

Conquest of the Zulu Kingdom 1876 – 1897

Importance: The conquest of the Zulu kingdom is an important subject for military history study because it spans the evolution of tactical warfare from the 19th Century infantry in red coats line abreast to the 20th Century mobile troops in butternut and gray. Weapons were evolving to breech-loading rifles and rapid-fire Gatling machine guns.

This was the Late Victorian Age, characterized by British imperial expansion and Queen Victoria's "Little Wars," almost entirely fought with Imperial troops against poorly equipped native armies. None has characterized the age better than the Anglo-Zulu War (also referred to in short form as Zulu War).

Treatment: I have chosen to refer to some of the conflicts immediately preceding the Zulu War to show that this war was a conquest that was part of a Colonial policy to expand influence and territory rather than to settle a dispute.

The exhibit develops chronologically, with representative covers illustrating the units involved and the major battles they fought. The British took an entire generation to finally defeat the Zulus. Part of the delay was the resistance by Zulus to exploitation, and part because British Colonial policy shifted several times with changes in Parliament.

The Zulu War itself only lasted 8 months in 1879; however, inept handling of the peace sowed seeds of the Zulu Civil War and general unrest in the 1880s. A Postscript deals with events after Annexation of Zululand by Natal in 1897 until South African Unification in 1910.

Knowledge: I have built a substantial library of books, maps and articles on this period in Zululand and Natal. By working with other collectors, I have also created a data base of the military postal history of the period and written a number of articles.

The postal history of the Zulu War has not been comprehensively treated in philatelic literature, primarily because there are less than 180 covers

extant covering the period 1876-1879. The war was brief, the numbers engaged were small, and therefore the postal history is difficult to acquire. The war itself is a popular military history topic.

Rarity: It cannot be emphasized too much how difficult the challenge has been to acquire representative postal history covering the major units and the major events of this period. This exhibit took 16 years to build, plus some fortuitous opportunities to acquire key items. The rare covers are indicated by rarity statements based on the personal census that I developed.

Condition: The covers reflect the wartime conditions, and a few are quite rough as can be expected. No attempt has been made to improve any of the covers. Because of the limitations of seeking postal history items from particular units and particular events, occasionally less-than-ideal material had to be accepted.

Presentation: A judicious use of maps are presented to aid the viewer unfamiliar with the events.

Key References:

McNamee, David, "Letters from the Zulu War," *Collectors Club Philatelist*, Vol. 91 No. 5 (Sept-Oct 2012), pp. 299-308.

Labland, John, *Historical Dictionary of the Zulu Wars* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009). Concise and comprehensive accounts of all battles and all major persons involved on both sides.

Morris, Donald R., *The Washing of the Spears* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965). The history of the Zulu Nation from its rise under Shaka to its fall in the Zulu War of 1879.

Also: The defense of Rorke's Drift was portrayed in the 1964 film *Zulu* written by John Prebble, starring Michael Caine and Stanley Baker. The 1979 film *Zulu Dawn* written by Cy Endfield, starring Bob Hoskins, Burt Lancaster and Peter O'Toole, portrayed the disastrous battle at Isandlwana and some of the weaknesses of British planning.