

The Arab Games: Establishment and Role (1953–1965)*

by Luis Henrique Rolim Silva and Hans-Dieter Gerber

The Arab Games were established after the Second World War, in a period in which many countries in the Arab world became independent or, at the very least, autonomous from Western powers. Despite the onset of independence, the territorial boundaries set by the colonial powers remained. These had divided the Middle East to suit their own interests. The Arabs resented this “fragmentation and weakness of the Arab world in modern times” and blamed it on the imperial powers.¹ Pan-Arabism – a form of Arab nationalism suggesting “that all Arabs should live in a single great Arab nation-state”² – was perceived as a tool to overcome this sense of weakness. By the twentieth century it was already the case that

*“the idea was widespread throughout the Arab world that anyone who spoke Arabic, looked back on the history of the Arabs with pride, and considered himself or herself to be an Arab was one, and that this sense of shared identity should in some measure find political expression.”*³

Even though Pan-Arabism had a limited effect on policies of individual Arab states, it had a strong influence in the intellectual and popular movements of the Arab world. The Arab Games from 1953 to 1965 reflect this idea of unity to a certain degree, while they also show characteristics of individual state interests.

This paper aims to understand the establishment of the Arab Games and their role as Regional Games during the Pan-Arab movement in the 1950s and 1960s. An analysis of the historical context of the first four Arab Games (Alexandria 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961 and Egypt 1965), suggests that these early competitions strengthened the bonds of Arab identity and created a representation of an imagined community as Benedict Anderson defined it:

*[The nation] is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. [...] The nation is imagined as limited because [...] it has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. [...] Finally it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.*⁴

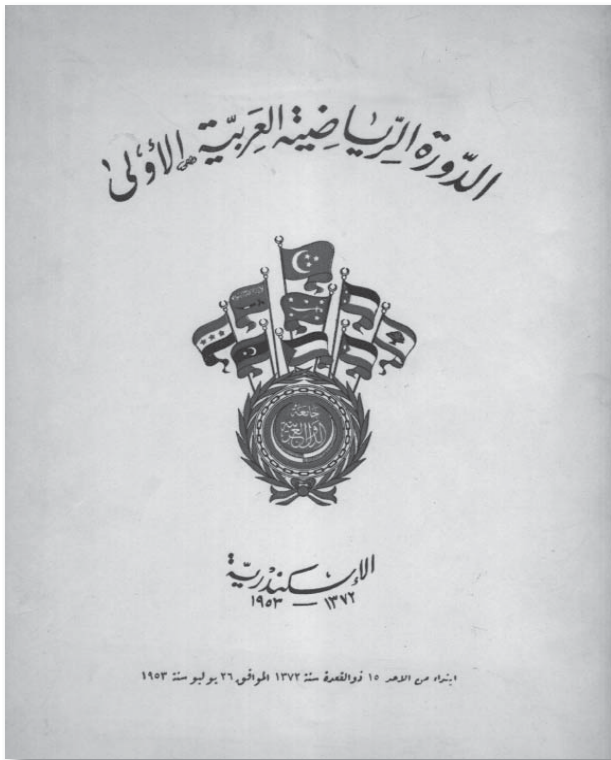
The Arab Games offered an opportunity to temporarily overcome the borders of the individual Arab countries set by the colonial powers after World War I and to experience communion and comradeship with athletes

from different parts of the Arab world. This real experience reinforced the imagined community. This aspect will be explored further using documents in Arabic from the Egyptian Olympic Committee (EOC) for the period as primary sources (newsletters, programs and official report) as well as historical documents from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) such as IOC minutes (Sessions 1894–2008 and Executive Board 1921–1979), the files of Arab IOC members, Arab Games files, circulars and correspondence in Arabic and French. Before doing so, some thoughts on the use of the term ‘Arab’ are necessary.

The majority of the population of the Arab world (Maghreb, Egypt, Sudan, Fertile Crescent and Arabian Peninsula) are Arabs. However, to label the inhabitants of this region generally as Arabs has its own difficulties, as it does not take into account the internal conflicts of the Arab majority with the non-Arab minority of the population (e.g., in Sudan, Algeria, Morocco and Libya with Arab Berber and non-Arab Berber, or in Lebanon with the Muslim and the Christian population).

Even in Egypt, the term Arab is not completely adequate because the country has a more distinct history which is more Egyptian than an Arab. In general, the term Arab is rather diffuse as it has been used to describe various divergent groups. Undoubtedly the term refers to the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula. The Quran uses the term for the Bedouins in the desert and only from the seventh century CE onwards with the dissemination of Islam did the people increasingly develop a distinguishable Arab self-perception. At that time, the conquerors usually quickly intermingled with the conquered and Islam became the distinguishing factor of a collective identity rather than the differentiation between Arabs, half-Arabs and non-Arabs. In this period from the seventh to the 13th century CE, empires were created, in which Arab culture and especially the Arab language were spread. It is these territories which we perceive as the Arab world today.

Nevertheless, it was not until the 20th century under European rule that the majority of the population in the Near and Middle East perceived itself as being Arab (in the sense of a European nationalism in which culture and nation are congruent). Until World War II it was mainly those involved in culture and arts who emphasized Arab language and history as unifying factors. After the war with the advent of independence the political elite began to harness Pan-Arab nationalism for their goals.



Poster of the first Arab Games, Alexandria 1953.
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THE ARAB CONTEXT: Creation of the Arab League and the Arab Games Idea

This section will briefly contextualize the Arab world as it was at the beginning of the 20 century. The events in this period culminated in the creation of the Arab League, the institution which established and directed the Arab Games. It is important to review this period to allow an understanding of the context in which the Arab Games were established.

By the end of the nineteenth century, inhabitants of the so-called Arab lands (Maghreb and the Middle East, including the Gulf region) were living within a variety of overlapping political structures. "The Ottoman Empire, Islam and local tribal and village structures all contested for and held sway over various features of peoples' lives".⁶ The dismembering of the Ottoman Empire, in combination with the end of World War I, resulted in the great European powers reconstructing the Arab world. This dismembering resulted in the creation of five new Arab states: Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, Iraq and Palestine. All of them were under the administration of Britain or France, who had also been chiefly responsible for establishing the shape of the frontiers.⁷ In this context, the Kingdom of Egypt was established in 1922, although British affairs did not stop there. Likewise, in 1920 the French proclaimed the establishment of The Arab Kingdom of Syria. Far reaching changes occurred in Saudi Arabia where the newly appointed king, Ibn Saud, controlled the holy sites of Islam. Ibn Saud, as well as being king, was the people's imam; which meant

he led his followers in prayers and set an example of religious devotion. His status as imam, combined with his methods of administrating⁸ his lands, gave him much influence in the Arab world.⁹

This fragmentation was the consequence of the actions of the Western powers. They had promised to create a unified Arab nation (Hussein-McMahon-letters 1915–1918; Balfour-declaration 1917). This had not happened and was seen as a broken promise. The disappointment and frustration at this resulted in increasingly anti-colonial and anti-Western sentiments and movements fighting for independence.¹⁰ However, it is important to point out that striving for independence remained in the framework of this fragmentation caused by colonial rivalries. Although these movements were using the language of Arabism and expressing interest in other Arab lands (Palestine in particular), their activities were directed at immediate independence and only secondarily at Arab unification.¹¹

Due to its early status as 'independent' in the 1920s and 1930s, Egypt largely excluded itself from the larger Pan-Arab movement, with the approval of fellow Arabs. In this period a conflict between the patriotism of an ancient nation-state (in Egypt known as 'Pharaonism') and the ideals of Pan-Islam flared up in Egypt. The situation began to change in the late 1930s when a growing body of Egyptians, outstanding among them, Abdul Rahman Hassan Azzam, foresaw a vital role for Egypt, in the Middle East once it was freed from British control.¹² However, neither all Arab leaders nor Arab people (including Egyptians themselves) in general regarded Cairo as the nucleus of Pan-Arabism with favor. As a result Egypt was excluded from the first Arab attempts toward unity in December 1942, undertaken by Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan. King Ibn Saud was proposed, by his friend and adviser the British Arabist Harry St. John Bridger Philby,¹³ to be head of the Arab Federation.¹⁴ Despite the squabbles, Arab nationalism had become a potent political force by the beginning of the second World War. Even though there was no singular meaning for 'Arab nationalism', the so-called Arab nationalists had a unifying core concept which included three aspects: there is, or can be created, an Arab nation, formed of all who share the Arabic language and cultural heritage; this Arab nation ought to form a single independent political unity; and the creation of such a unit presupposes the development among the members of their consciousness and that their membership should be a factor which determines all political decisions and loyalties.¹⁵

However, once the Arab states became independent in the mid 1940s, the elite of these states pursued division of the territories according to their own self-interests while paradoxically, at the same time, were also being pushed by a movement of Arab unity. Thus, at the time of independence, these Arab states seem

to lack both external and internal authority because of their colonial legacy in general and Pan-Arabism in particular. Most of the individual countries were dependent on an Arab identity to give legitimacy to their policies and actions.¹⁶ In addition, Arab leaders feared coming under foreign rule again and, at the same time, were afraid of being dominated by a neighboring state. In this way, two contradicting ideas for Arab unification became apparent. On the one hand was the notion of no-boundaries among Arab countries based on the idea of a collective cultural and historical background and a common rejection of the boundaries created by the Europeans. On the other hand was the preservation of the states' individual sovereignty among the Arab countries themselves; and this included looking out for one's own interest.¹⁷ Because of this dual-mentality, this paradox surfaces also in the creation of the Arab League.

On 7 October 1944 in Alexandria, Egypt, five Arab countries (Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Transjordan and Lebanon) formed the 'Preliminary Committee of the General Arab Conference' and agreed on the foundation of a joint Arab organization, which would be known as the 'League of Arab States' or 'Arab League'.¹⁸ This agreement was called 'The Alexandria Protocol',¹⁹ which became a very popular document among the Arabs, especially because it recognized Lebanese independence and because the Palestine cause became an Pan-Arab issue.²⁰ At the meeting, the committee considered three different options to create Arab unity. The first proposal suggested the foundation of a unified state with a centralized government, which implied the most far-reaching consequences. The affiliated states would give up their sovereignty. The second option proposed a federal solution requiring the constitution of a common government, in which the individual nation states would continue to exist as federal states. The third proposal aimed at creating a loose confederation without a centralized authority. Decisions would therefore be seen as recommendations rather than having a binding character. Ultimately, this last option was implemented because the particular interests of the individual states outweighed transnational goals.²¹ The Alexandria protocol was replaced one year later by the 'Pact of the Arab League' to clarify the sovereignty of the affiliate countries.

In March 1945²², the Arab League became a reality. It had its headquarters in Cairo and an Egyptian Secretary General, Abdul Rahman Hassan Azzam. The founding members, the seven Arab states which had achieved independence (Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon), ensured that the League did not become a federation that could be considered a formal union.²³ Instead, the Arab League was an institution necessary for granting the affiliated countries international status. Thus, each member retained its full sovereignty, and decisions taken by the Arab League Council were binding only for those members who had voted for them.

With the abolition of the Alexandria Protocol, the Arab League Charter was created. The Charter had less popular appeal but was better accepted by the leaders. Dealing with the interests of League members, the Charter can be considered a more detailed document than the Protocol; it protected and respected the sovereignty of the countries that wanted to make agreements with those outside of the League Council. In addition to the Charter, a Cultural Treaty was developed to promote cultural exchange among Arab youth. Among other aspects, the Treaty included the idea of sport competitions (Article 4).²⁴ However, it was the Arab League's first Secretary General, Abdul Rahman Azzam, who launched the idea of regular sport tournaments among Arab countries.



*First Arab Games flag, flown during the Alexandria Games 1953.
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FROM IDEA TO REALITY: Aims and Recognition of the Pan-Arab Games

To understand how Azzam's proposal for regular sport tournaments became reality, we must first explore the aims of the Arab Games and then consider their attempts to gain patronage from the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

In 1947 Azzam sent a memorandum to the Arab League. In this document he called for annual sports competitions with the participation of all Arab countries. These Games were to take place in the different Arab countries. In his words:

There is no doubt that gathering the Arab youth every year is the best way for acquaintance, harmony and invitation to the spiritual unity in accordance with the second article of the Arab League charter [...] It is the best way to link the youth of Arab States and enable them to build the Arab nation's future.²⁵

While the Protocol and the Pact focused on the preservation of particularist interests, this passage conveys a strong sense of a transnational Arab state. This state was an imagined community, which could be experienced for real at transnational sporting events. In turn, this had the potential to reinforce the notion of an Arab community, even though it did not exist politically.

At first, Azzam's letter did not have an immediate effect but remained dormant within the Arab League but five years later in 1953 Ahmed El Demerdash Touny embraced the idea and made it a reality. He proposed the establishment of an Arab Games to various Arab countries. On 9 April 1953 he presented the idea to the Arab League Council. The Council approved and gave Egypt the responsibility of hosting the first Games.²⁶ To support the organizers, the Arab League allocated 25,000 LE (livre égyptienne) to Egypt. An internal department of the Arab League was designated to coordinate the Games together with the organizers. The Egyptian city of Alexandria was chosen as the first city to host the Games. A special conference at the Alexandria Games would decide on future hosts.²⁷

No Arab League documents detailing the regulations of the Games could be found. It appears that the Organizing Committee of the Alexandria Games was responsible not only for organizing the Games but also for promoting its aims and perspectives. In this regard, the Organizing Committee issued four Official News brochures²⁸ together with a complete Program and Guide to the Games²⁹ These dealt with the promotion and organisation of the Games before, during and after the competitions.³⁰ These documents promoted more than the Games themselves; they were vehicles of communication about the ideals and aspirations of a Pan-Arab movement that was emerging at that time. In them it was possible to read not only who

was invited to the Games, but also authoritative words regarding 'an Arab congregation'; the 'benefits of sport' as a powerful tool to bring people together (even more than politics); a 'new Arab Era' based on the 'Arab sport traditions' as mentioned in the Quran³¹; the Arabs' 'common past' and the necessity of unity. Thus, the celebration of the Games created a representation³² of "unity" among the Arab people that step-by-step began to take shape in their minds as an imagined community³³: the 'Arab nation'. Because of this, many countries were invited to participate. They were chosen on the basis of sharing a common 'cultural identity' rather than being a unified Arab nation. The first issue of the 'Official News Brochure' came out in June 1953, one month prior to the Games. It contained a list of countries invited to the first Arab Games:

Members of the Arab League and regional countries: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Republic of Syria, Kingdom of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanese Republic, Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen, United Kingdom of Libya, Egyptian Kingdom and Government of Palestine.

Arab countries not affiliated with the Arab League: Emirate of Kuwait, Muscat, Emirate of Aden, Sultanate of Hajj, Emirate of Qatar, two regions in the Emirate of Hadramaut (Al Katefih – Al Kathreh), Tunisia, Algeria and Marrakech.

Eastern countries: Turkey, the Empire of Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Republic of Indonesia and India.

It is noteworthy that the list included countries that had not yet achieved independence from the imperial powers. To invite these countries and to document this in writing has a anti-colonial, revolutionary quality. At the same time the list is a sharp reminder of the fragmentation of the Arab world. To counter this sentiment of division, the aims of the Arab Games published in the 'Program and Guide' of the Games were stated in Article 2 and had a clearly unifying character:

1. *To give youth an education in sports.*
2. *To unite the youth from different Arab States who have common sporting ambitions. This allows them to get to know each other better and to help each other at the sporting level.*
3. *To give the sporting initiative a national collaboration.*

The first four Arab Games sought to do more than just physically prepare the athletes. These Games established a set of cultural practices to celebrate Arab identity. The lectures and speeches mentioned in the printed documents can be seen as practices to bind the Arab people together through a common past. Henry, Amara & Al-Tauqi³⁴ interpret the goal of the Arab Games in a wider perspective. For the authors, the Games aim to increase interest in sport

Aerial view of the Alexandria Stadium 1953.

Copyright: Egyptian Olympic Committee



as an educational tool. A strategy that seeks to prepare strong youth, who believe in their Arab identity (called *uruba*); to provide an opportunity for Arab youth to increase their awareness of development projects, traditions and cultural diversity in different Arab states; and to provide a competitive environment for Arab youth to enhance their skills, which would allow them to better represent their nations (and their Arab identity) in international sports festivals like the Football World Cup and Olympic Games.

Within this context the word “Pan”³⁵ prefixing the title of the Arab Games, makes sense for that period. The congregation of all ‘Arabs’ or all that share the same ‘Arab identity’ was a key theme for Arab leaders at that time. An example of this can be seen in Article 1 of the Arab Games rules:

*Just like the Olympic Games, there will be Regional Games between the states of the Arab League taking place once every 4 years, starting in 1953. These will be named The Pan-Arab Games. Arab Countries, that are not member of the Arab League, may also participate.*³⁶

The mention that ‘non-Arab League members are allowed’ to participate shows that the idea of countries congregating and sharing the same ‘ideal’ was more important than being an official Arab League member. It was a crucial strategy to bring together Arab countries. This though some of them were not independent or even considered as separate nations at the time. Furthermore, the rules do not say anything in regard to the invitation of countries outside the Arab realm, which was apparently allowed as the invitation of countries such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia and India to participate in the first Arab Games exemplifies. Based on the inclusion of so many different countries, the Organizing Committee of the Alexandria Games were able to refute any accusations that theirs was a racial sporting manifestation when they presented their Games before the International Olympic Committee. The Organizing Committee, in promoting the Arab Games, also refrained from

using the term ‘Olympic’³⁷ to promote the Games. However, the term is used in the phrase ‘just like the Olympic Games’ in Article 1. This sentence was not a mere figure of speech; it indicates an intention of the Arab authorities to participate at an international level of sport as is supported by an article entitled, ‘Arab Games for Our Sport on an International Level’ which was published in the ‘Official News Brochure’, Number 2 (July 1953).

During the 1950s and 1960s the Arab Games was one of many Regional Games that emerged and solicited IOC-patronage. It was, in fact, a recurring topic at IOC meetings. Because of its importance in the development of the Arab Games, the question of IOC patronage deserves closer consideration.

Informal recognition, not Patronage

At the height of the “boom” period of the Regional Games,³⁸ Gaston Meyer, editor of the great sporting newspaper *L'Équipe* wrote about the third Asian Games in Tokyo in 1958. Excited that the number of “black, yellow and colored athletes” equaled the number of white athletes, he referred to those Games as the first truly “colored Games”. He also believed that “at all events, the Regional Games duly codified will sooner or later serve as eliminatory events for the Olympic Games [...]”.³⁹ Meyer was not alone in his assessment. The fact that the article mentioned above was published in the *Olympic Review* indicates as much. Therefore, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) faced some important questions: What was the purpose of the Regional Games? How can the Olympic Movement be protected in the face of the growth of Regional Games? To answer these questions completely would go beyond the framework of this paper,⁴⁰ but some facts are presented here to facilitate understanding the case of the Arab Games.

Minutes from the IOC Executive Board meetings and the IOC Sessions indicate that between the late

1940s to the late 1960s the Regional Games were repeatedly a matter of discussion. In 1952 during the 47th IOC Session in Helsinki, Finland, new rules regarding Regional Games were approved. Prior to that, an internal IOC Commission had been studying the subject for three years. These Rules for Regional Games⁴¹ functioned as the charter for any Regional Games organizer who had IOC patronage. The main objective of these 12 rules was to protect the Olympic symbols and underscore IOC authority and control in the field of sport, as the many Regional Games challenged the leadership of the IOC to a certain extent. During the session Avery Brundage⁴² made clear that "our aim is the safeguarding of the Olympic Movement's interest, and this can be best achieved by intruding as little as possible in the Regional Games".⁴³ Still, it was decided to include IOC-members in the Regional Games Organizing Committees to ensure adherence to the proposed rules.⁴⁴

The IOC had two main concerns regarding Regional Games: First, the sport had to be politically neutral, which is why any political agitation had to be prevented. Well aware that sporting festivals could easily be harnessed for political purposes, article 5 clearly prohibits such intentions since sports must be politically neutral according to the IOC:

5. The ceremonies in connection with the Games may be similar to, but must not be identical with those of the Olympic Games. There must be no extraneous events connected with the Games, particularly those of a political nature. The loud speaker must be used for sport purposes only and no political speeches are to

*be permitted. In fact there must be no commercial or political intervention whatsoever.*⁴⁵

Since political protagonists were often involved in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, a complete absence of politics was of course impossible.

The second concern was to protect the exclusivity of Olympic Symbols as expressed in article 10:

*10. The words "Olympic" and "Olympiad", the five rings and the Olympic motto CITIUS ALTIUS FORTIUS, must not be used in any manner in connection with Regional Games. Also, there must be no torch relay or flame used. The Olympic flag may be used only in one place and that is in the Stadium on a flag pole alongside the center pole bearing the flag of the Games.*⁴⁶

The regulation concerning official Olympic Ceremonies and Symbols is understandable because it is these same ceremonies and symbols which distinguish the Olympics from all other types of international sport competitions. These rules were in effect until the 1970s, when the IOC revised the rules for Regional Games.⁴⁷

Most of the Regional Games emerging in the 1950s and 1960s tried to obtain the patronage or recognition of the IOC. However, the restrictive rules disqualified many of those Games. Even though IOC patronage, in theory, consisted basically of permission to display the Olympic Flag at the stadium, the organizers of Regional Games sought it because it gave credibility and international recognition to the Regional Games.



Start line of the 100 meter competition, at Cairo Games 1965. Copyright: Farouk Ibrahim

Mohamed Naguib (right), the Egyptian President, at the Alexandria Games 1953, Opening Ceremony. Copyright: Farouk Ibrahim



At a later stage it also meant financial support. After the creation of the Olympic Solidarity funds⁴⁸ patronage was accompanied with a grant to help organize the Games.

The Arab Games did not fulfill IOC-requirements to be eligible for recognition. The 'Pan-Arab Games' were categorized as ethnical Regional Games, with which the IOC categorically avoided any association. Inadvertently, the IOC recognized that the fragmentation of the Arab world was arbitrary.

In spite of not receiving the patronage of the IOC, the Arab Games were well-known to the IOC and the International Sport Federations, largely thanks to the outspoken efforts of a few IOC-members from Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco. These insiders in the International Olympic Committee were in many respects 'ambassadors' of the Arab Games. The 1953 Alexandria Games had the support of IOC-members Angelo Bolanaki⁴⁹ and Mohamed Taher. Gabriel Gemayel rallied for the 1957 Games in Beirut, Hadj Mohamed Benjelloun for Casablanca in 1961, and Ahmed El Demerdash Touny for Cairo in 1965. These 'ambassadors' made extensive efforts to obtain IOC- patronage or at least receive recognition from the International Sports Federations, which would permit individual and team results to be accepted as official results for future Olympic Games participation. However, during the IOC Executive Board meetings and in written exchanges between the above mentioned protagonists and IOC authorities, the most prominent obstacle to giving patronage to the Arab Games was cited as being the principle of amateurism, the lack of a basic sport structure and, of course, the question of ethnicity.

Although the IOC did not grant patronage to the Arab Games, it did not demonstrate any objection to them. An indication of this can be found in the IOC Circular No. 100 in June 1957.⁵⁰ In this document the IOC called for International Sport Federations to help organize the sports in the Arab Games in 1957. It referred to the inexperience of the organizers and the unstructured sport situation in the participating countries. This was a clear indication that the IOC had no objection to the Arab Games and in fact saw them as an opportunity to establish organized sports in the Arab world. Even though the results of the Arab Games were not recognized in the first years, the IOC's call for support and the presence of international sports delegates in the 1957 Beirut Games, marks the first steps towards organized sport among Arab countries.

The attempts to gain IOC-patronage for the Arab Games can be interpreted in two ways. First, the open association with the Olympic Movement, which in itself shows characteristics of an imagined community with an imagined, shared history going back to antiquity as well as an imagined community of horizontal comradeship (i.e., imagined equal opportunity for the athletes at the beginning of a competition), would have joined the Arab world to an even broader concept of community, internationalism. Second, if we consider that "in a national context, all public institutions take on an additional symbolic meaning: not only are they supposed to perform certain political, social or economic functions but they also form the visible surface of a nation",⁵¹ the Arab Games could be read as a public institution of a Pan-Arab project. In this case, IOC-patronage would mean official recognition of a public institution of a unified Arab state, even if this unified state was not yet real but an imagined community.

Even though the IOC-recognition was politically important, it can be considered a secondary element for the Arab Games aspirations. In the context of the 1950s and 1960s Egypt led the Arab world not only in the field of sports but also in the field of politics. The Arab League headquarters located in Cairo, and Gamal Abdel-Nasser⁵² were the foundations of that leadership. Thus, the first four Arab Games emerged within a Pan-Arab movement of unification that was growing in the Arab world.

Table 1: Arab Games - The First Years

| Games | Year | Place | Countries | Sports | Athletes |
|-------|------|-----------------------------|-----------|--------|----------|
| 1st | 1953 | Alexandria, Egypt | 09 | 10 | 455 |
| 2nd | 1957 | Beirut, Lebanon | 09 | 12 | 790 |
| 3rd | 1961 | Casablanca, Morocco | 10 | 12 | 1127 |
| 4th | 1965 | Cairo, United Arab Republic | 16 | 14 | 1500 |

First Games: Arab Identity and the Ideal of Arab Unity

In 1953, a year after Egypt declared itself a Republic, the Arab Games were inaugurated in Alexandria. This was not a coincidence: at the opening ceremony of the Games, authorities pronounced the occasion as a symbol of a new era for Egypt and the entire Arab world. In the opening speech the Egyptian president Mohamed Naguib declared: "I am very pleased to welcome the Arab Youth and their friends, who have come to join us in Egypt. I hope they consider this land as their home. They are neither our guests nor us their hosts. We are all one family".⁵³ The family ideal represented a common basic societal structure in the Arab world: the family shares the same past, it nourishes the same culture, like language and religion, and it fights for the same cause. The first four Games represent this ideal of the family as well as Egypt's strong influence in the successful establishment of the Pan-Arab Games movement based on the strength of the Arab identity.

Another reason for the successful establishment was founded in the psychological value of festivals as an intersection between "the individual and the collective. Using the term effervescence, the French sociologist Emile Durkheim captured the nature of this individual-collective atmosphere. An atmosphere of effervescence causes individuals to perceive themselves as an integral part of a greater collectivity".⁵⁴ In this way, the sentiment of a unified Arab community among participants of the Arab Games could be strengthened and reinforced. Possibly, this resulted in a growing participation in the first four Arab Games, as Table 1 illustrates.⁵⁵

Looking through the history of the Arab Games⁵⁶ it is understandable that Arab political affairs interfere directly, not only in the timeline of the Games, but in the organization as a whole. The first four Games were the only ones which followed successively within a four year period. The evocation of the 'Arab community' instituted by Gama Abdel-Nasser, along with the support of the Arab League, preserved the continuity of the Games. Furthermore, an increase in the number of sports and athletes, but especially in the number of participating countries, reinforced the idea of the Games as an occasion to celebrate the Arab identity. It can be considered the apogee of Nasser's ideal of unity that the 1965 Arab Games held in the United Arab Republic saw the participation of sixteen 'countries'. A closer look at the individual Games will reveal this development of growth.

Alexandria 1953

The rise of sport in the city of Alexandria and in Egypt as a whole can be contributed to the Alexandrian citizen, Angelo Bolanaki.⁵⁷ Alexandria

can be considered the city where the Regional Games emerged: The Alexandria Stadium was built in the 1920s and in 1929 the African Games were scheduled to take place there, followed by the first Mediterranean Games in 1951 and the Arab Games in 1953. The Alexandria Stadium was financed by donations⁵⁸ and the construction started in 1921. In 1929 the Stadium was ready for the scheduled African Games. However, the Games did not take place because most of the participant countries were still under European rule. The Europeans did not support the Games. Thirty years after its construction, it was renovated in 1951 to host the first Mediterranean Games. Two years later, it staged the first Arab Games. In this way it became an icon of collective Egyptian, and to a lesser extent, Arab memory. With a capacity for twenty thousand spectators and a new illumination system of 250 lux floodlights, the main open area of the Stadium was the stage for the opening and closing ceremonies, competitions in athletics, the football matches, and the gymnastic demonstrations. An annexed hall held the weightlifting competitions.⁵⁹

On 26 July 1953 General Mohamed Naguib had the honor of being the first head of State to declare open an Arab Games. Participants at the Opening Ceremony were impressed with the Alexandria stadium while opening speeches appealed for Arab cooperation and unity.⁶⁰ After a speech by Egypt's president, many dignitaries took to the microphone to address the public. Abdul-Khaleh Hassoma, General Secretary of the Arab League, stressed the importance of the presence of people from different parts of the Arab world in those Games. He claimed an era of understanding among all people that shared the same ideals, feelings, pain and future. At the end he was emphatic as he addressed the athletes: "you [athletes] have to know, any single shot from your gun, or kick from your leg and all the movements from your body in this place, it is the power of your body, it is the power of your Arab nation".⁶¹ The athletes of the Games were considered the youth, the future, and the ones that would lead to Arab unity. Mr. Salah Salem, the Minister of National Guidance, addressed the athletes as "the glorious Arabs" and explained that moment for them: "fifty million Arabs look to you and ask you to be one hand, not only in the sport arena but in other areas as well; especially in the coming times, the era of freedom, the era of effort, the era of struggle".⁶² These speeches were highly charged politically as the speakers presented the sporting festival as a training ground to tackle challenging tasks in the future. The speeches appropriated the physical performance and the physical ability of the athletes in a political context and gave them a meaning that went well beyond the mere competition in the stadium.

Political connotations were also visible in the branding of the Games. The first Arab Games poster illustrates the idea of Arab unity led by the Arab League. Only the Arab League members are represented on this flag.

This act can be interpreted in two ways. Either with a political element calling for more member states and portraying the power of membership; or may simply indicate that the poster was produced before the final list of the participating countries was complete. The poster depicts three rows of flags. The bottom line (left-right) shows the flags of the Kingdom of Libya, Palestine Government and Kingdom of Jordan; above, were the flags of the Syrian Republic, Saudi Arabia, Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen, Kingdom of Iraq and Lebanon. In the top row was the single flag of the Kingdom of Egypt. Each of the flags are replicated from the Arab League insignia. Unlike other sporting festivals and organizations that attempted to present themselves as politically neutral, the political background of the Arab Games was openly declared.

Another indication that the organizers were interested in political affairs is the fact that Indonesia was invited to participate in the Games as Table 2 below illustrates. Egypt's Nasser and Indonesia's President Sukarno later became protagonists in the so-called Non-Aligned-Movement, the goal of which was to maintain in good relations with both the United States of America and the Soviet Union without having to choose sides in the Cold War.⁶³

Table 2 - 1st Arab Games Overview⁶⁴

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| City/Country | Alexandria, Egypt |
| Dates | July 26 th to August 10 th of 1953 (16 days) |
| Sports | Athletics, Basketball, Boxing, Fencing, Football, Gymnastics, Shooting, Swimming, Weightlifting and Wrestling (10 sports) |
| Venues/Facilities/Cities | Athletics (Alexandria Stadium); Gymnastics (Small Hall); Swimming (Alexandria SC Swimming Pool); Wrestling (Tram SC); Fencing (Alexandria Fencing Club) |
| Athletes | Approx. 455 athletes (male) |
| Countries | Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine and Syria (9 countries) |

Up to 1965 the rules allowed the invitation of countries which were not members of the Arab League. Many countries which had Islamic or Muslim traditions, such as Indonesia⁶⁵, were invited, especially to the Games held on Egyptian soil. Indonesia not only participated in the Arab Games of 1953 but would do the same in 1965. This indicates

that Egypt promoted Arab unity on the one hand but also particularist interests.

Applying Michel Foucault's theory of the effect of creating rankings, this paradox of Arab unity and rivalry between the individual Arab countries becomes evident. In sports, performances are measured, counted, recorded, compared and, based on these, rankings are created. The rankings highlight differences, and organizational qualities, competences and abilities into a hierarchy. In a way, the rankings sanction the competitors, which creates a sense of order. Discipline and good performance are rewarded in the ranking, bad performances are punished by a low place in the hierarchy. In this way the rank itself can be reward or punishment.⁶⁶ In the Arab Games, the country with the most medals are considered the most successful; this phenomenon does not only come into effect between the athletes, but operates on a national level. To use such a system in the Arab Games undermines the Pan-Arab ideal of unity and consolidates the fragmentation of the Arab world into individual states (cf. Table 3).

Table 3 - 1st Arab Games Medal Table⁶⁷

| Country | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|-----------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| Egypt | 75 | 36 | 25 | 136 |
| Lebanon | 3 | 16 | 15 | 34 |
| Palestine | 1 | 5 | 6 | 12 |
| Syria | 0 | 15 | 16 | 31 |
| Iraq | 0 | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| Indonesia | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Jordan | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Libya | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Kuwait | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Even a casual observer will note that Egypt dominated the first Games. Egypt had enjoyed Olympic success since 1928. In Amsterdam Ibrahim Moustafa won the first Arab Olympic gold medal in Greco-Roman wrestling. Olympic combat sports were dominated by Egyptians until the 1960s.⁶⁸ Egyptian domination at the medals table was to be expected; it was the most experienced country in this regard and it would have been a surprise to find anything different. It underlined Egypt's self-perception of being the leaders in the Arab world.

Over all, the dominating mentality that was actively fostered at the Arab Games remained one of unity. To reinforce the participants common historical origins and its correlation to sport, an extensive 'cultural and scientific' agenda was set up parallel to the Games. These activities included visits to tourist attractions and places of historical interest and, mainly, numerous lectures.⁶⁹ The cultural program concluded with a performance of children and cavalry troops at the Closing Ceremony. Here, in contrast to the Opening Ceremony where nations paraded separately, the spirit of unity was

reinforced when nations marched in together as one team at the Closing Ceremony of the Games.⁷⁰

Beirut 1957

While the first Arab Games focused on promoting unity, the second Arab Games held in Beirut, Lebanon presented themselves as an opportunity for many of the Arab countries to obtain experience in international sports. For Beirut itself, the Games were a great achievement. The Cite Sportive Camille Chamoun,⁷¹ Lebanon's largest stadium, was constructed. It was considered the state-of-the-art sport complex in that period in the Arab world. It consisted of a main stadium for 60,000 spectators. It had floodlights, loudspeakers, a 500m cycling track surrounding the 400m running track, jumping and throwing areas and the football pitch. In addition there was a swimming stadium for 3,500 which had a 50x20m (2m deep) swimming pool and 20x18m (5.50m deep) diving pool. A covered sports arena for 6,000 hosted both indoor and combat sports. The multi-purpose, outdoor tennis stadium for 4,500 spectators could also be used for basketball and volleyball. Stands for shooting competitions and an equestrian stadium held 2,000 spectators and housed stables for 150 horses.⁷² All these facilities were used for approximately one thousand athletes and officials from nine countries in twelve different sports (cf. Table 4). Thanks to the support of the delegates the organizers were able to include new sports on the Arab Games program. Sports like volleyball, cycling, rowing and equestrian were included. However, the last two were considered exhibition sports because only the Lebanese athletes were trained in these disciplines.

Table 4 – 2nd Arab Games Overview⁷³

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| City/Country | Beirut, Lebanon |
| Dates | October 12 th to 27 th 1957 (16 days) |
| Sports | Athletics, Basketball, Boxing, Cycling, Fencing, Football, Gymnastics, Shooting, Swimming, Volleyball, Weightlifting and Wrestling (12 sports) |
| Venues/Facilities/Cities | Cite Sportive Camille Chamoun |
| Athletes | Approx. 790 athletes (men) |
| Countries | Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Tunisia (9 countries) |

The Opening Ceremony of the second Arab Games were attended by 80,000 people. It is largely agreed that this was because admission was free. However, not all were pleased as the maximum capacity resulted in some

of the dignitaries not gaining access to the stadium. Colorful dancing, marching and sports displays composed the artistic part of the Ceremony after which the Lebanese president declared the Games open.⁷⁴ Thus, the Opening Ceremony of the second Arab Games continued to follow a protocol similar to the Olympic Games. The second Arab Games attracted the attention of many international federations sports delegates, who were present to control the sport rules. Ten delegates⁷⁵ from various international sports federations responded to the call in IOC Circular No. 100 and attended to arbitrate the Games and ensure that IOC-regulations for Regional Games were adhered to. Nevertheless, some exceptions were allowed. Many participating countries were not yet affiliated with international sports bodies, which, in principal, was a prerequisite for participation in the Arab Games.⁷⁶ Many of the countries did not even have a national sport governing body. The presence of the delegates was the first attempt at imparting the importance of affiliation on at an international level.

Egypt, the top medal winning nation from the first Games and the most experienced in sports, did not participate in Beirut. The Egyptian delegation was said to be tired after taking part in the World Youth Festival in Moscow that same year. The participation in the Festival can be considered an indication of internal squabbling because some athletes disobeyed orders to not participate.⁷⁷ From a political perspective Egypt's absence could also indicate that the different paths taken by Lebanon and Egypt to interact and trade with the international community might have prevented the participation of Egypt. As the Western countries refused to sell arms to Egypt, President Nasser turned to the Communist bloc. In September 1955 he announced that Egypt would obtain arms from Czechoslovakia.⁷⁸ Lebanon on the other hand turned to the United States in 1957 because President Camille Chamoun believed that Nasser was a direct threat to Lebanon's independence.⁷⁹ Without Egypt in the competition, the way was open for Lebanon to reach the top of the medal table (see Table 5). In second place came Tunisia. Both Tunisia and Morocco impressed all the participants with their potential, especially since they had not yet taken part in the Olympic Games. Both would participate for the first time in Rome in 1960.⁸⁰

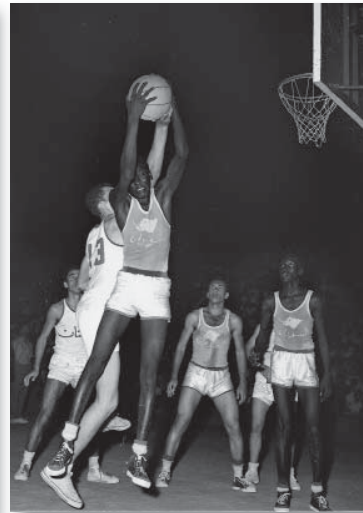
Table 5 - 2nd Arab Games Medal Board⁸¹

| Country | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|---------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| Lebanon | 29 | 38 | 19 | 86 |
| Tunisia | 20 | 8 | 17 | 45 |
| Iraq | 15 | 13 | 7 | 35 |
| Morocco | 9 | 10 | 6 | 25 |
| Syria | 7 | 9 | 10 | 26 |
| Jordan | 3 | 4 | 3 | 10 |
| Kuwait | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Libya | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

LEFT: Gamal Abdel-Nasser (right), the Egyptian President, at the Cairo Games 1965, Opening Ceremony. Copyright: Farouk Ibrahim



RIGHT: Lebanon vs. Sudan, Basketball match at Cairo Games 1965. Copyright: Farouk Ibrahim



The 'fight' for the coveted first place on the medal table would be accentuated in future Games. Not only by the hosts pride in being selected as host, but mainly because of the announcement of the 'winner' of the Games at the Closing Ceremony.

The Beirut Games ended in the same way they had started: with a massive attendance of 60,000 people at the Closing Ceremony, which had been preceded by the final of the football competition. It was the largest group of spectators at any of the competitions. Football averaged 15,000 to 20,000 spectators compared to the 4,000 found at gymnastics competitions. Combat sports attracted up to 5,000 spectators while the final basketball match between Lebanon and Syria was watched by a crowd of 6,500, which was more than the capacity in the tennis stadium.⁸²

Casablanca 1961

Political issues affected the 3rd Arab Games and reflected how problematic the international sport relations were and how fragile the political landscape of the region was. As with previous events, the Casablanca Games still did not enjoy the patronage of the International Olympic Committee, which 'remained reserved about being involved in any form' as IOC Chancellor Otto Mayer wrote to Hadj Mohammed Benjelloun.⁸³ On a political level, independence issues and inter-Arab disagreements influenced this period. The Arab League asked Benjelloun to organize the Games after Tunisia had declined to host them. Tunisia had said they would not host them. Tunisia was involved in the Bizerte crisis, an independence issue with France, and did not feel capable of hosting the event. Another conflict involved Iraq and Kuwait: Kuwait had only recently claimed independence on 19 June 1961. Thus, Iraqis boycotted the Games rather than compete in the same Games as the Kuwaitis. Despite this, the idea of Arab unity was still alive fueled by the broadcasts of the Egyptian radio station Voice of the Arabs, which Nasser had used to spread his ideas all over the Arab world. Syria took his call for Arab unity even more seriously

than Nasser himself. He understood Arab unity more in the sense of "Arab solidarity, a unity of purpose and goals", rather than a formal union with other Arab states.⁸⁴ However, Syrian officials approached Nasser with a proposal to unite the two countries. On Nasser's terms the United Arab Republic (UAR) was publicly announced on 22 February 1958 and Nasser became the unrivaled leader of the Arab world. The union had an impact on the entire region, destabilizing the Western-oriented Lebanon and Jordan. Finally, the Iraqi revolution in 1958 seemed to be a breaking point to overcome foreign domination in the region, if Iraq were to join the United Arab Republic. A "progressive Arab superstate" seemed close at hand. However, Iraq decided against joining the UAR, which eventually quenched all excitement and momentum for Arab unity.⁸⁵

Table 6 – 3rd Arab Games Overview⁸⁸

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| City/Country | Casablanca, Morocco |
| Dates | August 24 th to 8 th September 1961 (16 days) |
| Sports | Athletics, Basketball, Boxing, Cycling, Football, Gymnastics, Handball, Swimming, Tennis, Water Polo, Weightlifting and Wrestling (12 sports) |
| Venues/Facilities/Cities | Casablanca, Rabat |
| Athletes | Approx. 1,127 athletes (men) |
| Countries | Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Republic, Palestine and Sudan (10 countries) |

The union of Egypt and Syria also had consequences for the sport institutions of the two countries. In 1958 the IOC gave provisional recognition to the UAR to form a new Olympic Committee; Mr. Ahmed El



LEFT: Weightlifter attempt at Cairo Games 1965. One is able to identify Nasser's framed photo at the top of the image.

Copyright: Farouk Ibrahim

RIGHT: High Jump attempt, at Cairo Games 1965

Copyright: Farouk Ibrahim

Demerdash Touny was appointed secretary.⁸⁶ The political turmoil greatly affected the Casablanca Games. When King Hassan II of Morocco opened them, he welcomed more than one thousand athletes, but they only represented ten countries. Two other countries, Algeria and Tunisia, participated only symbolically by sending a flag bearer to the Opening Ceremony. All Algerian footballers had been banned by FIFA for 3 years for having broken their contracts with French teams in order to return to Algeria to join the Algerian National Liberation Front in 1958.⁸⁷

Some athletes received special recognition for their participation. Ibrahim Al-Masri (most probably the Moroccan football goalkeeper) was given a gold watch as a gift from King Hassan II. It was an award for his performance on the field. Also, the Moroccan sprinter Moubarak Bouchaib won the title “Star of the Games” for his performance in athletics. He won the 100m and 200m competitions in world class times of 10.2s and 21.2s.⁸⁹ The UAR demonstrated its superiority through the tremendous number of gold medals acquired (cf. Table 7) underscoring Egypt’s leadership also in the area of sport.

Table 7 - 3rd Arab Games Medal Board⁹⁰

| Country | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|----------------------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| United Arab Republic | 53 | 38 | 18 | 109 |
| Morocco | 23 | 20 | 30 | 73 |
| Lebanon | 7 | 19 | 17 | 43 |
| Libya | 2 | 4 | 6 | 12 |
| Palestine | 1 | 0 | 7 | 8 |
| Sudan | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Jordan | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Cairo 1965

The 4th-Arab Games were held in the United Arab Republic and were a demonstration of power, mainly by the Egyptian leaders, who were still pushing the

ideal of Arab unity. Nonetheless, signs of the end of this Egyptian dominance had already become apparent in 1961, when they withdrew from the United Arab Republic deeply disappointed about the “quasi-imperial fashion”, in which Egypt ruled the proud Syrians.⁹¹ Egypt continued to keep the Republic alive until 1971. President, Nasser used the broken union with Syria in 1961 as a pretext to form a new popular organization. The introduction of Arab socialism as Egypt’s new ideology provided Nasser with another good reason to create a political body which could be presented as an entirely new popular organization: the Arab Socialist Union.⁹² The newly formed states of Aden and Lahej participated in the Arab Games and can be considered as part of Nasser’s attempt at socialism. Both states were British protectorates and as a result of Nasser’s anti-colonial campaign, the British Empire tried to impose regional rulers on the Federation of South Arabia (1959–1967). After that both became part of South Yemen.

Table 8 - 4th Arab Games Overview⁹⁴

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| City/Country | Cairo, United Arab Republic |
| Dates | September 2 nd to 11 th 1965 (10 days) |
| Sports | Athletics, Basketball, Boxing, Cycling, Football, Gymnastics, Handball, Shooting, Swimming, Tennis, Volleyball, Water Polo, Weightlifting and Wrestling (14 sports) |
| Venues/Facilities/Cities | Cairo |
| Athletes | Approx. 1,500 athletes (men) |
| Countries | Aden, Algeria, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lahej, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Republic and Yemen (16 countries) |

As in the previous Games, those in Cairo were characterized by a spirit of Arab unity and political affairs. The largest number of events and participating

countries was planned (cf. table 8) to demonstrate that the Arab ideal was still alive, not only on the playing field, but also on the political field. For the first time Algeria attended the Games with an official team in their own right, just three years after gaining independence. Additionally, Indonesia returned to the Games. In 1963 the Arab League had demonstrated its friendship with Indonesia when they urged the IOC to re-include Indonesia in the Olympic Movement. . They threatened a boycott of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics if the IOC did not do as they asked.⁹³ In the end even UAR participated in the 1964 Olympics.

The number of gold medals (cf. table 9) is an indication of how seriously the UAR took the Arab Games. The athletes from UAR almost won almost 50% of all the medals, more than three times as many as second ranked Iraq. This can therefore be considered the first time that a nation marked the Games as the most important event in its sport calendar. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find any sources which related to how the UAR athletes regarded these Games. It is possible that the Arab Games simply fitted well into the sport calendar of UAR: it was just one year after the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games and two years before the next 1967 Mediterranean Games in Tunis.

Table 9 – 4th Arab Games Medal Board⁹⁵

| Country | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|----------------------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| United Arab Republic | 71 | 38 | 31 | 140 |
| Iraq | 10 | 21 | 11 | 42 |
| Morocco | 9 | 2 | 2 | 13 |
| Lebanon | 2 | 10 | 16 | 28 |
| Sudan | 1 | 6 | 3 | 10 |
| Syria | 1 | 7 | 19 | 27 |
| Libya | 0 | 6 | 8 | 14 |
| Algeria | 0 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Palestine | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Indonesia | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Jordan | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |

Conclusions

The establishment of the Arab Games began years before the first Games were held in 1953. A letter written by the Arab League's first General Secretary, Azzam, can be considered the first step towards the creation of the Arab Games. However, it is within the Arab context of the 1950s, and specifically the Egyptian context, that the establishment of the 1953 Games was realized.

Up until 1965 the Arab Games played an important role as a vehicle of communication regarding the ideals and aspirations of a Pan-Arab movement. The coming together of so many Arab people during a specific period of time created a representation of unity among participants. Sharing cultural elements such as religion,

language and a historical past within the framework of the Games strengthened their perception of Arab identity. Those elements were presented through cultural practices like ceremonies, lectures and the Games themselves.

Even though a formal union of Arab countries as propagated by Nasser did not succeed because individual leaders had their own agendas, the Games reinforced the sentiment of an Arab identity and helped to create an imagined community among the Arabs. Nations which were in the throes of becoming independent or wanting to break free of Western colonial rule were able to integrate themselves through the Games and could be part of the community. This cohesion proved to be very strong psychologically, while in the political realm the fragmentation of the Arab world and the self interests of the individual countries prevented a formal unity.

Acknowledgments

This paper would not have been possible without the efforts of the staff at the Qatar Olympic & Sports Museum. Rafia Al Abdullah and Sahar Hossny deserve special mention for their support with all issues related to the Arabic language. Special thanks also go to Hassan Abbas Amer, from the Egyptian Olympic Committee, who facilitated the research of the primary sources.

About the paper

This paper is the academic result of the research conducted by the Qatar Olympic & Sports Museum into the history of the Arab Games in preparation of the Arab Games Exhibition taking place in Doha, Qatar from 5 October until 23 December 2011. Both authors are employees of the Qatar Olympic & Sports Museum.

Notes

- 1 KHALIDI, Rashid: "Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature", in: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 5 (December 1991), 1363–1373, p.1366.
- 2 KHALIDI: "Arab Nationalism", p.1365.
- 3 KHALIDI: "Arab Nationalism", p.1365.
- 4 ANDERSON, Benedict: *Imagined Communities*. New York 2006, pp. 6-7.
- 5 SPEER, Sven W.: "Der Pan-Arabismus – eine gescheiterte staatenuebergreifende Idee?", in: ROBERT, Ruediger; SCHLICHT, Daniela; SALEEM, Shazia: *Kollektive Identitäten im Nahen und Mittleren Osten: Studien zum Verhältnis von Staat und Religion*, Muenster 2010, pp.74-81.
- 6 BARNETT, Michael: "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System", in: *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Summer, 1995), 479-510, p.492.

- 7 BARNETT: "Sovereignty", p.492; MANSFIELD, Peter: *A History of the Middle East*. 3 ed. England, 2010, p.207.
- 8 Facing the task of unifying and administering these vast but thinly populated territories, Ibn Saud contracted several dynastic marriages with the daughters of the leaders of important tribal confederations, which partially explains why 44 sons survived him and today there are some four or five thousand Saudi princes in direct line of descent from the king. For more information: MANSFIELD: "History", p.211.
- 9 MANSFIELD: "History", p.210.
- 10 SPEER: "Der Pan-Arabismus", p.493.
- 11 BARNETT: "Sovereignty", p.493.
- 12 MANSFIELD: "History", p.260.
- 13 For more information: MONROE, Elizabeth: *Philby of Arabia*, New York 1973.
- 14 MANSFIELD: "History", p.260.
- 15 BARNETT: "Sovereignty", p.494; HOURANI, Cecil: "The Arab League in Perspective", in: *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Apr., 1947), p.125-136.
- 16 BARNETT: "Sovereignty", p.496.
- 17 MANSFIELD: "History", p.258.
- 18 It is noteworthy that in a literal translation "Gami, a," does not mean "League" but rather "assembly", which is a much weaker term. It is a more accurate description, though. For example, only unanimous decisions are binding for all members. Decisions requiring a simple majority of votes are only binding for the member-states in favor of them. Cf. SPEER: "Der Pan-Arabismus", p.89.
- 19 BURDETT, Anita: *The Arab League. British Documentary Sources*. 1943-1963. London 1995, p.597-600.
- 20 The Palestine cause is considered to be the main issue of that period. This issue continues through the end of the British Mandate in Palestine, the United Nations partition plan on 30 November 1947 and culminates with the first Arab-Israeli war on 20 July 1949. For more information: ABU-GHAZALEH, Adnan: "Arab Cultural Nationalism in Palestine during the British Mandate", in: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring, 1972), p.37-63.
- 21 SPEER: "Der Pan-Arabismus", p.88-89.
- 22 The Arab countries discussed the group's name; Syria called it the Arab Union while Yemen called it the Unit of Arab Countries Independent. Iraq then called it the Arab Coalition but Egypt decided to call it Arab League because it fit with the linguistic and political aims of the institution. Nowadays, the League is only based on a shared culture rooted in a common language: Arabic. However, it was set up to help Arab countries coordinate their policies, to gain a united political voice in the world and to develop a better common future together. For more information: TOFFOLO, Chris: *Global Organizations. The Arab League*. United States of America 2008, p.33-35.
- 23 MANSFIELD: "History", p.257.
- 24 27 November 1945: The States of the Arab League will encourage cultural, scouting and sports visits between the Arab countries, and in areas where the Governments allow for the holding of cultural and educational meetings for students. Facilities will be given for this purpose, particularly in respect to travel arrangements and the travel expenses. For more information: KHALIL, Muhammad: *The Arab States and the Arab League. A Documentary Record*. Beirut 1962, p.99.
- 25 AMER, Hassan Abbas (Ed): *100 years. Egyptian Olympic Committee. Egyptian Olympic Committee* n/d, p.215.
- 26 AMER, 100 years; Organizing Committee of the Alexandria Games: "Abdel-Khaleh Hassoma. Opening Ceremony speech". Final Program, 10/08/1953, n/p.
- 27 AMER, 100 years; Organizing Committee of the Alexandria Games: "1st Conference for Pan-Arab Games" [photograph]. Newsletter, 05/08/1953), n/p.
- 28 The Organizing Committee of the Alexandria Games published the 'Official News Brochure' issue number 1, on June 1953; number 2, on July 1953; number 3, on 15 July 1953; and number 4, on July 26th, 1953.
- 29 The Organizing Committee of the Alexandria Games published the 'Program and Guide' in Arabic and French. No date was found in the publication, however the content, such as match and game schedules, as well as empty tables, suggests that it was published prior the start of the 1953 Arab Games.
- 30 In the 'Official News Brochure' issue number 1 (June 1953, n/p), it is written that the Arab Games organizers delegated two professors to travel among the countries to promote the Games: Prof. Mohamed Mohamed Fazly and Prof. Mohamed Hasanin Zahir.
- 31 The Quran is the Holy book of the Muslims.
- 32 CHARTIER, Roger: *A História Cultural. Entre práticas e representações*. Lisboa 2000, p.17.
- 33 ANDERSON: *Imagined Communities*, p.6-7.
- 34 HENRY, Ian, AMARA, Mahfoud & AL-TAUQI, Mansour: "Sport, Arab Nationalism and the Pan-Arab Games", in: *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 38/3 (2003), p.295-310.
- 35 The word 'Pan' in Arabic (Dawra) refers to a cyclical competition like the Olympic Games, World Cups, etc. In this sense, in Arabic the Arab Games are still written Pan-Arab Games.
- 36 "Program and Guide": Egypt, 1953, n/p.
- 37 TOUNY, Ahmed El Demerdash: "Letter to IOC Chancellor, 6 August 1953" International Olympic Committee: Historical Archives - File: Jeux Pan-Arabes (1953-1976).
- 38 The 1950s and 1960s were characterized by a boom of Regional Games: Asian Games, Pan-American Games, Mediterranean Games (1951); Pan-Arab Games (1953); Spartakiads (1957); Southeast Asian Games (1959); Pacific Games. For more information: ERRARIS, Borhane & FATES, Youssef: "Les Jeux Régionaux, témoins de l'universalisation des sports", in: *Mappe Monde* 89/2 (n/d), p.26-28.
- 39 MEYER, Gaston: "Asiatic and Regional Games", in: *Bulletin du Comité International Olympique. Olympic Review* (1958) August No. 63, p. 46.
- 40 The purpose of the Regional Games was problematic until the 1980s. In the 1970s the IOC opened the discussion with its president Lord Killanin (KILLANIN, Lord. "From Regional Games to the Olympic Games", in: *Olympic Review* No. 119 (September 1977) p. 535), probably based on the Samaranch study of the Regional Games (INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC): "Rules for Regional Games. Lausanne, February 20-22, 1975". *IOC Historical Archives - Executive Board Meetings Minutes*). Bill Mallon put some questions on the table regarding the purpose of the Regional Games, especially in relation to the beginnings of gigantism in the Olympics (MALLON, Bill: "Qualification for Olympic Games of the 21st Century", in: *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1993) p. 10-17). And Dikaia Chatziefstathiou had a critique perspective of it (CHATZIEFSTATHIOU, Dikaia, HENRY, Ian, THEODORAKI, Eleni & AL-TAUQI, Mansour: "Cultural Imperialism and the

- Diffusion of Olympic Sport in Africa. A Comparison of Pre- and Post-Second World War Contexts”, in: *Cultural Imperialism in Action: Critiques in the Global Olympic Trust. Eighth International Symposium for Olympic Research*, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada 2006, p.278-292).
- 41 INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC): “Rules for Regional Games”, in: *Bulletin du Comité International Olympique. Olympic Review*, No. 36 (November 1952), p.12-13.
- 42 Avery Brundage was IOC President from 1952 to 1972. As an American, he remains the only non-European to hold this post.
- 43 INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC): “Ruling of the Regional Games. Helsinki, 1972”. *IOC Historical Archives - Sessions Meetings Minutes*.
- 44 In the Arab Games this was the case of Mr. Angelo Bolanaki, Egyptian IOC member (1910–1932) and Greek IOC member (1932–1963); Mr. Mohamed Taher, Egyptian IOC member (1934–1968); Mr. Ahmed El Demerdash Touny, Egyptian IOC member (1960–1997); Hadj Mohammed Benjelloun, Moroccan IOC member (1961–1997); and Mr. Gabriel Geymael, Lebanese IOC member (1952–not found).
- 45 IOC: “Rules”, p.13.
- 46 IOC: “Rules”, p.13.
- 47 In 1975 Mr. Juan Antonio Samaranch led a study to review the rules. With National Olympic Committees already established around the globe and few possibilities to include regional competitions around the globe, it was possible to present 14 reviewed rules. Rule number 1 also explains the meaning of the Regional Games: “1. Competitions between representatives of National Olympic committees belonging to a continental or geographical region may be considered as “Regional Games” liable to receive the International Olympic Committee’s patronage. Countries in the process of forming an N.O.C. could, as an exception, take part in the Games with the approval of the IOC” For complete text see: INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC): “Annex 4. Rules for Regional Games. Lausanne, May 19-23, 1975”. *IOC Historical Archives – Executive Board Meetings Minutes*, p. 30.
- 48 In 1961 a resolution to the 58th IOC Congress established the Committee for International Olympic Aid (CIOA). According to the IOC’s own account of the history of the origins of Olympic Solidarity this resolution was presented by Count Jean de Beaumont, who subsequently chaired the Committee in its early years. The Committee provided aid (in kind or as loans but not in cash) to some of the NOCs of the newly independent states. See CHATZIESTATHIOU, “Cultural Imperialism”, p.284.
- 49 Angelo Bolanaki was a citizen of Alexandria, Egypt and can be considered the father of Egyptian sport. In 1906 he met Pierre de Coubertin in Paris and later they became friends. On 16 June 1910 he received a letter from Coubertin informing him that his proposal had been unanimously accepted. In the same year he established the Egyptian Olympic Committee, in which he was appointed Secretary General (AMER, *100 years*). He chose Greek nationality in 1932 and worked politically to ensure that Alexandria hosted the first Mediterranean Games in 1951 and two years later the first Arab Games.
- 50 INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC): “Aux Fédérations Internationales. Réf. No. 100. Lausanne, June 1957”. *IOC Historical Archives - IOC Circulars*.
- 51 UTZ, Raphael: “Nations, Nation-Building, and Cultural Intervention: A Social Science Perspective” in: VON BOGDANDY, A.; WULFRUM, R. (EDS.), *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, Vol. 9, Koninklijke Brill N. V. 2005, p.615-647.
- 52 Gamal Abdel-Nasser considered himself the first true Egyptian to rule the country since the Pharaohs time. Coming from a poor fellah family, he gained strong popularity among the poorer, lower class Egyptians. Simultaneously, he unified and convinced the Arab leaders of a common cause: the Palestinian cause (MANSFIELD: “History”, p.277).
- 53 AMER, *100 years*, p.217.
- 54 DI-CAPUA, Yoav: “Sports, Society, and Revolution: Egypt in the Early Nasserite Period” in: PODEH, Elie; WINCKLER, Onn (EDS.): *Rethinking Nasserism: Revolution and Historical Memory*, Gainesville FL 2004, p.144–162.
- 55 The table was based on EGYPTIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (EOC): *Official Report of the 1st Arab Games. Egypt 1953*; EGYPTIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (EOC): *Final program of 4th Arab Games: final results*. Cairo 1965; BELL, Daniel: *Encyclopedia of International Games*. North Carolina 2003.
- 56 After Cairo 1965 the Arab Games took place in Damascus in 1976. The location and years following were: Rabat 1985, Damascus 1992, Beirut 1997, Amman 1999, Algiers 2004 and Cairo 2007. The 12th Games will be hosted in Doha 2011. The four year time frame was again adhered to in the time of the 11th to 12th Games.
- 57 Bolanaki headed the Mixed Federation for Sport Clubs in Alexandria 1908. This institution was formed to organize sport in the city, basically divided by foreign clubs and local clubs. In 1910 the club that he founded became the Sport Federation in Egypt. In the same year he was appointed as an IOC member and established the Egyptian Olympic Committee on 13 June 1910 (AMER, *100 years*, p.24–25).
- 58 Approximately LE 6500 were collected to fund the Stadium. Sultan Fouad I (the ruler of Egypt) donated LE 3000, Prince Omar Toson (President of the Egyptian Committee) donated LE 2000, and Angelo Bolanaki (Secretary General of the Egyptian Committee) donated LE 1000. The Municipality of Alexandria also agreed to a credit of LE 500 to study the construction of the stadium (AMER, *100 years*, p.185).
- 59 ‘Official News Brochure’ issue number 1, June 1953, n/p.
- 60 BELL: “Encyclopedia”, p.39.
- 61 ALEXANDRIA ORGANIZING COMMITTEE: “Final Program”. Egypt 1953, n/p.
- 62 ALEXANDRIA ORGANIZING COMMITTEE: “Final Program”. Egypt 1953, n/p.
- 63 ROGAN, Eugene: *The Arabs*, London 2009, 373-374.
- 64 Based on EOC: “Official”.
- 65 The Arab League members found in Indonesia a supporter. In the 1962 Asian Games, Indonesia refused to issue visas to the athletes from Taiwan and Israel. However, since the Asian Games had IOC-patronage, the IOC withdrew the Indonesian Olympic Committee from the Olympic Movement in the following year. One of the direct reflections of this sanction was the establishment of GAENFO (Games of The New Emerging Forces). An east-west dichotomy was established with the participation of Soviet Union athletes and the second event happening in Egypt in 1967 (ESPY “Politics”, p.80–81).
- 66 FOUCAULT, Michel: *Ueberwachen und Strafen*, Frankfurt 1998, p.234.
- 67 Based on EOC: “Official”.

- 68 INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE: "The Arab Republic of Egypt and Olympism". *Olympic Review*. No. 121–122, (November–December 1977), p.692–703.
- 69 Three lectures were schedule and published on four "Games daily brochures" (dated on 29/07, 05/08, 07/08 and 08/08). The first was about 'the Arab origins in the Nile valley' presented by Dr. Mohamed Awad, the director of Alexandria University. The second was about 'the Arabs power' presented by Mr. Omar El-Desorhi, from the Science College; and the third was about 'the Arab sportsman behavior' presented by Mr. Kamal Elwi, from the Egyptian delegation representative in Saudi Arabia.
- 70 BELL: "Encyclopedia", p.40.
- 71 The new complex was built at a cost of one million British pounds. The name is a tribute to the Lebanese President's wife.
- 72 GEMAYEL, Gabriel: "Letter to IOC President, 25 October 1956". *International Olympic Committee: Historical Archives - File: II Jeux Pan-Arabes à Beyrouth 1957*.
- 73 Based on EOC: "Final".
- 74 BELL: "Encyclopedia", p.40.
- 75 Athletics: Col. A.H. Paulen (Netherlands); swimming: Dr. Med. V. Polic (Yugoslavia); shooting: Mr. K.A. Larsson (Sweden); fencing: Mr. Roger Duchaussoy (France); equestrian: Chevalier de Menten de Horne (Belgium); wrestling: Mr. Vehbi Emre (Turkey); boxing: Lt. Col. R.H. Russell (Great Britain); basketball: Mr. R. Busnel (France); volleyball: Mr. Jean Lenoir (France); gymnastics: Mr. E. Maurer (Switzerland). See COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIQUE: "Succès des 2èmes Jeux Pan-Arabes". *International Olympic Committee: Historical Archives - File: II Jeux Pan-Arabes à Beyrouth 1957*.
- 76 It is important to understand that the International Federations allowed for some exceptions to the participating countries. Most of them did not have sports Federations nor, of course, international affiliations. It was described in one letter from Mr. Gemayel to IOC chancellor, Mr. Otto Mayer, the importance of affiliating the Arab countries to international sports federations. See GEMAYEL, Gabriel: "Letter to Otto Mayer, 14 June 1957". *International Olympic Committee: Historical Archives - File: Jeux Pan-Arabes (1953–1976)*.
- 77 BELL: "Encyclopedia", p.40.
- 78 ROGAN: *The Arabs*, p.373–374.
- 79 ROGAN: *The Arabs*, p.390–393.
- 80 BELL: "Encyclopedia"; INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE: "Morocco and Olympism", in: *Olympic Review*, No. 135 (January 1979), p. 35–41; INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE: "Tunisia and Olympism", in: *Olympic Review*, No. 87–88 (January–February 1975), p.36–44.
- 81 Based on EOC: "Final".
- 82 See COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIQUE: "Succès des 2èmes Jeux Pan-Arabes". *International Olympic Committee: Historical Archives – File II: Jeux Pan-Arabes à Beyrouth 1957*.
- 83 MAYER, Otto: "Letter to Hadj Mohamed Benjelloun, 14 April 1960". *International Olympic Committee: Historical Archives – File: Jeux Pan-Arabes (1953–1976)*.
- 84 ROGAN: *The Arabs*, p.386–387.
- 85 ROGAN: *The Arabs*, p.385–388.
- 86 For more information see INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC): "New members. Rome, 1960". *IOC Historical Archives – Executive Board Meetings Minutes*; INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC): "New national Olympic Committees. Rome, 1960". *IOC Historical Archives – Sessions Meetings Minutes*.
- 87 BELL: "Encyclopedia", p.40.
- 88 Based on EOC: "Final".
- 89 BELL: "Encyclopedia", p.40.
- 90 Based on EOC: "Final".
- 91 ROGAN: *The Arabs*, p.402–403.
- 92 GINAT, Rami: *Egypt's Incomplete Revolution. Lutfi al-Khuli and Nasser's Socialism in the 1960s*. London, 1997.
- 93 For more information: "Arab League will Boycott Olympic Games. February 1963". *International Olympic Committee: Historical Archives – File: Jeux Pan-Arabes (1953–1976)*.
- 94 Based on EOC: "Final".
- 95 Based on EOC: "Final". This dual-mentality, this paradox surfaces also in the creation of the Arab League.

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Hurdles competition during the Cairo Games 1965. Copyright: Farouk Ibrahim