soldiers, elites, freeborn volunteers and slaves. In the military force structure, there were four military commanders, known as *Baloguns*. Each of the *Baloguns* was required to keep a contingent of soldiers under his watch including their logistics and a mild training to prepare them for campaigns. Such regiment comprised other distinguished warriors, usually made up of professional soldiers, elite volunteer soldiers, mercenaries, and soldier-slaves. Indeed, military service and loyalty were important considerations in the access to land and political positions in the Ilorin emirate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *Baloguns* were the major military commanders, while titles like *Maiyaki* (warriors) and *Ubandawaki* (cavalry commander) and *Ajia* were regimental warlords. There were ancillaries of the military in the Ilorin emirates such as smiths, singers, drummers, charms-makers, and Islamic spiritualists.

[Ilorin; Force-structure; Tactics; Military Ancillaries; Soldier-slaves]

---

---

## Introduction

The military played prominent roles in precolonial Nigeria because most of the states relied heavily on the efficacy of their army to survive. Largely, there was a fusion of military and politics. In fact, the “cyclical theory of

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria; alabi.om@unilorin.edu.ng.

history” believes that military and politics cannot be separated. The adherents of this theory argue that during the pre-colonial period, military commanders shared political power with their kings.<sup>2</sup> In some cases, rulers or kings often served as the commander of their armies. Therefore, because of its role, the military was attached to the political authority of most pre-colonial societies. However, it must be emphasised that the military, which emerged victorious in a given war, most often, would set up the machinery of government in the conquered territories; and in this way, the frontier of the victor is extended. Therefore, whoever controlled the military also controlled political power. For this fundamental role, the leadership of most precolonial states paid square attention to the structure of their military force to ensure a formidable expansion and defence.

The Oyo system appears to have been highly developed and was replicated in the provincial towns of the empire. It thus became the pattern for Ibadan and other Yoruba states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> The Oyo Empire, like those of Bunyoro, Buganda and Zulu, was a conquest state from whose inception the military played a crucial role. The warrior ideal was thus, relentlessly cultivated in her society. The *Aláàfins* (Kings of Oyo), like the earlier *Abakamas* of Bunyoro, were required to be great warriors and exhibit military leadership as well. *Aláàfin* Ajaka, for example, was at one time, deposed by the Oyo *Mesi* (Council of state) for his lack of militarism and was replaced with Sango, *Oranmiyan’s* son, who was known to have demonstrated war like characteristics.<sup>4</sup> In addition, among the non-conquest states, the function of the military was, indeed paramount and assured, at least in preventing external invasion and protecting the territory of the state. Conceivably, *Ààrè* Afonja, (Commander of the old Oyo army) inherited this military charisma and this encouraged him in the mission to create a sovereign political entity in Ilorin.

Generally, in precolonial Nigeria, the defence and security of a kingdom, chiefdom, principality, or an emirate, was a common concern of all inhabitants. At the least of that responsibility, every citizen must raise an alarm regarding any threat to the shared security of the state at the marketplace, festival arenas or other public gatherings. This collective

---

<sup>2</sup> G. N. UZOIGWE, *The Warrior and the State in Pre-colonial Africa*, in: A. MUZRUI, *Warrior Tradition in Modern Africa*, Leiden 1971, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> R. SMITH, *Kingdom of the Yoruba*, London 1969, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> UZOIGWE, p. 22.

security strategy was often reverberated among the peoples by the leadership for the safety and peace of all citizens. However, regardless of this common responsibility, military duty in each state was the official responsibility of certain individuals appointed by the leadership. In most Yoruba kingdoms and towns, chiefs whose titles and roles were specifically military exercised leadership in war.

Smith maintains that military service in all Yoruba states was theoretically obligatory on all able-bodied freemen. The households of the chiefs, with numerous slaves and bodyguards, formed the nucleus of the army but, apart from these, troops were raised on a short-term basis from those who responded to the call to arms for each campaign and enrolled with weapons in the ranks of the chief to whom each owed allegiance. Most of these recruits would already have had training of a sort as hunters in the bush. Soldiers from the capital formed the main army of the kingdom, but every town could raise some kind of force, and contingents from the towns were absorbed into the army of the kingdom where conditions allowed. In Ibadan in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and probably in other states, quotas of troops, food, and ammunition were required from the provincial towns.

The aim of this study is to explore the main components of precolonial Ilorin Emirate military structure. The study attempts to traverse the specific units of the military force, and the people that contributed to the campaigns from preparation to the actual battles. This work examines the hierarchy of the roles played by specific groups including military commanders, regimental heads, elite freeborn soldiers, volunteers, mercenaries, soldier-slaves, and military ancillaries like blacksmiths, hunters, spiritualists, singers, and drummers, during Ilorin Emirate military encounters.

### **Ilorin: A Brief Geographical and Historical Description**

Ilorin, the present-day capital of Kwara State, is situated in the transitional zone between the forest of the South and the savannah to the North of Nigeria. Thus, the town is fondly referred to as the gateway between Northern and Southern Nigeria. The town lies on latitude 8° 30' North and longitude 40° 38' East.<sup>5</sup> Its middle belt position and relative ease of

<sup>5</sup> I. F. MUSTAIN, *A political History of Ilorin in the Nineteenth Century*, University of Ibadan, 1978, p. 1; H. O. DANMOLE, *The Frontier Emirate: A History of Islam in Ilorin*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1980, pp. 1–2; S. A. BALÓGUN, Historical Significance of Ilorin: A Preliminary Survey, in: *Confluence, an Academic Journal of Kwara State Council for Arts and Culture*, 1, 1, 1978, p. 13; Kwara State L. G. A series "ILORIN"

access are its definite assets. It is about 300 km from Lagos, Nigeria, and the coastline, and only about 160 km from Ibadan.<sup>6</sup> The Ilorin Emirate consists of a strip of territory situated on the right bank of River Niger from Jebba to a point opposite Idah comprising about 24,000 kilometres.

Ilorin was a military outpost of the old Oyo Empire until the collapse of the powerful Yoruba state toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Jihad of 1804 in Hausa land, in the north of what later became Nigeria, extended to the south in the Nupe and Yoruba areas leading to the emergence of emirates in the states as the southern frontiers of the caliphate system. Ilorin's military became elaborate after the establishment of her emirate system in the early 1820s because of her ambition to extend the jihad influence on southern Yoruba groups such as the Igbomina, Ibolo and the Ijesha. This ignited attacks from the remnants of the Old Oyo, Ibadan, and other Yoruba groups. The defence of Ilorin against external attacks started in the days of *Aare Afonja*, when Ojo Agunbambaru, one of the surviving sons of Basorun Gaa, invaded the city with a contingent of soldiers recruited among the dreaded warriors of Borgu.<sup>7</sup> However, exigencies of the post-emirate assaults required a more robust mechanism for offensive and defensive operations against the state's aggressors, particularly, the Yoruba Oyo group.

Ilorin's establishment of an emirate and her posture as a frontier for the southward extension of the Jihad mission was considered a direct affront on the established traditions in Yorubaland for two reasons. First, politically, Ilorin's ascendancy would disturb the balance of power in the region, which, at the period, was largely under the authority of the old Oyo Empire. For emphasis, internal factors like dynastic struggle, political dominance of *Bashorun Gaa* (Oyo's most influential chief and head of the kingmakers), mistrust and rivalry among the chiefs, had weakened the empire. Nonetheless, old Oyo still survived as a power in the Yoruba nation, at least up until the opening of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Jihad commenced in Hausa land. Thus, Ilorin's emergence as an emirate faced a fervent resentment from other Yoruba groups.

Secondly, the Jihad (Islamic reform) was adjudged an attack on the age-long socio-cultural cum religious beliefs and practices of the Yoruba,

---

produced by the Information Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Information and Social Department, Kwara State, Ilorin, undated, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> I. F. JIMOH, *Individual Rainfall Events and Sediment Generation on Different Surfaces in Ilorin*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin, 1997, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> SMITH, p. 100.

which must be resisted through a collective effort. This is not to say that Islam was absent in Yorubaland before Ilorin created her emirate, for Johnson,<sup>8</sup> mentions the Muslim-slaves in Oyo in his book, *History of the Yoruba*, and gave specific emphasis on the Muslims at *Oke-Suna* under Olufadi, Solagberu and Gambari quarters all in ancient Ilorin. However, as the number of Muslims in Ilorin increased, traditional practices became threatened. Added to this was the influx of several people of non-Yoruba origin into Ilorin, which speedily transformed the city to a heterogeneous community. The implication was the gradual occupation of lands and the cultural infiltration of the Yoruba inhabitants by these new groups.

Thus, by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ilorin, according to Mabogunje,<sup>9</sup> had become one of the new centres of military power with a comparatively large population in Yorubaland. As early as the 1850s for instance, Bowen's estimated population for Abeokuta, Ibadan and Ilorin were 60,000, 70,000 and 70,000 respectively. For the record, diverse groups from different places with varying origins settled Ilorin. These included the Yoruba from Oyo via Ile-Ife, Hausa from the old seven Hausa states, Fulani from Sokoto via Futa Toro and other Fulani settlements, Kanuri from the old Borno Empire. Others were Nupe from the old Nupe Kingdom under Tsoede of Edigi, Niki (Baruba) from present day Republic of Benin, Kemberi from Kebbi, and Ibetu near Kontagora, and Mali or Malawi from Mali.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the above political and socio-cultural factors put Ilorin at the centre of Yoruba attacks at the period and it became imperative for the city to defend its territories by setting up a formidable military structure.

## **Military Hierarchy in the Ilorin Emirate**

### ***Baloguns (the Warlords)***

From the 1820s, the emir had become the head of the Ilorin emirate and Commander-in-Chief of the state's military. Only the emir had the authority to declare war or call for a cease-fire.<sup>11</sup> However, the onus of commanding and directing the course of warfare fell squarely on the military

<sup>8</sup> S. JOHNSON, *History of the Yoruba*, Lagos 1921, p. 15. S. JIMBA, *A Chronicle of Ilorin*, Ilorin 2009, p. 229.

<sup>9</sup> A. MABOGUNJE, *Yoruba Towns*, Ibadan 1962, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> O. IBRAHIM, *Kwara: the Stream of Western and Northern Nigeria*, Ilorin 2012, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> This fact was amply exemplified in I. ALIAGAN's literary work, a Drama titled *Oba Mama*, Ibadan 2013. The Drama depicted the intrigues surrounding the political and economic considerations behind Ilorin wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

commanders known as *Balogun*. There were four military commanders (*Baloguns*: Alanamu, Ajikobi, Fulani and Gambari), strategically located in the main entrances to the ancient city of Ilorin, and they were saddled with the duty of warding off external attacks from their specific domains and to also raise military contingents in periods of war. The *Baloguns* were also in charge of maintaining the city walls within their domains through periodic repairs. There were several warriors under each *Balogun*, who paid allegiance to him and were always ready to assemble their fighting arsenal once required by their principal. Indeed, each warrior stored both physical and spiritual weapons in his residence and was eager to update his stock once more potent armaments were available. There were also volunteer freeborn, elites and slaves in the Ilorin emirate military service.

Military role had increased the power and influence of Ilorin war chiefs so much that they drew income both from the Ilorin metropolis through control over trade and markets within their respective localities, as well as tributes coming from non-metropolitan communities under their watch. This economic power was further boosted by their membership of the Emirate Council and opportunity to partake in the selection of a new emir. For instance, by the time Emir Shitta died in 1861, the four *Baloguns* and the *Imams* (Islamic scholars and leaders) representing the three main linguistic groups, (Yoruba, Fulani, and Hausa), were automatically responsible for the selection of a successor to the emirship.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, by the time Emir Zubair (1861–1868) was appointed, a formal administrative structure had evolved whereby the *Emir* and the *Balogun* shared political responsibilities in the emirate, while *Imams* were left to handle religious affairs. With each of the *Baloguns* exercising full authority over administrative responsibilities in his unit of control referred to as wards within metropolitan Ilorin, and controlling areas he conquered or acquired outside the city as his fief, the powers and influence of the *Baloguns* became dominant in the general administration of the Emirate.<sup>13</sup> The *Balogun* also had better access to wealth through their control of the city gates, where they collected tolls in the form of money or goods from caravans moving in and out of the Ilorin metropolis. Their supervision of these gates was based on the security responsibilities, which they held as custodians of the Emir and the emirate.

---

<sup>12</sup> A. L. OLUMOH, *Managing Ethno-Political Relations in Nigeria.: the Ilorin Example 1823–2003*, Lagos 2015, p. 191.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

### The Soldier-slaves

Slaves occupied a significant position in the economic, social, and political life of precolonial Nigerian states. Primarily, slaves were important items of trade in the inter-regional and long-distance commerce among states. Slaves were acquired for several purposes including domestic and household chores, farm activities, prestige and affluence, protection, and military services. By the 1820s, Ilorin had taken over some of old Oyo's role as a slave supplier, both by capturing people and by re-exporting slaves from further north.<sup>14</sup> Their quarter, Gambari (the Yoruba name for Hausa), was the location of "*the lodging house keepers, the brokers, the dealers and the Mallams (Islamic scholars), who would see to their wants, direct them to buyers, provide finance as required, help find return cargoes and advise generally about the local environment*".<sup>15</sup> The Ilorin city rapidly became a major slave-trading center and by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ilorin was reported to have the largest slave market in the Yoruba region.

In the military circle, slaves were recruited to increase the strength of the army in battles. The Ilorin authority also exchanged slaves for important logistics of war such as horses, shields, quilts, sword-blades, and other valuable weapons of war. For instance, Robin Law maintains that the connection between the horse and slave trade lay in their relation to war. Horses were valued primarily for their use in warfare and were perhaps especially useful in the pursuit and capture of fleeing enemies, that is, in securing slaves, who, conversely, were captured during war. The exchange of horses for slaves therefore, tended to become a "circular process": horses were purchased with slaves, and could then be used in military operations which yielded further slaves, and financed further purchases of horses.<sup>16</sup> Trade and war, therefore, fed upon each other in a self-sustaining process that reinforced the domination of the warrior aristocracies – producing what Smaldone has christened the "war complex" of the Western Sudan.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> R. LAW, *The Slave Coast of West Africa 1550–1750*, Oxford 1991, pp. 190–191; R. LAW, LAW, *Oyo Empire, c. 1600–1860: a West African Imperialist in the Era of Atlantic Slave Trade*, London 1977, pp. 227–228, 281.

<sup>15</sup> R. J. GAVIN, The Impact of Colonial Rule on the Ilorin Economy 1897–1930, in: *Centrepoint*, 1, 1977, pp. 17–18.

<sup>16</sup> C. C. LAW, *The Horse in West Africa History. The role of the Horse in the Societies of Pre-colonial West Africa*, London 1980, p. 105.

<sup>17</sup> J. P. SMALDONE, *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate. Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, Cambridge 1977, p. 56.

Soldiers-slaves were recruited from captives of war and partly from slaves sent as gifts by conquered states. The slaves were usually absorbed into the regiment of their master, who could either be a major military commander in the Ilorin main army, known as *Balogun*, or a sub-commander, known as *Ajia*, Maiyaki. Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, states merely assembled their fighting force on ad-hoc basis in periods of warfare and disbanded them soon after the hostilities were over. However, from 19<sup>th</sup> century, when warfare became endemic in Yorubaland, the training of soldiers was taking with serious attention. Therefore, the onus of defending the state fell squarely on the warrior chiefs. Soldier-slaves generally proved effective in the execution of various wars which were largely provoked by the desire of the nascent and imperial states of *Ilorin*, *Ibadan*, *Ijaiye* and *Abeokuta* to fill the vacuum provided by the demise of Old Oyo.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, aside from the soldiers, which *Ààrè* Afonja controlled as the Commander-in-Chief of Oyo army, a considerable proportion of his army during and after the rebellion against old Oyo came from the Hausa slaves. It is reported that before the crisis, Ilorin and her surrounding villages had attracted many Hausa and Hausa slaves, most of who were engaged in various vocations in the area.<sup>19</sup> Many of these slaves were employed as barbers, cattle-herders and rope makers. Some of them were enslaved by non-Muslims and used as domestic servants and workers on plantations. It is possible to suggest that the Muslim slaves were not satisfied with their position possibly because their masters did not treat them well. They could have possibly abhorred their position as slaves of non-Muslims. It could be stated therefore that the slaves were in a state of discontent and were eager to embrace a change in leadership to improve their condition. Thus, service in the military provided the slaves a sense of freedom and recognition in Yorubaland in general, and Ilorin in particular. Besides, military service offered the slaves the opportunity for better economic standing in Ilorin society as it was generally in Yorubaland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Soldier-slaves, who distinguished themselves

<sup>18</sup> F. AFOLAYAN, *Warfare and Slavery in the nineteenth century Yorubaland*, a paper read at the National Conference on the Centenary of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo Peace treaty, held at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife), 1986.

<sup>19</sup> H. O. DANMOLE, *Slavery and Religion in the Nineteenth Century Ilorin*, a paper presented to the World Conference organised by Arewa House, Centre for Research and Historical Documentation, Ahmadu Bello University. Kaduna. At Lugard Hall March 26–30, 2012, pp. 3–4.

in battles, were rewarded from part of the booties of war. Booties of movable goods like slaves, cloths, household utensils and livestock were the byproducts of wars. These constituted a form of capital accumulation, which the professional soldiers needed to maintain and strengthen their military and political positions. The greater percentage of these booties belonged to the *Ologun* while the soldier-slaves had little. The *Ologun* on the other hand must give a quota of their booties to the *Baale* and the *Balogun*. Every *Ologun* also received from his subordinates.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the soldier-slave, who was successful in war and caught several slaves, released them to his master. In most cases, some of their masters would return one or two fifths to the soldier-slaves.

Furthermore, any of these soldier-slaves could buy his own freedom by giving his own share of the booties of war to his master in the presence of a witness. He was thus free to move around as a freeman and henceforth, he would serve as a free soldier under his former master. Like the freeborn soldiers, he was expected to give to his warrior-chief one or two captives, depending on the number of captives he got from a particular expedition. However, if he became idle and depended largely on his master for everything including his weapons of war and his debts, he was expected to give up more than a half or nearly all his booties of war.<sup>21</sup> These social and economic benefits from military service motivated the soldier-slaves to participate enthusiastically in campaigns and to bring as many gains of war as possible. The booties of war included war captives, cloth, weapons of defeated opponents, agricultural materials, and ornaments.

It is reported that as from the death of *Aláàfin* Aole c. 1796, powerful men collected individual armies, not with the intention to protect the citizens or maintain peace, rather for personal enterprise through on attacks on different towns. Opele, the *Baale* of Gbogun and Afonja, the *Ààre OnaKákánfò* in nearby Ilorin, played the most prominent roles in the destruction episodes.<sup>22</sup> There were probably countless other bullies, whose names have been lost in history, and who, then fearing no possibility of punishment by any lawful authority, roamed the countryside creating terror and panic. An example was the formation of *Ogo Were* (translated

<sup>20</sup> T. FALOLA, *The Political Economy of an African State: Ibadan, 1890–1900*, Ile Ife 1984, p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> S. JOHNSON, *The History of the Yorubas: From the earliest times to the beginning of the British Protectorate*, Ibadan 1921, p. 325.

<sup>22</sup> I. A. AKINJOGBIN, The Causes of the Nineteenth Century Yoruba Civil Wars, in: L. A. AKINJOGBIN (ed.), *War and Peace in Yorubaland 1793–1893*, Ibadan 1998, pp. 131–143.

as the Jackals or Young Glories) formed in the *Epo* (present Osun). To get their individual armies, they encouraged slaves to rebel and assert their freedom and enlisted free citizens, who were hardly better treated than the slaves were, and who were groaning under the tyranny of the ruling classes. Opele died early in this rebellious phase, leaving Afonja as the sole powerful man in the Yoruba nation, who then went ahead and cowed down the whole Igbomina and what is now the Osun area (then called *Epo*), into subjection.<sup>23</sup> Other groups in Ilorin military in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were hunters, blacksmiths, Muslim scholars, and traditional healers.

### Military Ancillaries

Warfare in precolonial Nigerian societies was facilitated by the efforts of certain groups, who, even though might not bear arms, were important factors in the success of the armies. These included the blacksmiths, woodcarvers, tanners and leather workers, entertainers or praise-singers, informants or spies and the spiritualists. Blacksmiths, for instance, were very crucial to the Ilorin army in the fabrication and supply of weapons. Smiting of iron was a popular practice in different locations in Ilorin and had a significant link with the name of the town. Indeed, Olaoye posits that blacksmithing was a 19<sup>th</sup> century Ilorin craft which facilitated activities in other sectors like farming, carving, weaving and ultimately, the production of weapons for the soldiers. Several locations within the old Ilorin metropolis were noted for blacksmithing. These include Idi-Ape, Oloje, Pakata, Ojuekun, Okelele, Baruba and Gambari.<sup>24</sup> There was a geographical spread in the practice of blacksmithing and this gave soldiers an unbridled access to weapons and other paraphernalia of warfare in Ilorin. The smiths supplied long-range (projectile) weapons such as throwing spear, arrows (*offa*), and *Masi*, a broad-bladed throwing spear. According to Babaelegeji, the blacksmiths also provided short-range weapons like knives, stabbing spears, swords (*ida*) of different sizes, lance, dagger, and bracelet.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, some respondents submit that the prevalence of warfare in the 19<sup>th</sup> century attracted some of the blacksmith to Ilorin.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> JOHNSON, *History of the Yoruba*, p. 233.

<sup>24</sup> R. OLAOYE, *The Ilorin Textile Industries 1850–1960. A Case Study in the History of Technology*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin 1993, p. 91.

<sup>25</sup> Babaelegeji Alagbede Jakota (85), a local blacksmith in Ijesa Compound, Oju-Ekun area, Ilorin, Kwara, Nigeria, interviewed April 14, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Taiye Alagbede Pataki (60), a blacksmith Ile Oloyin, Isale Gambari Area, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, interviewed January 5, 2017.

Other important ancillaries to the military were the entertainers and praise-singers whose job was to encourage the soldiers through songs, chants, and elegy.<sup>27</sup> Drummers, flutists, trumpeters, praise-singers, and priests, sometimes accompanied a typical Yoruba army to the battled field. In fact, there is a general belief in Yorubaland that warrior should not attack a drummer. *Ogun ki i ja ko ko onilu* meaning “No drummer should be taken as prisoner of war”.<sup>28</sup> The progenitor of the Zarumi Ologbonko in Ilorin, named Janju, is reported to be an entertainer, who’s magical and spiritual gifts caught the attention to the Ilorin authority.<sup>29</sup>

There were also informants and spies who gave intelligent report about the opponents to the Ilorin warriors. Sometimes, the Ilorin soldiers made friends within the camp of their enemies to gain access to their war plans. Also related to this was the role of the *Alore*, a look-out watchman, stationed at a strategic location in the entrance of the city, usually on a hill-top, where he could have a clear view of the enemies from long distance away. Olowookere and Fagborun emphasise that the *Alore* was an important whistle-blower in case there was a spy who had come to prepare ground for invaders.<sup>30</sup> It was the *Alore*, who would inform the whole town and specifically the soldiers of the impending invasion. This was an important act of intelligence gathering like the practice in modern time.

Other important supports to the military in 19<sup>th</sup> century Ilorin were the spiritualists comprising the traditionalists and the Islamic scholars. The traditionalists supported soldiers with different spiritual and metaphysical elements to fortify them and their implements of war. Metaphysical elements like *Afeeri* (invisibility), *Petupetu* (charm to change form), *Egbe* (disappearance), *Ayeta* (bullet-prove) *Arina* (to detect danger) and *Afose* (command) are few of those common among Ilorin warriors.<sup>31</sup> With the establishment of the emirate system, Ilorin took advantage of the presence of Islamic scholars to improve the potency of its soldiers. Muslim scholars engaged in fervent prayers for the warriors with use of texts from

<sup>27</sup> T. OLOWOOKERE – G. FAGBORUN, *Systems of Communication in Yoruba Wars*, in: I. A. AKINJOGBIN (ed.), *War and Peace in Yorubaland, 1793–1893*, Ibadan 1998, p. 238.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Saheed Abioye Zarumi, Magaji Zarumi Ologbondoroko (68), a traditional chief in Ilorin, Nigeria, interviewed, May 5, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

the Holy Quran popularly known as *hantu*, (spiritual water) and *asiri*, (classified potent spiritual element) for protection not known to many.

### **Force Structure and the Deployment of Troops**

Two major corps, the infantry, and the cavalry, operated in the Ilorin army, especially after the establishment of its emirate. The infantry was made up, mainly, of the archers and swordsmen while the cavalry consisted of heavy and light-armed horsemen. In Ilorin, the cavalry, which represented the elite corps of the *emir's* army, was recruited largely from the ranks of officialdom and its dependents. Titled officials and their free chiefs, and selected slaves composed the bulk of the horsemen. Mercenaries and men of wealth, who could afford to mount themselves also contributed to the ranks of the cavalry. Indeed, the impact of the cavalry on Ilorin wars and her society was further reinforced by the royal attachment it had in the emirate. For instance, there was an officer in charge of fending for horses and training them in preparation for battles known as *Akesinrin*, which translates as trainer of horses. The cavalry force played a significant role in Ilorin army. It was headed by the *Ubandawaki* or *Madaki*, (leader of the horsemen). The Ilorin cavalry constituted the emir's elite force and was dominated by the major warriors, who controlled the various units of the Ilorin army. It comprised of professional soldiers, elites' freeborn volunteers and selected slaves.

As one of the southern frontier emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate, Ilorin's plan was to extend the Jihad influence on new areas in Yorubaland and this objective had an impact on the structure of its forces. 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.<sup>32</sup> While the southern emirates expanded progressively at the expense of multifarious fragmented pagan people, the northern emirates became locked in the perennial defence of relatively fixed frontiers against hostile states. Sokoto, Katsina, Daura and Kano were periodically

---

<sup>32</sup> SMALDONE, p. 56.

invaded by armies from Maradi and Tessawa, the successor states founded by skilled loyalist of Katsina.<sup>33</sup> However, for either defence or expansion, the common denominator in all the emirates was the organisation of a force for prosecuting their missions.

In Ilorin, there was a hierarchy of titled officials appointed by the Emir. Most of these titled officials were remunerated by a share of the annual taxes collected from the fiefs that were attached to their offices. Each fief holder (*Daudu*, *Alangua* or *Magaji* as they were variously known in Ilorin) was assigned several military responsibilities, including the requirement to maintain a small-armed force to serve in the emir's army on specific campaigns, and to ensure the construction and periodic repairs of the walls of towns under his jurisdiction for defence purposes. Even though these were the basic military requirements of the *Baloguns* and other fief holders in Ilorin, the training of soldiers was less emphasised because the warriors and their families already knew that warfare was their responsibility and were always prepared and alert to that duty before other volunteers would join them to increase the numerical strength of the army.

### Archery

Bow and arrows provided great utility and outstanding result in the Ilorin wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> 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, the Jihad leader in Hausaland, emphasised the significance of the bow and arrow in warfare during the Jihad, describing it as unsurpassed as a weapon.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup>

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 arrowhead 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

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> U. B. FODIO, *Bayan Wujubul-Hijrat alallbad*, Ph.D. Thesis, Ibadan 1977, p. 214.

<sup>35</sup> R. SMITH, *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-colonial West Africa*, London 1989, p. 98.

darts. Rabbah archers, for instance, carried about a hundred arrows in their quivers, while those of Abuja and Nupe carried about two hundred.<sup>36</sup>

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*”.<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup>

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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 to produce bow and arrows making the weapon to be easily accessible to Ilorin warriors. The bow and arrow were a projectile attack weapon, which was less cumbersome to handle and thus required little training to master the skills of its application in warfare.

### Poisoned Arrows

In Africa, the use of poisoned arrows originated with the hunting of animals by traditional people. Since most animals in the region are comparatively bigger than those in the other continents and there were no guns then, hunters had to devise a method to kill such large animals, using poisoned arrows. Indeed, poisoned arrows killed bigger animals faster than ordinary arrow. In Africa, venoms from snake, spiders, toads, scorpion, plants, grubs, and many other ingredients were used to make poison. Some were quite poisonous while others were employed due to their magical effect. With time, poisoned arrows were introduced to warfare. In pre-colonial Nigeria, Bauchi and Daura were noted as places

---

<sup>36</sup> M. LAIRD – R. A. K. OLDFIELD, *Narrative of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa by the Niger, 1833 and 1834, Vol. II*, London 1970, p. 69.

<sup>37</sup> SMITH, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, p. 95.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

where poisons of various brands were produced and from where other emirates in the caliphate got their supply. The *Zabgai* poison from Bauchi was found to be the most lethal, hence the Hausa epithet, *Zabgai mai kare dangi* (*Zabgai* which wipes out the family).<sup>39</sup> Usually, the arrow was poisoned close to its tip by deeping it in a poison brew and allowed to dry. Great care was taken to prevent the poison from touching the pointed edge of the arrow to avoid accidental poisoning in case the handler got a scratch from the arrow.

Two kinds of poisons are said to be common in West Africa, the *strophanthus hispidis* and snake venom. *Strophanthus hispidis* is a kind of shrub that grows about five metres tall and bears flowers. It was popularly used for arrow poison in West Africa, specifically in the coastal regions of Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, and Gabon.<sup>40</sup> 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 from herbalists and other traditional healers in and around its environment. Besides, the Bariba group also contributed to Ilorin archery especially the use of poisoned arrow.

Captain (later Lord) Lugard buttressed this fact of Bariba use of poison when he visited Borgu (Baribaland) in 1894 for making treaties on behalf of the Royal Niger Company. He emphasised Bariba people's belief in the use of spiritual element in warfare describing them as a "fetish people". In his address to the Royal Geographical Society in 1895, Lugard attributed the successes of the Bariba in warfare to two causes. First, their reputation for a knowledge of witchcraft and of deadly poisons, which rendered their poisoned arrows very dreaded. Second, was their fighting tactics.<sup>41</sup> So far from dreading to separate their forces, their practice, when they fight, was to make a feint of attack simultaneously on the front

<sup>39</sup> E. BOVIL, *The Niger explored*, London 1968, p. 107. Two kinds of poisons are said to be common in West Africa, the *strophanthus hispidis* and snake poison venom. *Strophanthus hispidis* is a kind of shrub that grows about five metres tall and bears flowers. It was popularly used for arrow poison in West Africa. A. D. OSSEO-ASARE, Bioprospecting and Resistance: Transforming Poisoned Arrows into Strophantin Pills in Colonial Gold Coast, 1885–1922, in *Social History of Medicine*, 21, 2, 2008, pp. 269–290.

<sup>40</sup> BOVIL, p. 107.

<sup>41</sup> H. B. HERMON-HODGE, *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, London 1929, p. 60.

and rear, reserving the bulk of their strength for a strong attack on the centre of a long caravan. This mode of attack by ambush would succeed in dividing their enemies' forces and inducing panic on them.<sup>42</sup> Some of the Bariba warriors, who migrated to Ilorin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, brought their knowledge of weaponry, marksmanship, poison making and fighting tactics to help the Ilorin army in its encounters.

Only on very few cases were victims of poisoned arrow able to survive the attack. This was perhaps because no immediate antidotes could be provided to neutralise the lethal effect of the poison, or because it completely defied available antidotes. Nonetheless, Prince Shitta of Ilorin, who was hit by a poisoned arrow in the *Eleduwe* battle during a joint Oyo/Bariba invasion of Ilorin in the 1830s was rescued. Shitta's herbalists, named Bale *Alanamu*, was said to have prepared and administered an anti-poison herbal substance that saved his life.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, elsewhere in the battle of Konya, Caliph Bello was wounded in the neck with a poisoned arrow, following which Ben Gumsu, a North African Merchant from Ghadames was ordered by Bello to prepare some medicine for him. Ben Gumsu was reported to have written some verses on a wooden plate, which was washed in a calabash. Bello drank the substance and recovered shortly after.<sup>44</sup>

### Incendiary Arrow

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. 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.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> L. A. K. JIMOH, *Ilorin: the Journey so Far*, Ilorin 1994, p. 101. The Bale prepared a herbal substance which Prince Shitta drank and recovered. For this, he was rewarded later when Shitta became the Emir with appointment as the First Balogun Alanamu of Ilorin.

<sup>44</sup> H. CLAPPERTON, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the interior of Africa in the Year 1823, and 1824*, London 1829, p. 280.

<sup>45</sup> R. SMITH, *Yoruba Warfare and Weapons*, London 1973, p. 240. Volleys of arrows were fired against the enemy soldiers.

This strategy represented a traditional African projectile weapon, used to achieve the objective of modern day ballistic or scud missile in battles, even though on a far limited scale.

### **The Spearmen**

This was a unit of the infantry, which principally targeted the enemy cavalry as soon as it came within range. This category of warriors had greater ability to deal better with the opponent cavalry. The spears were strong and could be used to tear the armour or leather shield of the enemy unlike the arrow, which had limited success against the enemy cavalry. There were various kinds of spearheads, shapes and sizes depending on the function they were meant to perform in battle. The bigger ones with thicker shaft and broader heads were for thrusting against the enemy in close combat. Others with narrow heads were used in the form of projectile weapon as javelins against the opponent. Either in the broad or narrow spear, the shaft was made of wood or metal. In Ilorin, the broad-headed spear popularly known by the Hausa name, *masi*, was the most common.<sup>46</sup> The spears, like arrows, were also sometimes poisoned to enhance its effect on their victims. Ilorin warriors also carried some weapons, which served secondary functions. These included fighting bracelets, axes, maces, and clubs.

### **Role of Hunters in Ilorin Army**

Like in many precolonial Yoruba societies, considerable number of the Ilorin army came from among the hunters. For instance, the hunter's association in every Yoruba town or village constituted a para-military organisation for the maintenance of security at the borders against encroachment by hostile neighbours. Hunters also ran intelligence services in the times of war. They were sharp shooters due to their experience in in hunting and thus constituted an important part of the contingent in

---

<sup>46</sup> A number of respondents including some blacksmiths in Ilorin buttressed this. (i) Ajikobi Amidu (59), Ajikobi Compound, Ilorin, a member of the Balogun Ajikobi Family, interviewed on September 28, 2016; (ii) Ayuba Alagbede Pakata (72) Area, a local blacksmith, interviewed on March 30, 2015; (iii) Baba Elegbeji (68), a local blacksmith in Adangba area Ilorin, interviewed on May 25, 2015; (iv) Taiye Alagbede Pataki (60), Ile Oloyin, Isale Gambari Area, Ilorin, interviewed on January 5, 2017, and Baba Busari Alagbede (85), in Ogidi Compound, Ilorin, interviewed on April 14, 2015. Also, Suleiman Yahya, Magaji Akaraje (75), Akesinrin Compound, Isale Koto, Ilorin, interviewed on June 18, 2017.

battles.<sup>47</sup> The hunters were part of military in precolonial Ilorin. Indeed, it is reported that hunting was a major adventure of the Baruba group in the city. Some of the earlier hunters among the Baruba were said to have contributed to the success of many defensive wars fought Ilorin in the early days of the emirate. It was for this hunting dexterity and the killing of animals to feed the warriors that the Baruba were rewarded with the title of *Sarkinpawa* (Head of the Butchers).<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, this hunting prowess was not peculiar to the Baruba group as other inhabitants of the town also engaged in the vocation.

### Command and Coordination of Troops

Generally, different towns in Yorubaland had standing chiefs whose titles were either associated with lineages or age grade associations. Apart from commanding segments of the army during campaigns, these chiefs were responsible for the planning of war strategies and the general coordination of the war. In Ekiti, for instance, the war chiefs were called *Elegbe* and they all bore war titles. In Egbaland, Lisabi founded the *Olorogun*, association of war chiefs in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Old Oyo had a more elaborate organization of war chiefs than other Yoruba kingdoms. Here, the *Eso* was a class of semi-professional non-hereditary war chiefs.<sup>49</sup> Ibadan also developed into a military confederacy by early 19<sup>th</sup> century and her warlords wielded enormous influence in political decision.

In Ilorin, like in the typical Yoruba societies, the *Balogun* were responsible for the general administration of military affairs, the maintenance of the army and its logistic requirements, and the planning and direction of wars. Each *Balogun* also coordinated other warriors within his own domain including the assembling of variety of weapons to be used in prosecuting a battle. It was they, who assumed command of the army when the “feudal” contingents of the entire emirate assembled for campaigns. The *Balogun* were also expected to keep a regular army within their jurisdiction. Individual fief holders also maintained their own contingents and a corps of subordinate titled officials with specialised military roles. While the fief holders had general military functions in the military organisation of the emirate, they did not actually command their troop in battle. When the

<sup>47</sup> D. OGUNTOMISIN, *Studies in Precolonial Yoruba Warfare and Peace-making*, Ibadan 2017, p. 32.

<sup>48</sup> Suleiman Muahmmad (67), the 12<sup>th</sup> Sarkin Pawa (Head of Butchers) of Ilorin, interviewed on May 13, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Musa Maiyaki, (68), the Magaji Maiyaki of Ilorin, interviewed on March 1, 2015.

emir mobilized forces for specific campaigns, the territorial fief holders acted as liaisons between their own officers and the *emir*'s commanders. The fiefs' contingents were commanded by the military officials of their areas, who were subordinated to their respective counterparts in the *emir*'s professional officer corps led by the *Balogun* from the capital.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, the *emir* himself rarely took personal command of the army in the field, he gave instruction on when to commence attack or cease attacks. With this arrangement, commanding obligation of *Jihad* was considered a conjoint duty of the Muslim community. However, the sick, lame, blind, women and children were exempted from military service, except to defend Muslim territories from an unexpected attack. Normally then, the obligation of military service was universal and compulsory only for adult male believers.

As part of Ilorin's strategies to beef up its military arsenal and ensure loyalty, conquered areas were required to contribute soldiers to support the state's expeditions and they were expected to provide military logistics to ensure the success of encounters. Such military service was used as a mechanism for supervising the outlying territories and to assess their level of allegiance to the Ilorin authority. Perhaps, it was for this obligation that some Igbomina leaders even participated as field commanders in the Ilorin army during campaigns. An example was the *Jalumi* war in which the *Elese* of Igbaja led a contingent of the Ilorin army in the encounter against Ibadan. In the same vein, the *Elekan* of Ekan, was said to have made concession with the *Emir* of Ilorin during the Ilorin's war with Illa, which substantially assisted the Ilorin group.<sup>51</sup> It is reported that during the *Eleduwe War* of the 1830s, Offa supported Ilorin. The then *Olofa*, Oba Anilelerin deployed his soldiers led by *Balogun* Ajayi to increase the numerical strength of the Ilorin army.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Offa also brokered peace with Ilorin/Ogbomoso on one hand, and Ikoyi on the other during the *Pamo War*, in which the Ilorin group was victorious.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, it was Offa's refusal to make her regular contribution of soldiers to support Ilorin campaign against Ibadan in 1878 that resulted in suspicion, which eventually led to a 9-year hostility between the two

---

<sup>50</sup> J. B. OLAFIMIHAN, *Iwe Itan Offa*, Ibadan 1982, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Adisa Onikoko, Onikoko (81), Compound, a retired civil servant, Pakata area, Ilorin, interviewed on August 30, 2016.

<sup>52</sup> OLAFIMINAN, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> A. A. RAHMAN, *A political History of Offa in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ilorin, 2015, pp. 30–31.

from 1878 to 1886. Since Offa came under Ilorin's authority, she could no longer boast of an organised army because the *Baloguns* of Ilorin were directly in charge of war expeditions in the *emirate*.<sup>54</sup> The same military obligation was expected of the other non-metropolitan areas under Ilorin's control in the Igbomina, Ibolu and Ekiti areas.

Furthermore, some Igbomina areas were rich in the production of iron implements. This became an advantage to Ilorin when parts of the region were conquered. Places like Owa Onire, Owode Ofaro, Iwo, Ijara-Isin, and Oke Aba were areas where pig iron was extracted, and blacksmiths were common. Elsewhere within the Old Ilorin Province, especially in areas like Shaare, Isin, Agbamu and few parts of Igbominaland, iron working seemed to have taken place. This fact is buttressed by the residual of slags used for obtaining iron by the smiths in the olden days still visible in the areas.<sup>55</sup> In addition to the production of hoes, cutlasses and other household utensils, articles of warfare such as spears, arrows, swords, and later guns, increased due to the exigencies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, the Oro-Ago people, having learnt the art of spear throwing from the Nupe, took to its production on large scale.<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ilorin, certain considerations determined the force structure and deployment of troops. These include status, proficiency in the use of specific weapons and the number of soldiers available to prosecute particular campaigns. The Ilorin army essentially comprised of elites, professional soldiers, freeborn volunteers, and slaves all drawn from the metropolis and the conquered territories. Even though the commanders always directed the military contingent, militias (unprofessional but trained civilian soldiers), slaves and volunteers were always in the advance section of the army followed by professional soldiers and then the elites while the *Balogun* came in the rear. This was to ensure that the strongest collection in the army was not easily given away to the enemy. The distribution of weapons also took cognisance of the technical ability and proficiency of the soldiers in using different fighting implement.

In this regard, Ilorin's cosmopolitan nature also had impact on its soldiers' use of specific weapons. For instance, the Yoruba fought with

<sup>54</sup> Suleiman Yahya (75), Magaji Akaraje, Akesinrin Compound, Isale Koto, Ilorin, interviewed on June 18, 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Tunde Adeniran (50), Department of Geology and Mineral Science, University of Ilorin, interviewed on November 30, 2019.

<sup>56</sup> Amos Iyanda (85), a community leader at Oro-Ago, interviewed on April 20, 2017.

variety of weapons including swords, lances, bow, and arrow; the Hausa were strong in the use of spear, bow, and arrows; the Fulani were good in swords while the Nupe and Bariba combined excellence in swords, spear, and arrows. The Bariba were particularly renowned for their marksmanship in archery, and they brought this to bear in the battles they participated for Ilorin. According to a respondent, Suleiman Yahaya, Bariba gift in the use of bow and arrow was so great that at times during encounters, their archers would merely shoot arrows into the air and the opponents would be struck.<sup>57</sup>

This was made possible because the arrows were embedded with spiritual substances at both its blade and the base so that when released, they would find an opponent to hit. The Bariba also had a special strategy on the battlefield. So far from dreading to separate their forces, their practice, when they fight, was to make a feint of attack simultaneously on the front and rear, reserving the bulk of their strength for a strong attack on the centre of a long caravan. This mode of attack by ambush would succeed in dividing their enemies' forces and induced panic on them. Thus, the Bariba warriors brought these qualities to help the Ilorin army in its wars.

## Conclusion

The fall of old Oyo and the emergence Ilorin Emirate in Yorubaland put the latter at the centre of attacks in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Groups such as Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Kanuri and Bariba contributed men, materials, intelligence, and physical and spiritual weapons to support the Ilorin army. The Ilorin military force structure comprised infantry and cavalry while the fighting troops were made up of professional soldiers, elites, freeborn volunteers, and slaves all drawn from the metropolis and the outlying territories of the emirate. The emir was the Commander-in-Chief of the Ilorin army in the precolonial period, but he rarely accompanied the soldiers to battles. Warlords, known as *Balogun*, were appointed, and saddled with the responsibility to defend the emirate. There was a catalogue of other titleholders in the city such as the *Ajia*, *Daudu* and *Alangua*, who were all expected to contribute men and materials during warfare. The leadership of the outlying areas also contributed men and logistics for the prosecution of battles. Smiths, singers, drummers, charms makers

---

<sup>57</sup> HERMON-HODGE, p. 60. Suleiman Yahya (75), Magaji Akaraje, Akesinrin Compound, Isale Koto, Ilorin, interviewed on June 18, 2017.

and Islamic spiritualists also were formidable backups for Ilorin military. The Ilorin emirate's military benefitted from the state's heterogeneity and the liberal nature of her military structure, particularly the involvement of people from different strata of her society. The Ilorin city, in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had also attracted varied groups from far and near, and this provided the military opportunity for an array of weapon system, military strategies, tactics, skills and ideas that promoted her campaigns. This contributed to the success of the state's expansion and defence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Ilorin authorities also mandated conquered territories and vassals to contribute soldiers and logistics during military campaigns as strategy to secure their loyalty. This military cum diplomatic move brought the vassals closer to the central leadership of the emirate and boosted Ilorin's military during campaigns. In fact, few leaders of the conquered territories served as military commanders on the side of the Ilorin emirate. There were military ancillaries like blacksmiths, hunters, spies, spiritualists, and entertainers in Ilorin Emirate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Others were drummers, flutists, trumpeters, and praise-singers who motivated soldiers through songs, chants, and elegy.