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General Theme:

CLOUDS OF CONTROVERSY, RAYS OF ROYALTY

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by

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This Newsletter is written for friends, relatives and colleagues. My home address is as follows:

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Even by my standards the concluding year of the twentieth century generated an exceptionally wide range of debates in my life. Was the difference in economic performance between Caribbean Africans and Caribbean Indians due to the difference between the consequences of slavery and the consequences of indentured labour? Was Africa still divided between coup-prone countries and coup-proof ones? Is homosexuality more dangerous than corruption in African societies? What is the nature of the gender-debate within Islam? Are African languages impediments for Africa's development – or are the languages the missing engine for development? Finally, were Africans mere collaborators in the trans-Atlantic slave trade – or were they the main enslavers of each other?

But 1999 had another paradoxical sub-theme in my life. On the one hand, I touched base with Royalty; and on the other, I engaged in the most heated debates on slavery in years. Royalty is a tradition of hereditary privilege; slavery is often a condition of hereditary servitude. In 1999 I found myself involved in both Royalty and assessment of slavery at different times.

Here is my last year of the twentieth century, for better or for worse!

I. Taking My Bride Home to Mombasa

Let us begin with the truly personal meaning of 1999 for the family – the most important events of the year for me. My Nigerian wife, Pauline (her other names are Maryam Ejimah) got her United States' green card (permanent residence) and was therefore able at long last to travel outside the United States. Since she and our two little boys had never been introduced to my family in Kenya, our first destination was my hometown of Mombasa. What a spectacular reception Maryam received from the women in my neighbourhood in Mombasa and all our friends!! One of the parties was held on a secluded beach – with tremendous Swahili cuisine, music and dancing. Our Islamic culture kept men at bay, while women sang and danced in private abandon!

Throughout the trip Pauline did me proud. She related to my people exceptionally well, and was soon in joking and laughing relationships with most of the women of her own age. I saluted her adaptability! She also looked radiant and beautiful. Of course, all my relatives called her Maryam rather than Pauline!

Pauline (Maryam) and I also took the children (Farid and Harith) on tourist expeditions – including a safari where we sighted three lions, a couple of cheetahs, a dozen giraffes, a hyena, many zebras, up to a hundred elephants, and a variety of other fellow creatures.

Our stay in Nairobi was much briefer than in Mombasa. But there too our relatives rose to the occasion and went beyond the call of duty to make Maryam and the kids feel welcome. Our deepest gratitude to all our family in Kenya. Huda Mazrui was the superb coordinator, bless her! The children of my three sisters (Salma, Nafisa and Aisha) were kept busy. My fourth sister, Alya, was the only one who was younger than me. So she herself was kept busy over our

visit. Her daughter was away studying in the United States. As for my elder brother Harith, he entertained us with his wit, good humour and wise anecdotes.

The only part of the Kenya visit which was a nightmare was my last two hours. I lost my wallet, including my documents for returning to the United States. We discovered the loss at the Nairobi airport just before checking in. We searched the car in which I had arrived at the airport, sent somebody back to the Norfolk hotel in Nairobi, made a number of phone calls – in vain! Very painfully I decided to remain behind in Nairobi while sending Pauline and the children back to the United States. The kids were bewildered and upset that I was remaining behind, but there seemed to be no alternative! (Farid was seven years old and Harith was six.)

After Pauline and the children had left to board the plane, my Nairobi relatives and I decided to search the car one last time!! The whole incident had happened at night, and my wallet was completely black. But this time, lo and behold, we did at last find the wallet, lodged underneath one of the seats in a very dark corner!!

We rushed back to the airport. The airline class on which my family was originally booked was now full. I got a seat in another class just a few minutes before the plane took off. Pauline and the kids had no idea I was on board until long after we were airborne. I went looking for them, and we found each other at last, Alhamdu li Llah (the Lord be praised)!

II. Between the African Sovereign and the African Subject

My first public debate in East Africa in 1999 was not, however, in Kenya. It was in Uganda, another beloved country of mine. I had been invited by a project which was co-sponsored by the Ugandan Parliament, the United States Agency for International Development and the State University of New York. The project was designed to strengthen the effectiveness of the Ugandan parliament. I was invited to be keynote speaker for a workshop on that theme.

In my presentation I did distinguish between African countries which were coup-prone (like Uganda, Sudan and Nigeria) and African countries which were relatively coup-proof (like Zambia, South Africa, Senegal and Tanzania). I argued that in coup-prone countries a multiparty-system carried the risk of triggering off a military coup. This was widely interpreted as a defense of the "no-party state" which was preferred by the government of Yoweri Museveni. My remarks unleashed a debate in Uganda which continued for weeks after I had left the country.

In reality I was simply pointing out the risks of multi-partyism in a coup-prone country, without prescribing whether or not the risks were worth taking. It was still open to a thorough-going democrat to insist that multi-party democracy was what Uganda needed even if it carried risks. The African subject could insist on full democratic citizenship.

Unbelievably, 1999 gave me a second opportunity to visit Uganda and to start a controversy on a dramatically different subject. For this second visit I was the guest of the

Faculty of Law, Makerere University in Uganda, co-sponsored by the Ford Foundation. The conference in Uganda was on "Constitutionalism in Africa". My own topic was on "Cultural Engineering and Constitutional Change". The most controversial part of my lecture was on whether African governments should pay more attention to fighting economic corruption than to fighting homosexuality. My paper came against the background of recent gay-bashing speeches by the presidents of Uganda and Kenya, and in the context of earlier denunciations of homosexuality by the president of Zimbabwe. These Presidents had acted like arbitrary sovereigns!

While Africa could learn a lot from the West about freedom, Africa had more to teach the West about family. Africa should learn to understand its gay sons and daughters, not in the name of freedom, but in the name of family. Homosexuals too are family. The real threats to the African family are uncritical imitations of the West, heterosexual promiscuity, rapid urbanisation, and heterosexually transmitted diseases, including HIV! The issue was debated in the Uganda press for weeks.

During my stay in Uganda I was stopped once or twice by members of the small Black homosexual minority (I am assuming it is small). I did not know them, but they knew me from press coverage. They wanted to thank me for speaking up publicly about their rights.

But my two visits to Uganda were not all about big public issues. The visits were also about meeting old friends and visiting old familiar places. Dr. Suleiman Kiggundu was a student at Makerere University when I was there as a professor and Dean of Social Sciences in the 1960s. Suleiman later came to the United States for graduate work. Today Suleiman is one of Uganda's leading economists and was for a while Governor of its Central Bank. Every time I have been to Uganda, Suleiman Kiggundu has been one of my pillars of support, although his own standing with the Uganda government of the day has, of course, fluctuated.

Another former Makerere student was Akiiki Mujaju. While Suleiman Kiggundu has always been a gracious fan of mine, Akiiki Mujaju was profoundly ambivalent about me. He once even wrote to UNESCO to denounce me!! And yet in 1998, when I visited Makerere under other auspices, and he occupied my old office as Head of the Department of Political Science, Akiiki Mujaju was gracious and charming. We sat together in my old office and talked like old friends. Of course, neither of us realized that barely a year later Akiiki Mujaju (at least ten years my junior) would be dead in a road crash in Uganda. I was shocked and bewildered when I learnt about his sudden death. But upon reflection I was glad that at least in 1998, in my old office at Makerere in Uganda, Akiiki and I parted as friends.

What is Uganda to me? Africa often allows a man to be polygamous! When it comes to countries, I have been married to five – Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, the United Kingdom and the United States. Those are the five countries in which I have actually lived.

But how does marriage to countries relate to marriage to women? Autobiographically, I

have been married to women from TWO of the countries in which I had lived. I was once married to a woman from the United Kingdom, and I am now married to a Nigerian. My English wife, Molly (Muna), gave me three great sons. My Nigerian wife, Pauline (Maryam), has given two equally great sons.

Between those two marriages there was a third special relationship -- to Uganda. Whenever I go to Uganda I try to meet Nalongo (mother of twins), who nearly became my own mama once upon a time. Two daughters of hers had been very close to me in Michigan in the 1980s, in-between my two marriages. One daughter subsequently got married to another man. The other daughter tragically died at the tender age of twenty-three. But Nalongo and I have continued to have a special relationship as friends. In jest she says she still wishes I had become her son-in-law!! We laugh about it! Of course, I am now happily married to somebody else. So is her eldest daughter! But Nalongo and I tease each other lovingly.

The other sub-theme of my 1999 is between Royalty and servitude. When I was in Uganda arrangements were made for me to meet with Kabaka (King) Mutebi II of Buganda. It was a special year for him. He graciously invited me to his wedding in August. But the date coincided with the beginning of the academic year at Binghamton University, and I therefore begged to be excused. As it turned out, I really missed out on a spectacular event. The wedding in Kampala was a glittering and dazzling success. My loss! After all, how often does one get invited to a Royal extravaganza? The Kabaka's subjects relished the event to the full!

Let us now turn to a different Royal house. Did you know that Queen Elizabeth II of England first became queen on Kenyan soil? This was because she was in Kenya when her father, George VI, died in February 1952. "The King is dead; long live the Queen!" She became queen immediately although the formal coronation took place the following year.

Well, this particular Kenyan, Ali Mazrui, did not meet Her Majesty until 1999!! I was in London as a guest of the London School of Economics. There was no plan to introduce me to the Queen. It just so happened that she was paying an official visit to London House, where I was accommodated during my visit. Queen Elizabeth and I exchanged a few words of greetings. We referred to Kenya, where I was born and where her reign began! In a more official capacity I had met her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, much earlier in my life.

My third Royal encounter of 1999 concerned Princess Elizabeth Bagaya of Toro. We had known each other, on and off, since my Makerere years. If Winnie Mandela was the most famous African woman of the 1980s, Elizabeth Bagaya was the most famous of the 1970s. She served as Uganda's ambassador to the United Nations and later as Uganda's Foreign Minister. She was previously famous both as a lawyer and as a model for fashion magazines. (She is still beautiful and well preserved.)

When Princess Elizabeth was visiting New York State in 1999 she was gracious enough to include Binghamton in her itinerary. We were delighted to welcome her to our humble home

and to have an African luncheon with her. One member of my household (Goretti Mugambwa) is in fact from Toro. So, in a manner of speaking, part of Princess Elizabeth's kingdom in Uganda was also part of Ali Mazrui's family in Binghamton, New York!

III. Between Military Rulers and Indentured Labour

Military rule is not royalty, though it often behaves as if it were. Military rule came to an end in Nigeria in 1999 after Olesegun Obasanjo was elected president. Paradoxically, Obasanjo was himself a former general and indeed a former military ruler – the first such ruler in Africa to step down voluntarily from power. He relinquished military power in 1979 to the democratically elected government of al-Haji Shehu Shagari. Twenty years later it was General Obasanjo's turn to become democratically elected and receive the reins of power from another military ruler, General Abdulsalami Abubakar.

Just before General Obasanjo's Inauguration a workshop was organized in Abuja, Nigeria, about the principles of good governance. The host was President-elect Obasanjo and his victorious political party. Our hosts decided to have two keynote speakers at the workshop – one with extensive experience in governance (Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, former President of Tanzania) and the other with presumed extensive experience in the study of governance (Ali Mazrui).

In my case the trip to Abuja for the workshop was a logistical nightmare. My starting point had to be Trinidad no earlier than May 22nd. I was to be in Abuja in time to give my lecture at the Obasanjo workshop in the morning of May 25th. And then I had to be in Scotland, to give a keynote address at the University of Edinburgh on May 26, 1999. I made it for the lecture in Nigeria (May 25th) and the lecture for my Scottish friends in Edinburgh (May 26th) by the skin of my teeth. It was a privilege to have played a part, however academic, in launching this new phase of Nigeria's democracy. Julius Nyerere and I were addressing newly elected members of parliament and senate, and the prospective Cabinet of the new administration.

Surrounded by our Nigerian brothers and sisters, Nyerere and I chatted away in Kiswahili. He appeared to be his old self, and showed no signs of being specially ill. A few months later Mwalimu Nyerere died in a London hospital. I was deeply shaken by his death.

Nyerere had been one African leader who, when in power, resisted so hard the pomp and ceremony of royalty or quasi-royalty. He resisted what has been called "the monarchical tendency in African political culture". He tried so hard to discourage a personality-cult around him, lived relatively modestly, tried to impose a Leadership Code of abstinence on all his colleagues, discouraged the cult of portraits of him everywhere (not very successfully), explicitly condemned the concept of "life-presidency", and stepped down voluntarily from power at the height of his authority in 1985. This was one African president who explicitly declined to become "Sultan Nyerere I". No wonder he translated Shakespeare's Julius Caesar into Kiswahili – in which Caesar is claimed to have turned down the offer of a crown three times. "Was that

ambition?... Ambition should be made of sterner stuff."

The other side of this coin of ambition, power and royalty is the theme of servitude. In 1999 I got involved in at least two debates concerning servitude and slavery. One debate was in the Caribbean and was sparked off by two lectures I gave in Trinidad and Tobago. The other debate was mainly in the United States and was sparked off by Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Skip Gates) in his television series, *WONDERS OF THE AFRICAN WORLD* (BBC-PBS, 1999).

In Trinidad and Tobago I was primarily the guest of the Central Bank of the country, which sponsors an annual lecture named after Eric Williams (1911-1981), the founder Prime Minister of the country. My topic for the Bank was "The Dual Society on the Eve of the New Millennium: From Rwanda and Cyprus to Trinidad and Tobago". (The lecture was sometimes advertised by the Bank under a modified title.) The lecture was attended by major dignitaries of Trinidad and by foreign ambassadors. My wife, Pauline, was also an official guest of the Central Bank.

But my more explosive lecture was the one I gave at the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, sponsored by the Institute of Social Research, whose Director was my old friend Selwyn Ryan. My lecture at the University was on the theme "**Africa and India as Mothers of Diasporas: Comparisons and Contrasts.**"

Trinidad itself was a dual-diaspora country, consisting of Afro-Trinidadians and Indo-Trinidadians. In my lecture I suggested that one of the reasons why Afro-Trinidadians had performed worse in the economy than Indians was because the damage of enslavement (to which Blacks had been subjected) was more devastating than the damage of indenture labour (to which Indo-Trinidadians had been subjected). This proposition was debated in the country's mass media for weeks long after I had left the country. Friends sent me clippings of the debate, parts of it extremely rude to me!! Indo-Trinidadians were particularly offended by my proposition because it seemed to deny them well-deserved credit for their economic achievements. I certainly did not intend to minimize the importance of their achievements. I was simply comparing the consequences of two historic evils (indentured labour versus outright enslavement).

IV. Between Enslavement and Reparations

My next big debate about servitude was triggered off by Skip Gates' television series later in the year in the United States. *Wonders of the African World* went to great lengths to portray Africans as slave-dealers selling each other. The TV series had next to no discussion about the role of the white man in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. I wrote what turned out to be the first major critique of the TV series, and e-mailed it to some twenty friends. But the Internet as a system then took over. My critique was disseminated beyond my wildest intentions. I got hundreds of e-mails in response.

Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian Nobel Laureate, reacted in a less than intelligent manner. While admitting that he had not seen the series, he attacked me for criticizing it! Talk of trying to kill the messenger without even bothering to read the message! How could Soyinka know I was not justified in attacking Gates' television series if Soyinka had not even seen the series?

Of course Soyinka might have thought that by attacking Gates' series, I was trying to protect an income from my own TV series, The Africans: A Triple Heritage. Somebody should tell Wole that I receive not a single penny from either the BBC or PBS for either the television series or the videos which continue to be sold. For better or for worse, the BBC convinced me in the 1980s that since the BBC was a non-profit organization, I could best serve the cause of future television programmes on Africa if I was only paid when we were filming and not paid future royalties. I have therefore not been paid by either the BBC or PBS for The Africans since the end of 1986.

It follows therefore that Skip Gates' television series is not a threat to me personally in the least. It is a threat to wider societal concerns. If enough African Americans were to believe that the main cause of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was Africans selling each other, this could do irreparable damage to relations between African Americans and their ancestral continent. That has always been my main worry about Gates' TV series.

My own family background combines the theme of both royalty and enslavement. In the course of the debate about the Gates' television series I had occasion to refer to what I had said in programme 4 of The Africans: A Triple Heritage.

"My own extended family is mixed. We are descended from both masters and slaves, rulers and subjects."

The Mazrui were governors of Mombasa for 139 years in all, but they were autonomous rulers independent of both Oman and Zanzibar especially from 1735 to 1837.

In 1999 I took my youngest children (Farid and Harith) not only to Mombasa but to the historic Fort Jesus from which the Mazrui ruled Mombasa for much of that period. The Fort is now a museum, complete with a light-and-sound show in the evening. Of course, we also saw the Mazrui Hall within the Fort. Very briefly we re-lived the regal side of the family's ancestry. "How are the mighty fallen!"

1999 also witnessed a wider academic interest in the history of the Mazrui. I received enquiries from researchers in Europe and the United States who were working on Mazrui writers across the generations (my grandfather, my father, my nephew and others.) To my surprise this particular project initially envisaged leaving out Ali A. Mazrui altogether, in spite of the fact that he has been the most prolific writer of them all!! Or was it because he was so prolific? Or perhaps Ali Mazrui was being left out because he wrote overwhelmingly in a European language? However, I was assured that language was not the reason. What then was the reason?

I understand the researchers have decided to "go back to the drawing board and review the situation"! Whether or not they change their minds about Ali Mazrui, it was a very curious decision in the first place! What could possibly have been the logic behind it?

A.B. Assensoh, the Ghanaian scholar at Indiana University, also developed a new interest in the Mazrui as a scholarly family in 1999. He moved relatively fast in his interest, and completed a conference paper for the annual meeting of the African Studies Association in Philadelphia. He hopes to develop the study further in the new millennium!

A young Egyptian PhD student at the University of Illinois, Ahmed Salem, presented a paper on "Ali A. Mazrui as an Islamicist" at the annual Binghamton conference on "Philosophy and Social Thought" in October 1999. Young Mr. Salem focused on the Islamic side of Mazrui's work, but claimed that Islam had been a constant feature of Mazrui's work rather than a recent development.

In 1999 I also received an enquiry from a graduate student in the Sultanate of Oman. This student's dissertation was neither on the Mazrui family as a whole, nor on myself. The Omani student's dissertation was on my father, Sheikh al-Amin bin Aly Mazrui. The student asked for material about my father, including any photographs. We sent him what we could. Presumably the Omani dissertation was to be in the Arabic language.

Closer at home in Kenya was the work on my father in Kiswahili by Ghalib Yusuf Tamim, one of my nephews. He wanted me to write a Preface or Introduction to his short but solid study about my father. More comprehensive in ambition was the work of Njuguna Mutonya entitled "**The Mazrui: Fiercely Independent Warriors**" which Mutonya was writing for the Daily Nation in Nairobi as a special report in their series of articles under MILLENNIUM COUNTDOWN. Part of Mutonya's work was published in the Daily Nation in November 1999.

My third son, Kim Forde Mazrui (a professor of law at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville) was doing research neither on ancestry nor on royalty in 1999. But he did share a research interest in the long term consequences of enslavement and racism for African Americans. How do we measure the impact of historical forces on present-day realities? As a professor of law Kim was particularly intrigued by the legal implications of racial disadvantages which seemed to have historical causes going back several generations. When Kim and his son Will visited us in Binghamton in the last week of 1999, we continued this discussion.

Although Kim's research interests were different from mine, they were related to some of the concerns of the Group of Eminent Persons (GEP) appointed by the Organization of African Unity to look into the case for reparations for Black enslavement and subjugation. I and eleven others were "sworn in" before Africa's presidents in 1992 in Senegal to serve as members of the GEP on Reparations.

In the new millennium the TransAfrica Forum in the United States, a Pan-African

organization led by Randall Robinson in Washington, D.C., is entering the reparations debate more firmly. Also in the new millennium I am delighted that my old friend, Henry Louis Gates Jr., has declared himself more clearly on the side of reparations on CNN Millennial programs. Skip Gates is an important ally for such a cause, and has imaginative ideas on methods of compensation which deserve careful study and discussion. If I had underestimated his commitment to the crusade for reparations, I do apologise. However, his TV thesis about Africans selling each other was a blow to the cause of reparations from the West.

My old fellow members of the GEP on reparations – Professor Jacob Ade Ajayi from Nigeria and Ambassador Dudley Thompson from Jamaica – came as usual to the U.S. annual meeting of the African Studies Association (ASA). But this year (in Philadelphia) we did not organize a special panel on reparations. Instead there were two panels to honour the work of Jacob Ajayi himself on his 70th birthday. The issue of reparations featured in those two panels.

Also at the ASA in Philadelphia, the impromptu session on Skip Gates' TV series – which was organized hurriedly by the President of the Association, Professor Lansine Kaba – turned out to be a spectacular and lively session. The session generated heated debate on slavery, including the issue of reparations. President Lansine Kaba cast me as keynote speaker at the session.

My third presentation at the 1999 ASA convention was to pay homage to the late President Julius K. Nyerere at a special session held to mark his sad demise. The topic of "Nyerere" was also the one I addressed at the annual meeting of the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA) which this last year was once again hosted by the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. As part of my AHSA presentation we also showed a video of extracts about Nyerere from my TV series, The Africans: A Triple Heritage. The AHSA convention of 1999 was partly to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell, which was born out of the Black Studies revolution of the 1960s.

The Institute for African Development at Cornell University hosts "*an Evening with Ali Mazrui*" every year. Dr. Joan Mulondo organizes these evenings. All Cornell Africanists and African students are invited, and some come with delicious African dishes for the buffet. After the dinner I start a discussion on a topical theme. In 1999 I spoke on "Comparative Catastrophies: Rwanda and Kosovo". This whole concept of "an Evening with Ali Mazrui" is both an excuse for getting together and a basis for serious discussion about Africa and world affairs. Ruzima Sebuharara gave me a ride to Cornell that evening in 1999.

There is an older and more state-wide Africanist institution in the State of New York – and that is the New York African Studies Association (NYASA). Since I am an elder statesman among Africanists in the State of New York, every year I am called upon to play a special plenary role at the annual meetings of NYASA. In 1999 at the convention at SUNY-Oswego I was once again banquet speaker for NYASA. Bless them all.

The International Studies Association held its 1999 convention in Washington, D.C.. Specialists on International Development had launched a special award for a Distinguished Senior Scholar in the field. I was honoured to receive the 1999 Distinguished Award. At the session there were moving tributes from colleagues in international development, in Islamic studies, in the field of North-South relations and in World Order Studies. It was more than I deserved.

However, the organizers had over-estimated the size of my fan-club in the International Studies Association!! So the hall was much larger than the crowd that turned up!!

I had a much bigger audience when I addressed a luncheon of the National Summit on Africa (eastern division), held in Baltimore. But on this occasion we were honouring Africa rather than merely Ali Mazrui! In any case, I shared the platform with a U.S. Senator, a U.S. Congressman, an African Bishop and African-American leaders of the National Summit on Africa.

What is the National Summit on Africa? It is a movement seeking to arouse the conscience and deepen the consciousness of America towards Africa. I am privileged to serve on its Board of Directors.

As for my old affiliation with the World Order Models Project, I have maintained contact with Saul Mendlovitz of Rutgers and Richard Falk of Princeton. Old and dear friends. The struggle continues.

V. Between Islamic Democracy and Secular Servitude

My Islamic agenda for 1999 also included issues of royalty and power, as well as issues of servitude. I was elected as the first Chair of a new organization called Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (CSID) based in Washington, D.C.. The organization has initiated a newsletter called the Muslim Democrat, a series of lectures in Washington, D.C. on a subject connected with "Islam and Democracy", and panel discussions at relevant conferences on that broad theme. The Vice-Chair of CSID is Professor John Esposito, himself a Roman Catholic but one of the leading experts in the world on political Islam. The Executive Director of the new Center is Dr. Radwan Masmoudi, a Tunisian-American, who can be reached for information at the following numbers:

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I plunged into an Islamic debate with my paper on "Islam and Democracy: Natural Allies or Strange Bedfellows?", which I presented under joint auspices of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy and Middle Eastern Studies Association, in Washington, D.C.. In the presentation I distinguished between aspects of Islam which were "democracy-friendly" (such as shura or the principle of consultative governance) and aspects which were "democracy-

challenging" (such as the status of women in Muslim culture). I also discussed Muslim monarchies and whether or not they were undergoing democratisation.

I repeated parts of this analysis in my longer presentation at Wilton Park, Sussex, England, where I was keynote speaker at an international conference on **"Islam and the West in the 21st Century"**. The Wilton Park conference was attended by diplomats, princes, scholars and journalists from a wide range of countries. In my keynote address I also discussed the paradox of why Muslim monarchies were uniformly and unanimously pro-Western (in foreign policy) but hardly ever Westernised (in cultural assimilation).

At a different time in England in 1999 I attended the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies to which I had been unanimously elected. Once again there was royalty. The Oxford Board includes both scholars (Western and Muslim) and royalty (mainly from the Muslim world). Britain's Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, is a patron of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. Prince Charles' lecture at Oxford on **"Islam and the West"** has been widely disseminated in both English and Arabic by the Oxford Centre. Alas, I was not able to attend the lecture. On the other hand, I lectured on **"Islam and Africa"** at the University of Edinburgh in 1999. It was the annual Royal Africa Society lecture.

Did you know that the House of Lords in London now has a Muslim peer? Lord Nazir Ahmad is the first and only Muslim "His Lordship" in the emerging British aristocracy. Lord Ahmad attended the 1999 annual convention of the American Muslim Council held in Washington, D.C. It was a pleasure meeting him. It was Lord Ahmad and his aides who invited me to consider having one of my future books launched within the House of Lords.

In 1999 I was not able to attend the autumn conference of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), which this last year was attended by some eighteen thousand Muslims. However, the ISNA's special issue of the magazine for the conference carried my article entitled **"The Qur'an between Doubt and Devotion"** which was a response to an article by Toby Lester published by the Atlantic Monthly earlier in the year.

I did manage to attend the smaller summer conference of ISNA on the dual themes of "Islam in America" and "Islam in American Prisons". I was the banquet speaker for this summer convention of ISNA in Columbus, Ohio. Among the extra benefits was my meeting such Ohio State University friends as Isaac Mowoe, Okey Onyejekwe, Alamin M. Mazrui and (visiting briefly) A.B. Assensoh. I also met with some members of their families.

In 1999 I accepted an invitation from Georgetown University to serve on the Academic Council of their Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding – a body whose mission is 'to explore the Christian and Islamic histories in their mutual engagements, discuss the role of religion in international affairs ... and foster scholarly contributions to peace and mutual understanding in a religiously divided world.' [I have summarised the Center's mission.] The Director is Professor John L. Esposito.

The Center has been truly and impressively successful, and it is another honour for me to serve on its Academic Council. The Center has received in 1999 a grant of \$1,250,000 (one and a quarter million dollars) from the PEW Charitable Trusts to conduct research on Muslims in the United States. The research project is coordinated by Professor Sulayman S. Nyang (originally from Gambia) and Dr. Zahid H. Bukhari (originally from Pakistan).

In 1999 I continued to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the American Muslim Council (AMC), with its headquarters in Washington, D.C.. The AMC is primarily an institution of political education and lobbying on behalf of Muslims among policy-makers and opinion-makers in the United States. Among its more public roles in 1999 was its participation in Jesse Jackson's mission to Serbia in the middle of the Kosovo war, to appeal for the release of American prisoners of war. The President of AMC, Dr. Nazir Khaja, also made it a point to meet with Muslims in Belgrade and hear their concerns, and transmit some of those anxieties to the Yugoslav authorities.

President Khaja and Executive Director, Aly R. Abuzaakouk, also played a part in making possible the iftar (breaking the fast) between American Muslims and Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright. I personally did not make it to the supper with the Secretary of State, but I was among the Muslims who received a letter from President Bill Clinton wishing us a blessed and happy fast of Ramadhan. Islam is becoming increasingly accepted as part of mainstream American pluralism and diversity. Indeed, in the year 2000, the President of the United States commemorated the end of Ramadhan with American Muslims at the White House – the first Presidential Eid el Fitr in U.S. history!

I continued my role as Ibn Khaldun Professor-at-Large at the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences, in Leesburg, Virginia. I experimented with two new courses – a minicourse in the spring term on "Islam in Global Africa" (or "Islam in the Black World"). I also taught a more comprehensive course in the fall of 1999 on "Islam and the West". I hope to teach this same comprehensive course at Binghamton University in the year 2000. My experiences in Leesburg will help me in Binghamton – and vice versa.

The word "crusade" has now entered the English language for any kind of dedicated campaign. But our Islamic activities at Binghamton in 1999 included hosting an international conference on the original crusades!! We conferred on "THE CRUSADES: NINE CENTURIES LATER". Although I am not even remotely a specialist on that period of Islamic history, I was cast in the role of one of the keynote speakers to open the conference. I was flattered by the request, but made my presentation brief. My Institute of Global Cultural Studies co-sponsored the conference, but the real organizers and hosts were the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and the indefatigable Professor Khalil Semaan.

The Crusades were one period of world history when Jews and Muslims were on one side, defending themselves against Christians, on the other. In that respect some of the presentations at the conference were very powerful indeed.

Islam also featured at another conference which our Institute of Global Cultural Studies co-sponsored at Binghamton in 1999 – our annual October conference, coordinated by Parviz Morewedge and the Department of Philosophy. But a much bigger theme than Islam at this October conference was ancient Greece. The whole Binghamton campus was celebrating Greece in the autumn of 1999. The atmosphere took me back to the early days of my academic career when I was made a full professor at Makerere University in Uganda (which was then part of a region-wide federal University of East Africa, with a campus each in Kenya and Tanzania, as well as in Uganda). Newly appointed professors were expected to give an Inaugural lecture. I chose to speak in 1967 on the following topic: **Ancient Greece in African Political Thought**.

At the Binghamton conference thirty-two years later I returned to some of those themes, but of course with some further reflections. I grappled with Greece and the Black experience, rather than Islam and the African experience.

On the other hand, Kosovo featured strongly in our conference at the Villa Serbelloni, Bellagio, Italy, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, the U.S. Institute for Peace and Binghamton University. In reality the Bellagio conference was about peacekeeping, peacebuilding and demilitarization in Africa. My Associate Director, Ricardo Laremont, managed to assemble a remarkable combination of scholars, soldiers and diplomats to explore the vexed question of peacekeeping and prospects for development in Africa. The war in Kosovo was still going on in June 1999 at another level, and provided moral and political contrasts to our debates about Rwanda and other African conflict-situations. The Bellagio conference will yield a book based on the stimulating papers presented there on a theme which, more than thirty years earlier, I had called "Pax Africana" in another book published in 1967.

But can there be peace without justice? At the annual meeting of the African Heritage Studies Association at Cornell, Dr. Boubacar N'Diaye from Mauritania called for a condemnation of alleged slavery in Sudan and in his home country. Although I was the keynote speaker at that banquet session, I did not take part in the discussions on slavery. How was the Sudanese civil war affected?

Brother Boubacar N'Diaye subsequently wrote to me directly to call for my public condemnation of "slavery" in Sudan and Mauritania. On Mauritania there was little disagreement between Brother Boubacar and myself. There were forms of servitude and forced labor in Mauritania which deserved to be condemned.

But with regard to Sudan I felt that the real culprit was the civil war. If we could end the civil war tomorrow, we could end enslavement the day after tomorrow. The war was not an excuse for slavery, but it was a cause of it. In Sudan both the war and the enslavement were wrong.

On the other hand, I do not think Westerners should go around "buying slaves" in front of cameras in the Sudan. Such exercises become pure theatre! Indeed, how can we even be sure

that "the slave purchase scene" has not been entirely staged by both Arab and Black Sudanese to "make a buck" out of credulous Westerners? The Arab "slavers" and the Black "slaves" may in reality be friendly co-conspirators, staging something to get money from rich Westerners, however well intentioned! Poor people have to survive even if they have to resort to cynical theatrics!

However, Brother Boubacar N'Diaye [himself a Mauritanian Muslim] is embarked on a just cause if the "crusade" is against the injustices of servitude, forced labour and violations of human rights. We wish him progress in that mission.

VI. The Millennium and the Renaissance

Who was "*the African of the Millennium*"? The African Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) invited nominations from listeners throughout much of 1999. There were dozens if not hundreds of such nominations. The BBC broadcast some of those choices in the course of the year.

By the end of the year the BBC contacted me to let me know that the three most popular choices for the title of "African of the Millennium" were all from the second half of the twentieth century, and all three were former Heads of State. The most popular was Kwame Nkrumah, founder-president of post-colonial Ghana; the next was Nelson Mandela, first Black President of South Africa; and the third was Nnamdi Azikiwe (Zik), founder-president of independent Nigeria. Although I had a high opinion of Dr. Azikiwe, I must admit that I was quite surprised to learn that he had been the third most popular choice for the title of "African of the Millennium". He was much less known than either Nkrumah or Mandela, and his impact on the twentieth century seemed more modest. Among 20th century African leaders, people like Léopold Senghor, Julius K. Nyerere and Gamal Abdul Nasser seemed far more obvious.

But my Nigerian friends should be reassured that I did not let Zik down in the end-of-year BBC interview on this matter. My main complaint on the BBC was that listeners were choosing excessively from the second half of the twentieth century and excessively from among leading political figures.

The BBC then wanted to know who was my choice of "African of the Millennium". I insisted on distinguishing between "person of action" and "person of thought" – and choosing one of each. I selected for my African of action Shaka Zulu (1787-1828), the brutal but brilliant empire-builder, who rose from being an "illegitimate child" in a small Zulu clan to being the most celebrated "Black Napoleon" in history. Of no other military leader in Africa's history has so much been written and analysed and composed. There have been poems, plays, television programmes as well as history books about Shaka. I told the BBC that Shaka was my African of Action for this past millennium. My theme of Royalty persisted!

As for my choice of the African of thought for the millennium, I chose Ibn Khaldun, the

genius who was born in Tunis in 1332, and lived to become the father of the historical method in the social sciences in all civilizations. Arnold Toynbee, himself a great macro-historian, described Ibn Khaldun's Al-Muqaddimah as **"a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place."** Ibn Khaldun had Royal patrons, but worked for science.

The clarion call for an African Renaissance in the last year of the twentieth century came not from the country of my greatest African of thought (Tunisia) but from the country of my greatest African of action (South Africa). I linked those two countries implicitly by giving a paper in Tunisia on "The African Renaissance and the Triple Legacy of Skills, Language and Gender". The auspices were under the African Academy of Sciences, an Africa-wide academic and scientific organisation, whose headquarters were in Nairobi but whose meetings were held in different parts of Africa.

The concept of 'African Renaissance' has been popularised by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa in recent times. Later in 1999 I was invited to a conference entirely on that theme of "The African Renaissance", sponsored by the Africa Centre in London, England. The most important speaker at the London conference was the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Jacob Zuma. I was at best second fiddle! Dr. Zuma spoke eloquently.

Also at the London conference there took place the British launching of Abdul S. Bemath's annotated bibliography of all my works – the book entitled The Mazruiana Collection: An Annotated Bibliography ... 1962-1997 (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers; New Jersey: Africa World Press; Johannesburg: Foundation for Global Dialogue, 1998). Abdul Bemath, the editor and compiler, came to London from South Africa specially for the occasion.

However, I believe it was a mistake to have linked the launching of the Mazruiana Collection to a hectic one-day conference devoted to some other concerns. We had had the alternative of having the book launched in the House of Lords. On reflection after the event, I do believe Abdul Bemath and I should have accepted the House of Lords' option. Perhaps there will be another opportunity among their Lordships? Who knows?

At the conference of the African Academy of Sciences in Tunisia I experienced a very unusual honour. I was called upon to represent the family of Marcus Garvey, the great Pan Africanist (1887-1940) who led a Back-to-Africa movement in the United States in the years between the two World wars. In 1999 the African Academy of Sciences [consisting overwhelmingly of African physicists, chemists and biologists] voted to award Marcus Garvey a posthumous Award of Distinguished Service to Africa. On behalf of the Garvey family, I received the award from the Academy in Tunisia and then took it to Dr. Julius Garvey, Marcus Garvey's son, in New York.

One more word about Tunisia, the land where Ibn Khaldun was born and where Marcus Garvey was honoured by African scientists. Tunisia is the country where the name "AFRICA"

probably originated. The name "Africa" originated from a Berber language, and was once applied only to what is today Tunisia before "Africa" became the name of a whole continent. Tunisia gave us Ibn Khaldun and gave us the name of our continent. Our salute to all Tunisians!

VII. A Family Conclusion

My son, Kim, and his son, Will, refused to be intimidated by Y2K!! Pretty close to the New Millennium they boarded a plane from Charlottesville, Virginia, through Pittsburgh, to Binghamton, New York, to welcome the new Millennium with us! I was more scared on their behalf than they were!

Kim and Will also refused to be intimidated by Y2K on their way back to Kim's wife, Kay, who had remained behind in Charlottesville to entertain her mother. Kim and Will flew back home to Virginia on January 2nd through Philadelphia, totally unconcerned!! Kim's Dad was full of admiration!

I wonder if the only Y2K glitch this year was that the Mazrui family in Kenya and the United States celebrated the end of Ramadhan on three entirely different days for the first time in decades!! Disagreement about the sighting of the new moon on two different evenings is not unusual. But disagreement covering three evenings was a truly Y2K glitch!! We were split three ways!

Let me conclude with additional items of family news. My second son, Al'Amin, and his wife Jill celebrated their first wedding anniversary (December 26) romantically in a secluded holiday resort on the West Coast. In 1999 Jill completed all the requirements for her Masters degree in English and Multicultural Education at California State University. She may become Vice-Principal of a middle school in the course of the year 2000.

I wish I could say that Al'Amin had completed his M.A. in Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley, but he seems to have put that on the back-burner. Al'Amin has been moderately active as an entrepreneur on-line and active recruiting for Macy's, the major chain store. He and Jill seem to be truly happy, which is of course the main thing. They also seem to be working hard in areas which interest them.

Although my first son, Jamal, lost virtually all his sight in the 1980s, the optic nerve seems to have retained for him changing colours and shapes which are in his brain rather than in the real world. Unfortunately these colours and shapes are always there and can never be switched off except when he is fast asleep. They are very disconcerting.

Mercifully, Jamal is a very brave and determined young man. In spite of these problems he has graduated from two of the best universities in the world (Princeton and Harvard). However, if there is any friend who knows anything about such residual colours and shapes in the brain of a blind person, please get in touch with me, and I can arrange consultations with Jamal.

My son did not ask me to make this appeal on his behalf, but this Newsletter goes to a lot of my friends, and there may be someone with relevant information.

Jamal's friend, Maria, lost her mother to cancer soon after Christmas in 1999. Symbolically, Maria's great lady just missed the new millennium by a couple of days or so. Our deepest condolences to Maria and other members of her family! These events are always so painful when they happen. We hope Jamal is also taking it bravely.

In 1999 my youngest sons, Farid and Harith, left the campus pre-school completely and joined the Vestal Hills Elementary School. Seven year old Farid was born on January 14, Albert Schweitzer's birthday. (Farid's Dad is Albert Schweitzer professor at Binghamton.) Six year old Harith was born on August 28, Omari H. Kokole's birthday. (Omari was Associate Director to Harith's Dad at Binghamton before Omari died suddenly a few days after his own birthday in 1996.) I celebrated my tenth anniversary at Binghamton in the fall of 1999, the last year of the century. Time plays its own inscrutable games with our lives.

In terms of weekly communication my nephew Alamin M. Mazrui, a professor at the Ohio State University, has been in closer touch with me than almost any of my children, or any of my siblings. Alamin and I have been on the phone with each other two or three times every week, and have collaborated on two books and several professional articles.

There was one very distinctive event in 1999. Alamin drove all the way to Binghamton in the company of two African twins - Ousseina and Hassana Alidou. They were both academics and both women, working in the United States but originally from the Francophone Republic of Niger in West Africa. The twins wanted to talk to me about an unusual project they wished to embark upon. They wanted to write at least one scholarly article and conceivably even a whole book on ALI MAZRUI AND THE GENDER QUESTION. Scattered in my many writings are not only my views about women but also my views about masculinity in society. The two ladies wanted to have a crack at that sub-theme of Mazruiana.

As it happened, one of my women-students at Cornell in 1999 chose to address the topic of "Ali Mazrui on Gender" in one of her own term papers. She was very critical of my approach. My professorial colleague in the course, who graded the paper, described it as "EXCELLENT" and gave it an A grade! I did not change the grade before returning the paper to the student, but I did add a few comments in defence of the much-maligned Ali Mazrui!! (Joking apart, it was indeed a stimulating critique - even if I did not agree with it!)

Goretti Mugambwa (A Ugandan-Canadian) and her thirteen year old daughter, Maria, continued to live with us in Binghamton. Goretti did so well as an undergraduate at Binghamton University that she entered the Dean's List. As for her daughter, one of Maria's piano performances was held at a neighborhood church. We attended. She was great there. She is also doing very well at school!

My administrative staff, Nancy Levis and Barbara Tierno, continued to have excellent rapport with my family. And among academic colleagues, my family was in almost constant interaction with Ricardo Laremont and Lisa Yun, Parviz and Rosmarie Morewedge, Nkiru Nzegwu and her daughters (Uzamaka and Azuka) and Ruzima Sebuharara and his wife, Andrea. God bless them all.

My mother-in-law returned to Nigeria in 1999 after nine months with us. My little children and I miss her a lot. We speak on the phone from time to time. My study (where she slept) still has her presence. She lives among my books, as well as in our hearts. Bless her.

YOUR

Weekender

 MAGAZINE

Feted abroad, shunned at home

Prof Ali Mazrui talks about the price he's had to pay for his fiercely independent stand which saw him buck dictatorial tendencies in Kenya and Uganda in the 1970s

By NJUGUNA MUTONYA

A day before he was installed as Nigeria's Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo invited two of Africa's prominent sons to talk with his MPs, Governors and other leaders on the evils of corruption and bad governance. One of them was the unassuming poet, diplomat and Tanzanian former President Dr Julius Kambarage Nyerere of the Ujamaa Socialist experiment

The other was a Mombasa-born political scientists, prolific author on global issues and history who for many years has been depicted abroad as the

from his international lecturing circuits into the Manor Hotel where a suite would be readied for him and his bulky accompaniment of books and academic papers. Here he would receive his family, friends and fellow scholars as well as journalists who would visit as news of his arrival was made public.

If he was in Mombasa, we knew he was at Manor and you could easily bounce off questions on the local political situation and any other global events and his answers have always been quick, witty and global. It is a pleasure any time to drink from his well of knowledge whether you agree with him ideologically or not.

For years, family members used

country to take advantage of the chances that have presented themselves to us.

Prof Mazrui said that stability of a country should not be mistaken for durability of a regime. "Excessive durability of a regime can dry up ideas, cause decay and destruction of the elite. Uganda which has had eight governments since independence has had too little durability while Kenya with only two has had too much. Opposite extremes!"

He said that 10 years of two terms for the President make good sense. "What we need is a constitutional cut-off line. We can then honour them after retirement and provide them the necessary social



dominated abroad since he fled persecution and intellectual suffocation in his homeland decades ago.

That Africa's biggest democracy could shower such respect on a local son who barely gets a chance to be recognised is a tragedy. Talk of the prophet who is never recognised in his homeland.

But for the soft-spoken but lurid ideologist, maybe that is the price he has had to pay for his fiercely independent nature which saw him buck dictatorial tendencies in Kenya and Uganda in the seventies and finally settle in the United States of America where his ideas could run unbridled.

Professor Ali Mazrui, who confesses that he has not had a holiday for many years is currently in the country of his birth to do just that — holiday with his Nigerian wife and children at the insistence of his Mombasa family. "They have not had a chance to meet Farid and Harith and they suggested that I bring them along for a few weeks to get to know one another!" he said when we traced him at the Nyali Beach Holiday Resort where we found him gazing out to sea.

Comfortable as it may be, Prof Mazrui seethes with anger when he remembers how land grabbers have robbed him of the hotel he used to spend his days in Mombasa for many years — The Manor Hotel now demolished to pave way for God knows what demented project. "It was absolute vandalism — in any other country they would have been taken to jail! This is typical of a reckless and greedy society," he thundered exposing his anger for the first time since I have known him.

He has reason to. Since the colonial days when he was a student, Prof Mazrui remembers being invited to address groups of people on various academic issues at a time when Africans were not allowed to sleep at the hotel. His eyes brighten with the fond memories. Year after year, Mazrui would fly straight to Mombasa

to organise for him a public lecture, events which used to draw hundreds of Mombasa residents but which many times were banned at the last minute by jittery administrators. Prof Mazrui has lately been toying with the idea of

Year after year, Mazrui would fly straight to Mombasa from his international lecturing circuits into the Manor Hotel where a suite would be readied for him and his bulky accompaniment of books and academic papers

retiring in Kenya but after careful analysis he says it is quite difficult because most of his immediate family is in the US. "I have thought about it, I could retire in a quiet place like Lamu and read and write but I am not sure that I would be happy if I was too far away from them (family). Well, we could visit one another but I am not sure it would be good for me. . . . But I am still thinking about it," he said indecision clearly written on his face.

He says Kenya has become a more open society than in early 1990s. There is more transparency and relative freedoms. On the other hand, however, Kenyans are getting less service from their government and the State has become less efficient and more corrupt. We also seem to be enjoying more negative freedoms socially.

Regionally Kenya has lost its leadership role. We might have an edge on stability but not influence and economic performance. I lived in Uganda during Idi Amin's reign and I never thought they would rise again the way they have done. Part of it is due to the ability of the Ugandan leadership. But mainly also due to our inability as a

provide them the necessary securities so that they are not afraid of retribution."

Kenya is currently in the midst of a stalemate over the constitutional review process, what do you think is the main problem? I ask him. "The debate seems to be centred on how the process is going to be carried out and not what the Constitution should entail. The focus seems to be on the term limits. The Constitution should contain separation of powers between the Head of State and other institutions, should be clear about the devolution of powers. It must also be clear about human and civil rights and should be representative of all the country's interest groups. Parliament, though elected does not represent all groups. It is not a microcosm of society."

"A commission should have representatives of important groups like women, religious leaders as well as parliamentarians. What representation, for example, does the present Parliament have for the country's women?"

Mazrui, however, is against the involvement of foreign experts in the review process saying "it is not a good idea. "Finally it is for Kenyans to do the job themselves. But I would not oppose inviting international luminaries like Nelson Mandela or Jimmy Carter to arbitrate in case of a deadlock."

Nigeria invited you to give a crucial talk to its leaders at a unique period. What does this mean to you? "This is a measure of their willingness to listen to others. I talked with them about their problem of corruption, about their bloated civil service and they were not offended that I was an outsider. They finally embraced me, both Obasanjo and Babangida. Can you imagine that in Kenya? Foreign leaders are willing to listen to us but not Kenyan leaders."



Prof Ali Mazrui: Below with wife and children: For years, family members used to organise for him a public lecture, events which used to draw hundreds of Mombasa residents but which many times were banned at the last minute by jittery administrators

