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May 1, 1989

Professor Bernth Lindfors
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The University of Texas at Austin
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Dear Bernth:

Thank you for your letter of April 17, 1989 concerning Omari Kokole's biography of me. Omari himself has also alerted me about your need for illustrations. You may get a batch of illustrations from him and a batch from me to choose from. Some of the photographs are rare (e.g. Mazrui playing "Tarzan in New York" in 1960). Please make copies and return every photograph to me for my files and albums. Thank you so much. I know you were planning to do that anyhow.

Before you go to Press I may have become the first African to hold the Albert Schweitzer Chair within the New York System. If you would like to photograph the shorter version of the letter of appointment and publish it as an illustration, please let me know. But this would of course depend upon whether I accept the offer. I will decide within the next couple of weeks. The appointment could in any case affect some paragraph or another in Omari's biography, I suppose.

Considering the location of Albert Schweitzer's greatest Christian work, it is perhaps a pity that the first African professor to be offered the Schweitzer chair is not Gabonese! But I have tried to make amends for my "wrong nationality." In my novel The Trial of Christopher Okigbo I make Gabon the final point of entry back to earth for the two lovers, Hamisi and Salisha, after their agonizing adventures in the Hereafter.

" Salisha looked down from those heights of the audience to Hamisi on the Platform of Decision. Hamisi's eyes had tears in them. And so it is that in a desolate part of Gabon, on a windy evening, children sometimes hear voices reciting poetry to each other. It sounds like a man and a woman.

...Then we must sing, tongue-tied,
without name or audience,
Making harmony among the branches. "

I also happen to be the first Muslim to be offered the Schweitzer Chair. In terms of Christian humanitarian work, Schweitzer was the David Livingstone of the twentieth century. All that The Trial of Christopher Okigbo dedicates

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to Schweitzer is a conception of the Hereafter which is African, Muslim, Christian - and startlingly democratic. In spite of his paternalism, Schweitzer would probably have liked that.

I look forward to my own copy of The Dictionary of Literary Biography.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Ali A. Mazrui, D.Phil., (Oxon)
Professor, The University of Michigan and
Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large,
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AAM:nb
cc: Dr. Omari Kokole