



...Children bringing up children

TANZANIA

More Notes from the WORSLEYS 4

It has been another fascinating week. Probably the big thing that happened, was something that didn't happen! Yes – another power cut, from about 2pm Thursday until almost 8pm Friday. Much of the Tanzanian electricity system is old and unreliable. When something goes wrong, there is no backup or by-passing the problem. A transformer at Msalato exploded and started a fire. The fire was quickly extinguished and so was the transformer. Just as well the fire didn't get established, as everything here is so dry that any fire can soon be out of control.

It didn't take too long for the power company to arrive on the scene and start work. The power supply comes into the college from two lines. One line went dead immediately, which was just as well. It appears that the other line must have been rigged to bypass the transformer. The issue then became TOO MUCH ELECTRICITY! Instead of receiving electricity at 230 volts, it was coming in at about 430 volts. Those who were serviced by that line had real problems. Lights flared madly before blowing. People lost TVs, refrigerators etc. (Most if not all units are equipped with voltage regulators to overcome the frequent power surges, but they are not built to withstand 430 volts!) While these

protected many computers etc, the voltage regulators were burnt out and needed replacing. Iri and Kate Mato from NZ lost a TV, several lights, a voltage regulator and surge control on their refrigerator. One person had just replaced his TV, video and sound system ... and he lost the lot. While the Power company is theoretically responsible for the losses, they have no money, so no one expects to receive anything. What a fiasco!

Twice now we have been invited out for a meal even though the electricity has disappeared. Both of these were with African families. They take it all in their stride as it happens so often. "Yes, still come." they say. They do their cooking almost entirely outside on charcoal fires, although one of these families uses gas. Candles are used for a dim lighting, assisted by a few torches. The Africans cook real banquets and are so hospitable to visitors and anyone who simply turns up. The black faces, with the whites of the eyes in sharp contrast, along with the shining white teeth and ear to ear smiles are captivating, especially in the dark. They are all so friendly and lovely to be with. Iri and Kate Mato went to a village further into the drought zone last Sunday. The people there are eating one meal every two days, but they're still smiling and thanking God for their one meal and all the other things he does for them. They thank God that people come to see them!

One of the African families we visited was reasonably well off. Mama Tupa works full time for the college and David works for the newspaper. He also runs a farmlet. Their house is big by African standards and they are continually improving it. Many of the Africans are hard working and do almost everything themselves, including making and drying the bricks. The gas for cooking is provided by two cows! The Tupas have built a small biogas plant. All the cowpats are put into a concrete tank and mixed with water. This ferments, the methane gas is collected and used. The two cows produce enough milk for the family and for the college staff morning teas.

Mama Tupa was asked how many people she had in the house. She said that she had 10 at present but sometimes it rose to 20. Only a few were immediate family - the rest were other relatives or people they helped out. All the African families we've visited are highly organised. The children often do the cooking. It doesn't matter whether they are family or not. If you're living in the house you help. The children often wash the guests hands before and sometimes after the meal. They often say grace and do it very thoughtfully. Probably the biggest shock is that the children all stand back and wait until all the adults have filled their plates before they take anything. What discipline! They are so well behaved it is unreal!

The other African 'family' we visited was an unmarried lady who had two young nephews with her so they could attend school. Again, the young ones cooked a magnificent meal and did the cleaning up afterwards. One of the boys wants to be an engineer; the younger one has his heart set on being a doctor. We hope they succeed as both are bright young people. Their aunty has one of those big smiles and shiny white teeth and is an attractive person. We were talking about Christianity in our respective countries. We said that we need to have African and Asian missionaries coming to us and to other



Typical landscape around Dodoma

western countries because we need some of the fire they have for God. She immediately pointed out that Tanzania still needs western missionaries and to prove her point she gave us her full life history.

She had little schooling as her family were poor. She did what she could to help in the local village church and eventually was asked to lead the youth group. She felt very insecure, but after much persuasion, she accepted. Sometime later she was invited by the bishop to attend a youth training conference. Through missionary support she received more education. Her parish was asked if they had anyone they would like to put forward to be considered for university in Nairobi, Kenya. She was nominated by a young boy, who believed that God wanted her there. She won the right to attend, but she had no money and neither did her church. The bishop convinced her to hold on to the dream and keep praying. Eventually she received mission support from England and Australia. She duly completed her bachelor's degree, majoring in the study of Islam. She now teaches Islam at Msalato. This gives the students an understanding of Islam so they can relate better to Moslems and where they're coming from etc.

The meals we are invited to invariably have 'soda' as a drink – lemonade, fanta, coke or mountain dew. We don't know why, but these drinks are much cheaper than in NZ. Another interesting custom that happens at every church we've been to is hand shaking. After the daily service at our chapel and any other mini services here, the leaders leave first, followed by staff, then students. As people leave they shake hands with the person who is next in line. Eventually, they form a large circle, with every person having shaken hands with everyone else. Then the blessing is given by the leader.

A number of times witchcraft has been talked about by the students. It isn't the witch and

broomstick sort. This is traditional belief, led by a witchdoctor or someone similar. The whole thing is deeply ingrained in their culture. Another issue is ancestors. Particularly in the remote areas the old customs live on. No one will do anything that may upset the ancestors as they believe these will come back and torment them. If anyone speaks out about witchcraft, this will upset the ancestors and ... It seems that a number of the clergy and even a few bishops are still involved. They get prayer for an illness and if any western medicine doesn't work they head straight off to the witchdoctor for his potions. The students know this is wrong, but as they say, "What can we do? If we say anything we will upset our elders, and the locals believe we will upset the ancestors. As soon as something goes wrong, the locals, even the church members will blame us and take it out on us." Of course, only some of the bishops do this!

Mary's bit ...On Friday morning one of my students was late to class. The student explained that she'd helped another girl who had fainted as she walked to her classroom. Immediately, my student's mobile phone contacted Rev Iri Mato who drove the sick girl to hospital. Apparently, she'd had stomach ulcers for ages, with increasing pain. BUT in Tanzania, nobody is admitted to hospital unless money is paid upfront. Iri had to return to the college for cash - it must be cash - from a medical fund provided from Australia, to cover the patient's expenses. Thank goodness for the Aussies!

As for a good medical result, one of the men in my class had suspected typhoid. He went in to Dodoma for testing last Saturday but the laboratory was closed. He tried again on Monday and Tuesday. It was still closed. He couldn't go on Wednesday or Thursday, due to the Muslim celebration of Eid. Finally, on Friday the test was carried out and he was found to be clear. Halleluia! Typhoid can be deadly unless the right treatment is given.

Saturdays are market days in Tanzania. Inevitably, half Dodoma's population heads out to a market somewhere in the country, driving speedily along the potholed, clay road. If accidents don't happen they ought to! The Canadian couple on our staff were almost wiped out when a large bus ripped in front of them – nowhere else to go – while a third vehicle came head on in their direction. We were given a vivid description at the evening meal. The couple virtually turned white in the telling! I've heard that story in conversation about three times now and it still shakes them up. Traffic can be a nightmare.

This morning after the 7am chapel service at the college, everybody heads out to various churches for the mid-morning service. I go to the Girls' School nearby. Services alternate between English and Swahili and both can be very good. Today's service was taken by one of my students from the basic English class. Actually, he's a pastor. Although he's not that great at English, when he takes a service in Swahili, he seems like a different person. He has dignity and understanding. It's lovely to see. As for me, I found myself unable to understand much of the service at all because my Swahili is abysmal. Now I know first-hand how my students feel if they struggle to learn a foreign language. It's very humbling really but it does me good. That's about it for now. We keep you all in our prayers. Much love and many blessings,
Charles & Mary