

**An Obituary:
The Passing of Professor Ali A. Mazrui**

The passing away of Professor Ali A. Mazrui, Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities at Binghamton University, NY, was met with great sadness and a sense of loss by the NAAIMS Board of Directors and Executive Director, family members, supporters and friends. Professor Mazrui passed away on Sunday, October 12, 2014.

He served on the NAAIMS Board of Directors as President for two terms (2007 – 2011). During his tenure, Professor Mazrui promoted the introduction of such new program ventures as the university-cosponsored lectures in the US and Canada. We will miss the sincerity, dedication and enthusiasm with which he worked to help NAAIMS realize its vision to become a leading academic organization promoting the study of Islam by engaging in the highest standards of academic research.

As the current President of NAAIMS, I speak on behalf of the current Board of Directors and our Executive Director and Director of Academic Affairs when it comes to the gratitude we have for Ali Mazrui's efforts to support the development of NAAIMS as a strong academic organization. When I was elected to the Board as Vice President in 2011, Professor Mazrui had just finished his second term as president and was serving as ex-officio. Having had the privilege to work with him on the Board, I saw the tremendous dedication with which he handled the workload to raise awareness of NAAIMS in the academy. Ali worked to make sure NAAIMS would develop into a sound, autonomous and inclusive academic organization encouraging the study of Islam and Muslim societies in the 21st century.

Long before he was elected to the NAAIMS Board, Ali's participation with the organization began with our annual conference at Indiana University (September 2003) where he delivered the keynote address on "*A Marriage of Two Civilizations: The Balance between Western Norms and Muslim Values.*" He delivered the keynote address at our regional conference (June 2005) cosponsored by Southern Methodist University, TX, on "*Islam between Revivalism and Innovation: Implications for the West.*" He gave the presidential luncheon address at our symposium cosponsored by the Institute of Global and Cultural Studies (IGCS), Binghamton University, NY, on October 16, 2009. His address focused on "*Barack Obama: Between the Muslim Crescent and the Star Spangled Banner.*" At our annual conference (September 2011) cosponsored by John Jay College of Criminal Justice, NY, Ali delivered the keynote address "*From the Tragedy of 9/11 to the Triumph of Tabrir Square.*"

Ali received his Ph.D. from Oxford University, UK. He wrote more than twenty books and hundreds of articles on topics from global politics and the politics of Islam to East West relations. His latest book is *Islam between Globalization and Counterterrorism* (Oxford: James Currey Publishers and Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2006). He is best known for his television series *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (BBC/PBS, 1986), which included extensive coverage of Islam in Africa. Although Ali was enormously influential as a scholar and diplomat, his influence catapulted with his television series, in which he portrayed for the first time to a very wide American audience a role for Islam in African history at least as large as that of the West. Initially resisted by the traditional Africanists, it came to be the

standard description of modern African history. In my estimation, I believe that Ali Mazrui and Edward Said are the pair that, together, fundamentally changed the writing of history.

His writings have appeared in both academic journals and such widely-read media as *The Times of London*, *The New York Times*, *Guardian*, and numerous others. Prof. Mazrui joined Binghamton University's faculty in 1991, after serving as a member of the University of Michigan faculty in Ann Arbor. At Binghamton, he founded the Institute for Global Cultural Studies (IGCS) and was a member of Binghamton's Department of Political Science.

Our Executive Director and Director of Academic Affairs, Layla Sein, who worked closely with Ali during his tenure, informed me that when she spoke to him just before our September 2014 Annual Conference at Columbia University, he expressed his regret and sadness that he could not attend for health reasons. Ali Mazrui's death leaves a void in the world of scholarship and a deep sense of loss among those who knew him personally.

Best Regards,

Jon Mandaville, NAAIMS President

[On behalf of the NAAIMS Board, and

NAAIMS Executive Director and Director of Academic Affairs]

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