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EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRECOLONIAL ILORIN EMIRATE CAVALRY BEYOND WARS

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Abstract

Either in Ancient or modern time, movement of men and material is a critical element in the logistic and planning of warfare, and sometimes influences the outcome of encounters. There have been volumes of studies on the Nineteenth century military across the Nigerian area but the tactical military value of the cavalry in battles, with respect to Ilorin, have not been adequately represented in literature. The horse was an important component in Nigeria's pre-colonial warfare as it was also a key factor in the commercial, political and social lives of the people. The objective of this study is to explore the significance of the cavalry in Ilorin military encounters, its success, limitation and legacy in the cultural lives of the emirates. The historical research method, comprising of primary and secondary sources which involve oral interviews and the use of the library, was employed in the work. The cavalry, it was discovered, contributed immensely to Ilorin's military success as evident in the *Ogele* and *Mugbamugba* encounters in the early days of the emirate. Besides, groups such as Yoruba, Hausa, Bariba, Nupe, and Kanuri, contributed skillful horsemen to the emir's elite force which further increased their solidarity. The cavalry also led to a greater external diplomacy between Ilorin and sister emirates like Gwandu, Nupe, Kano and other distant areas like Adamawa and Borno in the supply of horses. With time, the tending and outfitting of the horses and riders led to the development of cavalry technology among the Nupe inhabitants in the Gambari area of Ilorin and this facilitated social relations among cavalymen and smiths in Ilorin. Officers like *Akesinrin*, *Ubandawaki* and *Zarumi Ologbondoroko* emerged as leaders of the cavalry contingents during campaigns. A major legacy of the cavalry in Ilorin is the annual durbar of horses held at the emir's palace to showcase the reminiscence of Ilorin military prowess in the precolonial period.

Keywords: Ilorin, Cavalry, Blacksmiths, Durbar

Introduction

In warfare, the movement of men and materials constitutes an important part of the logistic and planning of an encounter, and contributes to the success or failure of an army. In modern warfare, tanks, lorries, and other heavy-duty vehicles are employed for movement and engagements. In the ancient times however, horses were deployed to convey soldiers, weapons and other paraphernalia of war, and to facilitate engagements. The cavalry gave a distinct military advantage to its possessor in pre-colonial warfare. Cavalry includes the use of horses, camels and elephants in combat. However, horses were the most commonly used of the cavalry arsenals in pre-colonial Nigeria. It should be emphasised that if horses or any of the animals mentioned, were used merely to transport warriors to the battle field and not deployed in the battle itself, cavalry is not considered to have been employed. Several studies have been carried out on warfare in pre-colonial Nigeria particularly in Yorubaland and the Sokoto Caliphate. Some of these are Muri (2003), Ajayi, and Smith (1964), Danmole (1980), Jimoh (1994), Jimba (2009) and Yusuf (2016).

However, horses' tactical significance in the various battles has not been properly articulated, hence this study on Ilorin is justified since the town was involved in events of the two themes. Soldiers, who rode on horseback constituted a distinct unit known as cavalry. For quick movement, effective command and control, commanders of infantry units and their orderlies rode on horseback. Indeed, horses were important in the political, social, commercial and military lives of most pre-colonial Nigerian societies. The horse was a symbol of affluence and royalty among the political class, just as it provided strength and swift movement in slave raiding and capture of more lands. The item for these reasons, became one of the most sought-after merchandise in commercial activities and accounted for a considerable revenue among communities who possessed it. Thomas King, a member of the 1841 British Niger expedition supplied information on the tactical importance of the horse in slave raiding activities. He observed that "parties of about ten horsemen and some foot soldiers would lie in wait in the 'bush', near a village, and at daylight, when the unsuspecting natives go to their work in the fields, they are seized and hurried off to their camp" (Allen and Thompson,

1990). This buttresses Law's (1980) point 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. Slaves, conversely, were most readily obtained through capture in warfare. The exchange of horses for slaves therefore, tended to become, it is often suggested, 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. Trade and war fed upon each other in a self-sustaining process which reinforced the domination of the warrior aristocracies - producing what Smaldone (1977) has christened the 'war complex' of the Western Sudan (Law, 1980: 63)

The cavalry constituted a fraction of the armed forces in some pre-colonial Nigerian states. For instance, the Sokoto Caliphate's balance of forces gave the cavalry about one-tenth of the total strength of its army (Muri, 2003: 160). Similarly, the cavalry contributed greatly to the success of Old Oyo Empire during her hey days. Oyo Ile, the capital of the empire, was situated in the open grassland of Yorubaland, close to the states of present day northern Nigeria. Oyo forces regularly imported large number of horses from across the Niger. Thus, the empire became famous for its cavalry, which played major roles in her expansion to the coast; a distance of over 200 miles (about 320 kilometres) (Olutoye and Olapade, 1998: 212). After the fall of the empire, and the consequent shift of its population to the forest of the south, her use of cavalry diminished considerably but not completely, for as at 1881, Ibadan horsemen still had an opportunity to prove their mettle. Horsemen who had been left to guard the city, while the main army was engaged by Ekiti-parapo forces on the forest in hills of Igbajo, charged and completely routed an Ijebu force, which had persistently carried out menacing raids on Ibadan farms. The horses were an unaccustomed and terrifying sight to the Ijebu troops (Olutoye and Olapade, 1998: 212). However, apart from the incident described above, not much use was found for the cavalry by the Oyo group in the Nineteenth Century.

In the same vein, the cavalry occupied an important position in Ilorin precolonial military exploits because of its role in the successes

recorded in the various battles. Indeed, cavalry had been a factor in the Fulani-Hausa (Ilorin) revolt against Old Oyo, during the dying period of the empire. Clapperton for instance refers, several times, to the troubles in the Oyo Kingdom. At Assula, twenty six days' journey from Badagry, he found that the inhabitants had newly dug a ditch round the town 'on account of the existing war' - almost certainly meaning events at Ilorin; and three days later, he wrote: 'a war is now carrying on only a few hours' ride from us; not a national but a slaving war' (Clapperton 1826 as cited in Law 1966: 20). At Shaki and Enkoosoo, he learnt that his journey was being interpreted as a mission to make peace between the *Alaafin* and his Hausa slaves. He was told:

the Hausa have been in rebellion these two years and possess a large town only two days journey from Katunga (Oyo), called Lori (Ilorin). The Yorubanis (sic) are evidently afraid of them; they say they have a great number of horses, and have been joined by many Felattahs (Fulani). (Clapperton, 1826) as cited in Law, 1966: 20).

These remarks seem to underscore two important themes: first, the overthrow of Aare Afonja and the establishment of Ilorin as a southern outpost of the *Jihad*, and second, the significant role of the cavalry in Ilorin's attack on Old Oyo. To the north of the empire, the Fulani had occupied and overrun most of the Yoruba proper, and their cavalry continued to raid in all directions. However, the forests of the south proved a great obstacle to their progress; just as the regrouped remnants of the Yoruba armies. Thus, it was southwards, towards these forests that many of the inhabitants of northern Oyo fled for shelter and safety. The towns in this area became *Ilu-Asala*, (that is, towns of refuge), expanding their sites and their farmlands to accommodate the newcomers. One of the towns which hosted refugees from the Old Oyo Empire in the period was Osogbo in the Ijesa Kingdom, where the influence of immigrants was so great as to give it the character and allegiance of an Oyo town (Smith, 1988: 121). The Ilorin army used the cavalry extensively because of the savannah nature of its environs. The state derived considerable advantage from this geo-strategic characteristic of its location, which

favoured the mobility of her well-mounted horsemen. Ilorin's victories at the *Ogele* and *Mugba-Mugba*(locust fruit) battles for example, were due to this cavalry advantage (Ade-Ajayi, 1964: 15).

Sources of Horses for Ilorin Cavalry in the Nineteenth Century

Ilorin obtained horses for its cavalry force from the north, particularly from Sokoto, headquarters of the caliphate. This was possibly in line with the latter's traditional role in supplying logistics to facilitate the expansion of the caliphate to the south. Ilorin, being one of the southern frontier emirates, was a strategic destination for Sokoto's supplies during the campaigns. Furthermore, in the Nineteenth Century, Ilorin took over much of the trading role of Old Oyo, including its function as an entrepot between north and south. It shared the ecological advantages of Old Oyo and was in a good position relative to the Niger crossing and its situation between Hausaland and the Yoruba states. (NNAK, 1907: para 2)

These advantages were eagerly exploited by its government and people in sourcing for, and obtaining horses for its cavalry force. Therefore, Sokoto remained an important source of horses for Ilorin as for most of the emirates. It is therefore necessary for this study to examine the caliphate's efforts in horse procurement. The importance of horses as war animals became more visible in the life of the caliphate and its emirates as time progressed in the Jihad period. For the Sokoto Caliphate, as for the classical Sudanic states, the acquisition of horses for cavalry was a paramount concern. Smaldone maintains that during the Nineteenth Century, there were three principal means by which horses were obtained: through direct appropriation as taxation and tribute from subject people or as war booty from the vanquished; through selected and systematic local breeding; and through both inter-state and inter-emirate commerce (Smaldone, 1977: 15)

In the early period of the Jihad, the Muslim insurgents acquired many horses as booty from successful raids and campaigns. After the victorious Muslims had seized control of the Hausa states and extended their territorial domain, horses were demanded as part of the taxation or tribute accruing from the subject population. Perennial wars of consolidation against recalcitrant peoples also provided additional horses

as booty. Sokoto itself sometimes received horses as part of the annual tribute forwarded by its subordinate emirates (Smaldone, 1977: 15). Even though taxation, tribute and booty must have provided a considerable number of horses for Sokoto and its emirates, positive action had to be taken to ensure an adequate supply. Caliph Muhammad Bello (1817-1837), for instance, recognised the need for more and better cavalry mounts and took appropriate steps.

Bello's military requirements were exceptional. In his twenty year tenure, he conducted 47 major campaigns. To protect the newly organised cavalry, he introduced (*lifidi*) quilted armour, and at the same time made efforts to augment the available reserve of war-horses. Bello also took some political actions to encourage the breeding of horses locally. For example, he bestowed the title of *Banaga* on the leader of a group of Fulani horse breeders for a regular supply of horses. He also made a major attempt to induce nomadic Fulani and Tuareg herdsmen to adopt sedentary habits and to raise horses and camels for the Sokoto army. Even though, this policy proved unsuccessful among the Tuareg, many Fulani groups abandoned their migratory habits for residence in permanent settlements. Bello provided them with tools, an agricultural programme, and war captives to do the farm labour. Moreover, he instructed them to reduce their cattle herds and to emphasise instead, the breeding of horses and camels (Smaldone, 1977: 15). This strategy by Caliph Bello supported the high value the caliphate accorded the cavalry force, and it yielded positive results for the state in particular and the emirates in general. The caliphate's defence was enhanced by this increase in horses supply, particularly in the newly settled areas; there was economic prosperity, territorial control and general security in the caliphate, which enhanced sedentary life among the Fulani.

The third and perhaps the main source of horses was trade. The best horses in Hausaland were imported from the area north of Adamawa, and in particular, from Borno, which, claimed Lander (1967), "supplies every other in the interior with that useful animal; and these, he described as handsome, powerful beasts". These were probably the Dongola horses, which were highly prized in Borno, where they had been imported and bred for centuries. Another important source of horses was the Sahel region to the north of Hausaland, especially Azbin, where

Tuareg breeders raised a local variety of the oriental. One such northern breed, known in Hausaland as the *Sulebawa*, was considered by the British to be “closely akin to the English thoroughbred”. (Smith, 1977: 90) Other areas from where horses entered Ilorin were Jau and Megatare both in the present Jigawa State (Amidu, 2016).

It is impossible to determine the number of horses involved in this commerce. What is clear however, is that the trade in horses was closely regulated and well monitored because of its obvious military value. The caliphate’s realisation of the strategic advantage of the cavalry in facilitating swift movement of men and materials in battle fields must have informed Bello’s policy of encouraging self-sufficiency in horse production. This move could also have been related to a Borno embargo on the trade in horses, imposed perhaps during the *Jihad* when the Borno capital was sacked and its western provinces detached. In 1854 however, the embargo was lifted and as the horse trade again gravitated westward into Hausaland, the price of horses in Borno itself increased sharply (Laird and Oldsfield, 1837).

Sokoto also regulated the horse trade to deny its enemies a source of cavalry mounts. In 1850s for example, *Caliph* Aliyu Baba (1842-1859) prohibited the export of horses and swords to Nupe and Ilorin, fearing that these military supplies might fall into the hands of Umaru Nagwamatse, a grandson of Sheik Usman Dan Fodio, whose independent conquests in Southwestern Zaria and northern Nupeland were undertaken without official authorization (Crowther and Taylor, 1859: 422). Ibito and Kontagora areas in northern Nupeland, which were then under the forces of Nagwamatse, were important sources of weapons and soldiers for Ilorin. Therefore, this embargo on the supply of horses and swords in the middle of the Nineteenth Century had negative impact on the Ilorin cavalry.

Even though the caliphate obtained horses through foreign trade, it seems that from the time of Bello onward, the Sokoto area itself became the most important internal source of horses for the other emirates. By the early 1830s Laird and Olds field noted that the finest horses in Nupe were brought from Sokoto by Arab traders. Two decades later, this horse trade between Sokoto and southern frontier emirates of Nupe and Ilorin was still flourishing (Laird, and Oldsfield, 1837).

There is also evidence that Ilorin possibly obtained horses from other places in Nupeland based on relations between the two and the availability of the animal in the area. For instance, the Nupe had a long martial cavalry-based tradition as Tsoede, its founder-king, was said to have owned no less than 5,555 horses; and stirrups supposed to have belonged to him are preserved at Gbagede in Nupeland (Nadel, 1980: 20). Traditions of Nupe neighbour, like the famous Yoruba Empire of Oyo, bear evidence of Nupe effective use of the cavalry (Obayemi, 1980: 158).

Besides, Nupeland maintained a valuable and important trade in horses with Kano and Borno and was actually the principal supplier to the Oyo Empire in the period up to the start of its internal wars (Lander, 1967: 13). Moreover, there is indication that Nupe may have bred horses, besides importing them from its northern trading partners (Nadel, 1980:20). This made Nupeland a steady source of horses for the Ilorin Emirate in the Nineteenth Century especially based on the diplomatic relations between the two, occasioned by the *Jihad*. Ilorin commercial role as destination where goods from different regions of what later became Nigeria converged for distribution, also facilitated her access to horses and cavalry equipment in the Nineteenth century. For instance, the Gambari Market was described as an international market because it was frequented by long distance traders from within and outside the Nigerian area. Items of trade in the market included horses and horse-trappings reportedly brought for sale from North Africa, silk clothing, Arabian carpets, salt and spear. Slaves were also reportedly brought for sale in their hundred (Milum, 1881:27). These slaves must have been procured during some military expeditions of Ilorin in the Nineteenth century (Danmole and Falola, 1985: 22).

With time, Ilorin inhabitants imbibed the tradition of raising horses. Even though this was very limited in scale compared to the number imported, it certainly reflected the social status of the Ilorin elites of the Nineteenth Century. Horses were kept for both their military value and as paraphernalia of royalty and affluence. Indeed most Ilorin royal families employed people to fend for horses in their compounds.

Cavalry Accoutrement and Horse-Keeping Technique in Ilorin

The significance of cavalry as a force in Ilorin military was further strengthened by the emergence of horse-keeping tradition and the manufacture of horse trappings in few locations in the town, *Awodi* and *Pataki* areas, to be precise. While the smiths, who fabricated iron implement for the warriors were mostly Yoruba of Old Oyo extraction, those who made cavalry accoutrements were mostly of Nupe origin. Blacksmithing had a geographical spread in Ilorin because its products were of a general nature, serving both agricultural and military purposes. However, the cavalry technology, being a more specialised aspect, was restricted, and thus carried out by people in specific locations in the town, mostly Nupe people, found in Gambari area of the town (Alagbede, 2015). Smiths in Pataki, Isale Gambari area, were noted for fabricating cavalry accoutrements like saddle, stirrups, helmets, shields and horse trappings (Alagbede, 2015). The importance of this branch of blacksmithing increased in Ilorin especially with the town becoming an emirate and having to rely more on the cavalry in its wars of survival, expansion and consolidation.

In cavalry, both the rider and his mount often wore protective armour, manufactured from loose fibre of the silk-cotton and were fitted to the horseman's body in pieces; the quilted armour covered the loins, thighs and abdomen. Such armour was used by horsemen either alone or in combination with chain mail. The war horses themselves were sometimes outfitted with breast plates. Other protective devices and essential equipment of the cavalry men included helmets, shields, saddles and horse trappings. The helmet was a padded headpiece made of bound rags, sometimes covered by a tin of brass receptacle or chain mail, and decorated with the feathers of an ostrich or other highly coloured bird.

Body protection for Ilorin cavalryman in the Nineteenth Century comprised mainly of a special cross-belt made of strong ropes and 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. Furthermore, 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. Besides, few Ilorin blacksmiths were able to

fabricate metal body armour, even though this was always quite heavy on the body (A. Ajikobi, A. Alagbede, B. Elegbeji, 2016 oral communication).

Meanwhile, these quilted armours worn by the cavalrymen 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 shield carried by the heavy cavalry men were of two basic types; either large circular shields, about five feet in diameter, or large rectangular implement, about five feet high by two or three feet in width. These shields were made of tanned hide of elephant, buffalo, antelope or other suitable animals. They were extremely durable, light and supple, yet superior to metal or wood in proportion to their weight. A variety of saddles was used, the common one being high-peaked before and behind, employed by both heavy and light cavalry. Along with these items went a remarkable assemblage of horse trappings, including bridle and bit combinations, spurs, quilted saddle covers and lighter decorated outer covers and stirrups (Smith, 90). The latter existed in two general forms; either small toe stirrups or large shovel shaped instruments with sharp edges. These served not only to protect the riders' legs from scrub and brush but were in themselves weapons of offence and defence. This was known in Ilorin as *Bàtākemí* (Akaraje, 2017).

The main offensive weapon of the cavalry men was the heavy metal lance, about six feet long. Its butt end was shaped like an axe head and rested in the stirrup; the head was about eight inches long and barbed. The shaft was inlaid with brass and sometimes bore a brass knob about two thirds of the way down to balance the weight of the head. Ilorin heavy cavalry also made use of a variety of swords, war clubs, and battle-axes, especially when fighting at close quarters. Offensive and defensive armament of the light cavalry also included a variety of javelins or throwing spear, swords, cudgels, maces or battle-axes, knives or daggers, thrusting lances and shields. If spears (either with single pointed edge or barbed edge commonly referred to as *Masi* in Ilorin)

were carried, the horseman would normally have two or three. These were hurled as soon as the enemy troops came within range. The lances and swords were the principal weapons for close combat; swords (*Idà*) were slung over the shoulder by the sling, and daggers carried in a sheath affixed to the left forearm. Large round shields up to five feet in diameter, or small shield between two and three feet in diameter completed the outfit of the light cavalry men. (Akaraje, 2017)The horse itself was decorated with a variety of items to give the rider balance and transform the animal to a partner in the war mission.

Some Cavalry Accoutrements

Gàári (saddle), a seat, strapped on the back of the horse for the rider, was made of a combination of several items including leather, wood and iron. The saddle is a structure, which combined the works of blacksmiths, woodcarvers, tanners, and ornament designers, who would put the finishing touches to the outfit. The structure also had pads usually stuffed with grasses and sometimes dried horse droppings to give the rider a comfortable seat when riding.

Likafa (stirrup) is a metal loop supporting the horse-rider's foot. This could be made of brass, bronze or iron and enhanced the rider's sitting position as he controls the horse's movement.

Kemi- this refers to cavalry man's foot pedal. This was made of leather with a plate of sharp pointed iron affixed to its back used for hitting the horse to prompt the animal to move faster and could also be used for attacking the enemy by hitting him. In Ilorin, this was sometimes called *batakemi*.

Okùn-Ìjánu- (Reins) is usually a combination of leather and some ropes fastened to the head through the mouth of the horse for controlling its direction of movement. This was a sort of steering, which was held by the rider to give him support as well as function to control and halt the horse's movement.

Ikodi-Majayi- a rope, which connects the trapping from the head of the horse to its chest. *Alalafa* was the name given to the rope that comes from the mouth of the horse to support the saddle so that the horse would not move in awkward direction.

Tefendi refers to the first garment used for covering the horse before the saddle and other accessories were added. (A. Ajikobi, Y. Akaraje, B. Alagbede, T. Alagdede, 2017 ora communication). Pictures of few of these items are in the appendix after Notes and References.

Structure of the Ilorin Cavalry Force

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*, *Alanguaor 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 (Adisa, 2016).

Before the Nineteenth Century, most Yoruba societies relied on paramilitary, termed, *Ologun*, *Ogungbe* and *Ipanpa*. These warriors were usually not subjected to serious military training rather they were ad-hoc groups mainly recruited from hunters and able bodied men in time of war and often quickly disbanded thereafter. Thus, the level of professionalism in the military was quite low. However, by the Nineteenth Century, this changed because of the series of struggles that characterised the period. (Johnson, 1976: 257) During this century, the military was pushed to the forefront of Yoruba politics. This same opinion was expressed by Ade-Ajayi (1964), who contends that the professionalisation of the military in Yorubaland was largely encouraged by the emergence of the cavalry force.

Ilorin was a sterling example in the use of the cavalry as evident in the structure of her military. 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. However, the foot soldiers had numerical edge over the cavalry and were more flexible and effective during battle because of their ability to manoeuvre in every nook and cranny of the battle field. The infantry was able to operate where and when the cavalry was

handicapped. Nonetheless, the cavalry's superior mobility gave it a formidable advantage over the infantry. Even though a group of cavalry might lack subdivision and articulation, it could use its mobility to attack the flank or rear of the enemy formation. The horses themselves often had a tremendous psychological effect, coming as it did from an unexpected direction against troops not prepared to meet it. The horses themselves would add another cause of demonstration, for they would look large and menacing.

Furthermore, the cavalry's superior mobility and ability to go into action without dismounting set it out as an effective offensive troop in assailing the enemy's vulnerable flank and rear. But the cost of horses and the general accoutrement of keeping the cavalry force made the cavalry an expensive weapon system in the Nineteenth Century. 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, 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.

The significance of the cavalry force in Ilorin warfare is not only attested to by her army's successes, but also the prevalence of horses in the compounds of the elite group in the town in the Nineteenth Century. (A. Jos, A. Zarumi, A. Awise, 2015 oral communication). 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. His compound was thus referred to as *Ile Akęsinrin*, which translates as "abode of the trainer of horses". This officer was also responsible for selecting the horses to be used by the emir because of his sound understanding of the strength and psychology of the horses under his care. This officer was also recognised as the leader of the cavalry contingent in battlefield as he stayed in front to direct the movement of the mounted soldiers. Other important cavalry officers in Ilorin were *Zarumi Ologbondoroko* also reputed for leading a contingent of the emir's elite force in battle; *Ubandawaki* which means the chief cavalry commander. Few compounds also bear names that indicate the significant role of the horse in Ilorin military. Examples are

Ile Esinrogunjo, which translates literally as abode of the dancing war-horse; *Ile Olesin Matidiloju Ogun*, which was later shortened to *Olesin*, this means house of the fearless cavalymen. Ilorin is also praised as “*Ilu to 'yi, koni egungun, esin l'egungun won oko ni oro Ibe*”, which translates as “a big town without masquerade. Its people celebrate their powerful horses and the spear represents their culture”. This also underscores the city's high value for horses as a war instrument.

The Ilorin cavalry fought in a variety of ways: at a distance with throwing spears, at close quarters with thrusting spears, or even occasionally dismounting and fighting on foot. Sometimes, the horses had protection. However, men mounted in this way made a weapon system distinctly inferior to infantry and therefore could not expect to charge heavy infantry successfully because the men on foot had better weapons for shock action and a more secure fighting platform, the ground. Equally, the mounted men had a disadvantage in engaging light infantry with missiles. Also, foot soldiers' superior fighting platform gave them a distinct advantage because they could fight better than those mounted since they had only one task, to fight, unlike men on horseback, who had to first control their mounts and then fight.

Different tactics were employed by the Ilorin cavalry because the mounted men could manoeuvre their way easily in battle, especially in plain fields. Tactics of the cavalry was also dictated by the peculiar situation in the specific battle. For instance, conversion of defence to attack was used by the Ilorin cavalry in the *Ogele Battle*, which yielded huge success. The Ilorin cavalry adopted the tactic of trapping the enemies within the city walls during the *Eleduwe War* after her troops retreated due to a heavy attack from the joint Oyo-Bariba army. Furthermore, *Mugba-Mugba War*, Ilorin adopted the tactic of encircling the enemies from different flanks.

From another perspective, 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. 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. (Smith, 1977: 65)

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 invaded by armies from Maradi and Tessawa, the successor states founded by skilled loyalist of Katsina (Goody, 1988: 47). However, either for defence or expansion, the common denominator in all the emirates was the organisation of a force for prosecuting their missions.

Horse Race (*Berende*) or Durbar of Horsemen in Ilorin

An important legacy of the military (cavalry force) in the social life of Ilorin emirate is the horse-race, known in Ilorin as *Berende* or *Bareke*. This is an annual festival which keeps alive the role of Ilorin soldiers, particularly, the cavalry force, in the emirate’s wars of expansion and defence in the Nineteenth century. Horsemen are adorned in gleaming costumes and jewelries while their horses are also clad in rich outfits and decorations. Their riders always carry swords, lances, polished in elaborately rich traditional robes and headwear. This elaborate horse *regatta*, gives a reminiscence of the military engagement of the cavalry force during Ilorin’s warfare in the Nineteenth Century. The horse *regatta* largely represents memories of the heydays of military engagements of the warlords, and had since been used to showcase the strength of Ilorin cavalry force. This horse race is usually held during *Eid el Fitr* and *Eid el Kabir* celebrations and other important festivals in the *emirate* (Adedoyin Asude, Taiye Alagdede, 2017).

The *Berende* Durbar has since remained a glamorous event, which records heavy participation of colourfully dressed riders and horses. On the occasion, people of royal descent including princes, important title-holders especially the *Balógun* and their lieutenants in

their various localities align their horses in groups during the race to entertain the *emir* and the populace. Other military officers are always on parade. This has been one of the socio-cultural impact of the Nineteenth century *Jihad* on Ilorin because the practice possibly came to the town from among the Hausa and other groups found in what later became northern Nigeria. The occasion is usually packed with activities like parades, horse race and colourful displays by Ilorin royal families.

The Ilorin durbar celebration is an important cultural gathering that brings indigenes of the town together. The festival is held on the third day of the *Idil Adha*, a period characterized by heavy presence of indigenes and visitors. Indeed, recent durbar celebrations in 2018 and 2019 even recorded the presence of sons and daughters of the town who were resident abroad coming with their family members. The Ilorin durbar is also attended by important dignitaries such as businessmen, captains of industries, career official, academics, and political leaders. Also in attendance are traditional ruler, who are the custodians of culture and heritage of the people.

Conclusion

The cavalry played a significant role in Ilorin military escapades of the Nineteenth Century as epitomized by the successes the emirate recorded in her wars. As a southern frontier emirate of the Sokoto Caliphate, Ilorin's mission to expand the Jihad influence among Yoruba states was favoured by her location in the savannah zone of what later became Nigeria. The cavalry facilitated Ilorin's relation with other states in the area of sourcing for horses as Sokoto, Gwandu, Nupe, Kano, Adamawa and Borno which became important centres where the emirate obtained its horses and cavalry accoutrements in the Nineteenth Century. Even though, the cavalry represented the elite corps of the emir's army, it brought a new sense of solidarity in military structure because its membership cut across several linguistic and social divides in the emirate. As linguistic groups like Bariba, Nupe, Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba and Kanuri were all represented in Ilorin cavalry, so were royalty, titled official and their dependents and selected slaves were involved as horsemen in the battlefield. Mercenaries and men of wealth, who could afford also kept horses and contributed to Ilorin cavalry. The cavalry also

brought increased synergy between the warriors and the smiths in Ilorin in the fabrication of horse-keeping and riding equipment. The Nupe group in Isale Gambari area became prominent in this regard. Also, the cavalry brought the legacy of the annual celebration of Durbar of Horses known in Ilorin as *Berende*.

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Oral Interviews

1. Interview with Mallam Ajikobi Amidu, No. 22, Ajikobi Compound, Aged 59 years. 28th September, 2016. Interviewed on aspects of Ilorin war weaponry, cavalry and tactics.
2. Interview with Baba Busari Alagbede in Ogidi Compound, Ilorin. Aged 85 years. On 14th April, 2015; also interview with Baba Elegbeji, a local blacksmith in Adangba area Ilorin, Aged 68 on 25th May, 2015.
3. Interview with Suleiman Yahya, Magaji Akaraje, Akesinrin Compound, Isale Koto, Ilorin, 75 years 18th June, 2017. Also see

Smaldone, J. P. *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate: Historical & Sociological Perspectives*. London, Cambridge, 1977.p.46.

4. Interview with a cross-section of people including some blacksmiths in Ilorin. They include: (I) Mallam Ajikobi Amidu, a Correction Officer in the Nigerian Prison Service, No. 22, Ajikobi Compound, Ilorin, Aged 59 years. 28th September, 2016; (ii) Ayuba Alagbede Pakata Area, A local blacksmith, Aged 72, on 30th March, 2015; (iii) Interview with Baba Elegbeji, a local blacksmith in Adangba area Ilorin, Aged 68 on 25th May, 2015; (iv) Interview with Taiye Alagbede Pataki, Ile Oloyin, Isale Gambari Area, Ilorin. Aged 60 years. 5th January, 2017, and Baba Busari Alagbede in Ogidi Compound, Ilorin. Aged 85 years. On 14th April, 2015. Interview with Suleiman Yahya, Magaji Akaraje, Akesinrin Compound, Isale Koto, Ilorin. Aged 75 years 18th June, 2017.
5. Interview with Adisa Onikoko, Onikoko Compound, a retired civil servant, Pakata area, Ilorin, Aged 81 years on 30th August, 2016.
6. Interview with Alhaji Abubakar Akanbi Jos, the Balógun Alánàmú of Ilorin Emirate 18th Feb. 2015 and Adebimpe Awise Alánàmú, 20th Feb, 2015; Interview with Alhaji Saheed Abioye Zarumi, Magaji Zarumi Ologbondoroko, Ilorin, Aged 68 years. 5th May, 2015.
7. (I) Interview with Mallam Ajikobi Amidu, No. 22, Ajikobi Compound, Ilorin, Correction Officer, Nigeria Prison Service. Aged 59 years. 28th September, 2016. (ii) Interview with Ayuba Alagbede Pakata Area, A local blacksmith, Aged 72, on 30th March, 2015. Interview with Baba Elegbeji, a local blacksmith in Adangba area Ilorin, Aged 68 on 25th May, 2015. (iii) Interview with Adisa Onikoko, Onikoko Compound, a retired civil servant, Pakata area, Ilorin, Aged 81 years on 30th August, 2016. (iv) Interview with Hassan Taiye Alagbede Pataki, Ile Oloyin, Isale Gambari Area, Ilorin. Aged 60 years. 5th January, 2017. Taiye Alagbede recounted how his great grandfather, named Nmoh, came to Ilorin during the reign of Emir Abdulsalam. (v) Interview with Baba Busari Alagbede, a local blacksmith in Ogidi Compound, Ilorin, Aged 85 years on 14th April, 2015. Also see Awolalu, J. O, and Dopamu, P. A. *West*

African Traditional Religion. Ibadan, Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Limited. Revised Edition, 2005.

8. Interview with Alhaji Taiye Abubakar Alagbede, Pataki Isale Gambari, a smith specialized in the manufacture of cavalry equipment, Aged 60 years. Interview with Alhaji Sheik Adedoyin Ásúde, Age 75 Years and Mallam Issa Ásúde, Age 65 years both blacksmiths in Okelele Area, Ilorin. 5th January, 2017;

Appendix 1



Horses prepared for Durbar Procession in Ilorin. Source: Emir’s Palace.
Up: 2018 and Down: 2019 Durbar Celebrations. Source: Field work

Appendix 2



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

Appendix 3



Body Armour made from strong threads and worn on the cavalryman's chest and headdress for the warrior. Source: Armoury at the Emir's Palace, Ilorin, picture taken by the Researcher on 9th June, 2017.

Appendix 4



Different weapons and cavalry accessories preserved in the Armory.

Source: Armory at the Emir's Palace, Ilorin, picture taken by the Researcher on the 9th June, 2017.

Appendix 5



Prototype of Nineteenth Century Saddle (known as *Gàári* in Ilorin) with Bow and Arrows for the cavalryman. Source: Armory at the Emir's Palace, Ilorin, picture taken by the Researcher on 9th June, 2017.

Appendix 6

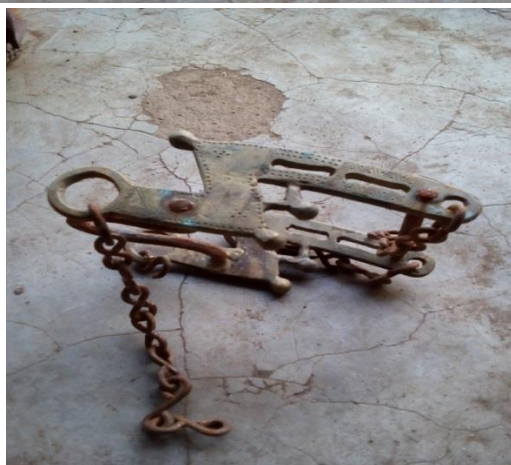


A





B



A- Iron stirrup supporting the Cavalryman's foot. B- Iron bit fastened to the mouth of the horse for controlling its movement.

Source: Picture taken by the Researcher at the abode of Nupe smith in Pataki, Isale Gambari Area, Ilorin on the 7th January, 2017.

Appendx 7



(*Gàári*) Prototype of Nineteenth Century Saddle locally made by Nupe Smiths in Ilorin.

Source: Picture taken by the Researcher at abode of Nupe Cavalry Accessories' Smiths in Pataki area, Ilorin on the 7th January, 2017.