

Dr. Andrew Bremner Lyall - Memoirs from Colleagues

“...I write to let you (and others in your family) know how much I valued and enjoyed my long-term friendship with Andrew. Early in my career we were colleagues at the University of Dar es Salaam Faculty of Law 1972-74 and in more recent years we met at a number of ‘British Legal History Conferences’ in various parts of Ireland and the UK, and most recently at a ‘Legal Histories of Empires: Perspectives of the Colonized’ conference in Barbados in July 2018. At that Barbados conference Andrew delivered a really excellent paper on work he had done on ‘Francis Barber, Jamaican manservant, companion and heir to Dr. Samuel Johnson and the ambiguous legal status of enslaved persons brought to England in the Eighteenth century’.

Going back to when we first met in Dar es Salaam, I saw a lot of Andrew both at work and at home on ‘the Hill’ where the University was and is. There was a group of expatriate lecturers who would gather weekly in the Sinza Road flat where I lived with my wife Robyn and our first child Jason. Andrew, Brian Slattery and his wife Mary-Anne Chang (both of whom I have kept in touch with – I stayed in their Toronto home in 2018) would gather in our flat and play Mahjong. Mary Anne was from Hong Kong and taught us a fun and fast way of playing that game. The most significant memory I have of Andrew’s academic work at that time was the controversy over his Masters thesis. It was a Marxist analysis of the class relations underlying the law of property in East Africa. An external examiner of the thesis was a Zambian academic who was bitterly hostile to any sort of Marxist analysis and he concluded that Andrew should be failed. He added that perhaps Andrew might obtain a MA in politics for this work but that it was not a ‘law’ thesis deserving a LLM. I was one of those in the Faculty meeting who then argued that the external examiner had not assessed the thesis on its merits as scholarship, but he had agreed that the thesis was worthy of a Masters degree. Rather than fail Andrew, or try to find another external examiner, it was agreed that the content of the thesis was well within our Dar es Salaam definition of legal scholarship. So Andrew (quite deservedly) was awarded the LLM degree...”

Prof. David Williams
July 2021

.... Andrew, Abdul (Paliwala) and I were the editors of the Eastern Africa Law Review. Really enjoyed working together. We used to go to Kimara and elsewhere to bars. We called ourselves Three Musketeers and were called by others as Three Musketeers. (I don’t think I ever checked it’s meaning!)

Andrew introduced me to my first beer when he treated me to a lunch at Etienes. It was my first time to Etienes.

Andrew introduced me to my first pub lunch - on Fleet Street - of Guinness and sandwich. We often used to eat at his flat on Sinza, if I recall correctly. Andrew introduced me to cheese omelette. Never before I knew about cheese omelette. At home we used to have fried omelette with onions - once a week. Cheese was the luxurious food of the European colonial class and a few high society Asians who had joined them.

In the small town Kilosa where I grew up there was one, what was then called, Provision Store (equivalent of a modern supermarket) where only white colonial administrators and Greek Sisal planters shopped. It had choicest wines, cheese and ice cream among other things. We Asian kids could only pass by but never enter. Swahili kids did not even pass by because they lived in their own segregated areas away from the center of the town. Whites lived on a Hill in palacious Government bungalows, Asians in the town Centre with shops in front and dwelling rooms at the back while Blacks lived in their townships (Ng'ambo) across the railway.

When I moved to a one-room apartment from research flats near Hall II, it became a kind of Commune. You would never know how many comrades slept there on any one night because the key was kept on the doorframe. Any comrade could enter and sleep on the couch or unroll a mattress, which was permanently "stationed" in a corner of the living room.

Once I remember Andrew helped himself to breakfast in the kitchen while we all were still asleep. He then left a thank you message on the back of a plate written by a marker pen. While the rest of us carried pens in our shirt pockets, Andrew would carry a marker because he was used to drawing charts. Andrew and Firoze Kassam (you may recall) drew that chart on the court system in Tanzania for their Legal Method class. The other day Dr. Tenga reminded me that he also developed a matrix on the history of land laws, which Tenga still uses.

When Andrew was writing his LLM you would find on his office desk neatly arranged index cards and a set of different colour markers. Andrew took great pride in organizing his writing material and notes neatly on his table.

Andrew used to come often to my home downtown and join us for lunch. We all ate with our fingers. Andrew refused to use fork and knife. He too tried (rather unsuccessfully) to eat with his fingers. My late father was very fond of him. He was particularly amused when Andrew tried to suck his mango and ended up with mango juice running down his arms!

BTW a number of us learnt driving in Andrew's used white VW with stick gear (we did not have automatic gear then). I did my first driving test in that car and I failed (the fault was mine not the car's). Couldn't do reverse parking!

When I received the email from Daniel carrying the sad news I immediately visualized visiting them at their Cheltenham home near a railway station where I spent a night.

Our dear friend has passed. ‘Ametangulia mbele ya Haki’ as we say in Swahili. He has joined the ancestors, the custodians of land!”

Warmly,
Issa (Prof. Shivji)
July 2021