

War

RICHARD
REID

in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa



EASTERN AFRICAN STUDIES

H434 | 1

21133

1/1



War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa

*The Patterns & Meanings of State-Level Conflict
in the Nineteenth Century*

RICHARD REID

Lecturer in African & Imperial History,

University of Durham



The British Institute in Eastern Africa
in association with

James Currey

OXFORD

EAEP

NAIROBI

Fountain Publishers

KAMPALA

Ohio University Press

ATHENS, OH

This is an examination of the nature and objectives of conflict in the major states of Eastern Africa in the nineteenth century. It focusses on highland Ethiopia, on the interlacustrine area of Buganda and its neighbours, and on the area of central Tanzania from the south of Lake Victoria to Lake Tanganyika where Mirambo and his rivals operated.

Richard Reid shows the circumstances in which conflict could encourage socio-political innovation and economic growth, as well as when it hindered development. He analyses how the economics of conflict and the wider social and cultural implications of violence affected urbanisation, depopulation and social status. The practice of diplomacy and conflict resolution was also of importance.

The book is aimed at undergraduates and academic specialists working on pre-colonial African history, and those interested more broadly in military history. People involved in modern development and conflict resolution may well find that this book helps them understand the deeper historical roots of African warfare.

'Although a large number of local and regional studies touch on warfare, few have made it a central theme and even fewer have given the topic the kind of thoughtful and wide-reaching treatment offered here.' – Richard Waller

Richard Reid, Lecturer in African and Imperial History at the University of Durham, is the author of *Political Power in Pre-Colonial Buganda* (James Currey, Fountain Publishers and Ohio University Press 2002).

Contents I THEORY & CONTEXT Introduction: African War in Historical & Theoretical Perspective – Antiquity & Inheritance: Restorative Violence & the Weight of History II ARMIES Tools & Tactics – Organisation & Function III PROCESS, IMPACT & CULTURE Cost & Profit; War & Economic Change – Violence & Society – The Resolution & Avoidance of Conflict – The Culture of Conflict – Conclusions: War & the Making of State & Society

Cover: Colonel Congo's regiment being reviewed by the King of Uganda, from Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*

The British Institute in Eastern Africa in association with E.A.E.P. www.eastafricanpublishers.com

Fountain Publishers • *James Currey* • *Ohio University Press*
www.fountainpublishers.co.uk www.jamescurrey.co.uk www.ohio.edu/oupres

ISBN 978-9970-02-728-6

ISBN 978-1-84701-604-1

ISBN 13: 978-0-8214-1795-9

ISBN 10: 0-8214-1795-9



9 789970 027286



9 781847 016041



9 780821 417959

EASTERN AFRICAN STUDIES

Contents



Acknowledgements	ix
Glossary and Abbreviations	xi
Map 1 Geography and Demography	xiii
Map 2 Corridors of Conflict Discussed in Text	xiv
Map 3 The Ethiopian-Eritrean Highlands	xv
Map 4 Lacustrine East Africa	xvi

Part One: Theory & Context

1

Introduction:

<i>African War in Historical & Theoretical Perspective</i>	2
--	---

- Themes and limitations
- War in Africanist scholarship
- The sources

2

Antiquity & Inheritance:

<i>Restorative Violence & the Weight of History</i>	22
---	----

- Chronicles of power and suffering in northeast Africa
- Founding fathers, civilisations and hegemonic narratives in the great lakes
- Remembered greatness: Mirambo and restoration

Part Two: Armies

3

Tools & Tactics

<i>Tools of war (1): Indigenous weaponry</i>	40
<i>Tools of war (2): The spread of the firearm</i>	
<i>Tactics, strategy and orders of attack and defence</i>	

4

Organisation & Function

<i>Armies: Their structures and commanders</i>	79
<i>The military in the African polity</i>	

Part Three: Process, Impact & Culture

5

Cost & Profit: War & Economic Change 108

The force of the world beyond: commerce and competition
Soil and wood, metal and flesh

6

Violence & Society 142

Criminality and illegitimacy
Class, age and gender: Shifting socio-economic relationships
Town and refuge: shifting patterns of settlement

7

The Resolution & Avoidance of Conflict 178

Interpretations and processes of conflict resolution
Diplomacy and embassy
Hyperbole and hubris: Interpreting the language of threat and placation

8

The Culture of Conflict 201

War and material culture: The symbols of conflict
Great men and pregnant women: notions of masculinity, courage and cowardice
mutilation and celebration
Rumour and half-truth: the anticipation of violence and the culture of fear
Reading intestines (and holy books): spirituality and military mysticism
Revisiting 'primitive war': violence as ritual sport

9

Conclusions:

War & the Making of State & Society 231

Sources and Bibliography 236

Index 245