



# NEWSLETTER

Institute of Global Cultural Studies, Binghamton University

Volume 10, Issue 1, Spring 2013

## **Message from the Director** **Ali A. Mazrui**



### **Gender Roles Between Land and Water: The African Experience**

"In the beginning was man and woman. Their first child was human culture itself." In many traditional African cultures there has been a belief that God made woman the custodian of *fire, water, and earth*. God himself took charge of the fourth element of the universe—the omnipresent *air*.<sup>1</sup>

Custody of fire entailed responsibility for making energy available. And the greatest source of energy in rural Africa is still firewood. The African woman became disproportionately responsible for finding and carrying huge bundles of firewood, though quite often it was men who chopped down the big trees initially.

Custody of water involved a liquid which was a symbol of both survival and cleanliness. The African woman became responsible for ensuring that this critical substance was available for the family. She has trekked long distances to fetch water. But where a well needed to be dug, it was often the man who did the digging.

The custody of earth has been part of a doctrine of *dual fertility*. Woman ensures the survival of this generation by maintaining a cen-  
(continued on page 3)

## **Ali Mazrui: Friend, Scholar, and Visionary**

By

*Burjor Avari*  
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Ali Mazrui and I were very close friends while we were undergraduates studying at Manchester University, UK, between 1957 and 1960.

We were again together at Oxford between 1961 and 1962 when I was training as a teacher on the Diploma in Education course, while he was at Nuffield College researching for a doctorate in Political Science. We had both come to Britain from Mombasa, Kenya; and, although we had never known each other before we met in Manchester, we could share many memories of the town where we had grown up. Both he and I possessed an instinctive appreciation of what it was like to live in the Old Town of Mombasa. Here diverse ethnic groups co-existed cheek-by-jowl, in densely packed houses and huts under the shadow of the great Portuguese fort which had first served as a bulwark against Arab intruders from Oman and Hadhramaut but was at the end of the seventeenth century besieged and then overrun by the same Arabs. Old Mombasa is one of the most historic places in Africa and, with my passionate interest in history, I have always been fascinated by the drama of history in that place across many centuries. Ali belongs to the elite and aristocratic Swahili family of the Mazruis, some of whose distinguished members had been warriors, diplomats, judges and poets. Mazrui and

I were first bonded together by the ties of Mombasa history.

Ali, five years older than me, had come to Manchester as a mature student; and so I always looked upon him as an elder brother. Today I remember with great affection and gratitude the four years that I was in his company. My nearly daily meetings with him, along with his girl friend Molly (later to be his wife) and his innumerable friends, were replete with all the conversations, jokes and banters that one enjoys during university life. More importantly, Ali exercised a profoundly beneficent influence over my character and personality in two particular aspects.

First and foremost, through Ali, I learnt to respect the African peoples, their cultures and civilizations. Although both of us came from Mombasa, my social and cultural world before coming to UK had been very different from that of Ali. I was brought up within the milieu of Indian cultural space in Kenya. While certain groups of Indian Muslims co-mingled extremely well with the Muslim Swahilis of Mombasa, only a few Indians in general in colonial Kenya had empathies with the Africans of that country.

### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

Message from the Director Ali A. Mazrui.	Was Ali A. Mazrui Ahead of His Time? .....	14
Gender Roles Between Land and Water:	What I Have Learned from Mwalimu Mazrui ....	16
The African Experience.....	Ali Mazrui Calls for a New Archival	
Ali Mazrui: Friend, Scholar, and Visionary .....	Order in Africa .....	18
Ali Mazrui: The Creole in the	Interview with Lady Pauline Uti Mazrui .....	22
Theater of Languages .....	Highlights Without Precedent:	
Mazrui.....	When Ali A. Mazrui Led the Way .....	25

(continued from page 1)



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## ... Ali A. Mazrui: Friend, Scholar and Visionary



Professor Ali A. Mazrui with Ugandan Visitors Nuha Mwesigwa and Charles Baguma at IGCS office at Binghamton University, Binghamton, NY (2012) (IGCS Picture Archives)

For the vast majority of them Kenya was a land where they could find jobs, make money in business and live far more comfortably than they would have ever done in India. Most of them had very little interest in the welfare of the great mass of poor Africans, and we were very ready to accept racial segregation that was an in-built feature of the colonial system. I was very much a part of that particular background. Moreover, we Indians were infected with ideas of cultural superiority vis-à-vis the Africans, owing to our millennia old ideas of purity and pollution that lay at the root of the caste system. Our African house servants were barred from using our cooking utensils, crockery or cutlery; they could not even use the toilets in our houses. My introduction at a relatively young age to Britain, a country where humiliating treatments of working class people had ceased before the Second World War, had already opened my eyes to the sort of inequalities that I had earlier accepted as a matter of course. My encounters with Ali led to further insights into the relationship between Indians and Africans in a typical colonial setting. Some of my in-built racial feelings came to an end once I began to appreciate the warmth and friendship that I enjoyed in the company of Africans. Ever since those days of the late 1950s my love and respect for Africa has never ceased. Ali played a crucial role in my conversion.

The second crucial way Ali exercised a profound influence on my mind was through his amazing intellectual sharpness and capabilities. His humbleness and humility hid a genius that eventually erupted in his life like a volcano. By his ready wit

and intelligent line of questioning he broadened my intellectual and cultural horizons. For me he was the epitome of a person who would have been cherished by that great seventeenth century philosopher, Francis Bacon. Ali followed Bacon's advice to the letter: "Reading maketh a full man; writing an exact man; and conversation a ready man." We used to discuss all manner of subjects and themes, and I was made to think more rigorously by Ali's logic and innumerable cross-cultural examples and case studies for discussion. Some twenty five years ago my career took on a new turn, when I left history teaching in schools for multicultural studies in higher education. The first source of inspiration into my multicultural education was what I had learned through my long discussions with Ali and mutual friends through the cold nights in Manchester.

An important trait in Ali's character that I have continually admired ever since he and I went our separate ways is his unbounded moral courage. He has had more than his share of problems over the last half a century with the authoritarian governments of his mother country, Kenya; and there were years when it was truly dangerous for him to enter the country.

Nevertheless, Ali has never shirked from his duty in saying things that have needed saying about various issues, such as the lack of democratic accountability, particularly in the days of Arap Moi, the former President. His courage was sorely tested during the time when Idi Amin ruled Uganda.

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 1)

## ... Gender Roles Between Land and Water: The African Experience



Professor Ali A. Mazrui arguing a point at a conference (IGCS Picture Archives)

tral role in cultivation—and preserving the fertility of the soil. Woman ensures the arrival of the next generation in her role as mother—the fertility of the womb. Dual fertility becomes an aspect of the triple custodial role of African womanhood, though always in partnership with the African man.

What has happened to this doctrine of triple custody in the period since the colonial days? Different elements of the colonial experience affected the roles of men and women in Africa in different ways.

Among the factors which increased the woman's role on the land was wage labor for the men. Faced with an African population reluctant to work for low wages for somebody else, colonial rulers had already experimented with both forced labor and taxation as a way of inducing Africans (especially men) to join the colonial work force.

According to Margaret Jean Hay, wage labor for men took some time before it began to affect women's role on the land. Hay's own work was among Luo women in Kenya:

*By 1930 a large number of men had left Kowe at least once for outside employment... More than half of this group stayed away for periods of fifteen years or more... This growing export of labor from the province might be thought to have increased the burden of agricultural work for women... As early as 1910, administrators lamented the fact that Nyanza was*

*becoming the labor pool of the entire colony... Yet the short-term migrants of the 1920's were usually unmarried youths, who played a relatively minor role in the local economy beyond occasional herding and the conquest of cattle in war. Furthermore, the short-term labor migrants could and often did arrange to be away during the slack periods in the agriculture cycle... Thus labor migration in the period before 1930 actually removed little labor from the local economy and did not significantly alter the sexual division of labor.<sup>2</sup>*

But Margaret Hay goes on to demonstrate how the Great Depression and the Second World War changed the situation as migrant labor and conscription of males took a bigger and bigger proportion of men away from the land. This was compounded by the growth of mining industries like the gold mining at Kowe from 1934 onwards:

*The long-term absence of men had an impact on the sexual division of labor, with women and children assuming a greater share of agricultural work than ever before... The thirties represent a transition with regard to the sexual division of labor, and it was clearly the women who bore the burden of the transition in rural areas.<sup>3</sup>*

Women in this period, from the 1930s onwards, became more deeply involved as

"custodians of earth." In southern Africa the migrations of men to the mines became even more dramatic. By the 1950s a remarkable bifurcation was taking place in some southern African societies—a division between a male proletariat (industrial working class) and a female peasantry. South Africa's regulations against families joining their husbands on the mines exacerbated this tendency towards *gender-apartheid*, the segregation of the sexes. Many women in the Front Line States had to fulfill their triple custodial role of fire, water, and earth in greater isolation than ever.

The wars of liberation in southern Africa from the 1960s took their own toll on family stability and traditional sexual division of labor. Some of the fighters did have their wives with them. Indeed, liberation armies like ZANLA and ZIPRA in Zimbabwe and FRELIMO in Mozambique included a few female fighters. But on the whole, the impact of the wars was disruptive of family life and of the traditional sexual division of labor.

After independence there were counter-revolutionary wars among some of the Front Line States. The most artificial of the post-colonial wars was that of Mozambique initiated by the so-called Mozambique National Resistance (MNR or RENAMO). The movement was originally created by reactionary white Rhodesians to punish Presi-

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 2)

## ... Ali A. Mazrui: Friend, Scholar and Visionary

From his base at Makerere University, as a highly respected scholar of wide sympathies, Ali exhorted Amin at every opportunity to become a merciful and benevolent head of state: but the evil in Amin was so primeval and ingrained that even Christ might have failed with him. Amin had some of the most distinguished people in Uganda murdered and decapitated; and it was only when Ali sensed an existential threat to him and his family that he left Uganda for the USA.

He has been greatly honoured and showered with many awards in the USA; yet, even in that great democratic country, Ali has had to suffer humiliations owing to his faith of Islam that has come under a cloud of suspicion since the Islamist attacks on New York on September 11, 2001. He has not shown any bitterness on his part. Perhaps the most striking example of Ali's moral courage can be shown by his stern refusal to bow down to pressures from unthinking pro-Israeli extremists on the matter of elementary justice for the Palestinians. While many other academics, normally writers of fulsome articles on democracy, peace and justice in international journals, have shied away from discussing the sufferings of Palestinians, Ali has fearlessly continued to make an articulate and rational case on behalf of the Palestinians.

Let me now talk about the amazing depth and diversity of Ali Mazrui's scholarship. We know that he has written over thirty books and at least eight hundred articles and short pieces in both serious academic journals and newspapers. Additionally, over his academic career spanning more than fifty years, he must have produced hundreds of sheets of notes for his students in Uganda, Nigeria and the USA, the three places where he has taught most. Ali Mazrui is a true polymath. What could be the secret that may explain such a vast production of intellectual material? We know that he can boast of a very fine intellectual pedigree from his family. His father was a learned jurist in the rigorous Islamic legal tradition. Despite mediocre school certificate grades he dabbled early on in journalism in Mombasa and gained maturity and easy facility in the use of English language, which secured for him the award of a Kenya government scholarship to study in Britain. Even before he joined Manchester University he had gained the prestigious Gladstone Memorial Prize, one of the great academic awards for would-be historians, philosophers and scholars. His sharpness and clarity of thought must have increased a hundred-fold at Manchester University which has always attracted to it some of the ablest academ-

ics in Britain. He was much influenced by the subtle wit and logic of his philosophy professor, Dorothy Emmett, under whom the Philosophy Department was flourishing in the 1950s. But there is also something else contributing to Ali's intellectual energy that I would like to bring to the notice of the reader. I do not remember a single evening spent in his company when he was not cutting out and referencing every bit of serious information that he elicited from daily newspapers. He could be talking, laughing and joking, while at the same time he could be cutting away the newspapers. He also made detailed notes from various textbooks in a very systematic way. While many of us under-

Let me now talk about the amazing depth and diversity of Ali Mazrui's scholarship. We know that he has written over thirty books and at least eight hundred articles and short pieces in both serious academic journals and newspapers.

graduates were struggling with methodologies of study, Ali showed early brilliance in organising his work.

It is impossible for me to comment in depth on all the voluminous writings of Ali, partly because of the limitations of my reading. There are, however, a few broad observations that I would like to make in this piece.

First and foremost, Ali is essentially a political philosopher, and his scholarly books and articles engage with a variety of theoretical perspectives in the field of political philosophy. In his works he deals with issues concerning political leadership, violence and warfare, resolution of conflict, ethnic and linguistic differences, institutions of world order, human rights, the role of culture in politics, and many other themes, in line with the works of many other political philosophers. However, from the limited number of his papers that I have read, I have been struck by two particular characteristics: his non-Eurocentric way of looking at the world and the comparative approach that he adopts. The Eurocentric approach, that

has dominated all our intellectual thinking during the last two centuries, marginalises concepts, motivations and actions springing from the non-European world; political philosophy is conceived to be a discipline designed in Europe by Europeans. Ali's non-Eurocentric approach, built on his profound knowledge of the history of the non-European world, endows parity of esteem to ideas and facts emanating from that world. His comparative approach makes Ali's articles also very fascinating to read; for him political philosophy is not some dry-as-dust academic subject; it is continually enlivened by his comparisons, contrasts and evaluations of personalities, institutions and ideas from different parts of the world and from different ages of history. The past and the present form a coherent whole and help to explain each other in Ali's political philosophy.

Throughout his life Ali has been a challenging and controversial political philosopher. He has been courageous enough to articulate sometimes the most unorthodox and conventionally unwelcome ideas. Let me point to one such idea. In his famous BBC Reith Lectures of 1979, *The African Condition*, he raised the theme of nuclear non-proliferation and dared to suggest that Africa should manufacture her own atomic weapons. He was, and is, aware of all the potential difficulties around this issue, not least being the decision as to who exactly in the continent could have the expertise and final authority to initiate such a programme. Nevertheless, Ali was prepared to shock his genteel BBC audience by asking some fundamental questions: Why should only a few nations have the right to possess nuclear weapons? Why should other nations remain in a position of dependency? Do the nations that possess nuclear weapons behave any more morally or ethically than the rest? It was the implications of such questions that eventually impelled countries such as China, India, Pakistan and North Korea to seek their own nuclear weapons, while Israel has sought to camouflage her true intentions. The realities of world power today have not proved Ali entirely wrong, as can be seen by the enormous pressure brought upon non-nuclear Iran not to venture into nuclear field.

The area of the world that has most engaged Ali's scholarship is Africa. Just about every issue that confronts the peoples of this continent can be found discussed in his great array of scholarly articles and books. He does this, not in a spirit of patronising pessimism, which is the common style of a majority of European writers and observ-

ers of Africa, but with a lively sense of hope and appreciation of the continent's heritage. In perhaps his first published article in a western newspaper, *The Times* of London, fifty years ago, Ali sought to explain what it meant to be an African and why Africans felt themselves to be a united people in a way that Asians could not be; he also tentatively explored the roots of pan-Africanism that has inspired so many of Africa's leaders and intelligentsia. Since writing that first article he has gone on to analyse a host of Africa's predicaments and promises. The nature of African leadership in the last half century has come under his gaze, and he has evaluated the qualities of that leadership in a fair and rational manner. I was disappointed, during the 1970s, to read of Ali's severe judgements on Presidents Nyerere of Tanzania and Nkrumah of Ghana, my political heroes at that time, but I also knew that his strictures on those two leaders were as a result of not personal malice but of genuine worry that ideological socialism espoused by the two leaders might not work out for their countries: and, to a certain extent, Ali has proved correct. I have not been the only person to have had reservations about some of Ali's judgements; the great African Nobel Prize winning author, Professor Wole Soyinka, for example, engaged Ali in sharp debates in intellectual journals for many years: but there was never any personal animosity between them.

According to Ali, the Africans are inheritors of three great civilizations: indigenous, Islamic and western. While colonialism and western technological superiority have beguiled so many millions of people of the so-called Third World into rejecting the wisdom of their ancestral past, a few courageous people like Ali have cherished this past and continue to pay respect and homage to it. Such native African concepts regarding spirituality, respect for nature and land, village organisation, family and clan bonds, inter-generational relationships and, above all, warm hospitality, have created the African personality in the first instance; and in Ali's works there is enormous regard for this tradition. The first element, therefore, in the making of Africa is her own indigenous heritage and vitality.

Islam and Islamic civilization are, for Ali, a second important cultural strand firmly embedded within the body politic of Africa. Some African and African-American intellectuals, influenced by Afro-centric ideas, have strongly castigated the role of Islam in the continent. The huge Arab slave trade, carried on even today in different guises in parts of Africa, like Sudan and Mauritania, provides much justification for the misgivings of Afrocentrists

regarding the role of Islam in Africa. But this is not the full story. Islam also brought much learning to Africa. Through Islam Africa came to be bonded with Asia; and for many millions of Africans in the west, north and east of the continent the Quran is their solace in a world full of dangers. A rational Muslim and African scholar, Ali has the right credentials to evaluate the role of Islam in African life, which he has done with brilliance and clarity. By popularising his concept of Afrabia he has provided the intellectual backbone for building potential links between Africa and the Arab Middle East.

scepticism over Western commercial and financial interests that have been dispossessing the continent of her enormous material wealth. The benefits of aid granted by Western nations are cancelled out in the aggregate by the enormous flow of wealth in the form of ill-gotten profits and interest charges to places like London, Paris, Brussels and New York. To a certain extent, the Chinese are playing the same game in today's Africa. While Ali's book and film, produced in the 1980s, did not anticipate the Chinese onrush into Africa, some of the criticisms he has made against powerful and vested Western interests can also be applied to the Chinese.

While the American establishment was happy enough to help fund Ali's trip to Africa, some of its members, like the wife of the future Vice-President of the USA, Dick Cheney, did not take kindly to Ali's straightforward criticisms of American geo-financial methods and strategies. What needed saying was however said, honestly and squarely, by Ali.

While his scholarly productions have remained focused on Africa, Ali has also written much about Islam. One of his most interesting articles, "Satanic Verses" or a *Satanic Novel: Moral Dilemmas of the Rushdie Affair* that appeared in 1990 in the *Third World Quarterly* provided a very balanced discussion of issues around Salman Rushdie's unpopularity in the Muslim world. On the one hand, Ali showed great sympathy and sensitivity in the matter of Rushdie's persecution and the infamous *fatwa* of Ayatollah Khomeini that threatened Rushdie's life. Remembering his own persecution in Kenya and Uganda, Ali understood that the *fatwa* and the intolerance of the most fanatic of Muslims represented real danger to freedom to write and speak without fear. He was entirely with Rushdie on this. On the other hand, Ali did not flinch from pointing out many theological errors in Rushdie's argument. He was not influenced by all the adulation for Rushdie in the Western world. During recent years he has written much about Islam and Islamic politics in relation to Africa. Ali's Islam is a world removed from the hoary myths about this faith that the West has for centuries fantasised about. There is a tendency among many of us non-Muslims to accept the lazy Eurocentric view of Islam as a trouble-making religion of violence and conflict. In many areas of Africa there are on-going political problems and issues in the inter-action of Muslim and non-Muslim populations. Ali's rational analysis of these matters, discussed in a historical context,



Former South African President Thabo Mbeki, Dr. James Kariuki and Professor Ali A. Mazrui (seated) at President Mbeki's home, South Africa 2012  
(IGCS Picture Archives)

The third cultural strand in the making of modern Africa, according to Ali, is Western civilization. Ali holds the achievements of the West in profound respect. If Africa wishes to make progress in raising the standard and quality of life of her peoples, then she has to embrace the ideas from the West. And this is what she has been doing for nearly a century. Some of the positive results are beginning to be noticed in fields as diverse as communications, health, education and industrialisation. Both in his book and the film Ali portrays the varied developments with vivid details. However, he also displays a very healthy

(continued on page 9)

## ... Gender Roles Between Land and Water: The African Experience

dent Samora Machel for his support for Robert Mugabe's forces in Zimbabwe. After Zimbabwe's independence the Mozambique National Resistance became a surrogate army for reactionary whites in the Republic of South Africa—committing a variety of acts of sabotage against the fragile post-colonial economy of Mozambique.

Again, there have been implications for relations between the genders. In addition to the usual disruptive consequences of war for the family, the MNR, by the mid-1980s, had inflicted enough damage on the infrastructure in Mozambique that many migrant workers never got home to their families in between their contracts with the South African mines. The miners often remained on the border between South Africa and Mozambique, waiting for their next opportunity to return to the mines, without ever having found the transportation to get to their families in distant villages of Mozambique.

It is not completely clear how this situation has affected the doctrine of "dual fertility" in relation to the role of the African woman. One possibility is that the extra long absences of the husbands had reduced fertility rates in some communities like Mozambique. The other scenario was that the pattern of migrant labor in southern Africa generally has initiated a tendency towards *de facto* polyandry. The woman who was left behind acquired over time a *de facto* extra husband. The two husbands took their turn over time with the woman. The migrant labourer from the mines had conjugal priority between mining contracts if he did manage to get to the village. He also had prior claim to the new babies unless agreed otherwise.<sup>4</sup>

If the more widespread pattern is still that of declining fertility as a result of extra long absences of husbands, the principle of "dual fertility" has reduced the social functions of the fertility of the womb and increased the woman's involvement in matters pertaining to the fertility of the soil.

On the other hand, if the more significant tendency in mining communities in southern Africa is towards *de facto* polyandry, a whole new nexus of social relationships may be in the making in southern Africa even after apartheid.<sup>5</sup>

While women's role on the farm expanded, women's land rights did not necessarily improve. The number of female cultivators multiplied, but land continued to be owned by fathers, husbands, brothers or, even more, traditionally, by a clan or tribe, led by male elders.

There is also women's role in the culture of water. As "custodian of water" the African woman has played a bigger role than men in fetching water from lakes, rivers or wells. Women have also utilized a bigger share of the domestic water supply—washing dishes, domestic laundry, cleaning babies, and using water for personal female hygiene.

Ironically, although women have a bigger role than men in the supply and consumption of fresh water, women have a lesser role in the culture of salt-water of the oceans. Until recently there have been few women-sailors since the days of dhows and sailing ships. Naval fleets have been overwhelmingly dominated by men. Men have also predominated in oceanic fisheries. Women have tilled the land; men have tamed the seas. In the words of Harry Belafonte's song about an island in the Caribbean Sun:

*I see woman on bended knee  
Cutting cane for the family  
[sugar cane]  
I see man on the water's side  
Casting net at the surging tide  
[fishing net].*

To summarize, the African woman is central in the culture of freshwater, but marginal in the careers of the oceans. The African woman is central in agricultural roles, but relatively marginal in agricultural rights. The struggle continues in pursuit of gender-justice.

### THE GENDER OF TECHNOLOGY

Other changes in Africa during this period which affected relationships between men and women included the impact of new technologies on gender roles. Cultivation with the hoe still left the African woman centrally involved in agriculture. But cultivation with the tractor was often a prescription for male dominance.

*When you see a farmer  
On bended knee  
Tilling land  
For the family  
The chances are  
It is a she*

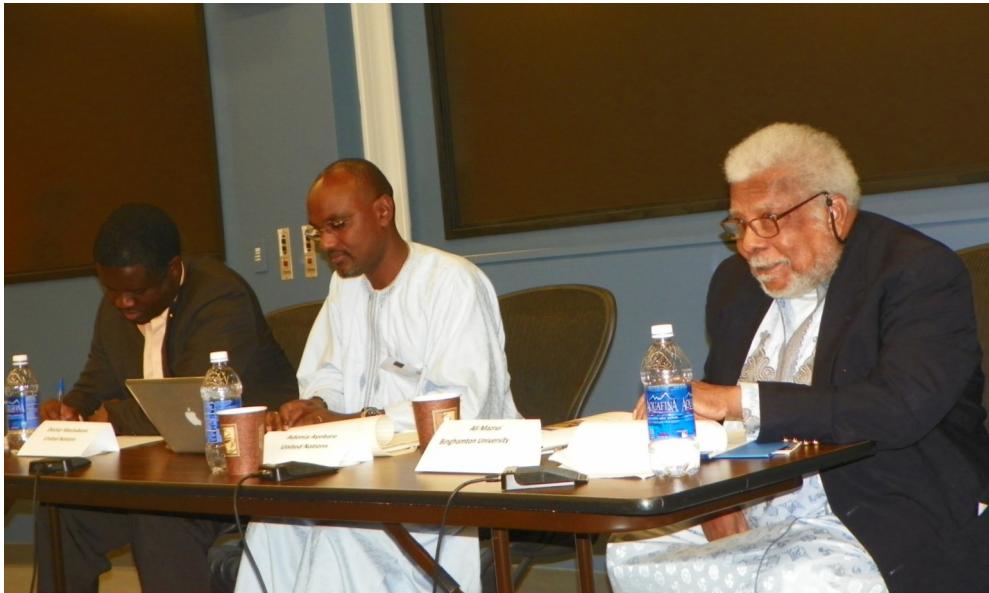
\*\*\*

*When you see tractor  
Passing by  
And the driver  
Waves you "Hi"  
The chances are  
It is a he!*

Mechanization of agriculture in Africa has tended to marginalize women. Their role as "custodians of earth" is threatened by male prerogatives in new and more advanced technologies. It is true that greater male involvement in agriculture could help reduce the heavy burdens of work undertaken by women on the land. On the other hand, there is no reason why this relief in workload for women should not come through better technology. Tractors were not invented to be driven solely by men.

Another threat to the central role of the African women in the economy in this period has come from the nature of Western education. It is true that the Westernized African woman is usually more mobile and with more freedom for her own interests than is her traditional sister. But a transition from custodian of fire, water, and earth to keeper of the typewriter is definitely a form of marginalization for African womanhood. Typing is less fundamental for survival than cultivation. The Westernized African woman since the second half of the twentieth century has tended to be more free but less important for African economies than the traditional woman in rural areas.

The third threat to the role of the African woman in this period came with the internationalization of African economies. When economic activity in Africa was more localized, woman had a decisive role in local markets and as a trader. But the colonial and post-colonial tendencies towards enlargement of economic scale have increasingly pushed the women to the side in international decision-making. It is true that Nigerian women especially have refused to be completely marginalized even in international trade. A Nigerian woman has risen almost to the top in the World Bank. But on the whole, the Africans who deal with international markets and sit on the boards of transnational corporations are overwhelmingly men. At the meetings of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)—where Muslims predominate—there are additional cultural inhibitions about having even Nigeria represented by a female delegate. But more recently Nigeria has acquired a woman Finance Minister. Praise the Lord!



*Professor Ali A. Mazrui at a Conference on the Libyan Conflict,  
Syracuse University, 2012 (IGCS Picture Archives)*

#### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS**

What are the policy implications of all these trends? One central imperative is indeed to arrest the marginalization of women and to cultivate further their entrepreneurial potential. *Cultural adjustment* is the imperative.

Women as custodians of earth had traditionally emphasized food cultivation. But from now on greater involvement of women in the production of cash crops for export is one way of linking tradition to modernity—and preventing Africa's economic internationalization from resulting in the marginalization of African women.

But support for traditional market women in food production and local trade need not suffer as a result of the new androgynization of cash-crop production. Credit facilities should be made available in such a manner that there is equity not only between men and women but also between Westernized and non-Westernized females. As matters now stand, traditionalist non-Westernized women are often at a disadvantage when assessed for credit-worthiness.

On the other hand, a higher proportion of non-Westernized women are involved in agricultural production than are their Westernized sisters. Indeed, cultural Westernization of women—though improving their credit worthiness—tends to decrease women's direct economic productivity. A balance has to be struck between the two categories of women (Westernized and non-Westernized) in relation to both credit and production.

Preventing technology from marginalizing women is yet another imperative. Special programs for women in technical training—from driving tractors to repairing a lorry engine—should be inaugurated. It will not happen on its own. Such shifts in the cultural aspects of technology need to be addressed purposefully. Effective participation of women in the world of economic entrepreneurship requires their upliftment in the world of technical and mechanical skills as well.

Women as custodians of fire make them the greatest users of firewood in the continent. But shouldn't women also be centrally involved in forest management and reforestation? Wood should increasingly be approached as an integrated industry, sensitized to the needs of environmental protection and ecological balance. Women as the greatest users of firewood should also become among the leading planters of trees for reforestation. The late Wangari Maathai led the way in mobilizing women to plant millions of trees.

This would not be incompatible with their involvement in the commercial aspects of wood more generally. Carpentry and furniture-making are crafts which cry out for much greater female involvement than has been achieved so far. Culturally women are often the selectors of furniture and the trustees of the domestic infrastructure of the family. And yet it is an anomaly that African women have played such a limited role in designing furniture or making it. This is an area of entrepreneurship which beckons the female participant to become more involved.

As traditional custodians of water, do women have any special role in this era of faucets and dams? Africa's women, as we indicated, still trek long distances in some rural areas for their water. But water-related industries are surprisingly still male-dominated. This includes the whole infrastructure of water-supply in urban areas. Even commercialized laundry and dry cleaning for the elite and for foreigners in African towns is still usually owned and managed by men, even when women do most of the washing and ironing. The soap manufacturing industry is also male owned and male-managed, even when the consumers are overwhelmingly women. One question which arises is whether these water-related industries are appropriate areas of linking tradition to modernity in Africa's gender roles.

#### **CONCLUSION**

What is at stake is the tapping of female talent where it was previously under-utilized. What is at stake is also the androgynization of entrepreneurship. Once again the imperative is cultural adjustment.

Can the traditional custodian of fire be the innovative consumer of hydroelectric power? Can the traditional trustee of water be the new creative user of the high dam? Can the traditional trustee of earth take control of a new (and more creative) green revolution?

*(continued on page 8)*



*Professor Ali A. Mazrui  
at the NYASA Conference  
in Oneonta, New York in 2011  
(IGCS Picture Archives)*

(continued from page 7)

## ... Gender Roles Between Land and Water: The African Experience

The future of the continent depends upon a new sexual equation in the whole economic process. The future of the continent depends more fundamentally on a cultural, than on a structural adjustment. In 2012 a Nigerian female Minister of Finance was nearly elected President of the World Bank in Washington, DC.

But none of those measures of culture adjustment regarding gender would be feasible without a pronounced role by the state. Classical privatization and laissez faire would simply permit worsening conditions of marginalization for women. Progress towards female entrepreneurialization would be aborted or retarded.

This is one reason why the cause of androgynous entrepreneurship in Africa needs an activist and enlightened state. The economy under such intervention would become less private—but the market could be released from some of the shackles of tradition and cultural prejudice. ▲

### NOTES

1. I am indebted to the late Okot p'Bitek, the Ugandan anthropologist and poet, for stimulation and information about myths of womanhood in northern Uganda. Okot and I also discussed similarities and differences between African concepts of matter and the ideas of Empedocles, the Greek philosopher of the 5th Century BC. Consult also Okot p'Bitek, *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1971).
2. Margaret Jean Hay, "Luo Women and Economic Change During the Colonial Period," chapter in *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, edited by Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), pp. 98–99. For a feminist perspective consult also Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression*, (London: Zed Press, 1983).
3. Hay, *ibid.*, p. 105.
4. There is no doubt such arrangements occur in Mozambique. What is not clear is how widespread de facto polyandry is becoming in southern Africa.
5. I am indebted to the field research and interviews in southern Africa which accompanied the BBC/WETA television project, "The Africans: A Triple Heritage" (1985–1986). I am also grateful to the work associated with Vol. VIII of the UNESCO General History of Africa (Edited by Ali A. Mazrui, forthcoming).



Professor Ali A. Mazrui at the Conference "Asia and Africa" at SUNY Binghamton, 2012  
(IGCS Picture Archives)

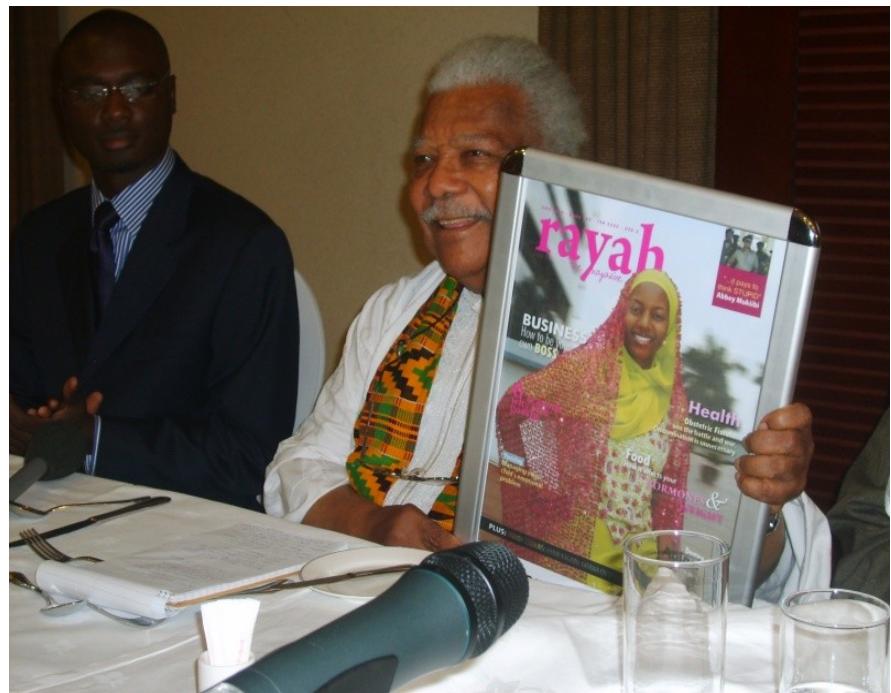
(continued from page 5)

### ... Ali A. Mazrui: Friend, Scholar, and Visionary

provides a true corrective to some of the misconceptions and stereotypes propagated by those from outside who have their own vested interests.

I like to conclude this paper with a tribute to Ali's vision for Africa. He wants the peoples of his beloved continent to enjoy the benefits of modern science and technology and become more prosperous. He wants their leaders to rule with humanity and dignity and not to behave as tyrants. He wants the young people to be proud of their heritage and traditions. All these ideas can be searched for in the millions of words that he has written in the last fifty years. I am sure that his voluminous works will provide guidance and direction for many future generations of scholars and students not only in Africa but in many other parts of the world too. It is important that the Mazruiana collection, that has been compiled and systematised over many years by the South African scholar, Dr. Abdul Bemath, is enriched, expanded and deposited in every major library in all the towns and cities of Africa.

▲



Professor Ali A. Mazrui in Uganda 2009  
(IGCS Picture Archives)



The Makerere Mazruiana Project poster, Makerere, Uganda, 2009 (IGCS Picture Archives)

# Ali Mazrui: The Creole in the Theater of Languages

By

Toyin Falola

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Growing up in Christian homes, many Africans thought that they would hear about *Babel* only in Christian parlance—or, if you will, Christiandom—where it referred to countless tongues when the Tower of Babel was being built. However, today, I crave your indulgence to allow me to reflect on *The Power of Babel*,<sup>1</sup> this time referring aptly to the seminal book co-authored by Professors Ali A. Mazrui and Alamin M. Mazrui (the two *Mazruis*, who need one more to create a triple heritage of their own!). Nevertheless, I will use this book to talk more broadly about the power and ambiguity of language, how word choices connect to society, and how language opens a window into the world of politics.

Autobiography is connected with language. Mwalimu Ali Mazrui (who is honorifically also called *Nana* in Ghana royal parlance) was born and raised in East Africa, where he learned English, Swahili, and Arabic. On Arabic, I have not encountered his uses other than some in citations from the *Q'uran*. Thus, he is a Creolite, thus one who has the capacity to mix languages and get entangled in the cultures as well as the identities of such languages. Years later, when he became a mature scholar, he formulated his eclectic language background into what he calls a “triple heritage”: indigenous, Islamic, and Western. That triple heritage has a foundation in language. Undoubtedly, the Creolite in Mazrui comes across in this articulation of the triple heritage.

Orality is critical, and it is sometimes presented as the use of African languages or their revival to advance the agenda of modernity. The endorsement of the creative power in orality becomes a sort of theatrical performance itself. The people that he writes about are grounded in orality, and they represent this orality in conversations and text.

English becomes the agency to mobility, modernity and intellectual power. His being prolific is facilitated by the infrastructure of English. His works are focused on African politics and economy, the search for change agents, and the understanding of processes in the *longue durée*.

The language of a Creolite embeds the narrative of the self in that of the nation. Although he does not pursue his work in a chronological fashion, the genealogies are clear. There is the autobiography of childhood in the TV series, one that talks about his family, and how that family is connected to an identity. This is how orality structures a narrative. There is a nostalgia for Mombasa, and the passing of its elements into oblivion, just as the griot in Senegal will present a storyline. Stress is placed on space and memory, which, although presented in a colonial language, are grounded in orality.

Orality recognizes the organic relationship between the environment and human beings, who use the powerful animals in the jungle to describe themselves. They developed strong understanding of everything around them, from insects to the trees, and call on them to organize religions and rituals. This connection with the environment can be characterized as sensing nature itself, and in doing so, using a language that draws heavily from all available objects and elements and working them into idioms, proverbs, and parables.

Moving into the school system, the language of orality is not discarded but expanded upon. English and Swahili become juxtaposed, and indigenous languages may be added to create a Creolization. One sees in a number of Mazrui's writings this juxtaposition. It is also striking that he brings in poetic stanzas, woven into prose. These are stylistic choices that embroiders an argument or are used as transitional phases.

Proverbs and poetry reveal Creolization, the unconscious recourse to the multiplicity of languages and creative genres. This brings the language of the farmer and professor closer to a mutual understanding. Mazrui becomes a language bargainer, shopping for the appropriate genre in which to negotiate in the market place of ideas. He is a smart bargainer, as he draws from too many diverse sources.

Orality is about a dialogue, but Swahili is conversational. Thus, Mazrui often writes as if he is engaged in a dialogue, with a few sentences

forming short paragraphs. These shorter paragraphs tend to invite a dialogue, a style not drawn from the European languages but from East African oral culture. When you “call out” in orality, it takes the form of a performance. Orality does not encourage a monologue. Orality is spontaneous and creative, and one sees the deployment of both tools in the way Mazrui answers questions. It is not unexpected for him to be theatrical, and to use very imaginative words.

Mazrui's intellectual assembly is a combination of the plurality of issues, the plurality of subjects, the plurality of perspectives, and the plurality of languages. But that plurality of languages gets hidden in what I have identified as the recourse to orality, the constant references to fragmented histories and memory. But as Mazrui deploys the English language, he needs to fracture himself, and his presentation of the past, grounded in orality, becomes “mythical.” Indeed, he often takes the Islamic as “indigenous,” thus casting its impact in mythical ways as well. This is where Mazrui not only betrays his preference but his transparency: the Western and the Christian become patriarchal and masculine, in opposition to the innocence and femininity of the mythical.

The dominance and status of English in Mazrui's work are clear. The English language is used to present Africa to Africans and to the world, and to re-Africanize Africans in drawing from lost traditions. A blended language, the “Englishes” with doses of Swahili and Arabic reveal creativity but draws attention to curiosity as well. Creativity and curiosity raise questions not just about intellectual innovations, but the contents of ideas. A language has such a powerful linkage with culture that writing in English does not mean a rejection of one's cultural immersion. Let me illustrate this point with a citation:

Where do the “pronouns” come in? Languages betray the cultures from which they spring. Pronouns are part of that story. In referring to a third person English is gender-conscious—so the pronoun *he* refers to the male and the pronoun *she* refers to the female.

In many African languages pronouns are gender-neutral. The words for 'he' or "she" are fused into one. To the present day many Africans competent in the English language sometimes refer to a third person female as "he" when speaking in English because of the linguistic influence of their own mother tongues.<sup>2</sup>

And there are cultural nuances:

Most African languages do not have separate words for "nephews" and "nieces" because your sister's children are supposed to be equivalent of your own biological children. The same word which is used for your child (*mtoto* in Kiswahili) is used for your niece or nephew. Very few African languages have a word for "cousin." Your uncle's daughter or son is the equivalent of your sister or brother, so cousins are counted almost as siblings. Once again language betrays the tightness of kinship times in the African extended family.<sup>3</sup>

Identity is central to this language use: how Africans see themselves, how others gaze upon them, how they are represented. Mazrui has to define himself, and language enables him to do so. Then he has to define his continent, again falling on language to do so.

Turning now to *The Power of Babel*, specific elements emerge in how Mazrui and his co-author present language in terms of its acquisition and usages, its universal nature, its connections to ethnicities, and its linkages to identity and nationalities. The way and manner that words are used can reveal a lot about people and places.

Mazrui presents the creative aspect of language in many ways. It can inspire heroism, as in the career of poet-president Léopold Sédar Senghor who was nominated many times without success for the Nobel Prize for his command of French (written and spoken), and his poetry and philosophy. Love for John Milton's *Paradise Lost*

is said to have influenced Apolo Obote (1925–2005), president of Uganda, to adopt Milton as his first name. Mazrui is full of praise for Julius Nyerere, the late president of Tanzania who translated William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice* into Swahili. He values these translations for advancing the modernist agenda of African languages.

Politics is always central. Indeed, just as he sees politics influencing language, he sees language as being influenced by politics. He links the end of the Cold War and the fall of apartheid to the possible decline in the use of French, Russian and Afrikaans. Charting the rise and fall of European languages in Africa is like playing "a chess game with African cultures. Will the African languages be Europeanized or will the European languages be Africanized?"<sup>4</sup>

This "chess game" deals with choices and options, negotiations and brokerage. The game is played in the world of globalization. Power has to be extended, as part of imperialism. This imperialism involves the imposition of language. Power, too, has to be resisted, in the nationalism that calls for self-assertion. Language is part of this nationalism. No matter how the issue of control or resistance is resolved, language becomes the critical part of that resolution: the very possibility of co-existence within national frontiers, and of cooperation between frontiers, involves language.

Back to Mazrui and this "chess game": as we all struggle for influence, resources, money, power and more, we will be drawn to those very institutions and structures that society puts in place to resolve our struggles. The state's structures and its coercive approach use the language of law and order, to legitimize its violence. In the fabric of society itself, where these conflicts play out intensely, language mediates the struggles between men and women, matriarchy and patriarchy. The language of respect recognizes boundaries between the youth and the elderly, resolving conflicts of interest in favor of older men. What we call persuasion is grounded in idioms, metaphors and similes that appeal

on the basis of culture. The language of persuasion is of course different from that of threat.

To an extent, my point is that at the very heart of politics and political discourse is the deployment of language. This language, in words and texts, communicates processes and actions. Each action has its own characteristics. The word, as Professor Ademola Dasylva of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, is fond of reminding me, can be transformed into a spirit—as in words of prophecy, of curses, of wishes, of incantations. If many political scientists ignore language, Mazrui recognizes it very fully in terms of its association with political discourse, both in the context of politics itself and the texts used to communicate its contents.

I started with a gesture at autobiography, and I want to close with a celebration of autobiography. Mazrui has done various first-person narratives in his presentations. He defends the preservation of traditional institutions, but he is not a traditionalist. He is a man of multiple cultures, but he celebrates identity. Amazingly, he lives in the West, but he translates Africa. He is, on the one hand, an autonomous scholar but, on the other, he is engaged in the "arrested development" of Africa. Mazrui is a Creole, with a style that shows how to accept the cultures of the West while retaining an African identity. As a Creole, he maintains a stream of dialogue with the colonizers and the "globalizers," but rejects de-personalization, rejects de-culturalization and rejects de-Islamization. In sum, that is Mzee—or in Ghana royal parlance, *Nana*—the indomitable Ali A. Mazrui, the teacher, the embodiment of refined African-cum-Western cultural being and, above all, the Public Intellectual! Long live Mazruiana!



## NOTES

1. Ali A. Mazrui and Alamin M Mazrui, *The Power of Babel: Language and Governance in the African Experience* (Chicago: Chicago University Press), 1998.

2. Ibid., 210.

3. Ibid., 210.

4. Ibid., 210.

*... Mazrui has done various first-person narratives in his presentations. He defends the preservation of traditional institution, but he is not a traditionalist. He is a man of multiple cultures, but he celebrates identity.*

# Mazrui

By

Ricardo R. Larémont

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I met Professor Ali Mazrui during the Spring of 1989 at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. I was working in the private sector at the time as the manager of two radio stations (WDZZ-FM and WFDF-AM) in Flint, Michigan. Twice a week I would drive from Flint to Ann Arbor to attend Professor Mazrui's class on the Government and Politics of Africa. I had been working first as a lawyer in New York City and then in Washington, DC before moving to Flint in 1988 to undertake the responsibilities for managing these two radio stations.

I had been working as either a lawyer or a manager for approximately ten years when I realized that although I was earning quite a bit of money I was quite dissatisfied as to whether what I was doing in life fit into a larger, more meaningful, and possibly divine plan. I felt there had to be more meaning in life.

It was at that moment in time that two events occurred that changed the entire direction of my life. First, while employed as the general manager of WDZZ and WFDF I was recruited by the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity in Lansing, Michigan to create a literacy program for at-risk, adolescent youth in Lansing. I jumped into this voluntary effort and created an after-school program that combined access to basketball courts and volunteer literacy teachers to help students who were at risk for dropping out of high school. I discovered for the first time in my life that I was profoundly interested in teaching rather than the practice of the law.

With this newly found discovery, I was motivated to return to school to advance my studies and chart a new direction to my life. It was then that I believe that spiritual forces way beyond my particular control directed me to enroll in Professor Mazrui's course. It was at that moment in time that the entire direction of my life changed, profoundly for the better.

When encountering Professor Mazrui, I found an extraordinarily well-informed man and a media and academic celebrity yet he was also a

man who was accessible, friendly, and generous. He lacked arrogance. He knew how to listen and also how to inform in a gentle manner. What also struck me in a remarkable way was his ability to hear and transform what he had heard into new paradigms of analysis that very few persons I had ever met were likely to consider. It seemed to me for that the third time in my life (the first two times were my Political Philosophy professor at NYU named Gisbert Flanz and the second was my Criminal Law professor at NYU Law School called Graham Hughes) I was in the presence of genius. Everything that I have learned about Professor Mazrui from that first encounter until now confirms what I was able to intuit then: that here was an eloquent man of genius yet he was accessible, kind, and generous.

Professor Marui's writings have been essential to my intellectual formation. I was first introduced to his thought by his book and film series *The Africans*, which laid out his *Triple Heritage* thesis and which stimulated my interest in Islam in Africa. Later I was deeply affected by two of his works, his Reith Lectures that were published as the *African Condition* and his co-written work with Al-Amin Mazrui called *The Power of Babel*. These three works still have extraordinary relevancy decades after their publication.

chose Yale where I could work with Professors David Apter and Juan Linz.

Even after beginning my studies at Yale, I kept in touch with Professor Mazrui for guidance. Even though he was extraordinarily busy, he always made himself available to guide me in my academic research and to answer my questions. Because of my exposure to him and his academic writings, I was encouraged to pursue my present field of research, which examines the role of Islam within the politics and societies of North Africa and the Sahel.

Professor Mazrui's writings have been essential to my intellectual formation. I was first introduced to his thought by his book and film series *The Africans*, which laid out his *Triple Heritage* thesis and which stimulated my interest in Islam in Africa. Later I was deeply affected by two of his works, his Reith Lectures that were published as the *African Condition* and his co-written work with Al-Amin Mazrui called *The Power of Babel*. These three works still have extraordinary relevancy decades after their publication.

Two years after my graduation from Yale I happened to be visiting Professor Mazrui at his new university, SUNY Binghamton, when his Administrative Assistant at the time, Nancy Levis, suggested that I apply for the position of being Professor Mazrui's Associate Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies after the unexpected demise of the founding Associate Director, Omari Kokole. I applied for the job and in 1997 I rejoined Professor Mazrui, eight years after I had first met him.

My association with Professor Mazrui while working with him as his Associate Director enhanced my research and teaching career. Not only was I given an opportunity to think and learn in novel ways with one of political science's most innovative thinkers, I was a rapt student who began learning the art of teaching from one of academia's superlative lecturers. I learned to structure a lecture; I learned the art of declamation; I learned the art of the pregnant pause; and I

Upon completing my class with Professor Mazrui I was convinced that I needed to undertake a change of life direction and that after ten years of practicing law and managing private enterprises, I would commit myself to becoming a university professor. With his encouragement and more importantly with his letters of recommendation, I was admitted to Oxford University, Yale University, and Princeton University and ultimately

learned the art of the controversial intervention even though I am less inclined to pursue that route than my esteemed teacher. It was an invaluable experience that improved me as a researcher and a teacher.

But there is much more that Professor Mazrui has taught me, which is something much more valuable than being capable as a university professor. That is the art of being a more complete and generous human being. Because after all, after our professional accomplishments, it is the degree to which we are willing to be patient and helpful to all who are around us that makes us humans who aspire to divine behavior. Although Professor Mazrui has taught me a lot about thinking, writing, analysis, and verbal explication, it is his example as a generous and patient human being that has been the most valuable lesson of all. How busy he is! Nevertheless, the warmth, the caring for others, the patience, is always there. And that is his greatest lesson of all. Professor Mazrui makes me think of William Wordsworth who in 1798 in a poem called *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* wrote:

*That best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
Of kindness and of love.*

▲



Professor Ricardo Larémont, Lotfi Zekraoui, Graduate Student from Algeria,  
Professor Seifudein Adem, and Professor Ali Bouanani.  
Seated: Dr. Abubaker al-Shingieti and Professor Ali A. Mazrui



Professor Ali A. Mazrui at the International Studies Association Convention  
in San Diego, April 2012 (IGCS Picture Archives)

# Was Ali A. Mazrui Ahead of His Time?

By

Sefudein Adem

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State University of New York at Binghamton

At different points in his intellectual journey as a political scientist, Ali Mazrui has been described as "reactionary," "radical," "conservative," "realist," "liberal," "idealist," "extremist," and so forth. This was partly a tribute to his eclecticism and partly a testimony to his contribution to academic and public discourse. But there was also more to the story. The issues Mazrui grappled with and the method he used, have sometimes estranged him from the mainstream discipline of political science. And yet Mazrui neither changed his intellectual agenda nor jumped on the positivist bandwagon. I write this piece in the tradition of Mazrui's own analysis, what we call Mazruiana around here, in defense of his approach and the discipline of political science, both at the same time.

About forty years ago, John Nellis observed about Ali Mazrui that he was "frequently and severely criticized by radical social analysts who find his traditional scholarship irrelevant and his liberal principles infuriating... Conversely, some mainstream political scientists feel that his work, of which now there is a substantial body, is lacking in analytical rigor, and that no amount of graceful erudition can disguise the fact that Mazrui is more a political essayist than a political scientist."<sup>1</sup> Mazrui's "traditional scholarship," that was under attack, anchored itself in historical method, eschewed fetishism in numbers, and accepted permissiveness of normative bias in social inquiry. The issues raised by mainstream political scientists in the 1970s about Mazrui's scholarship in this way closely mirror the fundamental schism which exists today between positivists and post-positivists. This is exhibit number one for our thesis that Mazrui was ahead of his time.

Ali Mazrui is a political essayist; he is also a political scientist. In the presumed conceptual distinction between a political scientist and a political essayist mentioned above, however, there is a suggestion that erudition and disciplined inquiry could not go together. I, for one, do not share that view. A careful examination of Mazrui's corpus of writings and the trend in the discipline today also supports the idea that early in his career Mazrui was in effect ahead of his time, breaking a new

methodological ground of social analysis. From the mid-1960s, Mazrui had already cultivated an intellectual style which helped to propel him to public prominence at an early age. The style consisted of some basic elements. Mazrui would identify a public issue which was capable of generating debate. He would then relate that issue to his own convictions in a dialectical manner. Mazrui enjoyed the contradictions of any public discourse, and proceeded to highlight them. Is this not akin to the poststructuralist method which, from the margins of mainstream political science, is challenging positivism today?

In the year 1963, when he was a graduate student at Oxford University, Mazrui published an article in the *American Political Science Review* about the notion of collective identity formation in the context of the African experience.<sup>2</sup> That was decades before the role of culture and identity in global affairs began to capture the attention of many political scientists. There is currently a proliferation of literature about "collective identity" formation, and the "return of culture" is now widely recognized.<sup>3</sup> In his numerous writings, Mazrui has also continued to grapple with the issue of inter-subjectivity—although he rarely used that cumbersome terminology—an issue which is today one of the central themes of an emerging paradigm of thought in political science.<sup>4</sup> Here again, Mazrui was clearly ahead of his time.

When it was fashionable to cling to a single overarching theory or ideology, Mazrui was openly advocating what he called creative eclecticism. To this day, he has continued to assert his independence in this regard, but more voices are also beginning to be heard in the discipline in favor of various forms of eclecticism. This should be another hallmark of a man who is ahead of his time.

In a related but slightly different arena of intellectual endeavor, Mazruiana has also done reasonably well in predicting some of the significant events in global affairs, perhaps more so, than many of the rival "scientific" theories, including those equipped with mathematical models and presumably greater predictive power. It must be

admitted at once that it is not in Mazrui's style of discourse to attach too much value to the predictive power of theories. Indeed, Mazrui has on one occasion argued: "... only a thin dividing line separates scientific prediction from fortune telling."<sup>5</sup> Mazrui uttered those words at least 20 years before IR scholars were humbled by their inability to "predict" two of the major international events of our time, the sudden collapse of communism and the rise of China as an aspiring global hegemon. In any case, it may be worth our while to mention just a few of his predictions and how, retrospectively, he seems to have been substantially vindicated.

In 1975, Mazrui lamented that "we are nowhere near an international police force strong enough to keep the Russians out of another Czechoslovakia."<sup>6</sup> In 1979, Russians invaded Afghanistan. In 1972, Mazrui wrote: "When the hold of the white minority in Rhodesia is one day broken, we will almost certainly have a country called Zimbabwe."<sup>7</sup> Rhodesia gained independence in 1980 and was renamed Zimbabwe.

In 1986, in *The Africans* (Program 5), Mazrui asserted that South Africa will be free from the White minority rule in the 1990s.<sup>8</sup> In 1994, the white minority rule came to an end in South Africa.<sup>9</sup>

In 1989, Mazrui predicted: "If Islam gets nuclearized before the end of the century, two regional rivalries are likely to have played an important part in it. One is the rivalry between India and Pakistan; the other is the rivalry between Israel and the Arabs."<sup>10</sup> In 1998, Pakistan exploded the nuclear device and joined the nuclear club.

Also in 1989, Mazrui wrote: "Islam in despair could be pushed to a nuclear terrorism as a version of jihad... And a future case of Islamic nuclear terrorism—aimed probably against either Israel or the United States or both—may well be the outcome of the present Israeli-American insensitivity to the sense of horror of Islamic civilization"<sup>11</sup> Mazrui made that observation more than a decade before the issue of "terrorism" and "clash



Professor Ali A. Mazrui and Dr. Seifudein Adem after the International Studies Association Convention in San Diego, California, April 2012 (IGCS Picture Archives)

of civilizations" became principal categories of discourse in the West.

In May 2001, Mazrui said: "If Americans are going to spend money only to listen to views which they regard as 'balanced', they had better brace themselves for international shocks in the future at least as 'bewildering' as the Iranian and Cuban Revolution!"<sup>12</sup> Three months later, it was 9-11.

Some of Mazrui's intriguing observations had thus been borne out by events, but given his reasons are based, to the extent he reasons, on logic rather than empirical evidence, his observations, too, might be dismissed as fortune-telling. We would recall that he had in the past dismissed scientific prediction in similar terms. But, fortunately, this does not mean that the estrangement between the mainstream discipline and Mazrui's scholarship is bound (or needs) to continue forever. I say this because a common ground could be found, one in which Mazrui's testable (and erudite) hypotheses could be made subject to "empirical" analysis by political scientists. What is more, if it is true, as it is often said, that concepts are the building blocks of theory, Mazrui has bequeathed to us a large reservoir of concepts which are useful for interrogating power and modernity, and for formulating a cultural theory of South-North relations. Putting

these concepts under the limelight of greater scrutiny could constitute another important task for empirical political scientists toward a more comprehensive examination of Mazrui's stimulating and substantial scholarship. So let the work begin... ▲

#### NOTES

1. John Nellis, Review of "Ali A. Mazrui, *Cultural Engineering and Nation-Building in East Africa* by Ali A. Mazrui (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972)," in *American Political Science Review*, 68, 2, 1974, pp. 831-833
2. Ali A. Mazrui, "On the Concept of 'We are all Africans,'" *American Political Science Review*, 57, 1, 1963, pp. 88-97.
3. See, for example, Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," *American Political Science Review*, 88, 2, 1994, pp. 384-396; Yoseph Lapid and Fredrich Karatochwil, *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996).
4. "Shared knowledge" was the phrase Mazrui used in reference to what social constructivists and postmodernists refer to as "inter-subjective knowledge," or "inter-subjectivity." For instance, Mazrui wrote in 1976: "The search for consensus in human affairs must . . . include a search for shared knowledge." Ali A. Mazrui, *A World Federation of Cultures: An African Perspective* (New York: The Free Press, 1976), p. 399.
5. Ali A. Mazrui, "Political Science and Political Futurology: Problems of Prediction," *Proceedings of the University of East Africa Social Science Council Conference*, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, 1969, p. 172.
6. Ali A. Mazrui, "World Culture and the Search for Human Consciousness," in S. H. Mendlovitz (ed.) *On the Creation of a Just World Order: Preferred World for the 1990s* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 6.
7. Mazrui, *Cultural Engineering*, p. 20.
8. Ali A. Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (Video), PBS/BBC, 1986; "New Conflicts." Program 5.
9. Mazrui has said recently that he also did expect more violent struggle for South African liberation: "I was vindicated about the schedule of the end of Apartheid, but I was wrong about the method or strategy of ending Apartheid. I was glad Apartheid ended with less violence than I had predicted, and also glad that it ended in the 20th century as I had predicted." Author's Email Correspondence with Ali Mazrui, 16 November 2012.
10. Ali A. Mazrui, "The Political Culture of War and Nuclear Proliferation: A Third World Perspective," in Hugh C. Dyer and Leon Mangasarian (eds.) *The Study of International Relations: A State of the Art* (New York: Macmillan: 1989), p. 158.
11. Mazrui, "The Political Culture of War and Nuclear Proliferation," p. 168.
12. Ali A. Mazrui, "The Place of Documentary Films in Africana Studies: The Case of *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*," Keynote Address to the Fourth Annual African Studies Student Research Colloquium, Bowling Green State University, May 23, 2001, p. 7.

# What I Have Learned from Mwalimu Mazrui

By

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Founder, Friend of UN Alliance of Civilizations

Some of life's best lessons are derived not from formal classes but from casual and stimulating conversations. Our most memorable teachers may not be our very own classroom teachers but those who teach us informally through their lectures, interviews, and writings. And then there are those who teach us through their personal lives and inspiration through long professional and personal association.

Professor Ali A. Mazrui was never a formal professor of mine. When Professor Mazrui was a candidate for the position of Albert Schweitzer Chair in the Humanities at Binghamton University in the late 1980s, I had all but finished my coursework. He did not have a formal role on my dissertation committee either but his presence at my oral defense was very much appreciated by me for his moral support. Yet, in recent years I have come to realize that Professor Mazrui is indeed a "Mwalimu" (teacher) to me because of the informal lessons I have had from him.

Since my first meetings with Professor Mazrui in 1988–1989, we have had several written and oral conversations. I have been fortunate to have innumerable occasions to listen to his lectures in the classroom as his teaching assistant/co-instructor, and his lectures and interviews in the public arena. My editorial role with many a Mazrui manuscript—starting with the fascinating and thought-provoking galley for *Cultural Forces in World Politics* (1990)—exposed me to his exciting views, academic range, and intellectual style. Our personal lives have also been opened to each other, through trials and joys. These included significant life-events such as the sorrow we felt when our friend and former Institute of Global Cultural Studies Associate Director Omari Kokole died unexpectedly at the age of 42; the joy of his marriage to Pauline Uti and the subsequent births of his second crop of sons, and my own marriage to a woman who has the same first name (Kim) as one of his first crop of sons; and our respective journeys to US citizenship.

Both Mwalimu and I enjoy the use of numbers to categorize and explain. In this spirit, I will

explain the *nine* most important things I have learnt from Mwalimu in *three* categories: academic knowledge; intellectual style, and personal attributes

## ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE

1) *Africa*: It should be no surprise that Mwalimu, as a leading African scholar, has taught me a lot about Africa that I did not know as a young graduate student. My own exposure to Africa had been limited to North Africa (my geographic area of civilization being the Middle East and North Africa) but my association with Mwalimu exposed me, for example, to the ideas of the "Triple Heritage," "Dual Societies," "Short Memory of Hate," and so on; the cases of Senegal and Tanzania as interfaith paragons; and the lives of African leaders like Gowon, Nkrumah, and Nyerere. When I spent a few years at the United Nations, many of my colleagues were astonished at how much I knew about Africa. Many of the colleagues (and taxi-drivers) in New York city thought I was an African!

2) *Islam*: The years at Binghamton saw an increasing involvement of Mwalimu Mazrui in the world of Islamic studies, and teaching on the role of Islam in world politics. Happily, this coincided with my own interest in Islam and its influence on society (my own dissertation being on Islam and development). Mwalimu Mazrui's own work exposed me to what I have called the "Audacity of Islamic Hope" (see my "Africans and the Audacity of Islamic Hope: Reflections on the Islamic Aspect of Mazrui," in *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, March 2009). This reflects the more tolerant, less rigid side of Islam and focuses on an Islam which has the potential to be peaceful, democratic, egalitarian and kinder towards women than its practice has been.

3) *Culture*: Although Mwalimu Mazrui's systematic exploration of culture in the previously-mentioned *Cultural Forces in World Politics* was my first exposure to his thinking on culture, he has of course written extensively on cultural aspects of politics. His formulation of the functional aspects of culture was very powerful in my own conceptualizations

of culture in my work at the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. There were several occasions in which I used his ideas about the functions of culture in my discussions with other UN agencies and civil society. I have since also been inspired to relate these *functions* of culture to what I call the elements of culture (A preliminary example called "The Elements of Cultural Forces in World Politics, Redux," appeared in an earlier edition of this newsletter—Vol. 7, Issue 1, Spring 2008, pp. 9–10) which plays an important part of my ongoing intellectual explorations.

## INTELLECTUAL STYLE

1) *Comparisons*: One of the most enjoyable and thought-provoking aspects of Mazrui's writing is his ability to compare phenomena, personalities, and issues in an original manner, sometimes coming up with new terms on the way. A sampling of such comparisons could include: Sharpeville 1960 to Libya 2011 "Euro-Jews" and "Afro-Arabs"; "Shariacracy" and Federalism in Nigeria; "Afro-stroika" and Planned Governance; McCain and Mandela and Othello and Pushkin; Shakespeare, Shaka, Puccini and Senghor; Karl Marx and James Callaghan; Muhammad Ali and Idi Amin; Baganda and the Japanese; Nkrumah and De Gaulle. The intellectual originality of these comparisons is such that the message of the comparisons—whether one agrees or disagrees with it—stays in the mind of the reader/listener. My own modest ventures into this style include, e.g. entitled sections of a recent work "Black gold and white gold" (referring to oil and water), or dissertation chapters entitled "A Tale of Two Republics" (comparing Syria and Algeria) or "A Tale of Two Kingdoms" (comparing Saudi Arabia and Morocco).

2) *Clear Writing*: Another extremely enjoyable aspect of Mazrui's writing for the reader is his writing style—clear and accessible to the educated reader. You will never find Mwalimu writing a sentence like "If, for a while, the ruse of desire is calculable for the uses of discipline soon the repetition of guilt, justification, pseudo-scientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities, and classifications can be seen as the desperate effort to

'normalize' formally the disturbance of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational, enlightened claims of its enunciatory modality.'<sup>1</sup> Further, Mwalimu delights in using poetry and alliteration to drive home his points. In my own writing, I have endeavored to be clear and accessible, and even to bring a chuckle or two to the reader from time to time. Both Mwalimu and I have had backgrounds in journalism, and perhaps that is why the writing style of Mwalimu has been easily impressed on me.

3) *Public intellectualism*: The two above points are related to why Mwalimu has been a successful public intellectual, to the point of being named one of the top 100 public intellectuals in 2005 by the *Prospect Magazine* (UK) and *Foreign Policy* (USA) as well on the list of *The Muslim 500: The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims, 2012*.<sup>2</sup> In addition, his years of teaching and lecturing around the world (sometimes to hostile audiences and individuals) have trained him well in being an adept presenter and interviewee. What emerges in these public appearances is an adept communicator who is able to explain complex issues and respond nimbly to tough questions without losing his cool. I try to emulate Mwalimu in my own limited way in my own teaching and efforts at public speaking for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations project in the past, and as an activist academic these days in my public appearances.

#### PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

1) *Humor*: Many academics have a serious demeanor all the time. Indeed, some will never even crack a smile in public. Thus when my wife Kim first met Mwalimu in Cleveland when he came to Cleveland State to give a lecture, she was quite surprised to meet a man who, in her words, "is such a jolly man." In my long associa-

tion with Mwalimu, we have shared many a joke and plays on words. Since Mwalimu's writings are sometimes quite personal, there are often anecdotes from his past that bring chuckles to the readers. Sometimes what Mwalimu has to say can be harsh but he often softens the blow with the use of humor. In my own life, I have found that to be a valuable attribute, and I have always tried to use humor in my speeches and while teaching where possible.

the Mwalimu. From my earliest days in editing his manuscripts, I have been impressed with how open he has been to the changes I have suggested.

3) *Interfaith Openness*: Mwalimu is an African raised in a Muslim family. Nevertheless, both Molly, his first wife, and Pauline, his current wife, are Christian. Mwalimu is an inspiration to those who believe that religion is no bar to love. His friends include those who are from various religions (or none at all) proving that religion is also not a bar to friendship. Indeed, his friendship with—and trust in—me (a Catholic with a Jewish background raised in Hindu majority India with a scholarly interest in Islam) is testimony to his interfaith openness. In my past and current work in the intercultural area, I have always emphasized the role of not only academic knowledge about the "other," but also getting to know people from other cultures as well as travel. Mwalimu's openness to travel and getting to know people from other cultures has been a lesson well-absorbed by me.



Professor Thomas Uthup Speaking at UN  
Department of Public Information Briefing

#### NOTES

1. This was the second-place winner in the 4th Bad Writing contest, sponsored by the scholarly journal *Philosophy and Literature*, and is from the *Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 131 by Homi K. Bhabha, an academic superstar currently at Harvard. The other examples of such writing can be found at [http://denisdutton.com/bad\\_writing.htm](http://denisdutton.com/bad_writing.htm)

2. Chief Editor, Prof. S. Abdallah Schleifer, *The Muslim 500: The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims, 2012* (Amman: Royal Institute of Strategic Studies, 2011).

***As Mwalimu turns 80, I look forward to many  
other lessons for years to come.***

***Happy Birthday dear Mwalimu!***

# ***Ali Mazrui Calls for a New Archival Order in Africa***

## ***How Would Indigenous Civilizations Benefit?***

By

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Professor Ali Mazrui is one scholar who has been underlining the importance of archives and has been emphasizing the need to find new foundations for the African memory as well as the need to protect Africa's identity. As we celebrate not only Professor Ali Mazrui's 80 years of life but also his 50 years of an outstanding publishing career, we would like to take a look at an issue that has a lot of implications for one of his most widely circulated concepts, the triple heritage of Africa. Our task here is to, first, try to reflect on Mwalimu Mazrui's preoccupation with the importance of an African archival tradition and, second, focus on the importance of the indigenous factor in his concept of the triple heritage—of indigenous, Islamic and Western civilizations—of Africa.

Mwalimu Mazrui does not deny the existence of an African version of an archival tradition. But, per his definition of an archival tradition "as a cultural preoccupation with keeping records, a tradition of capturing the past through preserved documentation,"<sup>1</sup> he demonstrates that the African archival tradition is weak and that weakness has had ghastly devastating consequences for Africa over the centuries. Professor Mazrui's consciousness of the importance of an archival tradition transcends simply establishing national archives and/or having stockpiles of dusty documents. He identifies five forms of documentation: material documentation, which includes such archaeological evidence as pottery, skeletons and coins; written documentation, which he says is what has conditioned our view of what constitutes archival reference itself; pictorial documentation, which includes painting and carving on rocks; sound documentation (or what Carney Gavin dubbed "phono-archeology"), the newest form of archival record; and *the raw memory of the human being* or the human capacity to recollect in tranquility, which Professor Mazrui refers to as the oldest form of documentation.<sup>2</sup>

Mwalimu Mazrui understands that indigenous civilizations form the weakest part of the triple heritage. He attributes, among other things, Africa's weak—not absence of—scientific and technological practice, weak philosophical institutions, as well as the deplorable status of indigenous languages to Africa's weak archival tradition. Let us focus on indigenous African science (and technology) and philosophy for a moment.

The research of Gloria Emeagwali, professor of History at Central Connecticut State University, on science and technology and African indigenous knowledge systems reveals that Africans had their own form of change and innovation through endogenous and exogenous activities. She notes that "endogenous scientific and technological growth includes advancements in medicine, mathematics, metallurgy, ceramics, textile, and food processing and building technology."<sup>3</sup> She continues, "While interacting with their environment and transforming various raw materials, Africans, over time, arrived at various hypotheses about nature, the natural world, and society. The fabrication of metallic tools and implements, textile production, traditional medicine, or food processing involved the application of various techniques, principles, and propositions, arrived at through observation of the environment and the experimentation at various levels. It seems that most of these activities were based on inductive methodology."<sup>4</sup>

Indigenous African philosophy is described as the philosophy of sages. But who is a sage? According to Odera Oruka, formerly professor of Philosophy at the University of Nairobi who has researched on African sages, customs, and traditions in Kenya, a sage is a wise man or woman.<sup>5</sup> In *Sage Philosophy*, Oruka explains that Sage Kithanje, one of the sages who was involved in his research, defined a wise person as "someone who knows the world belongs to

three people, God, man and woman; and he is one who takes the past, present and future into account when making judgment."<sup>6</sup> Oruka adds to Sage Kithanje's definition by noting that a "wise person enlightens people by what he/she says. A wise person is also one free from internal and external 'huners'."<sup>7</sup>

What do we learn about indigenous African scientific (and technological) and philosophical civilizations? One can deduce from Emeagwali's research that indigenous scientific and technological practice went through trial-and-error processes or "experimentation at various levels," seeking to innovate. Sage Kithanje's definition suggests that a sage operates within three cultural tendencies which Professor Mazrui refers to elsewhere as a triple temporality: nostalgia, presentism, and anticipation.<sup>8</sup> That is, a sage reconciles three things—the idealized continuities of the history of his community (nostalgia), the compelling pressures of the moment (presentism), and the demands of the future (anticipation)—before making a judgment. And Oruka's statement about a wise person's freedom from internal and external "huners" seems to suggest that a sage is independent and innovative, and is able to pose questions about continuity and change.

Inasmuch as Mwalimu Mazrui might agree with our deductions above, his analysis of Africa's oral tradition reveals some of African oral tradition's limitations that produced adverse effects on the dynamism, innovativeness, and development of indigenous scientific (and technological) and philosophical practices. At the end of the day, it does come across that Mwalimu Mazrui blames African culture itself. He determines that two concepts are largely responsible: documentary deficit and primordial surplus.<sup>9</sup> With regard to primordial surplus, he says that generally, "most indigenous African cultures refuse to regard the past as a bygone or the

present as transient..." and he wonders, "If the present is not transient, why bother to record it?"<sup>10</sup> In the postcolonial era, primordial surplus takes the form of identity politics which tends to promote unwavering allegiance to primordial identities by way of Africans' commitment to ethnicity or religious sectarianism.

It is also apparent that the archival tradition he has been calling for emphasizes written documentation because, as he asserts, "among the great cultures of the world, African civilizations have had less written records than average [and] for a long time, this literary deficit resulted in the assumption that Africa was a continent without history."<sup>11</sup> Thus, Africa's documentary deficit is portrayed by an excessive silence in African historiography and a shortage of recognized documentation in the written (and material) fields.<sup>12</sup> The Professor's analysis of African oral tradition clearly suggests that even if the written word had existed, Africa would still have been deprived of much of its "bounty of cumulative heresy [because] Africa's oral tradition was a tradition which tended to transmit consensus rather than dissent, what was agreed upon rather than what was rejected by the establishment."<sup>13</sup> For him, heresy would have served as "a built-in principle of instability" through the posing of questions of continuity and change, which would in turn promote dynamism and development in indigenous science and philosophy. Unfortunately, African indigenous intellectual practice which discouraged dissent he has made brilliant ideas which were formed independently and innovatively and are, thus, outside familiar way of life to recede into oblivion.<sup>14</sup>

Where do indigenous languages come in? Indigenous languages were largely unwritten. As a result, indigenous languages could not keep pace with or keep record of changes that occurred over time. Mwalimu Mazrui clarifies that the written word forms part of the imported sections of Africa's triple heritage. And adds that "modern archives are mostly Western in conception but they are also Islamic to some extent."<sup>15</sup> The Islamic conception of archives in Africa involved the use of the Arabic language and the Ajami tradition, the use of modified Arabic script in writing indigenous African languages. Fallou Ngom, associate professor of Anthropology and director of the African language program at Boston University, notes that Ajami has been used in Africa for more than a thousand years, and indicates that French colonialists, for example, described Ajami as "unreadable Arabic."<sup>16</sup> While the Ajami tradition might be a thousand years old, most African societies began to have access to the written word only in the last two centuries. And many more remain unwritten today.



Anukware Selase Adzima, 2012  
(IGCS Picture Archives)

Though most indigenous languages have remained unwritten, indigenous science and philosophy are still conceived in them because indigenous scientific and philosophical practices are primarily based on native traditions. As we all know, the fate of indigenous languages changed with the inception of the colonial machinery. To date, they continue to be sidelined and are currently in a very deplorable state. Colonial powers imposed their languages on Africans as the languages of education, administration, and commerce despite their weakness in terms of the number of speakers. The vast majority of the African elites who are products of colonial schools fell in love with foreign values, practices, and languages to which they have given prestige and priority. In the postcolonial era, colonial languages continue to be dominant while indigenous languages continue to be relegated in terms of status and domain of use.<sup>18</sup> Today, "[m]any Africans are more eager to learn the imperial European languages than to protect indigenous languages."<sup>19</sup> Colonization has, thus, made African identity something to be ashamed of.

Now, what would a new archival order then mean for indigenous science and technology, for sage philosophy and for indigenous languages? It is safe to say that the acceptance of a triple-heritage Africa, on the one hand, means accepting the fact that Africa cannot deny its Western and Islamic influences; neither can Africa undo those influences. On the other hand, it also means integrating the "positive" aspects of Western and Islamic influences for, first, sustainable development and, second, development that makes Africa competitive in an increasingly integrated world.

A new archival order would mean a more serious acceptance and promotion of indigenous science, technology, philosophy, and languages. The majority of Africans continue to use indigenous science, technology, philosophy and languages but in the informal sector, unfortunately. How many peasant farmers use TV weather forecasts to determine when to and when not to go to the farm due to bad weather? Do most still not use age-old hypotheses about many things including the appearance and direction of the sun and the moon, for example, to differentiate bad weather from good weather? How many Africans use fridges/freezers? But do they not preserve food for a long time? In most African countries, foodstuff is mostly produced either by peasant farmers with their age-old equipment, or it is imported. How many peasant farmers have access to farming best practices being promoted by Ministries of Agriculture, Departments and/or Faculties of Agriculture or agriculture research institutes? How adaptable are those best practices to the local contexts in the first place?

How about indigenous languages? Recent happenings in Ghana's political scene offer some food for thought. The inability of the majority of Ghanaians to adequately use the English language has necessitated the use of Ghanaian languages for political communication mostly by political parties. Since the year 2000, Ghanaian languages have assumed unprecedented status at political rallies, and Ghanaian cultural elements have also been used in political slogans, songs, and symbols to translate candidates' messages to the masses, according to Professor Kwesi Yankah. He reveals his analysis of the linguistic situation within the Ghanaian political scene in his lecture on the topic "The Tongue, the Thumb and the Ballot Box" at the 38th J. B. Danquah Memorial Lecture series, organized by the Ghana Academy of Arts and Science (GAAS).<sup>20</sup> He observes that the more proficient politicians are in Ghanaian languages, the more endeared they are to the people. He adds that slogans of political parties are not chosen at random and translated into the various Ghanaian languages; rather they are chosen together with local Ghanaian songs and symbols. Professor Yankah's analysis demonstrates that political parties have also integrated Ghanaian philosophies, beliefs, traditions, history and customs into political communication. At the end of the day his goal is to call for the development of indigenous languages because, as he reveals, his analysis does not only show the importance of indigenous languages in the identity of Ghanaians, but it also indicates that indigenous languages are resources.

If the indigenous factor is strengthened and made to integrate the foreign—not only Western perspectives but also those of the East including Japan, China, and India—Africa can become intellectually independent as well as a center among other centers of knowledge production around the world. Let us apply a macro conceptualization of translation to further explain this. First, there is the need for translation across medium; that is, translating oral tradition to a written tradition, in hardcopy and/or digitally. Second, there is the need for translation across perspective. We need to create a fusion of endogenous and exogenous perspectives; a fusion of consensus and dissent. Third, there is the need for interlingual translation by which we mean promoting multilingualism through translation into several languages. This will not only resource indigenous languages but it will also re-position them to take up a positive economic role as they can be used in administration, education and commerce, and the formal sector in general.

A new archival tradition should not only document indigenous scientific, technological and philosophical civilizations for the history books. They must be continually studied and improved upon. According to Abiola Irele, "there is the scientific spirit itself which governs the whole functioning of the scientific and technological civiliza-

tions we [Africans] now wish to appropriate."<sup>21</sup> He adds that "What we now recognize as the scientific spirit is the product of a whole movement of ideas by which what we now refer to as the West sought to understand man and the universe: the ground for modern science was a matter of historical fact prepared by the development of Western philosophy."<sup>22</sup> The humanities and social sciences have a role to play. Through their research, they must create the socio-cultural context for development. The interconnections of indigenous languages and know-how are still a very fertile ground for intellectual activity in Africa. There is a vast and rich oral tradition in Africa which has barely been tapped into and studied. Apart from the amount of data that popular memory and traditional leaders still possess in African communities, the recordings made of bards by missionaries and explorers as well as travel literature and administrative records of the various European regimes that were in Africa have still not been explored enough in this direction.

Many thanks Mzee Mazrui and Happy Birthday! May you live to be a hundred. ▲

#### NOTES

1. Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, 1986, p. 76.

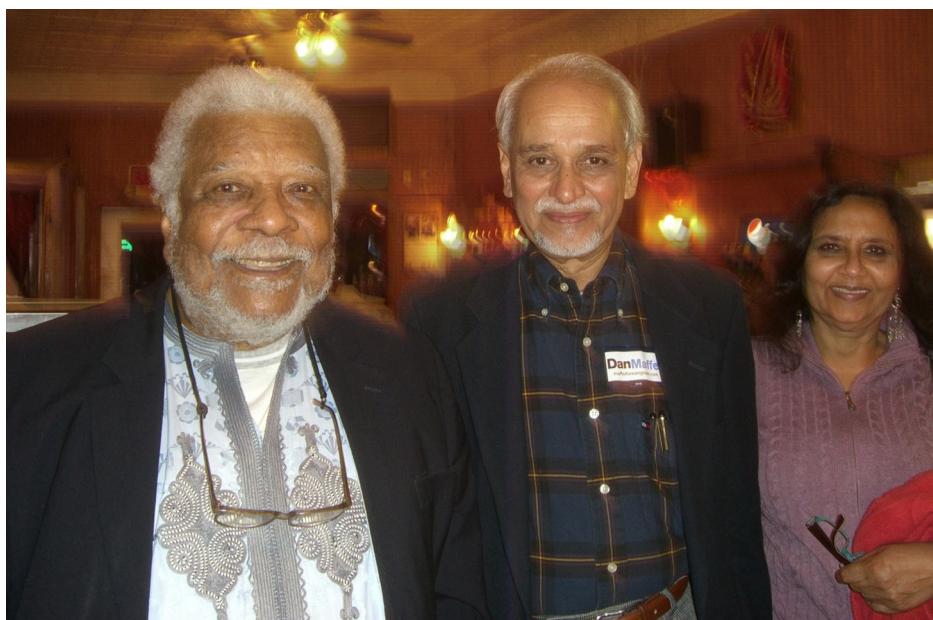
2. Mazrui, "Between Cultural Nostalgia and Cultural Amnesia," 2005.
3. Emeagwali (ed.), *Africa and the Academy: Challenging Hegemonic Discourses on Africa*. NY: Africa World Press, 2006, p. 2. She has written quite extensively on this issue. For more discussions, see Emeagwali (1993, 1995, 2003).
4. *Ibid.*
5. Oruka, *Sage Philosophy*, 1990, p. 70
6. *Ibid.*, p. 71
7. *Ibid.*
8. See Mazrui, "Built Form and Three Tendencies: Nostalgia, Presentism, and Anticipation," 1999.
9. See Mazrui, "Between Cultural Nostalgia and Cultural Amnesia."
10. Mazrui, *The Africans*, pp. 76–77.
11. Mazrui, "Between Cultural Nostalgia and Cultural Amnesia."
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. Mazrui, *The Africans*, p. 77.
16. *The World*, "Africa's Ajami Writing System." Available at: <http://www.theworld.org/2010/09/africa-ajami-writing>
17. Bambose, "African Languages Today," in *Selected Proceedings of the 40th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, (ed.) Eyamba G. Bokamba et al., pp. 1–14. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
18. Mazrui, "Between Cultural Nostalgia and Cultural Amnesia."
19. Also see Ghanaweb, "Let's Intellectualise Ghanaian Languages—Prof. Yankah," *General News* of Wednesday, 22 February 2006. Available online at: <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=99844>
20. Abiola Irele, *In Praise of Alienation, An Inaugural Lecture* (University of Ibadan) Nov. 1982.
21. *Ibid.*



Professor Ali A. Mazrui and Mrs. Pauline Uti Mazrui entertained by friends in a restaurant in South Africa  
(IGCS Picture Archives)



*Professor Ali A. Mazrui and his wife Lady Pauline Utu Mazrui, 2012*  
(IGCS Picture Archives)



*Professor Ali A. Mazrui with SUNY Colleagues at a Turkish Restaurant*  
(IGCS Picture Archives)

# Interview with Lady Pauline Uti Mazrui

By

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Institute of Global Cultural Studies

This year IGCS is celebrating Professor Mazrui's 80th birthday and his 50th year of academic publishing. Because family has played a vital role in shaping Professor Mazrui's life, it seems appropriate that we include this dimension in our celebration of his accomplishments. Therefore, I decided to interview his wife Pauline Uti Mazrui. I met Pauline three years ago, when I came to work at IGCS. I have been deeply impressed by her dedication to service and activism in the Binghamton community, and have often been affected by the joy with which she approaches life. Our conversation provided an opportunity to learn more about her fascinating life, and appreciate more fully the qualities that make her a beloved and respected member of our community.

**Pauline, when did you come to this country? Did you come straight to Binghamton or did you live in other cities before coming here?**

I came to this country in September of 1990. I came straight to Binghamton.

**When you came here what was your first impression of Binghamton?**

Binghamton is a small city, like a college town. It is quite different from where I come from. I come from a large city called Jos, in Plateau State, Nigeria. But, Binghamton in its own way was also unique, it was quite different. We previously lived very close to the Roberson Museum and Science Center, so that was a bonus!

**Pauline, you were a teacher in Nigeria, your home country. Can you tell us about your experiences as a teacher there?**

Yes, I worked with children from first grade to third grade. Those are the very formative years of children's lives. Later, I did a degree in special education, which enabled me to work with children with special needs and learning disabilities. This experience was very enriching and rewarding. When you work in this area you see that you make a difference in a child's life or even the parents' lives. Sometimes in Africa, parents are in denial when their children have special needs. Sometimes they

say, "Oh! Maybe it is witchcraft. Maybe it is medicine or voodoo; or joo joo," but these things are all part of developmental delays or difficulties. Letting the parents know that there is one person or a group of people that can help them, and that it is not their fault, makes a difference.

**What subjects did you teach?**

In Nigeria you have your own class, so I taught math, English, social studies, religious studies, and physical education.

**Can you tell us about one memorable moment of your teaching experience in your country?**

When you are teaching in the class and you see that a child is really in need and struggling, you are able to help this child to understand, or at least grasp the concept of what is going on. Then you can see the brightness or the happiness in the child's face. "Oh! I got it," so, it gives you satisfaction. Then you see the parents, "Oh! You know, I have seen the difference in my child since you started." You can have these moments working one on one, or in a group, with these children. There is no specific case, but it is little things here and there, small experiences. Seeing the happiness in the child brings joy to you.

**I know that when you came to this country you came to pursue your Special Education Masters degree. Tell us your experiences as a University student in this country.**

I did my first degree in Nigeria. It was on hearing impediments. So, when I came to do my Masters degree here, it was in general special education. I had more resources here than I had in Nigeria. With the physically disabled, you can see the material that they make, or sometimes even go out for field work. It is not just you visualizing something ethereal. I had good teachers too, who made learning fun, making you appreciate and love what you are getting yourself into.

**To prepare myself for this interview, I read Professor Mazrui's personal newsletters, and I found out that you are a very active member of**

**several community organizations, including working as a Lourdes Hospice volunteer. Can you tell us how you became a volunteer?**

I have been involved in lots of different projects. One project was called HOPE, it means "helping our parents to be good educators." There was another one in which I was involved, called the Family Resource Center. When my kids were growing up, I took them to the Resource Center. There, they had different programs for teachers, for parents and for the children.

I learned about Hospice, when Jill, little Ali's mom, Professor Mazrui's daughter-in-law was dying of breast cancer. At the time when she was undergoing treatment, the family members took turns going to California to spend time visiting her. During the treatment before her death, I was there when they said they were going to a Hospice. I never had been in a Hospice before, and I did not know what it was. So, I was at her house when this group of people came to set up the room for her. They were very caring, you know. They wanted to make sure everything was okay, asking the family members if there was anything they could do to help them. If you wanted to take a break, they could stay with her. This act of compassion really touched me deeply! Once I realized what hospice was after they explained it to me, they said, "I bet you must have one in your area." I said, "Once I go back to Binghamton I will go and look for it. I will see if they have one in our area. In memory of Jill, I would be a hospice volunteer."

Lo and behold, two weeks after I came back from California, a newspaper ad said "new training for hospice volunteers." I said, "Yahoo!!" I went and did thirty hours of training to be a hospice volunteer. People think you are helping the dying and their family, but I think I'm learning from them, because it gives you a different perspective and makes you appreciate little things that you take for granted.

**What are your typical duties as a volunteer?**

As a volunteer I have gone to relieve the caretaker. Maybe the caretaker wants to go to the doctor, to the dentist, or they just want to have time for them-

selves, or be with a friend. I have also gone caroling during the Christmas season. During our training we learned how to give massages and hand massages—very soothing. So, I found that very comfortable and, like they say, it was a calling for me. When they call me they ask me to help deliver medicines if the person can't come, or they ask me to do this or that. Most often they will say: "Pauline this patient is actively dying. Can you go sit with them, or give them a hand massage to relax them?" I also belong to a Lourdes group called "Secret Watch, Nobody Dies Alone." So, if somebody is actively dying and doesn't have a family member to stay with them, they can call you and ask if you can stay with them. Maybe you will be with this person when they die, to keep him or her company in the final hour.

**What would you say is your most memorable experience as a volunteer?**

Oh my goodness! As a volunteer it's when you really see that somebody has been restless and you know that just with the gift of touch you can calm this person. And letting the caregiver who has been there sitting with this person have twenty minutes or an hour to just take a break. You see! There is a family to whom I became so close, if they had activities they sometimes called me and said "Pauline could you come?" They treated me as their own, because I was with their mother and grandmother. There is no one particular experience. Another one—and this will sound strange—this lady, I had gone to see, had passed on. So, I went to her service and after that they had a reception. One of her friends, who sat beside me, said to me, "I never want to see you again." I replied "that is okay ma'am." Two days later she called the volunteer coordinator and she asked to talk to me. The coordinator asked what the matter was. The lady told her that she thought that she had said something mean to me. The volunteer coordinator told me that the lady wanted to talk. I replied that it was okay, she was in a grieving mood, so she wanted to apologize. I don't take it personally. She said that she did not mean to say what she said. I answered "Hey let's not make a big deal about it." That is human nature. But, it was very kind of her to recognize that she had offended somebody. I did not take it as an offence, because I knew that she was grieving a dear friend who passed on.

**What are the qualities needed to be an effective hospice volunteer?**

Oh! Well, to be a hospice volunteer it is something you, yourself must want, feel, love or enjoy doing. Knowing what you want to do, to make a difference in somebody else's life, either to the actively

dying person or to the family member, in any way that you can help out. So there is no specific criteria—it is just you and another person in need.

**Would you recommend that others volunteer their time to support community organizations, in a hospice or in other capacities?**

Oh, yes, very much. We live in a community where we are all interrelated in one form or another. So helping out in your community, either in the library, meals on wheels, hospices, going to the nursing home to visit someone, reading to a child, all these things make a difference in peoples' lives one way or another. It also enriches you, because the time that you give up helping another person will benefit you in a different way, so I highly recommended doing it.

**What advice would you give people who are interested in volunteering their time?**

I will say let it be what you want to do. Don't be forced to do it, and when you do it, love and appreciate it. Take your time; see if this is what you want to do. Ask yourself what you can give. There are different ways to volunteer in the community, but let it come deeply from your heart.

**Pauline, I know that you are the leader of the African Women of Binghamton. Can you tell us how this organization started?**

This organization started when our kids were growing up. We all came from different cultural backgrounds, and the kids were now growing up in a different cultural environment. As much as we wanted them to adjust in the new culture, we did not want them to forget their African culture. So, we formed this meeting. We rotate the meeting's location every month. Once in a while, we organize big gatherings, and the kids will be included. We became our sisters' and brothers' keepers. The children call all of us "aunties," although we are not all blood-related, but as a matter of respect. Where we come from, we don't call our elders by their proper names, so they have a lot of "aunties" and a lot of "cousins." I personally grew up in a family where my grandmother never made food just for herself. She would say: "You never know who will stop by." She would always say that a cup of tea that one can drink, six people can share. If they are happy and love each other, they will be satisfied. So, whatever you have to share, do not hold it for yourself. That is the kind of community-life we wanted to instill in our children.

And, as I just said, it went well because Harith had written a paper about the group during his first year at the University of Albany. He wrote that most of the memories of his childhood were about

seeing all these African women, from Congo, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, etc., and the way they dressed up for these gatherings. The professor told him that he needed to share those memories with those women and his parents, so, it really had an impact on him.



*Lady Pauline Uti Mazrui at an Oxford dinner in England with friends, 2012  
(IGCS Picture Archives)*

Now what we are trying to do is to fund-raise to help with projects. For example, we might make sure a child's family who can't afford to send him/her to school could have some means to support that child. In some places some of the clinics do not have adequate utensils. Then we will send some money for buying some medical supplies. That is the way it came about—it started with our kids growing up with our culture.

**How many members does the organization have?**

For now we are seven active members, because people move in and out of Binghamton.

**What are the main activities of the organization?**

As I said before, it is the culture issue, but we are beginning fundraisers to help people at home in Africa and here in Binghamton too. We do outreach and volunteer. For example, during the recent flood we went around helping people, cleaning homes for them, helping put things away. At first we bought supplies and then we discovered that the Red Cross and FEMA had clean water and other things, so we helped people in cleaning their homes and removing trash.<sup>1</sup> I remember there was a home in Vestal where the woman told us that she did not have money to pay us. We replied that we did not need money. She was surprised, and we started helping her. She had things in her attic. She and her husband could not go up the stairs, so what we did was climb to the attic and hand them down what they wanted.

**I know that the younger members of the African Women of Binghamton call you the “Big Mama.” Can you tell us why they call you “Big Mama?”**

To be honest, I do not know where that name comes from. It is a big name but, I don’t know where or how it came. It may be due to being the wife of an African elder!

**Pauline, as part of the African Women of Binghamton, could you tell us one memorable experience that you have had with the organization?**

Oh, wonderful. Yes, knowing that the association came about for giving our children this cultural background. If you can see somebody else’s child doing something wrong, you stop them and tell them that you don’t do things like this. You don’t need to get permission from the mother or father before reprimanding a child. You take care of this child as your own. The fact is that we are able to reach out to people who are in need and help them. “It takes a village to raise a child.” In this society somebody will say, (referring to our climbing to the attic): “Wait a minute, there are legal issues if I fall and hurt myself.” But that is not the case with us in Africa, it wasn’t an issue. We helped. If one of our members is ill, we spend time, sometimes even spend the night. We chat, pray, sing, and we make sure that this person will be okay. Again, this is part of our culture, and we are retaining that culture in a new continent.

**You have visited many countries and met many important leaders. In your travels what countries have had major impacts on you? Why?**

Every country is unique in its own way, like Malaysia. For example, in Kuala Lumpur the ethnic Chinese are the ones with the money—they are the business ones, while the Malaysians are the political ones. When you see how they interact, it seems that it has worked for them, they are doing very well. When we visited the former Prime Minister, you could see the passion in him about the Palestine issue. Turkey is quite a unique country in itself as well. The people there are very friendly. This country is very rich in history—anywhere you turn—you can see history. I remember one of Mwalimu’s students telling us that they were trying to build a subway, but wherever they dug, they discovered historical treasures. The visit brought back some memories from history lessons learned in elementary and high school. These memories were very vivid to me. I also visited some religious areas that were very nice as well.



*Professor Ali A. Mazrui  
and Lady Pauline Uti Mazrui  
(IGCS Picture Archives)*

**Who was the leader that most impressed you? Why?**

I must say when we went to India, I appreciated how the Indians enjoy their own cultural heritage. Like the day we went to the Taj Mahal, you see all these Indians with their families—children, grandparents and parents—visiting different sites in their own country. Tourism is mainly Indian. When taking a vacation, they do not travel outside of their own country. These are people who appreciate what they have, and Manmohan Singh, within twenty-four hours of our arriving in India, was able to grant an audience to Mwalimu. I think that was very, very nice.<sup>2</sup> The former Prime Minister of Malaysia’s passion about the Israeli and Palestinian troubles, could be seen in the way he spoke about it.<sup>3</sup> We have also met multiple African leaders, representing diverse countries.

Pauline, to conclude, one of the hallmarks of Professor Mazrui’s life has been his efforts to promote better understanding among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds. What do you think are the keys to people becoming more able to live together and share the planet peacefully?

It’s appreciating one another; it’s respect. You can disagree, but in a very respectful way. Reach out; try to know what is different about people. My grandmother would always tell us when we were growing up, when somebody comes to you and says that Mr. or Mrs. A is bad, don’t just assume that the person is bad, because you do not know what happened, what triggered Mr. or Mrs. A to be bad. There must be a situation that had developed which affected the behavior of that person. So, when we reach out to people, we should try to understand and appreciate them, and then we can all live freely. I was born and raised a Roman Catholic and still practice my faith. I married a Muslim. During Ramadan I fast with them, because I have understood, I have seen that you do not always need to generalize that Christians are good, and Muslims are bad. There is always good and bad in every human society. What you decide to choose, you exhibit. When you take the time to understand somebody and appreciate the differences, you can live happily and the true understanding will be there. Most of the time, we use this *I love you, I love you*, so loosely, that you don’t know what people really mean. So “I love you” or “I care about you” or “I understand you” with sincerity. If you want to look at it in the Christian way, the golden rule said, “do not do to others what would anger you if done to you by others.”

*“We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.”*

—Maria Wright Edelman

**NOTES**

1. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

2. Manmohan Singh is the Prime Minister of India.

3. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi former Prime Minister of Malaysia.



## Highlights Without Precedent: When Ali A. Mazrui Led the Way

**I. Ali A. Mazrui was the first African scholar to occupy each of the following positions:**

- (a) Full professor in any of the humanities in any university in East Africa—beginning in 1965 at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda.
- (b) Full professor of Political Science in any university in East Africa—beginning in 1965 at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda.
- (c) Dean of Social Sciences in any of the universities in East Africa—from 1966 to 1968 at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda.
- (d) Vice-President, International Political Science Association (Headquarters in Paris, France, at the time) from 1968 to 1971.
- (e) The first young scholar in Africa as a whole to be promoted from Lecturer to full Professor in less than two years—skipping the intermediate ranks of Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor (Reader).

**II. On the basis of available records Ali A. Mazrui was the first African graduate student to publish full-scale scholarly articles in the following professional journals:**

- (a) “On the Concept of ‘We are all Africans,’” *The American Political Science Review*, Journal of the American Political Science Association, Vol. 57, No. 1, 1963.
- (b) “Edmund Burke and Reflections on the Revolution in the Congo,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1963.
- (c) “Consent, Colonialism and Sovereignty,” *Political Studies*, Journal of the Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1963.
- (d) “African Attitudes to the European Economic Community,” *International Affairs*, Journal of Chatham House, Institute of International Affairs, London, UK, Vol. 38, No. 1, 1963.
- (e) “The United Nations and Some African Political Attitudes,” *International Organization*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1964.



**III. On the basis of available evidence Ali A. Mazrui was the first African graduate student to be given access to the following high profile British media:**

- (a) Op. Ed. article, “Why Does an African Feel African?”, *The Times*, (London, UK), 1962.
- (b) Two select radio talks: “The African Innocence” and “The Dress of African Thought,” *The Third Programme* (intended for British intellectual elite), British Broadcasting Corporation, (London, UK), 1963.
- (c) Chairing radio discussion on British Foreign Policy with Harold Wilson, Leader of the Labour Party and later Britain’s Prime Minister, British Broadcasting Corporation, Overseas Service, 1962.

**IV. On available evidence Ali A. Mazrui was the first African scholar to publish three books within the single year which followed the successful defense of his doctoral thesis at Oxford. The books published were as follows:**

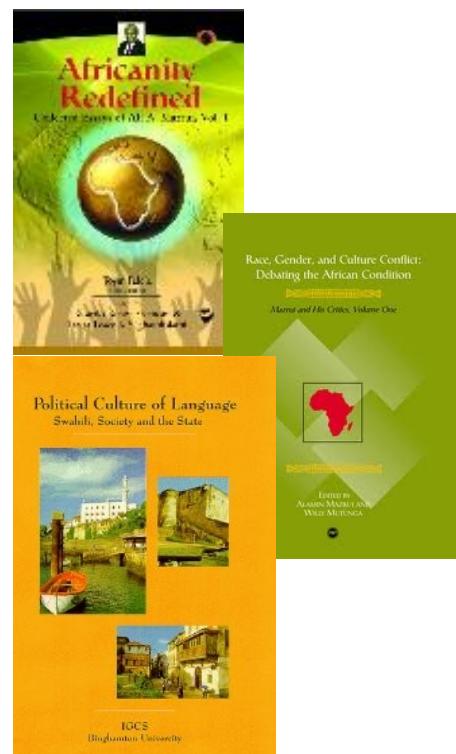
(a) *Towards a Pax Africana: A Study of Ideology and Ambition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, and London: Weidefeld and Nicolson, 1967).

(b) *On Heroes and Uhuru-Worship*. (London: Longman’s and New York: Humanities Press, 1967).

(c) *The Anglo-African Commonwealth: Political Friction and Cultural Fusion*. (Oxford: Pergamon, 1967).

**V. Ali A. Mazrui was the first African to be invited to Australia to give the Dyson Distinguished lectures and tour the Australian continent.**

The lectures were annual at that time and were administered by the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Sydney and Melbourne. The first Dyson Lecturer in this distinguished series was the British philosopher Bertrand Russell. Mazrui delivered them in 1972.



**VI. On available evidence Ali A. Mazrui was the first African scholar to be appointed both as Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, California, and Senior Fellow of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace in consecutive years.**

The two appointments were in two consecutive academic years, 1972–1974. During the same period Mazrui was also appointed Visiting Professor in the Department of Political Science, Stanford University, Stanford, California. Dr. Mazrui used his two years in Northern California to complete the following books:

(a) *World Culture and the Black Experience* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974).

(b) *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy* (Sage Publications, 1975).

(c) *Who are the Afro-Saxons?: The Political Sociology of the English Language* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1974).

**VII. Ali A. Mazrui was the Senior Representative for Africa within the international team of researchers known as the World Order Models Project (WOMP 1970–1977).**

The members of the group met every year in different parts of the world to compare notes about global trends, identify which trends were positive and which negative, and respond with appropriate policies accordingly. Each member of the group was assigned the task of drafting a book which viewed the world from the perspective of his or her own region. There were published separate books viewing the world from an Indian, Latin American, Middle Eastern, US, European, Japanese as well as African perspectives. Ali Mazrui's massive global volume from an African perspective was entitled as follows:

*A World Federation of Cultures* (New York: Macmillan/Free Press, 1977)

This 508-page volume is Ali Mazrui's most ambitious book. *The World Order Models Project* was sponsored by the Institute of World Order in New York, and chaired by Professor Saul Mendlovitz of Rutgers University, NJ.

**VIII. Ali A. Mazrui was Editor of the final volume (Volume VIII) of the massive historical project, the UNESCO General History of Africa, whose headquarters was at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in Paris, France.**

The 1,190-page volume edited by Ali Mazrui was authored by more than a dozen distinguished scholars, and took nearly a decade to compile. Ali Mazrui was the only Political Scientist entrusted with one of the volumes. All of the other editors were distinguished professional historians or archaeologists. Mazrui served on the International Scientific Committee of this multiple volume UNESCO General History of Africa. Mazrui also served on the Executive Bureau of the Project. Mazrui's own massive volume was entitled, quite simply, *Africa Since 1935*.

Like the other volumes of the project, Mazrui's volume was published simultaneously in English and French, and was later translated also into Arabic. There were also abridged editions of the volumes not only in English and French, but also translated into Kiswahili and Hausa.

**IX. Ali A. Mazrui was the first African and the first Muslim to be invited by the British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC] to deliver the highly prestigious annual radio lectures, named the Reith Lectures, which were named after the Founder Director-General of the BBC, Lord Reith.**

Mazrui's six lectures were entitled *The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis*. A companion book under the same title was published by Cambridge University Press in New York and by Heinemann Educational Books in London, UK. The companion book has been widely used in college classrooms across the English-speaking world. *The African Condition* was first broadcast in 1979.

The BBC Reith Lectures are broadcast on both the world service and the domestic programs. Across the years the Reith Lectures have included multiple Nobel Laureates, including Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma (Myanmar) and Wole Soyinka of Nigeria.

Previous historic personalities who gave the BBC Reith Lectures included Lord Bertrand Russell, Lord Radcliffe, Arnold Toynbee, and George F. Kennan.

The first Reith Lectures about Africa were given by Mazrui's Oxford tutor, Dame Margery Perham. Her lectures were entitled *The Colonial Reckoning* (1961) which coincided with Mazrui's own years at Oxford as a student.

**X. Ali A. Mazrui was the first African to make and narrate a major international television series, shown in dozens of countries and translated into several languages.**

When the TV series was first shown in 1986, it triggered a national debate. The Mazrui television series was sponsored and financed by both the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Public Broadcasting Service of the United States. The title of the TV series was *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, and was first televised in 1986 in Britain and the United States. Since then *The Africans* has been shown in dozens of countries, and translated into several languages, and been utilized in classrooms on campuses across the English-speaking world. It is now available in videos and DVDs.

*The Africans* was filmed in about twenty countries in Africa and in France, Great Britain and the United States. The filming was done mainly by the British Broadcasting Corporation, helped by the Public Broadcasting Service and the Nigerian Television Authority. The TV project cost about four million dollars in all. The TV series triggered controversy in the United States and, to a lesser extent, in the United Kingdom. The theme was that contemporary Africa was a convergence and synthesis of three civilizations—Africanity, Islam and the West.

**XI. Ali Mazrui was appointed as the first African and the first Muslim Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities in the State of New York.**

These Chairs were established by the late Governor Nelson Rockefeller in the 1960s, following the death of the Nobel Prize winner, Albert Schweitzer, in 1965. The Chair was awarded by the Department of Education in Albany competitively to one university within the State of New York which could provide additional research support for the successful candidate. The Binghamton campus of the State University of New York made a bid for the Chair with Ali Mazrui as their candidate. In support of the Schweitzer Chair Binghamton created a small Institute of Global Cultural Studies, with Ali Mazrui as the Permanent Director. He was first appointed in 1989.

**XII. Mazrui was the first Black person to be appointed Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.**

The appointments are honorific and each is occupied for six years. The person appointed was at that time expected to visit Cornell once every semester, deliver two or more public lectures, and be accessible to both graduate and undergraduate students. The professor would then return to his or her regular university until the following semester when he or she was due to make another visit to Cornell.

Ali Mazrui's Professorship-at-Large lasted from 1986 to 1992. When it ended he became the first Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large to be made *Emeritus*. Cornell also appointed him Senior Scholar in Africana Studies with effect from 1992. He continued at Cornell in that capacity until 2012.

**XIII. Mazrui was appointed the very first Walter Rodney Distinguished Professor at the University of Guyana, Georgetown, Guyana, South America.**

The Chair was created by the Head of State of Guyana in memory of the late Walter Rodney, a distinguished Guyanese historian, who was assassinated about a decade earlier. Mazrui was approached by the Office of the Head of State Cheddi Jagan. By the time Mazrui went to Guyana it was Janet Jagan, the widow, who had become Head of State. Mazrui gave public lectures not just on campus in Georgetown, but also to other audiences in the country as a whole. He was also honoured by both the President of the country and by the Prime Minister.

**XIV. Ali Mazrui was elected the first Muslim President of the African Studies Association of the United States, and one of the first Africans to lead this organization. He was President 1979–1980.**

This is the largest Association of Africanists in the world, whose annual meetings are attended by hundreds of scholars working on Africa. It publishes scholarly journals, and awards

annual prizes for excellence in African studies. As former President Ali Mazrui subsequently managed to raise \$50,000 for the Association from Chief Moshood Abiola. This became part of an Endowment which launched an annual distinguished Lecture of the Association, named after Chief Abiola. Ali Mazrui was invited by the Association to deliver the very first M.K.O. Abiola Lecture. Chief Abiola himself was elected President of Nigeria, but was prevented by the military from assuming office.

**XV. Ali Mazrui was elected the very first Chairman of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, based in Washington, DC.**

This new organization was designed to promote lectures, conferences and research on the relationship between ancient Islamic values and modern democratic principles. The Center tried to promote such concerns not just in the United States but also in the Muslim world. The latter effort was mainly through conferences or lectures held in major Muslim cities. Mazrui presided over the Center for two years, a very formative period in the life of any organization.

**XVI. Ali Mazrui was the first Chair, Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, Washington, DC (Approx: 1998 to 2004).**

**XVII. Ali Mazrui was the first African Member of the Board of Trustees, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, UK (from 1999 to the present).**

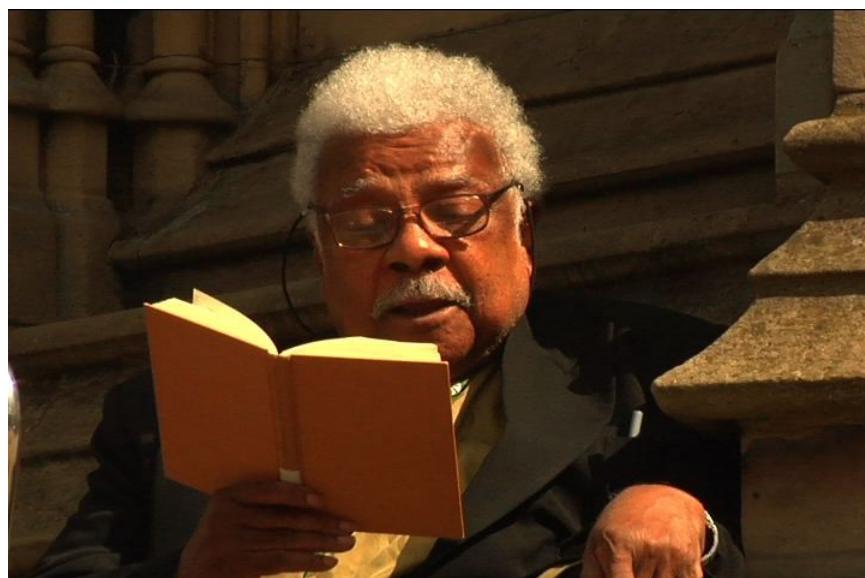
Ali Mazrui was the first African to serve on the Board of Trustees of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Oxford, England. He was elected unanimously, and has since been re-elected every four years. Mazrui has also given public lectures at Oxford University under the sponsorship of either Islamic Studies or African Studies since the 1970s.

**XVIII. Ali Mazrui was the Founding Father of a project to identify the 100 greatest African books of the 20th century. As Founding Father of the Project he presented the Prize to Nelson Mandela in Cape Town in 2003.**

**THE FINAL LIST WAS ANNOUNCED  
IN FEBRUARY OF 2002**

Mazrui had originally proposed the concept of 100 greatest African books of the 20th century at a Book Festival in Harare, Zimbabwe. Many publishers were in attendance, and they decided to implement Mazrui's proposal. Committees were created to survey the entire corpus of African literature, and evaluate winners in relevant languages.

As inventor of the concept, Mazrui's own books were disqualified. But he was given a special role in awarding Prizes to others, including honoring Nelson Mandela for the book he wrote in prison, *Long Walk to Freedom*. The grand ceremony occurred in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2003.



*Professor Ali Mazrui enjoying a good book on a sunny day.  
(IGCS Picture Archives)*

**XIX. Ali Mazrui was invited by the Prime Minister of Malaysia to deliver the very first of special annual distinguished lectures in the capital city of Malaysia in 2010.**

Ali Mazrui and his wife, Pauline, were received in Malaysia by the current Prime Minister, Najib Razak, and by the preceding Premier, Mahathir Mohamad.

Mazrui had been assigned the topic "A MUSLIM CENTURY: MYTH OR REALITY?" by the Prime Minister's office. Mazrui was to choose the relevant century and write about it. He was to submit the text in advance so that it could be printed for distribution immediately after the delivery. Ali Mazrui fulfilled all the conditions.

**XX. Ali Mazrui was the first to be interviewed by the Library of Congress for New Literary Series: "Conversations with African Poets and Writers" in Washington, DC in 2011.**

Ali Mazrui launched a new literary series of the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, in partnership with The Africa Society of the National Summit of Africa. The literary series is entitled "Conversations with African Poets and Writers." To inaugurate it Ali Mazrui was interviewed extensively about literary and cultural trends in post-colonial Africa. The interview took place on October 7, 2011 in the colorful Thomas Jefferson

building of the Library of Congress. There was an audience whose members later asked Mazrui questions on literature and culture. The entire proceedings were carefully recorded for the archives of the Library of Congress.

**XXI. Ali Mazrui is the first Distinguished Scholar of the Global South Caucus, International Studies Association, USA [2012].**

The Global South Caucus of the International Studies Association (ISA) selected Ali A. Mazrui to be the first to receive their Distinguished Scholar Award at the 2012 annual convention of ISA in April 2011 in San Diego, California, with a luncheon in Mazrui's honor. Mazrui also accepted an invitation to give a presentation at ISA on "India and China in Africa's Experience: Between Rivalry and Partnership".

**SPECIAL AWARDS AND HONORS**

A. Mazrui was appointed Chancellor, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Nairobi, Kenya, from 2004 to 2010. He was the first Chancellor of a Kenya University who was not Head of State, and the only Chancellor who was part of the Kenyan Diaspora abroad.

B. President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya awarded Mazrui the National Honor of the Order of the Burning Spear, First-Class in 2007.

C. President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa awarded Mazrui the National Honour of Grand Companion of Oliver Tambo in a special ceremony in Pretoria in 2007.

D. In 2010 President Mwai Kibaki announced the first list of national heroes (*Mashuj'aa*) of Kenya since independence in 1963. Mazrui was among them.

E. In 2005 *The Foreign Policy* magazine in Washington, DC nominated Ali Mazrui among the 100 greatest public intellectuals alive. *Prospect* magazine in London supported the nomination.

F. In 2007 Ali Mazrui became the first Muslim to deliver the Distinguished Commonwealth Lecture in London, UK. His topic was "The Power of Language and the Politics of Religion." The lecture was subsequently published in the Oxford-based Journal, *The Round Table*, Vol. 97, No. 394, 2008. Mazrui's lecture in London was chaired by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Marlborough House, London, UK.

G. Ali Mazrui gave the first Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Distinguished Lecture at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA, sponsored by Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program at Harvard. The lecture was delivered on November 1, 2011. ▲



Professor Ali A. Mazrui in Swahili dress in Lamu, Kenya  
(IGCS Picture Archives)



Mazrui before a microphone, London, England  
(IGCS Picture Archives)

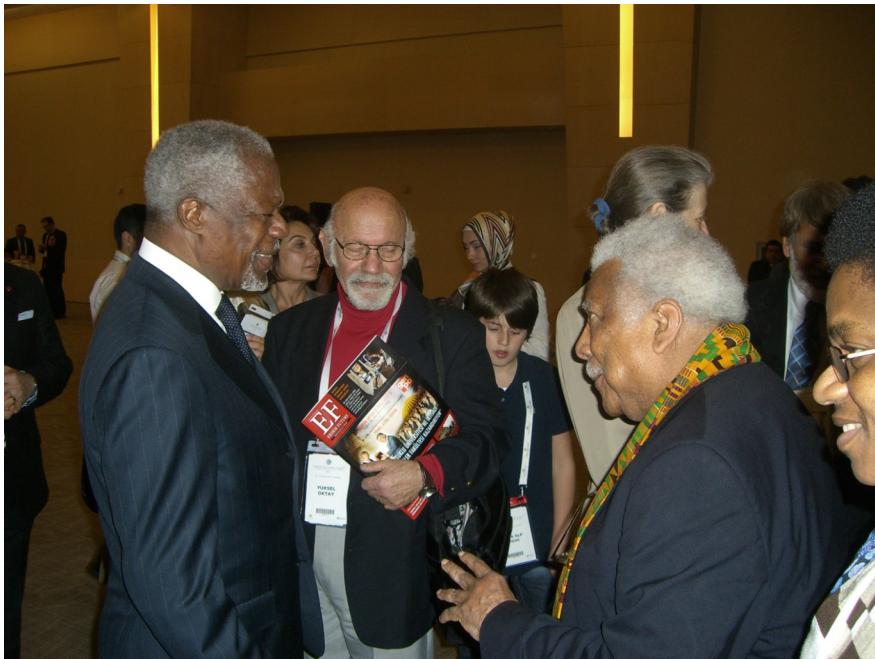
## Ali A. Mazrui with Makers of History



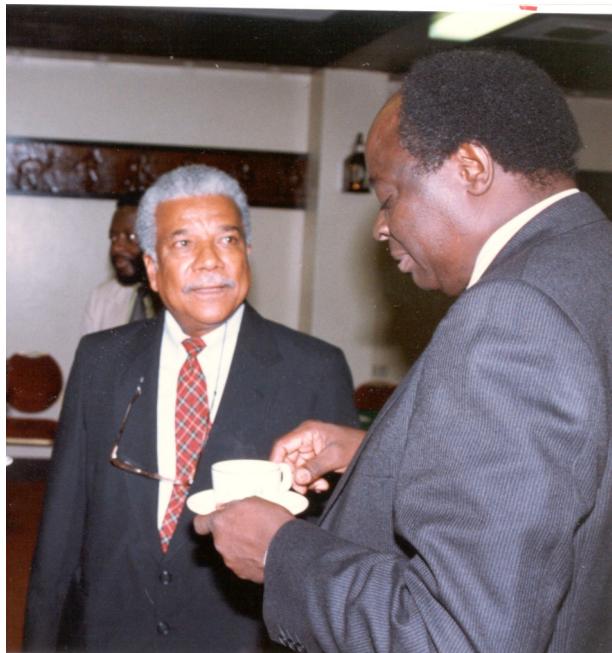
*Left, Professor Ali A. Mazrui greeting the late Professor Chinua Achebe (IGCS Picture Archives)*



*Right, Professor Ali A. Mazrui greeting the President of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni (IGCS Picture Archives)*



*Professor Mazrui talking to the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan*  
(IGCS Picture Archives)



*Professor Ali A. Mazrui with  
the Kenyan President, Mwai Kibaki*  
(IGCS Picture Archives)



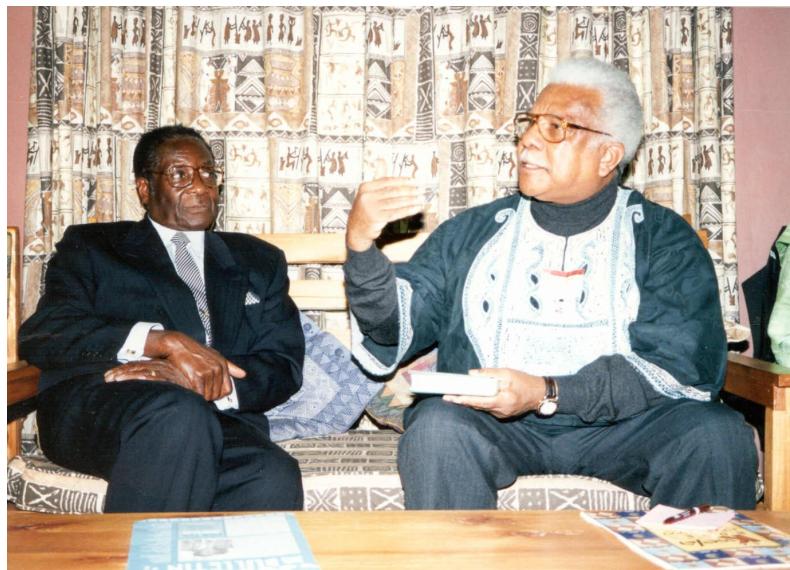
*Professor Ali A. Mazrui with the late Libyan  
President Muammar Gaddafi*  
(IGCS Picture Archives)

*From left to right: Sonia Ghandi, President of the Indian National Congress Party, former President of Zambia Kenneth David Kaunda and Professor Ali A. Mazrui  
(IGCS Picture Archives)*



*Professor Ali A. Mazrui with the former South African President Thabo Mbeki  
(IGCS Picture Archives)*

*Professor Ali A. Mazrui with Zimbabwe President, Robert Mugabe  
(IGCS Picture Archives)*





## Institute of Global Cultural Studies

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