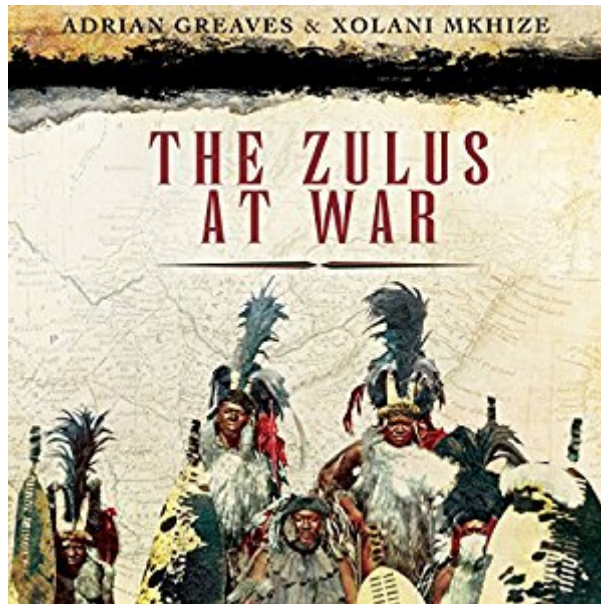


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# The Zulus At War: The History, Rise, And Fall Of The Tribe That Washed Its Spears



## Synopsis

By tracing the long and turbulent history of the Zulus from their arrival in South Africa and the establishment of Zululand, *The Zulus at War* is an important and readable addition to this popular subject area. It describes the violent rise of King Shaka and his colorful successors under whose leadership the warrior nation built a fearsome fighting reputation without equal among the native tribes of South Africa. It also examines the tactics and weapons employed during the numerous intertribal battles over this period. They then became victims of their own success in that their defeat of the Boers in 1877 and 1878 in the Sekhukhuni War prompted the well-documented British intervention. Initially the might of the British Empire was humbled as never before by the surprising Zulu victory at Isandlwana but the 1879 war ended with the brutal crushing of the Zulu nation. But, as Adrian Greaves reveals, this was by no means the end of the story. The little known consequences of the division of Zululand, the Boer War, and the 1906 Zulu Rebellion are analyzed in fascinating detail. An added attraction for listeners is that this long-awaited history is written not just by a leading authority but also, thanks to the coauthor's contribution, from the Zulu perspective using much completely fresh material.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A fascinating account of Zulu culture and warfare, and their savage and bloody confrontations with other tribes, the Boers and the British in the 19th century. A very good book about a remarkable and strange people, superb warriors and tacticians, bizarre kings, incredible battles, treachery and cultural misunderstandings on both sides and a must-read for any student of Africa or military

history.

They inflicted one of the worst defeats on the British Empire. They spread terror throughout Southern Africa, pushing tribes off their ancestral lands. Most of their rulers were ruthless tyrants. One of them, Shaka, single-handedly created the most-feared warrior state on the continent. The Zulus were and are a force to be reckoned with. Adrian Greaves' *The Zulus at War* gives an in-depth and comprehensive study of this fascinating tribe. True to its subtitle, *The History, Rise, and Fall of the Tribe that Washed its Spears*, Greaves traces the rise of the tribe from their humble origins in south-central Africa through their savage sweep-up of southern Africa, the *mfecane*. Greaves explores in detail the harsh customs of these African Spartans. Brutality and regimentation allowed Shaka to forge the Zulus into the continent's most-feared military machine. Shaka would regularly and arbitrarily order an execution because someone sneezed in his presence or because he disliked a man's appearance. In addition, the book contains a glossary of the Zulu terms used throughout the text. Furthermore, Greaves provides valuable insight into the spiritual world-view of the Zulus, including information on the *sangomas* (mediums and healers), and the *qaka* or ritual disemboweling of a fallen enemy. For much of the book, Greaves speculates on the origins of Shaka's arbitrary brutality. The traumatized childhood of this unwanted royal bastard no doubt shaped his cruel personality. Moreover, Greaves explores Shaka's successors, Dingane and especially, Cetshwayo, in great detail. Leader of the tribe during their regrettable conflict with Britain, Cetshwayo proved to be one of the tribe's most competent rulers. Greaves' analysis of the Anglo-Zulu conflict is very balanced and thorough. He is highly critical of Britain's imperial policy which forced the Zulu nation into war. Having suffered early humiliating defeats at the hands of the Zulus, the British indulged in a vicious war of attrition. The awful catastrophe of Isandlwana where some 1,357 imperial soldiers died within an hour had to be avenged. Britain made it policy to take few prisoners and kill Zulus where they found them, an awful parallel to America's Indian policy. Greaves concludes his expansive study with the demise of the Zulu state, accelerated with the destruction of Cetshwayo's royal household at Ulundi. Soon after, peace was made and the Zulus were forced into American-style reservations under British control. Greaves argues persuasively that this fragmentation led to the persistent factionalism that has dogged Zuludom ever since. While full of information and engagingly written, *The Zulus at War* does have flaws. First and foremost, the book appears to be unedited. Whole paragraphs repeat themselves in several places. Some have been slightly altered, while others

repeat verbatim. Sadly, this tarnishes an otherwise entertaining and enlightening read. The fault for this oversight lies with both author and publisher for releasing unedited work. Still, *Zulus at War* is a worthy read. With this accessible and comprehensive history of the Zulu people, the armchair African historian can enjoy an engrossing read on a rather unknown subject.

The Zulus as a recognizable entity have only existed since the late 1700s. The authors do their best to tell the story of the Zulus fairly, but from the point of view of the Zulus. The Zulus quickly became powerful through discipline and bloodshed. Nevertheless, when their territory was invaded by the British in 1879, they "had been at peace for twenty-three years and no British settler or traveller had ever been harmed." The ultimate result was inevitable, but the Zulus achieved remarkable successes along the way. Strangely, this disciplined people would have achieved even greater success if they had obeyed their King's order not to attack fortified positions. The aftermath of the war featured British greed, brutality and incompetence. The authors have written a chronicle worthy of the heroic Zulus.

A terrific history of the ZULU people and their history with Great Britain. For history buff who like the 19th century a gold mine

Good research over a long time period. The story seemed balanced, with a Zulu co-author.

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