

Islam Assembled

The Advent of the Muslim Congresses



MARTIN KRAMER

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New York Columbia University Press 1986

To my parents, Anita and Alvin

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PREFACE

"If a scheme on these principles could be carried into effect, it would be the greatest event ever known in the annals of Mohammedan history."

—Shaykh Mustafa al-Maraghi,
on his congress proposal of 1915.

LATE IN THE last century, Muslims, separated by distance, language, and history, first thought to make their world whole by assembling in congress. The expansion of the West into Muslim lands awakened within Muslims a shared sense of subjugation. Then steamer, rail, and telegraph made possible an animated discourse among Muslim centers linked in the past by tenuous ties. From this exchange emerged a loose network of Muslim cosmopolitans, men of common conviction who shared a critique of the West, and a vision of a revitalized Islam. After numerous failed initiatives, they finally did meet in an irregular succession of Muslim congresses between the two world wars. These were the earliest occasions on which Muslims, assembled from various parts of the Muslim world, discussed and resolved on issues of common concern. They were perhaps the broadest attempt by a group of subject peoples to ward off the West.

The uneasy first encounters made fitful progress. The earliest practical proposals, and then the congresses themselves, emerged and disappeared in rapid succession. They followed one another in no sequential order, and they bore no formal relationship to one another. Many hands were at work, often at cross-purposes, and no renowned individual made his name synonymous with the broken string of congresses. The initiative moved from continent to continent, and the action unfolded not only in Mecca, Cairo, and Jerusalem, but in the unlikely settings of Moscow, Geneva, and Tokyo. So scattered was the evidence that no attempt was made to study Muslim congresses in an integrated fashion, to weigh them against one another, and to measure their cumulative effects. Some of the leading contemporary Islamicists—Massignon, Gibb, Hartmann—believed that the advent of the congresses was a significant development

in Islam, but the appreciations which they published were brief and tentative.¹ The passage of time has made possible a comprehensive study, based upon sources which were beyond the reach of contemporaries. My method has been to trace the congress idea through its early evolution, to examine the first and largely unsuccessful initiatives, and to assess the congresses convened between the two world wars. My purpose has been to establish the persistence of Muslim attachment to the political concept of a united Islam, even as Muslim empire and caliphate waned.

As the West began to divest itself of its Muslim possessions, and Muslim peoples achieved independence, the congress movement lost much of its appeal. It is here that I have drawn the account to a close, with an examination of the activities of the leading Muslim cosmopolitans during the last world war. The later revival of the congresses as diplomatic arenas for independent Muslim states occurred in a very different world, and warrants a very different approach. But here I am concerned with how an idea circulated by Muslims of radical political and religious persuasions first won general acceptance, and how it fared when first put into practice, for the most part by statesmen without states. It is a study of first encounters, of the moments when Muslims first equated the sheer expanse of Islam with political power in the modern world.

I have striven to present a cosmopolitan appraisal, as informed about the expansive world of Muslim activism as were the Muslim cosmopolitans themselves. For the congresses soon proved larger than they appeared. Their effects were felt in parts of the Muslim world far removed from the center of initiative. To study those effects, I have had to venture across the boundaries established to divide the Muslim world for the convenience of foreign scholarship. This has led me at times through unfamiliar terrain. And so I am particularly indebted to those whose own cosmopolitan knowledge of Muslim history served for me as a guide. I owe much to Professor Bernard Lewis, who supervised this study through an earlier incarnation as a Princeton University doctoral dissertation. I have never succeeded in exhausting his store of knowledge, references, and anecdotes on this or any Muslim subject. And he has given me ample opportunity to try.

Parts of the manuscript were read and commented upon by Professors Benedict Anderson, Shaul Bakhash, L. Carl Brown, William Cleveland, Charles Issawi, and Edward Lazzerini, and I thank them all. A constant companion of this work has been Professor Itamar Rabinovich, now my colleague at Tel Aviv University, who first set my sights on the Muslim congresses, and followed with countless encouragements. To the various

archivists and librarians from whose collections I cite, I am most indebted. For special courtesies, I wish to offer special thanks to the Right Hon. Viscount Knebworth for permission to examine the Oriental correspondence of Wilfred Scawen Blunt, at the West Sussex County and Diocesan Record Office; to the Mohamed Ali Foundation and the Keeper of Oriental Books at the Durham University Library, for permission to consult the Abbas Hilmi II Papers; to Dr. Muhammed [°]Amira, Chief Librarian of the Azhar Mosque Library, for permission to study the files of the Cairo caliphate congress; to Mr. Abu al-Futuh Hamid [°]Awda, Director of the Archives of the Presidency of the Republic in Cairo, for permission to examine the Egyptian royal archives; to Mr. Daniel Bourgeois of the Swiss Federal Archives, for his kind assistance; to Mr. Yitzhak Oron, Director of Research at the Israeli Foreign Ministry, for permission to study the wartime papers of Hajj Amin al-Husayni; to the French Embassy in Cairo, for permission to consult the Embassy post records; to Dr. P. A. Alsberg, Director of the Israel State Archives, for providing Arabic documentation concerning the Jerusalem congress; and to the staff of the India Office Records, for exceptional efforts on my behalf.

The initial research was made possible through grants from the Princeton Program in Near Eastern Studies, the United States Information Service through the American Research Center in Egypt, and the Ben-Gurion Fund. For the opportunity to revise and publish the work, I acknowledge with gratitude the support of the Bronfman Program for the Study of Jewish-Arab Relations.

I am also grateful for kind acts of hospitality to Professor Shimon Shamir and the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo, and to Paulette and David Spiro of Princeton. It was my good fortune that Leslie Bialler of Columbia University Press undertook to copy-edit the manuscript. Edna Liftman guided the book past treacherous bureaucratic shoals. Then there is my wife Sandra, who learned that scholarship somehow does qualify as work, and then made the decisive contribution.

Transliteration has proved a thorny problem in a work which includes names and terms drawn from most major Muslim languages. My approach has been to avoid unsightly Arabicization in transliterating other Muslim languages, and to omit diacriticals and vowel quantities. In this manner, I hope to satisfy even readers who reach this book from opposite ends of the Muslim world, with their own conventions of transliteration. Within each Muslim language, my method has been simplified but consistent, and its principles will be readily evident to the specialist.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Louis Massignon, "L'entente islamique internationale et les deux congrès musulmans de 1926"; H. A. R. Gibb, *Whither Islam?* 354-64; Richard Hartmann, "Zum Gedanken des 'Kongresses' in den Reformbestrebungen des islamischen Orients."

1. THE COSMOPOLITAN MILIEU

1. The novel went through many editions. It is summarized by F. A. Tansel, ed. *Namık Kemal'in mektupları*, 2: 177-79. For more details on the publication of the book, see Ömer Faruk Akün, "Nâmık Kemal'in Kitap Halindeki Eserlerinin İlk Neşirleri." For Namık Kemal's appeal for Muslim solidarity in his own era, see Mustafa Özön, *Namık Kemal ve İbret Gazetesi*, 74-78.

2. The gathering was called a *majlis*; the dialogue, *muhawara*.

3. 'Abdallah Efendi ibn Husayn al-Suwaydi, *al-Hujjaj al-qat'iyya li-ittifaq al-firaq al-islamiyya*, 22-27. Cf. L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 233; and Hamid Algar, "Shi'ism and Iran in the Eighteenth Century," 294-96.

4. E. G. Browne, "Pan-Islamism," 323.

5. Text of proclamation in *Revue du monde musulman* (1911), 13: 385-86. Details on the attitudes of Iraq's Shi'i scholars to the Ottoman state are provided by Abdul-Hadi Hairi, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran*.

6. E. G. Browne (Cambridge) to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, February 16, 1911, in Blunt-Chichester, file 9, "Edward G. Browne."

7. On the origins of this current of thought, see Dwight E. Lee, "The Origins of Pan-Islamism," and Nikki R. Keddie, "Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism."

8. H. A. R. Gibb, "Luṭfi Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate," and Fritz Steppat, "Khalifat, *Dār al-Islām* und die Loyalität der Araber zum osmanischen Reich bei Ḥanafitischen Juristen des 19. Jahrhunderts."

9. See Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, 141-50.

10. Halil İnalçık, "The Socio-Political Effects of the Diffusion of Fire-arms in the Middle East," 202-10.

11. Anthony Reid, "Sixteenth Century Turkish Influence in Western Indonesia"; Seljuk Affan, "Relations Between the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim Kingdoms in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago"; and documents published by Razaulhak Şah, "Açı Padişahu Sultan Alâeddin'in Kanunî Sultan Süleyman'a Mektubu."

12. Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, 27-28.

13. B. G. Martin, "Maî Idrîs of Bornu and the Ottoman Turks, 1576-78," 478-79. A more complete set of documents was published by Cengiz Orhonlu, "Osmanlı-Bornu münasebetine âid belgeler."

14. This reassertion is described by Bernard Lewis, "Ottoman Empire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: A Review," 290-94.

15. For Algerian immigration see Charles-Robert Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans et la France (1871-1919)*, 2: 1079-92; see also J. Desparmet, "La turcophilie en Algérie," citing