In 1999 two young Arab kings succeeded their fathers to the throne: King Hussein of Jordan had reigned for 46 years and King Hassan of Morocco for 38 years, when their respective sons, Abdullah II of Jordan and Mohammed VI of Morocco, succeeded them. King Hussein’s son, who succeeded him in Jordan, is widely considered to be the most reformist of the new kings in the region. He came to the throne in 1999, having been prepared to succeed his father for many years. This event supports the hypothesis that religious conceptions of the monarchy are vested with an emotional impact on the collective cultural identity.

The young king’s new semiology represents a cultural re-evaluation in the Middle East. It is being debated whether the obvious metaphor of the holy well will end in a position of the king comparable to the Spanish monarch after Franco. Or is Mohammed VI just trying to secure the position of the crown above the constitution by applying a modern outlook?

In both cases, the new symbols mean a different challenge for the Islamist opposition. This event will be of interest for the whole Arab world to see which notions of legitimacy and types of power exists, and whether the society, which is heavily struck by a crisis of religious and political meaning.

References


Dr. Sonja Hegasy is a researcher working on the project ‘Proven and Controversy on a Muslim Monarchy’ at the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies in Berlin. Her PhD on Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies in Morocco was supervised by Dr. Hans-Dietrich Graf von Holzhausen and Prof. Dr. Martin Frank. E-mail: sonja.hegasy@rz.hu-berlin.de

Note

Yassine explained that he had originally written the Memorandum in French in order to reach Moroccan’s westernized French-speaking elite who regard Arabic as ‘vernacular’ language used only to communicate with illiterate people.

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