

12 John Buchan's British-Designed Jihad in *Greenmantle*

Ahmed K. al-Rawi

John Buchan (1875–1940) was the director of British Intelligence in the last two years of World War I and a novelist, too. His novel, *Greenmantle* (1916), examined the decaying stages of the Ottoman empire with a specific focus on radical Islamic movements. *Greenmantle* reveals Buchan's Western elitist views and the continuation of his imperialist conviction of the deterioration in the East and Islam in comparison to the Christian West. In fact, he presents Muslims as medieval and superstitious people who can easily be mobilized for Jihad. The chapter argues that Buchan's novels can be read as tools to influence the beliefs of a whole generation and as works that echo the prevalent cultural and political views and stereotypes about Islam and Muslims in Britain at the time of World War I.

By 1900 the British empire had spread over five continents and controlled many different regions, hoping to make use of their unexploited wealth and to "secure to Great Britain the freedom to sell all over the world the products of her growing interests" (Rose, Newton, and Benians 1940, v). The British politicians and intelligentsia who theorized the ideologies of the empire played a major role in maintaining, expanding and strengthening the British empire as well as managing the affairs of the colonized peoples. John Buchan, a prominent empire commentator in the Edwardian period, was strongly influenced by the ethos of empire in his early fiction and polemics (Lownie 1995). In the 1916 "Preface" to the third edition of *A Lodge in the Wilderness* (1906), Buchan said that "our Empire is a mystic whole which no enemy may part asunder, and our wisest minds are not given to the task of devising a mechanism of union adequate to this spiritual unity" (Buchan 1922, x). Hence, the "wisest minds" had a duty towards the empire, impelling them to "devise" methods and "mechanisms" to strengthen it. This emphasis on a spiritual dimension to the British people's "duty" to maintain the empire can be connected to the other important forces, beside the pursuit of free trade, that determined the make-up of the British empire. These were "the impulses of evangelical religion" and the "missionary societies" (Rose, Newton, and Benians 1940, vi). It was claimed at the time that Britain

had a divine message that must be achieved because it was God's will. In the 1920s Edward Byers made a comparison between the Israelites and the British, in the sense that both were chosen by God and had "the temporal blessings" of "the possession of certain land". Byers argued that Britain must be "the greatest on earth" and that "the greatest race on earth is the Anglo-Saxon" (Byers 1922, 8 and 13). In brief, Christianity and commerce were the decisive factors and forceful motives that shaped the British empire.

As a result of the empire's expansion, the British were encountering various cultures and religions that were different from their own. The East, and Islam in particular, was seen as exotic, unstable and often decadent, because the civilizations of the colonized countries did not match Western and European norms and values. The "imperial attitude meant thinking of people – encountered in daily business – as being of a different and inferior kind; thinking of them as agreeable or disagreeable, but always as different" (Daniel 1962, 154).

At the beginning of World War I, the British government became more aware of the importance of the psychological warfare to "counter the detrimental effects of German propaganda upon British interests and prestige, particularly in neutral countries" (Taylor 1980, 880). In fact, the director of British special intelligence, Brigadier-General C.R. Cockerill, suggested on 29 November 1915 that "the war of words should now demand 'as much attention as the economic war'" (ibid., 876). This "war of words" certainly echoed in Buchan's mind, and it must have further motivated him to focus on subtle propaganda techniques. As Buchan was exempted from military service during World War I for medical reasons, he decided to serve his country in the area of propaganda.

Before the Great War, Buchan had been Thomas Arthur Nelson's partner in his publishing company. In his autobiography, he mentioned the active efforts carried out by this printing house during the Great War in the way cheap books on a variety of topics and languages were distributed to various countries:

We were a progressive concern, and in our standardised Edinburgh factories we began the publication of cheap books in many tongues. On the eve of the War we must have been one of the largest businesses of the kind in the world, issuing cheap editions of every kind of literature, not only in English, but in French, German, Magyar, and Spanish, and being about to start in Russian. (Buchan 1940, 138)

These activities are regarded as propaganda efforts which reached such a state during this period that even fiction and literary criticism were

used as effective tools. For instance, Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman*, which narrated the Crusades "with an Anglicised Richard Lionheart storming the Holy Land", were exploited and used as a "defining episode in the emergence of English nationalism" (Bar-Yosef 2001, 94). In February 1916, Lord Newton became nominal head of the propaganda organization, aided by many others like "Miles Lampson (in charge of film propaganda), the poet Alfred Noyes, John Buchan, J.D. Gregory and Stephen Gaselee" (Taylor 1980, 884). Also in 1916, Buchan met Ernest Hodder-Williams, who was then responsible for managing the Hodder and Stoughton publishing company and was "involved in the publication of government propaganda" (Smith 1965, 292). Historically speaking, *Greenmantle* was the first of Buchan's novels published by that company. Having in mind the writer's strong Christian devotion and upbringing and following Walter Scott's examples (Matthew 2004), Buchan clearly intended to write a modern doctrinal Crusade in *Greenmantle*.

As for John Buchan's knowledge of Islam, he did not have direct contact with Muslims and Easterners, although he frequently depicted them in his works. To get his information Buchan depended entirely on books, newspaper coverage, accounts from friends and contacts, and, during the war, intelligence reports: these were not always accurate accounts (Al-Rawi 2009b). His single visit to the East was to Turkey in the spring of 1910. Buchan visited Constantinople with "his wife and Gerard Craig-Sellar", and reported taking lunch with the "Sultan's brother and dining at embassies" (Lownie 1995, 116), where he found a "pure Arabian Nights" atmosphere, and visited some places further east near Erzurum (Buchan 1993, 2). Later, Constantinople was depicted in his novel *Greenmantle* (1916), before and during its fictional capture by the Russians in World War I. Buchan's view of "the East", and specifically Muslims, as a medieval and superstitious people, while being also mysterious and exotic, produces a powerful, subliminal dynamic in his fiction which uses the East as a touchstone to compare it with the West.

Background to Buchan's Fiction and Ideology

In his early work on South Africa, *The African Colony: Studies in the Reconstruction* (1903), Buchan revealed his ideas on the disparity that existed between the British people and the other races, and set criteria for distinguishing between the two:

Between the most ignorant white man and the black man there is fixed for the present an impassable gulf, not of colour but of mind. The native

... lives and moves in a mental world incredibly distant from ours. The medium of his thought, so to speak, is so unique that the results are out of all relation to ourselves. Mentally he is as crude and naive as a child, with a child's curiosity and ingenuity, and a child's practical inconsequence. Morally he has none of the traditions of self-discipline and order, which are implicit ... in white people ... With all his merits, this instability of character and intellectual childishness make him politically far more impossible than even the lowest class of Europeans. (1903, 289–290)

Buchan depicts South Africa in *Prester John* (1910) as a response to his experience working there in 1901–1903 (Lownie 1995, 70–85). Critics have discussed at length his treatment of Africans in that work,¹ but there is a religious dimension in the novel. The plot of *Prester John* has as its basis the medieval story of Prester John who was believed in the Europe of the Middle Ages to be a strong oriental king from Ethiopia. He was thought to possess the ability “to break the power of Islam and restore Jerusalem to Christendom ... The rumour gained so much credence in Europe that messengers and letters were sent to the East in search of the non-existent King” (Whitaker 1952, 74–79; Aljubouri 1972, 26). As Buchan himself noted, Prester John became “a generic name for any supposed Christian monarch in unknown countries” (Buchan 1903, 21). In fact, Buchan's use of this Christian legend came at a time when many writers viewed the war in the East as a new crusade due to the efforts of the British government. British Orientalists like Sir Mark Sykes and Sir Stephen Gaselee were influenced by these crusading ideas that were “central to the way in which the Great War was anticipated, imagined and understood” (Bar-Yosef 2001, 93 and 95). Buchan's revival of this mythical Christian figure can be seen as a reminder of the possibility of weakening the Muslim Ottoman bloc that was manifested in *Greenmantle*. His Christian sense of duty was not foreign to him because it was “part of his Calvinist training” and his observation of the “Free Church” (Mann 1999, 8), although he himself had no leanings towards missionary activity or to supporting missionary work.

In fact, Buchan treated Islam as an entity that was entirely different from the civilized West. In his first attempt at a “novel of Empire”, *The Half-Hearted* (1900), Buchan described the East during the “closing years of the nineteenth century”. Lewis Haystoun has written a book about Kashmir, and is standing for Parliament. His friend Winterham speaks in support of Lewis at a public meeting, saying: “I should back Lewis if he were a Mohammedan or an Anarchist. The man is sound metal, I tell you, and that's all I ask” (Buchan 1935, 113). As can be seen from this

casual assigning of “a Mohammedan or Anarchist” to the most extreme contrast to a white Scottish laird, Victorian Britain perceived these groups negatively because they were linked historically with a residual fear of “the Turk” and were a reminder of the Ottoman threat against Western interests (Smith 1977, 16).

Finally, in *The Half-Hearted*, we can see an expression of British imperialist anxiety over a Russian military threat against its interests in the region. At Bardur, Lewis speaks with a Scot who says, “It is assumed that Russia has but to find Britain napping, buy a passage from the more northerly tribes, and sweep down on the Punjab ... It is a mere matter of time till Persia is the Tsar’s territory, and then they may begin to think about invasion” (Buchan 1935, 229). Buchan notes that Russia is the “step-daughter of the East”; therefore, “some day when the leader arrives they will push beyond their boundaries and sweep down on Western Europe, as their ancestors did thirteen hundred years ago. And you have no walls of Rome to resist them, and I do not think you will find a Charlemagne” (Buchan 1935, 228). In fact, Buchan uses the theme of a foreign invasion against Britain, or the destruction of its interests abroad, in many of his novels, particularly in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) and later *Greenmantle* (1916). For example, Buchan emphasizes in *Greenmantle* that one has to remember “the old torrential raids which crumpled the Byzantine Empire and shook the walls of Vienna” (1916, 7). In these two novels, Germany, instead of Russia, becomes the disturber of the geopolitical system dominated by the British. If the system breaks down, a possible regression to barbarism will occur, which is an expression of Buchan’s principal theme of the thin line between civilization and chaos.

Buchan’s *Greenmantle*

When Buchan worked for British Intelligence, he wrote *Greenmantle* during World War I when the Ottomans, with the help of the Germans, were fighting the British. Hence, the writer used his novel as a work of propaganda that aided the war effort (Al-Rawi 2007). In fact, Buchan may have been directly influenced by the Dutch orientalist C. Snouck Hurgronje whose works were translated into English. The titles most relevant to the period of *Greenmantle*’s composition include *The Holy War: “Made in Germany”* (1915) and *Mohammedanism* (1916). In *Greenmantle*’s preface, Buchan mentioned that the events taking place were not unrealistic:

Let no man or woman call its events improbable. The war has driven that word from our vocabulary, and melodrama has become the prosiest

realism. Things unimagined before happen daily to our friends by sea and land. The one chance in a thousand is habitually taken, and as often as not succeeds. (Buchan 1916, vi)

Buchan retained the dream of the ever expanding British empire but shifted his idea towards Islam and the decaying Ottoman empire so as to address wider problems that destabilized the status quo, such as the rise of radical Islamic movements. This chapter argues that Buchan's *Greenmantle* falls into Edward Said's concept of Orientalism since it expresses elitist ideas about the East and Muslims (Al-Rawi 2009a). In this chapter, the novel is analysed as a historical document relative to the events that occurred before and during World War I. Indeed, the novel's historical details, as will be shown, are consciously used to propagate positive ideas of the British empire and present negative stereotypes of the German and Ottoman powers. Before the historical discussion, it is important to highlight the main theme of the novel which is Jihad.

Greenmantle's Plot

The plot of *Greenmantle* revolves around the notion that Muslims are following the orders of the Ottoman sultan in having an utter belief that a new leader or the Mahdi has arrived and will lead them to their final destiny. This Mahdi descends from the family of the Prophet Mohammed:

There's a great stirring in Islam, something moving on the face of the waters. They make no secret of it. Those religious revivals come in cycles, and one was due about now. And they are quite clear about the details. A seer has arisen of the blood of the Prophet, who will restore the Khalifate to its old glories and Islam to its old purity. His sayings are everywhere in the Moslem world. All the orthodox believers have them by heart. That is why they are enduring grinding poverty and preposterous taxation, and that is why their young men are rolling up to the armies and dying without complaint in Gallipoli and Transcaucasia. They believe they are on the eve of a great deliverance. (147)

As there was an actual conflict between the Germans and the British, Buchan made the Germans and the Ottomans the enemies in the novel, in view of the Central Powers' alliance which included the Ottoman and German empires. The Ottoman Sultan was believed by some Muslims to be the sole leader of the Islamic world with a supreme religious authority. "During World War I, when the Ottoman empire was the ally

of Prussia and Austria-Hungary, the sultan in Istanbul, in his capacity as Commander of the Faithful, had called upon all Muslim subjects of the British, French, and Russian empires to wage jihad against their colonial masters" (Kepel 2002, 44).

Sir Walter, one of the senior British officials, describes in the novel the political condition of Islam in the East immediately preceding World War I:

The Sheikh-ul-Islam is neglected, and though the Kaiser proclaims a Holy War and calls himself Hadji Mohammed Guilliamo, and says the Hohenzollerns are descended from the Prophet, that seems to have fallen pretty flat. The ordinary man again will answer that Islam in Turkey is becoming a back number, and that Krupp guns are the new gods. Yet – I don't know. I do not quite believe in Islam becoming a back number. ... But in the provinces, where Islam is strong, there would be trouble. Many of us counted on that. But we have been disappointed. The Syrian army is as fanatical as the hordes of the Mahdi. The Senussi have taken a hand in the game. The Persian Moslems are threatening trouble. There is a dry wind blowing through the East, and the parched grasses wait the spark. And that wind is blowing towards the Indian border. Whence comes that wind, think you? (6)

The British wanted to discover who was manipulating the cause of religion, since they could use the same tactic and achieve their aim by following the motto of divide and rule in the sense of dividing the Muslims' bloc to weaken the Ottomans' control. Sir Walter asks, "Supposing there is some Ark of the Covenant which will madden the remotest Moslem peasant with dreams of Paradise?" (15). Such a belief leads to the conclusion that the British, like the Germans, thought to obtain the secret power to control Muslims by designing and manipulating a new religious leader. The Ottoman Army and the Muslim nations as a whole were thought to be easily driven and led as long as someone knew their weak and sensitive points. Despite the fact that the Ottoman empire was weak at the time, the British thought of Islam as being a formidable power. As Major Hannay puts it, "It looks as if Islam had a bigger hand in the thing than we thought ... I fancy religion is the only thing to knit up such a scattered empire" (15). Therefore, Muslims should be alienated from the political and religious authority of the Ottoman sultan. In this sense, a new leader has to be created, representing the character of the Mahdi.

According to the novel, the Germans used the same tactic, knowing quite well the sacredness of religious matters for Muslims. Having a

powerful intelligence force in the region, the British concentrated their efforts on knowing what really moved the masses, as Sir Walter says:

I have reports from agents everywhere – pedlars in South Russia, Afghan horse-dealers, Turcoman merchants, pilgrims on the road to Mecca, sheikhs in North Africa, sailors on the Black Sea coasters, sheep-skinned Mongols, Hindu fakirs, Greek traders in the Gulf, as well as respectable Consuls who use cyphers. They tell the same story. The East is waiting for a revelation. It has been promised one. Some star – man, prophecy, or trinket – is coming out of the West. The Germans know, and that is the card with which they are going to astonish the world. (15–16)

As part of the British plot, Hannay, the British intelligence officer, was sent to the Germans to find out their secret plans with regard to the Muslim world. According to Sir Walter, Hannay was chosen because he had “a nose for finding out what our enemies try to hide”. In addition, he was “brave and cool and resourceful” (16). Hannay, in disguise, tries to win over the Germans by praising them in an exaggerated manner and hinting indirectly at their secret project: “[y]ou are the cleverest people in the world. You have already half the Mussulman lands in your power. It is for you to show us how to kindle a holy war, for clearly you have the secret of it. Never fear but we will carry out your order” (57).

In order to create a proper Mahdi or Muslim leader, the figure has to be characterized with specific traits to attract the majority of the Muslims. One of the characters in the novel, Mr. Blenkinson, who is American, states, “To capture all Islam – and I gather that is what we fear – the man must be of the Koreish, the tribe of the Prophet himself ... Then he’d have to be rather a wonder on his own account – saintly, eloquent, and that sort of thing. And I expect he’d have to show a sign, though what that could be I haven’t a notion” (28–29).

The secret behind Greenmantle lies with a mysterious German woman, von Einem, whom British Intelligence wanted to locate. But the real Greenmantle fell ill and died of cancer, leaving the Germans with a problem since “you can’t have a crusade without a prophet” (182). In order to show that the Ottomans are fools for believing in a false prophet, the British officer, Sandy Arbuthnot, shows up afterwards wearing a green mantle. Ironically, Buchan describes the condition of the Ottoman soldiers watching the awaited prophet pass by:

As he rode it seemed that the fleeing Turks were stricken still, and sank by the roadside with eyes strained after his unheeding figure ... Then I

knew that the prophecy had been true, and that their prophet had not failed them. The long-looked for revelation had come. Greenmantle had appeared at last to an awaiting people. (271)

In order to depict British supremacy, the German and Ottoman plots to control Muslims have to fail, whereas the British scheme succeeds. Poetic justice seems to be the final solution for Buchan to end his novel, where the military and intelligence strength of Britain prevails. In the following section, a broader historical background is offered for one further to understand Buchan's sources in writing *Greenmantle*.

***Greenmantle* and Its Historical Roots**

During British colonial rule, most national and religious movements, whether in the Arab and Muslim world or elsewhere, were viewed as unjustified and violent. For instance, the Indian Sepoy revolt against the British rule in 1857 angered the British empire and led to outrageous massacres against the Indians (Blunt 2000). In the late nineteenth century, Muhammad Ahmad led a revolution in Sudan and proclaimed himself the Mahdi in 1881. The Sudanese rebels scored successive victories, like capturing Khartoum in January 1885 after a battle in which General Gordon was killed. The Mahdists were able to exert their control over many parts of Sudan (Holt 1958). Referring to the Sudanese Mahdi, Major Richard Hannay in *Greenmantle* advises the Germans not to play with the religious sentiments of the Africans:

It is waiting for you – the Mussulmans of Somaliland and the Abyssinian border and the Blue and White Nile. They would be like dried grasses to catch fire if you used the flint and steel of their religion. Look what the English suffered from a crazy Mullah who ruled only a dozen villages. Once get the flames going and they will lick up the pagans of the west and south. This is the way of Africa. How many thousands, think you, were in the Mahdi's army who never heard of the Prophet till they saw the black flags of the Emirs going into battle? (56–57)

Buchan could have been inspired to draw the character of Greenmantle from Muhammed Ahmed, his “crazy Mullah” of the Sudan. In *Greenmantle*, Sir Walter says that “Islam is a fighting creed, and the mullah still stands in the pulpit with the Koran in one hand and a drawn sword in the other” (7). This terrifying image suggests that even the religious man has a duty to fight the “Kaffirs” or the infidels. Islam is shown as

an uncontrollable force in the British empire, exemplified by historical events, particularly the Mahdi revolt in the Sudan. If the British tried to interfere, then Muslims “would be like dried grasses to catch fire ... Look what the English suffered from a crazy Mullah who ruled only a dozen villages” (55). The Germans played a major role in creating this prophet; hence, the British wanted to interfere before their enemy gained a serious advantage with its Muslim tool. Sir Walter says that containing the Islamic threat is a “life and death” matter. “I can put it no higher and no lower” (9). The only way to counter the Islamic Jihad is by controlling its leader, Greenmantle, because “you can’t have a crusade without a prophet” (204). After the original Greenmantle had died, Sandy Arbuthnot was forced to agree to impersonate him, and the long-looked for revelation had come. Greenmantle had appeared at last to an awaiting people (307). This act suggests that the Turkish Muslims are highly credulous as they have not questioned the identity of the new prophet. It also shows that a Christian white man can lead Muslims to their own advantage: an extension of the empire’s own logic.

As for Sandy Arbuthnot, he is regarded as one of the most important characters in *Greenmantle*, who is disguised as the Mahdi by the end of the novel. He is described as a cultivated traveller having a deep knowledge of the Muslim world:

If you struck a Mecca pilgrimage the odds are you would meet a dozen of Sandy’s friends in it. In shepherds’ huts in the Caucasus you will find bits of his cast-off clothing, for he has a knack of shedding garments as he goes. In the caravanserais of Bokhara and Samarkand he is known, and there are shikaris in the Pamirs who still speak of him round their fires. If you were going to visit Petrograd or Rome or Cairo it would be no use asking him for introductions; if he gave them, they would lead you into strange haunts. But if Fate compelled you to go to Lhasa or Yarkand or Seistan he could map out your road for you and pass the word to potent friends. (26)

***Greenmantle* Prototypes**

A Scot, Sandy played the role of the second Greenmantle, who guided and led all Muslims. This character was very important because we can find Buchan’s view on the role the British empire aspired to play in the Muslim world. Sandy was supposed to stand for Aubrey Herbert (1880–1923) and to a lesser extent T.E. Lawrence (1888–1935); in both cases, Sandy was shown as a superior man. In fact, many British people

were viewed in Britain in this way; for instance, Herbert mentioned in his second book of memoirs *Ben Kendim* (1924) that “there is a quality in some Englishmen that is rarely possessed by men of other nations” (Herbert n.d., xiv–xv). Further, Buchan’s son, Lord Tweedsmuir, said that most of his father’s characters were “usually an amalgam of two or three real people, often going through the adventures of several other real-life figures” (Master 1987, 22). Many critics assumed that Sandy was Aubrey Herbert alone because Buchan mentioned in his autobiography that Sandy was “reminiscent of Aubrey Herbert” (Buchan 1940, 195). Also, Buchan was Herbert’s Oxford contemporary and, according to Herbert’s granddaughter, Margaret FitzHerbert, Buchan wrote a letter in September 1923 to a friend after hearing about Herbert’s death, saying:

I am greatly saddened this week ... The most delightful and brilliant survivor from the days of chivalry ... he was the most extraordinary combination of tenderness and gentleness, with the most insane gallantry that I have ever known – a sort of survivor from crusading times. I drew Sandy in *Greenmantle* from him. (FitzHerbert 1983, 1)

Unlike T.E. Lawrence, Herbert was not directly involved in the Arab Revolt of 1916 that was hinted at in *Greenmantle*, and he did not play a role in agitating Arab Muslims against the Ottomans. Instead, he worked hard to support the Albanians against the Ottomans after the Balkan Wars and was actually offered the throne of Albania after the end of World War I (Waugh 2004). So, Sandy was originally meant to “commemorate” Herbert, but was “soon altered to fit Lawrence while Lawrence, perversely, was altered to fit Sandy”. This change happened in the novel after the capture of Erzurum when Lawrence started to take “over the person of Sandy and the romantic ideals he represented for John Buchan” (Buchan 1993, 1–2). In reality, Lawrence, according to his own claim, played a major role in the capture of Erzurum by the Russians by secretly coordinating with Arab officers serving in the Turkish army (Lawrence 1977, 34; Orland 2002, 27; Hart 1989, 71); therefore, Sandy appeared at the end of the novel as a liberator of the same city.

Indeed, there were common views shared between Herbert and Buchan. Herbert, for instance, was appointed in March 1904 as honorary attaché in the British Embassy in Constantinople; the new post greatly increased his enthusiasm for the East. Herbert mentioned once that he was sent to the “never logical” East because he got the experience out of “travell[ing] widely” together with a “fairly fluent smattering of several Eastern languages” (Herbert 1919)² that included Turkish, Arabic, Greek and Albanian. After being released as a prisoner in Mons in 1914,

Herbert received a letter from Mark Sykes in which he was urged to join the intelligence work, so in December 1914 he became involved with the Arab bureau of intelligence in Cairo together with T.E. Lawrence. Sykes said that “the Turks will not be able to keep the field and the people will welcome our arrival on the coast say in June or July when Germany should be on her last legs” (FitzHerbert 1983, 144).

During the Battle of Mons in 1914, Herbert had written the following: “[o]ur feelings were more violently moved against Germany as the disturber of Europe”. Readers could find numerous references in *Greenmantle* showing Germany as a vile enemy that was ready to destroy its friends and enemies alike, and its might expanded due to its manipulation of the Greenmantle figure. Also, Buchan clearly accused the Germans of being merciless and treacherous people who were used to back stabbing; as his character Blenkiron said, “Germany’s like a scorpion: her sting’s in her tail, and that tail stretches way down into Asia” (160).

During his stay in Egypt, Herbert visited other Muslim lands like Yemen, Syria and Mesopotamia as part of his work. In the beginning of *Greenmantle* Buchan describes the character of Sandy who seemed to be typically applied to Herbert as a man who:

rode through Yemen, which no white man ever did before. The Arabs let him pass, for they thought him stark mad and argued that the hand of Allah was heavy enough on him without their efforts. He’s blood-brother to every kind of Albanian bandit. Also he used to take a hand in Turkish politics, and got a huge reputation. (12)

Indeed, some of the ideas in Buchan’s *Greenmantle* were influenced by Herbert’s views. For instance, the latter mentioned that he saw the Egyptian Sultan at his palace in Cairo on 8 March 1916. The Sultan said that the British “did not understand the Moslems or what was their fraternity”, and Herbert commented by saying that “[w]e English were *bons enfants*, but did not understand the East”. In *Greenmantle*, Buchan echoed Herbert’s comments when Sandy stated, “The West knows nothing of the true Oriental. It pictures him as lapped in colour and idleness and luxury and gorgeous dreams. But it is all wrong” (205).

On the other hand, some critics believed that Sandy’s description closely matched Lawrence of Arabia’s for his active participation in the Arab Revolt as well as for other historical details, though this is a weak claim because Lawrence was sent to Hejaz only in 1916. Other scholars believed that Lawrence took over the character of Sandy only after the spread of Lawrence’s reputation as a champion of Arab rights. David Stafford, for instance, mentioned that Buchan used to receive

Lawrence in the 1920s as a “frequent visitor” to his house at Elsfield near Oxford, “where Buchan was drawn to him by the sense of adventure and youthful possibility which he symbolized” (Stafford 1983–1984, 2–3).

Buchan himself admitted in a radio interview broadcast in 1936 that he met Lawrence in 1915 and 1918 (Smith 1965, 207). Also, in *A Prince of the Captivity* (1933), Buchan clearly referred to Sandy as T.E. Lawrence. In this novel, the character, Falconet, informed his friend, Adam, that he had done a “hundred men’s jobs in the war”, but most people were not aware of these achievements. Otherwise, “you’d have been as famous as Lawrence – the Arabian fellow” (Buchan 2003a). In fact, this reference caused Lawrence to write an angry letter to Edward Garnett on 1 August 1933 in which he criticized Buchan who used to take “figures of today and projects their shadows on to clouds, till they grow surhuman and grotesque: then describes them ... It sounds a filthy technique ...” (as quoted in Smith 1965, 280). Lawrence was against the “filthy technique” followed by Buchan because it meant creating unbelievable supermen. Finally, Buchan used Lawrence as Sandy in *The Island of Sheep* (1936), observing that he was a man who knew “the Near and Middle East like a book” (Buchan 2003b, 18).

As a Briton who feels responsible for all Muslims, Sandy visits Egypt and Palestine in *The Three Hostages* (1924) to become the organizer of the holy pilgrimage to Mekka. This time, he talks of preparing aeroplanes to take Muslim pilgrims to their destination. He says:

I’m a hamelidari on a big scale. I am prepared to bring the rank of hadji within reach of the poorest and feeblest. I’m going to be the great benefactor of the democracy of Islam, by means of a fleet of patched-up ’planes and a few kindred spirits that know the East. (Buchan 1924, 137)

As with *Greenmantle* in which he becomes the chosen prophet, Buchan sets up a fictional world where Sandy makes possible pilgrimage, the most important religious act for a Muslim. This implies a colonial attitude because it suggests such inefficiency and economic dependence on the part of Muslims that they are unable to take charge of their affairs and act independently. Sandy’s role in Buchan’s novels is to be a mediating contrast with the Western and Muslim characters. By inflating his intellectual abilities and infinite intrigues, Sandy’s character confirms Buchan’s idea of the superiority of the British, particularly the Scottish, over other races and indicates the writer’s continuous imperialist belief that the British are destined to participate in the most intricate matters of other nations and religions.

Back in 1915, Lawrence wrote a confidential report in the *Arab Bulletin* entitled “Syria, The Raw Material”, in which he pointed to the British plans of establishing a state in Syria with “really prepared groundwork or a large body of adherents” as long as it was “a Sunni one, speaking Arabic, and pretending to revive the Abbasides or Ayubides” (Lawrence 1917).

It was not just the Germans or the Ottomans but also the British who had in mind the pretentious revival of the Islamic Caliphate in order to serve their interests.³ Based on this, it is possible that Buchan heard about the British war schemes as narrated by Lawrence and later documented them in *Greenmantle*.

On 9 December 1914, Lawrence was sent to Cairo to work as a “subaltern attached to the military intelligence department of the Egyptian expeditionary force” (James, 2004). He said later in *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926) that his mission in Cairo was meant to change and “build a new people in the East”, clarifying that from their “oriental railway station”, as Herbert called the intelligence office in Cairo, “we began to work upon all chiefs, far and near” (Lawrence, 1986, p. 58). In January 1916, a new section was created in the intelligence bureau responsible for “manipulating Arab nationalism to frustrate French imperial ambitions” as well as to destabilize the Ottoman rule in Hijaz (James 2004). In reality, the aim behind the sending of Lawrence to Arabia in late 1916 was to stir up a revolution and “set the parched Eastern grasses afire in a way that the Ottoman Empire did not expect” (Hitchens 2004, 106). In another work, *Revolt in Arabia* (1927), Lawrence confessed that he was searching for a leader to agitate Arabs against Turks: “[m]y visit was mainly to find the yet unknown master-spirit of the affair, and measure his capacity to carry the revolt to the goal I had conceived for it”. In another context, Lawrence stated that he travelled to Arabia to find his “armed prophet” who “succeeded in revolutions” (Lawrence 1927, 13).

As a result of the British support, Sharif Hussein of Mekka, one of prophet Muhammad’s descendants, started his revolt on 5 June 1916. In Buchan’s *Nelson’s History of the War*, the Sharif was described as “the most powerful prince of Western and Central Arabia. He was the real ruler of Mecca, and, along with his able sons, exercised a unique authority due to his temporal possessions and his religious prestige as sprung from the blood of the Koreish” (Buchan 1915–1919, 117). Thus, Buchan was aware of the existence of Sharif Hussein, and he used him to embellish the portrayal of the Greenmantle figure.

But what literary critics ignored was that Buchan could also have had someone else in mind when he portrayed the character of the first Greenmantle. This prophet, who was made by “that damned German

propaganda" (206) and run by Hilda von Einem, died because of cancer and could not achieve his goals. "Greenmantle is dying – has been dying for months" (204). The first Greenmantle figure appears to be a delineation of Wilhelm Wassmuss (1880–1931) who was also known as the "German Lawrence of Arabia" (Sykes 1936; Olson 2013, 52; Manjapra 2006).

In 1909, Wassmuss was actually made the German Consul to the Persian Gulf in Bushire and later Shiraz. Major Percy Cox, the British Consul General at Bushire, in 1910 expressed serious concerns regarding Wassmuss' arguments about the German rights in the Persian Gulf (Henderson 1948, 64). During World War I, Wassmuss was instrumental as consular official in agitating the Muslim Persian tribes against British forces. Then, the Government of India felt "uneasy about the internal situation" because the overall conditions were increasingly deteriorating, and "Persia, worked upon [by] the intrigues of the enterprising German emissary Wassmuss" (Cruttwell 1982, 345), was about to enter the war. In the fictional story of *Greenmantle*, Buchan wrote the following: "Persian Moslems are threatening trouble. There is a dry wind blowing through the East, and the parched grasses wait the spark. And that wind is blowing towards the Indian border" (6). The revolt against the British was feared to start in Persia, crossing through Afghanistan to reach India. In reality, the possibility of an Islamic Jihad against the British in India was "a recurring nightmare" (Bar-Yosef 2001, 90–91) for Earl Kitchener (1850–1916) and his British commanders. As Sir Walter exclaimed in *Greenmantle*, most of the British interests would be at stake if a Muslim revolt occurred: "Hell ... may spread. Beyond Persia, remember, lies India" (7).

As a matter of fact, the German plan to wage a propaganda war in India through Afghanistan against the British dated back to 1914. It was first suggested by a Swedish explorer called Sven Hedin (1865–1952) who "claimed that the east was ripe for revolt and the Afghans 'burning with desire' to free India from the British". Such a plan would be achieved only by agitating the Emir of Afghanistan against British rule (Hughes 2002, 450). In reality, when Wassmuss lost his German Diplomatic Code Book which included all his encoded secrets, the British forces were able to decipher his plans and Wassmuss was forced to flee. In an article published in February 1916, Wassmuss was reported to be fleeing without his box that contained "thousands of violently inflammatory pamphlets printed in English, Urdu, Hindu, Punjabi, and Sikh, and addressed to the Indian Army, calling on it to take the opportunity presented by the war of throwing off the hated yoke of England". There was also "a special appeal to the Mohammedans in that army, urging them to join in a Holy War against the infidel English" (Machray 1916, 351). In the fictional story

of *Greenmantle*, one of the first agents to report a strange occurrence in the East was Harry Bullivant, Sir Walter's son, who worked as a muleteer between Mosul and the Persian border. Bullivant reached some findings as he handed over a small paper on which three words were written: "Kasredin", "cancer", and "v. I.". These codes were later deciphered by the British. After the death of the first Greenmantle, a new prophet appeared as Buchan wanted to prove that the British Greenmantle was better than the German version, as stated above.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Buchan expresses in his treatment of Islam the anxiety of the British empire by stressing its perceived fearful and uncontrollable nature as well as its "fanatical" adherents. Any outsiders, whether they be "fanatic" Muslims or "chauvinist" Germans or Ottomans, were seen as disturbers of the British world order, so they were consciously and continuously vilified. Buchan's novels aimed to enhance the sense of unity and faith in Great Britain and, as previously stated, he affirmed that the British empire was "a mystic whole" which relied on the "wisest minds" to keep its "spiritual unity". Surely, Buchan viewed himself as one of those elites and intelligentsia who were responsible for shaping the philosophical basis of this empire through his work and writings. His fiction, especially *Greenmantle*, offers a world where the British organize and control the affairs of Muslims and clearly shows the aspiration of the empire by conveying the popular views of British society in the form of propaganda. Within this framework for an imagined empire, the British had to remain superior and everything had to be in order so that the system would continue functioning properly.

Though this was still the period of the early twentieth century, the British intelligentsia viewed Islamic Jihad as a very important issue, inspiring policy-makers to exploit it in order to encourage Jihad against Britain's adversaries and prompting Buchan to use it as a central theme in *Greenmantle*. In the two cases, Jihad is used as a mobilization tool disguised in the form of religion to serve political objectives.

Notes

- 1 See for instance Robert MacDonald's *The Language of Empire* (1994), Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism* (1988), and

Craig Smith, "Every Man Must Kill the Thing He Loves: Empire, Homoerotics, and Nationalism in John Buchan's 'Prester John'", *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* (Winter, 1995).

- 2 I relied on this online edition throughout this study, so only page numbers will be cited afterwards.
- 3 Buchan himself wrote in *The Last Secrets of Final Mysteries of Explorations* (1924) that someone called Thomas Kejth became the governor of Medina, one of the respected Muslim cities, in 1815. He was "a deserter from the 72nd Highlanders" and worked in "one of the strangest posts ever held even by a Scot!" (Buchan 1924, 214).

