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Dear Friends and Relatives,

A TRIPLE HERITAGE: PHASE I

Here is the annual Mazrui Newsletter once again! Take your time--you don't have to take your dose of Mazruiana in one gulp! Try it at bedtime on three consecutive nights if you can stand it!

But, first, Brenda, my three sons and I send you and your loved ones our very best wishes for the festive season and for the whole of 1984! May you all prosper in joy. Amen.

If you have not met Brenda Kiberu, you will remember her from my previous annual newsletters. She arrived from Uganda in 1981 with Sam Sebina and both stayed with me at my place. It was later agreed that Sam would accompany me to Jos in Nigeria, while Brenda remained in Michigan pursuing her bachelor's degree in business administration at Cleary College. Now Sam looks after me whenever I go to Nigeria, while Brenda helps me whenever I am in the United States. My children get on exceptionally well with both Ugandans--Sam serving as a big brother when the kids are in Nigeria, while Brenda is the big sister right here in Ann Arbor. The relationships have worked out very well.

I have had a third Ugandan assistant in recent years. That has been Omari Kokole. Omari's support has been academic and his help has ranged from teaching my courses at the University of Michigan to editing some of my manuscripts! We shall return to these young Ugandans later in this Newsletter.

Talking of "three Ugandans," my life has operated in triads from time to time! 1983 has been another stage in that triadic experience. I now have three "masters"--the University of Michigan, the University of Jos, and a television project called "The Africans" sponsored and financed by the British Broadcasting Corporation and W.E.T.A. Television Channel in Washington, D.C.

It all started when I was moulded by three cultures--African, Islamic and Western. I grew up in an East Africa which was conscious of a special relationship among three countries--Kenya, the land of my birth; Tanzania, the leading country of my language (Kiswahili) and Uganda, the cradle of my academic career.

I was educated in three continents--Africa, Europe, and North America. I ended up with three degrees from three different universities. I then joined the University of East Africa, which consisted of three constituent colleges in three different countries. The head of the University of Nairobi wanted me to be at Nairobi because I was a Kenyan. The head of the University of Dar es Salaam wanted me to be in Dar es Salaam because (he argued) Dar was my cultural capital. The head of Makerere University in Uganda wanted me to remain in Uganda because I was what I was. And so I remained at Makerere.

Academic life is partly concerned with publishing. In 1967 I published my first book. But I also published two other books in the same year--just to make it three! Three separate publishers were involved.

A few years previously I had acquired one wife. But because she was English I was unable to add another two! However, I did make my English woman bear me three sons before it was all over! Needless to say, it was not all over before we had cohabited together as man and wife in three separate continents.

My life has not been a dialectic. It has in fact been a trialectic. Perhaps even in Hegelianism and Marxism the term "dialectic" is a misnomer. After all, the so-called "dialectic" consists of three parts--thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

All this is by way of alerting you that I am working on a series of nine television programmes concerned with the triple heritage in Africa's cultural experience--the indigenous inheritance, the legacy of Islam and the impact of the West upon Africa. The television series will be shown on the B.B.C. towards the end of 1985, and on public television in the United States (led by W.E.T.A.) at the beginning of 1986. Because the Africa envisaged in the series is Ali Mazrui's Africa, you can be sure that the trialectic will be a major part of the method! If there is no method in the madness, there must at least be madness in the method!

More seriously, the B.B.C. and its allies have asked me to do about Africa what Alastair Cooke did about America--a personal interpretation of public events in a given civilization. Cooke produced both a television series and a companion book. I have been asked to do the same. The book and the television series are to come out at about the same time. We still have two more years before completion. I will give you a progress report in my next annual newsletter at the end of 1984.

From the cradle of my academic career (Uganda) I have here with me in Ann Arbor Brenda Kiberu, my ward and companion. In 1983 she switched colleges -- from Cleary College to Eastern Michigan University. Also at Eastern Michigan is the mother of my children, Molly Mazrui, teaching English as a foreign language. Because Brenda's subject as a student is business administration, she has not found herself being taught by Molly! Indeed, the ladies have never run into each other at Eastern Michigan University. But behind my back the two women have had meals together comparing notes about my children, as well as about me. (Molly has custody of the children, but sometimes the boys move in with Brenda for a weekend or two, treating her as a big sister).

Al'Amin celebrated his sixteenth birthday in March 1983 and Kim celebrated his fifteenth in November. There were the usual teenage excesses during the year--excessive exuberance on weekends and excessive macho when Daddy was not around. Had we still been in Africa we might have had to find alternative initiation ceremonies for the two younger boys.

Kim continued his Karate lessons and was doing very well when he concentrated on the art. Al'Amin dragged me out swimming from time to time. The two of them even managed to drag me out screaming and kicking to a sauna or two on exceptional evenings!

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Jamal, the eldest of my three boys, celebrated his 20th birthday this December in Baltimore where he spent most of 1983. But you thought he was studying some branch of engineering at Princeton? You are quite right. Jamal will indeed be returning to Princeton shortly. He was granted leave to go to Baltimore to study a special kind of technical Braille. He needed it for his Engineering, and Baltimore is apparently the best place in the country for it. What's more he seems to have made many good friends in Baltimore. The bigger city's attractions notwithstanding, Jamal is definitely returning to Princeton.

The University of Jos in Nigeria is (as I said) one of my three "masters." My Research Professorship at the University of Jos continues at least until 1985. It has been an exciting experience. Ever since I resigned from Makerere in 1973 I had dreamt of re-establishing an academic base in Africa. Indeed, in my negotiations with the University of Michigan way back in 1974, I had made it a condition of my appointment at Michigan that I should be free at any time to have a joint appointment with an African university. Michigan very graciously agreed. And yet the idea of a joint appointment was for almost a decade "purely academic" in more senses than one!! My children were too young to permit my being absent from them for more than a couple of weeks at a time. And Molly was unhappy enough about my multiple international conferences without my imposing on her a dual academic career involving Trans-Atlantic commuting.

Then in 1980 I heard from Dr. Jonah Isawa Elaigwu of the University of Jos. I had taught Isawa when he was a graduate student at Stanford--and I was a fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences and later a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford. Isawa and I had maintained contact after his return to Nigeria. By 1980 he was curious to know if I would consider spending a year at the University of Jos as a Visiting Professor.

On receiving his invitation I examined my wider circumstances. My eldest child was about to go to college. My other two sons were in their mid-teens and seemingly more self-reliant than they were in their younger days. My marriage was breaking up. The University of Michigan could spare me for half-a-year at a time. I thought the time was ripe to re-establish contact with Africa in a big way.

I wrote to Elaigwu to say that while I would consider a Visiting Appointment at Jos, I would prefer a longer term research association with the University of Jos--an appointment which would permit me to regard Jos as my African base while simultaneously retaining my appointment at the University of Michigan.

The idea was big enough to require the involvement of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jos, Professor Emovon. Careful three way negotiations between the Vice-Chancellor, the Head of the Department at Jos, and myself, finally produced my Research Professorship at the University of Jos. I am sincerely grateful to those who were prepared to gamble on an innovative idea. I am also grateful to the University of Michigan for its willingness to share me with an African university!

It was good to be back in Egypt in 1983 for the first time since the death of that greatest of Arab singers, the Star of the East, Umm Kulthum. One of my eternal regrets will remain my failure to attend one of her concerts before she

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retired. I have listened to her voice on record since I was a child. But I never saw her perform in person except on the screen. (Some Egyptian films used to come to Mombasa when I was a child.)

During the Nigerian Civil War, I remember putting on Umm Kulthum's new record at the time entitled Wa Darat el Ayyam ("And the Days Touched and Passed"). It was so beautiful, and seemed so related to my agony over the Nigerian Civil War, that I knelt down and wept. I thought I was alone in that sitting room in Kampala. But Molly happened to come into the room and saw me kneeling in tears. It was the triple confluence of cultures at work.

Anyhow, when I was in Cairo again in 1983, Dr. Salwa Labib, a colleague at Cairo University, took me out to the cassette shops to purchase some of Umm Kulthum's songs. Dr. Labib and I had great fun comparing notes on Egyptian singers. She ended up buying some cassettes herself.

By the strangest of coincidences, I discovered that her brother was a Professor at the University of Jos, my Nigerian home! Can you imagine?

There was an academic side to my visit to Egypt as well. I gave a series of lectures at the American University in Cairo under their Distinguished Lectures programme. I was flattered to learn that I was the only person who had been invited twice to give the Distinguished Lectures at A.U.C.. (On the first occasion I went with Molly and our base at the time was still Uganda.)

On both occasions I also lectured at Cairo University. I also addressed the long-established Economic Society of Egypt.

About six months later in the same year I was back in Egypt--this time under the BBC/WETA auspices. Dr. Salwa Labib at Cairo University and Dr. Gail Gerhart at the American University in Cairo once again went well beyond the call of duty in helping us. It was also very pleasant to meet Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, now a Minister in the Egyptian cabinet--but previously an academic. He and Molly have remarkable memories. The two of them accurately described each other and the exact circumstances when we all first met in Kampala fifteen years ago!! Boutros-Ghali talked about Molly (not realizing we were now divorced) with precision. A few days later I telephoned Molly in Michigan from Cairo about another matter and mentioned what the Minister had said about her. Then Molly astonished me with her own precise description of Boutros-Ghali whom she met only once so long ago. (I personally saw him on other occasions abroad before President Anwar Sadat appointed him a Minister and took him on that momentous journey to Jerusalem.)

My BBC/WETA preliminary research work in 1983 also took me to Zanzibar. It was my first visit there in about thirty years. To some extent the visit was very nostalgic. My first visit to Zanzibar was when my father went on pilgrimage to Mecca in the 1930's. I was only a few years old. My next visit was during the second World War. Mombasa as a major port was regarded as vulnerable to Italian bombing. Some Swahili families in Mombasa decided to evacuate their wives and children and send them to Zanzibar. My father was among those who decided to evacuate the families (while the men remained in Mombasa).

Curiously enough, we sailed on a Japanese ship from Mombasa to Zanzibar with the ships' lights ablaze and glaring and the flag of the rising sun flying. It

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was before Pearl Harbour and Japan's entry into World War II. Although I was only about six years old, I remember the sailing and the ship quite clearly.

I made other visits to Zanzibar when I was a young man. But 1983 was, as I said, my first visit in about three decades. It is virtually certain that Zanzibar will be featured in my television series on Africa's Triple Heritage.

Also important for the Triple Heritage is Lamu, that beautiful neo-Biblical town on the northern Kenyan Coast. My nephew, Adil Muhammed, was a superb help to me and my B.B.C. colleagues. Our visit was for pre-filming research.

We visited many other cities in connection with the Triple Heritage, but I must not give the game away by mentioning them all. Please be satisfied with Zanzibar and Lamu!

I gave the 1983 Distinguished Millenium-Chase Lecture at the London School of Economics in April. My topic was ostensibly "The Political Economy of the State and the Political Culture of Nationhood." But in reality I ended up discussing "The Legacies of Lenin and Lugard in Africa." At least one of the previous lecturers in the same series was a fellow B.B.C. Reith Lecturer (John Kenneth Galbraith). During my stay in London in the Spring, I also gave a lecture sponsored by the Royal African Society at the Royal Commonwealth Society. It was good to see a number of old friends from the two Institutes at the lecture.

A triple heritage marriage has occurred in Ann Arbor. A Muslim Kakwa has married a Westerner! Omari Kokole, a Ugandan favourite of mine, has at last been captured into holy matrimony. We wish him and Kay all the very best. (Kay is a young American in her twenties; Omari has just entered his thirties. They look great together side by side--both tall, but Omari towering over us all very, very convincingly!). Omari comes from Africa's tall Nilotic stock!!

I have known Omari since he was a secondary school pupil in Jinja (Uganda) many moons ago. Since he arrived in Michigan a few years ago he has been an excellent asset to me personally and to African Studies in Ann Arbor. He may be leaving Michigan for greener pastures in New York in 1984. We hold our breath while he agonizes over the decision. But we, of course, wish him well whatever he decides.

Brenda and I are mobile again--catching up with the Western side of the Triple Heritage. I never learned to drive. So for awhile, after Molly and I broke up, I joined the bus culture. But Brenda is now licensed in Michigan and we have bought a car. I continue the tradition of letting my women drive me around--often only short of the bend! Is this part of my life Islamic, African--or Western? Maybe it is a confused mixture of all three. I have never made my women carry firewood for me! But they are jolly well going to carry me! (In my case the "automobile" is a misnomer. There is nothing "auto" about it at all!)

Nuruddin Farah, the Somali novelist and playwright, tried to have me taught driving in Jos. A Canadian friend of his--Monique--went as far as to give me my first lesson. Indeed, I drove my first "mile" (a slight exaggeration!). But then I left town--almost in panic! Now Nuruddin has resigned and left Nigeria for the Gambia--and nobody else in Jos is likely to put moral pressure on me to learn to drive.

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Maybe Sam Sebina, my other Ugandan ward, will add driving to the many skills he has mobilized in my service. Sam spends half his year in Uganda and half with me in Jos. I have come to rely on him enormously when I am in Jos. His skills range from basic bookkeeping to negotiating with Nigerian shopkeepers, from research assistance to house-management. He is also a better cook than me--though I try my hand in the kitchen also from time to time.

The Western side of my own tricultural background has never included spying! Robert Molteno, the white South African "radical," has withdrawn without reservations the libellous suggestion he made in a book that I was connected with the C.I.A. I took the matter to my lawyers, who threatened him and his publishers (the Zed Press) with legal action. Both the author and the publisher have apologized publicly in a number of publications.

Now somebody else in the United States (an institution called "Center for World Security") is asserting that I am connected with the KGB (the Soviet secret service). I am looking into the implications of these ew charges also!

One of the happiest moments of 1983 was when I was woken up by the telephone at about 3 o'clock in the morning in Ann Arbor! I picked up the phone (as yet not realizing that happiness was at hand. On the contrary, I was feeling distinctly cross!). Two voices at the other end transformed the remainder of the night for me. One voice was that of my nephew, Al-Amin Mazrui, newly released from detention by the Kenya Government. The other voice was that of our mutual friend, the painter Ibrahim Shariff, who was by Al-Amin's side at that moment of exhilaration. We are all greatly indebted to all those who appealed to Kenya's Present Daniel arap Moi on Al-Amin's behalf. The President responded in the end with magnanimity. We hope that other political prisoners in Kenya will also be treated generously and released--with their jobs back. President Moi may have had wrong advice before. His readiness to review such cases is an encouraging sign for his second administration. May his second term be even more historic than his first.

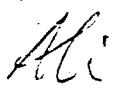
Looking at Africa as a whole, there is a triple heritage of human rights in the continent--indigenous, Islamic and Western approaches to issues of rights and duties. But I am sure all three cultural approaches are reluctant to hurt the innocent. Let us hope our leaders all over the continent bear that in mind.

You will not believe it, but I have two New Year resolutions--cutting down on publications with immediate effect and cutting down on travelling with effect from 1986 (I am already committed to a lot of travelling until 1986!).

Actually, the policy of cutting down on publications has already been in operation. I write much more than I publish these days. In the old days I used to dispatch my products to journals or the publishers as soon as they seemed publishable. I have decided to slow down. Cutting down on travelling may be tougher from 1986!

Meanwhile, I continue to reflect on Africa's triple heritage--the indigenous, the Islamic and the Western forces at work. Wish us luck in our search for the images of television, for the concepts of analysis, and above all for the truthfulness of interpretation. With Africa as the subject matter, we stand in awe. We can only hope Africa reveals its secrets in all their trialectical dynamism!

Good luck, dear friends, for 1984. Yours warmly,


Ali A. Mazrui