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## **ANNUAL MAZRUI NEWSLETTER NO. 22**

General Theme:

**BETWEEN GLOBAL AFRICA AND THE WORLD OF ISLAM**

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by

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

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Appendix A: Mazrui and the Walter Rodney Chair

Appendix B: Diana, Princess of Wales, and Islam

In 1947 my father died rather prematurely in Mombasa, Kenya. Did his death mark the end of my dreams for an Islamic career? In 1957 I entered the University of Manchester in England as an undergraduate. Was that entry the beginning of my dream for a Western career? In 1997 it was time to take stock of the cultural consequences of those two events for my entire life. How were those cultural repercussions reflected in what happened to me in 1997?

But first let me pause and wish you and your loved ones all the very best. As this old century comes to a shrieking end, hold tight - and hang in there!

To return to my cultural story, 1997 marked the 50th anniversary of my father's reunion with his Maker. Dad had been the Chief Kadhi (the Chief Islamic Justice) of Kenya. As a father, one of his dreams had been to have me trained as an Islamic jurist in his footsteps, ideally at the one-thousand-year-old Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Dad's death seemed to put an end to that particular civilizational dream.

Yet in 1997 I lectured about Islam in such major centres of Islamic civilization as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, Malaysia, and on the Arabian/Persian Gulf. In the Western world I was a Board member of the American Muslim Council. I was also specially commissioned by Foreign Affairs, the distinguished journal of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, to write an article on "Islamic and Western Values" for Foreign Affairs'

special anniversary issue to mark the 75th year of its publication. If the death of my father in 1947 had put an end to his dream that I be trained and prepared for an Islamic role, and 1957 marked my initiation into Westernization as an undergraduate at the University of Manchester, why was 1997 such an Islamic year for me professionally? Most significant of all, why had I been appointed in 1997 the Ibn Khaldun Professor-at-Large in Islamic Studies at the School of Islamic and Social Sciences in Leesburg, Virginia, U.S.A.?

The real answer is that both the University of Manchester and the legacy of my father had triumphed in claiming me. The role I was playing in the Muslim world in 1997 was that of a westernized Islamicist - quite different from what I would have been playing had I proceeded to Islamic studies at Al-Azhar University directly from my secondary school in Mombasa forty to fifty years earlier.

In any case, 1997 was unusual. The year had more of the Muslim world in my travels - and less of Africa - than would normally happen. 1997 was also the year when I was honoured more by the African Diaspora than by Africa itself.

### **The Diaspora Embraces a Son**

My greatest Afro-Diaspora and Indo-Diaspora honour came from the Republic of Guyana, the only English-speaking country in South America. I was appointed the Walter Rodney Distinguished

Professor, University of Guyana, for one year to launch this new chair. Walter Rodney was one of Guyana's leading intellectual luminaries and political activists. I knew him when he was a senior lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and I was based in Uganda. In those days he and I were regarded as ideological adversaries. I was a "liberal" (pro-human rights) and he was a "radical socialist" (pro-workers' rights). We often debated on the campus of the University of Dar es Salaam. One debate on my own campus in Uganda (Makerere University) was broadcast live. Later on, when we both moved to the Americas, Rodney and I became friends. [see Press appendix A to this Newsletter].

Walter Rodney was assassinated in his native Guyana in 1980. President Cheddi Jagan created a Chair in his memory before Jagan died in 1997. I was invited to be the first occupant of the Rodney Chair for a year (1997-1998). Cheddi Jagan's widow was elected President after him in December 1997 - though not without protests from those who felt that someone who was foreign-born should not be Head of State. Janet Jagan was born in Chicago in the 1920s.

Jamaica honored me in a different way in 1997. At first I was invited by a Ugandan professor at the University of the West Indies (Professor John C.S. Musaazi) on behalf of the Education Research Centre on the campus in Jamaica. But after I had accepted the invitation the lecture escalated in stature. The University at Mona, Jamaica, decided to turn it into a

distinguished lecture, to be chaired by the head of the Jamaica campus, Dr. Kenneth Hill. The event was a great success. The turnout was overflowing, and the chemistry between speaker and audience was truly responsive.

Principal Hill told me that he had played a part in my appointment as Albert Schweitzer Professor. He was working for the Department of Education of the State of New York at the time (1989). His opinion was sought when the choice was down to two candidates. Dr. Hill believed he helped to tilt the balance in my favour in Albany, where the appointment was made. (The Albert Schweitzer appointment was made by the State of New York and not by Binghamton University. But Binghamton had nominated me as their candidate in competition with candidates put forward by other universities.) My own Albert Schweitzer Chair was previously occupied by Toni Morrison, the Nobel Laureate, before she left New York for Princeton. Toni Morrison later won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The African Diaspora in North America honoured me when Lincoln University, the oldest historically black college in the United States, selected me as being among the black Icons of the age. President Niara Sudarkasa of the university wrote to me with the great news. The investiture at Lincoln University, confirming my new status as an Icon, will occur in 1998.

(Incidentally, Lincoln University is also the alma mater of such historic African and Black Icons as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria and Thurgood Marshall of the United

States. I was privileged to meet all three at different stages of my life.)

Another Diaspora honour for me of 1997 came from the New York African Studies Association (NYASA) who selected me once again for my contributions to African Studies. I got a special award, and gave the keynote address at the Association's annual convention in Troy, New York. Russell Sage College played host to the convention. The Association then decided to negotiate holding their next convention (1998) on my own Binghamton Campus. My old friend, Locksley Edmondson, of Cornell University, was elected the next president of NYASA.

The African Diaspora also honoured me when I was nominated to receive the DuBois-Garvey Award for Pan-Africanism on the occasion of the Second Annual International Interdisciplinary Conference on "Black Creativity and the State of the Race," to be held at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. Although the nomination occurred in 1997, the actual award will not be given until April 1998.

The theme of the conference in April will be "Literature, Politics, and Society in the Black Experience." As a recipient of such an award, I would be expected to give the keynote address on a subject relevant to that theme. The last time I wrote a novel was more than a quarter of a century ago. Maybe this is a reminder that I should write my second novel at long last! (My twenty other books have been a very different kind of political literature.)

The Ohio State University in Columbus honoured me by asking me to close a major conference on the future of "Black Studies".

One of the issues of contention was whether the very name "Black Studies" had outlived its purpose. Should it now be called "African-American and African Studies"? Or, simply "Africana Studies"? The most unusual candidate was "Africology", which had in fact already been adopted as the name of at least one department in the United States. My own universities at Binghamton and Cornell had chosen Africana Studies, meaning the study of African peoples in Africa and the Diaspora.

In my television series, The Africans: A Triple Heritage, I had coined the term "Global Africa", and used it as the title of the last programme. I also now use the phrase "Global Africa" as the title of a course I teach at Cornell University from time to time. The phrase is beginning to catch on.

The Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell held a conference in 1997 on a theme similar to that of the Ohio State University -- the future of Africana Studies. While Ohio State had asked me to close their conference, Cornell asked me to open theirs. I had a more explosive time at Cornell than at Ohio State. Should the concept of "African Studies" cover the whole continent or only "sub-Saharan Africa plus ancient Egypt"? When I argued that the concept of "African Studies" should cover the whole continent, someone in the audience injected the history of the Arab slave trade! From then on there was at least as much heat as light in the debate!! Subsequently I mailed to some of

my critics my paper presented at a conference in Istanbul entitled "Comparative Slavery in Islam, Africa and the West." I am not sure whether my paper mollified them -- or added fuel to the fire! I hope the former.

### **From Mombasa Floods to Murder on the Nile**

On one of those occasions when he was exasperated with me, President A. Milton Obote of Uganda used to ask me in the 1960s: "Do you know the difference between being a political scientist and being a politician?" I was then living in Uganda, and used to comment openly on some of Obote's policies. Was I analyzing policies as a political scientist or engaged in partisan debate as politician?

I am sure President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya has often been tempted to ask me the same question. Faced with this ambivalence, Moi's solution most of the time was to stop me giving lectures altogether in Kenya. At least those who were acting on Moi's behalf did stop me -- unless my lecture was part of a major international event.

Was 1997 any different? In the capital city of Nairobi my presentation in October 1997 was indeed part of an international conference. I and the Vice-President of Kenya, Professor George Saitoti, were the keynote speakers at the Congress of the

International Advertising Association. Things went smoothly in Nairobi.

However, a lecture by me was also being organized in Mombasa by the Kenya Human Rights Commission and other pro-democracy NGOs. My topic was to be "Political Change and Constitutional Reform in Africa: Kenya in Comparative Perspective". Would the political authorities allow the Mombasa lecture to take place? We even formulated contingency plans in case the meeting was broken up by the police.

Another threat to my lecture in Mombasa was El Nino! The rain kept pouring down in torrents all the night before and all day long. We thought we could not possibly have much of an audience, especially since the great majority of potential members of the audience did not own cars and would have had to walk in torrential rain to the lecture.

Nevertheless, the lecture hall was full of people, many drenched to the skin. It was so moving. Had we triumphed over both El Nino and "El Moi"? The Kenyan authorities should be given credit for acting rationally towards me in 1997. As for the torrential rain, we can only conclude that it limited the audience to the size of the hall (hundreds of seats). If there had been no rain-storm, thousands of people might have turned up - beyond our capacity to accommodate them!

As for the pro-democracy organizers of the event, I must congratulate them on the superb prior publicity they had given it. The promotion of the lecture was of professional standard.

No wonder so many people knew about it, and so many turned up for it, in spite of everything.

I stayed at the Mombasa Club for the first time. The Club goes back to the colonial days when it was an institution for "Europeans Only". Now, the club is multiracial. It is built on the seashore, with a swimming pool which juts out into the real ocean. With the help of our old friend Loloshy (Professor Muhammad Aidarus Sagaaf) who is a distinguished senior member of the club, I was made a temporary member so that I could stay at the club. In 1997 the club was celebrating its 50th anniversary. It is still quaintly colonial and British in atmosphere, but not without a charm of its own. Perhaps I should consider applying for membership.

Egypt in 1997 was suffering the consequences of the act of terrorism in Luxor when some sixty people were killed. More about that shortly.

My visit to Egypt in 1997 was under the auspices of the Centre for Political Research at Cairo University and the School of Islamic and Social Sciences at Leesburg, Virginia. The theme of the conference was "Islamic Paradigms of International Relations". The entire conference was in the Arabic language except for my own presentation, which was permitted to be in English.

I was given the task of closing the conference in a plenary session. In spite of the fact that my presentation was in English, we had a full house! My own topic was "Globalization

and the Islamic Paradigm of International Relations: Friends or Foes?"

Did the Islamic paradigm of International relations include tourism? International tourism in Egypt suffered a severe setback with the killings in Luxor. December is usually a busy tourist month in Egypt. Alas, not in 1997. I visited one bazaar in Cairo where we were almost the only shoppers. Our own hotel was half empty in the middle of the tourist season.

If the perpetrators of the Luxor massacre had intended to damage Egypt's tourist industry, they had succeeded beyond their wildest dreams - although they were not alive to celebrate. All of them were killed in the shootout.

While in Egypt I tried to solve a more personal murder - the killing of a woman I knew and liked. Her name was Salwa Labib, a political scientist at Cairo University who had once had a special interest in Africa. In my earlier visits to Cairo she had often volunteered to be my guide in sightseeing. She was terrific. So vivacious and lively. I was shocked and flabbergasted when I learnt that she was murdered in the 1990's.

The murder has never been solved. Was it a crime of passion - an outburst of jealousy? Or was it a political crime because Salwa Labib knew too much?

In the old days I had given Salwa Labib's name to UNESCO as a possible Egyptian writer about sub-Saharan Africa. In 1997 I was asking questions in Cairo about her murder. Unfortunately it still remains unsolved - perhaps caught-up between the intrigues

of politics and the passions of the heart.

My 1997 visit to Cairo also had light moments - such as lunching on a sailing ship on the Nile, dinner at what was regarded as the best seafood restaurant in Cairo, and sightseeing which included Saladin's citadel and some of the most historic mosques in Cairo, including Al-Azhar and Mehamet Ali's mosque. I am particularly grateful to Hani Raslan for the social side of my Cairo visit.

Hamdy AbdulRahman also met me on arrival at Cairo airport on a different mission. He has been instrumental in having some of my writings translated into Arabic. He is deeply committed to promoting closer Afro-Arab relations. He believes that exposing the Arab world to African thought is one approach towards that goal. He has now embarked on a project of Encyclopaedia Africana - in Arabic. He wants me to write an overall introduction to the Encyclopedia.

### **A Fatwa in Karachi and a Pilgrimage to Mecca**

In January 1997 I was in Pakistan for a conference on "Muslim Polity in the Modern Social Milieu". The conference had been postponed two years in a row because of the security situation in Karachi. One of the ethnic cleavages was between the indigenous and those who came from India at the time of partition in 1947. The latter are still called the Muhajir (the migrants) fifty years since they first arrived. By the 1990's

the ethnic cleavage was becoming more and more violent. Pakistan had also been torn by escalating sectarianism between the majority Sunni and the minority Shi'a.

Our conference was opened by the interim Prime Minister at the time. We were relatively secure in our hotel in spite of the fact that we were discussing some of the most theologically explosive issues in Islamic history. These included the contentious issue as to whether the verses of the Qur'an which were revealed during the Prophet's years in Medina were intended only for seventh century Arabs, while the Qur'anic verses revealed in Mecca were intended for all time and all human kind.

Even in the twentieth century blood has been shed over such a debate (the dominant and orthodox opinion being that every verse in the Qur'an is addressed to all people in all ages). Our debates in Pakistan in 1997 - though sometimes heated - were more tolerant and more civilized than the fatwa which led to the execution of Mahmoud Mohamed Taha in Sudan by President Numeiry's government in 1985. Taha's views on this Qur'anic duality have been translated into English. (See Taha, The Second Message of Islam Paperback edition Syracuse University Press, 1996).

The event I attended in Saudi Arabia in 1997 was part of an annual royal event involving a celebration of the work of the Royal Guards. I arrived too late for some of the splendid horse-parades and colourful ceremonies of the first few days. But there were a lot of other events later on - not least the lavish feasts for lunch or dinner or both.

Our conference itself was, in a sense, "nocturnal". We began our deliberations after 8 p.m. every evening for two or three hours. Dinner came after the sessions as a rule.

For a country which did not have theatres, cinemas, night-clubs, concerts, let alone bars, it always amazed me how full of traffic the streets of Riyadh continued to be late into the night. Where were these people coming from or going to in the absence of the usual "night life" and "night spots" which we normally associate with Western cities?

There must be much more inter-family nightly entertainment in homes in Saudi Arabia than normally occurs in the West. Socializing among Saudis is at the personal level of friends and relatives at home rather than the more impersonal setting of the theatre or night club.

One of the more exciting experiences in Riyadh was rediscovering old friends from my old days at the University of Michigan. Brother Abdulrahman Shamlan was a student of mine when he was doing his PhD at Michigan. Abdulrahman is now an influential member of the intellectual establishment in Riyadh.

Indeed, he assembled a number of other Saudi intellectuals for "an evening with Ali Mazrui" at his home. We discussed topics which ranged from Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" to the stalled peace process in the Middle East.

Also from my Michigan days I rediscovered in Riyadh two old Libyan friends - Mahmoud (a medical doctor) and his wife, Fawzia (a social scientist). They provided me with new insights into

comparative Arab experiences and inter-Arab relations.

My most memorable experience in Saudi Arabia was the pilgrimage to Mecca which I made (the Umra). When I performed the sacred rites I was aided by an experienced religious guide by my side every step of the way, thanks to prior arrangements made by Abdulrahman Shamlan and his friends in consultation with Mahmoud. I was at once deeply moved by the Kaaba and the Great Mosque and deeply disturbed by the rest of the city of Mecca. The sacred places shook me as an ultimate spiritual experience; the city of Mecca disturbed me as a culture shock. Mecca as a city seemed to be getting increasingly Americanized - the Coca-colanization of the birthplace of Islam. Hamburger joints, ice cream parlours and the Hilton and the Hyatt towering over the Great Mosque itself.

I suppose I should have felt more at home to witness two of my cultures (Islam and Westernism) co-existing side by side in Mecca. Aspects of the modernization of Mecca and the new facilities at sacred places, were clearly to be welcomed. Mecca is a healthier and a brighter city because of the modernization.

But if one can distinguish between technical modernization and cultural Westernization, one may be allowed to conclude that aspects of the coca-colanization of Mecca were cultural sacrilege.

I should mention that throughout the year I had two major advisors in the United States about Islamic doctrine and Muslim history. These were Professor Taha Jabir Alalwani, President of

the School of Islamic and Social Sciences, and Dr. Nasr Aref, a colleague at the same school and former scholar at Cairo University in Egypt. Although neither Professor Alalwani nor Dr. Aref were with me in Saudi Arabia, some of their lessons were relevant for me in the Holy Land, alhamdu li Llah. However, any political conclusions about the Holy Land were of course entirely my own.

### **Turkey, Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates**

Turkey in the first half of 1997 was politically a confrontation between secularists and Islamists. The government in power in Ankara at the time was pro-Islamist. So was the municipal government in Istanbul.

I was in Istanbul at the Second International Conference on Islamic Thought hosted by the Municipal authorities of the city. The theme of the conference was philosophical and doctrinal. My own presentation was on "Comparative Slavery in Africa, Islam and the West".

Considering how sensitive the issue of slavery has been in Afro-Arab relations in Zanzibar, was it a coincidence that some Zanzibari students (non-Arab) studying in Istanbul asked to have a private session with me? I arranged to see them. Those young people were born after the 1964 Zanzibar revolution against the Arab Sultanate. Most of their questions for me were about Zanzibar, and especially about the causes of the Zanzibar revolution.

They were particularly intrigued by my formulation that the confrontation in Zanzibar in 1964 was between Swahilized Arabs and Arabized Swahili or Waswahili. Politically the Swahilized Arabs at that time were mainly represented by the Nationalist Party founded by Ali Muhsin Barwani. The Arabized Waswahili were represented by the Afro-Shirazi Party led by Abeid Karume. Ali Muhsin Barwani was the most far-sighted Arab of his generation and the most pro-African. He was trying to work his way towards an Afro-Arab alliance of equality. Unfortunately for him (and perhaps for Zanzibar) he was too late. Black African nationalism in Zanzibar had passed beyond the point of racial compromise. Hence the revolution.

One of the Zanzibari students who came to see me in Istanbul in 1997 has continued to correspond with me ever since. He has asked for copies of some of my works about Africa as a whole, and I have obliged.

My biggest surprise in Istanbul was to learn that people had been reading me in the Turkish language. For example, nobody had sought my permission to translate and publish my book, The Africans: A Triple Heritage!! But I was given the Turkish version of the book nevertheless. I also learnt that my television series of the same title was scheduled for showing in Turkey (and in Turkish) in June 1997.

The second half of 1997 was bad news for the economy of Malaysia and the value of its currency. I arrived there in August in the early phases of the crisis.

It was good to be back in Malaysia even under such economic clouds. I owed the visit to a triangle of sponsors - the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the International Islamic University Malaysia, and the School of Islamic and Social Sciences, Leesburg, Virginia. All three forces shaped the nature of the visit and the actual program of events.

On my first day on the main campus of the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur nobody had warned me in advance that I was expected to address the whole faculty! I suddenly saw myself facing the academic staff, and being introduced as a speaker! I did my best to improvise, but it was not a proud performance! I did much better in the questions and answers session.

A couple of days later I addressed the faculty on the new campus of the same university. There I was a little better prepared - but with a disturbing question. Was it a good idea to call the university an "Islamic university" explicitly? Would it have been better to call it after a major Muslim historical figure like Al-Ghazali or Iqbal University - the way the Jews in the United States had named Brandeis University after a distinguished Jewish jurist?

By calling it an "Islamic" university, did the university in Malaysia keep out Chinese Malaysian citizens, for example? Should such institutions admit a proportion of non-Muslim students and have some non-Muslim staff?

I am not sure if it was polite to ask my hosts to change their name, but President Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman was certainly very gracious! We debated the issue, but in a very civilized manner.

It was also very gracious of Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to meet me twice for extended periods in spite of the enormous demands on his time, especially with the threat of an economic crisis. There were usually long lines of people outside his office waiting for an opportunity to see him. There were also problems ranging from that currency crisis to the politics of ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations).

I lectured on different Islamic topics at several centres of learning in Kuala Lumpur. The longest established was the University of Malaya. Unfortunately I had my smallest audience there!! On the other hand, my lecture at the University of Malaya was the most highly publicized in the local press, both in English and in Malay. I had a small face-to-face audience on that campus, but a much larger national audience through the Press, including photographs in the Press.

Did you know that I had a grand-niece in Kuala Lumpur? Her name is Nihla. She is my sister's grand-daughter. Nihla Munir Mazrui is an undergraduate at the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur. She and I managed to steal a meal together at my hotel.

I spent a weekend on Malacca historic seaport. I discovered an interesting museum there - a museum of the Brutal Quest for

Female Beauty! (The official name was more polite than that). What was on display was how far different cultures had gone in cruelty to women to attain their own conception of female beauty.

In China there was the tying up of the feet of baby girls to stop their growth. (Small feet in women were "beautiful"). In Africa women's noses and ears carried huge, heavy adornments. In the West there were corsets to attain narrow female waists. In the West more recently there have been deadly eating disorders in the quest for slim figures. These have also been breast implants with mutilating consequences. What about female circumcision in Africa and the Middle East? Is it a hidden adornment or simply a rite of passage?

In Malacca there was also arranged a whole day of "Ali Mazrui with Malaysian Intellectuals". The conversation was truly wide-ranging, and included Samuel Huntington's thesis that the end of the Cold War could mean the beginning of a clash of civilizations.

Did you know that the tallest building in the world was in Kuala Lumpur? I was taken there by my university guide, Dr. Firdaus. One day the longest bridge in the world may also start in Malaysia - the one linking Malaysia with Indonesia across the Straits of Malacca.

While in Turkey I had discovered a Turkish translation of one of my own books about which I had had no prior knowledge, in Malaysia I bought a hefty book on globalization - and discovered to my surprise that I had a chapter in it! The 570 page book was

entitled, Islamic Political Economy in Capitalist Globalization, and had just been published in Malaysia in 1997.

At the height of one of the crises between the U.S., the U.N. and Iraq, I went to one of the smaller countries on the Gulf. Saddam Hussein was on everyone's lips.

My visit to the United Arab Emirates was for the purpose of giving a single lecture sponsored by the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR). My lecture was on "Islam, Western Democracy and the Third Industrial Revolution: Conflict or Convergence?" Saddam Hussein was only a footnote to my presentation.

When the venue of the lecture was transferred from the Hilton to the Sheraton, plans for simultaneous translation into Arabic collapsed. The audience was substantial, but unfortunately there was no concession to Arabic at all. Nevertheless, the question-and-answer session was vigorous. Gulf issues were difficult to suppress at the session. U.S. military action did not seem to have much support in the U.A.E.

My official hosts in Abu Dhabi arranged that my Chairman should be a distinguished local Mazrui from Dubai. There are a lot of Mazruis in the Gulf (mainly in the U.A.E. as well as Oman). I was presented to the audience as a long-lost son of the Gulf! It certainly helped to make me feel at home. I told the audience that my father had written a book in Arabic entitled The History of the Mazrui Dynasty of Mombasa, which had now been translated into English and published by Oxford University Press

on behalf of the British Academy (London, 1995). These courtesies and exchanges before my lecture were designed to emphasize the historic links between the Arabian Gulf and the East African coast.

As if to emphasize these historic links further, an old Omani friend of mine flew into Abu Dhabi to spend some time with me. Khamis Al-Hashar became virtually my co-host in the Gulf. He arranged sightseeing for me, splendid meals, including a dinner on a floating dining boat called Al Safina under a glittering Gulf sky. From the boat we used Khamis's cellular phone to call Mombasa - where both of us had once gone to school as children. I startled my family in Mombasa when I said I was calling from Safina on the Arabian Gulf! (Safina was also the name of a political party in Kenya, which at that time President Daniel arap Moi had refused to register precisely because of its name. Although the word in both Arabic and Kiswahili simply means boat or ship, it is also taken to refer to Noah's Ark!).

My official hosts, the ECSSR, also arranged a 24-hour excursion for me to Dubai. Khamis Al-Hashar graciously accompanied me, and helped to organize things there. Especially important was tracking down my more immediate relatives who had immigrated from Mombasa. We were successful in tracking down my first cousin, Seif M. Mazrui. He succeeded in mobilizing other cousins and relatives for a splendid luncheon the next day. We used the occasion also to thank Khamis and to pray for him.

We were all still warned that there might be U.S. military

action against Iraq - but life must go on!

**Between the Western Heritage and the Gandhian Legacy**

Although in 1997 I was mainly "confined" to the United States, Global Africa and the Muslim world (what a vast "confinement"), I did venture into other parts of the world as well! Particularly memorable was a conference I opened in Aberdeen, Scotland, on the dual themes of "Africa and Scotland" and "The Africans in Scotland". My own keynote address was on "The Scottish Factor in the African Experience: Between Negritude and Scottitude."

The conference had a lot of pragmatic concerns about how to help African students studying in Scotland and how to strengthen or mend relations between Scottish and African peoples. My own lecture ventured further afield - encompassing Scottish explorers and missionaries like David Livingstone, Scottish Prime Ministers who impacted Africa like Sir Alec Douglas-Home and African Heads of State with special Scottish connections such as Julius K. Nyerere of Tanzania (former student of Edinburgh University), Hastings Banda of Malawi (who claimed to be an elder of the Church of Scotland), and Jerry Rawlings of Ghana (whose father was a Scotsman.)

Talking of "Africa and Scotland", Binghamton University played host to a dazzling musical drama from South Africa entitled Umabatha: The Zulu Macbeth. (Macbeth was of course a Scottish King). The concept of comparing Shaka Zulu with

Shakespeare's Macbeth was brilliant. In reality the storyline in the South African drama was too loyal to Shakespeare - but there was no denying the power of the music and its naked exhilaration.

My own Dean of Arts and Sciences at Binghamton (Solomon Polachek) graciously invited me to join him as his guest at the musical drama. It was a great experience.

Actually Binghamton used the whole Fall (Autumn) semester for different events on "Africa, Shakespeare and Global Perspectives". It was an imaginative concept to promote cross-cultural education, but we still have a long way to go in this struggle for diversity and multiculturalism.

An event which was dazzling for different reasons was the banquet at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York to mark the 75th anniversary of the journal Foreign Affairs. The dinner I attended was preceded by an address by Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, with Henry A. Kissinger presiding. Although nothing very new transpired at the event, the occasion itself was symbolically glittering for one of the most influential journals in the Western world. There were also a lot of influential people present.

Of course, there were a lot of other things which happened to me in America in 1997. I taught courses at Binghamton, Cornell and the School of Islamic and Social Sciences. I also lectured at other universities in the United States. Our Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton published the first translated work into English by the newly elected president

of Iran, Mohammed Khatami. We received many congratulations. But we also received anti-Iranian protests from as high as Capitol Hill! President Khatami is widely recognized as the most liberal Head of State the Islamic Republic of Iran has had since the revolution in 1979. Parviz Morewedge, our Institute's editor-in-chief, was the main person on our team responsible for this presidential publishing achievement.

For the first time in years I did not attend the annual meeting of the African Studies Association of the United States, and therefore could not carry the banner of the struggle for reparations there. Instead I attended a conference at Harvard University at the invitation of Samuel P. Huntington, the professor who set the intellectual world buzzing with his article in Foreign Affairs in 1993 on "The Clash of Civilizations". His 1997 conference was connected with that thesis. The conference was designed to find out whether political and policy elites in different regions of the world perceived problems of global security according to the values and cultural perceptions of their regions.

My own paper was entitled "A Racial Paradigm of World Order: From the Cold War of Ideology to the Cold War of Race." Because of the experience of colonialism, imperialism and enslavement, African perceptions of world security were race-centric and were influenced by a fear of imperialism. As one of several solutions to African fears and concerns, the paper called for reparations to Africa and the Black world for enslavement and colonization.

Needless to say, the paper was hotly debated. Samuel Huntington was even accused of having "planted" me at the conference to prove his point about "clash of civilizations"!!

The Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton has a new Associate Director. He is Ricardo Rene Laremont, who did his doctoral work at Yale University and his doctoral research in Algeria on Islam and Politics. We managed to attract Ricardo away from his job as Associate Director of African Studies at Columbia University, New York. When Omari Kokole died suddenly in September 1996, the job was advertised. We received about one hundred applications for that one job. Ricardo Laremont emerged triumphant. He and I are now working together on new research projects and fundraising. He and his wife Lisa are a stupendous addition to our community.

Other academic colleagues who worked with me on my projects during 1997 included Ruzima Sebuharara, Samuel Quainoo, Aldrin Bonilla and Lindah Mhando. Administratively I was greatly supported by Nancy Levis. Secretarially I was assisted by Julie Hill and Danielle Blas. Off campus Thomas Uthup still graciously helped intellectually from Syracuse University. To all those I am greatly indebted for my 1997 activities. Fouad Kalouche worked more with Parviz Morewedge most of that time. But Fouad has helped me with his French and Arabic from time to time.

The Nobel Foundation invited me once again to one of their symposia. This time it was a symposium on "Nationalism and Internationalism in the Post-Cold War Era", held in Stockholm,

Sweden, and co-hosted by the University of Stockholm. As it happened the most symbolic act of internationalism which was happening at the time was the worldwide grief over the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. I arrived in Stockholm on the day of Diana's funeral. Every Swedish channel in my hotel room seemed to be covering it live. I managed to watch the funeral on two of the English language channels available in my room - CNN and BBC. I kept on switching from one channel to the next. [see my Press appendix B to this letter on Diana and Islam].

At the conference itself Diana and Mother Teresa were discussed in private conversations rather than in the formal sessions. The latter ranged over such issues as the relationship between religion and ethnicity, the nature of nationalism, and obstacles to peace in places like the Middle East, the former Soviet Republics, the Balkans, the Great Lakes region in Africa, and Afghanistan.

If there is already an identifiable African Diaspora in Sweden, it includes my old friend near Stockholm, Abdul Kader Mohammed. He really rose to the occasion upon my arrival. He and his family arranged a stupendous Swahili dinner (was it a Swahedish dinner) for me at their home! A memorable evening. From then on Abdul Kader made sure that I received every day at my hotel an English language newspaper (usually more than one British paper). God bless the Swahedish Diaspora!

The Gandhi name in India unfortunately carries a shadow of assassination - similar to the Kennedy name in the United States.

Three Gandhis have been assassinated since 1947 - the Mahatma, Indira and Rajiv. The Mahatma was not related to the political Gandhis who later ruled India.

Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv's widow, and the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust once again hosted us in New Delhi. It was the sixth Indira Gandhi Memorial conference. Because 1997 was the 50th anniversary of India's independence, the theme for the latest Indira Gandhi conference was "Post-Colonial World: Interdependence and Identities." I was called upon to give the keynote address at the very beginning of the conference, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, former President of Zambia. The most heated exchanges in my session were between myself and Robert McNamara, former President of the World Bank and former Defense Secretary of the United States. Although heated, the exchanges were very civilized. The differences between us were not ideological but methodological. In explaining the differences in economic performance between Africa and Asia, I had included cultural variables. McNamara argued that differences in culture had no relevance in explaining differences in economic performance. Both points of view were argued forcefully.

Former UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, was originally expected at the Indira Gandhi conference, but he could not make it - especially after he was elected Secretary-General of the French-speaking countries of the world.

Another "casualty" who did not make it to our conference was

the former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Sir Shridath Ramphal. But Ramphal managed to send his paper, which was circulated. I was very disappointed that Sir Shridath did not make it, for I had a lot of questions to ask him about his native Guyana which had just appointed me Walter Rodney Distinguished Professor for a year.

Our conference was opened by the Prime Minister of India. We were also introduced to the President of India shortly after it was announced that the 1998 winner of the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize was going to be former President Jimmy Carter. (The prize is announced a year before it is actually presented.) But the most compelling political gossip in India at the time concerned the role of our own hostess, Sonia Gandhi, widow of Rajiv Gandhi. How powerful a figure behind the scenes was she in the Congress Party - power behind the throne? Would she eventually capitulate to pressures asking her to lead the Congress? Would this Italian woman one day become India's second woman Prime Minister?

Two members of her family who had become Prime Ministers had been assassinated - her husband, Rajiv, and her mother-in-law, Indira. Was it fair to ask her to take those risks all over again? She has since agreed to campaign for Congress. Whether or not Sonia Gandhi eventually runs for political office herself, it is almost certain that at least one of her children will do so one day.

It was wonderful my reuniting with Manmohan Singh, the former Finance Minister who had opened the doors of the economic

liberalization of India. Why was it wonderful meeting him again?

Well, we were contemporaries as graduate students at Nuffield College, Oxford, and Manmohan had later become a figure in India's economic history. We had a moment of mutual reminiscences, for old times' sake!

I enjoyed a splendid dinner with an old friend of a different kind - Ashis Nandy of the Center for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi, and former colleague in the World Order Models Project. Ashis is one of the most insightful interpreters of India that I have come across. So the dinner was most instructive for me. I was only sorry that Rajni Kothari, another very old Indian friend of mine, was not able to join us at dinner.

President Kaunda told me in India that he planned to return to Zambia before Christmas, whatever happened. I was concerned that he might be politically harassed upon his return. As it turned out, our fears were fully justified. Zambia's former Head of State was arrested and imprisoned on his return home, with little clarification of the charges against him. There were international protests from Africa, the Commonwealth, the United States, as well as from within Zambia. President Chiluba's government, which had officially declared Zambia a "Christian nation", had decided to arrest a 73 year old former Head of State on Christmas Day! Was there a cross Kaunda would be called upon to bear on his way to the crucifixion?

### **The Family and Three Million Dollar Suit**

Our biggest family news in 1997 was that my wife and I won the three million dollar suit which had been lodged against us. It had been hanging over us like the sword of Damocles since 1992, when we were served the papers. When driving out of our driveway in 1991, Pauline had hit a van passing by. It was the driver of the van who had sued for three million dollars, alleging that her back had been damaged for life. The passengers in the car, including her husband, sued also, but for thousands rather than millions. The minor passengers later settled out of court for relatively small amounts.

The main case took years to come to court. One of the lawyers died while we waited. It was almost Dickensian! Our insurance covered us for only \$ 100,000. If the jury were to award the plaintiff anything more than that, we would be personally liable. If the damages went into millions, it was going to bankrupt us for life!

We were represented by lawyers hired by our insurance company. But just in case there was a conflict of interest between our insurance company and ourselves, we also hired a personal attorney to keep an eye on things. The personal attorney cost us thousands of dollars.

The whole case hinged on medical evidence. The woman did have severe back injuries but were these caused by the car accident, or did they antedate it? The plaintiff had medical evidence of her own; and we had our own doctors to examine her.

Our doctors' conclusions was that her back problems were due to a degenerative physiological health condition, which had nothing to do with the accident. The doctors testified in court and were cross-examined.

Neither the plaintiff's lawyers nor our own wanted me to testify, although the car was in my name and I was a passenger in it at the time of the accident! It is just as well. The plaintiff's lawyer did put Pauline on the stand. She performed very convincingly.

Nevertheless, at first we thought the dice was accidentally loaded against us. The trial was taking place in a little town where nobody knew us, but where the plaintiffs were respected citizens. Indeed, some members of the jury had once been the clients of the main plaintiff's husband as a tax accountant. Thirdly, Pauline and I seemed to be the only people in the court room who spoke English with obvious foreign (non-American) accents. Finally, Pauline and I were the only black people in court. Did we really stand a chance?

But the jury rose to the occasion and gave us color-blind justice. In fact, the jury was so tough on the plaintiff that we felt sorry for her. The jury refused to grant her a single penny. She, therefore, did not even get the \$ 40,000 which our insurance had been prepared to give her if she settled before the verdict.

The second biggest family news of 1997 was our buying a house at last in the Binghamton area. We had in fact delayed

purchasing property precisely because of the three million dollar suit. Our personal attorney had advised us against buying. But by 1997 we were ready to move into a house whatever happened. Our apartment at River House had become too small for our little children, Farid and Harith. Pauline started looking around for a house which would suit us. She had the first veto. I was brought in at the end to give a husband's final rubber stamp! We are now home-owners!

My older brother, Harith, who normally lives in a Kenya town called Takaungu, came to Mombasa to spend a few days with me when I was in Mombasa in October. He looked well. Munir Mazrui and his brother Alamin (our nephews) were our primary hosts in Mombasa, on behalf of their mother, my oldest sister, Salma. As usual Munir and Alamin went beyond the call of duty in putting themselves at my disposal. Alamin was on sabbatical leave from the Ohio State University. He and I have a book coming out shortly entitled, The Power of Babel: Language and Governance in Africa's Experience, (Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 1998). The American Publisher will probably be Chicago University Press.

Nafisa is my second sister. We had a major feast as usual with her and her children in the outskirts of Mombasa where she lives on the farm of one of her sons-in-law, Muhammad Salim Manthry. The Swahili cooking at the feast was stupendous, as usual!

My third sister, Aisha, died a few years ago. One of her sons (another Mohamed) is now a Canadian, and we talk on the

phone from time to time. I met several of Aisha's other sons when I was in Kenya, alhamdu Li Llah (the Lord be praised). Ghalib is writing a biography of his grandfather (i.e., my father), Sheikh Alamin bin Ali Mazrui. From time to time I send Ghalib some relevant material.

My fourth sister, Alya, was born when my father was in his fifties. I suppose it runs in the family! Here I am, raising another family, when I am in my sixties!! Alya's daughter, Narriman, is today a student in the United States. From generation to generation!

My own older children, Jamal, Al'Amin and Kim are now in their thirties (Kim will be 30 in 1998). Jamal and Kim came to visit us in Binghamton to welcome the new year (1998), and to join in house-warming our new habitat!! Kim arrived with my grandson, Will; and Jamal with his woman-friend, Maria. Yes, we have indeed been busy trying to furnish the new house as well. At last we can take some trouble furnishing our own place. We already have a few splendid pieces from different parts of the world, but far from enough to decorate a house.

With some help at my office, I have started communicating with Jamal and Kim by e-mail. These two boys are much more at home with this medium than with my old-fashioned postal mail. Jamal is a bit of a computer-wiz. My friends ask, "How come? We thought Jamal was blind!" So much for their knowledge about blindness and computers!

Kim is semi-blind and also prefers communicating with

computers. A different generation! Al'Amin, my other adult son, is fully sighted but is not yet fully assimilated into the computer culture. Al'Amin is almost like his Dad! But not for long, Al'Amin is getting computerized!

### **The Bonds of Friendship and the Menace of Time**

Finally, what old friends turned up the most unexpectedly in 1997? These would definitely include Dhiru and Laura Tanna, now Jamaican, but previously Ugandan and American respectively. We stumbled upon each other at the Delhi airport in India when we were all about to leave for the United States. Can you imagine?

I had not seen them in at least a decade-and-a-half! What a reunion at an airport!

But my most moving reunion was with Muhammad Ali Abdulrahman, a Mombasa boy who was my room-mate at the University of Manchester more than thirty-five years earlier when we were both undergraduates. Muhammad ("Panya" to his closest friends) and I were once again briefly reunited in 1997 when I was in Mombasa in October. He had previously migrated to the Sultanate of Oman on the Gulf, but had now returned back home to Kenya. I was so pleased to see him again. He seemed to have aged less than I had, God bless him. We spent some time reminiscing about old times!

A number of old friends and relatives passed away during 1997. The deceased include Boniface Obichere, the Nigerian

historian, and some relatives in Mombasa, Kenya. Mobutu Sese Seko, former President of Zaire, also died. I had met him more than once when he was president. He ruled for far too long (since 1965)!

But at my age it is the departure of an old teacher which is particularly poignant. Kenneth Kirkwood was Rhodes Professor of Race Relations when I was a student at Oxford University. I used to attend some of his classes and seminars. He was also involved in my doctoral examination at Oxford. We remained friends to the end of his days. He and his wife Deborah entertained me to dinner when I visited Oxford on a number of occasions. Kenneth and I used to exchange letters between those visits.

When Kenneth retired as Rhodes Professor, his successor was Terence Ranger, who first became truly famous in Africanist circles when he broke new ground in historiography at the University of Dar es Salaam in the 1960s. Unfortunately the new Rhodes Professor at Oxford (Ranger) appeared not only cold, but hostile to the old professor (Kirkwood) - and relations between them never got any better. Matters were certainly not improved when Terence Ranger was accused by Kirkwood's supporters of turning the Rhodes professorship into a "Rhodesia professorship" - devoting "disproportionate" professional attention and time to the countries which Cecil Rhodes had once carved out and controlled (now Zimbabwe and Zambia - formerly Southern and Northern Rhodesia)!! Those happened to be the parts of Africa which Terence had been studying long before he arrived at Oxford.

By a strange coincidence, Kenneth Kirkwood died just as Terence Ranger was stepping down into retirement from the Rhodes Professorship. Terence had also been Professor of History at Oxford, a parallel appointment. In their vastly different ways, Kenneth and Terence had both helped to keep the African flag flying at Oxford almost constantly. I shall feel their absence on my future visits to Oxford.

Another Oxford professorial figure who passed away in 1997 was Isaiah Berlin, the political philosopher and historian of ideas. We were all intellectually influenced by his lecture, Two Concepts of Liberty - but I was ideologically to his left on the kind of liberty worth pursuing. Although I did indeed know him during my Oxford days, my most vivid memories of Isaiah Berlin are based more on the island of Cyprus where we were later both attending a philosophical conference. We were both introduced to Archbishop Makarios, who was at the time President of Cyprus. I remember Isaiah Berlin's scintillating discussion with me about the impact of "Jewish nostalgia" on world history. Berlin was a brilliant conversationalist.

### **CONCLUSION**

Did I mention the University of Manchester where Muhammad (Panya) and I first lived together? Let us return to that old cultural story of my initiation into Westernism.

When my future wife Ejimah Pauline was being born in Nigeria in 1957, I was making plans for admission to the University of

Manchester as a student. In 1957 I was entering a British university for a Western-style education unrelated to either Islamic studies or African studies. The Manchester experience was a consolidation of that third civilization within me - the Western one which had come with British rule in Kenya (my other two legacies being Africanity and Islam). I entered the Western game with such gusto that I did brilliantly at Manchester - emerging with a bachelor's degree with Distinction. Had Western civilization taken me over? What does 1997 have to tell us as an answer to that question? This newsletter has demonstrated anecdotally how complex the answer has been.

Professionally the years 1957 to the 1980s may be seen as my dualistic years (Afro-Western). As a scholar my professional concern was basically between Africa and the Western world, while Islam was confined mainly to my private and family life.

It was from the 1980s onwards that my professional and civilizational concerns went truly triadic - namely, Africana, Islamic and Western cultures. (The concept of "Africana" includes Africa and its Diaspora.)

In the 1980s, when we were filming The Africans, my BBC/PBS television team used to call me in jest: "The walking triple heritage - burdened by Africanity, Islam and the West!" In 1997 I was at times a limping triple heritage - under the heavy weight of a cultural triad. But the struggle has to continue for a more viable cultural equilibrium. Amen.