

CANNIBALS IN SOUTH AFRICA?

(Another Riley Tale)

New missionaries, learning the Zulu or Swazi language, we were surprised that the word for the South is kaMANINGIZIMU, “the place of many cannibals”. Where did this name come from? Were there ever any cannibal tribes in South Africa? That practice was abhorred by present Bantu tribes and even the Bushmen.

Around 1950, my family moved to Fairview Mission, near Umzumbe, on the coast, just north of Port Shepstone. We were told that the name came from UMUZIMUBI, the Evil Kraal, or place. In fact, a large group of Cannibals lived there in the time before Shaka. All the other tribes including the Bushmen hated them. Zulus were afraid to venture very far south of Durban unless they were armed and in large groups. The Cannibals were well armed, liked to fight, and eat, their dead, or captured, victims. Early Missionaries were sent to convert the cannibals. The missionaries were delighted because the people quickly learned to get off the floor, sit at tables, eat off plates, say grace, and eat their victims with Knives and forks. But before the people could be taught to change their diet, Shaka sent a large army which wiped out most of them, except for a few that escaped into the bush and river.

The few remaining cannibals, and their descendants, were able to secretly carry on some of their traditions. People continued to disappear and rumors were rife. Obese people were told to slim down if they did not want to disappear! The few remaining cannibals took on trappings of modern civilization. I suspected a family, near Fairview who were literate, drove motor vehicles, owned a Butchery and installed a telephone. Then I became even more suspicious when I saw their phone number which was 10810. LOL.

PS: If you have never called someone an “Oh”, then your lingo is not up to date.