



COMPANION
VOLUME TO THE
ACCLAIMED
PBS SERIES

ALI A. MAZRUI

THE AFRICANS

A TRIPLE HERITAGE

T H E

A · F · R · I · C · A · N · S

A T R I P L E H E R I T A G E

ALI A. MAZRUI

Little, Brown and Company
Boston Toronto

To the memory of Valerie Ward

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First American Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Mazrui, Ali Al'Amin.
The Africans.

1. Africa—Civilization. I. Title.

DT14.M39 1986 960 86-2753

ISBN 0-316-55200-3

Published simultaneously in Canada
by Little, Brown & Company (Canada) Limited
Printed in the United States of America

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By the same author

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ON HEROES AND UHURU-WORSHIP: ESSAYS ON INDEPENDENT AFRICA
THE ANGLO-AFRICAN COMMONWEALTH: POLITICAL FRICTION AND CULTURAL
FUSION
VIOLENCE AND THOUGHT: ESSAYS ON SOCIAL TENSIONS IN AFRICA
PROTEST AND POWER IN BLACK AFRICA (ED., WITH ROBERT I. ROTBERG)
CULTURAL ENGINEERING AND NATION-BUILDING IN EAST AFRICA
THE TRIAL OF CHRISTOPHER OKIGBO
THE POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE: AN AFRICAN
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SOLDIERS AND KINSMEN IN UGANDA: THE MAKING OF A MILITARY
ETHNOCRACY
THE AFRICAN CONDITION: THE REITH LECTURES 1979
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PRESENT (WITH MICHAEL TIDY)

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Acknowledgements

Perhaps never in the history of African scholarship has so much been owed to so many – by so few. My debt is to a very wide range of people, scattered in three different continents. Those who challenged, stimulated, irritated, and enlightened me constantly were those directly involved in making the television series, *The Africans*, jointly produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation and WETA (Public Broadcasting Service). In the television series I was to look at Africa – and the BBC and WETA were supposed to translate my ideas into lively television.

In reality, the interaction was much more complex than that. I did indeed present my ideas to the production team of the television series at meetings which were themselves held in three continents – from Mombasa in Kenya to London, England, from Jos in Nigeria to Washington, DC. But it was not of course a simple case of articulating my academic ideas on Africa while the television experts scratched their heads about how to translate my story into pictures. It was a constant give and take. My ideas were analysed, challenged, contradicted, and scrutinised by a group of very intelligent people from another profession (television). In the final analysis I could of course stick to my position on a particular issue and refuse to budge. But much more often we attempted to persuade each other and were responsive to each other's arguments. What is more, my television colleagues soon learnt so much about Africa on their own that purely in terms of information they had as much to tell me on Africa as I had to tell them. My edge of advantage lay in my being an African and in my having spent more than thirty-five years of my life on the continent. Nevertheless, I learnt an awful lot more about my own continent as a result of this project.

It was out of this intense interaction in the course of making the television series that this book in turn evolved and developed. In a curious manner, this book is both the mother and the child of the television series. Many of the ideas of the book helped to give shape and direction to the television series. But other ideas emerged out of the research for filming, and much of the information was obtained as a result of contacts and experience on the ground as we travelled from one African country to another. In this latter sense, the book is the child of the television project. William Wordsworth was right in his ambiguous observation that 'the child is father of the man'. This book bears additional testimony to that eternal truth.

But of course my intellectual and informational debt is not purely 'incestuous' within the BBC/WETA project. Especially for this book, there has also been the special role of Michael Tidy, my co-author in a previous book

entitled *Nationalism and New States in Africa* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1984). In this new BBC/WETA publication, Michael Tidy has been commissioned not as co-author but as editor and research support. Michael Tidy has indeed discharged those twin responsibilities of editing and research assistance with impressive thoroughness. In some cases I have provided the skeleton (the theoretical framework) and Michael Tidy has provided the flesh (the illustrative information). Without Michael Tidy and the data emanating from the BBC/WETA television series, this book would have been much thinner in terms of information and historical illustrations. Michael's wife, Anastasia Obuya Tidy, graciously lent a hand both as editorial advisor and typist.

In addition, every African country we filmed had its own experts, academic and otherwise. Many of them went out of their way to educate us about their country, making themselves available without compensation. Some of them were personal friends or professional acquaintances of mine, selflessly eager to help. In these brief remarks they will recognise themselves. I do not have to mention them by name. But neither the television series nor this book would have made it without this kind of professional altruism and co-operation. This son of Africa extends his gratitude to many brothers and sisters in Africa itself and in the African Diaspora in all its complexity.

A team of consultants was put together by WETA and the BBC to advise on the scholarly content of the television series. This group consisted of Professors Jacob Adeniyi Ajayi, Ali Hussein Darwish, John Donnelly Fage, I. M. Lewis, Elliott P. Skinner, Joseph Harris and Christopher Davis Roberts. This book is indebted to them all, and to Professor J. Isawa Elaigwu at the University of Jos and Mrs Angeline Kamba at the National Archives of Zimbabwe.

Two universities had to bear the burden of neglected routines as a result of my long absences for this project. The universities were those of Jos in Nigeria, where I am Research Professor of Political Science, and The University of Michigan in the United States where I am Professor of Political Science and of Afroamerican and African Studies. Both universities have shared me with this project over a period which has extended well over three years. Without the patience and understanding of these two universities, I would have been in the wilderness. Particularly relevant are the two Departments of Political Science at Jos and Michigan, and the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies at Michigan.

Since I am indebted to hundreds of other names, I am trying to avoid mentioning too many of them in this acknowledgement. Perhaps I should highlight research assistance and secretarial support as the most *immediate* pillars. Research assistance most directly supportive of this book came from Omari H. Kokole at the University of Michigan, Diana Frank at WETA in Washington, DC, Judith Andrews at the British Broadcasting Corporation, and Sam Max Sebina, Ezekiel Okeniyi, Vianney Bukyana and John Munene

at the University of Jos. Kay Kokole was also a major contributor to the smoothness of the work in Michigan.

But the manuscript had to be got ready for publication. Anthony Kingsford of BBC Publications and Roger Donald of Little, Brown warned me quite early against excessive academic jargon, on one side, and, on the other, against 'talking down' to my non-specialised audience. I took the advice to heart. Later on the editorial staff of the two publishers helped more directly with style editing. Valerie Buckingham helped me prune the original hefty manuscript, Frances Abraham tracked down thousands of photographs and helped in selecting them, and Martin Gregory was responsible for the design of the book. Other people involved in preparing the manuscript included Judith Baughn at the University of Michigan as the central co-ordinator, assisted by my former secretary, the late Valerie Ward, and her daughter, Karen Ward. Their dedication at short notice was exceptional.

At the University of Jos the secretarial assistance came mainly from the Department of Political Science, with special reference to Evelyn Iroegbu. At the British Broadcasting Corporation Kate Harris, Caroline Wolfe and Judith Andrews were crucial both as liaison officers and as production aides.

Apart from Judith Baughn and Valerie and Karen Ward at Michigan, it was mainly the secretaries of the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies who were involved in typing drafts of this book. At WETA in Washington, DC the secretaries were busy keeping track of relevant press reports of African news on my behalf and then mailing the photocopies to me wherever I was.

No less immediate in their support were, of course, those involved in the actual production of the BBC/WETA television series. David Harrison, Charles Hobson, Peter Bate, Diana Frank, Timothy Copestake, Alan Bookbinder and Jenny Cathcart were constantly involved in discussing the ideas affecting the television series. Some members of the filming crew also took considerable interest in Africa and discussed the continent with me. So did Judith Andrews and Caroline Wolfe. I am indebted to them all for stimulation, information and support.

But I would have had to give up the whole project if my three sons had appeared cool and resentful of the enterprise. On the contrary, Jamal, Al'Amin and Kim Abubakar were supportive and enthusiastic – though they insisted on fining me a modest sum of money for every week I was away. (I suspect the fine was more to augment their pocket-money than to express their wrath.) My wider extended family and other friends in Kenya responded to their sacred duty in our traditional manner – they helped a compatriot in need all the way from Nairobi to Malindi, from Mombasa to Lamu.

Two women bore the brunt of looking after the children in my absence. Their mother first and foremost. Molly was, as usual, a tower of strength. But when she was not there, Brenda Kiberu took over – as a friend to the children

and to me. Without those two women, I would have had to return home and 'babysit' – away from 'the madding crowd' and away from television and field research.

An indirect influence on this book has been a special *Reader*, a collection of essays commissioned by WETA to accompany the television series as supportive material for a college television course. Major Africanist scholars have contributed to that *Reader*. My interaction with those scholars helped to enrich my own book.

In editing the contributions of those scholars for that *Reader*, I have been greatly helped by Toby Levine as co-editor and co-ordinator. Without her energetic involvement, it would have been difficult for me to be educated by this particular team of scholars. This book of mine would therefore have learnt less from the prior reaction of other scholars to my tentative ideas.

Major funding for *The Africans* was provided by the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Annenberg/CPB Project. Additional funding is from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Public Broadcasting Service, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Subsidies for research by the author also came from the University of Jos, Nigeria and the University of Michigan in the United States.

The faults of this book belong at the author's door. But the author is still indebted to everyone else for a singular intellectual experience.

Ali A. Mazrui

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