

***King Me: The Political Culture of Monarchy in
Interwar Egypt and Iraq***

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This dissertation is dedicated to the memory
of Avriel Butovsky

(1959-1993)

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
PREFACE	v
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
THE COLONIAL ANGLE.....	2
COLONIAL IMAGININGS OF MONARCHY	5
INDIGENOUS MONARCHICAL IMAGININGS: APPEARANCES, LANGUAGE, AND MODERNITY	7
POLITICAL CULTURE, TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY, AND THE PROBLEM OF LEGITIMACY	11
ARAB MONARCHY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION	19
METHODOLOGY: THE SYMBOLISM OF POLITICS AND INVENTED TRADITION	24
CHAPTER 2: IMAGINING KING FAISAL	27
IMAGINING IRAQ’S FUTURE BEFORE FAISAL	29
SELLING KING FAISAL.....	36
FAISAL’S ACCESSION	40
LOOKING FORWARD: FAISAL FRONT AND CENTER	42
CONCLUSION: “THE MEANING OF KINGSHIP”	43
CHAPTER 3: KING FU’AD’S GAMBIT.....	46
FU’AD’S FIRST ACCESSION: THE CEREMONIAL GAME BEGINS	49
THE CEREMONIAL STRUGGLE CONTINUES: FU’AD BECOMES KING	51
FU’AD’S MIXED RECEPTION	54
COMPETING INTERPRETATIONS OF EUROPEAN MONARCHY	56
NEW DIRECTIONS IN EGYPTIAN POLITICAL CULTURE.....	59
CONCLUSION	62
CHAPTER 4: THE IRAQI MONARCHY IN TRANSITION.....	65
FAISAL’S CEREMONIAL: 1932-33	67
MOURNING KING FAISAL.....	69
A REINVIGORATED THRONE	73
GHAZI’S SHIFTING PUBLIC IMAGE.....	75
CONCLUSION: THE CEREMONIAL CYCLE REPEATS	77
CHAPTER 5: REPACKAGING THE EGYPTIAN MONARCHY	79
REMEMBERING FU’AD: BETWEEN ARROGANCE AND PRIDE	81
ACCULTURATING KING FARUQ	84
MONITORING FARUQ’S POPULARITY.....	86
CURBING FARUQ’S ENTHUSIASM	88
SEARCHING FOR SYMBOLIC CAPITAL: ISLAM AND THE MONARCHY.....	90
CONCLUSION: MONARCHY, MASS MEDIA, AND INTEGRAL EGYPTIAN NATIONALISM	97
CONCLUSION	101
APPENDICES	106
BIBLIOGRAPHY	107

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Preface

A King of the Arabs?

At the turn of the Muslim new year 1335 (beginning October 16, 1916), one local Arab ruler made a bid for sovereignty that subtly but irrevocably altered the meaning of kingship in the modern Middle East. The First World War was already two years old by this point, and the world was changing fast. With the survival of the Ottoman Empire – now allied with Germany – seriously called into question, the field of political orientation and allegiance for Arabs and Muslims was suddenly blown wide open (it had been considered relatively secure and sacrosanct before the war). Of course, the Sharif Hussein bin Ali of the Hijaz was no ordinary local Arab ruler. With the war on and the British struggling against an Ottoman army that was proving battle after battle to be a much tougher foe than anticipated, British officials had already been in frequent contact with Hussein and his family, thinking that the traditional prestige derived from their position as keepers of the Two Holy Places would help steal Arabs' loyalty away from their Ottoman overlords and provoke a much-needed revolt in the Ottoman Arab provinces.

The long and labyrinthine history of the Anglo-Hashemite negotiations in this period – the string of correspondences, promises made, and promises broken after the war – has already been extremely well documented¹ and, even though it factors into the discussion later with Churchill's imposition of the Hashemite solution in Iraq, it lies outside the scope of this dissertation. What is more important for our purposes here is how Hussein – firmly believing that his participation in the British war efforts bestowed upon him a newfound source of political legitimacy and authority – re-imagined his role in a rapidly changing world and postured himself relative to his people and, consequently, to the Great Powers.

The Arab Revolt had only been underway for four months when Hussein declared himself “King of the Arab lands” (*malik al-bilad al-'arabiyya*) and staged an elaborate series

¹ For example, see Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth*.

of events to mark the assumption of this new title.² These ceremonial proceedings demonstrated a striking mix of the traditional and modern, making willful use of both Arab and Islamic symbolism to cut for himself the broadest swath of sovereignty available at that time. Hussein and his son Abdullah engineered the initial assumption of kingship to coincide with celebrations for the Muslim New Year, during which an array of ulema and local notables cordially greeted Hussein at his palace and read aloud a petition demanding he assume the honor of “King of the Arabs,” which he then accepted.³ Though evidence shows that the event was completely prefabricated, with Hussein’s accession made to seem like “a guileless response” to this impassioned and spontaneously delivered petition,⁴ the careful attention paid to making this demand for Hussein’s new sovereignty seem at once organic, popular, and religiously legitimate is extremely telling. A day later, in another ceremony steeped in Islamic symbolism, Hussein made a sacred pact with his people by taking the oath of *bay‘a* (a traditional Islamic “contractual agreement between ruler and ruled”⁵) inside the Grand Mosque of Mecca, next to the Ka’ba. Ami Ayalon calls this event Hussein’s “coronation,” during which local ulema and notables joined him again to offer a “solemn vote of confidence” as he honored yet another deep-rooted political tradition in the Islamic world: that of “defying imperial or caliphal authority by declaring his own autonomous or independent state.”⁶

This idea of ceremonially delimiting one’s new locus of political authority becomes especially important when we consider the one really new and modern aspect of Hussein’s bid to re-fashion his political identity: the employment of the Arabic word *malik* to denote his newly heightened position. Throughout most of Islamic history, the word had held an

² Ami Ayalon, “Post-Ottoman Arab Monarchies: Old Bottles, New Labels?” in *Middle East Monarchies*, ed. Joseph Kostiner (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 25.

³ Teitelbaum, 108.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, 58.

⁶ Ayalon, “Arab Monarchies,” 25.

extremely pejorative connotation and thus was typically eschewed by leaders and authority figures. Its root m-l-k imbuing it with a sense of possession and personal control, *malik* came, after the emergence of Islam, to “connote the temporal, mundane facet of government—the antithesis of *khalifa* and *imam* which signified piety and righteousness.”⁷ If, as Bernard Lewis and Ayalon both argue, the use of *malik* made a comeback when the notion of supreme caliphal authority began to wane after the tenth century, the word still continued to conjure up many negative associations and would never enjoy the same exalted status as “sultan” or “caliph.” Rather than indicating a ruler’s real acquisition of sovereignty or status, the idea of *malik* always implied a circumscribed hegemony—a “limited sway over one kingdom among many and subjugation to a supreme suzerain.”⁸ Though in the twentieth century, as we will see, the idea of circumscribing authority over one newly imagined political community⁹ in the Middle East became precisely the issue at hand, throughout the bulk of Islamic history this was a move that rulers could never attempt lest they compromise their dignity, prestige, and potency as leaders.

This tension between the traditional open-ended model of monarchical rule and the simultaneous need for rulers to assert their autonomy by marking off their territories in some new way warrants further discussion. Even if, as we have said, Hussein was recalling a time-honored Islamic practice of defining his own personal authority against a supreme suzerain (in this example, his Ottoman overlords in Istanbul), it remains the case that he and other rulers in the region tended to proclaim sovereignty in the name “of the Muslims,”¹⁰ or the entire community of believers,¹¹ rather than explicitly acknowledge the limits of their newly re-defined kingdoms. Consequently, by the nineteenth century, for Muslim rulers aspiring for their authority – no matter how limited in reality – to be conceived only in the broadest

⁷ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 6th ed., s.v. “malik.”

⁸ Ayalon, *Language and Change*, 32.

⁹ The language here is, of course, Benedict Anderson’s. See *Imagined Communities*.

¹⁰ Ayalon, *Language and Change*, 33.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

terms relative to God, the word *malik* was simultaneously subsumed under larger chains of titulature (for example *malik al-muluk* or *al-malik al-sultan*¹²) and broadened to encompass wide cross-sections of peoples (for example, the Ottoman notion of “*malik al-Arab wal-Ajam wal-Rum*” – King of the Arabs and non-Arabs and the Rum, with *rum* here meaning Ottoman lands).¹³

The more common usage of the word *malik* until the twentieth century, however, manifested in attempts by Arab and Muslim writers to distinguish between Islamic rulers – fashioning their sovereignty as widely as possible for purposes of legitimacy – and “foreign kings” in Europe, especially those presiding over modern, territorially limited nations that were scarcely comprehensible in the eyes of Arab-Muslim observers paying tribute to one over-arching political-religious construct.¹⁴ It is crucial to note here that the particular pattern of European monarchical rule that these Arab thinkers presumably had in mind was by no means static, but rather was a fairly recent development reflecting the move in Europe away from an open-ended, dynastic, and religiously legitimated model not unlike that of pre-modern Arab political orders. According to Benedict Anderson, in his discussion of the “dynastic realm” that prefigured the onset of the nationalist idea in Europe around the seventeenth century,

Kingship organizes everything around a high centre. Its legitimacy derives from divinity, not from populations, who, after all, are subjects, not citizens. In the modern conception, state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory. But in the older imagining, where states were defined by centres, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another.¹⁵

Anderson proceeds in his argument to discuss the salience of sexual politics and royal intermarriage in the process of outlining legitimacy and authority in the age of dynasties,

¹² *Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.b. “malik.”

¹³ Bernard Lewis, “Monarchy in the Middle East,” in *Middle East Monarchies*, 18.

¹⁴ Ayalon, *Language and Change*, 37.

¹⁵ B. Anderson, 19.

citing as an example a long chain of titulature for the House of Habsburg that resembles the Arab-Ottoman example quoted above.¹⁶ If modern European monarchy was worth highlighting by Middle Eastern authors as so fundamentally antithetical to the traditional Arab understanding of the institution, then it must be remembered that this was not always the case; Anderson's description of the pre-nationalist dynastic realm in Europe accords very strongly with the open-ended type of rule with which the Arabs continued to identify so strongly.

In light of all this, Hussein's willful assumption of the title *malik* – bearing in mind that he was the first Arab ruler in the twentieth century to claim it – is extremely curious. On one hand, it signifies a major departure from the deep-seated pejorative understanding of the word, as Hussein clearly believed the title to carry a certain prestige or dignity that was non-existent just half a century before, when no Muslim ruler would call himself king for fear of being identified with either foreign, limited, or profane monarchy and in turn deemed an un-Islamic and unworthy leader. Apparently basing his new claim to kingship on the recent post-dynastic European monarchical model – these foreign kings no longer being viewed with enmity and disrespect, but rather as “eminent symbols of potency and high standing”¹⁷ – Hussein adopted the title *malik* with a view to the future, ostensibly believing that only this nomenclature could afford him the domestic legitimacy and international prestige that he craved in the new post-Ottoman world.¹⁸ This theme of borrowing and re-fashioning an undoubtedly modern and Western construct of monarchy will be evaluated in more depth in the chapters that follow.

On the other hand, Hussein's adoption of the title *malik* – no matter how modernistic his intent – does not exemplify a full-fledged break with tradition; Hussein at this juncture could not have been at all comfortable with the contemporary European practice whereby

¹⁶ Ibid., 20.

¹⁷ Ayalon, “Arab Monarchies,” 25.

¹⁸ Ibid., 26.

royal titles defined one “territorial or national kingdom.”¹⁹ Thus while, as we have said, Hussein was clearly engaging in a project of circumscribing some new field of authority for himself, out of reach from the Ottoman suzerains – and actually using a title that in the past had been stigmatized for being narrow and therefore illegitimate – he did not match the two up in a way that would lay the groundwork for some new, delimited nation-state. To the contrary, Hussein insisted on being called King of all the Arabs and actually made a claim to the Islamic Caliphate in all but name.²⁰ The petition by the notables and ulema reflected this broad conception of monarchy: “We recognize His Majesty our lord and master al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali as our King, we the Arabs, and he will act amongst us according to the book of God Almighty and the laws of His Prophet, prayer and peace upon him.” Further on, the petition included an oath of allegiance to Hussein as a new “‘religious authority’ [*marji‘ dini*]...pending the decision of the Islamic world in the matter of the Islamic Caliphate.”²¹ Hussein then made a bid for widespread Islamic suzerainty by issuing a *fatwa* to be sent to India’s Muslims. And a few months after the coronation, the Hashemite newspaper *al-Qibla* printed a speech by a Medina notable, who had addressed Hussein as “‘His Highness [*al-jalala*] our Master [*mawlana*] *Amir al Mu’minin* and the Caliph of the Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds, our Lord and Lord of all, Sharif al-Husayn bin ‘Ali.”²² This was to be no ordinary modern European-style territorial kingship.

Hussein was not content merely asserting the authority of his new position over Arabs and Muslims; he also eagerly sought to advertise his accession to the Arab throne to the world, especially to the Allies who were paying special attention to his region. Aside from several articles in *al-Qibla* – actually written with foreign audiences in mind – that carefully detailed Hussein’s coronation and claims to Arab sovereignty, Hussein immediately notified

¹⁹ Lewis, “Monarchy,” 18.

²⁰ Teitelbaum, 110. Of course, Hussein later made an overt claim to the mantle of the Caliphate upon its abolition in 1924.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Reprinted and translated in Teitelbaum, 111.

several European powers of his accession by telegram and demanded that he be recognized as King of the Arabs.²³ According to Joshua Teitelbaum, “By having himself declared king not only of the Hijaz but of the Arabs as a whole, he put the British on notice that he was advancing himself as the sovereign in the territories mentioned, but not mutually agreed upon, in the Husayn-McMahon correspondence.”²⁴ Regardless of his ultimate intent and the scope of his ambition, it is clear that Hussein was advancing a claim for international standing with his Arab monarchy – a claim that would be repeated by other Arab kings as they popped up one by one after the war – that heralded the emergence of a new ideal of political leadership in the Arab world that was modern enough to take the same stage as the European monarchs yet still deeply rooted in traditional notions of authority. Hussein was forced by the Allies to compromise over the scope of his kingdom and accept the modified title of “King of the Hijaz,”²⁵ but they accepted the title and symbolism of royalty, and the idea of the modern *malik* in the Arab world was here to stay.

²³ Ayalon, “Arab Monarchies,” 26.

²⁴ Teitelbaum, 112.

²⁵ Teitelbaum, 115; Ayalon, “Arab Monarchies,” 26.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Arab Monarchy in the Modern World

Hussein's Hashemite kingdom – marked by his frequent attempts to augment his power, including his bold public assumption of the Caliphate in 1924 – was short-lived, ending in 1925 with the Saudi invasion of the Hijaz. Yet by this date, two new Arab monarchies – in Egypt and Iraq (at the time, the British Mandate for Mesopotamia) – had already been established and had benefited from several years of experience attempting to root themselves in their respective societies and forge a meaningful sense of legitimacy. Though both these kingdoms in turn came to abrupt ends in the 1950s – Egypt's king was overthrown during the Free Officers' revolution in 1952 and Iraq's during the bloody Ba'athist coup six years later – their ultimate failure places them in a clear minority among modern Arab monarchs. Eight monarchies all created after World War I are still in power today in the Middle East, including two Sharifian kingdoms (in Jordan and Morocco). Monarchy is alive and well in the contemporary Arab world – perhaps more so than in any other region of the world.

This dissertation will explore the political culture of the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchies in the interwar period—two kingdoms that Ayalon notes were similarly “of a more modern type, whose leaders tried to assimilate not just the royal title but also some of the other institutions of the European example,” most notably, for our purposes, constitutionalism.¹ Although according to Ayalon's classification, Hussein's kingdom of the Hijaz represented an example of the other, more traditional and tribal type of Arab monarchy, many of the themes and contradictions that emerge from the aforementioned account of his accession to rule will underlie my study of the Egyptian and Iraqi contexts. Like Hussein, the Iraqi and Egyptian kings in this period were fundamentally concerned with legitimacy, both

¹ Ayalon, “Arab Monarchies,” 24.

domestic and international. As such, ceremonial and political ritual played a key role in defining the scope and guise of these new modern monarchies, just as had been the case with Hussein in Mecca in 1916. Also similar to the Hijazi case, the monarchs in interwar Egypt and Iraq employed a wide and oftentimes contradictory assortment of political languages² and symbols to posture themselves as traditional, time-honored, Islamically legitimate rulers at the same time that they needed to keep up with the changing times and exude a forward-looking outlook and appearance of modernity. By looking closely at the history of the social and cultural meanings and practices of the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchies in this period, it becomes possible to discern several key tensions and issues surrounding the notions of political community and identity in the post-Ottoman context. In this way, the concept of modern Arab monarchy can be read as a metonymy for much broader notions of ideological orientation in the turbulent and heady context of the interwar years in the Arab world.

This first chapter will attempt to outline several different analytical frameworks through which to read these two monarchies and in turn place them conceptually with respect to current understandings of modernity in the Middle East.

The Colonial Angle

It is necessary first to turn briefly to an account of the historical context in which the new Iraqi and Egyptian monarchies came into existence. This naturally leads us to a discussion of the colonial powers and their immediate postwar objectives.

The British – along with several other European powers – had strategic and economic interests in the Middle East that predated the outbreak of World War I but became even more vital as the war drew on and in its aftermath. Britain was especially invested in Egypt – the most economically productive of the Ottoman territories in the nineteenth century – and became even more so after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Britain, along with

² See Avriel Butovsky, “Languages of the Egyptian Monarchy.”

France, felt compelled to intervene in the Egyptian khedive's financial affairs as the stability and security of Egypt were called into question, embarking on a process that culminated in the British occupation of the country in 1882. Though Britain was to play a hand in the affairs of Cairo from that point on, the official status of Egypt as an Ottoman province did not change until 1914, when Britain sought to distance Egypt from Istanbul's grasp and declared Egypt its protectorate. At this point, the Egyptian-Ottoman khedive (who had essentially ruled Egypt as an autonomous province within the Ottoman Empire since the historic Edict of 1841) was transformed into a "sultan" loyal to the British war effort. Control of Egypt, especially Suez, proved to be extremely important to the British during the course of the war, and so they had no intention of renouncing that privilege afterwards. In order to assuage an increasingly politically conscious Egyptian populace, however, which had been sparked to rebellion in 1919 by the actions of Sa'ad Zaghlul and his remarkably popular Wafd party, the British were forced to alter the official political status of Egypt once again. In March 1922, Britain annulled its Protectorate and declared Egypt to be independent under the rule of its current sultan, Fu'ad I (reigning from 1917), who switched titles again and became the first *malik* of modern Egypt the day the Protectorate expired. A year later, after much political chicanery and adept maneuvering,³ the Egyptian monarchy became a constitutional one, though the British reserved their notorious four points and consequently retained much influence over the Palace. Even with the Anglo-Egyptian agreement of 1936 and the accession to the throne of a new, more popular king, Britain still refused to relinquish its political and diplomatic control of a territory so vital to its strategic interests.

The British role in creating the new Iraqi monarchy is much more overt than was the case in Egypt with Fu'ad—in no small part due to the fact that Iraq itself was a brand new colonial construct. Though Britain's interest in the three Ottoman provinces that comprised

³ See Kedourie, "The Genesis of the Egyptian Constitution of 1923" in *The Chatham House Version*.

Mesopotamia was initially much more limited, the war made these lands considerably more important in the eyes of the British, especially once the India Office dispatched an army in 1914 that eventually seized Baghdad from the Ottomans and established an apparatus of occupation there. Though the form of government that would arise in Mesopotamia after the war remained an open question until 1921 (when the first king of Iraq was crowned) it was clear here, too, that the British would be loath to cede absolute control; protecting land and air routes to India, as well as the oilfields in Persia that were operative by that time, was simply too important. Of course, as has now been documented quite thoroughly, the new question for British officials became how to maintain this influence over their new territories in the Middle East (Mesopotamia as well as Transjordan and Palestine) cheaply and efficiently.⁴ No one was more adamant and vocal about concerns of cost and the overextension of troops than Winston Churchill, who in 1920 became the British Secretary of State for the Colonies. It was Churchill who spearheaded the move to dismantle Britain's "short-lived India-type administration"⁵ in Iraq and prop up in its place a new national government: a constitutional monarchy under the leadership of Hussein's son Faisal, who had been extirpated by the French from his throne in Damascus a year earlier. Churchill sold his plan for a Hashemite solution – in Iraq, as well as Transjordan – at the Cairo Conference for Middle Eastern affairs in spring 1921. By August of that year, Faisal had been "elected" king by plebiscite, no matter how dodgy the pretenses. Another modern Arab monarchy was thus born, but this time, unlike they would do a year later in Egypt, the British did not just play a key supporting role in executing the transition to modern national monarchy for the Arabs—in the Iraqi case, they were solely and completely responsible.

⁴ See Darwin, *Britain, Egypt, and the Middle East*; Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*; Hyam, "Churchill and the British Empire."

⁵ Porter, *The Lion's Share*, 259.

Colonial Imaginings of Monarchy

With Fu'ad's accession to the Egyptian throne in 1922, then, Britain found herself playing an integral role vis-à-vis two new monarchies established in former Ottoman Arab territories – Egypt, technically an independent country, with a keen sense of its own distinctive history dating back to the onset of the khedival period and beyond;⁶ and Iraq, a British Mandate being groomed for independence at a later date, whenever the Mandatory authorities felt comfortable with the prospects of the Iraqi regime's loyalty to Westminster. At the same time, we have already seen how Hussein paved the way for the more European-style Arab monarchies – of which Egypt and Iraq are the clearest examples – to make a bid for international standing by posturing themselves as progressive institutions worthy of prestige and honor in the new world of modern nation-states. The interaction between these two monarchical stances or ideologies – the colonial power imagining the role of the Iraqi and Egyptian Thrones in a way conducive to her own needs and interests, while the kings themselves sought to arrogate to themselves all the trappings of prestigious modern-style monarchy as a way to bolster their domestic legitimacy and personal authority – is therefore crucial to this study and worth looking at in more depth.

That the British approached these young Arab monarchies from the perspective of political and economic expediency should come as no surprise to us. Egypt and Iraq were vital strategic interests, and as such, they needed to be governed in the safest and least expensive possible manner. By the time of the Cairo Conference and the imposition of the Hashemite solution, Churchill had already decided that creating monarchies in Iraq and Transjordan would be the panacea to all Britain's problems of foreign governance in those two Arab territories. It is now almost cliché to note that Churchill had a deep-seated affinity for the trappings of monarchy and lamented the “demise of the ‘old world’” of royalty and

⁶ See, for one example among many, Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs*.

pageantry.⁷ But more than this, Churchill saw the Hashemite plan as a means to implement “empire on the cheap,”⁸ along the lines of the time-honored Victorian practice of “indirect rule” perfected by Lord Lugard in Nigeria, which now became once again a chief colonial imperative in these times of economy and domestic political upheaval.⁹ Similarly, Britain saw no need for Fu’ad to be called king until it became politically important to do so; having denied him the title in 1921, the British allowed him to assume it – along with *jalala* (Majesty) – a year later when they worried that other European powers might warm themselves to Fu’ad first and establish a special relationship with him.¹⁰

Underlying these political and economic justifications for the creation of Arab monarchies was a certain British colonial ideology that manifested in this context as a tendency to reify and encourage what they understood to be the time-honored social and political practices and customs of traditional Islamic society in a way that accorded with their perceived order of the colonial world.¹¹ Though this theme is perhaps overstated by David Cannadine in his book *Ornamentalism*, it cannot be denied that the British took some comfort in “creating kings,” in the words of Gertrude Bell, “that stressed ‘solid magnificence’ and ‘ordered dignity.’”¹² On a basic level, monarchy was a political construct to which the British certainly could relate. After establishing Queen Victoria as the Empress of India in 1877, for example, the British went to work doling out princely titles and royal honors on the Indian subcontinent, thus erecting a fairly elaborate system of colonial patronage by which they sought to control their most prized possession.¹³ Churchill himself believed that the Hashemite kingdoms would “establish ‘the very best structure,’ which would be ‘analogous

⁷ Ziegler, “Churchill and the Monarchy”; Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 75.

⁸ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 75.

⁹ See Darwin, *Britain, Egypt, and the Middle East*, for an analysis of this colonial outlook.

¹⁰ Foreign Office (F.O.) minute (London) to Allenby telegram, 7 Mar. 1922, FO 371/7732. See Chapter 3 for further analysis of this aspect of British policy-making.

¹¹ The following discussion hails from Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*.

¹² *Ibid.*, 77.

¹³ Bernard S. Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” in Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*.

to princely states in India.”¹⁴ Even before the Cairo Conference, several British officials – including T.E. Lawrence as well as Mark Sykes and Aubrey Herbert of the Cairo-based Arab Bureau – had started to see themselves playing the role of “king-maker,”¹⁵ believing firmly that establishing post-war Hashemite kingdoms (“agrarian in nature and almost medieval in structure”¹⁶) would be an ideal way to preserve the traditional order of things in the Arab territories.¹⁷

Indigenous Monarchical Imaginings: Appearances, Language, and Modernity

At the same time that the British were conceiving these new Arab monarchies in Egypt and Iraq (and later, Transjordan) as quintessentially traditional – and therefore similar, knowable, and ultimately more docile – the kings themselves were imagining ways in which they could portray themselves as more modern. This is effectively where we can begin to understand why these rulers could be so willing to assume a title we have seen was widely held to be pejorative and even *haram* throughout Islamic history. Ayalon’s analysis is again extremely instructive and is adopted here fully. He writes,

Perhaps more significant [an explanation for the preference for monarchy] was a more recent cause for the lure of kingship: the contemporary Western example, in which royal power seemed to be associated with a dignified international status. Kings and queens in Europe—above all, again, those of Britain, the mightiest power of the day—were widely acknowledged symbols of proud dominion. Majestically sovereign and subordinate to no other human sway, these Western monarchs featured an attractive model. With the decline and later disappearance of the caliphate, joining the international circle of respectable royalties seemed to many leaders in the region the obvious course to follow. Establishing monarchies thus corresponded not only to the tradition of the region but also to what seemed norms of modern international prestige.¹⁸

This passage underscores the obvious shift away from the traditional Arab and Muslim understandings of the modern Western practice of monarchy that we highlighted

¹⁴ Cannadine, 75.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Cannadine, 73.

¹⁷ Toby Dodge’s recent book *Inventing Iraq* deals with this same theme of neo-traditionalism, though focusing on Britain’s anti-Ottomanism, land policy, and views of the noble sheikh class.

¹⁸ Ayalon, “Arab Monarchies,” 24.

earlier, in which the word *malik* was ascribed to European kings specifically because they were seen to represent illegitimate, secular, and temporal rule over narrowly defined and therefore ill-conceived kingdoms. This all began to change by the late-nineteenth century, once colonial influence in the region became more entrenched and pronounced, and the Arabic printing press was used increasingly to disseminate foreign ideas and Arab interpretations of those ideas.¹⁹ With time, Arab depictions of European rulers grew less derogatory and more laudatory, as Arab intellectuals involved in the translation of foreign texts began to convey European royal titlature with oftentimes lofty Arabic diction and then standardize these written formulas in print.²⁰ Foreign kings thus came to be respected and even venerated by Arab-Muslim intellectuals seeing the West as a potent model for asserting political authority in times of acute change. It was only a matter of time until these new conceptions of modern monarchical rule gained currency in the Arab world, to the point that Hussein's assumption of the title *malik* in 1916 was not only passable or acceptable, but highly desirable – an act to be emulated many times over throughout the region.

To say that the Arab view towards European monarchy had become much more favorable, or that Western-style kingship provided a model that Arab rulers willfully emulated in the twentieth century, does not mean that the concepts necessarily translated from one society to another so readily. In another insightful work on the ways in which the Arabic language adapted to the new linguistic requirements arising from increasingly intimate colonial contact, Ayalon provides a cogent thesis for understanding what might happen when a foreign concept like European nationalist monarchy requires accurate representation in Arabic print. He writes,

Most of the solutions to Arabic's nineteenth-century lexical problems came from its rich resources. These could be exploited in a number of ways. Writers

¹⁹ Ayalon, *Language and Change*, 13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 40-41. For example, Louis VI of France was called "This great *malik*"; and Prince Napoleon III was given the honorific of *jalalat al-malik al a'zam* ("His Majesty the Great King"). The latter is particularly significant given the sacrosanct connotation of *jalala*; traditionally this term was reserved only for God.

could derive new words—neologisms—from existing roots, revivify terms from the vast stock of obsolete Arabic expressions to denote new ideas, extend the range of reference of current words to embrace new meanings, or combine two or all three of these methods by way of making verbal compounds. In drawing upon the treasures of their own language, Arab writers were guided primarily by the principle of analogy; what dictated the application of existing or newly remodeled words to novel notions was a conceived sharing or similarity of contents. In the process, new ideas lent their meaning to Arabic expressions, sometimes replacing, but more commonly adding to, their existing import. The result was a broad array of verbal creations with modified and extended range of meaning, featuring various degrees of proximity between their initial content and the new concept they now came to designate.²¹

When this analysis is applied to our case study of Hussein and his bid to be king of the Arabs, it becomes clear that his understanding and usage of the word *malik* – a title that he was absolutely committed to – by no means represented a seamless translation of the concept of European monarchy, but rather constitutes an example of how an old Arabic word was simultaneously re-imagined and broadened to embrace and convey new meaning—though with undoubtedly ambiguous results. The reappearance and willful adoption of the word *malik* was thus not a “revitalisation of the old title but rather a calque of ‘king’ or ‘roi’ in the modern European sense,”²² which, no matter how desirable in theory, could only be imperfectly represented in the transitional modern Arabic of the period. Moreover, as part and parcel of this process of translating a new foreign concept using the old, traditional lexicon of Arabic, it is highly probable that several layers of meaning for the same words denoting the concept of modern monarchy could have existed side-by-side. With the meanings of key political words so fluid at the turn of the century, it is unlikely that any two Arab rulers approached the idea of modern European-style kingship in the same way. By the time that Faisal and Fu’ad acceded to the throne, the meaning of *malik* was very much up for grabs.

The complexity and ambiguity of this modern royal titlature becomes even more significant when we consider that modern conceptions of political community underwent the

²¹ Ibid., 6.

²² *Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. “malik.”

same uneasy process of translation and adaptation in the turn-of-the-century Arab context. It is commonly known that the Arabic word *umma* has been construed throughout Islamic history to denote a broad community of Muslim believers that knows no ethnic, linguistic, or territorial bounds—a meaning still current in the Middle East today. Yet once Arab intellectuals in the mid-nineteenth century started to encounter secular nationalism in Europe – a concept of political orientation that had been alien to the Middle East previously – this new and modern foreign idea interacted with the traditional notion of the *umma* in complex ways. As these intellectuals began to write about foreign political communities in the burgeoning Arab press, *umma* became the favorite term they would use to approximate the concept of “nation” in its modern-day sense.²³ Multiple and overlapping meanings of *umma* began to proliferate around the literate Arab world. In 1881, for example, Husayn al-Marsafi – a sheikh at al-Azhar – “defined *umma* as an entity determinable not merely by faith but also by territory and language.”²⁴ In the case of *umma* – unlike that of *malik* – the traditional Arabic meaning did not disappear in favor of a calque or approximation of a modern European one. Rather, conceptions of the over-arching Islamic *umma* continued to exist alongside writings in which individual foreign nations such as France or England were classified as *ummas*—a phenomenon that Ayalon concludes must have had “a seriously confusing effect on the Arab discussion of modern nations, and to have delayed the semantic transformation of the term,” with the possible upshot of hampering “the assimilation of the idea itself in the region.”²⁵

Whatever the long-term effects of this rocky lexical adaptation, it is clear that these fluid and unstable meanings of both monarchy and nation in the Arab world could not rest easily atop one another, but rather had to take their respective places on the symbolic battlefield that Arab rulers would enter in order to assert their unique political identities and

²³ Ayalon, *Language and Change*, 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

proclaim their legitimacy and authority. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the ensuing abolition of the Caliphate in Turkey decimated long-established structures of political and religious orientation in the Middle East and opened the field wide open for local rulers around the region to re-fashion their identities and forge new political communities. At the same time, as the foregoing analysis demonstrates, modern and traditional notions of communal and political identity as well as rule and kingship managed to co-exist, however uneasily, and comprised a cauldron of cultural material from which the new Arab polities established in the wake of the Ottoman Empire could draw. It is certainly true that Arab rulers still assumed new titles with altered meanings as a way of continuing the traditional practice of asserting and delimiting one's slice of rulership from a broader Other; as Lewis notes in an oft-quoted passage, "To assert his independence against the Ottoman sultan, the khedive of Egypt became a sultan; to assert his independence against the king of England, the sultan of Egypt became a king."²⁶ Still, it does not naturally follow that a strict territorial nationalism was the logical conclusion for these new political entities and their ostensibly modern rulers. Hussein, once his bid to become king of the Arabs was scuttled, never stopped politicking for a broader Arab or Islamic constituency; and as we will see, Fu'ad and Faruq I actively sought the mantle of the Caliphate, whereas Faisal (and, though to a lesser extent, his son Ghazi I) doggedly pursued a grander Arab kingdom reaching to Damascus. The idea of modern Arab monarchy, as put into practice in interwar Egypt and Iraq, was imperfectly conceived, infinitely complex, fraught with contradictions and unresolved tensions, and perpetually shifting in meaning.

Political Culture, Traditional Authority, and the Problem of Legitimacy

It is clear from the foregoing analysis that the modern meanings of both political community and rulership were highly unsettled at the turn of the twentieth century in the

²⁶ Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, 53.

Middle East, and that the notion of modern Arab monarchy as it manifested at the time would be caught right in the middle of this rather contentious conceptual playing field. It thus makes sense to turn now to the question of political legitimacy in the modern Middle East and ask to what extent the fundamentally ambiguous nature and scope of modern Arab monarchy undermined the efforts of the new rulers to assert their legitimacy in their respective kingdoms. This, in turn, leads us to a brief analysis of the meaning of political culture—a highly loaded term from the political science literature that begs a quick overview and careful conceptualization of its own.

In his pioneering work on the question of legitimacy in Arab politics, Michael Hudson argues that legitimacy poses the central problem of governments in the Middle East to this day, since “Arab politicians must operate in a political environment in which the legitimacy of rulers, regimes, and the institutions of the states themselves is sporadic and, at best, scarce.”²⁷ This condition has long-lasting and negative consequences for the region, according to Hudson, since it breeds a “prevailing popular cynicism about politics”²⁸ that makes it perpetually difficult for political leaders and rulers of Arab states to forge meaningful and efficacious relationships with their nations. Hudson takes as his starting point the seminal work on political authority and organization of sociologist Max Weber, who argued that “without legitimacy...a ruler, regime, or governmental system is hard-pressed to attain the conflict-management capability essential for long-run stability and good government,” and also that, as a result, “the optimal or most harmonious relationship between the ruler and the ruled is that in which the ruled accept the rightness of the ruler’s superior power.”²⁹ Along Weberian lines, Hudson proceeds throughout his own work to attempt to discern several key criteria for political legitimacy – qualities that a certain ruler may possess,

²⁷ Hudson, 2.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Oxford UP, 1947), 124-26, quoted in Hudson, 1.

or specific features of a ruler's apparatus of authority that can bolster his position in the eyes of his people – and then identify the complex ways in which these legitimating factors interact with various elements of the Arab world's unique political culture.

For Hudson – as well as for many scholars engaged in the political culture debate since the 1960s³⁰ – political culture can be understood to refer loosely to “all politically relevant orientations, whether of a cognitive, evaluative, or expressive sort” that are held by the members of a political system, and which consequently serve to frame the dominant discourse and internal dynamics of that system.³¹ Working within the Arab context, Hudson goes on to identify all those different strands of orientation that loom large in the Arab political field – including nationalism, Arabism, Islamism, and ethnic-based solidarity – in order to understand the complexities and difficulties inherent in the process of constructing a meaningful legitimacy of rule. Hudson's conceptualization of how a ruler's legitimacy claims intersect with and ultimately derive from his community's particular political culture – all its “common revered loyalties”³² with which people identify – is useful and is loosely accepted here; though if wrongly construed, this slightly reductionist or essentialist model can easily lend itself to unhelpful analyses that attempt to locate “primordial” elements of Arab political culture resisting all kinds of social and political change.

In the introduction to his edited volume on Middle Eastern monarchy and the “challenge of modernity,” Joseph Kostiner posits another conceptualization of political culture that proves equally important for our purposes. Rather than viewing political culture merely as a set of loosely held orientations in society that frame a political system's internal dynamics (impacting rulers and subjects alike), Kostiner focuses instead on what we can call the political culture of the rulers themselves—the underlying principles, styles, and patterns

³⁰ See also Gabriel Ben-Dor, “Political Culture Approach”; G. Hossein Razi, “Legitimacy, Religion, and Nationalism.”

³¹ Hudson, 33, quoting Verba, “Comparative Political Culture,” 521-22.

³² Hudson, 11.

of authority and political leadership that dictate how a ruler operates in and postures himself relative to society.

Kostiner's emphasis is on discerning the "monarchical legacy of earlier Middle Eastern empires,"³³ in order to understand how the new modern kings of the postwar period – including those in Egypt and Iraq – ultimately responded to, utilized, and built from long-standing traditional patterns of authority in the region. He identifies two main underlying principles of this traditional rule in the Middle East, which he calls "individual-absolutist" (meaning, essentially, one-man rule), and "dynastic-hereditary." These two – by no means mutually exclusive – are in turn characteristically propped up by certain monarchical expressions of authority and legitimacy, including "administrative and military apparati," kinship and religious linkages, and "royal entourages and households."³⁴ To this list may be added the notion of patrimonialism – defined by Reinhard Bendix as "an extension of the ruler's household in which the relation between the ruler and his officials remains on the basis of paternal authority and filial dependence"³⁵ – which Kostiner examines later on, and which certainly fits neatly enough into his two main models listed above.

Having identified these overarching characteristics of traditional monarchical rule in the Middle East, Kostiner then provides a general picture of how they functioned in an Arab political milieu that lacked, through to the twentieth century, any real centralized or standardized norm of practice. This is a crucial question, especially given the fact that the aforementioned ruling principles were always applied *without* official Islamic legitimacy.³⁶ As might be expected in such a fluid and diffuse political context, rulers' execution of these main tropes of traditional rule – absolutism, dynasticism, and patrimonialism – was highly

³³ Kostiner, "Introduction" in *Middle East Monarchies*, 1.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Bendix, *Max Weber*, 330-1.

³⁶ Kostiner, "Introduction," 1.

variable, and as such their legitimacy could stem from an amalgam of any number of different sources.³⁷ Kostiner writes,

Without an official religious sanction, adoption and exercise of these qualities did not develop into a desired norm or into an official doctrine of monarchical rule. Monarchical principles in the Arab and Ottoman Empires evolved more haphazardly, typical of a regime created by a forceful seizure of government, following Persian, Greek, and Byzantine examples as well as local practices and arbitrary rulers' interests.

Islamic monarchies had to cope with the continuous challenges inherited in these characteristics: the need to legitimize and justify a rule, which, to borrow Jurgen Habermas's expression, was in a 'legitimacy deficit,' and the need to balance absolutist rule, based on administrative and military arms, with deference to ascriptive, religious, ethnic, and class divisions, to sustain dynasty and factional dynamism.³⁸

This passage is critical for several reasons. For one, Kostiner's analysis here demonstrates that just as the linguistic and cultural meanings of monarchy and political community were highly fluid and unsettled in the pre-modern period – a situation that we have said foreshadowed the imperfect translation and adaptation of these key concepts once the post-war context of nation-state nationalism took hold in the Arab world – the patterns of rulership itself across the region were similarly inconsistent and open to local interpretation. Without one overarching Islamic conception of authority and governance to establish a unifying system or *modus vivendi* for all the ruling houses that reigned simultaneously throughout the region, the legacy of monarchical rule into the twentieth century would be a highly malleable and contestable one. Secondly, Kostiner's argument echoes that of Hudson, at least insofar as he calls attention to Arab rulers' "legitimacy deficit" (in the words of Habermas³⁹) and the need for ruling authorities to remain constantly sensitive to dominant strands of social, cultural, and religious orientation in order to uphold traditional rule, close the legitimacy gap, and "sustain dynasty."

³⁷ See Toledano, *State and Society*, for a discussion of the salience of the dynastic theme in imagining the mid-nineteenth-century Egyptian Khedivate.

³⁸ Kostiner, "Introduction," 1-2.

³⁹ From Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, quoted in Kostiner, "Introduction," 2.

In light of Kostiner's concern with the "continuous challenges" that Islamic rulers inherited from such a fluid and dynamic legacy of traditional monarchical authority, it becomes crucial for our purposes to flesh out what happens to them in the twentieth-century context. This is especially true of the post-war period, once the Ottoman Empire collapsed and, as we have said, the field of political orientation was blown wide open in the region with the establishment of brand new and modern nation-states. On one hand, as Kostiner notes, modern European-style monarchies clearly constituted the logical follow-up to the aforementioned patterns of traditional authority: not only, as we have shown with our analysis of linguistic change in the Arab world, did the model of European territorial kingdoms during the nineteenth century gradually become a popular source of emulation, but also it accorded closely with the traditional ideals of absolutism and dynasticism that had prevailed in the region.⁴⁰

Yet at the same time, the heady postwar context precluded any possibility of a seamless transposition of the traditional monarchical legacy into the new Arab Middle East. Hudson, again drawing from Weber as well as the work of sociologist S.N. Eisenstadt,⁴¹ argues that this transition was so fraught with difficulties and unique tensions because Arab society since the turn of the century has been "'post-traditional'—an obscure, ambivalent condition conducive neither to traditional legitimacy nor to [Weber's] rationalist legitimacy."⁴² This situation naturally had huge consequences for those Arab monarchs who desired to posture themselves as rational, enlightened, and quintessentially "modern" rulers of the European mold at the same time that they could not renounce the traditional bases of authority and patterns of rule that crystallized their stature in the absence of official Islamic legitimacy. Hudson argues that,

⁴⁰ Kostiner, "Introduction," 5.

⁴¹ S.N. Eisenstadt, "Post-Traditional Societies and the Continuity and Reconstruction of Tradition," *Daedalus*, 102:1 (1973), 1-28.

⁴² Hudson, 17.

Arab political instability arises from the incongruity of primordial and particularist values with contemporary norms, notably those of modernity, and structures, foremost among them the state. Traditional identifications in some cases correspond with present-day sovereignties but in most they do not, being either subnational or supranational in scope.⁴³

Hudson thus highlights here two key tropes or “norms” of political self-identity that would become central in the eyes of Arab rulers and their subjects alike in the interwar period: modernism and nationalism. No monarch seeking to forge a meaningful base of legitimacy in the twentieth century could ignore the newfound primacy of these two ideological orientations. As such, they became central themes in the kings’ own representations of themselves and their authority to their people – something we will see repeatedly in our analysis of primary materials from Egypt and Iraq during the 1920s and 1930s.

Of course, no matter how hard the kings tried, posturing themselves as the spokesmen for and symbols of both modernism and nationalism would be no easy business. This is especially true in the case of the latter. We have already seen how the idea of circumscribing authority over one territorial kingship – one newly imagined community – would be problematic in light of the cultural and linguistic norms working against it. Similarly, as Kostiner and Lisa Anderson⁴⁴ both argue, several aspects of traditional monarchical authority in the Middle East actually work against modern nationalism and the standardization and centralization of political and social life that it necessarily entails.⁴⁵ Nationalism essentially disrupted a key balance, however tenuous, over which pre-modern rulers in the Middle East had presided, between overseeing gradual but inexorable economic, administrative, and technological development on one hand, and arbitrating between many various factions and social divisions that sought to benefit from these advances, on the other. In other words, the patrimonial structure of rule could only really work in a context in which the rulers were able

⁴³ Hudson, 165.

⁴⁴ See Lisa Anderson, “Dynasts and Nationalists: Why Monarchies Survive” in *Middle East Monarchies*.

⁴⁵ Again, see B. Anderson for his analysis of this process of transition.

to position themselves “above the sociopolitical system” and as “an overall patron” of a wide cross-section of different solidarity groups (whether based on class, profession, sect, or ethnicity) vying for a place in the overall order—in short, a society in which its “diversity, rather than its uniformity, is a virtue.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Alan Richards and John Waterbury argue in their analysis of the surviving kingships in the Middle East that “what the monarchs want is a plethora of interests, tribal, ethnic, professional, class-based and partisan, whose competition for public patronage they can arbitrate. . . . The monarch’s rule is to divide, chastise and regulate, but not to humiliate or alienate important factions.”⁴⁷

Nationalism inevitably runs counter to such contexts of social diversity and factionalism that allow rulers to play the role of the overall patron. Whereas the forces of nationalism hinge on carefully pinpointing, in the name of the people,⁴⁸ specific unifying linguistic, ethnic, and cultural identities, monarchy typically thrives on cultural multiplicity and ambiguity in society and emphasizes instead “the primacy of kinship,” patriarchal family structures, and dynasticism above all else.⁴⁹ Nationalism re-orientates a state’s society in one overarching direction – towards the center – whereas monarchy ideally seems to need a concomitance of centrifugal social and cultural forces. The paradox for our modern monarchs in Egypt and Iraq is that they felt compelled, for purposes of establishing legitimacy, to posture *themselves* at the center of a highly dynamic society by assuming incongruous political roles and many contradictory strands of identity: dynastic *and* nationalist; territorial *and* supranational; modernist *and* traditional; absolutist *and* constitutional; Arab *and* European. Of course, the fact that the nationalism they were forced

⁴⁶ This analysis hails from Kostiner, “Introduction,” 4-5.

⁴⁷ Richards and Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, 297-98, quoted in Kostiner, “Introduction,” 4-5.

⁴⁸ See Bendix, *Kings or People*, for an analysis of the tension between traditional monarchy and modern political identity, most centrally in Europe. Chapter two in *Imagined Communities* is also useful.

⁴⁹ L. Anderson, “Dynasts and Nationalists,” 57-8.

to embrace was largely of a “negative,”⁵⁰ anti-colonialist type, which sought to expel from Arab soil the foreign powers upon whose good graces and clout the kings themselves relied, only exacerbated this fundamental problem. Remaining at the center of so many spectra of cultural and social identity in their respective nations would become increasingly difficult for the Egyptian and Iraqi kings in the context of the extremely rapid and sweeping social transformation in the region that set in after the First World War. It is thus to this subject that we now turn.

Arab Monarchy and Social Transformation

In his influential discussion of political systems in countries undergoing acute social transformation – focusing on those societies moving away from traditional political organization – Samuel Huntington characterizes the “king’s dilemma” as the situation that arises when “the very centralization of power necessary for promoting social, cultural, and economic reform made it difficult or impossible for the traditional monarchy to broaden its power base and assimilate the new groups produced by modernization.”⁵¹ In other words, traditional rulers who attempt to go with the flow of modernization out of political necessity end up nonetheless compromising their own position atop society, as a result of the creation of new social classes and forces in the political field that they cannot ultimately win over or control. Huntington also posits that the “new middle class” as well as the ranks of military officers were among the most integral destabilizing forces along these lines in modernizing societies, which would inevitably seek to wrest power away from the forces of traditionalism, leading ultimately to revolution in certain cases.

It certainly cannot be denied that both Egyptian and Iraqi society were experiencing “profound social and economic upheaval” during the postwar period, “brought on by

⁵⁰ Safran, 102.

⁵¹ Huntington, *Political Order*, 177-91, quoted in Hudson, 166.

demographic pressures (population growth and increasing urbanization); the expansion of the educational system, which created larger politically conscious publics⁵²; the establishment of new industries and professions; and unstable economies that only worsened with the onset of world depression in the 1930s. One major upshot of this urban, educational, and professional expansion was the dramatic growth and increasing political significance of the “new *effendiyya*” class in both national contexts in this period. Though the meaning and scope of this social classification is still open to much debate among historians of the modern Middle East – and no doubt the word meant different things in different countries across the Arab world – for the purposes of this dissertation, the *effendiyya* will be understood as a group of urban, Western-educated middle-class professionals in both Egypt and Iraq, who took on a wide array of newly created occupations in both locales as the social and economic fabric continually expanded and evolved.⁵³ It may be true, as Michael Eppel argues was the case in Iraq, that the *effendiyya* never reached a level of clear class consciousness of their own, to the point that they could become potent and independent-minded political actors.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, most scholars of the period now seem to agree that the emergence of the *effendiyya* constituted a major social change in the new Arab nation-states, which in turn seemed to have a profound impact on the development of their nationalist ideologies and political orientations.

It is now taken for granted by many historians that the fundamental problem of the modern Egyptian and Iraqi monarchies – the chief reason they fell out of favor by the 1950s – was their traditionalism and parochialism in the face of dynamic social change—most notably reflected by their willful cultivation of the elite classes in society at the expense of all others, including the expansive nationalist *effendiyya*. This is certainly the point of view adopted by Huntington, who blames the Iraqi and Egyptian monarchs’ shortsighted response to the

⁵² Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, “Why Did Arab Monarchies Fall?” in *Middle East Monarchies*, 44.

⁵³ Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, 11.

⁵⁴ See Eppel, “Growth of Nationalism.”

king's dilemma – their dogged effort to sustain the social and political status quo against better odds – for their ultimate downfall. The political significance of class consciousness has not been properly studied to this day in the interwar Egyptian context, but has received much wider attention with regards to Iraq, beginning with the publication in the late 1970s of Hanna Batatu's seminal work on the "old social classes" there. Batatu's central argument is that the alliance formed between the ruling house and ex-Sharifian officers (on one hand), and the large landowners and tribal sheikhs (on the other), was robust enough to establish a state and ward off potential threats to it until the late 1940s, when the *effendiyya* and military classes amassed sufficient power to overthrow the old and outmoded order.⁵⁵ This, of course, certainly seems to underline Huntington's thesis that the monarchies' failure to embrace social change is what lay at the root of their demise. This has been a hugely influential argument in the modern Middle East historiography and has proven extremely difficult to challenge.⁵⁶ Kostiner himself partly attributes the failure of the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchs to their tendency to "aristocratize themselves" by buying large chunks of land, as well as their inability and unwillingness to accommodate the new, educated middle classes whose members exceeded the traditional social networks in their respective societies.⁵⁷

It is undeniable that the postwar Egyptian and Iraqi monarchies adopted many of the trappings of royal aristocracy and nobility; bought large tracts of land and forged alliances with elite landowners; and, by the end of the Second World War, appeared to have fallen completely out of touch with their nations and the new social classes that colored the new and complex socioeconomic fabric in each country. Yet as a full explanation for these monarchies' inevitable downfall – and also as an analysis of the changing political culture in Arab countries in the context of postwar nationalism and anti-colonialism – this model of the

⁵⁵ See Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*.

⁵⁶ The edited volume by Wm. Roger Louis and Robert Fernea successfully augments Batatu's work and raises several important questions stemming from his approach and analysis.

⁵⁷ Kostiner, "Introduction," 6.

monarchies' stagnancy in the face of rapid social change seems to be at once incomplete, overstated, overly teleological, and rather simplistic.

It is, quite the contrary, a central argument of this dissertation that the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchies were never passive or dormant bystanders in the dynamic interwar years, remaining unreceptive to and ultimately crippled by the social transformation in this period, but rather were active social and political players seeking to remain firmly in the center of their respective countries' society and rapidly evolving political culture. If, as it will be argued is the case, the first monarchs upon their accession initially focused more on consolidating their power, posturing themselves as modern kings to the foreign powers, and making a bid for a more traditional brand of absolutist kingship and dynastic authority, by the 1930s this limited monarchical conception would be scrapped out of necessity. Acutely aware by the early 1930s (though we certainly see signs of this much earlier) of the perils of remaining aloof from the ever evolving "national political field"⁵⁸ in their countries, the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchies set out to re-engage with their respective societies and win back for themselves a central and integral place not only in the political arena, but the social and cultural ones – both inextricably tied up with the ideology of nationalism – as well.

In this way, we are fundamentally concerned with what Avriel Butovsky has termed the "political languages" of monarchy: not only the "vocabularies" deployed by the monarchs and their supporters and the ways in which they intersected with and were grafted onto others (for example those of "colonialism, constitutionalism, nationalism, reform, social order"); but also, just as importantly, the ways in which "the monarchical forces both read and tried to draw the social map, and the degree to which they were successful in imposing their vision upon society."⁵⁹ In fact, as we will see, the practically unfettered exuberance and loyalty shown to each of the young heirs apparent upon their accession to the throne in both countries

⁵⁸ See Zubaida, *Islam, People, and the State*, 145-52, quoted in Roger Owen, "Class and Class Politics in Iraq Before 1958: The 'Colonial and Post-Colonial State'" in Fernea and Louis, eds., *The Iraqi Revolution*, 155.

⁵⁹ Butovsky, "Languages of the Egyptian Monarchy," 56-57.

in the mid-1930s reflects just how successful this engagement with the social field was—and just how firmly rooted the idea of a certain image or ideal of monarchy had become in these new Arab nations in a relatively short period.

The perhaps surprising popularity of modern Arab kingship in these contexts – or at least of certain key features of the social, political, and cultural meaning of these monarchies – is thus one central theme in this dissertation. The fluidity of the social and political arenas and the high level of interplay between the monarchy and public sphere constitute another. In many ways, this type of analysis accords closely with the aforementioned study of Iraqi social change by Eppel, and also the work of James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni, who, in their surveys of the evolution of Egyptian nationalism, work to connect salient ideological and intellectual trends during the interwar period to certain key underlying social and economic forces. In *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, Gershoni and Jankowski are especially attuned to the forces of social transformation and the integral role that the burgeoning *effendiyya* class came to play in Egyptian society. In this volume, the co-authors seek to investigate in the context of 1930s Egypt three large questions of national identity: “‘Who are we?’ ‘What do we want?’ ‘What are we to become?’” They then proceed to focus on the cultural consumption of the nationalist *effendiyya* as well as what they aptly call Egyptian society’s “feedback loop,” whereby this large class shapes the salient political languages and themes in society.⁶⁰ They write,

The emergence of a new audience of Egyptian nationalist consumers along with the feedback effects of their selective consumption of nationalist ideas and policies together played a central role in the gradual ascent of a more supra-nationalist outlook. The capacity of newly literate and newly politicized Egyptians of a more Islamic background to assimilate nationalist concepts as their own depended on the redirection of those concepts into more Arab-Islamic channels. The entry of these middle strata into the negotiation over national identity was the decisive event shaping the evolution of Egyptian nationalism.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, xiii.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

Though Gershoni and Jankowski do acknowledge the wide popularity of King Faruq upon his coronation, and focus in one chapter on his bid for the Islamic Caliphate after 1936, they largely ignore the place of the monarch in the feedback loop and in their answers to the questions posed above.

This dissertation intends to correct for this lacuna in their conception of interwar Egyptian political culture and re-focus attention on where the monarchy fit in and how it asserted its presence in the public sphere—along the lines of Roger Owen’s resolve to “bring the state back in” when discussing social change in interwar Iraq.⁶² By closely examining how the Iraqi and Egyptian kings postured themselves with respect to their societies, and paying attention to the political languages, symbols, and representations these monarchies employed, I thus attempt to flesh out the meaning of political culture in the Middle East context. At the same time, I hope to deepen and broaden Huntington’s notion of the “king’s dilemma.” The real dilemma – for the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchs, at least – was not their hopelessness in the face of social change, but rather how they could manage to remain at the center of their rapidly transforming societies and establish for themselves a dominant cultural presence; and in turn, how they participated in the “feedback loop” and appropriated or manipulated a wide array of fluid political orientations and contested tropes of symbolic capital, all in order to meet these aims and shore up their legitimacy and authority on both modern and traditional grounds.

Methodology: The Symbolism of Politics and Invented Tradition

Clifford Geertz writes, in a famous passage,

At the political center of any complexly organized society...there is both a governing elite and a set of symbolic forms expressing the fact that it is in truth governing...They [the elite] justify their existence and order their actions in terms of a collection of appurtenances that they have either inherited or, in more revolutionary situations, invented. It is these—crowns and coronations, limousines and conferences—that mark the center as center and give what goes on there its aura of

⁶² Owen, 155.

being not merely important but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built.⁶³

Geertz's anthropological analysis of the role of political symbolism and ritual in asserting the centrality of any given order or regime has informed and enriched the work of many historians looking at cultural aspects of rule and political authority, and mine is no exception. Marking "the center as center" is exactly what was at stake for the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchs, who, as we have seen, were compelled to step into the feedback loop, identify the dominant social and ideological currents in their nations (no matter how contradictory), and posture themselves symbolically at the nexus of them all. Consequently, my research will focus on the trappings and "appurtenances" of monarchical rule to which Geertz alludes – such as coronations and other ceremonial practices, as well as media representations – since I believe these kinds of sources to reflect most evocatively the nature of the monarchs' consistent forays into the cultural and social arenas.

Several additional points about this kind of analysis and methodology should be mentioned here briefly. First, focusing on the monarchies' use of ceremonial provides a crucial link to the role of British colonial power in all this, since notions of imperial propriety, ceremony, and decoration always loomed large in the British view of how to manage their colonies and mandates—in turn, rubbing off in interesting and important ways on the local populations and rulers themselves. Secondly, the literature on political symbolism lends itself nicely to my attempt to explain the contradictory images and orientations that our monarchs felt compelled to adopt; as David Kertzer demonstrates, it is the very ambiguity and "multivocality" of political symbols that can make them so useful for rulers, and allow ostensibly conflicting orientations and paradoxical interpretations of political actions to co-exist.⁶⁴ Finally, this cultural and anthropological emphasis greatly enriches my claim that modern Arab monarchy can be read as a metonymy for broader

⁶³ Geertz, "Centers, Kings, and Charisma," 15.

⁶⁴ Kertzer, 11.

debates and tensions regarding identity and the meaning of modernity in the Middle East. As Kertzer as well as Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (in their ground-breaking work on “invented traditions”⁶⁵) all demonstrate, key political symbols aptly put to use in times of marked change can imbue this transition with a deep sense and appearance of “symbolic continuity”⁶⁶ and seamlessly blend the modern and traditional into one over-arching cultural construct. Modern Arab monarchy is one such invented tradition, which bridges the gap between the traditional and modern in complex and meaningful ways.

⁶⁵ See Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*; Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*.

⁶⁶ Kertzer, 45.

Chapter 2: Imagining King Faisal

Life in Iraq at the start of the 1920s was remarkably heady and unpredictable. Each new month seemed to bring surprising spectacles and unforeseen circumstances that altered the thinking of Iraqis and the British colonial administrators alike, and forced them to confront constantly emergent tensions and problems in the three Mesopotamian provinces. The anti-British revolt in the mid-Euphrates region in the summer of 1920 – the suppression of which cost the British heavily and impelled them to expedite the process of political devolution – left the field wide open for discussions about the future of Mesopotamia and the apparatus of rule that would be established in the impending mandate. As might be expected from such a diverse and fractured society as there was in Iraq at this time – divided many ways culturally, ethnically, religiously, and politically – no consensus could be reached to this end.

Yet events had a way of unfolding inexorably in spite of this internal division and confusion. As the British formulated their Mesopotamian policy in London and then fatefully in Cairo in March 1921, Iraqis of all stripes from across the provinces braced themselves for a momentous change of some sort, though they could not know for sure what it would be. The recently appointed Minister of the Interior Sayyid Talib – from a notable Basra family – began politicking to become the ruler of a new centralized Iraqi state with the support of Harry St. John Philby (a talented linguist and experienced colonial officer, now serving as special British advisor to the Baghdad ministry). A group of separatists in Basra seeking to resist the centripetal forces of the burgeoning state apparatus drafted a petition to the new British High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox. Local notables and sheikhs published letters in the quickly growing vernacular press and threw their allegiance several different ways. Soon after the Cairo Conference, Sayyid Talib was surreptitiously arrested and then deported by

the British under shady pretenses. And then at the end of June, Hussein's son, the Hashemite Amir Faisal – having been expelled from the throne in Syria not even a year before – stepped off a British ship at the port of Basra as a candidate for the throne of Iraq and, along with an entourage of local notables and British officials, processed through the city, *en fete* for his arrival. Within three weeks, as Faisal set off on a whistle-stop tour around the provinces, the Council of Ministers in Baghdad passed a unanimous resolution declaring him king of Iraq. Shortly after, Faisal was elected king by a dodgy public referendum that the British engineered and used to tout that he had won ninety-six percent of the vote. And on August 23, Faisal was crowned the first king of Iraq in a short but resplendent and suitably symbolic accession ceremony.

This context – and the rapidity of this procession towards Faisal's coronation – is important for understanding the complex meaning of monarchy in Iraq in its crucial formative period. For in such heady and dynamic times, no single, clear ideal or picture of the Iraqi rulership could readily emerge. Rather, the story of the birth of the modern Iraqi kingship is one of the fluid interplay between three distinct, if overlapping, monarchical imaginings: that of the British colonial officials; that of King Faisal himself (and to some extent, Sayyid Talib before his deportation); and that of the Iraqi people, in all their diversity. The British needed a strong and loyal king in Baghdad in order to foster stability as well as national pride and unity—key prerequisites for the proper realization of indirect rule that would allow them to run the mandate on the cheap. The British also imagined Faisal to be the worthiest leader for the task of Iraqi nation-building due to his traditional and religious stature as *sharif* as well as his Arab nationalist credentials, going back to his role in the Arab revolt against the Ottomans. Faisal himself imagined kingship to be the best way to position himself solidly atop the political and social order of a deeply fragmented country to which he was an outsider, crystallize his authority and legitimacy there, and advance his family's

dynastic goals.¹ At the same time, Faisal – perhaps not unlike his father – seemed to crave the title in order to sell himself and his nation to the international community as major players in the modern world, deserving of their autonomy from the British. Finally, the Iraqi people imagined their new king to be many things all at once: a symbol of national pride and unity; a traditional, pious, and venerable Arab dignitary of eminent lineage; a surefire ticket to independence; and, perhaps most significantly, a modern European-style constitutional (and therefore limited) monarch whose very presence in Baghdad signaled Iraq’s entry into the new world of progressive nation-states. Of course, Faisal could never be all things to all people simultaneously, especially given the constant pressure he faced from the High Commission – a situation that Faisal knew risked making him appear as a British “puppet.”² Nevertheless, the many subtle ways in which these monarchical imaginings overlapped and interweaved in this formative year of Iraqi history go a long way in explaining Iraq’s political culture and patterns of centralized rule throughout the entire monarchical period (and even beyond), as well as the lingering unresolved tensions and questions about national identity and political community that underlay them.

Imagining Iraq’s Future before Faisal

It was not long after the mid-Euphrates revolt subsided that British thinking started to coalesce around the idea of a Hashemite solution for the Iraq Mandate. Ironically, outgoing Civil Commissioner Sir Arnold T. Wilson – who, like many policy-makers in the India Office, had been vocally opposed to indirect rule in Mesopotamia until the rebellion³ – became a major champion of Faisal’s candidature for some sort of rule over the provinces.⁴ In a letter to Cox and Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon, Wilson inquired if the British government

¹ On the subject of Faisal’s dynasticism, see Simon, “The Imposition of Nationalism,” 88.

² Cox to Churchill, 16 Aug. 1921, FO 371/6352.

³ Wilson and the India Office had consistently been at odds over Iraqi policy with the Foreign Office and Arab Bureau, which were decidedly pro-Hashemite during and after the war.

⁴ Paris, 76.

had considered offering Faisal the “Amirate” of Mesopotamia, adding that “Faisal alone of all Arabian potentates has any idea of [the] practical difficulties of running a civilized government on Arab lines. He can scarcely fail to realize that foreign assistance is vital to the continued existence of an Arab state.”⁵ Westminster proved to be immediately receptive to this line of reasoning. Indeed, the British Cabinet instructed Cox upon his arrival in Baghdad that “Sharif Faisal should be offered the Amirate of Mesopotamia... provided that a spontaneous demand for Faisal is forthcoming from a sufficiently representative body of public opinion.”⁶ Though with Faisal “very much the first choice”⁷ of key British officials for the Iraqi rulership, the question of the precise form that the government would take was still ostensibly left open-ended: “Similarly the choice of a ruler (if they decide in favour of a monarchy) will be left to them.”⁸ Resolving the form of rule was thus less important to the British at this stage than simply propping up a candidate who they could trust.

While the British settled on Faisal as the “best and cheapest solution,”⁹ in the words of Churchill, and began to debate how best to get him “elected” by the Iraqi people, Sayyid Talib and Philby – still in the dark about Churchill’s budding Hashemite policy – had other ideas. Philby adamantly opposed the arrival of a Hashemite amir in Iraq and instead committed himself to establishing an autonomous Iraqi republic based on free and equitable elections. He wrote of Sayyid Talib, “I saw him in the role of director of the destinies of an independent ‘Iraq for years to come in whatever capacity might prove to be most appropriate—Prime Minister, for instance, or President of the Republic. From this moment I proceeded to train him for one of those parts.”¹⁰ Sayyid Talib was certainly keen to have Philby’s tutelage, but he nonetheless maintained his own ambitions for rule – revealed to

⁵ Telegram from the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad to Curzon and Cox, 31 July 1920, India Office, L/PS/10/919.

⁶ Instructions of His Majesty’s Government to Cox, 28 Aug. 1920, I.O., L/PS/10/919.

⁷ Bell letter, 25 Dec. 1920, quoted in Burgoyne, 193.

⁸ See note 6 above.

⁹ Churchill to the British Prime Minister, 14 Mar. 1921, I.O., L/PS/10/919.

¹⁰ Philby, *Arabian Days*, 189.

Philby in private – which evince a marked ambivalence about the type and trappings of authority most befitting a new Iraqi ruler. Even though Philby was consistently pressing for a republic with Sayyid Talib as president,¹¹ the latter remained curiously fixated on the themes of royalty, honorifics, and titulature. Philby writes, “he aimed, of course, quite frankly at the crown of ‘Iraq, but above all he wanted to be a prince, a prince of the British realm, and he could not see why King George V should not confer a principedom on him.”¹² In another private conversation, Sayyid Talib inquired whether “some sort of flourish would please the people,” citing his elevation to princely rank as one such example.¹³ Philby replied, “the whole matter of titles and dignities was one for the Arab cabinet to consider... Incidentally I told him that the conferment of a British honour on him to mark the occasion would be more suitable and somewhat naively he asked whether such an honour would carry with it the title of ‘Sir.’”¹⁴ Though Sayyid Talib ultimately lost out in the struggle for Iraqi rulership, his fixation on noble and royal themes remains an important reflection of the open-endedness of political thinking at the time in Iraq.

Philby’s clamor for creating a republic certainly did not come out of nowhere. Like Cox and Gertrude Bell (Oriental Secretary to the High Commission), Philby had his ear close to the ground and was trying to measure Iraq’s burgeoning political culture and act accordingly. In October 1920, for example, Philby and Cox attended a meeting of notables in the southeastern town of Amara, the point of which was to discuss “merely the form that government should take – republic, kingdom, amirate, etc.”¹⁵ Though the lack of open discussion disappointed Philby, he recalled in his diary that “one member of the company expressed the view that a Republic would be more suitable than a monarchy (malik) which they did not want. This opinion was not dissented from – an interesting fact in the face of

¹¹ Philby personal diary, 24 Oct. 1920, St. Antony’s, box 5.

¹² See note 10 above.

¹³ Philby personal diary, 8 Oct. 1920, St. Antony’s, box 5.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Philby personal diary, 7 Oct. 1920, St. Antony’s, box 5.

Sayyid Talib's obvious ambition to be Amir or King."¹⁶ Cox and Bell – who ostensibly collaborated on the publication of comprehensive bi-monthly intelligence reports on Iraqi affairs – reached no clearer conclusions in their attempts to gauge Iraqi popular opinion. The two reports from February reveal several competing ideas about the Iraqi rulership, including a curious Baghdad Sunni preference for the candidature of a Turkish prince for amir and a Shi'ite affinity for the sons of Hussein.¹⁷ A month later, it was reported that “any consensus of opinion as to the appointment of an Amir seems to be as far off as ever.”¹⁸

It was around this time that political life in Iraq started moving inexorably in the direction of the Hashemite solution:¹⁹ many ex-Sharifian officers arrived in the region and began to propagandize on behalf of Faisal; the Cairo Conference locked Britain's Sharifian policy for Iraq into place; and Sayyid Talib would be expelled soon after, by the end of April. The provinces were abuzz with news of Faisal's imminent arrival and probable candidature, and the vernacular press began to fill up with discussions about the Amir's qualifications as well as the idea of kingship more generally. Though Faisal became the clear center of attention from spring 1921 onwards – making his accession to the throne seem like a foregone conclusion – there still remained much ambivalence and confusion concerning the form and trappings of the future apparatus of rule in the Mandate. Additionally, excerpts from the Iraqi local press taken and translated in the intelligence reports reveal the beginnings of the complex and oftentimes contradictory popular imagining of what an Iraqi king should be like. It is here that many of the dominant tropes of the Iraqis' conception and ideal of their modern Arab monarchy become clear.

In their discussions of the proper qualifications for an Iraqi king, several authors (some clearly propagandists for Faisal) based their arguments on the virtues of noble birth

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Baghdad Intelligence Report (B.I.R.) #6, 1 Feb. 1921, FO 371/6350.

¹⁸ B.I.R. #8, 1 Mar. 1921. FO 371/6350.

¹⁹ Timothy Paris writes that the plan was finalized by the end of January 1921.

and honorable Arab lineage—certainly an understandable strategy in light of the traditional patterns of Arab rule outlined in Chapter 1. Yet it is striking to see how many unmistakably modern ideas crept into this traditional language of patrimonialism and Arab kinship. One article in *al-‘Iraq* of April 25 offers the opinion that “the Amir must have qualifications which fit him to represent the honour of the Iraq, he must be of noble birth, capable, trusted by the civilized world and by the people of Iraq.”²⁰ Another article attempts to justify traditional patriarchal family rule Islamically, while tacitly approving of elections: “Islam does not admit of a republic for it may be that the luck of elections might favour some one who was not of suitable birth. King Husain and his sons are the only admissible people.”²¹ Yet another dismisses the republican idea by citing an obviously false tradition of choosing monarchs; this language is particularly interesting for the way it places kingship – which it seems to imply is rooted in tradition – on the same page as republicanism. The author, signed “Iraqi,” writes that “the rule in electing kings, which is different from that in electing the president of a republic, is that they must be of an old ruling house, and we know no Arab house more worthy in these respects than that of the Sharif.”²² In all these examples, we see traditional ideals of rule infused with modern political sensibilities. In one case, the noble ruler must be acceptable to the “civilized world” and responsible to his own subjects—in other words, possessing both domestic and international legitimacy. And though one article defending Sharifian family rule repudiates elections altogether, another one condones them and tries to root them in some sense of tradition.

Many of these ideas are echoed in another article in *al-‘Iraq*, entitled “Who Should be King of ‘Iraq.” The author (signed “Arabi”) writes that,

Arabian Iraq suffered from the cruelty of the Turk and now stands in great need of moral and material progress. We must look for a king who has a good name abroad so that we may benefit by his position. No family is better known than that

²⁰ *Al-‘Iraq*, 25 Apr. 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #12, 1 May 1921, I.O., L/P&S/10/962.

²¹ *Al-‘Iraq*, 13 May 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #14, 15 May 1921, I.O., L/P&S/10/962.

²² *Al-‘Iraq*, 28 Apr. 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #12.

of Hashim. Now-a-days a king is only king in name, he exercises no tyrannical powers but is guided by the wishes of the people.²³

This passage is extremely elucidating. Like one of the above excerpts, it links the ideal of family prestige to a ruler's stature abroad—again bespeaking the modernistic sensibility that a nation's international standing matters to some degree. Moreover, by mentioning “progress” and invoking the idea of an Arab nation moving forward after the Ottoman period, it imbues the person and exalted position of the ruler with a distinctly modernist and nationalist bent. Finally, the author introduces the idea of a limited constitutional monarchy that is devoid of authoritarianism and based instead on “the wishes of the people” —a notion that certainly constitutes a departure from more traditional ideas of rulership. We will return to this tension between traditional authority and modern-style constitutional monarchy later in the chapter.

However much these writers desired a modern liberal government founded on the principles of constitutionalism, they still attached fundamental importance to the idea of having a king, seemingly believing there to be something sacrosanct or singularly prestigious about monarchical authority as opposed to other forms of rule. Shi'ite notable Muhammad al-Sadr (son of a preeminent *mujtahid*) noted in an interview that he could not “understand a Cabinet without a King,” and added that any future Arab state in Iraq “must be liberal and free and independent, with a King, a parliament, an army, and a flag.”²⁴ This affinity for kingship no doubt stemmed partly from the popularity and noble reputation of King Hussein, whose own accession to an Arab throne was ostensibly admired across the Mashriq. One writer from Mosul expressed the idea that “if we desire for ourselves rank and honour such as flow from a King, the King Husain should be asked to send one of his sons.”²⁵ A couple

²³ *Al-'Iraq*, 4 May 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #13, 15 May 1921, I.O., L/P&S/10/962.

²⁴ *Lisan-al-'Arab*, 17 Feb. 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #12.

²⁵ *Al-'Iraq*, 26 May, as printed in B.I.R. #14. This article was referenced by Mustafa Dulaimi who sought in his leader to refute these arguments and push again for a “constitutional king.” Still, even he advocated “the putting in of a King before making a constitution.”

weeks later, attention in the vernacular press turned to the centrality of free elections, yet even in this context, one author would still write that “the selection of the King must come before everything. After the arrival of the King the elections should be held.”²⁶

Indeed, it becomes clear from all these articles that many political aspirations of the Iraqis – elections, independence, popular representation, traditional prestige, international legitimacy, constitutionalism, nobility – tended to mesh together into some idealized, if complex and contradictory, monarchical bolus. This is perhaps best exemplified by an editorial published in the first ever edition of *al-Fallah* a mere three days before Faisal’s arrival:

Our policy in the *Fallah* is:

(1) Complete independence of our country attained by gradual development of education and union of thoughts

(2) Creation of a constitutional, kingly, representative government in which the final authority shall be the people. We say kingly because we do not think that a republic is suited to our needs, specially as the Arabs have been long accustomed to a king. With a constitutional government the nation cannot come to harm.

(3) The man who rules over us must have the confidence of the nation and proper qualifications. He must be an Arab and noble.²⁷

There was thus still much confusion and discord among Iraqis over the institutions and trappings of their future government. This one *al-Fallah* text alone clearly demonstrates the contradictory tendency of writers to justify Arab kingship as natural and traditional while simultaneously extolling undeniably modern and European features of monarchy. Luckily for those in favor of electing a strong king straight away, they would not have to wait very long to see their ambitions realized. By June, the British had become increasingly determined to proceed immediately with the Hashemite plan, in spite of all lingering oppositional forces. Cox wrote to Churchill that although “certain elements” could be found propagandizing either for the separation of Basra, the “creation of a republic,” the “importation of a Turkish prince,” and even the continuation of the British occupation, “in

²⁶ *Al-Iraq*, 4 June 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #15.

²⁷ *Al-Fallah*, 20 June 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #16, 1 July 1921, I.O., L/P&S/10/962.

order that public opinion may rally in [a] direction which we favour we need to do all we can to discourage these elements.”²⁸ Though it is interesting that Iraqis were still ostensibly grappling with the republican idea this late in the game, the British had completely dismissed it: “With respect to the idea of a republic we hardly think people of Iraq have arrived at a stage of social development as would make such a solution a safe one at present stage.”²⁹ With Faisal due to arrival in Basra at the end of the month, it was time for the British to commence with the next phase of the Hashemite solution and consummate their enthusiastic “king-making.”³⁰ In the prescient words of one *al-Fallah* writer, “all that remains is the public ceremonial.”³¹

Selling King Faisal

The events of the two months leading up to Faisal’s coronation shed light both on Faisal’s own ambitions and monarchical imaginings as well as the continued British role in defining the parameters and setting the tone of the new Iraq rulership. In the meantime, the Iraqi press continued to overflow with varied and complex notions about their ideal future leader.

On June 23, Amir Faisal was greeted on his ship by a large party of Basra notables, one of whom welcomed him by exclaiming “Long Live the State of ‘Iraq and the unity of the Arab Nation. Long live King Hussein.”³² The following day, after attending Friday prayers in the principal Sunni mosque (where a “huge concourse of people” had assembled),³³ Faisal re-assumed the public spotlight during a large demonstration featuring much pomp and circumstance, including military music and marching by a local troop of Boy Scouts. Reidar Visser notes that though much of this spectacle adopted Ottoman precedents, Faisal’s

²⁸ Cox to Churchill, 9 June 1921, I.O., L/PS/10/919.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ De Gaury, 22.

³¹ *Al-Fallah*, 10 July 1921. In B.I.R. #17, 15 July 1921. I.O., L/PS/10/962.

³² “The Amir Faisal Arrives,” *Baghdad Times*, 27 June 1921.

³³ Cox to Churchill, 1 July 1921, I.O., L/PS/10/919.

ceremonial still showcased some strikingly novel features. Not only was the Sharifian flag of Mecca now on display (alongside the Union Jack), but also Arabic replaced Turkish as the language of ceremonial for the first time; several local notables gave speeches of welcome in the local tongue, followed by a humble and well-received one by Faisal, who made sure to include references to “Arab unity,” “Iraqi unity,” and “complete independence.”³⁴ Faisal later revealed to Philby that he was disappointed in the turnout and reception in Basra, which he found to be lukewarm.³⁵ In spite of this, however – even if the pageantry was not quite as grandiose as Faisal would have liked or the British reported – Visser notes that the ceremonial on this day proved quite effective in reminding “the popular masses that they were part of a larger community” and stealing loyalty away from the Basra separatist movement.³⁶

Faisal then embarked on a multi-stop train journey northward towards Baghdad and was “variously received”³⁷ along the way, even though many notables in key towns on the route had been in touch with the British over how best to engineer the Amir’s reception.³⁸ The popular mood was markedly improved once Faisal arrived in Baghdad, however. After an official greeting and “royal salute”³⁹ by the British High Commissioner, and a warm welcome from many Baghdad notables, Faisal processed with a troop of Boy Scouts and a British Guard of Honor along a route to the palace that was “a riot of colour, the triumphal arches of palms, rendered very effective with flags, bunting, and patriotic inscriptions, thousands of flags from the houses and shops.”⁴⁰ Faisal and the British officials on hand were all extremely pleased with the display, marked by huge crowds along the streets and on

³⁴ Visser, 175.

³⁵ Cox to Churchill, 2 July 1921, I.O., L/PS/10/919.

³⁶ See note 35 above.

³⁷ B.I.R. # 16, 1 July 1921, I.O., L/PS/10/962.

³⁸ Philby, *Arabian Days*, 201.

³⁹ See note 39 above.

⁴⁰ “Amir Faisal Arrives in Baghdad,” *Baghdad Times*, 30 June 1921.

rooftops throughout the city. It was also reported that he made an instant impression on the people, who could be heard to remark that he had “the face of a king.”⁴¹

The tempo of life and mood of the Iraqis picked up rapidly after this highly successful reception in Baghdad. As Faisal toured around the country and was met with increasingly enthusiastic audiences,⁴² large deputations of sheikhs and notables (apparently Sunni as well as Shi’ite) began arriving in Baghdad,⁴³ bracing for the start of Faisal’s regime and in turn paving the way for a more centralized mode of rule over the provinces.⁴⁴ The Council of Ministers approved Faisal’s accession on the 11th of July, while various supporters of Faisal began demanding his immediate rule by acclamation both publicly and in the local press. The Iraqi political field was evolving remarkably fast.

Meanwhile, Faisal continued to employ carefully considered ceremonial and political symbolism during his tour of the provinces. In Kadhimain, after another cordial “royal reception,” Faisal visited a Shi’ite shrine with al-Sadr and another prominent notable and performed the midday prayers alongside them in the mosque, “according to the Shi’ah rite.”⁴⁵ Cox wrote that “repeated allusions were made to Faisal as the King elect of Iraq and were received with acclamation by the local audience.”⁴⁶ Two days later, in Mu’addham, Faisal paid an “official visit” to the shrine of a prominent Sunni notable and again recited the Friday prayers along with a “great concourse of people.”⁴⁷ Later in July, Faisal visited the Dulaim Liwa and – after being escorted to the site by “bodies of tribesmen who galloped for several miles beside his car”⁴⁸ – attended a “great tribal gathering” at which he was received extremely cordially by many prominent sheikhs and was offered oaths of allegiance. Playing

⁴¹ See note 39 above.

⁴² Cox to Churchill, 9 July 1921, FO 371/6352.

⁴³ Cox to Churchill, 11 July 1921, FO 371/6352.

⁴⁴ This idea of the increasingly centripetal nature of the new Iraqi state based in Baghdad is a major theme in Charles Tripp’s *A History of Iraq*.

⁴⁵ B.I.R. # 16, 1 July 1921, I.O., L/PS/10/962.

⁴⁶ Cox to Churchill, 1 July 1921, I.O., L/PS/10/919.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ B.I.R. #18, 1 Aug. 1921, FO 371/6353.

up his traditional authority here, Faisal spoke at length to the tribesmen on the importance of Muslim unity and concluded that “under a proper settlement Arab traditions and the word of Arab rulers will be respected.”⁴⁹

Many other examples abound of Faisal being received across the region with due honor and pomp and proclaimed king on the spot by loyal supporters. In Amara, for instance, Faisal was “acclaimed” king of Iraq “with due ceremonial,” kicked off by the reading of a Qur’anic passage that begins “We have crowned him.”⁵⁰ Meanwhile, many pro-Sharifians commenced with their propaganda campaign in the local press for Faisal’s speedy accession, while others continued to discuss the broader significance of the throne in Iraq.⁵¹ These writings go far in evincing many of the sustained tensions and complexities underlying the perceived social and political meaning of Faisal’s imminent kingship. On one hand, like we saw before, there was much clamor for a modern constitutional monarchy along the lines of the contemporary European model—for a king who “should be bound by ties which are in the interest of the country.”⁵² One author, alluding to the trajectory of European kingship towards the modern form and citing the English example, wrote that “formerly the king exercised tyrannous authority but now his authority comes from the people.”⁵³ Yet this imagining of Iraq’s king as a European-style limited monarch was not always so perfectly construed or seamlessly translated. Indeed, a much more confused picture of popular or limited monarchy emerges from the paradoxical claim that Faisal would be “a constitutional king of ‘Iraq, free from the authority of any other person, independent in issuing orders.”⁵⁴ Additionally, as before, there appeared to be something special and singularly desirable about the title of king itself, albeit for a variety of reasons. One author emphasizes that the sequence of

⁴⁹ Speech of 25 July 1921, translated in *Baghdad Times* 5 Aug. 1921.

⁵⁰ “Amarah for Faisal,” *Times of Mesopotamia*, 1 Aug. 1921.

⁵¹ This can be traced by reading the Intelligence reports from June through to Faisal’s accession.

⁵² *Al-Dijlah*, 4 July 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #17.

⁵³ *Al-Dijlah*. 11 July 1921, *ibid*.

⁵⁴ *Al-‘Iraq*, 16 July 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #18.

demonstrations and “entertainments” upon Faisal’s arrival “show the great thirst for an Arab king” (adding that Faisal is appropriate given his stature as “greatest statesman in the Arab world”);⁵⁵ another claims that “the ‘Iraq nation do not wish to hear again the word ‘ruler’ for they want the clear word ‘king.’”⁵⁶

With Faisal’s coronation now only a matter of time, many notable Iraqis seemed more than eager to have a king of their own, even if their reasons for wanting one were not always clear or consistent with one another. Consequently, the shape that Faisal’s monarchical rule would take was still very much up in the air.

Faisal’s Accession

Faisal, too, seemed to ascribe special significance to the idea of kingship and regard the title with no small amount of reverence. This penchant can be seen most clearly in the immediate run-up to his coronation ceremony. After the referendum, the British were especially keen to settle the terms of the mandate and “have him crowned as soon as possible” so as “not to upset the harmonious march of events in Iraq.”⁵⁷ Yet Faisal – acutely aware that the entire Mesopotamian population was watching him and relying on him to jockey with the British for Iraqi independence – refused to come to terms, demanded the postponement of his coronation, and insisted on more autonomy from the High Commission. It appears as if Faisal wanted to see this autonomy borne out at the level of his own kingly powers. Cox noted that “speaking generally, he feels his accession must be marked by some definite outward sign of change” so that he did not appear to be a puppet.⁵⁸ Even more tellingly, Faisal now was demanding to be considered an equal peer by the British: “Having, so to speak, chosen me, you must treat me as one of yourselves and I must be trusted as His

⁵⁵ *Lisan al-‘Arab* 5 July 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #17.

⁵⁶ *Lisan al-‘Arab*, 8 July 1921, *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Churchill to Cox, 15 Aug. 1921, I.O., L/PS/10/919.

⁵⁸ Cox to Churchill, 16 Aug. 1921, *ibid.*

Majesty's Government trust you...Much more is it to your interests to show at once that I really am King."⁵⁹

After over a week of heated discussion – during which the British convinced Faisal to commence with the coronation with a combination of concessions and threats – Faisal was at last officially crowned as the first king of Iraq in a moving ceremony colored by a wide deployment of military, nationalist, and royal accouterments suitable to such an official and important occasion. Faisal pandered to popular sentiment in his address to the crowd, expressing that “if the people are the religion of their king, it follows that the King must also follow the religion of his people. It is in proportion to the completeness of this union that progress will ensue.”⁶⁰ He also made sure to appeal to their modernist and nationalist sensibilities: “I pray the Almighty to give me success in elevating the state of this dear country and this noble nation so that its ancient glory may be restored and that it may maintain a high place among rising and progressive nations.”⁶¹

The local press did not miss the opportunity to celebrate the auspicious event with many offerings of lofty panegyric to the new king, several of which used interesting comparisons and language that reflect the contemporary state of the country's monarchical imagining. Three days before the coronation, for example, *Lisan al- 'Arab* again conflated the modern and traditional connotations of Arab kingship in its praise of Faisal: “His Highness the Amir will ascend the throne of the 'Iraq as a Constitutional King. It is the day on which the Imam 'Ali was elected as Khalif by the Faithful.”⁶² On accession day, the paper acknowledged that “to-day after 700 years...the first Noble Arab King ascends the throne of Bani 'Abbas and assumes the crown made not of jewels but of fame and glory,” adding that “as Rome rose under Garibaldi and Greece, under Venezelos and Egypt, renewed its life

⁵⁹ Quoted in Cox to Churchill, 18 Aug., 1921, *ibid*.

⁶⁰ Faisal's accession speech, as printed in *Baghdad Times*, 31 Aug. 1921.

⁶¹ *Ibid*.

⁶² *Lisan al- 'Arab*, 20 Aug. 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #20, 1 Sept. 1921, FO 371/6353.

under the patriot Zaghlul, Baghdad has her King.”⁶³ At least a couple newspapers published a congratulatory telegram that Faisal received from the British King, which encouraged their understanding of the event as a renewed tradition with its claim that “the ancient city of Baghdad has once again become the seat of an Arab Kingdom.”⁶⁴ Yet the immediate significance of this royal communication was not lost on the editors, who responded by surmising that the telegram implies that “both are free nations” and proudly added that Faisal’s reply was “as Statesmanlike as that of [His Majesty].”⁶⁵ Faisal’s accession was thus being celebrated simultaneously for being the consummation of an old tradition of kingship as well as an assertion of Iraq’s eruption into the modern world of independent nations.

Looking Forward: Faisal Front and Center

The date of the coronation was itself significant, chosen by Faisal to coincide with the Shi’ite feast of the Ghadir,⁶⁶ his accession day subsequently became a national holiday to be celebrated annually until his death in 1933. Faisal also stipulated that his name and title be inserted into the *khutba* (sermon) of the Friday prayers in Sunni mosques. Yet these forays of Faisal into the realm of Islamic symbolic politics are only two early illustrations of his drive to mark his throne at the center of the Iraqi social and political field and present *himself* as the “inspiration for the process” of creating an Iraqi people.⁶⁷

A few additional examples will have to suffice. On one hand, Faisal continued to tour around the country, attempting to endear himself to different cross-sections of the Iraqi people and successfully earning their loyalty to his new position as overlord of a unified Iraqi kingdom. In October and November, Faisal traveled north to Mosul and south to the

⁶³ *Lisan al-‘Arab*, 23 Aug. 1921, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Telegram from H.I.M. King George V to H.M. King Faisal, 23 Aug. 1921, as printed in telegram from Churchill to Cox, 22 Aug. 1921, I.O., L/PS/10/919.

⁶⁵ *Lisan al-‘Arab*, 27 Aug. 1921, as printed in B.I.R. #20.

⁶⁶ B.I.R. #20, FO 371/6353.

⁶⁷ Bengio, 139.

Muntafiq, arriving with much fanfare and “animated spectacle,”⁶⁸ visiting shrines and staging colorful demonstrations and parades wherever he went. One eyewitness in Mosul claimed that though Faisal had previously been to the people of Mosul “but a name,” “now he is an honoured and loved personality”;⁶⁹ and the warmth of Faisal’s reception in the southern towns greatly surprised Faisal and “even his most ardent adherents.”⁷⁰ Perhaps surprisingly, Faisal even managed to strike a chord with some Kurdish notables, who – though seeking autonomy from Baghdad – were still willing to accept Faisal as their ruler, at least nominally; according to Bell, “from the moment Faisal arrived, he began to have messages from the Kurdish magnates north of our frontier saying they wanted to throw off the Turkish yoke and make an autonomous Kurdistan with Faisal as King (a sort of Austria-Hungary...).”⁷¹ Faisal also tried his best to look the part a king who was held to be at once modern and traditional. At times Faisal wore nothing but Western-style dress and proved, in the eyes of one commentator, to be remarkably adaptable to European ways;⁷² yet to bolster his traditional image, Faisal also appeared ubiquitously in a neo-traditional national headgear that he fashioned – the “fore-and-aft cap”⁷³ – and could alternately be found “dressed in his most beautiful Arab clothes” (even when playing polo!) and, to quote Bell, “playing the part of King of the Arabs in his finest manner.”⁷⁴

Conclusion: “The Meaning of Kingship”

Ten days before Faisal’s coronation, a very curious and conceptually rich article entitled “The Meaning of Kingship,” written by an unnamed Englishman, appeared in the

⁶⁸ “H.M. King Faisal’s Visit to Mosul,” *Baghdad Times*, 29 Oct. 1921.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Cox to Churchill, 1 Nov. 1921, I.O., L/PS/10/919.

⁷¹ Bell letter, 17 Sept., 1921, quoted in Burgoyne, 247.

⁷² De Gaury, 28, 42.

⁷³ De Gaury, 28.

⁷⁴ Bell letter, 13 Feb. 1924, as printed in Burgoyne, 329.

Baghdad Times (see Appendix A).⁷⁵ In this one fascinating piece we can identify almost all the major tensions surrounding the idea of the modern Iraqi monarchy; ostensibly picking up on many prevailing tropes of the burgeoning Iraqi political culture while pitching some new symbolic content of its own, we can only marvel at the splash this article might have made in educated Iraqi circles at the time. At the very least, this article sheds much light on the subtle ways in which the British conception of their own king-making overlapped with the popular Iraqi imagining of their new monarch, shaping a new and fluid political culture for Faisal to tap into.

The article develops two main themes which he have highlighted: the new king's role as the symbolic center in the process of forging a unified Iraqi nation based on modernist nationalism; and the king's complex persona – at once traditional and modern – drawing on more old-fashioned sources of legitimacy to help the nation assume a modern and European-style political identity, based on constitutionalism and democracy. As for the first point, we have already seen many examples of how Faisal took great strides not to alienate any one segment of the population in the provinces by appealing alternately to Sunni, Shi'ite, or Kurdish sentiment and symbolic capital, while consistently stressing the themes of national pride and Iraq's glorious role in Arab history. Indeed, Faisal tried doggedly to prove to all his subjects, as the article suggests, that the crown is “the link that unites” Iraq's many diverse ethnic, religious, and political communities as well as the Arabs’ “visible symbol of their historic past, their present unity, and their future glory and prosperity.”⁷⁶ Public ceremonial was naturally crucial to this process: by effectively filling the “symbolic space which had opened up after the Ottoman collapse”⁷⁷ with nationalist and monarchical themes, Faisal could successfully stymie the efforts of separatist groups and superimpose a new, symbolically potent Iraqi identity atop pre-existing particularistic ones.

⁷⁵ “The Meaning of Kingship,” *Baghdad Times*, 13 Aug. 1921.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Visser, 286.

The article's second argument is much more problematic, calling attention to the fundamental contradiction of Faisal's accession. Striking a balance between being "the embodiment of the whole long and glorious history of the Arab Race" and an "august Presence, possessing every attribute of kingliness," on one hand, and the progenitor of a new "Kingly Constitution" modeled on the English system, on the other, would be no easy business for Faisal.⁷⁸ Yet in light of all the evidence presented earlier in this chapter, this paradoxical position was precisely what seemed to be expected of Faisal by both the British and the Iraqis. His legitimacy and authority as king lied simultaneously in his traditional credentials (as a Hashemite, amir of Mecca, and Arab hero of sorts) as well as his commitment to modern political aspirations such as nationalism and international prestige. This tension underlay his whole reign, and arguably the entire monarchical period in Iraq, and it helps explain why Faisal could never remain aloof from his populace despite his exalted stature,⁷⁹ but rather felt compelled to remain flexible and play up many incongruous strands of his identity at different moments during his tenure as king.

What is certainly undeniable is that Faisal's kingship – located at the nexus of three discrete, if overlapping, monarchical imaginings – heralded a new era and style of centralized rule in Iraq and introduced many themes, ideas, and trappings of that rule that arguably have persisted long past the monarchy's demise in 1958. With the king at the symbolic center of so many contradictory notions of political community and cross-currents of identity from the very moment of the Iraqi nation's inception, a perhaps impossible ideal of rulership was fashioned in the country, creating a real king's dilemma for each Hashemite who successively acceded to the throne.

⁷⁸ See note 77 above.

⁷⁹ De Gaury, 58.

Chapter 3: King Fu'ad's Gambit

It was not long after Faisal's coronation in Iraq before the Arab world witnessed the dawn of yet another new Arab monarchy. In March 1922, Egypt's Sultan Ahmed Fu'ad assumed the title of Majesty (*jalala*) and became King Fu'ad I, as part of the process of earmarking the onset of Egyptian independence from the British, and making him the first non-Hashemite to ascend to a modern Arab throne. It would be misleading, however, to claim that the dynamics involved in this transition accorded exactly with the Iraqi case. After all, Egypt had been experiencing centralized family rule under the house of Muhammad Ali for over a century; Fu'ad arrived to the scene as just another heir to this long dynastic tradition, marked by its own distinctive Ottoman-Egyptian political culture that had evolved steadily over the years. Moreover, whereas Iraq was a brand new nation-state being forged, however uneasily, from three discrete provinces that did not necessarily gel, Egypt by the end of the First World War had a keen sense of its own national identity and territorial integrity—indeed, the seeds of a particularistic nationalism that would be increasingly played up by liberals and Zaghulists throughout the 1920s.¹ The widespread nationalist revolution of 1919 constituted a surefire sign of Egypt's eagerness to achieve full independence and self-government (defined by a democratic constitution) and fashion itself at the vanguard of modern Arab nations.

Yet if the modern Egyptian throne had deep-seated historical roots, there was still something singular about Fu'ad's assumption of the titlature and trappings of kingship at this time that makes the transition important and well worth further investigation. For one, Fu'ad's accession was integrally – almost symbiotically – linked to Egyptian independence; he became king the moment the British Protectorate lapsed. In this way, Fu'ad's monarchical role as a kind of national symbol is roughly analogous to Faisal's, though in the Egyptian

¹ See Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs*.

case the country was actually technically independent, no matter how circumscribed its autonomy was in reality. Of course, the Egyptians' uneasy consciousness of Britain's sustained influence in the country made the achievement of independence seem much less real and in turn mitigated this symbolic stature of Fu'ad's; it would soon become extremely difficult to see Fu'ad as any sort of ardent liberal nationalist.

If King Fu'ad never really pretended to be a popular nationalist hero, he still firmly believed that his newfound monarchical status should afford him a certain national prestige as well as unprecedented ruling authority. That Fu'ad had autocratic tendencies as king is no secret, and is well established in the existing literature of the period. Yet what is missing from the common interpretations of Fu'ad's reign – most of which place him firmly in the familiar triangular model of power politics, by which the Palace, the British, and the Wafd all vied for ascendancy in a new, nominally constitutional political order – is a more careful and nuanced consideration of the social meaning of the King's gambit and the ways in which his behavior shifted Egypt's political culture in new and meaningful directions. Even if Fu'ad did not bother so much to win the affection of the masses like Zaghlul – or Faisal, for that matter – he still imagined his kingship to have a central role in defining Egypt's new place in the postwar world order. In Fu'ad's mind, the stature and progress of the modern nation-state were most evocatively measured by displaying, somewhat ostentatiously both at home and abroad, all its “outwardly impressive”² institutions and trappings—of which a grandiose monarchy along the line of turn-of-the-century Western European dynasties was the clearest example. In this way, paradoxically, by valuing and implementing more old-fashioned monarchical stylings and patterns of rule, Fu'ad nonetheless successfully capitalized on the fervent modernist sensibilities of the nationalist movement, and, I will argue, helped cement the place of a strong and prestigious monarch in the country's rapidly evolving political

² “The king of Egypt,” the *Times*, 29 Apr. 1936.

culture. In spite of Fu'ad's aloofness, conservatism, authoritarianism, and flagrant disregard for the constitution, he still managed to fashion the monarchy as an eminent symbol of Egypt's modernism and civilizational progress and in turn, by consistently touting this identity, crystallize his legitimacy.

The British – having a major vested interest in maintaining their special privileged relationship with Egypt – naturally figured quite prominently in this story. On one level, the ways the colonial establishment in Cairo presented itself and carried out its official colonial business with the Palace on a day-to-day basis provided Fu'ad with a ready model of how to act in order for his monarchy to come off as unabashedly distinguished and royal. On another level, by maintaining significant sway over the king and ultimately possessing the ticket to the powers he so coveted, the British essentially made up the rules of the official relationship with the Palace as they went along. Consequently, they further encouraged Fu'ad's habit for ceremonial and other royal trappings, convincing him that these were the real criteria for royal authority.

This chapter will begin with this dynamic and often amusing interplay between the British vision of their colonial world and Fu'ad's bid for power and international standing as king. It will then consider Fu'ad's self-important understanding of his own position and its relation to Egyptian identity as against that of the Egyptian people, drawing primarily on two key texts extolling the virtues of a particular kind of European-style constitutional monarchy. The final part of the chapter will account for some key examples of Fu'ad's behavior as king that helped solidify the monarchy's place inside Egypt's political culture—most notably his use of royal patronage, but also including some forms of media representation that prove he was not always so out of touch with popular Egyptian nationalism as has previously been thought.

Fu'ad's First Accession: The Ceremonial Game Begins

Britain's fixation on proper ceremonial procedure towards the Egyptian ruling house was readily apparent well before the abrogation of the Protectorate. We pick up the story here with Fu'ad's first formal accession—to the sultanate in October 1917, upon the death of his brother Hussein Kamil.

After reviewing the position of the sultanate to make sure it was still seen as legitimate and “accepted by Egyptians as a normal part of their institutions,”³ the British determined that the new sultan's accession should be marked with suitable pomp and some meaningful signs of change. For example, the British King chose to mark the occasion by conferring on Fu'ad the “Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath,” an esteemed decoration that the previous sultan had also held. This honor seemed to matter a great deal to the British, who agreed that the representative insignia and mantle be presented to Fu'ad “in an official and ceremonial manner suited to the importance of the occasion and to the high dignity of the Order.”⁴ Indeed, when neither the insignia nor mantle had arrived by December, Wingate wrote to the Foreign Office several times inquiring as to its whereabouts. When the decorative items finally arrived the next month, they were presented to Fu'ad in a very dignified ceremony by the Duke of Connaught, noted by Wingate for “the fine military appearance and smartness displayed by all ranks who took part in the ceremony”⁵—a comment that bespeaks the kinds of official appearances the British were after in their Protectorate. Also significant was Fu'ad's immediate reciprocation of the British decoration with an indigenous Egyptian one—conferring on the Duke the “Grand Cordon of the Order of Mohamed Ali” in the presence of Wingate.⁶ Fu'ad was quickly learning how to play the ceremonial game.

³ Letter to Wingate, 16 Oct. 1917, FO 141/620/3.

⁴ F.O. (London) to Wingate, 2 Nov. 1917. FO 141/620/3.

⁵ Telegram from Residency, 1 Feb. 1918. FO 141/620/3.

⁶ Ibid.

The British did not encourage ceremonial and decoration for Fu'ad just to underscore the authority of his own new position, but also saw it as a way to check his continued loyalty to the British; as long as certain courtesies and exchanges were executed in accordance with the British sense of colonial propriety, all would be well with the Residency. We can discern this attitude in a letter to Wingate from London regarding “the importance of maintaining the dignity of the Sultan’s position” that suggested that Fu’ad – “as an evidence of friendship and respect towards the protecting Power” – should be obliged to call personally on the Residency once a year in honor of the British King’s birthday or accession day.⁷ This was not the only way that ceremonial of this nature was useful to the British: the letter continued, “I see no intrinsic objection to the Sultan’s indulgence in receptions and entertainments or in his endeavoring to enhance his position by a certain amount of display. The higher His Highness’ [sic] prestige and dignity, and the wider his popularity, the more valuable will become the support and assistance which his loyal co-operation will afford to you.”⁸ The British thus perceived a direct relationship between Fu’ad’s ceremonial displays and his usefulness to their interests.

Finally, it seems clear that the British also considered these official colonial exchanges – in the following example, the bequeathal of honorific titulature – to be part of a strategic reward system. In this case, they saw a direct correlation between how well-behaved Fu’ad was in their mind and the degree of stature they would allow him to tout. In May 1921, for example, the High Commissioner Lord Allenby strongly recommended that in honor of the British King’s birthday, the “title of Majesty should be conferred on the Sultan of Egypt.”⁹ Yet this suggestion was rejected categorically by the Foreign Office. According to one officer, “it cannot be maintained that he [Fu’ad] has since his accession rendered very signal services to H.M.G. [His Majesty’s Government] nor has he recently so distinguished

⁷ Telegram to Wingate (author unknown), 15 Oct. 1918, FO 141/437/4.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Allenby to Curzon, 22 May 1921, FO 371/6334.

himself as to call for such a marked reward.”¹⁰ Fu’ad’s bid here for a prestigious title, ostensibly to shore up his authority as sultan, was rebuffed by his British overlords, who still then had the clout to require him to improve his behavior before reaping such a benefit.

The Ceremonial Struggle Continues: Fu’ad Becomes King

If the British had fixated on the Cairo Residency’s official and ceremonial protocol towards the Palace during the Protectorate, they became obsessed with it once independence was nigh and their special relationship with Egypt was called into question. With this major political transition at hand, the British felt compelled to confer titulature and employ ceremonial with the utmost care and calculation, with a number of different ends in mind. This, in turn, set the parameters within which Fu’ad would operate in order to arrogate to himself as much kingly authority relative to the British as he could muster.

As soon as the British resigned to granting Egypt its formal independence, Fu’ad began clamoring again for new royal titulature. This time the British quickly agreed, however begrudgingly. On one hand, they seemed to see Fu’ad’s accession to the new throne as part of the inevitable process of Egyptian independence: “Nothing can stop the assumption of the title and the question arises whether we should not make the best of it.”¹¹ Yet it becomes clear from the documentary evidence that strategic considerations loomed larger in the British thinking on the matter. The British felt strongly that they needed to confer this title in order to preserve their special relationship with the Egyptian ruler, lest any other foreign powers encroach on their position in the country. One official on the spot, R.G. Vansittart, wrote:

With the assumption of his new title, the Sultan will certainly desire to be addressed as His Majesty, a distinction he has long coveted and which we refused last year; but the circumstances are no longer the same as, with the independence of Egypt, he is free to call himself what he likes and it is eminently desirable that we should not be

¹⁰ F.O. Minute (London) by Murray, 23 May 1921, E5897/5897/16, FO 371/6334.

¹¹ F.O. Minute (London) by K.C.L., 7 Mar. 1922, E2543/1/16, FO 371/7732.

behind Other Powers in recognizing what will be regarded locally as a symbol of the new status of Egypt.¹²

This argument surfaces repeatedly in the official correspondence: “If his Ministers agree to his calling himself king I suppose we shall have to recognize his claim to the title of majesty for if we do not do so some other Power may anticipate us.”¹³ The British clearly had no intention of relinquishing their firm grasp over the affairs of the country and made this patent to the other interested European nations. In a retrospective summary of their policy during this critical period, the Foreign Office recalled how

His Majesty’s Government in notifying all the Powers with whom they were in diplomatic relations that the British Protectorate over Egypt was terminated, informed them that they would regard any interference in the internal affairs of Egypt or any aggression against her territory as an unfriendly act, thus establishing a virtual Monroe doctrine in regard to that country.¹⁴

With this strategic imperative in mind, the British set about prescribing a proper dose of ceremonial and decoration to mark Egypt’s independence and Fu’ad’s assumption of his new kingly titles. “As soon as” the British parliament approved the abrogation of the Protectorate, the occasion would be “celebrated by national fete”¹⁵ around the country. This became Egypt’s Independence Day and would join Fu’ad’s birthday and first accession day as a third national holiday in the country, though they would all always be celebrated in accordance with their respective dates on the English calendar.¹⁶

The British also examined their policy towards royals in analogous contexts to discern proper precedents for things like ceremonial visits, congratulatory telegrams, and other such decorous courtesies. One Foreign Office official, for example, researched and wrote a memorandum documenting how Britain had gone about sending congratulatory telegrams to three “monarchs of countries which have achieved their independence”¹⁷—the kings of

¹² Vansittart to F.O. 13 Mar. 1922, FO 371/7732.

¹³ F.O. Minute (London) unsigned, 7 Mar. 1922, E2543/1/16, FO 371/7732.

¹⁴ F.O. Memorandum, 21 Sept. 1923, FO 371/8962.

¹⁵ Telegram from Allenby, 6 Mar. 1922, FO 371/7732.

¹⁶ F.O. Memorandum, 19 Jan. 1923, FO 141/437/5.

¹⁷ Allenby to F.O., 9 Mar. 1922, FO 371/7732.

Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Iraq (which of course was not formally independent at the time). Protocol towards Egypt was also compared to the Afghan and Persian cases.¹⁸ Of course, all this sensitive attention to royal procedure – essentially how the Residency must act towards Fu’ad now that he was king – becomes even more striking in light of the fact that the British clearly did not really like or respect him personally. One official wrote of Fu’ad’s accession to the throne that his “change of title is a debasement of the coinage of current language,”¹⁹ while still conceding that the British King should send a cordial telegram. Another wrote somewhat condescendingly that Fu’ad desired to be called king because he was “jealous of Hussein and Feisal whom he regards as little better than barbarians.”²⁰

Though the British were hard-pressed to do so, then, they still acquiesced to Fu’ad’s gambit for royal titulature and ceremonial because he was king of a sovereign state, therefore deserving of a new and special kind of treatment. Additionally, they worried that balking in such matters might open the door wide open to other foreign powers seeking to endear themselves to ‘Abdin. This fear was not entirely groundless. At the end of March, for example, the Italian royal family – with whom Fu’ad had a close relationship – conferred on him a decoration of their own: the Collar of Anunziata. Italy, too, could play the ceremonial game in its attempt to win Egypt’s favor; and this undoubtedly could only add to Fu’ad’s burgeoning sense of self-importance and his penchant for royal decoration and ostentation.

It must be remembered that despite the Foreign Office’s resignation to Fu’ad’s new royal status, titulature, and ceremonial, many of their old concerns and policies carried over. Immediately after Independence Day, the Foreign Office instructed Allenby to “discourage any change likely to reduce the dignity or prestige attaching to the position of High Commissioner.”²¹ A week later, Allenby acknowledged that it would be “necessary to mark

¹⁸ F.O. to Allenby, 6 Mar. 1923, FO 372/1969.

¹⁹ See note 16 above.

²⁰ See note 18 above.

²¹ F.O. to Allenby, 16 Mar. 1922, FO 371/7732.

the altered relation in which Egypt now stands to Great Britain” with a change in the language of the Residency; yet he could only feel comfortable doing so because he did not “consider that in conceding this we should lose any ground or that our prestige would suffer since the title of Safir now suggested by Egyptians is the highest by which any foreigner could be designated.”²²

The British also persisted in using ceremonial as a kind of carrot and stick. In March 1923 – this time considering how to honor the anniversary of Fu’ad’s birthday – one official suggested that “before making any innovation we should be sure that our relations with King Fouad are likely to remain tolerably cordial,” while another agreed that “King Fu’ad deserves no special compliment just now.”²³ Fu’ad’s ceremonial treatment as king by the British would still thus depend to some extent on whether he had been naughty or nice. Yet Fu’ad was already starting to exercise his own ceremonial prowess upon becoming king and surprise the British with assertions of his newfound monarchical authority. This explains their puzzled and angry reaction to Fu’ad’s decision to host an impromptu gala at the Palace, limit the numbers of Residency staff who could attend, and take it upon himself to present foreign diplomats from Europe to a British prince visiting Egypt.²⁴ This is only one example of how Fu’ad began to appropriate the stylings of British colonial rule and turn it against the Residency as a way of affirming his own autonomy as king.

Fu’ad’s Mixed Reception

The ceremonial events marking Fu’ad’s accession were subsumed into broader celebrations of national independence around the country. Yet perhaps surprisingly, these festivities did not evoke the “general popular enthusiasm” that had been hoped by the

²² Allenby to F.O., 22 Mar. 1922, FO 371/7732.

²³ F.O. Minutes to Allenby Telegram of 6 Mar. 1923, T1374/1374/316, FO 372/1969.

²⁴ Letter to Furness (author unknown), 8 Jan. 1924, FO 141/437/5.

British.²⁵ Even if, as seems clear from the documentary evidence, the occasion was marred more by the nationalists' strong dissatisfaction with the terms of independence than by any disapproval of Fu'ad's actions,²⁶ it is still hard to glean any real sense of excitement towards the new Egyptian King. Nevertheless, simply by virtue of Fu'ad's new heightened status and the trappings and procedures that accompanied it, the monarchy began to emerge as a new center of gravity for the country's political culture.

The week of celebrations following the official proclamation of independence provided many Zaghulists – mostly students – with the perfect opportunity to exhibit their hostility to the terms of settlement. Several student protests erupted sporadically during the week around Cairo and Alexandria, which effectively dampened the festive and ceremonial spirit. In Giza, for example, “several hundred schoolboys” stormed the premises of a law school, destroying both a portrait of King Fu'ad and an Egyptian flag in the resulting melee with the police.²⁷ These oftentimes hostile demonstrations petered out after this one rather intense week, yet even among the general population, “popular enthusiasm was absent,” most likely as a result of “Zaghulist efforts...directed to spreading the doctrine that the independence granted is not real independence and that the king and Sarwat Pasha have sold the country.”²⁸

If Fu'ad was failing to turn himself into a popular hero – a function of his accession being inextricably linked to the widespread disappointment of an incomplete independence – he still went through some of the motions as king to gain publicity—for example, attending Friday prayers at the Citadel mosque; distributing the “royal largess” to the people; and attending races at Gezira with a “cordial reception” on hand.²⁹ More importantly, Fu'ad also held a series of functions at the Palace that attempted to bring together notables and officials

²⁵ Scott, “Report on General Situation in Egypt, March 16-22,” E3536/61/16, FO 407/192.

²⁶ *Ibid.* This explains the outcry “No festivities and no independence without Sa'ad!”

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

as well as a “throng of Egyptians of all classes” under his royal auspices.³⁰ One such event was purported to be the “largest gathering of any in recent times, and included provincial deputations from all over the country.”³¹ Even the popular Zaghlulists could not entirely overcome the Palace’s immediate centripetal pull towards Cairo. In Port Said, for instance, “the local Zaghlulists...made attempts in the cases of those who proposed attending the king’s reception on the 20th to prevent them from going. They had little success. Some sixty or seventy notables actually left for Cairo.”³²

Fu’ad might not have made a huge popular splash as a nationalist leader, but he nevertheless exhibited great skill in immediately attracting key classes of Egyptians from around the country upon whose support his authority could rest. Coupled with the fact that Zaghlul himself refused to pin blame on the king and instead consistently exhorted that Egypt’s “real enemies are the English,”³³ Fu’ad had already gone far in establishing a firm place for the monarchy in the nation’s rather turbulent political life. Meanwhile, the situation on the streets quickly normalized: within a month of his accession, the demonstrations had long ceased, and the streets and schools were calm.³⁴

Competing Interpretations of European Monarchy

The next year of Egypt’s political life would be occupied primarily by the process of establishing a liberal and democratic constitutional regime—the major goal of both the British and the nationalists in the country. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to account for the long and sinuous history of the constitution’s generation, marked by constant friction between a stubborn and power-mongering Fu’ad on one hand and a committed cadre of liberal politicians on the other (with the British still trying to influence affairs while keeping a

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Scott, “Report on the General Situation, March 30 to April 15,” E4056/61/16, FO 407/192.

low profile).³⁵ It is no secret that Fu'ad was reluctant to cede much personal authority and only begrudgingly acquiesced to demands for a constitutional order that would limit his powers at least in theory. But even if the constitution ultimately failed to do its job of balancing political power between the king and the ministry, it still represented the primary focal point of Egypt's evolving political culture throughout much of the interwar period—imagined by all important political actors, ultimately including Fu'ad, to underscore Egypt's more Eurocentric modernist self-identity and symbolize its progress and worldly sophistication.

Yet the King and his subjects interpreted the European constitutional monarchical model in very different ways. The attitude of the nationalists is revealed quite provocatively in a curious article entitled “The Kings of Europe Today, and the Monarchical Orientation towards Democracy” (See Appendix B for the full Arabic original plus my translation),³⁶ published in the edition of the royalist journal *al-Hilal* immediately following the one a month earlier celebrating Fu'ad's accession with a fawning poem and leading feature. This article evinces a marked skepticism of traditional patterns of monarchical rule and – by praising those European monarchies (like the English one) that had handed authority over to its people and now served a more symbolic and apolitical role – constitutes a clever delineation of the prevailing liberal Egyptian vision for a constitutional monarchy. The language is strikingly clear, especially in its historical account of how the Great War had put an ignominious end to “the class of despotic kings” in Europe: “That class has gone, Praise to God, and none remain on the throne except those who handed over sovereignty of the nation and their right to control its affairs.” It also criticized the traditional sexual politics of royal intermarriage and advocated that kings and princes marry only countrywomen instead. Yet no matter how adamantly the authors argued against traditional norms of monarchical

³⁵ See, for example, Kedourie, “The Genesis of the Egyptian Constitution of 1923,” in *The Chatham House Version*.

³⁶ *Al-Hilal*, 1 May 1922, translation mine. All references in this paragraph hail from this text.

authority and autocracy, they still reserved a special place for the king as a “living symbol” of a nation’s “dignity and honor.” This explains their emphasis towards the end on the decision of the English monarchy to continue bearing no expense on “the trappings of pomp and stateliness” of the Crown, which “needs to keep on preserving its dignity to the utmost degree possible” in order to satisfy the people.

This very same attitude towards Egypt’s constitutional monarchy – a curious mixture of apprehensiveness towards absolutist rule and reverence for the prestigious symbolism of a centralized and ceremonious dynastic court – emerges in a book published in French in 1925 by European-educated Egyptian lawyer Makram Hilmy, entitled *Quelques problèmes soulevés par la constitution égyptienne* (“Some Issues Raised by the Egyptian Constitution”).³⁷ Hilmy was by no means an apologist for the monarchy, and his book contains a vigorous “condemnation of the unseating of the Wafd” in 1924 and several appeals for “important constitutional amendments which would...take away some of the very important powers granted the king under the 1923 constitution along the lines of Wafdist demands” (such as the ability to dissolve parliament and call new elections).³⁸ Yet in the final third of the book, Hilmy argues the case for an Egyptian constitutional monarchy as “an immemorial tradition of rule” in the country as well as a “national symbol, a sign of permanence in the face of British colonialism.”³⁹ Absolutism is “completely unthinkable” for Egypt – the stuff of the Arabian desert – yet in Hilmy’s mind a purely *constitutional* monarchy is absolutely crucial for Egypt’s development. According to Butovsky, “from an attack on the monarchical constitutional putsch we get an emotional defense of constitutional monarchy”—thereby revealing a key formative tension in the political culture current at the time.

³⁷ Not having access to this book myself, the following analysis hails completely from the work of Butovsky, “Languages,” 64-66.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

Fu'ad might have strongly resented the imposition of constitutional checks on his kingly powers and only reluctantly acquiesced in order to appease the Wafd, yet at the same time he still paradoxically came to accept the new constitution as one of several outwardly impressive institutions that would serve as “proof of Egypt’s progress as a civilized nation.”⁴⁰ He foreshadowed this sentiment in his declaration to the nation upon acceding to the throne, claiming that “we announce for the whole world to see that Egypt as of today is blessed with sovereignty and independence, and we assume for ourselves the title ‘His Majesty the King of Egypt’ in order for our country to have, as befits its independence, all the trappings of an international personality and means for obtaining national pride” (see Appendix C for excerpts from the Arabic original).⁴¹ If, by playing up the constitutional part of his identity, he could further shore up his own primacy in the center of Egyptian political life and simultaneously gain more symbolic capital to enhance his international prestige and legitimacy, then he could ultimately rationalize such an ostensible curtailment of his royal prerogative.

New Directions in Egyptian Political Culture

It is well documented that through shrewd maneuvering in the ministry and calculated manipulation of the political system, Fu'ad never had to relinquish much of his royal prerogative, even after the implementation of the constitution in 1923. The British condemned his reliance on traditional despotic methods as the behavior of an “autocratic eastern potentate” (which belied his Western education).⁴² And although it cannot be denied that Fu'ad exhibited unmistakably authoritarian tendencies as king and consequently alienated the liberal nationalists, it should not be assumed that the patterns of his rule constituted a simple throwback to pre-modern Arab political culture. Rather, it seems clear

⁴⁰ See note 2 above.

⁴¹ “The Independent Egyptian Monarchy” (*al-mamlaka al-Misriyya al-mustaqilla*), *al-Hilal*, 1 Apr. 1922.

⁴² F.O. Memorandum, 21 Sept. 1923, FO 371/8962.

that Fu'ad's ruling style was distinctively neo-traditional (or, to use Eisenstadt's terminology, "post-traditional")—certainly drawing on some more old-fashioned Arab and Ottoman practices, but also infusing them with self-consciously modern political sensibilities that accorded with his own understanding of the sources of European monarchies' success and prestige. It is here that we can see the likely influence of British ceremonial procedure on the Palace's ideas for how to represent the monarchy in the most distinguished fashion possible.

The clearest example of Fu'ad's post-traditional vision of political culture is his careful use of royal patronage and his obsession with personally conferring ranks, titles, and decorations on key individuals. My evidence here again comes by way of the pioneering work of Butovsky, who must be credited for conducting much of the primary research on this matter.⁴³ On one hand, Fu'ad codified five new civil ranks (*riassat*, *imtiyaz*, *basha*, *bey* first class, and *bey* second class) in his Royal Rescript no. 3 for 1923. The terms of this rescript stipulated that the king would retain the final say in the distribution of these titles, and that "holders of the different civil ranks were required to wear special uniforms at official ceremonies, for which orders of precedent were set down by the royal cabinet."⁴⁴ On the other hand, Fu'ad worked doggedly to establish and regulate an entire hierarchy of indigenous orders and decorations (the most prestigious of which – the Order of Muhammad Ali and the Order of Ismail – played up the dynastic theme) and stipulated that they be doled out only "upon his own initiative,"⁴⁵ a requirement that was ultimately codified in Article 43 of the constitution. This elaborate patronage system – an invented tradition in accordance with the classic European model of hierarchical court culture – is significant for several reasons. Most basically, it demonstrates that Fu'ad was actually quite active in the evolving political field and had devised a way to maintain his ascendancy during an era of sweeping social and political change. Butovsky notes that "the language of rank" was one way to bring

⁴³ See Butovsky, "Languages."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 60-1.

⁴⁵ Allenby to Curzon, 21 Jan. 1923, FO 371/8959.

the new elites of professions and business into the political field as well as to “break down the nationalist discourse of a united, indivisible nation into a nation constituted through groups on which the monarchy could go to work.”⁴⁶ On another level, by tying key subjects’ status and livelihood to the ceremonial symbolism of the dynasty, Fu’ad successfully bolstered the monarchy’s “historical legitimation”⁴⁷ and further entrenched its central position in the political universe of those social actors who mattered the most.

Fu’ad also consistently attempted to represent himself to the general public as a way of centering the monarchy in the political culture of the period. The images and symbolism employed most commonly affirm Fu’ad’s keen interest in portraying himself as a prestigious world leader akin to the most dignified and ceremonious European monarchs, and linking this exalted picture of his international stature with national progress and glory. We can see this theme borne out visually by looking at the covers of several issues of the Egyptian journals *al-Musawwar* and *al-Lata’if al-Musawwara* from the late 1920s and early 1930s (see Appendix D for examples). Fu’ad would alternately be shown sitting in a dignified manner upon his lavishly decorated throne in the Parliament building⁴⁸ or participating in ceremonial state functions (at home and abroad) that – by picturing Fu’ad alongside foreign statesmen or focusing on the level of sophistication of Egypt’s official (often formal and military) preparations – showed off just how modern and European the Egyptian ruling regime could be.⁴⁹ The series of coins that Fu’ad issued between 1928 and 1930 also exemplifies Fu’ad’s concern with playing up Egypt’s international legitimacy and prestige symbolically (see Appendix E);⁵⁰ the three that commemorate Fu’ad’s state visits to France, Belgium, and England by juxtaposing ancient Egyptian and Pharaonic images with modern European ones

⁴⁶ Butovsky, “Languages,” 63.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴⁸ See, for example, cover of *al-Lata’if al-Musawwara*, 13 Jan. 1930.

⁴⁹ See, for example, covers of *al-Musawwar*, 1 Apr. 1927; 9 Aug. 1929. Additionally, the cover of *al-Lata’if al-Musawwara*, 30 Dec. 1929.

⁵⁰ See MINT 24/64 for the collection of images.

(the Arc de Triomphe in the French example) provide fascinating illustrations of this pictorial device.

In fact, Fu'ad's application of Pharaonic symbolism provides us with another telling example of how the Palace was not completely detached from popular nationalism, but rather sought to engage with some of its main ideas and themes and adjust its self-representation accordingly. We see one instance of this in *al-Lata'if al-Musawwara*'s depiction of Fu'ad at the site of the ancient monuments in Luxor (see Appendix F).⁵¹ Also, Donald Reid writes that a patriotic ode to Tutenkhamen by the "poet of poets" Ahmad Shawqi "presented Fu'ad as a benevolent constitutional monarch and worthy heir to the pharaohs," and that pharaonic motifs appeared on "seven of nineteen stamps issued during Fu'ad's reign."⁵² Shawqi's conflation of pharaonicism and constitutionalism might seem curious and arbitrary, but it actually accords neatly with language used at the end of the *al-Hilal* feature on Fu'ad's accession that stresses the hope that "Parliament will be held and run in the near future to return the nation of the Pharaohs to its ancient glory" (*yatimmu 'an qaribi in 'iqadu al-barlamani wa s' iuhu fima yu' id bilad al-fara'na ila majdiha al-qadim*).⁵³

Conclusion

Fu'ad – who had "not a drop of Egyptian blood in his veins,"⁵⁴ and whose Arabic was shoddy at best – was an odd figure to become the ruler of Egypt at such an intense and urgent moment in the country's nationalist struggle. With Zaghlul so widely considered the hero of the anti-British opposition, it is difficult to imagine how there could be any more room in the popular imagination for a national leader at the time that Fu'ad became the first king of Egypt. Yet in spite of all this, Fu'ad managed to fix the monarchy as a new center of gravity in Egyptian culture remarkably quickly. On one hand, he was aided by the anti-Wafd British,

⁵¹ Cover of *al-Lata'if al-Musawwara*, 22 Dec. 1930.

⁵² Reid, 138.

⁵³ *Al-Hilal*, 1 Apr. 1922, 608.

⁵⁴ See note 2 above.

who would do all in their power to throw their weight behind the throne. By virtue of this special relationship, marked by an entire apparatus of royal ceremonial procedure, Fu'ad would gain new insights into how pomp and political symbolism could be used to help posture himself as the symbolic center of the nation's political order.

Yet the strength of the British hand in Egyptian political affairs does not sufficiently account for the almost instant centripetal pull of the Palace on political life in the country. Rather, it seems clear that Fu'ad's royal ambitions – impelled by his own interpretation of the success of Western European monarchy – overlapped with and played on one major strand of Egypt's nationalist self-identity: its Eurocentric sense of modernism and civilizational progress. There was something special about having a strong centralized and dynastic king with all the necessary royal accouterments in this brave new post-war world of national self-determination and international competition, and the intersection of Fu'ad's accession with the achievement of independence subtly underscored this attitude. This explains Prime Minister Sarwat Pasha's curious homage to the king as having “led the national movement to fruition,”⁵⁵ and perhaps partially underlies Zaghlul's immediate assurances of loyalty to the throne.⁵⁶

Much of this fervor for the monarchy as a symbol of Egypt's dignified international standing hinged on Egypt's zeal for a liberal and democratic constitution that would hand political authority over to the people; this is clear enough from the two main texts cited above. It would seem, then, that Fu'ad's relentless pursuit of personal royal authority in the face of the constitution would provoke the nationalists to target the throne rather than the British in their campaign for liberalism. The British themselves accused Fu'ad of opportunistically “affecting to be eager to assume the mantle of a constitutional monarch”⁵⁷ while stealthily arrogating to himself more despotic powers and thus flouting the wishes of

⁵⁵ See note 30 above.

⁵⁶ Scott, “Report on General Situation in Egypt from March 23 to 29,” E3803/61/16, FO 407/192.

⁵⁷ Allenby to Curzon, 7 May 1923, FO 141/516/6.

his people. Even if this is exactly how things appear in retrospect, it is still not the complete picture. For it ignores the extent to which a ceremonious royal court – no matter how autocratic at first – became a key benchmark in the national consciousness for measuring Egypt’s progress as against Europe; and how in the process, the Muhammad Ali dynasty – in the face of a sustained British colonial presence – could steadily gain legitimacy as authentic-indigenous. Even some of Fu’ad’s fiercest detractors throughout the first decade of his rule could never imagine Egypt without its monarchy, but rather would seek to replace him with another member of the dynasty who better reflected their national goals.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ See, for example, statement by Takla Bey Gabriel – proprietor of *al-Ahram* – on 20 Sept. 1923, FO 371/8963.

Chapter 4: The Iraqi Monarchy in Transition

It is difficult to develop an accurate picture of what life was like in Iraq towards the end of King Faisal's reign. Much of the historiography on Iraq in the 1930s focuses on power politics and the struggle for centralized state authority, as well as the increased militarization of Iraqi society. Even more recent forays into the social history of the period can only seem to conjecture at the extent and pulse of social and cultural change in the country – marked by an increasingly politicized *effendiyya* class – and, following Batatu's footsteps, attempt to interpret this change rather teleologically, with a view forward to the revolution of 1958. An obvious and recurring problem for studying this transitional era in Iraqi history – and one that admittedly limits the scope of this chapter – is the dearth of readily accessible Iraqi primary sources; the manifest focus on high politics reflects the kinds of materials – mainly British colonial documents – that are most widely available to scholars of the period.

This chapter will attempt to breathe some new life into the political historiography of the 1930s by focusing on sources that reveal some key insights into the social and cultural meaning of the Iraqi monarchy as it continued to evolve after the death of Faisal. After over a decade of his rule – which coincided until 1932 with Iraq's circumscribed autonomy under the British Mandate – the monarchy had clearly run out of steam. Despite continued attempts to crystallize his central place in the Iraqi imagination as a legitimate nationalist and modernist ruler, Faisal's popularity seemed to be on the wane. Upon his abrupt death in early September 1933, however, Iraqi sentiment ostensibly changed on a dime; the nearly uncontrollable public outpourings of grief and the grandiloquence of the praise thrown his way posthumously evince an unforeseen and interesting dynamic between king and people, by which Iraqis ostensibly could exhibit a profound respect for Faisal and everything his

crown had stood for, even if they had grown tired of him personally and were poised for change. This helps explain the unfettered popularity that the new, youthful King Ghazi enjoyed immediately upon his accession. Yet Ghazi's short reign was also marked by a curious vicissitudinary relationship with his subjects. At times Ghazi seemed to embody all the hopes and ambitions of Iraq's changing populace; at other moments, his public appeal was so low that the British and the Iraqi ministry had no choice but to contemplate his removal. Just as in Faisal's case, however, after Ghazi's abrupt death in 1939 he was instantly and unconditionally venerated as a popular nationalist hero, and the monarchy was consequently reinvigorated anew.

This was undoubtedly a somewhat ambiguous and ambivalent period in Iraqi history. On one hand, the termination of the British Mandate opened up new possibilities for national self-definition and progress, even if the British still maintained a firm presence in the country.¹ On the other hand – especially against the backdrop of the worldwide depression, which sapped the energy of Iraq's inchoate economy – new, increasingly visible social groups emerged and came to want and expect different things from their state.² Within this context, the meaning of the Iraqi monarchy would be consistently malleable and unsettled, as the Palace actively sought new methods to reassert its symbolic ascendancy at the center of an evolving Iraqi political field. Ghazi was alternately revered and reviled just as Faisal had been, depending on the conditions and political circumstances; yet the instantaneous drive of the Iraqis to mourn their second departed king as a symbol of national pride and prestige again bespeaks, I will argue, a more permanent underlying deference to the position and status of the Throne that transcended any popular disdain for the behavior of the individuals

¹ See the essays by Peter and Marion Sluglett and Roger Owen in Fernea and Louis, *The Iraqi Revolution of 1958*, for somewhat disputing interpretations of the significance of this transition.

² See Eppel, "The Elite, the Effendiyya."

who sat upon it.³ Indeed, overthrowing the monarchy did not yet appear to be anywhere in the cards throughout this transitional decade in Iraqi history; even Ghazi's staunchest enemies only desired to replace him with another more popular monarch.

Faisal's Ceremonial: 1932-33

It is worth beginning with a brief account of Faisal's use of ceremonial in the final year of his reign. Most basically, it demonstrates that even after a decade of personal rule, Faisal was still actively concerned with selling his image publicly. Moreover, given the context of Iraq's recent independence, we can discern several clear parallels between Faisal's ceremonial and that of Fuad a decade earlier—most centrally in the ways that British colonial precedents and sensibilities circumscribed the choices and manners of the Iraqi court.

Faisal never lost his flair for dramatic receptions and colorful public processions during his periodic tours around the country. In May 1932, for example, Faisal and his entourage made a formal royal visit to Basra, which one correspondent noted “put up a very good show on the occasion.”⁴ Not unlike the scene to which he arrived in the city in June 1921, the streets teemed with large crowds that had assembled to offer cordial greetings to the royal procession as it passed through a series of triumphal arches. Adding to the “excitement and enthusiasm of people” – marked by loud “ululating from the house-tops” – was an ostentatious visual display emanating from the Palace: “At the Sarai a large illuminated

³ Of course, it cannot be forgotten that many of these ceremonial events that I am analyzing – for example, those surrounding the deaths and accessions of the Iraqi monarchs – represent classic rites of passage or key “liminal” moments within the political community that would evoke similar popular outpourings in any context of modern monarchy. As anthropologists such as Victor Turner have observed, it is precisely the ritual process in any community, marked by its salient rites of passage, that can largely explain sudden shifts in apparent popularity of the authority structure in place, since these liminal moments are experienced by “initiates” in the community as “anti-structure,” which can imbue the rites with a sense of over-arching “communitas.” In the case of the modern monarchies we are studying, the community at hand is the entire nation; and the communitas is experienced on a mass scale. If this process is common and predictable throughout many different political communities – especially modern monarchies – it does not mean that the historical contingencies of a given system are not still unique, or that (especially in a context of modern mass communication) the particular meanings at stake or social actors involved are not highly variable and revealing. See Turner, *The Ritual Process*; van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*.

⁴ “King Faisal's Visit to Basrah,” *Times of Mesopotamia*, 5 May 1932.

crown, with changing colours, was the object of general admiration, and an illuminated Iraqi flag marked the entrance to Saudiyah.”⁵ Faisal was again greeted by a Guard of Honor, though this time it consisted of Iraqi policemen rather than British soldiers.

After the achievement of independence, Faisal also became involved in a series of ceremonial exchanges – revolving around a state visit to England planned in honor of the transition – that very much recalls the dynamics of the Egyptian case in 1922. The British were quite keen to use the state visit to celebrate Iraq’s “progress,” exemplified by the “historic occasion...when Iraq became a member of the League of Nations,” as a way of proving their commitment to Iraqi nationalism and maintaining their special diplomatic relationship with Baghdad.⁶ Faisal was now the king of a sovereign nation, and as such, he needed to be given proper royal treatment. Consequently, according to one Foreign Office official, he was to be regarded during the state visit “by us exactly as a European monarch in similar circumstances.”⁷ The British also decided to confer on Faisal the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, just as they had done for Fu’ad upon his formal accession, and prepared for Faisal’s reciprocation of this act by granting certain British officers the Order of al-Rafidain.⁸

The British clearly saw this array of royal ceremonial as a way to impress on Faisal a certain style of kingly behavior and ensure Iraq’s loyalty to Westminster. Yet to their chagrin, all their concerted efforts were not entirely successful. This becomes clear from a report on the Iraqi media coverage of Faisal’s state visit published by the Foreign Office, which noted that “the vernacular press of Bagdad [sic] appears to have entered upon a conspiracy of comparative silence concerning the reception accorded to King Faisal during

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Draft speech by the English King to Faisal, 2 June 1933, FO 371/16915.

⁷ F.O. Minute (London), 22 May 1933, FO 141/705.

⁸ See various entries in FO 372/2900.

the State visit to London.”⁹ One officer even went so far as to respond to this apparent boycott by exclaiming that “the visit has been a waste of time and money, I fear. I always thought it premature” – a comment that reveals just how tactical the ceremonial exchange actually was in the British mind.¹⁰ Finally, it appears that the Iraqis had their own ideas about the symbolic meaning of the state visit, hoping that Faisal’s upgrading in the eyes of the British would afford him more international prestige and clout in asserting the Iraqi will. One Iraqi writer expressed that “the country wants its great King on this auspicious tour to let the world hear the voice of Iraq thundering out its demand for freedom and emancipation and its denunciation of all that is derogatory to its national honour.”¹¹

Mourning King Faisal

Hindsight does not seem to be exactly 20/20 when it comes to interpreting the legacy of Faisal’s rule in Iraq. On one hand we have contemporary testimony from British authors that Faisal’s life was “consistently progressive”¹² and that his problems stemmed from his being “too civilized, too constitutional a ruler to deal with opposition on the crudely vigorous lines adopted by the dictatorships of our day.”¹³ On the other hand, Faisal has often been depicted retrospectively as a would-be despot, aspiring to emulate the Italian fascist style of rule, and displaying clear authoritarian tendencies in the way he handled internal politics in the country.¹⁴ Even Philby, who we know was a staunch opponent of any Hashemite monarchy, called Faisal’s death a “providential accident” that “opened the door for the constitutional developments” he had always envisaged, leading to the establishment of a true popular and constitutional monarchical regime under Ghazi that had previously been absent

⁹ Ogilvie-Forbes to Simon, 27 June 1933, FO 371/16915.

¹⁰ F.O. minute to note 8 above.

¹¹ See note 8 above.

¹² Erskine, 267.

¹³ “King Feisal,” the *Times*, 9 Sept. 1933.

¹⁴ Kedourie, “The Kingdom of Iraq: A Retrospect,” *The Chatham House Version*, 246.

when his father was king.¹⁵ Perhaps most curiously of all, Saddam Hussein – “in his rather frantic search for unifying historical symbols” in Iraq – invoked Faisal’s legacy, built a statue in his honor in 1989 (replicating one that had been destroyed in 1958), and touted the “once-vilified Hashemite kings as superb Iraqi nationalists.”¹⁶

No matter how mixed Faisal’s record has appeared in the long run, upon his death he was instantaneously revered as a popular hero and the consummate symbol of Iraq’s progress and national glory. Contemporary accounts of the scale and intensity of the public outpouring of grief and mourning are truly remarkable. After word of Faisal’s death reached Iraq, large processions of mourners “thronged the streets of Bagdad [sic]” daily,¹⁷ and at least in one case “wended their way slowly through the town beating their breast and wailing dirges bemoaning” the King’s death.¹⁸ The first night of mourning was marked symbolically by the extinguishing of all electric lights along one central street; the *Iraq Times* reported that “it was a macabre experience last night to walk along the darkened streets, surrounded on all sides by groups of mourners chanting, in rhythmic monotone, such words as: ‘O father of Ghazi, you have left us when we needed you most.’”¹⁹

After roughly a week of intense mourning, Faisal’s body arrived in Baghdad and a funeral was immediately planned. In preparation for the funeral procession, according to the *Iraq Times*, “all night long crowds had collected in the streets of the city to await the passing of the cortege. When dawn broke the flat roofs of the houses along the route... presented an extraordinary appearance” of “the women of Baghdad, who had gathered at every available coign of vantage to pay their last tribute of tears to the Arab King.”²⁰ During the day of the funeral, the police had their hands full dealing with an extremely disorderly and almost

¹⁵ Philby, *Mesopotame*, 439, Philby papers, St. Antony’s archive, box 8.

¹⁶ Bengio, 142.

¹⁷ Humphreys to F.O, 14 Sept. 1933, FO 141/705.

¹⁸ “King Faisal’s Sudden Death,” the *Iraq Times*, 9 Sept. 1933.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ “The Funeral of H.M. King Faisal,” the *Iraq Times*, 16 Sept. 1933.

uncontrollable crowd that continuously broke the military cordons propped up for the event, and were in turn forced to cut a suspension bridge in order to keep thousands of frenetic mourners away from the burial site.²¹ The funeral itself was a “short religious and military ceremony” – fittingly adorned by a “proper blend of Eastern and Western custom” – and was attended by prominent British officials as well as Iraqi politicians and deputations of notables from all the provinces.²² The British Ambassador stated in his report that “no one who took part in this ceremony could fail to be impressed by the genuine signs of grief which were manifested by every class and section of the population for the loss of their king.”²³ Perhaps ironically, Faisal was buried in a special royal tomb constructed especially for his funeral in the gardens adjacent to the Parliament building.

In light of the frequent attention paid to the militarization of Iraqi society in this period, it is perhaps worth digressing slightly to note the heavy military overtones of much of the ceremonial surrounding Faisal’s death, which of course was devised primarily by the British. If Iraqi politicians tended to focus inordinately on the fundamental importance of a strong centralized military, it is interesting to speculate how much their thinking was shaped by the dominant modes of the British Residency’s profoundly militaristic public and ceremonial life during the mandate and beyond.

First, Faisal’s body was received throughout the entire journey from Switzerland to Baghdad with “due ceremony and military honors,”²⁴ a natural consequence of the responsibility for conveying the coffin during the trip falling primarily on the British Admiralty and Royal Air Force. As the body made its way via military procession through Palestine, it was always accompanied by proper military panache – honor guards, twenty-one gun salutes, military bands – to such a grandiose degree that one Palestinian newspaper was

²¹ Ibid.

²² Humphrys to Simon, 21 Sept. 1933, FO 372/2978.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Drummond to Despatch at Haifa, 14 Sept. 1933. CO 732/57/11

compelled to celebrate the English military's decorous behavior: "It is beyond my ability to explain the manifestations of respect and honour and the lavishness of which reached a climax of splendour, displayed by the men of the fleet and those of the Army... They estimated the duty and ably discharged it with respect."²⁵ The body arrived in Baghdad in an air convoy consisting of two British and nine Iraqi aircraft and was greeted with even more military formality: "The Royal bier was received with full military honours and then placed on a gun carriage to be borne in state through the city to the burial ground."²⁶ One newspaper reported that between the "Guard of Honour, the Hashimi Regiment, and the Royal Bodyguard," the funeral procession presented a "very soldierly appearance."²⁷

The British interpreted all the impassioned public mourning on Faisal's behalf and the newfound popularity of the departed king as a function of his becoming "a convenient national 'anti-Imperialist' figurehead on his death in the middle of the Assyrian crisis"²⁸ (which had stirred the nation in August 1933). Though there certainly seems to be some truth in this assessment, it only encompasses half the story. For it ignores how Faisal's instantaneously reconstructed legacy evinces something more sacrosanct and symbolically central about the popular conception of the Iraqi monarchy—a conception that manages to combine many of the various and complex strands of Faisal's monarchical identity that we outlined in Chapter 2.

More than being just a convenient rallying point for opportunistic anti-British agitation, Faisal's death seemed to remind Iraqis just how central the monarchy was to the Iraqi national project in the first place. Ambassador Humphrys himself noted that, in political circles, Faisal's death elicited "a keener appreciation of the great work which he had accomplished" and the realization that "it was he who founded the Iraq state and who guided

²⁵ Article from *Falastin*, 15 Sept. 1933, as transcribed in CO 732/57/11.

²⁶ See note 21 above.

²⁷ See note 20 above.

²⁸ Ogilvie-Forbes to Peterson, 3 Oct. 1934, FO 371/17871.

it through the many perplexing difficulties which have been encountered during the twelve years of his reign.”²⁹ Faisal’s alleged ability to transcend local politics and factionalism in the country added to this revision of his legacy. Humphrys added that, in the view of Iraqis, “it was King Faisal’s skill and political subtlety which enabled him to hold the delicate balance between Sunni and Shi’ah” and maintain “a position above the local party rivalries and personal jealousies of the country.”³⁰ Just as he had initially appeared to the Iraqi people in 1921, Faisal was being glorified now for “his noble birth and his romantic leadership of the Arab cause,”³¹ as well as his role as the preeminent Arab statesman who alone possessed the international legitimacy to “deal with the European powers” and promote the Arab cause abroad.³² Finally, King Ghazi’s first speech from the throne conflated many of his father’s identities—his role as “the father of the whole nation” and a “martyr to duty,” as well as his work as a statesman who “developed and strengthened” Iraq’s relations with various countries (Ghazi mentioned the British state visit here as a prime example) and helped raise the country “to a befitting place among the nations of the world.”³³

A Reinvigorated Throne

The young King Ghazi made an immediate splash in Iraq. This was due in no small part to the revived reputation of the Hashemite family name in the wake of Faisal’s death. More than this, however, Ghazi – with his youthful looks, modern outlook, and military and sporting acumen – seemed to embody the optimistic spirit of post-independence Iraq at the time. To some extent, this attitude derived from the belief – alluded to in the British document cited above – that Ghazi would be the right leader to rid Iraq of the nagging British presence in the country. According to Lufti Ja‘far Faraj, “with Ghazi’s accession to the

²⁹ Humphreys to F.O, 14 Sept. 1933, FO 141/705.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² H.E. Satow to Simon, 13 Sept. 1933, CO 732/57/11.

³³ Speech from the Throne, 1 Nov. 1933, as transcribed in telegram from Humphrys to Simon, E6887/105/93, FO 371/16903.

throne, the hopes of the people were revived that his reign would be a new beginning of a policy satisfying their expectations of removing all the signs of foreign influence, and continuing to move by quicker steps towards the realization of nationalist goals.”³⁴

Yet Ghazi’s instant appeal ran deeper than his alleged nationalist credentials; after all, he was still inexperienced and unproven as a national leader. Gerald de Gaury writes that much of Ghazi’s popularity stemmed from his place in the burgeoning younger generation of Iraqis who now filled important military posts and comprised the expansive and increasingly prominent *effendiyya*. After giving several examples of the modernization of education and westernization of public life, de Gaury suggests that “these many changes in a decade had an exhilarating effect on youth. What was new and young was good. Ghazi was the new King and young, therefore he must be good. He was cheered wherever he went.”³⁵ After a brief stint at a public school in England, Ghazi had received the same military education as the new class of officers in the period, who would prove extremely loyal to him: “The King’s popularity continued to grow with the younger generation until it reached the point of adoration. Young officers carried a photograph of him and even preserved one in their pocket-books twenty years afterwards.”³⁶ And at the very beginning of his reign, at least, Ghazi seemed to carry the popular backing of a broad cross-section of the population. According to the *Iraq Times*, “King Ghazi is extremely popular with all sections of his subjects. During his recent visit to Mosul, where he attended the special parade of the Iraq Army, and again on his return to Baghdad, he had a most enthusiastic public reception.”³⁷

Ghazi’s widely publicized oath to the constitution (as proscribed by article 21 of Iraq’s Organic Law), reinforcing Iraq’s identity as a modern constitutional monarchy, could only have added to his prestige and popularity. The army signaled the completion of his

³⁴ Faraj, Lufti Ja‘far, *al-malik Ghazi*, 62.

³⁵ De Gaury, 97.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁷ See note 17 above.

swearing-in to the people with a 101-gun salute, which was followed by the usual procession through the bustling Baghdad streets.³⁸

Ghazi's Shifting Public Image

The initial surge of enthusiasm by the Iraqi people for their new, young, and flashy king gradually subsided, giving way to a more inconsistent attitude that no doubt reflected the different ways Ghazi's style of rule resonated with different segments of a changing populace. In light of this social transformation, Ghazi made sure to be accessible to the public and continue making ceremonial appearances just as his father had done. The second anniversary of his accession in 1935, for example – captured in the press by a troop of “super-exuberant photographers”³⁹ – was marked by an elaborate fete day in which Baghdad was adorned with “thousands of national flags,” a military parade, and symbolic illuminations at night. Two years later, Ghazi's accession day was celebrated “on a greater scale than ever before,” and the *Iraq Times* published – with captions in both English and Arabic – a fitting tribute to the King and his young son, Faisal II, which alluded to the dynastic theme by intimating that the young Crown Prince would “follow in father's footsteps” (see Appendix G).⁴⁰

Oftentimes Ghazi's ubiquitous public representations became necessary in order to counter increasingly negative press coverage documenting his reckless habits and less flattering personal characteristics. The fragility of Ghazi's reputation and prestige became obvious during a national crisis of sorts in 1936, when his sister – Princess Azza – eloped with a Christian Italian waiter while traveling in Europe, causing serious damage to the honor of the Hashemite family and the personal prestige of the King.⁴¹ This “scandal” sent both the ministry and the British embassy into a panic, to such an extent that the Prime Minister as

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Bateman to Hoare, 12 Sept. 1935, FO 371/18945.

⁴⁰ “Father and Son” and “Baghdad Diary,” the *Iraq Times*, 8 Sept. 1937.

⁴¹ A. Clark Kerr to Eden, 19 June 1936, FO 371/20017.

well as Nuri Pasha suggested that murdering the princess would be the only way to save Ghazi's position and avoid his ouster.⁴² Only after much deliberation did the British ambassador work out a reasonable plan with the ministers, hinging on a "purge" of all the undesirable elements from Ghazi's household and the annulment of the fateful marriage.⁴³ In the aftermath of the crisis, the Iraqi court consequently became especially focused on representing Ghazi in an exceedingly good light: "The Court were particularly careful to keep the King well before the public eye. His Majesty's name now appears at the head of all charitable subscription lists for good works, his devotional exercises are carefully recorded, and he is represented in all important social functions."⁴⁴

Ghazi also harnessed the Iraqis' concern with his foreign policy and their growing interest in supra-state Arab identity somewhat defensively in order to bolster his "Royal prestige," for example by allowing an apocryphal article to appear in various Arab newspapers reporting that Ghazi had taken the British Ambassador "seriously to task over Palestine."⁴⁵ Additionally, Ghazi cultivated a keen interest in the radio and made frequent broadcasts to his people, including reports that vociferously attacked the regime in Kuwait. The British noted (in 1939) that radio receiving sets had become "indispensable equipment" in Iraqi coffee shops;⁴⁶ and De Gaury writes that when Ghazi spoke on the Kuwait issue, "Iraqi youth listened, entranced by its King."⁴⁷ Ghazi's private broadcasting station founded in 1937 was one of the first in the Arab world, paving the way for a new era of mass media to sweep across the region.

⁴² Clark to F.O., 15 June 1936, FO 371/20017.

⁴³ See note 42 above.

⁴⁴ Bateman to Eden, 17 Sept. 1936, FO 371/20013.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Houstoun-Boswall to Halifax, 18 May 1939, FO 371/23201.

⁴⁷ De Gaury, 104.

Conclusion: The Ceremonial Cycle Repeats

No matter how skeptical the Iraqis had become of their rather reckless young king, all was forgiven upon his sudden death in a car accident in 1939; it was as if the scandals that repeatedly blemished his career had never taken place. As the country braced for a long regency until Ghazi's son Faisal II became king, Ghazi joined Faisal I in the Iraqi canon of popular nationalist monarchs.

A brief survey of the ceremonial mourning for Ghazi makes this pattern patently clear. According to the *Iraq Times*, "King Ghazi's death is being mourned with great intensity by the emotional and loyal citizens of Baghdad. From early morning until long after darkness interminable processions paraded the main streets of the city, weeping, beating their breast...and chanting laments for the loss of their King in the flower of his youth."⁴⁸ The British Ambassador, reporting on the funeral (for which the *Times* expected 250,000 people to turn out),⁴⁹ said that he "had not before seen an Arab crowd in such a fever of hysteria."⁵⁰ Adding to the atmosphere of "frenzied mourning"⁵¹ was the pervasive rumor that the British had murdered the "'Arabs' hero King"⁵²—a sentiment that was current not just in Baghdad, but also as far as Mosul, where it spurred a group of Iraqi youth to murder a British consular official. The Iraqis – extremely shaken by Ghazi's abrupt death – refused to allow his reputation to be sullied and instead mourned and celebrated him as another hero of Arabism, modernism, and nationalism.⁵³

Meanwhile, the *Iraq Times* wasted no time in pulling out all the stops for the next king, Faisal II. At the ripe age of four, he was already being touted as a popular military

⁴⁸ "Iraq Mourns King's Death," *Iraq Times*, 5 Apr. 1939.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Houston-Boswall to Halifax, 11 Apr. 1939, FO 371/23201.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ See, for example, an undated photo essay from the *Iraq Times* (found in the Sinderson papers at St. Antony's College Archive) that we know was printed after Ghazi's death because of the way he is referred to as "departed" in each caption.

figure and able sportsman (and portrayed in military regalia – with the same photograph in

Appendix G):

The four-year-old King Faisal the Second has already won, as Crown Prince, the affection and admiration of his people. Here he is shown in military uniform. King Faisal is known to at least half the population of Baghdad, as he has made quite a number of public appearances. The last of them was at the Baghdad Royal Horse Show last week, when he rode round the ring on a tiny pony and won the first prize in the children's class. He had a tremendous reception from the crowd. A month ago he was among the most interested spectators of the arrival of the Crown Prince of Iran.⁵⁴

Despite the shortcomings of their last king, then, it would seem that the Iraqis would again rally behind and place their hopes in their reinvigorated dynastic monarchy as a symbol of Iraqi national pride. With familiar flair, they would eagerly anticipate the beginning of a third Hashemite reign with renewed fervor.

⁵⁴ See note 49 above.

Chapter 5: Repackaging the Egyptian Monarchy

“The Egyptian Royal House appear to have an exaggerated idea of their own grandeur and importance.”

- Foreign Office minute by V. Cavendish Bentinck¹

Though it has not commonly been viewed as such, King Fu’ad’s death in 1936 can be considered a key watershed in Egypt’s modern history. On one hand, it altered the course of Anglo-Egyptian relations, at least insofar as British thinking on the matter was concerned. The British had already resigned to reworking the terms of the official relationship by implementing a new treaty, in order to redress many of the recurring diplomatic tensions and Egyptian political grievances that had arisen since the onset of circumscribed independence in 1923 and reached a fever pitch by the mid-1930s. Yet with Fu’ad’s passing, and the impending accession to the throne of the young and inexperienced Crown Prince Faruq, the British hoped to take advantage of an ostensibly wide-open Egyptian political field and manipulate the Palace in order to preserve their basic strategic interests in the country and assure their continued ascendancy in Egyptian political affairs. Fu’ad’s death was also a major turning point in the Egyptian mindset. By 1936, there was no longer any doubt that the King had clearly authoritarian tendencies and – whatever his strengths and achievements over the years – had fallen well short of popular nationalist hopes and expectations. The Egyptians took immediately to their new king-to-be, however, who – aided by his youthful good looks and pious public persona – appeared to be authentically Egyptian in a way his father never did and thus completely renewed and reinvigorated Egyptians’ pride in and respect for the Throne.

The 1930s was a decade of dynamic change in Egypt at many levels. The fabric of society was evolving, as we said in Chapter 1, as the *effendiyya* came to play a much more

¹ F.O. Minute (London), V.C. Bentinck, 22 Apr. 1938, FO 371/22004.

prominent role in the economy and in shaping the contours of Egypt's shifting ideological orientation. As the dominant cultural consumers in the 1930s, Gershoni and Jankowski write,² the *effendiyya* loomed large in the Egyptian cultural "feedback loop," their preferences for nationalist self-identity becoming increasingly pervasive and consequently reverberating back to the top strata of society. Gershoni and Jankowski argue that the upshot of this steady social and cultural transformation was the reassertion of Islamic themes in Egyptian public life, as well as the forging of a new, somewhat reactionary brand of "integral Egyptian nationalism," which stressed "cultural authenticity and pride rooted in Egypt's native Arab-Islamic customs and traditions" and subsumed broader, supra-state notions of identity into one organically Egyptian one.³

Though Gershoni and Jankowski effectively demonstrate how the monarchy responded to this new trend of a more thoroughly Islamic "integral" nationalism by adjusting its self-representation and public symbolism accordingly (and even inventing traditions to correspond with popular sentiment), they do not give full attention to just how central the monarchy was to Egyptian identity at the time, and how Fu'ad's death – in light of these major societal changes throughout the decade – created a context in which the monarchy could repackage itself and consequently emerge as the consummate symbol of Egyptian nationalism. Though Fu'ad had been aloof and personally unpopular as king, we saw in Chapter 3 how many Egyptian nationalists at the time still looked up to the Throne as a key symbol of Egypt's national progress and international prestige in the modern, post-Versailles world. With Faruq's accession, the monarchy could be repackaged in such a way that the dominant themes of Egypt's new, altered self-identity – most notably Islam and the historical legitimacy and continuity of the nation and its dynasty – could be grafted on top of the old common conception. Faruq was wildly popular from the moment he returned to Egypt after

² See Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, Chapter 1.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

Fu'ad's death, in no small part due to the way he managed to embody all these various tropes of Egyptian identity at the time, which he and the Palace entourage would consequently play up to a large extent in their self-representation in Egyptian culture and mass media. The ultimate irony is that by virtue of this monarchical makeover, the British quickly realized they had lost control of the young king whose proper deferential attitude was so crucial to their interests, to the point that all they could do was puzzle over how the royal house had cultivated such an "exaggerated idea" of its own "grandeur and importance" and eagerly await Faruq's fall from grace.⁴

Remembering Fu'ad: Between Arrogance and Pride

Just like the case of Faisal in Iraq, King Fu'ad became significantly more popular in death than he ever had been during his reign. The widespread popular outpouring of grief for the departed king, by many different segments of the population, is evinced in a report on his funeral by the British High Commissioner (later Ambassador) Sir Miles Lampson:

The death of the King was the occasion of manifestations of striking respect to the throne. Deputations of students, of Azharites, and of the Wafdist blue-shirt organization proceeded to Abdin and Koubbeh Palaces to show their sympathy, and members of all parties joined in expressing their sorrow. The press with one accord paid tribute to the King's strong sense of duty and his devoted labours in the interests of his country, and deplored the loss of a determined and experienced ruler... The funeral was well organized and impressive and the behaviour of the public was good.⁵

Lampson's account of the support given to the monarchy by students and Blue-Shirts (the Wafd's youth faction) is especially noteworthy, in light of Fu'ad's dubious reception by Egyptian youth back in 1922.

The British prepared for this lavish funeral ceremony and procession with the usual flurry of correspondence regarding proper royal precedent and colonial procedure. Partly with an eye to appeasing the Palace and partly "in order to have usual precedence over all

⁴ See, for example, Lampson to Oliphant, 23 July 1938, FO 371/21948.

⁵ Lampson to Eden, 20 May 1936, FO 371/20109.

foreign representatives at [the] funeral,”⁶ the British Residency fastidiously planned nearly every detail of the mourning period, ranging from the correct order of Egyptian and British officials in the procession, to the manner in which Faruq should be addressed and sent his condolences, to the postponement of all games and parties at the Residency out of respect to the Throne.⁷ Ever mindful of the Italian menace – keeping tabs on Italian press commentary on Fu’ad’s death and Mussolini’s conveyance of condolences to ‘Abdin⁸ – the British even acquiesced to certain Egyptian ceremonial requirements, in order to ensure that the Egyptian government threw its support behind only one European power.

Though Fu’ad’s death elicited a striking outpouring of sympathy and support in the country – just as Faisal’s had in Iraq three years earlier – the Egyptian press was not quite willing to forget some of their long-standing grievances during Fu’ad’s reign and simply gloss over them with unfettered adulation. One long feature in a special kingship edition of *al-Musawwar* (published on the occasion of Faruq’s accession in 1937), for example, offers an extremely cagey analysis of Fu’ad’s career that celebrates many of his achievements (especially in the realm of foreign affairs) as measures worthy of national pride, while subtly suggesting several instances in which the king overstepped his bounds and failed to connect with his people.⁹ This ambivalent attitude manifests most clearly in a section that calls Fu’ad a man of “*kibriya’a*,”¹⁰ a rather shifty word that denotes pride at the same time that it gives a sense of arrogance or haughtiness. On one hand, the author emphasizes the more positive connotations of *kibriya’a*, arguing that Fu’ad’s state visits to Europe “were the best demonstration of the grand splendor of the dignity of the king and the nation which he represents” (*kanat al-rihlatu al-malikiyyatu fi euruba khayra i‘lanin fakhamin fakhirin ‘an*

⁶ Memorandum from Residency (Cairo), 29 Apr. 1936, FO 141/538/7.

⁷ Examples of this detailed planning abound in FO 141/538/7, between 25 April and 5 May 1936.

⁸ Drummond (Rome) to F.O., 28 Apr. 1936, FO 371/20105.

⁹ The following analysis is from “Fu’ad the First, the Former King” (*Fu’ad al-awwal al-malik al-sabiq*), *al-Musawwar*, 29 July 1937.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

karamati al-maliki wa al-ummati allati yumaththiluha).¹¹ This, of course, further supports our argument from Chapter 3 that Fu'ad's international prestige as a modern monarch accorded closely with the modernism so central to the Egyptian nationalism current at the time; it is noteworthy that this is the bit of Fu'ad's legacy reinforced here in such detail. On the other hand, the author seems to allude to the downside of Fu'ad's imperiousness or *kibriya'a* by calling him "cruel and heavy-handed" (*shedid al-wata, qasi al-riqaba*) as well as "extremely conservative" (*min ghulati al-muhafazini*),¹² and later emphasizing (for several paragraphs) his unyielding drive to control all political and royal affairs personally.

Meanwhile, the British were engaging in discussions of their own about Fu'ad's legacy and the lessons to draw from his tenure as king. The British actually applauded Fu'ad's efforts to modernize Egypt and guide the country towards "a noteworthy advance in all the elements, material, political, and social, which are the components of a progressive modern state."¹³ Another British MP noted with similar veneration that "at a time when political and economic forces were working constitutional and dynastic changes of deep and permanent significance in Turkey, Persia, Arabia, and Afghanistan King Fu'ad succeeded not merely in maintaining but in strengthening the position of the monarchy in Egypt,"¹⁴ which is naturally curious for its tacit approval of Fu'ad's disregard for constitutionalism.

Indeed, this sentiment seemingly contradicts Lampson's testimony that "far too little credit has been given to the sincerity of the late King's disbelief in Constitutional government in Egypt and to the fact that he may really, as he incessantly protested, have been unable to understand the motives of H.M.G."¹⁵ This gets us closer to the true British attitude towards Fu'ad generally: however much they appreciated his zeal for modernization and monarchical authority, it was his relationship with the British and compliance with their stated interests in

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 75.

¹³ Resolution of Halifax, as printed in "The Late King Fu'ad," *the Times*, 5 May 1936.

¹⁴ Speech by A. Sinclair, *ibid.*

¹⁵ Lampson to Eden, 1 May 1936, FO 141/538/7.

Egypt (of which constitutional government was certainly one) that would be the ultimate criteria for judgment. In his report, Lampson laments that Fu'ad's "personal sympathies...were with Italy," and that "he never arrived at much personal sympathy with or understanding of the English character."¹⁶ Yet if the British distrusted Fu'ad's handling of Egyptian affairs and dismissed any misguided behavior as "characteristically Turkish" (and therefore, in their mind, autocratic and backwards), they still could take much comfort that "On all occasions when H.M.G. [His Majesty's Government] felt compelled to insist on any particular course of action, his fundamental belief in the inevitability of the British Connexion came into play, and he invariably gave way."¹⁷

Acculturating King Faruq

It was thus extremely urgent, upon Fu'ad's death, for the British to develop the same trustworthy relationship with the new king and ensure that his political behavior ultimately fell in line with their strategic interests. The British were acutely aware of the Residency's "most delicate role"¹⁸ in this regard, since Fu'ad's death had "destroyed the balance of power in Egypt" and created a political vacuum that the Wafd could readily fill.¹⁹ Yet if the British were apprehensive about the new political situation in Egypt, they also saw Faruq's kingship as a potential boon for their interests. Not only was Faruq extremely popular across Egypt, but also his youth and inexperience, so the British thought, would enable them to mold his character to their liking and instill in him the utmost respect for English political influence in the country. They thus saw the rise to stature of Faruq as an effective way to redress many of the problems they had experienced with the aloof, unpopular, and oftentimes stubborn Fu'ad. Of course, their ongoing desire to steal the Throne's loyalty away from Italy was always present in their thinking, especially on the subject of the new king's entourage:

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ F.O. Minute to Lampson's letter of 1 May 1936, written 12 May 1936, J4127/2/16, FO 371/20107.

It still was of vital importance to future of our two countries that the young King should have [a] proper environment and one calculated to instill into him that the fates of Egypt and England were inevitably linked not to mention [to] interests of his Throne...I was convinced that [the] elimination of Verucci [the Italian architect of 'Abdin and a notable figure in the Palace entourage] was essential as soon as possible. Otherwise it was too easy for Italian flattery and intrigue to reach His Majesty.²⁰

The British strove even more vehemently to “mould the King’s character along right healthy lines,”²¹ by familiarizing him with all the proper manners and trappings of upper-class English life. It is truly remarkable how much effort the British devoted to Faruq’s English acculturation and socialization during this formative period of their relationship with him; for in their eyes, at stake was nothing less than the future security of British interests in Egypt. The British initially lamented that Fu’ad’s abrupt death had brought Faruq’s two-year stay in England to an end, since, as one Foreign Office official articulated, they “had hoped that a prolonged contact with English social life, *the absence of which in the case of his father altered the whole course of Anglo-Egyptian relations*, would not only develop the character of the heir to the throne along the right lines, but produce intimately desirable political results [italics mine].”²²

Once the British resigned to the fact that it was more politically expedient for Faruq to forgo the rest of his English public education and remain in Egypt, they still adamantly insisted on keeping a close watch on Faruq’s personal development. They immediately set out to hire a private tutor for Faruq who would be an “English ‘gentleman’ of the right qualifications (educational, sporting, athletic, etc.).”²³ At the same time, they delighted in the fact that the British King had “undoubtedly made a terrific impression on” Faruq and served as his model of royal behavior.²⁴ They also paid much attention to Faruq’s physical activity, noting that Faruq should be encouraged in his latent “desire to keep bodily fit in the way

²⁰ Lampson to F.O., 12 May 1936, FO 371/20107.

²¹ Lampson to F.O., 4 Aug. 1936, FO 371/20116.

²² Vansittart to Hardinge, 24 Sept. 1936, FO 371/20119.

²³ Lampson to F.O., 15 May 1936, FO 371/20107.

²⁴ Minute by Yencken, 22 Sept. 1936, included in telegram from Kelly to F.O., 23 Sept. 1936, FO 371/20119.

Englishmen do.”²⁵ Indeed, one year later – when Faruq asked for “a collection of specimen British implements of sport” as part of his official wedding present from London – the British, while scoffing at his request, at least felt that “it’s rather nice in a way to know that what he does want is what he regards as typical of English country life”²⁶ and appreciated that Faruq was not “turning to Italy or Germany for sports equipment.”²⁷ At root, however, all this emphasis on proper social behavior still reflected undoubtedly political objectives: “We have had such bitter experience here of what it means to have a King in Egypt who is personally unsympathetic and distrustful in his attitude. King Faroukh is going through a most critical phase and really his development during the next twelve months is going to fix the trend of our future relations.”²⁸

Monitoring Faruq’s Popularity

While the British concentrated on keeping close watch over Faruq’s personal development, they could not help but notice how immediately popular Faruq was upon his arrival in Egypt after Fu’ad’s death. Faruq’s exceedingly warm and enthusiastic reception in his home country is certainly striking, by all accounts. The journal *Great Britain and the East* reported that

King Faruq’s reception on his arrival was a revelation. We have had vociferous welcomes extended to the late King and to Zaghlul Pasha. But none of them reached the heights of enthusiasm, nor were so clearly spontaneous and heartfelt, as the outburst of feeling which...did not cease until the young King had reached his home at Koubbeh Palace. Yesterday’s events can be regarded as an excellent augury for the future. This Boy-King touched the imagination of the older amongst his subjects and struck a responsive note in the hearts of his contemporaries in age, which cannot fail to create between Throne and People a human link, that has hitherto not existed in this country.²⁹

Lampson confirmed in a private report that Faruq’s arrival was marked by many “manifestations of respect to the throne,” which included royal processions through “dense

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Lampson to Oliphant, 23 Nov. 1937; Report by Smart, 23 Nov. 1937, T16602/12201/379, FO 372/3240.

²⁷ Lampson to F.O., 10 Dec. 1937, FO 372/3240.

²⁸ Kelly to F.O., 23 Sept. 1936, FO 371/20119.

²⁹ “Popularity of the Young King,” *Great Britain and the East*, 14 May, J4278/2/16, FO 371/20107.

crowds, which cheered and showered flowers” in both Alexandria and Cairo, the attendance of large deputations of notables and ulema, and parades by troops of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides “in honor of their chief Scout.”³⁰ Lampson concluded by adding that “while all classes of the people shared in according the new King a warm welcome, the prominent part taken by the youth of the country both in Alexandria and in Cairo, and along the line during His Majesty’s journey to Cairo, was a notable feature.”³¹ This very visible backing for Faruq by the nation’s youth population was, again, extremely significant, demonstrating that Faruq seemed to tap into the “myth of youth”³² current in Egypt at the time and exude the same optimistic spirit that colored the ambitions of his generation.

Though clearly impressed that the Egyptian public “had taken the young monarch warmly to their hearts,”³³ the British were simultaneously apprehensive that all this lavish ceremonial attention would give him a “swollen head”³⁴ and make him more presumptuous and thus less docile. The British, on one hand – seeing “no reason...against King Faruq’s establishing his position and the Crown’s and the dynasty’s”³⁵ – felt compelled to support Faruq’s frequent public appearances, in order to promote his popular image and simultaneously stave off any intrigues against the Palace. After all, detachment from the people had been “one of his father’s weaknesses,”³⁶ which only made Britain’s job of propping up the Palace more difficult. On the other hand, the British grew increasingly skeptical of all of Faruq’s instantaneous attention to ceremonial, believing that it could distract him from his proper course of personal development. According to one official, “I expect that all his visits to the mosques and his being shown to the people is making the King even more above himself than when he arrived...It is a difficult situation, for on the one hand

³⁰ See note 5 above.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, 20.

³³ See note 19 above.

³⁴ Report on political situation by Smart, 9 May 1936, FO 141/772.

³⁵ F.O. Minute (London) to Lampson telegram of 17 May 1936, J4480/2/16, FO 371/20108.

³⁶ F.O. to Lampson, 18 May 1936, FO 371/20107.

there is much to be said politically for keeping the King's end up, but from the point of view of the formation of the boy's character all this showman business must be very bad."³⁷

Curbing Faruq's Enthusiasm

Many of these themes surrounding Faruq's stature as heir apparent and his penchant for ceremonial representation came to a head when the Palace and the Residency began to devise a European trip that Faruq and his entourage would take for several months leading up to his formal accession to the Throne (upon his coming-of-age in July 1937). On one level, this episode sheds light on how Faruq started to play the ceremonial game with the British from early on and sought to appropriate many of the trappings and styles of their prestigious monarchical system for his own benefit. On another level, the exasperated British reaction demonstrates not only just how condescending they could be towards the Egyptian government, but also the extent to which they continued to pin all their hopes for future relations with Egypt on the proper behavior and personal character of the new king.

This dilemma of sorts began when Faruq intimated to the Residency that he desired to attend personally the new British King's coronation in London. The British adamantly refused this request, on the grounds that "it is contrary to accepted custom for one sovereign to attend the coronation of another."³⁸ The acting British Ambassador added that "the presence of King Farouk in London would be embarrassing" and also asked for advice in dealing with the Egyptians' "ignorance of convention" and Faruq's personal governor's fear for the "moral effect of disappointment on the King."³⁹ Additionally, he wrote, "I realize how very trivial all this sounds but I must ask for indulgence as I have to deal with Egyptian

³⁷ Minute by Smart, 11 May 1936, FO 141/772.

³⁸ See note 18 above.

³⁹ Kelly to F.O., 20 Sept. 1936, FO 371/20119.

scale of values rather than realities. It must be remembered that this probably the last opportunity for giving King Farouk a prolonged contact with English social life.”⁴⁰

At the same time, the Foreign Office officials acknowledged the substantive value that a royal exchange could have and hoped that a “brief visit” to England “could be associated with some kind of gesture which could be used to raise His Majesty’s prestige in Egypt.”⁴¹ Even if Faruq’s attendance at the coronation would be embarrassing, the British still felt that “the longer the period that King Farouk can manage to spend in this country next year the better we shall be pleased.”⁴² Consequently, they resolved to allow Faruq to make a special trip to England as a personal guest of the king’s:

No doubt, King Farouk, who has a profound admiration for The King, whom he is said to have taken for a model for himself, will be keenly disappointed when he learns that he cannot represent Egypt at the Coronation. Much could be done however to mitigate this disappointment and, incidentally, to foster the young King’s so far marked preference for British over other foreigners if it could be found possible to arrange, while he is in England, for him to spend a few days as the guest of His Majesty at one of the Royal residences.⁴³

Faruq’s tutor commented, after the visit, that “I hope it has increased his respect and affection for English people...It may be that this visit has engendered in him that sort of feeling for this country and its people rather than for more seductive European ones.”⁴⁴

This mode of thinking on the part of the Foreign Office manifested again a year later, when the Egyptian Palace inquired about the possibility of an official state visit by the British King to Faruq on the occasion of the latter’s formal accession to the throne. This idea was similarly vetoed straight away, on the grounds that “it might please the Egyptians too much and give them too good an idea of themselves. As far as the Government are concerned they

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See note 18 above.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Report to Ambassador, summarizing report of Mr. Ford, undated, J3009/20/16, FO 371/20884.

are inclined to be swollen-headed as a result of their success in concluding a Treaty with His Majesty's Government."⁴⁵ One official added, even more disdainfully,

It [would] be quite calamitous if the King paid a visit to King Farouk. The latter's shallow pate would burst. He is wholly unfit for such an honour... We must make the young man come here several times more, before there be any question of being able to visit him without losing something – and that a very valuable something – of the King's superiority in King Farouk's eyes... At present... we shall have to make them feel – tactfully – that they aren't quite on our level yet.⁴⁶

The British were completely determined not to cede any ground to Faruq in the ongoing struggle over royal ceremonial.

Searching for Symbolic Capital: Islam and the Monarchy

Just as the British were growing increasingly wary of Faruq's affinity for public appearances, the monarchy started to seek new ways to bolster its image on its own terms and move further away from the Residency's grasp. In the lead-up to Faruq's accession, the Palace began to engage increasingly with the cultural feedback loop in Egypt and adjust the dominant themes of its self-representation in both mass media and public ceremonial accordingly. In turn, the Palace's designs for the accession ceremony drew on the most prominent themes of the integral brand of Egyptian nationalism current at the time. Much to the Residency's dismay, Faruq embraced and played up an array of new monarchical identities and symbols that – while ostensibly signaling a step backwards towards traditionalism in the eyes of the British – actually reflected how carefully the Palace was reading the Egyptian social map in its attempt to posture Faruq's throne at the nexus of the nation's various and shifting ideological orientations.

No identity was more important for the monarchy to tout than a thoroughly Islamic one. Faruq's public religiosity became a dominant theme in the monarchy's self-representation from very early on after Fu'ad's death. Shortly after Faruq first arrived back

⁴⁵ Minute by Campbell, 8 July 1937, FO 371/20884.

⁴⁶ F.O. Minute to note 42, 9 July 1937.

in Egypt, he began to make weekly public appearances at Friday prayers in the most prominent mosques in Cairo, in order to keep himself “in the public eye” as much as possible.⁴⁷ This immediately incurred the ire of Faruq’s rivals in the royal family (most notably the Prince Regent Muhammad Ali) as well as the Wafdist government, all of whom saw Faruq’s year-long regency as a golden opportunity for intrigues of their own. In fact, both parties complained incessantly about the “representation of King Farouq at ceremonies in mosques,”⁴⁸ to the point that that the British soon resolved to pay close attention to their increasing jealousy “of the immense popularity of [the] young Monarch”⁴⁹ lest it engender a major political crisis.

The British did not have to wait long for such a crisis to unfold. In the month leading up to Faruq’s accession in 1937, his proposal to attach a large-scale, outwardly impressive religious ceremony to the official accession proceedings became a major point of contention between the Palace and the government. At first, Palace officials desired to hold a special religious service apart from Friday prayers, on the afternoon of Faruq’s constitutional oath, believing that only this would convey the “essential idea of the somewhat special” nature of the event.⁵⁰ This plan was completely unacceptable to the Egyptian government, however, which – led by outspoken Prime Minister Nahas Pasha – opposed it on the grounds that “the accession of King Faruq to his full powers of Kingship was a purely constitutional matter and religion had nothing to do with it.”⁵¹ Constitutional or not, the Palace was acutely aware of the symbolic power of Islam in Egypt at the time and sought to harness it during the accession for a decidedly political end: to shore up the dynasty’s traditional legitimacy and promote its image as a time-honored and organic Egyptian political institution. This explains Faruq’s firm commitment to having the rector of al-Azhar “gird him with the sword of his

⁴⁷ Lampson to Eden, 20 May 1936, FO 371/20108.

⁴⁸ Draft telegram from Kelly to Eden, 4 June 1936, FO 141/772.

⁴⁹ Lampson to Eden, 19 May 1936, FO 141/772.

⁵⁰ Lampson to F.O., 15 June 1937, FO 371/20884.

⁵¹ Lampson to F.O., 6 June 1937, FO 371/20884.

ancestor, Muhammad Ali,⁵² as well as his insistence that the religious service be coupled with a ceremonious visit to the tombs of Muhammad Ali and King Fu'ad.

The standoff between Faruq and Nahas over the use of Islam in the accession ceremonies quickly reached a fever pitch, with the latter so completely “determined that there should be no element of religion”⁵³ during the coronation that he threatened to “resign and refuse to form a new ministry.”⁵⁴ Ultimately Nahas’s government forced Faruq to abandon his plan for the sword-girding ceremony and stipulated that the king could only include the tomb visits in the accession proceedings if they took place “without religious ceremonial.”⁵⁵ Yet the dispute dragged on even after this compromise, as Nahas and the Palace now clashed over where the king should recite the Friday prayers – for which he “desired a really big and impressive attendance”⁵⁶ – the day after taking the oath. In the end they agreed on al-Rifai Mosque, which – though smaller than the Citadel Mosque or al-Hussein Mosque, both of which the king had initially suggested – had the extra symbolic advantage of being Fu’ad’s burial site. This was a minor victory for the king, but regardless of how this heated dispute played out, the entire episode clearly illustrates the process of “invention of tradition” in the making. By seizing upon and conflating a full spectrum of symbolic cultural material available at the time – in this case, Islam and nationalist pride in Egypt’s distinguished history, as embodied by the Muhammad Ali dynasty – the monarchy was embracing a new array of themes and ideological orientations in order to enhance its image as traditional, legitimate, and authentically Egyptian.

Another such invented tradition that sought to pass off a distinctively modern (and in this case, European) monarchical sensibility as traditional and inherently Islamic was the symbolism of the crown, which became ubiquitous in Egyptian print media at the time of

⁵² See Kedourie, “Egypt and the Caliphate,” in *The Chatham House Version*, 199.

⁵³ Lampson to F.O., 29 July 1937, FO 371/20884.

⁵⁴ Lampson to F.O., 5 July 1937, FO 371/20884.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See note 56 above.

Faruq's accession. Though the idea of coronation – and the crown as a symbol of royal power – had largely been shunned throughout Islamic history (or at least had not had much currency in practice), the Palace sought to mark Faruq's recent accession to the Egyptian Throne by providing him with an official crown. There is actually some evidence that this desire stemmed from popular sentiment; the acting British Ambassador noted in a report that "there have recently appeared in the press suggestions to the effect that King Farouk should be crowned."⁵⁷ The proposal was immediately met with fierce opposition from Faruq's rivals. Prince Omar Tousson "made a statement to the effect that coronation was contrary to Islamic tradition",⁵⁸ and another Egyptian official, Zaki al-'Orabi Pasha, expressed in a conversation with the Oriental Secretary "that he thought this idea of a crown as rather an anachronism in view of the democratic tendencies of modern times. It was all right...to maintain regal traditions already existing, and it was even advisable to do so. He thought, however, that the creation of new regal traditions would not be taken seriously nowadays."⁵⁹

Of course it was exactly the creation of new royal traditions – reflective of the changing ideological orientation of Egypt in the period – that the Palace had in mind. And so the Palace sought to propagate the image of the crown in popular press and even legitimate it Islamically (no matter how apocryphal the justifications were), precisely in order to cultivate a veneer of continuity and obscure any anachronistic elements in the monarchy's self-representation. Sheikh Maraghi – the rector of al-Azhar, and a liberal Islamic scholar who proved to be a loyal supporter of Faruq's Throne – defended the idea of crowning the king, saying that "there was nothing in Islamic tradition against the principle of coronation...though the Omayyad and Abassid Caliphs had not been crowned, they had worn jewels in their turbans instead of crowns. Moreover, the Fatimid Caliphs had actually had a

⁵⁷ Kelly to Eden, 9 Sept. 1937, FO 371/20885.

⁵⁸ Kelly to Eden, 25 Sept. 1937, FO 371/20886.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

crown.”⁶⁰ Moreover, the special kingship edition of *al-Musawwar* mentioned above included a feature entitled “Coronation Ceremonies in Egyptian History from Pharaonic Times to the Modern Period,”⁶¹ which attempted to trace the occurrence of coronations in Egypt through each successive period (including the Islamic one) during its long, dignified history.

Though Faruq ultimately decided not to take a crown for himself, the imagery clearly caught the public fancy. The front page of this special *al-Musawwar* featured Faruq’s royal insignia, itself comprising two resplendent crowns. The cover of another special kingship edition – this time published by the magazine *Kull Shay wa al-Dunya*, in anticipation of Faruq’s accession a year later – pictures the attractive and suavely dressed young king with a large crown above his head (see Appendix H).⁶² Finally – and most intriguingly – the popular periodical *Akhir Sa’a* published a special “coronation edition” (*‘adad at-tatwij*) for Faruq that featured on its cover a cartoon of the king – sitting on his throne in a dignified manner and dressed in full military regalia – being given a lavishly bedizened crown by al-Masri Effendi, a popular caricature character from the period (see Appendix I).⁶³ This image is striking not only for its commemoration of an event that never actually happened, but also for its attempt to link the monarchy to a popular and well-known figure in Egyptian print media who symbolized the growing stature of the *effendiyya* as cultural consumers in the country. Though it is beyond the scope of this chapter to account for the subtle ways in which notions of class were changing and being conveyed in popular culture, this image of al-Masri Effendi suggests that by the mid-1930s the monarchy had become interested in reaching out to a much wider cross-section of its population and fitting itself into alternate, even counter-hegemonic, conceptions of social hierarchy current at the time. Even if the Islamic justification of the coronation was apocryphal, then, the crown nevertheless was made to

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ “*Heflat al-tatwij fi tarikh Misr min ‘usur al-fara’na ila al-‘asr al-hadith*,” *al-Musawwar*, 29 July 1937.

⁶² See issue of 6 May 1936.

⁶³ See issue of 29 July 1937.

seem traditionally legitimate, and it consequently caught on as a potent symbol of the monarchy's prestige and progress across many levels of Egyptian society.

The Palace proved to be incredibly persistent in its attempts to enshroud the popular young new king with a distinctively "Islamic aura."⁶⁴ In this way, the monarchy aimed to move in lockstep with the pervasive Islamization of Egyptian public life – encouraged not only by Maraghi, but also more pressingly by new, radicalized religious groups such as the Young Men's Muslim Association and the Muslim Brotherhood. This tactic seemed to be remarkably successful. Faruq was acclaimed with a variety of religious epithets and titles – such as "the pious king" or the "renewer" of Islam⁶⁵ – that demonstrate the public's deep-seated appreciation of Faruq's public piety. This apparent resonance of the monarchy's religious forays in the public sphere in turn propelled the Palace to resume its bid to acquire the mantle of the Islamic Caliphate for Egypt—a goal to which Fu'ad had also aspired but had been unable to rally much support behind. If the Caliphate had been a taboo subject for the monarchy in the 1920s when Fu'ad was interested,⁶⁶ by the mid-1930s the idea of Faruq's candidature was completely out in the open; for example, Gershoni and Jankowski cite several examples of students proclaiming Faruq to be "Caliph of the Muslims" or "Commander of the Faithful."⁶⁷

Special mention must be made of the role of Sheikh Maraghi in carrying out this Islamic repackaging of the monarchy. Maraghi – who at one point informed the British he wanted to be made "Sheikh El Islam"⁶⁸ – became notorious at the Residency for his constant insistence on blurring the boundaries between religion and politics. We can gain a clear picture of Maraghi's tactics by looking closely at a sermon that he delivered and was aired on the radio by the Egyptian State Broadcasting Company in February 1938, on the occasion of

⁶⁴ Lampson to Halifax, 6 May 1938, FO 371/21947.

⁶⁵ Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, 160.

⁶⁶ See Kedourie, "Egypt and the Caliphate."

⁶⁷ Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, 160-3.

⁶⁸ Lampson to F.O., 19 May 1938, FO 371/21947.

'id al-adha. On one hand, it is interesting to see how a prominent Islamic figure was making such vitriolic and explicitly political statements – for example attacking the Copts and condemning British influence in Egypt⁶⁹ – on the increasingly popular national airwaves, using the subtext of a “defense of Islam”⁷⁰ as his rationale. On the other hand, Maraghi’s radio sermon is extremely interesting for the way it uses Islam to propagate yet another invented tradition—this time, the celebration of Faruq’s birthday as a national holiday.

Kedourie quotes Maraghi as saying,

‘The union of two holidays after His Majesty has become the ruler of the country...is a sign that Faruq’s birthday is an Islamic holiday as well as a national festival for all Egyptians whatever their different religions and creeds. The Holy Azhar...present their loyal and sincere congratulations upon the two events to His Majesty King Faruq.’⁷¹

This was, all at once, a shrewd political maneuver “designed to enhance Faruq’s position and his popularity,”⁷² as well as a clever use of tradition and Islamic symbolic capital to foster an even greater sense of the monarchy’s integral Egyptianness and its long-standing legitimacy.

All this attention of the monarchy to Islam and the widespread resonance of its symbolism across Egyptian society simultaneously confounded and deeply concerned the British. To a certain extent, the British would never take kindly to any of the Palace’s ploys to arrogate to itself more political power at their expense. More than this, however, the British completely failed to understand the deep social and cultural meaning of the new outwardly Islamic guise of Faruq’s Throne. Instead, they only could perceive this marked monarchical makeover as a step backwards towards the East and towards tradition – and consequently as a threat to their own interests.

In a lengthy report on the Egyptian political situation in May 1938, Lampson lamented that the Palace was currently reorienting itself “by looking Eastwards rather than

⁶⁹ Lampson to Eden, 17 Feb. 1938, FO 371/21945.

⁷⁰ Kedourie, “Egypt and the Caliphate,” 201.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

Westwards” so that it could “exercise preponderating influence in Asia.”⁷³ Yet rather than demonstrating any real sensitivity to the internal political or ideological dynamics in Egypt that could have prompted such a shift, Lampson could only interpret it as a strange, unfortunate, and hopefully ephemeral departure from its course of modern progress: “Although Islam to them may, as elsewhere in Islamic countries, represent a sort of political and social force to which they are proud to belong, the influence of modern Europe is too strong for them to take seriously attempts to return to medieval ideas of society.” In British eyes, there were ostensibly only two paths for a nation into the twentieth century: either a modern, constitutional, and European one; or otherwise an Eastern, religious, and traditional one. This, of course, evinces the marked disconnect between the two nations as well as the deep underlying ignorance on the Residency’s part of the prevailing conceptions of modernity and self-identity in Egyptian society that we have been delineating. By the 1930s, Islam had actually become a major part of Egypt’s modern outlook and self-conception and was not at all considered an obstacle to it, as the British suspected. This newfound place of religion in Egyptian public life and nationalist ideology was the dynamic that the monarchy tapped into so effectively, which explains why the Palace strove so doggedly to graft a thoroughly Islamic identity atop its all its other ones. The upshot was a curious monarchical bolus of identity – incorporating the symbolism of Islam, dynasticism, Arabism, and Egyptian historical pride – which managed to encapsulate a striking number the dominant tropes of Egypt’s significantly changed ideological orientation of the 1930s.

Conclusion: Monarchy, Mass Media, and Integral Egyptian Nationalism

Within a year of Faruq’s accession, the monarchy had managed to win for itself a central place in Egypt’s intensely nationalist political culture. Though Faruq inevitably made several enemies in the government and found himself quickly embroiled in several political

⁷³ Lampson to Halifax, 6 May 1938, FO 371/21947.

crises that started to poke some holes in his impeccable public persona, the monarchy in 1938 – by virtue of the Palace’s keen sense of Egypt’s self-identity and shrewd deployment of a wide array of monarchical images in mass media – was perhaps stronger than ever. Faruq managed to draw on the most useful legacies of his father – as a strong and proud monarch who embodied Egypt’s progress and prestige as an independent nation as well as its international legitimacy – while simultaneously reinvigorating the Throne with his youth, his public piety, and his explicit commitment to nationalism and independence.

It is in the mass media of the period that we can clearly see how so many of these themes coalesced. On one hand, like Ghazi in Iraq, Faruq understood the power of the radio for propagating certain monarchical images and used it as a primary tool to bolster his popularity—for example by making a nationalistic broadcast to the nation the day after taking the oath to be king. Egyptian State Broadcasting was also employed for several days surrounding Faruq’s wedding in January 1938 – an extremely lavish occasion celebrated across Cairo, marked by performances of several “stars of stage and screen,” including a young Umm Kulthum⁷⁴ – the program for which included several broadcasts from prominent sheikhs reciting the Quran from al-Hussein Mosque as well as a “running commentary from headquarters on the various illuminations, receptions, wedding presents, etc.”⁷⁵

Yet it was the special editions of popular magazines commemorating Faruq’s accession that best reveal how the monarchy, able to draw from a cauldron of prime cultural material, proved to be a consummate symbol of integral Egyptian nationalism. One undated and untitled photo book published ostensibly by *al-Musawwar* sometime late in 1937 traces Faruq’s movements from his first arrival in Egypt after Fu’ad’s death, to his journey to Europe, through to his arrival back in the country in time for his accession ceremony. This volume encompasses a striking number of images of Faruq that pander to different nationalist

⁷⁴ Sabit, 65.

⁷⁵ Lampson to F.O., 8 Jan. 1938, FO 395/557.

sensibilities and portray the king as an impeccable model of Egyptianness (ranging from his attendance at Friday prayers, to his interest in sport and charity, to his hobnobbing with foreign dignitaries). It also introduces key monarchical symbols to its audience (such as the royal insignia and carriage), while documenting Faruq's extremely enthusiastic reception and public ceremonial during his accession in July 1937 (see Appendix J for examples from this edition).

And the issue of *al-Musawwar* mentioned above⁷⁶ manages to juxtapose a striking array of nationalist themes and subsume them all under the institution of monarchy: crowns and coronations; the international legitimacy demonstrated by personal greetings of prominent European officials; Pharaonic images; a tribute to Faruq as the "leader of youth" (*qa'id al-shabab*); blessings by many key political figures in Egypt (not to mention Zaghlul's wife) as well as prominent religious men; and a family tree tracing Faruq's lineage back to Muhammad Ali, along with biographies of each Egyptian ruler in the dynasty. The edition also features several photo essays of Faruq as crown prince that demonstrate how the Egyptians appropriated several of the trappings of English social life that the Residency sought to instill in Faruq – in this case, the primacy of proper English sport activity – and sold these to the public as worthy of national pride.

As the Egyptian monarchy came into its own during the early years of Faruq's reign and developed a sharp sense for political symbolism and frequent mass media representation, it is easy to see how the British felt they had let their prize monarchical pupil slip away. Yet if the Egyptian monarchy had an exaggerated sense of its own grandeur at this time, the British had no right to complain. After all, they had taught the Egyptian royal house the rules of the ceremonial game. Their mistake was simply underestimating just how critical the symbolic trappings of monarchical rule would end up being in the kings' ongoing struggle to

⁷⁶ See note 60 above.

assert their legitimacy and fix 'Abdin's place in Egypt's dynamic and ever-expanding political and ideological fields.

Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to demonstrate that the idea and practice of monarchy in the twentieth-century Middle East can be read as a metonymy for broader questions of political orientation and identity inherent in the process of embracing modernity in the region. Of course, at the root of this process – certainly in the Egyptian and Iraqi contexts, at least – was a sustained and complex encounter with the West that assumed many different forms over time. On one hand, as we saw in Chapter 1, increasingly intimate colonial contact spawned a situation around the start of the nineteenth century in which Arab intellectuals sought to re-engage with Western conceptions of political organization and rule and adopt an entirely new set of conventions to discuss and interpret the nature of modern European monarchy as well as territorial nationalism. This new posture towards the West’s political systems was borne out linguistically, as the Arabic word *malik* was re-fashioned and imbued with a new, broader meaning that – in light of the word’s traditional, largely pejorative connotations in the Arab world – constituted an ambiguous and imperfect representation of the Western concept in the transitional Arabic lexicon of the period. The same held true for the idea of modern nationalism, as the age-old Arabic word *umma* was used to describe individual European nation-states and kingdoms at the same time that it retained its traditional Islamic meaning.

If sustained contact with the West launched the Arab world into a prolonged engagement with the underlying significance and value of such key modern political concepts, it also integrally affected how Arab monarchs approached the trappings and fundamental institutions of their rule once they assumed power in the new nation-states and mandates propped up after the First World War. On one level, the ostensible power and prestige derived from all the patent appurtenances and perquisites of monarchy in Europe provided Arab rulers in the twentieth century with a ready model for how best to assert their

own legitimacy and authority both at home and abroad. By the end of the war, many outwardly impressive aspects of modern European monarchy became worthy of emulation in the eyes of Arab rulers seeking to posture themselves in the loftiest way possible during such heady and uncertain times. On another level, many of these visible royal trappings became critical objects of contention, at least insofar as they lay at the nexus of the conflicting monarchical imaginings of the colonial power, on one hand, and the indigenous ruling regimes, on the other. If Britain perceived royal ceremonial as a major way to control the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchs indirectly and consequently preserve their underlying strategic interests in both territories, the kings themselves sought to appropriate all the symbolic capital of such decorous and grandiose exchanges and public appearances, use it against their British overlords, and harness it in order to satisfy their respective populaces' modernistic and nationalistic sensibilities.

The struggle for ceremonial – which we have documented in both locales using a variety of sources highlighting the monarchies' steady drive to appropriate various royal trappings and mark them as authentic-indigenous – becomes even more interesting and revealing in light of the fact that the monarchies continually sought to tweak their image and underscore different strands of their authority and identity over time, as their countries' respective political cultures steadily evolved. To this end, I have argued that the Iraqi and Egyptian monarchies were not passive bystanders that shunned the dramatic social and ideological transformation pervading their countries, but rather actively engaged with their societies' shifting political and cultural orientations in order to posture themselves at the center of them all.

This kind of analysis, I hope, offers a new, more balanced and nuanced understanding of the “king's dilemma” as it pertained to the Iraqi and Egyptian monarchies and brings together several different aspects of the historiography of the period that all too often have

remained discrete. On a basic level, studying the active engagement of the monarchs with their countries' political culture – a function of their acutely felt need to shore up legitimacy in times of dynamic social and ideological change – helps us move beyond the “three-legged stool”¹ model applied frequently to the interwar Egyptian context, according to which the monarchy has been understood to operate exclusively on the level of high politics, in competition with the British and the nationalist government.

Secondly, by examining how these monarchies “read the social map” and in turn attempted to change, broaden, and hone their public images in popular culture and mass media, we gain a sort of barometer for gauging the nature and scope of the aforementioned ideological shifts in each country. If, as Gershoni and Jankowski aptly note in the Egyptian case (and their analysis is also applicable to Iraq), popular nationalism by the 1930s was thoroughly infused with new supra-state identities such as Islam and Arabism, the ways in which the monarchy tapped into this altered nationalist discourse and appropriated many of its relevant symbols serve as a clear reflection of how the inchoate political and ideological orientations of the 1920s in the post-Ottoman Arab world had evolved and to some extent crystallized by the 1930s.

Finally, the nature of these symbols as well as their oftentimes curious juxtaposition in the monarchies' self-representation serve as a final testament to the complex and even ostensibly contradictory manifestations of modernity in the Middle East. The various languages and images that the Iraqi and Egyptian kings deployed were at once modern and traditional and played up a striking array of themes that brought together distinctively Arab, Islamic, and European conceptions of political authority. The British interpreted the reassertion of Islam and Arabism in the monarchies' public discourse as a step backwards towards traditionalism, failing to see how modernity in the Arab world could be

¹ See, for example, Gabriel Warburg, “The ‘Three-Legged Stool’: Lampson, Faruq, and Nahhas, 1936-1944” in Warburg (ed.), *Egypt and the Sudan*.

fundamentally “post-traditional,” with many facets of Arab and Muslim identity grafted atop European cultural and political sensibilities.

The Iraqi and Egyptian monarchies lasted only a bit over three decades, but I would like to suggest that many of the styles, patterns, and trappings of monarchical rule as conceived and practiced by them in the formative period covered in this dissertation have proven to be remarkably resilient in the Middle East, not only in the remaining Arab monarchies, but also even in some of the most explicitly anti-monarchical republics such as Syria or post-revolutionary Egypt or Iraq. We can see this continuity on the level of the modes of rule itself—for example, the ideas of patrimonialism and family politics, as well as the salience of closed political cadres and narrowly conceived bureaucracies at the top of ostensibly republican regimes. We also see it in the realm of symbolic politics, as rulers of all stripes across the region have felt the need to engage actively with their societies’ political culture, reinforce their Islamic and Arabist legitimacy and authority, and attach their names and faces to a wide array of nationalistic themes. King Faisal’s attempt to insert his newly acquired royal title into the *khutba* in Sunni mosques after his accession – and King Faruq’s heated struggle with his government over Islamic coronation symbolism – constitute extremely interesting early examples of the Islamist political dynamics between state and society that are still widely manifest in the region today.

In fact, in order to understand the striking resilience of many of these monarchical trappings and patterns of rule, we have to look no further than “republican” Iraq under Saddam Hussein; with his penchant for lavish palaces, his insistence on surrounding himself with only the most loyal family and tribe members, and his unyielding drive to speak personally for all the main tropes of nationalist identity in Iraq, he was a modern Arab monarch in all but name. The same could be said, though perhaps to a lesser extent, of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt; in many ways, the manner of personalized patrimonial rule that

characterizes his regime seems no less monarchical than that practiced by the royal family in Morocco. Even in post-Saddam Iraq, the monarchical idea persists to a certain extent as one solution to the vexing problem of self-governance; this explains the recent appearance of two self-proclaimed “monarchy” parties, which ran candidates during the general elections of January 2005.²

If elsewhere in the world the idea of monarchy is widely considered to be anachronistic and outmoded, it is still remarkably resonant in the contemporary Middle East. More monarchies still rule in this region than in any other; and we have just seen how even outwardly republican or democratic ruling regimes in other Arab countries still embrace many essentially monarchical appurtenances. In view of this fact, it is extremely curious that monarchy has received so little scholarly attention over the years. This is especially true in Egypt and Iraq, where the establishment of new kingships underpinned the process of nation-building in the critical formative period after the First World War. In fact, much of the existing historical literature that *does* take monarchy into account actually ignores its role in nationalist ideology across the Middle East, treating it not as a key component of modern Arab political identity, but rather as an obstacle to the project of nationalism in any given country. I hope that this dissertation has demonstrated the shortcomings of analyses that view monarchy and nationalism to be mutually exclusive and suggested how a properly contextualized understanding of monarchy might actually illuminate our perspective on nationalism in the Middle East. Clearly nationalism has proven to be the most dominant and resonant political force in the twentieth-century Arab world. But many Arab monarchies have achieved a symbiosis with their countries’ nationalist movements, so that these two seemingly contradictory political forms now manage to co-exist and interact in complex and meaningful ways.

² “The King is Dead (Has Been for 46 Years) but Two Iraqis Hope: Long Live the King!” the *New York Times*, 28 Jan. 2005.

Appendices

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**See <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~7Emetheses/Ellis%20Appendix.htm#ApA>
for appendices**

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ARABIC LANGUAGE PERIODICALS

Akhir Sa'a

Al-Hilal

Al-Lata'if al-Musawwara

Al-Musawwar

Kull Shay wa al-Dunya

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PERIODICALS

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Iraq Times

New York Times

The Times of London

The Times of Mesopotamia

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