

**4/3/13 -Day 87-Richards Bay, South Africa-Shakaland (KwaZulu-Natal Province):**

The Amsterdam arrived in Richards Bay, South Africa about 7am with a light rain coming down. The scene on the austere industrial dock was soggy, as shown in the picture on the left. The conditions were particularly dreary for some souvenir vendors, shown below, who had come to the pier in hopes of making a few sales to the Amsterdam tourists.



Richards Bay is South Africa's largest harbor. It is situated on a lagoon at the mouth of the Mhlatuze River on the northern coast of KwaZulu-Natal Province.



Richards Bay got its name from Sir Frederick Richards who was the Commodore of the Cape during British colonial days. Richards Bay is a relatively new city with the plans being laid in 1954 and not officially declared a city until 1969. The deep water port serves as an important link for oil and gas lines feeding Johannesburg and other inland areas. There is also titanium, aluminum and fertilizer production at local plants using electricity generated from massive coal reserves in South Africa. The location of Richards Bay in South Africa is shown in the map on the left.

We had signed up for a tour of Shakaland near the town of Eshowe. Shakaland is a specially constructed site representing a traditional Zulu village about 70 miles from Richards Bay. The location of Shakaland in KwaZulu-Natal province is shown on the right.

The Zulu people make up the largest South African ethnic group, (10-11 million) and they live mainly in the province of KwaZulu where we were located today. The Zulu people formed a powerful state in 1816 under their King Shaka. King Shaka united what was formerly just a weak confederation of tribes. The Zulus fought the colonization efforts of the British in fierce battles that finally ended with their defeat on July 4, 1879. The Zulus were administered in KwaZulu Province much like Indian tribes in the United States on reservations. However, in 1970 a South African law was passed that resulted in hundreds of thousands of Zulus living on their own land outside of KwaZulu being rounded up and forcibly moved to KwaZulu. By 1993 approximately 5.2 million Zulu people lived in KwaZulu.



The Zulu language is the most widely spoken first language in South Africa while English, Portuguese, Shangaan, Sesotho and others from among South Africa's 11 official languages are also spoken. As tourists speaking only English we had no trouble in negotiating the transportation, social and commercial system in South Africa during our visit. One feature of the country that was very helpful to us who only spoke English was that all the signs along the highways and in commercial settings were in English. Usually the signs were only in English but occasionally the sign was repeated in another language.

On our tour today we were going to attend a Shakaland program that explained and demonstrated Zulu culture and traditions for visitors. We joined our Holland America Tour group of about 31 people on the bus at 8:30am. Our guide's nickname was Shiny and her last name was Bright (get it?– Shiny Bright). She did a great job of describing the passing scene as we motored west to Shakaland.

Shiny said that the mineral reserves of South Africa are a major part of the economy. They produce phosphate fertilizer, timber for paper pulp, granite building stone, gold, titanium and aluminum as well as gasoline made from the extensive coal reserves. She said that after the changes in South African government in 1994 the rate of economic expansion really started to increase.

We hit the road driving in the left hand lane, of course, living out the legacy of a former British colony. A short distance from the port Shiny pointed out a large aluminum production plant. We traveled through rolling hills that were under cultivation in some areas and completely undeveloped in others. It was raining most of the way to Shakaland so the picture taking was somewhat limited. However, we got a few photos which showed how lush the vegetation was in the countryside.

We frequently saw sugarcane fields as shown on the right and below. Shiny said that the people of South Africa use a great amount of sugar in their daily food and drink intake. She also provided some interesting cultural background about the sugar industry. Shiny said that



when the white land owners first planted sugar cane in the early 1800s they couldn't get the local Zulu people to work the plantations in a scheduled labor routine. Since the Zulu's wouldn't work they imported workers from India to work the sugar cane fields. That solution was working well but then in the late 1800s the Zulus decided that they would like to do the sugar cane work so the large Indian population was out of a job. There was a lot of ethnic tension between the people from India, the Zulus, and the white plantation owners. Finally, in 1893 Mahatma Gandhi came to South Africa and through his social and political skill most of the issues were peacefully resolved.



In addition to the land under cultivation there was plenty of land that was completely undeveloped like that shown on the right. It was all beautiful to see, even in the rain.



There was commercial development that would be expected in a prosperous modern nation such as South Africa. Some examples of the type of residential and commercial development are shown below.



After about an hour and a half we arrived at Shakaland.



We were greeted by an enthusiastic and likeable Zulu man named Joe. He showered everyone with attention and made us feel welcome.

Joe led us through the entrance gate to the Shakaland village. Barbara immediately seized the opportunity to document the arrival of her library card in Shakaland, as shown on the right.





Near the entrance was the sign shown on the right that nicely summarized background information about the Zulu people and how King Shaka came to be so revered. It was not possible to make the text on the picture easily readable so the writing is quoted below.



## “ZULU

Between the Transkeian Territories & Swaziland & to the immediate north of Natal lies the land of the Zulu Nation.

It is a country rich in the violent grandeur of forest, bushveld & mountain range & rich in tranquility that pervades its valleys, gorges, rivers & plains. Its beauty is reflected in the very name it bears .....KWAZULU.... “Place of Heaven”.

During the first decade of the nineteenth century KwaZulu was inhabited by scores of clans all pursuing a similar culture. All speaking a similar language, but all distinctively named and ruled by independent hereditary chieftains. Among the smallest of the clans was the Zulu or “people of heaven” whose territory spanned the White, Umfolozi & Ummlatuze Rivers & whose ruler, Senzangakhona, was to sire a number of famous sons, among them the redoubtable Shaka.

In 1816 Chief Senzangakhona died & although the succession now fell to his heir Siguana, the throne was usurped by Shaka, who had meanwhile risen to prominence as a warrior & political leader of uncommon ability. No sooner had the dust he stirred up settled than Shaka mustered a small fighting force & embarked on the subjugation of the neighboring clans. During the following twelve years he extended his rule over the vast territory bordered by the Pongola River in the North & Pondolands Umzimvudu River in the South. A man not only of might, but also of extraordinary foresight, he was to become revered as the founder & architect of the powerful Zulu Nation & the first of its several illustrious kings.

The romance which surrounds his name of the Zulu Nation has lingered on for a century or more since the days in the mid eighteenth hundreds when their exploits were blazoned in dramatic headlines across the world. The tales of their deeds during those warring years read like legends of forgotten times.... But the Zulu epic is no fantasy!

Today below the hills where once stood Kwabulwayo, the great military kraal of King Shaka lies **SHAKALAND**.

After reading about King Shaka we understood why his name shows up prominently on public buildings streets and roads in South Africa. He holds a place among the Zulu people much like George Washington in eyes of United States citizens.

One of the first activities for our group was to walk through the center of the village and into a large circular thatched building used for a meeting lodge. Shiny, shown in the center of the photo below, went over the general agenda for the day and then she turned us over to the Zulu organizers.



We gathered in an outdoor courtyard where there was a model of a traditional Zulu village. Joe went over the design with us and explained the importance of each feature.



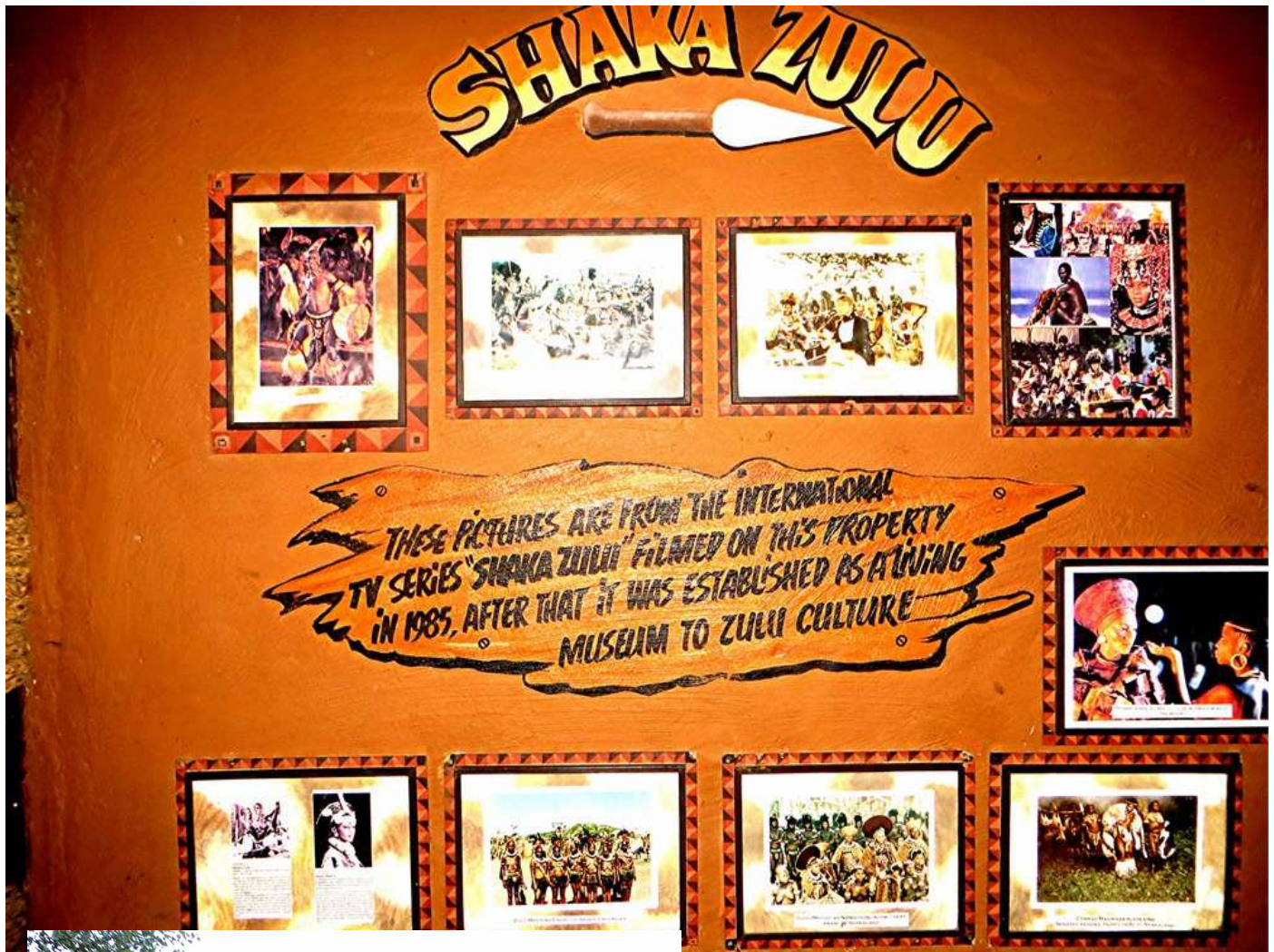


A photo of the entire model is shown below. The huts that served as living quarters were located in the outer circle within a protective fence of woven tree branches. The meeting lodge was the biggest hut, and then the chief and his wives had successively smaller huts. The food was kept in a hut that was elevated above the ground on four poles so animals could not easily get it. The center area was reserved for ceremony and other group activities.





It turned out that this model and all the buildings that we saw today were produced in support of a 1985 TV series called “Shaka Zulu”. This sign shown below explained how it happened. After the TV Series was filmed the property was preserved and dedicated as a museum for Zulu culture.



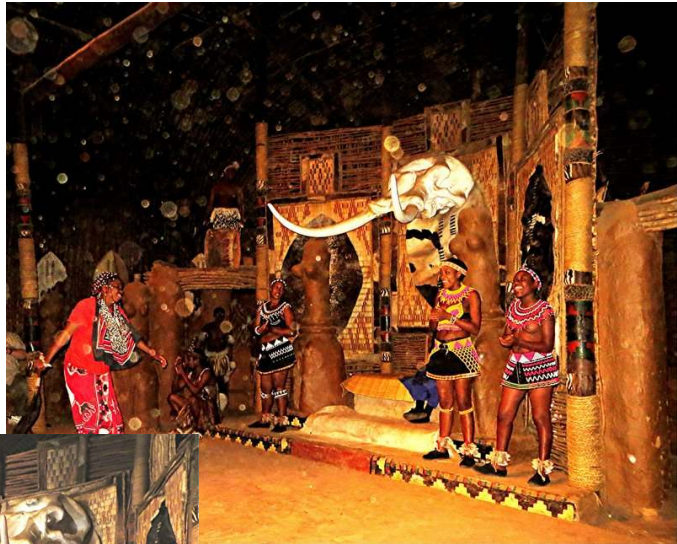
Shown on the left is a full sized food storage hut supported on four tree limbs to keep the food out of reach of stray animals.



This picture on the right shows a Zulu fence made with tree limbs and stones to make a more protective barrier around the village.



When Joe had finished his presentation we went to a demonstration of Zulu dances in the main meeting lodge. The following pictures show some of the dancers in the performance.





In their dance performance they would repeatedly kick one leg up high and nearly touch their face but we weren't able to catch that move in a photo. The drums were particularly loud during the dances. At the end of the performance the announcer brought our attention to the man shown with a drum in the picture on the right. His drum had a wooden stick that penetrated and was attached to the leather membrane near his feet. He played his instrument by wetting his hands and then pulling on the stick while letting it slowly slide through his wet hands. The stick vibrated and caused the drum membrane to vibrate and produce an unusual eerie sound. This was apparently a percussion instrument unique to the Zulu people.



After the dance demonstration our tour group walked across the courtyard to an even larger circular building with thatched roof. This was their cafeteria where we all lined up, as shown on the left, and picked up our buffet lunch of rice, stew, mixed vegetables and a selection of desserts.



After lunch it was still raining slightly but some of the people in our group grabbed their umbrellas and, as shown on the right, took a look at some of the souvenirs that some Zulu ladies had on display.



There was a general break time for souvenir hunting and many people went to the more upscale gift shop inside of one of the buildings as shown on the left.

This zebra skin on the right was one of the more exotic items they had for sale.





After the break we all went into a large amphitheater hut where we watched a movie about King Shaka. The movie illustrated in dramatic fashion the story of King Shaka's life as described above.

Finally it was time to leave and we said goodbye to our Zulu hosts. Fortunately the rain had stopped by the time we boarded our bus and headed out of Shakaland.

Nearby was a Pentecostal conference center with a tent like hall, as shown on the right. The subject of organized religion had not been discussed by the Zulus. There may not be any connection with the Zulu but we noted the existence of the conference center as a sign of religious diversity in South Africa.



We retraced our route back to Richards Bay and boarded the Amsterdam about 3pm. We had enjoyed and benefited from this brief visit to Shakaland. For us the Zulu had always been just a remote and fearsome African tribe that we had only seen in movies. Now we viewed them in a more positive light. It appeared that they are doing a good job of telling their story in the nation of South Africa.

The Amsterdam got underway at about 7pm. We were bound for Durban, South Africa. We were scheduled to arrive in Durban at 7am on Thursday, 4 April.