



Machete, Kris, and Throwing Iron: Edged Weapons of Latin America, Indonesia, and Africa (Knives, Swords, and Bayonets: A World History of Edged Weapon Warfare)

Martina Sprague

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Large knives with origins as farming and brush cutting tools are often associated with warfare in geographical regions of rough terrain, dense jungle, hills, and in societies without centralized leadership. They have found use as weapons in guerrilla warfare and internal rebellions. The machete has been employed extensively in political uprisings, particularly in Third World countries with unstable governments; for example, in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Africa.

Some of the most varied types of edged weaponry, however, can be found in Indonesia. Since this region faced foreign occupiers, conflicts proved common, forcing the natives to resort to knives that could easily be carried on one's person. Indonesian edged weapons saw use during the Philippine-American War of 1899-1902.

Africa is yet a region that has relied on edged weaponry. Because of a need for people to develop ethnic and cultural identity, regional weapons often feature significant differences in shape and size. The edged weapons of Africa frequently demonstrate the cultural connection between war and peace, life and death, offense and defense that existed in peoples' lives.

This book focuses on three geographical regions associated with jungle, desert, and guerrilla warfare from around the fifteenth century to modern day: Latin America, Indonesia, and Africa. The book starts by discussing the machete and other big-bladed weapons used extensively in Central America, Cuba, Mexico, and Chile. Next it explores the unique knives of Indonesia, with particular focus on the kris. It then examines the bladed weapons of the different regions of the African continent, including the tactics used in pre- and post-colonial warfare. The history of metallurgic science and the migration of weapons to different regions are also explored. The concluding remarks summarize the main points of each section.

Knives, Swords, and Bayonets: A World History of Edged Weapon Warfare is a book series that examines the history of edged weapons in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas, and the Middle East and surrounding areas before gunpowder increased the distance between combatants. The book series takes a critical look at the relationship between the soldier, his weapon, and the social and political mores of the times. Each book examines the historical background and metallurgic science of the knife, sword, or bayonet respectively, and explores the handling characteristics and combat applications of each weapon. Save by purchasing the full 10-book series in a single paperback volume (538 pages). Look for Knives, Swords, and Bayonets: A World History of Edged Weapon Warfare (the full series).

The full series comprises the following books, which can be read in any order:

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2. Machete, Kris, and Throwing Iron: Edged Weapons of Latin America, Indonesia, and Africa
3. Cold Steel: The Knife in Army, Navy, and Special Forces Operations
4. Japanese Swords: The Katana and Gunto in Medieval and Modern Japanese Warfare

5. Chinese Swords: The Evolution and Use of the Jian and Dao
6. Yatagan, Khanda, and Jamdhar: Swords and Sabers of Persia and India
7. Sickle Sword and Battle Axe: Edged Weapons of Ancient Egypt
8. Gladius and Spatha: Swords and Warfare in the Classical World
9. Longsword and Saber: Swords and Swordsmen of Medieval and Modern Europe
10. Pike, Halberd, and Bayonet: Sharp Weapons in Near Modern and Modern Warfare

Note that the books are written for those with an interest in exploring the historical beginnings of edged weaponry, how edged weapons have been used in war in different parts of the world, and the value the soldier attached to his weapon. Military, social, and political history is discussed. Arms collectors or others with detailed interest in the finer points of weaponsmithing may want to look for books that are more heavily illustrated.

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