

## **A Military History of the Funj Sultanate of Sinnār, 1503-1821**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the military history of the Funj Sultanate of Sinnar from 1503 to 1821, with particular reference to the role of the army in the establishment and sustenance of the Sultanate. The study focuses largely on the interplay between warfare, state-building, and societal transformation in the history of the Funj. The objectives of the study are to: (i) trace the rise of the military in the Funj Sultanate, (ii) study the military dynamics of the sultanate, comprising its technological foundations, coups, and counter-coups, and (iii) assess the factors responsible for the decline of the military and the disintegration of the Sultanate. The study argues that although the military history of the Funj has largely been overlooked, the military was responsible for the establishment and sustenance of the Sultanate for three hundred and eighteen years while positioning it as the dominant power in the Blue Nile region. Adopting a historical methodology, the data for this study are drawn from primary sources such as oral interviews and archival materials, and augmented with extant secondary sources. These sources provide insights into the sultanate's military structures and leadership dynamics. The study finds that the military was central to the Funj statecraft, especially through its fortifications, expeditions, and defence against external aggressions, which shaped the sultanate's military history. While bringing the military dimension of the Funj Sultanate's history to light, this thesis contributes to understanding precolonial African state formation and regional dynamics in the Nile Valley, while delineating the exceptional role of the military. It also challenges the dominant Eurocentric narratives that trivialise African military history and the African agency with reference to its military traditions.

**Keywords:** Funj Sultanate, Military, War, Sudan, Pre-Colonial Period.