

In memoriam: R. Andrew Savage (1962-2016)

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A fiercely committed Tuareg scholar, R. Andrew Savage passed away in Marseilles, France, on 9 October 2016, due to postoperative complications following elective brain surgery. He had been suffering recurring headaches for the past three years, which had worsened in recent times. A scan had revealed a cavernoma in the cerebellum. The cavernoma (a cluster of abnormal blood vessels) was successfully removed on 28 September, but complications set in the next morning. Andrew lost consciousness after the first of several haemorrhages. He underwent more surgery, and was kept in an induced coma. Eleven days later, the fight was over. In a cruel twist of fate, Andrew never got to see his first grandchild, a boy by the name of Gabriel André, born to daughter Estelle and her husband Étienne just twenty hours after his *papi* died.

The fourth of five brothers, Andrew was born and raised in Stanthorpe, Queensland. At age 16, the young Australian lost his father and went to Brisbane to work, attending evening classes to complete his high school studies. In his twenties, he started travelling the world and developed a keen interest in languages and cultures, volunteering at different times onboard a couple of vessels owned by German based charitable organization GBA Ships. It was on one of them that he met his wife, French-born Hélène. The couple married in 1989 in Andrew's hometown. Soon after, husband and wife moved to France, where they taught English to professionals and had their first daughter.

In 1994, Andrew joined the Summer Institute of Linguistics and completed a Diploma of Social Science in Applied Linguistics in Melbourne. Between 1996 and 1998, he was involved in literacy work and the production of materials in Tamasheq, a Tuareg language spoken in Mali. It is during his time living in the north of Mali that he became fascinated by the hundreds of Tuareg proverbs people were naturally quoting in the course of everyday conversations. He started collecting them,¹ noting them one by one in a pocket book that he took everywhere he went. In trying to understand their meaning, he soon realized how intricately connected language and culture were. He then returned to Australia for a few years, with his family, and undertook tertiary studies at the University of New England (Armidale, New South Wales), graduating in 2000 with an MLitt in linguistics titled *Writing Tuareg Vowels: Advantages and Disadvantages of the three Script Options: Arabic, Tifinagh and Roman*. Apart from the Tamasheq dialect, the thesis also took in Tamahaq, the neighbouring Tuareg dialect spoken in Algeria. As a result of his research, Andrew became involved in the Unicode implementation of the Tifinagh script for Berber languages. He made concrete proposals in 2003 and again in 2008 (with Lorna A. Priest and Jon Coblenz). 2008 was also the year he published a paper in the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* on the three script options for Tuareg (Arabic, Roman, and Tifinagh). It was the first of four papers dealing with the question of writing in the language. The others were published in 2011 and 2012. By that time, Andrew had become the driving force behind the update and digitalization of Charles de Foucauld's monumental *Dictionnaire touareg-français*, posthumously published in 1951.² The centenary of Foucauld's tragic death in the Sahara desert was the object of a year-long commemoration in 2016 consisting of several events, some of which Andrew was involved in.

In 2001, months after graduating from the University of New England, Andrew commenced studies towards a PhD at the University of Newcastle, under the supervision of Jean Harkins, who introduced

¹ Digitalization of the proverb database is currently underway; see <http://proverbes-touaregs.fr>.

² See <http://tamahaq.tk>. Not to be confused with the less ambitious wikisource initiative accessible on: https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionnaire_touareg_-_français, which is basically a digitalized version of the original dictionary.

him to the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) approach advocated by Anna Wierzbicka, Cliff Goddard and others. The Tuareg proverbs he had started collecting were to become the topic of his PhD; it was his dream and ambition to explicate their often elusive meanings using NSM. In 2004, the entire family (there were by now four children) took up residence in France. This made it easier for Andrew to travel to Africa for his field trips, whereas H el ene was closer to her parents, who were finding it difficult to get by on their own. Andrew suspended his PhD candidature for a variety of reasons, but was determined to keep his interests alive, spending many years living on and off with the Tuareg people whose language and culture he found so fascinating. He took part in several international conferences and produced a few papers (2006, 2009, 2010) reporting on his proverb research.

My own contacts with Andrew go back to January 2007, when he e-mailed me with a request for information. He was by now living in the South of France, and still enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Newcastle. His supervisor, Jean Harkins, had told him about a conference in Montpellier, a few hours away from where Andrew lived; the conference was due to be held from 5 to 7 July, and was organized by a team of local linguists, mostly affiliated with the Universit  Paul Val ry, Montpellier III, and myself. The conference theme was “Les enjeux de la communication interculturelle: comp tence linguistique, comp tence pragmatique, valeurs culturelles” (“The stakes of intercultural communication: linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, cultural values”). Andrew was hoping to attend and perhaps even contribute a paper. Unfortunately, the deadline for submission of abstracts had passed, but this did not prevent him from travelling to Montpellier, where he and I first met. We stayed in touch and met again in Odense, Denmark, the year after, at the third instalment of the “Language, Culture and Mind” conference, held at the University of Southern Denmark from 14 to 16 July. I had obtained permission from the conference organizers to run an NSM inspired session on language and cultural values, and he was one of the speakers. He talked about how the proverbs he had collected could provide insights into Tuareg cultural values. It was a theme he pursued until the very end.

Away from the world of linguistics, Andrew always kept his faith and enjoyed serving the Protestant churches he was in contact with wherever he and his family lived. The title of a book he published weeks before his death provides an oblique reference to his religious beliefs. Titled *Walking Home: 2000 Km in 80 Days*, it relates the epic trek he undertook between August and November 2010 with two friends, walking all the way from Cairns, in the tropical north of Queensland, to Stanthorpe. The three men wanted to raise awareness of the 2000 languages that the Bible had not yet been translated into, even in part. A copy of the book was presented to daughter Yesica at her wedding in Bristol at the end of August 2016. She was the only member of the family who had not read through any of the soft versions predating publication. The release of the hard copy, on the other hand, came as a surprise to everyone.

Andrew is survived not only by his wife of 27 years and by four children, two older girls and two teenage boys, but also by his 87 year old mother in Stanthorpe and his four brothers. He was a multi-talented man with a huge passion for Berber language development and conservation, and he will be sadly missed by family, friends and colleagues, many of whom are only now starting to realize the scope of his influence and contacts. He was a great reader of books and an avid conversationalist around words, expressions, meaning. Andrew was also fluent in Spanish and taught linguistics at the University of León and in Latin America. He never managed to finish his PhD thesis, but he has left us with several scholarly articles, referred to above and listed below. The French articles were published under his 'French' name, André Savage.

PUBLICATIONS BY ANDREW SAVAGE

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