

# The Zulu Army in 1879

By Michael Farnworth

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In January 1879, a tiny African nation gave the mighty British Empire a bloody nose. Their name is still famous 130 years later – the Zulus.

The Zulu Army had proved to be practically invincible in battles with other African Tribes. They had significant successes against the Boers. The first major battle with the British resulted in a massacre of the British column at Isandlwana. However, the Empire struck back and defeated the Zulus within six months.

This article attempts to identify the principle elements of the Zulu Army in 1879. Each of these regiments is described in terms of shield design, history, estimated strength in 1879 and actions. Each of the major battles is presented with a list of the Zulu regiments present.

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## 1. Introduction

Zulus are a tribe of **Nguni** people in South Africa. In English, the Nguni are often described as Bantu but this term can be used for over 400 ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Zulus live in the western region of modern South Africa. The area is called **Kwazulu** and **Natal** on modern maps.

The rapid growth of the Zulu nation was largely down to the policies and leadership of **King Shaku (1778-1828)**. Shaku, the illegitimate son of Zulu chief **Senzangakhona**, was brought up by a neighbouring tribe, the **Mthelwa** and served in their army. Shaku was a tall powerful man and a fierce warrior. He became a leader of the army and developed the encircling tactic of horns and chest. In 1816, Shaku's father died and he returned to become king of the Zulu. King Shaku introduced the **amabutho** system to the Zulus in 1816.

Between 1816, and 1879, the Zulu conquered their neighbouring tribes and expanded their lands twelve fold. By 1828, the Zulu army was at least 20,000 strong and by far the strongest tribal army in Africa.

White colonists, particularly the Boers, and later the British also wanted Natal. The British took over control of neighbouring lands from the Boers in 1848.

King Shaka was assassinated in 1828. He was succeeded by **King Dingane**, who ruled until 1838. This period saw the first hostilities between the Zulus and the Boers culminating in open war in 1838.

**King Mpande** ruled from 1838 to 1872. He had two sons, **Cetshawayo** and **Mbuyazi**. The two sons fought a bloody battle for control at eNdondakusuka 1856. Cetshawayo won and in effect became ruler for his father. **King Cetshawayo kaMpande** was finally crowned in 1872.

By 1877, it was clear to the British that war between the colonialists and the Zulu was inevitable. Britain sent a military force in 1878 and waited for an excuse to invade. In December 1878, **Sir Henry Bartle Frere**, the British High Commissioner in South Africa, issued an ultimatum to King Cetshawayo to disband his army and surrender his nation to the British Empire. The ultimatum expired on January 11, 1879.

Three columns of British soldiers, under the command of **Lieutenant-General Lord Chelmsford**, invaded Zululand on 11<sup>th</sup> January. **Colonel Wood** advanced into the North towards **Kambala** and **Hlobane**. The main invasion force under **Colonel Richard Glyn** advanced in the centre towards **Isandlwana**, stopping to build a supply base at **Rorke's Drift**. **Colonel Pearson** advanced into the South towards **Eshowe**. All three columns planned to meet at **Ulundi**, the Zulu capital.

### Note

Many books and websites list the British forces at each battle in minute detail. In contrast, the Zulu Army is a mystery. Many books tell the same simplistic story about the army and its structure. However more detailed analysis is elusive. There is a lot of information about the main Zulu impi that fought at Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift but much less about the forces present at the other battles.

This subject is very confusing as Zulu spellings can vary considerably and some regiments had more than one name. There are different regimental descriptions in various books and websites. This article was made by cross referencing the works of three popular authors on the period (Angus McBride, Ian Knight and Jonathon Sutherland).

Additional website research was used to gain up to date information and also to try to resolve some of the many anomalies. The forum users at isiZulu.net were very helpful with translations.

## 2. Structure of the Zulu Army

### Organisation

The **amabutho** system (ibutho) was first used by the **Mthelwa** tribe under King Dingisawayo. The king ruled over many local tribes, each loyal to their own chief. To consolidate power in the kingdom, men were formed into regiments loyal to the king rather than remaining in their tribal groups. It was a form of national service starting from school age.

Young boys were schooled in same age groups called **intanga**. At the age of 20, these intanga joined together to form **ikhanda**, which were combined to form regiments loyal to the king. These regiments were called **ibutho**. The plural **amabutho** is also used to describe the regimental system.

<b>Intanga</b>	Group of same age young boys, rather like a school class
<b>Ikhanda</b>	“head”, a group of 40-50 men, the basic military unit.
<b>iviyo</b>	A company made up of several ikhanda
<b>ibutho</b>	A regiment
<b>amabutho</b>	Several Regiments, also used for the system
<b>Impi</b>	Army

The word **ibutho** is usually translated as “regiment” which implies 1,000 to 2,000 warriors. However, the word but this is confusing as it can refer to a company size unit of 500 up to a brigade of 4,000 warriors. Amabutha were combined together to form larger regiments and brigades.

Regiments were named at their inception and later received one or more “praise names”. For example, in 1861 the umXhapho “Mongrels” were formed. Later, this regiment earned the name of uHlwayi, which means “Shower of shot”. After January 1879, they were known as uMpanga (the grey headed ones who do not die).

Regiments served in rotation for a few weeks of each year in peacetime. They had some military training and ceremonies each year. They performed many non military duties, building and maintaining kraals (farms) and **ikhanda** (military camps). They also tended the royal cattle.

At about the age of 40, regiments were given the right to officially marry. This marked retirement from regular service. Marriage is often misunderstood. Many of the men already had long time girlfriends and sometimes also children. Marriage meant that the men could build their own homes and that their priority was family rather than state. After that, they would only attend for a short period to perform

ceremonial duties each year. They remained as reserves ready to be called up in a time of crisis.

## Tactics

The Zulu impi (army) formed a battle formation of a chest **isiFuba** flanked by two horns **impondo zankoma** or **izimPondo** and backed up the loins (reserves) **umaVa**. The loins frequently sat away from the battle with their backs to the action.

There were variations of the tactics. Sometimes, one horn would advance in sight of the enemy in order to split their forces.

Often the horns remained hidden in order to make a surprise flank attack. A key element of the method was to use the terrain to conceal troop movements. Zulu commanders, **izinduna**, stationed on high ground, out of sight of the enemy, coordinate the attack with hand signals.

<b>induna</b>	Commander
<b>izinduna</b>	Commanders

## Weapons

Most warriors carried a thrusting spear, called an **iklwa** or **assegai**. Many also carried two or three javelins. For close combat, clubs called **knobkerrie** or **iwisa**, were a common weapon. Axes were occasionally carried.

Before the 1879 war, the Zulus had purchased firearms from Europe. It is estimated that the Zulus had nearly 20,000 guns before the war started. Many were old **Brown Bess Muskets** from the Napoleonic wars. They were used at Rorke's Drift to good effect.

However, the old muskets were no match for the **Martini Henry rifles** of the British. However, at Isandlwana, the Zulus captured at least 1,000 Martini Henry rifles which were used from then onwards.

## Uniforms and Insignia

In the field, the principle insignia for Zulu regiments was the pattern on the **isiHlangu** (large war shield). Troops armed with firearms often carried smaller shields **umBumbuluzo** but these would have been relatively rare in 1879. However, there was a cattle disease between 1872 and 1879 which decimated the royal herds and forced the use of mixed shields. It may well be that regiments formed after 1872 (e.g. uVe) were equipped with the smaller umBumbuluzo shields.

In very simplistic terms, the warriors in the horns would have had black shields, some with white patches. The warriors in the chest would have had more white on the shields with black patches for unmarried troops and red brown patches for married men. The veteran warriors in the loins would have had mostly white shields.

Married warriors wore their hair in wax arranged in a ring – hence “**head ringed**” is another term for married. Unmarried men wore their hair in various styles including some spiky arrangements made with wax.

Zulus have very fancy ceremonial uniforms but went to war stripped down to basic clothing. Ornate feather headdresses and animal skin bibs were usually only worn on ceremonial occasions.

Some parts of the ceremonial uniform were sometimes worn in battle. Many Zulus regiments wore a headband. For married regiments this was of otter skin. For unmarried regiments, leopard skin headbands were common. Many regiments wore a belt or kilt of fur shaped to look like striped monkey tails. Some warriors wore armbands, leg bands and bibs of fluffy white cows' tails.

Individual warriors were awarded red feathers to wear in their headdress as a symbol of bravery. Similarly, brass armbands were given as battle honours to veterans. These were often worn on the right arm.

Commanders wore more of the fancy ceremonial headdress and uniform in action. They also carried staffs with distinctly shaped heads to aid in signalling. After, Isandlwana, British pistol belts were often worn as officer symbols.

### 3. The Zulu Army in 1879

#### Strength of the Zulu Army in 1879

The size of the Zulu army in 1879 was estimated by **Sir Henry Bartle Frere**, to be 40,000. There is very good evidence for the main Impi of 24,000 at Isandlwana and a second Impi of 6,000 at Eshowe on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879. Further troops must have been deployed in the North and on guard duty at various villages.

The figure of 40,000 warriors is realistic. Of these, perhaps 30,000 were unmarried warriors between 20 and 40 with the remainder being older reserves. Additionally, several thousand youths between 12 and 19 served as porters for the army.

Ian Knight provides an order of battle for the main Zulu army in Campaign 14 - The Zulu War 1879. Sutherland and McBride provide further information in their accounts of the battles. McBride (Men at Arms 57, page 6) provides a table of regiments with their inception date. The table also lists many of the combinations as regiments were integrated into others. This provides a very good basis for structuring any Zulu army list.

Here are 22 regiments that were active in 1879 ranked by seniority.

#### Married Regiments

The married regiments were officially a reserve force. However, the regiments from 1852 onwards were involved in most major battles. Their total strength was circa 15,000 on paper but probably 10,000 in reality.

1821-27	amaKwenkwe'	"Young Boys"
1833.	umKhulutshane	"Howling"
1843.	uDlambedu	"Forceful" (iNgwegwe)
1844.	izinNgulube	"Pigs"
1846-51.	amaPhela	"Cockroaches"
1852.	isAngqu	"White Tails" or "Orange River" a mountain
1854.	uThulwana	"Dust"
1857.	inDlondlo	"Black Mambas"
1858.	uDhloko	"Savage"

#### Unmarried Regiments

The unmarried regiments were the core of the army. The regiments from 1857 to 1875 onwards were involved in most major battles. Their total strength was circa 30,000.

1857.	iMbube	"Lions"
1859.	uDududu	(a place)
1860.	iQwa	"Frost",
1861.	umXhapho	"Mongrels" also means dog food...
1862.	inSukamngeni	"Starters from the Umgeni River"
1863.	uMbonambi	"The Evil Omen" also a common surname
1865.	uNokhenke	"Skirmishers"
1866.	iNdluyengwe	"The Leopard's Lair"

1867.	umHlanga	“Reeds”
1868.	umCijo	“Sharpeners”
1872.	inGobamakhosi	“Bender of Kings”
1875.	uVe	“Fly Catchers”
1878.	uFalaza	“Clouds in the Sky”

## Allies

### abaQulusi

The abaQulusi were an independent Ngoni clan that was not part of the Zulu “amabutho” military system. They were however, highly respected and fought as a royal section in the army. The leader in 1879 was Prince Mbilini waMswati.

### Coastal Tribes

Various independent Ngoni tribes supported the Zulus, particularly at Gingindlovo. However, they are often simply described as local tribes or coastal allies. Two tribes are possible, the **Qwade** and the **Mthelwa**. The Mthelwa are more likely allies as they had strong links with the Zulu since King Shaka's time.

## 4. Major Battles of 1879

The British invaded Zululand in January 1879 in three columns. Colonel Wood advanced into the North towards Kambala and Hlobane. The main invasion force under Colonel Richard Glyn advanced in the centre towards Isandlwana, stopping to build a supply base at Rorke's Drift. Colonel Pearson advanced into the South passing by Gingindlovo towards Eshowe. All three columns aimed for the Zulu capital at Ulundi.

Ian Knight provides a comprehensive list of events in Osprey Campaign 14; The Zulu War 1879. [www.britishbattles.com](http://www.britishbattles.com) provides a list of the British forces at each battle and a summary of events. Wikipedia also gives comprehensive information about the Anglo – Zulu War.

## iNyezane and Eshowe (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879)

### Zulu Commanders

Godide kaNdlela – army commander

Mbilwane kaMahlanganisa - brigade commander

Masegwane kaSopigwasi - brigade commander

Matshiya - brigade commander of the left horn, which lead the attack

### Zulu Regiments

1843. uDlambedu (iNgwegwe)

1844. iNgulube “Black and White Pigs”.

1846-51. amaPhela “Cockroaches” specifically iNdabakwombwe

1860. iQwa “Frost”,

1861. umXhapho “Mongrels”

1862. inSukamngeni “Starters from the Umgeni River”

Early in the morning of 22<sup>nd</sup> January, Colonel Pearson's column in the south was attacked by a second Zulu impi (army) at the river iNyezane. The impi was estimated at 4,000 to 6,000. The attack was repulsed quickly by the British. However, the British moved to nearby Eshowe and made a defensive fort. They were besieged until 3<sup>rd</sup> April.

## **Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879)**

### **Zulu Commanders**

Chief Ntshingwayo kaMahole Khoza – army commander

Chief Mavumengwana kaNdlela Ntuli

Prince Dabulamanzi kaMapande (reserve)

### **Zulu Regiments**

#### Left Horn Regiments

1863. uMbonambi “The Evil Omen”  
1872. InGobamakhosi “Bender of Kings”  
1875. uVe “Fly Catchers”

#### Chest Regiments

1867. umHlanga “Reeds”  
1868. umCijo “Sharp Points”  
1852. IsAngqu “White Tails” or “Orange River”  
1833. umKhulutshane “Straight Lines”

#### Right Horn Regiments

1857. iMbube “Lions”  
1859. uDududu  
1865. uNokhenke “Skirmishers”

#### Loins at Isandlwana

Reserve Regiments that were sent to Rorke's Drift

1866. iNdlyengwe “The Leopard's Lair”  
1854. Uthulwana “The Dust Raisers”  
1858. uDhloko “Savage”  
1857. inDlondlo “Horned vipers” (according to Knight)

The British Central column made an advanced base at Rorke's Drift and then moved onwards. Near to Rorke's Drift British troops burned a krall (homestead) owned by a local induna, Inkhosi Sihayo kaXongo.

They set up camp in front of the mountain at Isandlwana and started scouting for the main Zulu Army. The scouts disturbed the Zulus who were resting. Both sides were surprised and this prompted an immediate Zulu attack. The Zulu commanders, managed to bring some order to the advancing forces. They sent a small right horn behind the mountain to outflank the British. The chest and left horn pressed home the attack overwhelming the British troops. The battle started about 12.00 and was over by 16.00. 858 British soldiers and 471 African allies were killed. The Zulu reserve forces were sent onto attack Rorke's Drift 10 Km away.

Zulu casualties were 2,000 dead either on the field or from wounds. The Zulus captured 1,000 rifles with the whole of the column's reserve ammunition supply.

## Rorke's Drift (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879)

### Zulu Commander

Prince Dabulamanzi kaMapande.

### Zulu Regiments

1866. iNdluyengwe	"The Leopard's Lair"
1854. UThulwana	"The Dust Raisers"
1858. uDhloko	"Savage"
1857. inDlondlo	"Horned vipers" (according to Knight)

The reserve from Isandlwana were disappointed not to have been involved in a great victory and ran the 10 km distance to Rorke's Drift. The first warriors arrived about 16.00, eager to attack the British. The supply base was defended by 139 British troops commanded by Lieutenant John Chard, Royal Engineers, and Lieutenant Gonville Bromhead of the 24th Foot. The British built defensive walls from supply boxes and flour sacks. Approximately 4,500 Zulus attacked the post continually during the evening and on into the night. Each time, they were repulsed by rifle fire and bayonets. Before dawn, the Zulus withdrew after having taken at least 500 casualties.

## Ntombe Drift (12th March 1879)

### Zulu Commander

Prince Mbilini kaMswati

### Zulu Regiments

abaQulusi

A British supply convoy in the North was trapped by the rising Ntombe river. Despite forming a defensive V formation, the convoy was attacked during the early morning by a force of Zulu allies under Prince Mbilini. It was escorted by a company from the 80th Regiment. Captain Moriarty and 60 of his men were killed. The Zulus captured the baggage train and looted the supplies.

The Zulus are described by Sutherland as Swazi allies and by Knight as Mbilini's followers. Both suggest the abaQulusi. The Zulu force was described at the time as 4,000 but modern historians estimate about 800.

## Hlobane (28<sup>th</sup> March 1879)

### Zulu Commander

Prince Mbilini kaMswati in Hlobane

Chief Mnyamana kaNgqengelele Buthelezi – commander of army

### Zulu Regiments

abaQulusi

1868. umCijo	"Sharp Points"
1872. InGobamakhosi	"Bender of Kings"
1875. uVe	"Fly Catchers"

As a reprisal for the massacre at Ntombe Drift and to stop Zulu raids, the British sent Colonels Buller and Colonel Russell each with 700 and 250 mounted troops each to attack either end of Hlobane. The British assault on the abaQulusi stronghold on Hlobane mountain became a massacre for the British. Buller lost 12 officers and 80 men. An unrecorded number of native irregulars were killed. The abaQulusi were reinforced by the main Zulu impi on its way to Kambala. The impi was estimated at 20,000, although only the right wing was actually involved at Hlobane. The InGobamakhosi and abaQulusi were the principal Zulu combatants

## **Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> Match 1879),**

### **Zulu Commander**

Chief Ntshingwayo kaMahole Khoza – army commander  
Chief Somopho kaZikhala mthembu  
Chief Mnyamana kaNgqengelele Buthelezi  
Prince Mbilini kaMswati leader of abaQulusi

### **Zulu Regiments**

1852. IsAngqu	“White Tails” or “Orange River”
1854. Uthulwana	“The Dust Raisers”
1857. inDlondlo	“Horned vipers”
1857. iMbube	“Lions”
1858. uDhloko	“Savage”
1859. uDududu	
1863. uMbonambi	“The Evil Omen”
1865. uNokhenke	“Skirmishers”
1866. inDluyengwe	“The Leopard’s Lair”
1867. umHlanga	“Reeds”
1868. umCijo	“Sharp Points”
1872. InGobamakhosi	“Bender of Kings”
1875. uVe	“Fly Catchers”

abaQulusi

The main Zulu impi clashed with a large and well prepared British force of 2,000 British troops and native levies. The Zulus were repulsed with at least 3,000 dead and wounded.

## **Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879)**

### **Zulu Commander**

Chief Somopho kaZikhala mthembu – army commander  
Chief Mbilwane kaMahlanganisa - brigade commander  
Chief Masegwane kaSopigwasi - brigade commander  
Prince Dabulamanzi kaMapande – brigade commander  
Chief Sigwelecewele KaMhlekehleke - leader of inGobamakhosi

### **Zulu Regiments**

1852. IsAngqu	“White Tails” or “Orange River”
1854. Uthulwana	“The Dust Raisers”
1863. uMbonambi	“The Evil Omen”
1867. umHlanga	“Reeds”
1868. umCijo	“Sharp Points”
1872. InGobamakhosi	“Bender of Kings”
1875. uVe	“Fly Catchers”

Plus coastal allies

As the British forces moved to relieve the besieged troops at Eshowe, the main Zulu impi of 12,000 attacked a large and well prepared British force of 5,250 men in a square formation supported with artillery. The Zulus were repulsed with at least 1,000 dead and wounded.

## **Ulundi (oNdini) (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).**

### **Zulu Commanders**

Prince Ziwedu kaMpande (brother of the king)  
Chief Ntshingwayo kaMahole Khoza – army commander  
Chief Mnyamana kaNgqengelele Buthelezi –brigade commander  
Prince Dabulamanzi kaMapande – brigade commander

### **Zulu Regiments**

1821-27	amaKwenkwe'	"Young Boys"
1844.	iNgulube	"Black and White Pigs".
1852.	isAngqu	"White Tails" or "Orange River"
1854.	uThulwana	"The Dust Raisers"
1857.	inDlondlo	"Horned vipers"
1858.	uDhloko	"Savage"
1859.	uDududu	
1860.	iQwa	"Frost",
1861.	umXhapho	"Mongrels"
1862.	inSukamngeni	"Starters from the Umgeni River"
1863.	uMbonambi	"The Evil Omen"
1865.	uNokhenke	"Skirmishers"
1866.	iNdluyengwe	"The Leopard's Lair"
1868.	umCijo	"Sharp Points"
1872.	inGobamakhosi	"Bender of Kings"
1875.	uVe	"Fly Catchers"

As the British moved to capture the Zulu capital of Ulundi, they were stopped by the Zulus. The main Zulu impi of 20,000 to 24,000 clashed with a large and well prepared British force of 17,000. The Zulus were repulsed with at least 3,000 dead and wounded.

The **amaKwenkwe** are only mentioned in McBride. As the original warriors would have been aged between 72 and 78, it is unlikely that they were a significant fighting force.

## **5. Regimental Descriptions**

### **Corps and Brigades**

#### **uSuthu**

Prince Cetshwayo's formed a personal army called **uSuthu** in 1856. They fought at Ndondakusuka (2<sup>nd</sup> December 1856) where he defeated and killed his brother Prince Mbuyazi. uSuthu regiments were uThulwana, inDlondlo, isAngqu, uDlambedu, izinNgulube, iNdabakawombe and the abaQulusi. Although uSuthu did not officially exist in 1879, its regiments remained the respected core of the army. uThulwana

were the king's own regiment. iNdabakawombe were appointed as the royal guard in 1879.

### **amaPhela Brigade “Cockroaches”**

This brigade was more of a battle group, formed from several veteran regiments. amaPhela regiments were iNdabakawombe, umKhuze, uNongamulana, umSikaba and umZinyathi. Sometimes, the most prestigious regiment, **iNdabakawombe**, is used as a description of the unit.

uDlambedu and izinNgulube fought alongside amaPhela in 1879 and could be considered part of the same brigade.

### **uNdi Corps (also oNdini)**

In 1879, uThulwana, inDlondlo and iNdluyengwe were combined as the uNdi Corps. They were deployed together at Isandlwana and Rorke's Dift.

### **uNodwengu corps**

In 1879, uDududu, iMbube and isAngqu were combined as the uNodwengu Corps. However, although uDududu and iMbube were deployed together in the horns at Isandlwana, isAngqu were deployed in the Chest.

### **1868. umCijo “The sharpener”**

Also called uKhandempemvu. The oversize regiment was from two training groups, the uMtlisazwe “peacemakers” and the iNgqakamatshe “stone catchers”

### **1872. InGobamakhosi “Bender of Kings”**

Sutherland describes that this oversize regiment was also brigaded together with **uVe**. They were usually deployed together as one of the horns of the army.

## **Married Regiments**

The married regiments were officially a reserve force. Married warriors wore their hair in wax arranged in a ring – hence “**head ringed**” is another term for married. For married regiments the headband was of otter skin.

### **1821-27 amaKwenkwe' “Young Boys”**

The word **amaKwenkwe** means “young boys who have not yet been circumcised”. McBride describes them as present at Ulundi but they are not listed by Knight or Sutherland. As they would have been aged between 72 and 78, it is unlikely that they were a significant fighting force.

Formed	1821-27
Typical age of warriors	62-78 Married
Strength	Originally 1500, however much less in 1879
Shield Colour	White with black patches



**1833. umKhulutshane “The Howling”**

McBride describes them as the oldest regiment present at Isandlwana but they are not listed by Knight or Sutherland. umKhulutshane is translated in some books as “Straight Lines”. According to members at isiZulu.net, It is the howling of a dog.

Illustration – Men at Arms 57 B2

Formed	1833
Typical age of warriors	63-66 Married
Strength	Originally 1500, however much less in 1879
Position at Isandlwana	Chest – the oldest regiment, so at the back
Isandlwana	Attacked northeast corner of British position
Shield Colour	White, possibly with dappled or spotted edges



**1843. uDlambedu (iNgwegwe) “Forceful”**

Also called umDlenu and iziNgwegwe (iNgwegwe or umZwangwenya) uDlambedu means to be Forceful or act Vigorously.

The original regiment was one of the first in Shaka’s army formed in 1816. It was reformed in 1829 and again in 1843. uDlambedu was part of uSuthu in 1856. They were present at the siege of Eshowe (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879).

Formed	1843
Typical age of warriors	63-66 Married
Strength	Originally 1500, much less in 1879
Shield Colour	red shields



**1844. izinNgulube “Pigs”.**

Also known as iGulube combined with 1845 iNkone. izinNgulube was part of uSuthu in 1856. They were present at the siege of Eshowe (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879) Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).

Formed	1844 or 1845
Strength	Originally 1500, much less in 1879
Typical age of warriors	54-55, Married in 1854
Shield Colour	Red shields and white patches.



**1846-51. amaPhela Brigade “Cockroaches”**

Also referred to by the principal regiment **iNdabakawombe**

This regiment was more of a battle group, formed from several veteran regiments. The original regiments date from 1846 to 1851 and were combined successively after the conflicts with the Boers and after the Zulu Civil War. amaPhela regiments were iNdabakawombe, umKhuze, uNongamulana, umSikaba and umZinyathi. uDlambedu and izinNgulube fought alongside amaPhela in 1879 and could be considered part of the same brigade.

iNdabakawombe was part of uSuthu in 1856. In 1879, most the iNdabakawombe were assigned as the kings personal regiment to guard oNdini, but some are reported by Sutherland as present at Eshowe (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879).



Formed	All from 1846-51
Typical age of warriors	53-58, married
Strength	1500
Shield Colour	Red

**1852. IsAngqu “White Tails” or “Orange River”**

This regiment is also called **amaShishi**.

IsAngqu is translated as “white tails” or “orange river” in many books but it also the name of the mountain in Zululand.

IsAngqu was part of uSuthu in 1856. IsAngqu was present as part of uNodwengu Corps at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> Match 1879), Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).



Illustration – Men at Arms 57 D1

Formed	1852
Typical age of warriors	44-47 Married
Strength	1500
Shield Colour	White, some with red brown markings.

**1854. uThulwana “The Dust Raisers”**

Also written as **Thulwana**. The Zulu word means “dust”. By 1879, this regiment also incorporated the 1855 **isiBabule** “sulphur” and 1856 **iNkonkoni** “Wilderbeast”.

This regiment had a famous history. Created by King Mpande in 1850, both Prince Cetshwayo and his brother Prince Mbuyazi served in the regiment during the 1852 conflict with the Swazi. uThulwana were part of uSuthu in 1856.

The uThulwana and much younger InGobamakhosi fought over women in January 1878, resulting in 60 dead. This incident also was cited by the British in their demands for dissolution of the Zulu army.



As part of the uNdi Corps, they were present at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Rorke’s Drift (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> Match 1879), Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879) and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879). In 1879, uThulwana, iNdlondlo and iNdluyengwe were combined as the.

Illustrations –Elite 21 J3, K2, Men at Arms 57 D3, Warrior 14 Db

Formed	1850
Typical age of warriors	49 Married
Strength	1500
Shield Colour	White, some with small red patches

**1857. inDlondlo (iNdolondo) “Black Mamba”**

Also spelled as **iNdolondo**. The regiment also had praise names of **uShisizwe** “landburners” and **imiDwaimba** “tall men”. Often translated as “poisonous snakes”, according to the forum at isiZulu.net, inDlondlo is actually a black mamba snake. A viper is called “imfezi” i.e. due to the fangs.



In 1876, inDlondo and uDloko were involved in the chastisement of a Tonga tribal village. Having “washed their spears” in combat, both regiments were allowed to marry. The women selected were relatively young, some were already married and many of them fled. They were brought back and some women executed. This caused British diplomats to send a warning to Cetshewayo, who was furious at British interference.

InDlondlo were present at Isandlwana (22nd January 1879), Rorke’s Drift (22nd January 1879), Kambala (29th March 1879), Gingindlovo (2nd April 1879) and Ulundi (4th July 1879).

Parade dress consisted of a crane feather headdress with two ostrich feathers. The headband is otter-skin. The shield is recorded as red with white patches. It may have been similar to uDhloki which is red with a white spot.

Illustration – Men at Arms 57 B2b shows a married man in parade dress.

Formed	1857
Typical age of warriors	42 Married in 1876
Strength	1500
Shield Colour	red shields and white patches.

**1858. uDhloko “Savage”**

Also spelled **uDloko**

In 1876, inDlondo and uDloko were involved in the chastisement of a Tonga tribal village. Having “washed their spears” in combat, both regiments were allowed to marry. The women selected were relatively young, some were already married and many of them fled. They were brought back and some women executed. This caused British diplomats to send a warning to Cetshewayo, who was furious at British interference.



One of the main regiments in the 1879 war. Present at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Rorke’s Drift (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> March 1879), Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879) and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).

Illustration – Elite 21 G1

Formed	1858
Typical age of warriors	38-41 Married
Strength	2500
Shield Colour	Red with one white spot

## Unmarried Regiments

The unmarried regiments were the core of the army. Unmarried men wore their hair in various styles including some spiky arrangements made with wax. For unmarried regiments the headband was of leopard skin.

### 1857. iMbube “Lion”

As part of uNodwengu Corps, iMbube were present at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> Match 1879), Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879) and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).

The formation date is given as 1857 but this leads to an anomaly as they should have been a married regiment in 1879. iMbube are not mentioned by McBride.

Formed	1857
Typical age of warriors	Born 1837, therefore 42 Unmarried
Strength	500
Shield Colour	Black with White spots



### 1859. uDududu

uDududu is a place at lower south coast of Zululand.

uDududu were present at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> Match 1879), Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879) and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879)

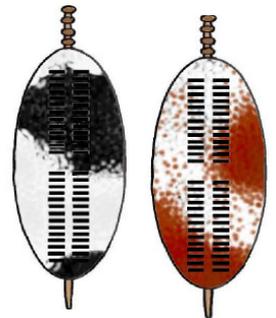
Formed	1859 (Sutherland gives 1857)
Typical age of warriors	Born in 1837-39, therefore 40-42 Unmarried
Strength	1500
Shield Colour	Black with White spots, Sutherland says at bottom



### 1860. iQwa “Frost”,

Also spelled as **iQhwa**. The word means “frost” in isiZulu. This regiment was present at Eshowe (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879) and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).

Formed	1860
Typical age of warriors	39, probably unmarried
Strength	Probably 1500
Shield Colour	Black and White or Red and White



**1861. umXhapho “Mongrels”**

Often translated as “mongrels”, Umxhapho is, according to Izingulu.net, a liquid substance that can be consumed by dog = dog food!  
This regiment is also called uHlwayi, which means “Shower of shot”. After January 1879, they were known as uMpanga (the grey headed ones who do not die). Sutherland describes them as closely associated with uDududu. However, the main regiment of uDududu were at Isandlwana, 50 miles to the north. UmXhapho were present at Eshowe (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).



Illustrations – Elite 21 I2, Warrior 14 Dd

Formed	1860 or 1861
Typical age of warriors	38-39, probably unmarried
Strength	Probably 1500
Shield Colour	Black with some white spots

**1862. inSukamngeni “Starters from the Umgeni River”**

This regiment was present at Eshowe (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).



Formed	1862
Strength	Probably 1500
Typical age of warriors	37, unmarried
Shield Colour	Black with White spots, Sutherland says at bottom

**1863. uMbonambi “The Evil Omen”**

They can also be called **iNkonyanebomvo**, which means “red calf”. Mbonambi is a common surname of people from northern Zululand. The name can be translated as “those who experience sorrow” or as “the evil omen”. One of the main regiments in the 1879 war. Present at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> Match 1879), Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879) and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).



Illustrations – Elite 21 K1, Men at Arms 57 C1, Warrior 14 Dg

Formed	Originally from 1821, formed again 1863-64
Typical age of warriors	Born in 1842 – 1844, therefore 35-37 Unmarried
Strength	2000
Shield Colour	Black with small white spots or patches.

**1865. uNokhenke “Skirmishers”**

Also spelled **Nokhenke**

uNokhenke were present at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> Match 1879), Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879) and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).

Illustrations –Warrior 14 Dh

Formed	1865
Typical age of warriors	31-34 Unmarried
Strength	2000
Shield Colour	Black or Dark Brown, some with white spots



**1866. iNdluyengwe “The Leopard’s Lair”**

This can be translated as the leopard’s lair or the leopard’s den.

As part of the uNdi Corps, they were present at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Rorke’s Drift (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> Match 1879), Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879) and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879). They were based at oNdini.

Some warriors of this regiment were armed with muskets. At Isandlwana, they suffered the ignominy of being discovered by British scouts whilst resting in a ravine. They chased fleeing British after the battle before being sent onto Rorke’s Drift. At Rorke’s Drift, they attacked the north side, and also provided snipers from the Oskarberg

Illustrations – Elite 21 I3, Men at Arms 57 D2

Formed	1866
Typical age of warriors	30-33 Unmarried
Strength	1000
Shield Colour	Black with white spot or speckles below centre.



**1867. umHlanga “Reeds”**

umHlanga are only mentioned by McBride. They were present at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> Match 1879) and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).

Formed	1867
Typical age of warriors	32 Unmarried
Strength	1000
Shield Colour	Black one large white spot



**1868. umCijo**

**“The sharpener” or “Sharp Points”**

Also called uKhandempemvu. Sometimes translated as “sharp points”, ukuCija is to “sharpen”, hence umCijo means “the sharpener”. The alternative name uKhandempemvu (uKhandempemum) means “head with black and white markings”. The regiment was from two training groups, the uMtulisazwe “peacemakers” and the iNgqakamatshe “stone catchers”



um Cijo were present at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> March 1879), Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879) and Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879). They were probably also at Hlobane (28<sup>th</sup> March 1879).

Illustrations – Campaign 14 p83, Elite 21 H2, H3, Men at Arms 57 C3, Warrior 14 De, Df

Formed	1867 or 1868
Typical age of warriors	31-32 Unmarried
Strength	2500
Shield Colour	Black or Dark Brown, many with white spots on one side.

**1872. InGobamakhosi**

**“Bender of Kings”**

InGobamakhosi were present at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Hlobane (28<sup>th</sup> March 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> March 1879), Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879) Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).

The uThulwana and much younger InGobamakhosi, who were barracked together, fought over women in January 1878, resulting in 60 dead. This incident also was cited by the British in their demands for dissolution of the Zulu army.

Illustrations – Elite 21 J2, K3, Men at Arms 57 B1, Warrior 14 B, Di

Formed	1872 or 1873
Typical age of warriors	Born in 1852-53, therefore 25-26 Unmarried
Strength	4000
Position at Isandlwana	Left Horn
Isandlwana	Attacked east side of British position.
Shield Colour	Mixed – Black, red, many with white patches Mostly dark brown with white patches (Sutherland)



**1875. uVe “Fly Catchers”**

uVe is the isiZulu name for the bird, *Terpsiphone viridis*, African paradise-flycatcher.

uVe were present at Isandlwana (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879), Hlobane (28<sup>th</sup> March 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> March 1879), Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879) Ulundi (4<sup>th</sup> July 1879).

Uve were one of the youngest regiments and each company bore the shields from their training camp rather than a consistent regimental shield. It may well be that UVe were equipped with the smaller umBumbuluzo shields.



Illustrations – Campaign 14 p50

Formed	1875
Typical age of warriors	Born in 1855-58, therefore 21-24 Unmarried
Strength	2000
Shield Colour	Mixed – Black, red, many with white patches

**1878. uFalaza “Clouds in the Sky”**

The uFalazu were newly formed in 1878 and were still in training. They do not feature in any of the major battles and probably acted as replacements for regiments that had suffered casualties.

Formed	1878
Typical age of warriors	21 unmarried
Strength	probably 2000
Shield Colour	probably mixed

**abaQulusi**  
also **aBaqulusi**.

The abaQulusi lived in the North of Zululand and used the flat topped mountain Hlobane as a natural hill fortress to protect their cattle herds. They were an independent Ngoni clan that was not part of the Zulu “amabutho” military system. abaQulusi were however, highly respected and fought as a royal section in the army. They were part of uSuthu in 1856.

The leader in 1879 was Prince Mbilini waMswati. They were present at Ntombe Drift (12<sup>th</sup> March 1879), Hlobane (28<sup>th</sup> March 1879), Kambala (29<sup>th</sup> March 1879), Gingindlovo (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1879).

Formed	Not part of Zulu system
Typical age of warriors	Probably 20-45 some married
Strength	1000
Shield Colour	not known - probably mixed with white patches

## **6. References**

This subject is very confusing as Zulu spellings can vary considerably. There are also different lists and different regimental descriptions in various books.

### **Books**

#### **Osprey Men-at-Arms 57; The Zulu War by Angus McBride**

This book is my favourite. It gives a very concise but complete summary of the events and both armies. It also includes a table of Zulu regiments explaining incorporation dates and alternative names.

#### **Osprey Elite 21; The Zulus by Ian Knight and Angus McBride**

Extra information on the Zulus

#### **Osprey Warrior 14; Zulu Warrior 1816-1906 by Ian Knight and Angus McBride**

Currently out of print.

#### **The Zulu Kings and Their Armies by Jonathan Sutherland and Diane Canwell**

Published by Pen and Sword Military in 2004, this book includes detailed descriptions of the minor battles and a second view on the regimental histories. It also includes a timeline.

#### **Osprey Campaign 14; The Zulu War 1879 by Ian Knight and Ian Castle**

This book focuses strongly on two battles - Isandlwana and Kambala. The book also includes a table of Zulu forces and a detailed timeline of the 1879 events.

#### **Osprey Elite 32; British forces in Zululand 1879**

Covers the British Forces and their allies.

#### **Osprey General Military; The Zulu War by Ian Knight and Ian Castle**

This book is a combined volume of Campaign 14: 'Zulu War 1879', Elite 32: 'British Forces in Zululand 1879' and Elite 21: 'The Zulus'.

Also of interest

#### **The Washing of the Spears by Donald R. Morris**

This comprehensive and long book was written in the style of a historical novel in the 1960s. It remains a reference work today.

## Websites

### Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zulu\\_army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zulu_army)

This page is a useful introduction to the Zulu army with links to references to the battles of 1879.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IsiZulu>

An explanation of the Zulu language

### isiZulu.net

<http://isizulu.net/>

This site offers an on-line dictionary English to isiZulu and vice versa. There is also a forum where you can get help with translations. The forum users at isiZulu.net were very helpful.

<http://izn.2.forumer.com/index.php?act=idx>

### British Battles

[www.britishbattles.com](http://www.britishbattles.com) provides a list of the British forces at each battle and a summary of events.

### Birmingham's Guards Wargames' Club

<http://members.tripod.com/kriegsmann/1klwa.html>

This has a website page which shows shields for various regiments in the Zulu Army. Note – sometimes the shields on this website are slightly different to those shown here.

### Empress Miniatures

<http://www.empressminiatures.com/page10.htm>

This has a website page which describes various regiments in the Zulu Army. Note – sometimes the information is slightly different to this article.

<http://www.greatendeavours.co.uk/colonials/index.php>