

ADEA Newsletter May/June 2006

In two weeks I will be hosting my bi-annual dinner party. I am famed for these classy night of fine dinning sophistication. This year things will be quite different. I am hosting an event in order to raise funds for the hungry and exceedingly poor in the nearby coast villages of Kianga and Mseti. At this time of year, just before the new harvest , food becomes scarce and expensive; this year prices are even higher than usual. . With my friend Sefu, a fisherman from Kiannga, we will host a dinner on the beach offering grilled fish, coconut water and “meat”, traditional foods, and Makonde (the local tribe) dance and storytelling. All on the beach and under the fisherman bandas (wall-less huts)

[Two weeks later] Well, two nights ago my friend Sefu and I hosted the afore mentioned dinner. For a first time it was not bad. There were invited guests. What I failed to consider were the 100+ locals who are rarely at the beach, but with the sound of the drums they came. So the privacy of he beach I’d envisioned was a falicy. Eleven Akina mama (women folk) of the town volunteered to cook the food and serve it. We hired a traditional dance troop with drummers. As we ate under the roof of a palm roofed open air hut traditional stories were told while we ate coconut rice, fish, fried cooking bananas (plantains), spinach and coconut soup/sauce – the for dessert fresh coconut, banana bread (my contribution) and tea served in coconut shells. The event began at 4:30 and ended at 8:30 to experinence the sunset. Almos \$250 was contributed. All went well, except at the end when a pair of shoes was taken and finally a bag was snached from someone’s open car window.

[Two weeks and two days later] Drama begins to unfold. It seems that fear grips many people in the village – especially the children. You see, there were those there who know who the thieves were, but they were afraid to speak up. Sefu was squeezed to force them to speak up and take action as a village leader, and some guests were so insenced that we had given these people help, and this is how they respond by stealing and silence (some of we who have come here to give occasionally feel burned by the ingratitude we believe we are experiencing from some Tanzanians who are every taking and asking – rarely thanking.) It was not until the next morning that 5 young boys came to my home to share with me the name of the thieves. They were too afraid of their parents and village adults that they would pressise them, then beat them for their silence. In the end we learned the names and home of the two thieves, someone had visited one man’s home only to find he hadnor returned home. It was well known all along who these two were, but a strange fear grips the town. Though the village wanted more time, a police report had to be signed. In the end a police car went with Sefu to the village and one arrest was made, the other will be met at the boat traveleing to Dar es Salaam tomorrow.

[Three days later] As the event and stories continue to unfolded it is like Hollywood mystery drama: Testimonies of events and attitudes are conflicting - of one persons testimony contradics another. , anomonus text messages and conflicting stories abound. It seems it is not fear that plagues these villages but jealousy and distrust. You’ll have to wait for new next newsletter for fuller details, as that will numous pages. I am oddly optimistic about his. Through this, I have gained an intimate relationship with the villagers, and actually feel more welcome than I did before. The end is yet to be resolved.

People coming by the door – young man with upturned foot, begging friends. In Mtwara, as in every part of Tanzania, there is great need, and also a tradition of begging, one of the few traditional practices I have been invited to participate in regularly. I would not call it a steady stream, but it's not uncommon either (especially on Friday, the Islamic holy day). Some are blind elderly people being led by young children holding one end of a walking stick. Others are mentally ill

Our current and first Municipal Director, Fredrick N... seems to be a very positive force in Mtwara – or so I am told, as much of what buzzes around me sounds just like that – a buzz. This is wonderful because it has a lot of work to do. You see, technically, a town needs street signs, a garbage collection service, an ambulance, and an adequate population. Mtwara has none of those things (however the last they were able to overcome by expanding the town borders.)

“Laav Akbar, Akbar, En Shala. AAAAAH ... is the song/call of the over amplified mosque speaker I hear throughout the day. He sings live, and the usual man has a pleasing voice, though his occasional substitutes often lack pitch or self control when it comes to expression resulting in a less cohesive or pleasing song/call, but I enjoy a chuckle when his filigree results in crack in his voice he gets over ambitious about his range. About a year ago, three or so new mosques were built equipped with new sound systems. At first, I swear, it was a battle of the minarets, one trying to overpower the other’ I think the words “a cocofany of sounds” would be the right descriptions of these simultaneous calls were made. I think those living next to the mosques put a stop to such volume as it no longer occurs. Do not set your clock by these calls, remember, this is still Tanzania. Though I have not verified my belief, I am sure that calls are occasionally missed completely. Surely a great sin in another part of the world, but here it is a part of the spirit of the place. I do enjoy hearing the call, and often sing along.

Order system: In an effort to give the artisans greater control over their income generation and orders, ADEA has set up order form system which indicates an ideal instock number, it is the artisans job to check existing shop and storeroom inventory to determine their next order. For example: Let's imagine that ADEA wants in stock 6 ebony back scratchers. First Bwana Backscratcher finds there is 1 backscratcher in the shop, then 3 more in the storeroom. So, Bw. Backscratcher makes an order for 2 pieces, and also moves 2 pieces from the storeroom into the shop so they are ready to sell. We hope this system will give them greater involvement, decrease our responsibility to follow order needs, and give us a healthier stock supply.

- Theft: Two weeks before I returned to Mtwara our office and my home were broken into – our newly purchased used computer was stolen along with a few appliances, my snorkeling equipment, the top half of a hot pot, transformers, my French deck of cards (go figure). and various articles (included my broken boom box – glad to have that gone!). They were not violent, and searched thoughtfully through things – fortunately leaving my disk burner, scanner, feather bed pillows

and white linen table cloth with 12 linen napkins! Last week while passing through the bus stand I spotted my windbreaker. I was with my friend, and a young man was preparing potatoes for the French friy (chipsi) stands was wearing it. I fained interest in their work and asked if my visiting friend could have a picturee with the Chipsi makers. They happily complied, and now I have a picure to show the authoritiets. We shall see if this leads to anything. Philipo visited the police office, but they had misplace our report – so that’s another hurdles to deal with.

Last week, a man was caught stealing 10 chickens in a neighboring community. Sadly, he did not survive the stoning, leaving a wife and children behind.

Another trajic story (related to a different kind of stealing) is of the baby that died of malaria last week because the parents choose to take the child to a witchdoctor/medicine man for a fee of 20,000 Tshillings verses a visit to the dispensery for 2000 Tshillings. Surely there are natural known remedies for many ailments in which the witchdoctor is skilled, but some are obsessed with the power of their positions charging high fees to the very poor for show.

- Washing Machine – Finnish Did I tell you I have a washing machine? I bought it from friends who were leaving. Sort of package deal: a refrigerator, an over/stove, and the washing machine. It’s Finnish, and the instructions are in Finnish, so there is a lot of guessing going on just what dials do what. As I have no steady running water I have placed an oversize bucket onto of my refrigerator and fill it remembering the priciple that a higher bucket will empty into a lower bucket. It works – however slowly. But when it gets to the final spin cycle – it shakes and bangs violently. So when it gets to this point we run, sit on it and hold the back panel. One time we ran the machine in the evening and the thunder cycle began at 2:00 a.m. It roared through the quiet night so violently I covered my head with my pillow. Much to my frustration, the security guard we hired after the robbery, who protects our home with a bow and arrow, didn’t notice it! How heavily does he sleep?
- Oddly, I when engrossed in my work I am take by surprise when a goat or chicken passes my door – imagine my surprise the day a chicken and goat passed my office door – which is inside the building!!

In our painting division we have a growing number of apprentices (wanafunzi). The majority are young men who failed their exams that would allow them to finish their secondary studies. Some have been with us over a year and have so advanced in skills that they are producing new designs and selling in our gift shop. Masud came to ADEA three months again having trained two months under a master and has brought new styles to ADEA.

Thursday April 6th was the final day of our forth bi-annual artisan workshops. The final day was marked by a closing ceremony complete with ADEA directors (Philipo and

myself), government figure guest speaker (the municipal director), head table, 3 head chairs, 3 groupings of 2 sodas (Coca Cola and Fanta Passion), a bottle of water and glass, lines of benches and 27 of the participating artisans. Upon the municipal directors arrival I welcomed him into our office to show him the display of products developed during the workshop period, this was followed by the customary signing of the guest book (an event I captured on digital camera), then I ushered him to the meeting room where he was greeted by standing artisans and a sputter of applause. The rest carried on with two minor speeches, climaxing at the event highlight – free soda! These sorts of events are important in the local climate to legitimize and raise awareness of any projects efforts toward the local government. Mtwara is small enough that local government offices can make or break you depending on the character and motives of the official.