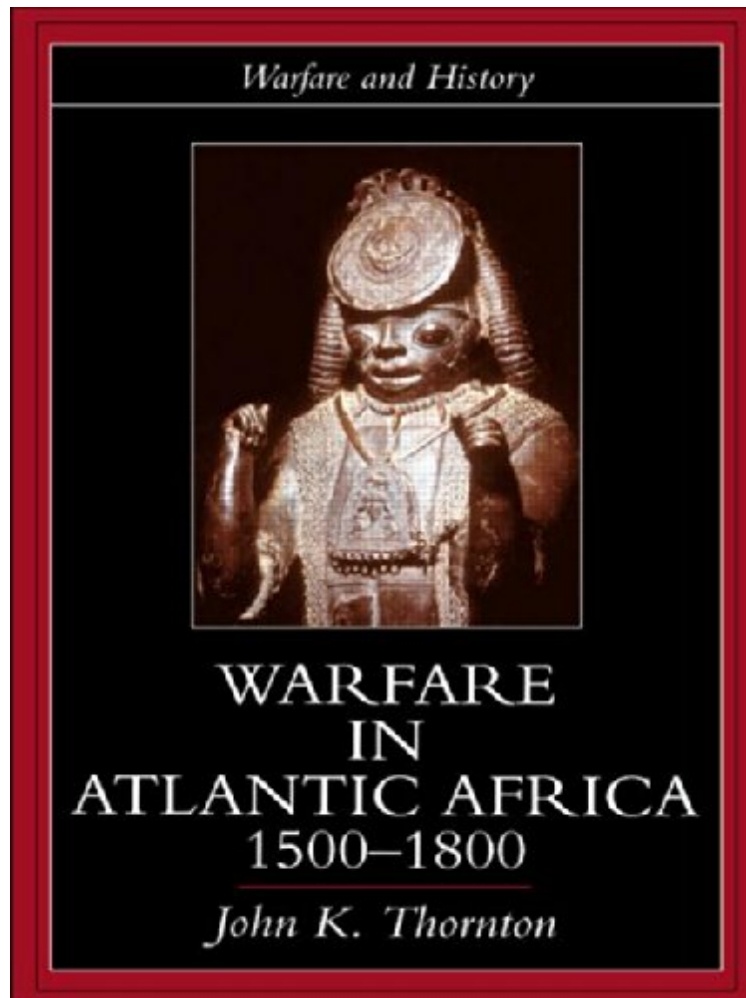


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Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800 (Warfare and History)

John K. Thornton

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John K. Thornton : Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800 (Warfare and History) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800 (Warfare and History):

0 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Good attempt, but it falls short. By Moonshinefunk I think this book is good in that there is not a lot on this subject so Thornton did a lot of research. The book is actually poorly written, unlike the his other book Africans and the Making of Africa I believe is the title. Sometimes its very hard to follow what he is saying. It also purely descriptive, not a lot of analysis on the larger themes. 15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Excellent By Ronald T. Jones There has been a regrettable tendency in history, military history in particular, to obscure or omit altogether African accomplishments. Certainly, the nonliterate nature of precolonial African societies has not led to the generation of copious documentation from original African sources.

Much of that history available to us is derived from observations by Europeans and Arabs, oral tellings which tend toward embellishment and whatever insight archeology reveals to us. World historians may attribute the paucity of African history in their works to a comparative lack of source material. Yet, in my reading of African history, it is clear that enough material has been compiled by scholars in this field to produce multi-volume books. Thus, the fallacy of Africa being a continent without a history is exposed, though not entirely put to rest. John K. Thornton's "Warfare in Atlantic Africa: 1500-1800" is the latest contribution to studies about Africa that aim to shed light on what many may still regard as the "Dark Continent." The book is not long (152 pages, excluding notes and index) but it is brimming with information stemming from detailed research about African warfare. Each chapter focuses on a region of Africa where the author analyzes terrain, political contexts, strategies, tactics, weaponry and military operations with a high degree of depth. Thornton reveals the diversity of precolonial African militaries and warfare and how environment dictated how wars were fought and armies organized. He shows how African militaries responded to the presence of Europeans and their introduction of gunpowder weapons. The facts he brings to bear in regard to these early African/European interactions indicate a more complex relationship than the simplistic summaries of historians with no access to the valuable data Thornton has dredged up. As elsewhere in the world, many African wars were conducted with vigor and ingenuity, with armies demonstrating abilities to respond accordingly to operational situations. In the 18th century, a combined African army constructed counterworks around a fortified town it was besieging with the intent of cutting off the town's supplies. This example of tactical dynamism as detailed in the book is very reminiscent of Caesar's besiegement of Vercingetorix's stronghold. "Warfare in Atlantic Africa" abounds with such examples, each one underscoring the absolute necessity of scholars to abandon whatever misconceptions may lurk in their minds about African history. This book is an intriguing and exciting read, presenting an early Africa far removed from the stereotyped monotony of Hollywood.

Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800 investigates the impact of warfare on the history of Africa in the period of the slave trade and the founding of empires. It includes the discussion of: * the relationship between war and the slave trade * the role of Europeans in promoting African wars and supplying African armies * the influence of climatic and ecological factors on warfare patterns and dynamics * the impact of social organization and military technology, including the gunpowder revolution * case studies of warfare in Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Benin and West Central Africa

About the Author John K. Thornton is Professor of History at Millersville University, Pennsylvania. He is the author of Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800 (Cambridge, 1998).