Towards Re-Africanizing African Universities: Who Killed Intellectualism in the Post Colonial Era?

Ali A. Mazrui*

In Memoriam:
This lecture is dedicated to Dr. C. Odhiambo-Mbai who had invited Mazrui to give it, and who was later tragically assassinated in Nairobi, Kenya, on Sunday, September 14, 2003.

I am delighted to be lecturing in Taifa Hall after many years. Under the previous political order a lecture by Mazrui at the University of Nairobi needed the permission not just of the Vice Chancellor but also of the Office of the Head of State. I hope that under the new dispensation all that was needed to invite me to give this lecture was the decision of the relevant department.

The last time I lectured in Taifa Hall was about ten years ago when Kenyan alumni of the U.S. Fulbright-Scheme were celebrating the 50th anniversary of Fulbright and wanted me as their keynote speaker. My topic was relatively innocuous – "African Universities and the American Model of Higher Education." Even such a lecture needed the permission of the Office of the Head of State.

Let me begin with a crucial question. How can a university help to develop the society to which it belongs? In reality no university is ever able to help develop a society unless the society is first ready to help develop the university. It is a symbiotic relationship.

A society without the will to create a sustainable university is a society without the will to maintain sustainable development. A fundamental starting point is a readiness by the

society to award a university a charter which guarantees institutional independence and also guarantees the members academic freedom.

Behind it all is the whole tradition of intellectualism. People can be very <u>intelligent</u> without being actively <u>intellectual</u>. Intellectualism is an engagement in the realm of ideas and rational enquiry. In the years since independence what has been the fate of intellectualism in East Africa?

The Rise and Fall of Intellectualism

Over the last forty years East Africa has experienced the rise and decline of African intellectuals. What is an intellectual? <u>An intellectual is a person who has the capacity to be fascinated by ideas, and has acquired the skill to handle some of them effectively.</u>

When I was an academic at the University of East Africa in the early years of independence my colleagues consisted substantially of people who were capable of being fascinated by ideas. Every week there was a range of extra-curricular events on campus. Public lectures at the Makerere campus or at the University of Nairobi were often heavily attended. In the case of my own evening lectures at both Makerere and Nairobi, students sometimes gave up their suppers in order to get a seat at one of my presentations. The main halls were packed to overflowing.

For its Head of State Kenya had the nation's first black social anthropologist, Jomo Kenyatta – author of <u>Facing Mt. Kenya</u>. Uganda had for Head of Government a person who had changed his name because of admiration of the author of the great English poem, <u>Paradise Lost</u>. Obote became Milton Obote out of admiration of John Milton.

The most intellectual of East Africa's Heads of State at the time was Julius K. Nyerere of Tanzania – a true philosopher, president and original thinker. He philosophized about society and socialism, and translated two of Shakespeare's plays into Kiswahili – <u>Julius</u>

Caesar and The Merchant of Venice. The Swahili translations were published by Oxford University Press – beginning in 1963, the year of Kenya's independence.

East Africa had vivacious and scintillating intellectual magazines – such as Transition magazine based in Kampala and East Africa Journal based in Nairobi. Contributors to those magazines were intellectuals from the campuses, from the wider civil society and from the governing class. The late Tom Mboya of Kenya, one of the most brilliant East Africans of his time, wrote for those magazines from time to time.

Those were the days when it was possible for me to be engaged in a public disagreement with a Head of State, Milton Obobe, and survive. It was also possible for a public debate to occur in the Town Hall of Kampala between a professor of political science (myself) and the Head of Intelligence in Uganda's Security system (Mr. Akena Adoko). Mr. Adoko was at the time the second most powerful civilian in Uganda after the Head of State.

The campuses vibrated with debates about fundamental issues of the day – nationalism, socialism, democracy and the party system, and the role of intellectuals in what was widely designated as "the African revolution". Since then, who has killed intellectualism in East Africa?

In Uganda part of the answer is obvious. A military coup occurred in January 1971, which brought Idi Amin into power. Eight years of brutal dictatorship followed. No less a person than the Vice-Chancellor of Makerere – Frank Kalimuzo – was abducted in broad daylight from the campus and never heard of again. A similar fate befell the judicially courageous Chief Justice of Uganda, Benedicto Kiwanuka. The scintillating intellectual voices of Uganda either fell silent or went into exile. Before long I too packed my bags and left my beloved Makerere.

Who killed intellectualism in Kenya? The killers included rising authoritarianism in government and declining academic freedom on campuses. The very fact that the University

of Nairobi was unable to hire me when I resigned from Makerere was a measure of the impact of political authoritarianism on the university's freedom of choice. These were the mid-1970s when Kenyatta was still in power. The fate of intellectualism became worse and worse during the years of President Daniel arap Moi.

If the first two killers of intellectualism in Kenya were rising political authoritarianism and declining academic freedom, the third killer was the Cold War between Western powers and the Soviet bloc. The government of Kenya was co-opted into the Western camp, sometimes at the expense of Kenya's own citizens. Being socialist or left-wing as an intellectual became a political hazard. All sorts of laws and edicts emerged about subversive literature. Possessing the works of Mao Tse Tung of the People's Republic of China was a crime in Kenya, and people actually went to jail for it. My own nephew, Dr. Alamin M. Mazrui of Kenyatta University, was detained without charge by the Moi regime for more than a year for being a left-wing Kenyan academic in the company of such other left-wingers as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo.

Intellectual opposition to capitalism in Kenya became increasingly a punishable offense. Lives of socialists were sometimes in danger. Like the life of the relatively powerless Pinto, who was assassinated. Moderately left-wing political leaders like Oginga Odinga were ostracized. All these were forces which were murderous of intellectualism in Kenya.

Who killed intellectualism in Tanzania? In Tanzania intellectualism was slow to die. It was partially protected by the fact that the Head of State – Julius Nyerere – was himself a superb intellectual ruler. He was not only fascinated by ideas, but also stimulated by debates.

But two factors in Tanzania had paradoxical roles – the ideology of Ujamaa (Tanzania's version of socialism) and Nyerere's one-party system. On the one hand, Ujamaa and the justification of the one-party state stimulated a considerable amount of intellectual

rationalization and conceptualization. On the other hand, there was no escaping the fact that one-partyism was a discriminatory system of government and the enthusiasm for socialism in Tanzania intimidated those who were against it. I visited the campus of the University of Dar es Salaam many times and I witnessed some of the consequences of ideological intimidation in the name of socialism.

What this means is that while in Kenya intellectualism died partly because of the Cold War opposition to socialism, in Tanzania intellectualism died partly because of excessive local enthusiasm <u>for</u> socialism.

In my own personal life I was respected more as an intellectual by Milton Obole in Uganda and Julius Nyerere in Tanzania than I was by either Mzee Kenyatta or Daniel arap Moi in Kenya. Even Idi Amin, when he was in power in Uganda, wanted to send me to apartheid South Africa as living proof that Africans could <u>think</u>. Idi Amin wanted me to become <u>Exhibit A of the Black Intellectual</u> to convince racists in South Africa that Black people were human beings capable of rational thought. Fortunately, I was able to convince Idi Amin, not humour racists, with such a display.

But apart from ensuring a climate of academic freedom and the free flourishing of intellectualism, what does society have to do to develop a university before the university becomes capable of helping to develop society? Clearly resources are crucial. The society has to be ready to invest resources in the university great enough to ensure high quality of academic recruitment and high quality of academic retention of staff and students.

Resources will also be needed for high quality curriculum development and high quality research and general development. Students and staff are human beings whose motivation and sense of commitment needs to be sustained by a system of rewards and recognition. Grades for students should be a true measure of achievement; so should

promotions for staff. Promotions without performance should come to an end if the spirit of intellectual ambition is to be restored.

But no university can be a first class institution of higher learning if the secondary schools which feed into it are all mediocre. In order to fully develop a university, society also has to develop the educational ladder as a whole. Quality of education at the primary and secondary levels needs to be sustained if the final candidates for possible admission to the universities are to be of high standard.

The capacity to be curious and fascinated by ideas has to start early in the educational process. The spirit of intellectualism has to be nourished from primary school onwards, but it can die at the university level if mediocrity prevails.

In relation to the wider world, a university has three crucial relationships. A university has to be <u>politically distant</u> from the state; secondly, a university has also to be <u>culturally close</u> to society; and thirdly, a university has to be intellectually linked to wider scholarly and scientific values of the world of learning.

Can a university be funded by the state and still maintain political distance? It has been done in other societies; there is no reason why it cannot happen in Africa as well. British universities still depend heavily on the state, even when they have large endowments. This is a common pattern in Europe.

In the United States, government-funded universities are funded mainly at the state level rather than federal level. Nevertheless, the Federal Government contributes billions to higher education generally without compromising academic freedom.

In Kenya, President Mwai Kibaki's administration may have started the process of depoliticizing the public universities by a new atmosphere of academic autonomy. The President's decision to give up the Chancellorships of the six public universities is an important symbol of decentralization and depoliticization.

In addition to political distance from the state, each university needs to be culturally close to society. This is a much tougher proposition in Africa, especially since African university systems are colonial in origin and disproportionately European in traditions. African universities are among the major instruments and vehicles of cultural westernization on the continent.

A contradiction occurs between the university's duty to be culturally close to its society and the university ambition to be intellectually linked to the wider world of scholarship and science.

In this connection it is worth bearing in mind important differences between the westernization of Africa and the modernization of Japan after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Japan's original modernization involved considerable selectivity on the part of the Japanese themselves ("Western Technique, Japanese Spirit"). The whole purpose of selective Japanese westernization was to protect Japan against the West, rather than merely to submit to western cultural attractions. The emphasis in Japan was therefore on the technical and technological techniques of the West, rather than on literary and verbal culture. The Japanese slogan of "western technique, Japanese spirit" at the time captured this ambition to borrow technology from the West while deliberately protecting a substantial part of Japanese culture. In a sense, Japan's technological westernization was designed to reduce the danger of other forms of cultural dependency.

The nature of westernization in Africa has been very different. Far from emphasizing western productive technology and reducing western life-styles and verbal culture, Africa has reversed the Japanese order of emphasis. Among the factors which have facilitated this reversal has been the role of the African university as a vehicle of western culture.

If African universities had borrowed a leaf from the Japanese book of cultural selection, and initially concentrated on what is indisputably the West's real area of leadership

and marginal advantage (science and technology), the resultant African dependency might have been of a different kind. But the initial problem lay precisely in the model of the university itself – the paradigm of academia, with its distrust of direct problem-solving in the wider society. "There is much in our education system (in Britain) which makes it easier to define problems in terms of narrowly scientific objectives. The existing relationship between universities (with the unidirectional flow of 'experts' and advisors, the flow of overseas students to this country, etc.) have tended to transfer the same standards and expectations to the LDCs [Less Developed Countries] …… Technologies for the satisfaction of basic needs and for rural development have received little attention….. curricula, text books and teaching methods are too closely imitative of practice in industrialized countries. This has spilled over from teaching into research expectations. Universities have aimed to achieve international standards in defining the criteria for staff recognition and promotion; in practice this means using the international scientific and engineering literature as the touchstone. However, applied work directed at the solution of local problems…..can rarely be associated with publication in 'respectable' journals: a far better test is the local one of success or failure of the particular project in the LDC environment."[1]

The one paradigmatic change which was necessary for the imported universities did not in fact occur. The missing factor was a change in the conception of the university itself and what its purposes were. The new Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya – strongly supported by the Japanese – may explore new developmental horizons in tertiary education.

The original colonial university was so uncompromisingly foreign in an African context, and was transplanted with few concessions to African cultures, its impact was more culturally alienating than it need have been. A whole generation of African graduates grew up despising their own ancestry, and scrambling to imitate the West.

Those early African graduates who have later become university teachers themselves have on the whole remained intellectual imitators and disciples of the West. African historians have since begun to innovate methodologically as they have grappled with oral traditions, but most of the other disciplines are still condemned to paradigmatic dependency.

African universities rely overwhelmingly on European languages as media of instruction. On the one hand, European languages complicate any effort to take African universities culturally closer to African societies. On the other hand, those European languages help African universities in the search for intellectual links to the wider world of scholarship and science. Let us look more closely at this dilemma between the quest for cultural authenticity and the necessity of using the imperial languages inherited from the colonial era.

Cultural Autonomy Versus Borrowed Languages

An important source of Africa's intellectual dependency is the language in which African graduates and scholars are taught. For the time being it is impossible for an African to be even moderately familiar with the works of Charles Darwin or Karl Marx without the help of a European language. Neither The Origin of Species nor Das Kapital is as yet available in Hausa or Kiswahili, let alone in Kidigo or Lutoro. Parts of the Manifesto of the Communist Party have already been translated into Kiswahili and Amharic but it may take the rest of this twenty first century before even a fraction of the literary output of other civilizations is available in any single African language.

As matters now stand, an African who has a good command of a European language has probably assimilated other aspects of western culture as well. This is because the process of acquiring a European language in Africa has tended to be overwhelmingly through a formal system of western-style education. It is because of this that the concept of an African physicist who is not also westernized is for the time-being a socio-linguistic impossibility.

This need not apply to a Chinese or Japanese physicist, where it is possible to engage in a scientific conversation at a sophisticated level without the explicit mediation of a foreign language. Japan and Korea especially have tamed their languages to cope with a wide range of intellectual discourse.

But in black Africa for the time being a modern surgeon who does not speak a European language is virtually a socio-linguistic impossibility. So is a modern chemist, zoologist and economist. The ambition to be culturally close to African society clashes with the ambition to be intellectually linked to the wider world.

Nor is this simply a case of the surgeon, or physicist or economist acquiring an additional skill called a "European language" which he has the option to discard when he discusses surgery or physics with fellow professionals in his own society. Professional Japanese scientists or social scientists can organize a conference or convention and discuss professional matters almost entirely in Japanese. But a conference of African scientists, devoted to scientific matters, and conducted primarily in an African language, is for the time being sociologically impossible.

Almost all black African intellectuals conduct their most sophisticated conversations in European languages. Their most complicated thinking has also to be done in some European language or another. It is because of this that intellectual and scientific dependency in Africa is inseparable from linguistic dependency.

And since a major function of culture lies, as we indicated, in providing media of communication, the choice of European languages as media of instruction in African universities has had profound cultural consequences for the societies which are served by those universities. Intellectual proximity to global scholarship clashes with cultural proximity to African society.

It is possible that outside Arab Africa and parts of Eastern Africa the imperial founders of African universities had no choice. The great majority of African languages did not have enough speakers to justify the massive financial and intellectual investment necessary for making them effective media of higher education. But even those African languages like Kiswahili which stood a chance of developing in that direction did not receive adequate imperial support. As for Arabic in the Sudan, there continued to be discordance between the English language as a medium at Khartoum University and the Arabic-orientation of pre-university education, with severe costs in quality for all levels of instruction.

What should be remembered is that by the time these African universities were being established, African intellectuals had already become so mentally dependent that they themselves insisted on considerable imitation of western educational systems – including the importation of western media of instruction for African schools and universities.

If intellectualism in European languages first flourished and then declined in the post colonial era, intellectualism in indigenous languages was handicapped quite early by the policies of both the colonial and post-colonial eras. The imperial powers did sow the seeds of African intellectualism in English, French and Portuguese. But those same policies tended to undermine intellectualism "in the vernacular".

African universities played a leading role in fostering this new basis of stratification. They helped to give western culture as a whole greater legitimacy in African societies. They produced teachers for lower levels of education and thus helped to continue the Eurocentric tradition of the colonial educational system. The universities also produced opinion-leaders in other public pursuits. The university degree itself was for a while a major passport to influence and opportunity. The class-systems of African societies were in a state of flux, and cultural dependency was part of this problem of restratification.

In fairness to some African governments and educational reformers, we must recognize some of the agonized efforts that have been made to modify the colonial heritage. In Kenyatta's Kenya alone at least three major educational commissions (Ominde 1964, Ndegwa 1971 and Gachathi 1978) once dealt with educational reforms – not to mention numerous workshops and seminars.

But reforms in Daniel arap Moi's Kenya were even faster in coming. Some important concessions have been made to Kiswahili. It enjoys more attention at the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University than it has ever done before, though the attention is still modest in resources. The status of Kiswahili at lower levels of Kenya's educational system is also modest, in spite of the elevation of the language into the "national language" of Kenya with English as the "official language". English continues to overshadow Kiswahili decisively at least from the third year of schooling onwards.

In terms of political stratification, an important step was taken when Kiswahili was adopted as the language of Kenya's parliament from 1974 to 1979. But significant anomalies remained. Whereas written legislation in Kenya's parliament was still presented in English, the debate on that legislation was conducted in Kiswahili. The speech on the budget continued to be made in English with full political and diplomatic ceremony. The minimum qualifications required of a parliamentary candidate continued to include competence in the English language – but no necessarily competence in Kiswahili. After Kenyatta, debate could be in either language in parliament. The most important language of national politics is now Kiswahili, but the official language of the Kenya constitution (old and new) continues to be English.

Because of these continuing anomalies, the political establishment of the country continues to consist disproportionately of those who have been initiated into the culture of the former imperial system. The public universities are central to the structure which is

perpetuating the Britannic factor in Kenya's system of political stratification. But some of those universities have also started the slow and difficult process of Africanizing African universities. This agenda for re-Africanization needs a closer look.

On balance the universities have contributed more to African bureaucracies than directly to the production processes of African economies. The bureaucratic bourgeoisie which wields considerable political power in most African countries is on the whole a product of Western education. The impact of this class of people on patterns of consumption in African countries is sometimes greater than their impact on levels of production. But, the centrality of their position in African political systems has in many cases made them custodians of the highest levels of economic policy in their countries – for better or for worse. But what about closing the cultural gap between the university and the society it serves?

Towards Africanizing the African University

We have sought to demonstrate in this paper that the African University is part of a chain of dependency that continues to tie Africa to the Western world. African perspectives, models of communication, structures of stratification, rules of interaction, standards of evaluation, motives of behavior and patterns of production and consumption have all been undergoing the agonies of change partly under the disturbing impact of Western culture.

African universities have been the highest transmitters of Western culture in African societies. The high priests of Western civilization in the continent are virtually all products of those cultural seminaries called "universities".

On balance the African university is caught up in the tension between its ambition to promote genuine development in Africa and its continuing role in the consolidation of cultural dependency. If genuine development has to include cultural decolonization, a basic contradiction persists in the ultimate functions of an African university. It may generate skills relevant for modernization and development. But it has not even begun to acquire, let alone

to transmit to others, what is perhaps the most fundamental skill of them all – how to promote development in a post-colonial state without consolidating the structures of dependency inherited from its imperial past.

If development for Africa means the decolonization of modernity, then some major strategies are needed for African development – two of them are capable of rapid implementation, while others are for slower but sustained introduction.

The first strategy concerns the domestication of modernity: the bid to relate it more firmly to local cultural and economic needs.

The second strategy is paradoxical. It involves the wider diversification of the cultural content of modernity. Under this approach the foreign reference-group for an African institution becomes not only the West but also other non-African civilizations. The African university is thus to be transformed from a multinational to a multicultural corporation.

The third strategy is perhaps the most ambitious. It concerns an attempt by the African continent as a whole to counter-penetrate western civilization itself.

Let us take each of these strategies, beginning with the imperative of domestication in relation to education. Until now there has been no doubt that African educational systems have entered deeply into the life-styles of local societies, for better or for worse. In the very process of producing educated manpower, creating new forms of stratification, accelerating Westernization and modernization, African educational institutions have been major instruments through which the Western world has affected and changed the continent.

In order to shift this balance, African societies must be allowed fundamentally to influence the educational systems themselves. It is not enough for an African university to send a traveling theatre to perform a play by Shakespeare or even by the Nigerian playwright, Wole Soyinka, before rural audiences in different villages. This type of endeavor is indeed required, and helps to deepen the life experiences of folk communities in the villages. But the

traveling theatre of a university like Makerere or Nairobi is one more form of academic impact on the wider society. It does not by itself constitute a reverse flow of influence.

Similarly, extra-mural departments and even extension services are valuable methods of increasing skills and expanding social awareness among rural communities. Like a number of other professors at Makerere University in Uganda, I traveled many miles on hard roads to address village schools and assemblies on the implications of public policies in Uganda and the nature of the political system of the country. That kind of commitment was a way of reaching out to the isolated groups of the African countryside. But once again it was much less an exercise in being affected by the society than an exercise in reaching the society. The social impact was still one-sided.

The first task, then, in decolonizing modernity is to seek cultural nearness to African society and to enable the influence of the local society to balance that of the Western reference group. But how is this process to be realized in the universities? Four major areas have to be examined afresh: the requirements for admission of students, the content of curses throughout the educational system, the criteria for recruitment of teachers and other staff, and the general structure of the educational system.

University admission requirements should be reformed in the direction of giving new weight to certain subjects of indigenous relevance. Social and cultural anthropology ought to become a secondary school subject, rigorously examinable, and required for entry to university. This should help promote considerably more interest in African cultures in primary and secondary schools. Secondly, admission to a university should include a requirement for a pass in an African language. There were times when many African universities required some competence in Latin for entry into some faculties; the African university of the future should require competence, formally demonstrated in an examination,

of at least one African language regardless of the subject that the student proposes to study once admitted.

African dance and music should be given a new legitimacy in all primary and secondary schools, regardless of the sensitivities of the missionary authorities in power. Investigation should be undertaken into whether dance and music should be competitive, and in what way the ethnic diversity of musicological experience can be made creative rather than disruptive in an African school. These problems are far from insurmountable, and could add a new richness to African aesthetic experience alongside the imported recreations of sports and athletics.

Progress has already been made in the teaching of African history and literature. Further progress can be made, including more effective utilization of oral literature, duly transcribed, as an introduction to the pre-literate aesthetic creativity of African societies.

The university in turn should re-examine the content of its courses, permitting indigenous culture to penetrate more into the university, and non-Western alien contributions to find a hearing at African universities.

Recruitment of faculty will in turn be affected by these considerations. Must all teachers at an African university have formal degrees from Western or Western-type educational institutions? Or should there be areas of expertise where lecturers or even professors could be appointed without the degree requirement so characteristic of Western institutions? Okot p'Bitek once compared the recruitment requirements for a university with the electoral requirements for an African parliament. African parliaments have on the whole insisted on competence in either English or French before an African could become a member. A candidate could speak ten African languages, and still be ineligible for parliament, if he did not speak the imported metropolitan language. Conversely, a candidate could speak only English or French, and no African language, not even the language of his

immediate constituents, and still be eligible for parliament. Okot p'Bitek saw the linguistic and formal requirements for a parliamentary career in Africa:

> You cannot become a member of <u>their</u> parliament unless you can speak English or French … you may be the greatest oral historian but they will never allow you anywhere near <u>their</u> University … Our Universities and schools are nests in which black exploiters are hatched and bred, at the expense of the taxpayers, or perhaps heartpayers.[2]

The question which arises is whether there are specialists of oral history in African societies who can be appointed to university faculties without having a formal degree. Presumably this might be difficult if these oral historians are unable to read or write. A compromise situation would be one in which only those oral historians who can in addition read and write might be regarded as eligible. Admittedly, literary skills are still a departure from ancestral ways in many African societies, but even readiness to acknowledge competence regardless of formal Western-type degrees would be revolutionary in African universities.

A related area is that of African languages. There are specialists in African languages who know not only how to use an African language, but also how the language behaves. Some of these are superb teachers at university level. I know of at least one who spent many years in an American university, teaching Kiswahili with a sophistication unmatched by many of those who have actual degrees in the subject and in Bantu linguistics. Yet in the United States he could never hope to have a proper tenure appointment or even formal rank, since he did not possess a degree. Yet the same university would be quite prepared to appoint a distinguished British Swahilist from the London School of Oriental and African Studies, with a less intimate knowledge of certain African languages than the Kenyan with a demonstrated competence over several decades.

There is a case for broadening the criteria for recruiting academic staff to include both formal degrees and, where appropriate, indigenous traditional skills adequately demonstrated and capable of being effectively utilized on both teaching and research at the university level. Clearly a hybrid of cultures is at play here, and staff recruitment could reflect this dualism.

Departments of sociology could have indigenous specialists in oral traditions; departments and faculties of medicine and preventive medicine could include specialists in indigenous herbs, and might even examine the medical implications of sorcery and witchcraft as part of the general training of a rural doctor in Africa. Departments of history, literature, musicology, philosophy and religious studies could all allow for the possibility of recruiting skills on a different set of criteria from that which has been honoured in Western institutions.

But in addition to reforms encompassing student admission requirements, curricula, faculty recruitment, there must be a broader structural transformation which relates general social needs to the educational system, and which reduces the tendency toward a pyramid educational structure with the university at the top, and everything below that being no more than a step toward the pinnacle. What is needed is a major change involving a diversification of the content of the curricula of each institution.

At the university level, should studies continue to be organized according to conventional western disciplinary categories? Or is there a case for having on the one hand a School of Rural Studies, encompassing agriculture, anthropology, preventive medicine in rural conditions, and the like, and on the other, a School of Urban Studies, examining the rural-urban continuum, labour migration, ethnic associations, criminology and relevant preventive medicine? Other possible schools could include Oral Tradition and Historiography, Languages and Oral Literature, and Religion and Witchcraft.

Informing all these reforms would be a concept of relevance domestically defined, and which related to both the economic and cultural needs of the society as a whole.

The Strategy of Diversification

The second strategy of development is that of diversifying the cultural content of modernity. This approach rests partly on the assumption that just as economically it is a greater risk to be dependent on one country than on many, so in culture one foreign benefactor is more constraining than many. To be owned by one person is outright slavery; but to be owned by many masters, who can be played against each other, may be the beginning of freedom.

The African university has to move from being a multinational corporation to a multicultural corporation. From what we have discussed, it is clear that in spite of the fact that African university systems have grown up with structural or other links with metropolitan universities in Europe and North America, the African university has continued to be heavily uni-cultural: it has been more a manifestation of western culture in an African situation than an outgrowth of African culture itself.

For as long as the African university remained a multinational corporation in this sense, it denied itself the wealth of its own society. But in order to become a multicultural corporation it is not enough to combine African traditions with the Western heritage. It becomes more important than ever that African universities should take seriously the cultures and experiments of other civilizations. The educational system should not simply talk about European history, combined increasingly with African history, but should in addition pay attention to Indian civilizations, Chinese civilizations and most immediate of all, Islamic civilizations. Although Arabic is the most widely spoken language in the African continent, the language has received very little acknowledgement in the educational syllabi of Africa south of the Sahara. It has not even received recognition from countries bordering Arabic-

speaking areas, or with large numbers of Muslims among their own citizens. The Muslim community in Nigeria runs into millions, and the bordering countries contain millions more, yet Nigeria's universities once favoured Latin and Greek rather than Arabic studies. As for Chinese studies, there is at most some interest in Mao Tse-tung in political science departments these days, but still no interest in Confucius. Mao's China is relevant not only to ideology and economic organization, but also to intermediate technology, medicine and new methods of agriculture. A conscious effort to learn more about what is done in China since Mao, and an attempt to see how much of it is relevant for African needs could help to add technical richness to cultural pluralism.

A multicultural corporation requires not only a revival of interest in African indigenous traditions, but also a cultural diversification of the foreign component in African curricula. A twin process is then underway: increased Africanization, as the society is permitted to reciprocate the impact of the university; and increased internationalization as the foreign component ceases to be Euro-centric and attention is paid to other parts of the total human heritage.

An important subject which should be introduced into African secondary schools is the history of science. It is possible that the dependency complex among young African school children arises partly out of their being overwhelmed by Western science. The prestige of the Western world, in a continent which is very conscious of the power of prestige, derives disproportionately from Western leadership in science and technology. So great has that leadership been in the last 300 years that Westernism and science are sometimes regarded as interchangeable.

In reaction to this Western scientific pre-eminence, some Africans have sought refuge in negritude as glorification of a non-scientific civilization. The leader of negritude as a romantic movement in Africa, Leopold Senghor, former President of Senegal, has defined

negritude as "the sum of African cultural values" informed by their "emotive attitude toward the world".[3] Other Africans have sought answers in Marxism – partly because it seems to offer Africans the chance of rebelling against the West without ceasing to be scientific. After all, was not the Marxist heritage a scientific critique of the West? These two responses symbolize wider forces at work in Africa. The negritudist rebels against the scientific West by idealizing his own heritage; the African Marxist rebels against the West by embracing an alternative scientism.

Leopold Senghor, a cultural nationalist, has been denounced by some African radicals as an intellectual primitivist who has tried to reduce African modes of knowledge to pure emotion and has turned the history of Africa into the story of the Noble Savage. But, Senghor denies that the has deprived the African of the capacity to reason and innovate technologically.

It is a fact that there is a white European civilization and a black African civilization. The question is to explain their differences and the reasons for these differences, which my opponents have not yet done. I can refer them back to their authorities. 'Reason has always existed', wrote Marx to Arnold Ruge, 'but not always under the rational form'.[4]

Senghor then proceeds to quote Engels, whom he regards as even more explicit on this question in his work "preparatory to the Anti-Duhring":

Two kinds of experience … one exterior, material; the other, interior; laws of thought and forms of thinking. Forms of thinking also partly transmitted by heredity. A mathematical axiom is self-evident to a European, but not to a Bushman or an Australian aboriginal.[5]

This debate between African cultural nationalists and African scientific scholars is likely to continue for the rest of this century. What the two groups have in common is a

rebellion against the West and the inferiority complex which had been created by Western scientific pre-eminence.

The curriculum in African schools should at some stage reflect these disagreements. But at least as fundamental as the question of whether African culture was traditionally scientific or whether Marxism is a science is the issue of how much Western science owes to other civilizations. From the Indus Valley to ancient Egypt, from imperial China to medieval Islam, the West has found intellectual and scientific benefactors over the centuries. Yet very little of this is communicated to young children in schools in Africa. The cultural pluralism which lies behind the scientific heritage is lost to these young minds, as they continue to be dazzled at a formative period by Western civilization alone. Secondary school curricula in Africa must therefore put science in its proper historical context, reveal the diversity of the human heritage, and break the dangerous myth of Western scientific pre-eminence.

Another major change which would need to be introduced into primary and secondary schools concerns the teaching of languages. Each African child should learn a minimum of three languages – one European, one Asian and one African. The era of learning multiple European languages – some ancient and some modern – while other linguistic heritages of the world are ignored should come rapidly to an end.

Because of the colonial legacy, some African students in former British Africa will need to learn French and some francophone Africans will continue to learn English. Pan-Africanism will need the teaching of an additional European language for a minority of students. But any additional European language has to be a fourth language – chosen instead of, say, geography or fine art, but certainly not at the expense of either an African language or an Asian one. These linguistic requirements are partly based on the assumption that access to a culture is considerably facilitated by knowledge of its language. At the university level, language requirements should continue in a modified form. Each undergraduate –

regardless of the field – should take either an African or an Asian language at an advanced level. In addition they should take a course on a non-Western civilization, preferably, but not necessarily, linked to the language of his choice.

But perhaps the most fundamental of all reforms must be a change in attitude in all departments in African universities away from excessive Eurocentrism and toward a paradoxical combination of increased Africanization and increased internationalization of the content of each department programme. It is only in this way that the African university can evolve into a truly multicultural corporation.

The Strategy of Counter-Penetration

But domestication of modernity and the diversification of its cultural content will not achieve final fulfillment without reversing the flow of influence back into Western civilization itself: there are reformers in Africa who urge only domestication – and some of them would go to the extent of espousing cultural autarky. But this is a strategy of withdrawal from world culture, the outcome of which could be the continuing marginality of Africa in global affairs. In a world which has shrunk so much in a single century, there will be many decisions made by others which are bound to affect the world as a whole.

For Africa to attempt a strategy of withdrawal or total disengagement would be a counsel not only of despair but also of dangerous futility. Modernity is here to stay; the task is to decolonize it. World culture is evolving fast, the task is to save it from excessive Eurocentrism. The question which arises is how this task is to be achieved.[6] This is where the strategy of counterpenetration is relevant. If African cultures have been penetrated so deeply by the West, how is Western culture to be reciprocally penetrated by Africa?

The West has not, of course, completely escaped from Africa's cultural influence. It has been estimated that the first piece of carving made by an African to reach modern Europe

arrived on a Portuguese trading ship in 1504. African workmanship in leather and probably gold had a much older presence in Europe.

> However, African art burst upon the awareness of the Western world only in the turn of the nineteenth century. Army men like Pitt-Rivers and Torday brought back large collections with good ethnographic description …. No one should jump to the idea that Picasso's women who look two ways at once, or anything else about his work, is a copy of something he discovered in African art. There was little direct, stylistic influence, although some can be discovered by latter-day critics. Rather, what happened was that with the discovery of African and other exotic art, the way was discovered for breaking out of the confines that had been imposed on European art by tradition – perspective, measured maturalism, and anti-intellectual sentimentality.[7]

At least as important as this artistic counter-penetration has been Africa's indirect influence through its sons and daughters exported to the New World as slaves. Africa's impact on jazz and related forms of music has already been documented. So has the influence of African tales on the literatures of other lands, particularly of the Southern United States and the Caribbean area.

Africa's cultural influence on the West has been far more modest than the West's influence on Africa. This asymmetry will continue for at least the rest of this century, but the gap in reciprocity can be narrowed. To achieve this, Africa will need allies. The continent's most natural allies consist of the Black Diaspora and the Arab World. The Arabs share a continent with black people. Indeed, the majority of the Arabs are within Africa; so is the bulk of Arab land. Black and African states share the Organization of African Unity. This organization and the Arab League have overlapping membership. There are possibilities of exploiting this relationship to the mutual advantage of both peoples.

The Arab oil-producers have already started the strategy of economic counter-penetration into the West. This ranges from buying real estate in England to controlling a bank in the United States, from acquiring a considerable share in the Benz complex in West Germany to the possibility of extending a loan to Italy. The whole strategy of recycling petrodollars is full of possibilities of economic counter-penetration. As a result, the West is at once eager for the petrodollars and anxious about its long-term consequences for Western economic independence.[8]

But alongside this risk is an opportunity for a new Third World alliance to counter-penetrate the West. Once again economic power and cultural influence might be linked. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries is heavily Muslim in composition, and includes the largest Muslim country in the world, Indonesia. The largest oil-exporting country is Saudi Arabia, where the spiritual capital of Islam, Mecca, is to be found. The second largest oil-exporter is Iran which is, when at peace, an increasingly influential Muslim country in world affairs. Two-thirds of the membership of OPEC is Muslim – but represents over two-thirds of OPEC's oil reserves. Nigeria, another OPEC member, contains all three parts of the soul of modern Africa – the Euro-Christian, the Islamic, and the indigenous religious traditions. All three are vigorous – and Islam is already the strongest single rival to Westernism there.

The rise of OPEC in world affairs – however transient – may herald the political resurrection of Islam. Before the end of this century African Muslims will probably outnumber the Arabs and will be making a strong bid for shared leadership of Islam. It would not be surprising if, within the next decade, black Muslims direct from Africa are establishing schools and hospitals in Harlem and preaching Islam to black Americans. The funding for this Islamic counter-penetration will probably come from the oil-producers of the Arab world. But since African Islam is distinct from Arab Islam, and carries

considerable indigenous culture within it, Islamic counter-penetration into the United States would also be, in part, a process of transmitting African indigenous perspectives as well.

But at least as important as Arab money for African cultural entry into the West is the black American population. The second largest Anglophone black nation in the world (second only to Nigeria), Black America, is situated in the middle of the richest and mightiest country in the twentieth century. At the moment, Black American influence on America's cultural and intellectual life is much more modest than, say, the influence of Jewish America. But as the poverty of black America lessens, its social and political horizons widen, and its intellectual and creative core expands, Black American influence on American culture is bound to increase. A central task for African universities will therefore be to reach out to black America, and, by influencing the most powerful country of the Western world, to reach out to the rest of the West as well.

Towards Wider Strategies of Change: A Conclusion

We should diversify the civilizations from which we learn. The world consists of more than merely Africa and the West. Should our universities learn more about how Japan modernized? If Ghana and Korea were at the same economic level in 1957, why is Korea today the eleventh industrial power in the world – while Ghana is still underdeveloped?

Can African universities learn from the Japanese and the Koreans in order to help Kenya and Africa find alternative models of development?

Nor must we abandon the basic *Strategy of Horizontal Interpenetration.* Universities should cooperate with each other more extensively – comparing notes on teaching methods, research findings, and public service in an African context.

Kenyan universities should promote their own professional associations of shared specializations and joint meetings – in the tradition of old initiatives of the East African

Institute of Social Research, which united not just Kenyan social scientists but East African scholars generally and other researchers in the 1960s and 1970s.

But the universities should also give priority to research relevant for cooperation among African countries – technological, economic, environmental, regional integration. Universities should become relevant vehicles of African unification.

Particularly urgent is a much delayed strategy of *Androgynization*. We need to make each university bi-gender – not only ensuring that students are gender mixed in equal proportions (men and women), but also promote more and more women in the faculties and administrations.

When President Kibaki appointed new university chancellors in June 2003 he missed an ideal opportunity for appointing the first woman chancellor of a public university in Kenya. A woman Vice-Chancellor in Kenya is long overdue.

My own bosses at the State University of New York at Binghamton are women. The President of Binghamton University is a woman (who also flies her own plane) and our Provost at the same university is also a woman. In Africa we need to speed up the quest for gender balance not only in personnel and student body, but also in the curriculum and in the research agenda.

Also vital is a *strategy of geographical balance*. This has to be one of the seven strategies of potential transformation of our universities in Africa. This geo-strategy is a quest for rational geographical balance. This is needed within each country, including the different locations of universities.

In Kenya, the Coast was the first to be literate historically, but seems to be the last to have a university of its own. Mombasa was literate a thousand years before Nairobi as a city was born. Yet Kenya's second city still does not have a university of its own. It is a case of blatant geographical discrimination. We need to redress the issue and try to

approximate <u>rational</u> geographical balance.   Mombasa and Lamu initiated literate intellectualism a thousand years before most of the country could read and write.

As for penetrating the citadels of power in other civilizations, Africa's brain drain is both a cost and a benefit to Africa. The Brain Drain enhances Africa's influence on the Western world, molding young Western minds in schools, influencing Western understanding of other countries.

The presence of African scholars in Japan has started – such as <u>Seifudein Adem of Ethiopia,</u> teaching at Tukube University in Japan. Kenyan professors, teaching in the Middle East, include Muhammad Bakari (formerly of the University of Nairobi) who is now teaching in Istanbul, Turkey. Nor need Kenyan professors in the Arab world necessarily be of Muslim faith. Dr. Alfred Mutua is a professor at the College of Communication and Media Sciences, Zeyed University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Dr. Mutua is a Christian. With the brain drain, highly qualified Africans are influencing young people of other civilizations. These are new intellectual links between Africa and the wider world of scholarship. Africa is not merely on the receiving end of knowledge. It is also on the giving end of intellectualism.

African universities would do well to encourage more Black Americans to gain part of their education in Africa. Here again, Western and Arab money could find a new use in scholarships available to Black Americans to study on the African continent, north or south of the Sahara. Later, Brazilian, as well as Caribbean Blacks, might be encouraged to follow suit.

But the full maturity of African educational experience will come when Africa develops a capability to innovate and invent independently. Full reciprocal international penetration is a precondition for a genuinely symmetrical world culture. African societies need to balance the weight of Western cultures with the riches of non-Western cultures.

African researchers and teachers may then proceed to transform our educational and intellectual world in a manner which makes genuine creativity possible and puts the continent on its way toward decolonizing modernity and reviving the culture of intellectualism at last.

* Director, Institute of Global Cultural Studies and Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities, State University of New York at Binghamton, New York, USA. Chancellor, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya. Albert Luthuli Professor-at-Large University of Jos, Jos, Nigeria. Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large Emeritus and Senior Scholar in Africana Studies Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA. Founding Chair, Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy Washington, D.C., USA. Lecture in Taifa Hall, University of Nairobi, Kenya, delivered on 19 August 2003, and attended by some of Kenya's academic leaders, including Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors. The lecture was organized by the Department of Political Science and Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, University of Nairobi. This lecture has borrowed from Mazrui's previous work on the political culture of African universities. The original advertised title of the lecture was "Public Universities and Development in Africa".

Endnotes

[1] L. Pyle, "Engineering in the Universities and Development," paper presented at the Conference on "The Future Relationships Between Universities in Britain and Developing Countries," held at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, England, March 17-20, 1978, pp. 2-3.

[2] Okot p'Bitek, "Indigenous Ills," Transition, No. 32, August/September 1967, p. 47.

[3] See Senghor, Prose and Poetry, edited and translated by John Reed and Clive Wake (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 34. The emphasis is original.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Engels as cited by Senghor, Ibid., p. 33.

[6] Aspects of the Eurocentism of world culture are also discussed with passion and insight by Chinweizu, The West and the Rest of Us: White Predators, Black Slavers and the African Elite (New York: Random House, 1975). Chapters 14 to 16 are particularly relevant from the point of view of this article. Consult also Mazrui, World Culture and the Black Experience (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974).

[7] Paul Bohannan and Philip Curtin, Africa and the Africans, American Museum of Natural History (New York: The Natural History Press, 1971 edition), pp. 97-98.

[8] This is argued more fully in Mazrui, "The New Interdependence: From Hierarchy to Symmetry," in James Howe (ed.), The United States and the Developing World: Agenda for Action, 1975 (Washington, D.C.: Overseas Development Council, 1975). See also Mazrui, Cultural Forces in World Politics (London: James Currey, 1990).