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Trends. Fathers and Sons: The Future of King Abdullah II

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The inevitable death of Jordan's King Hussein and the less inevitable change in the line of succession from Crown Prince Hassan to Crown Prince Abdullah has fostered intense speculation on the future of Jordan and its new King. The ageless features of death and succession should significantly inform this speculation.

History suggests that valid predictions rarely can be made as the son succeeds the father. A strong and beloved leader--and even King Hussein was not perceived as strong and beloved by all--may be followed by any and all of the combinations of strength and weakness, love and hate. Yes, the child may be father to the man, but the father may be the man that the child aspires to be, ignores, discounts, rejects, or rebels against. And which fathers may that be? The father, King Hussein? The great-grandfather, King Abdullah I? In the case of the Hashemite lineage, Mohammed the Prophet? Do fathers lie elsewhere among contemporary and past leaders of a socially constructed Arabic or Islamic nation? Or even beyond to contemporary and past leaders from other nations as well as various national mythologies? Do the increasing sophistication and availability of telecommunications and transport suggest that fathers may as likely or more likely be from beyond the bonds of blood?

Even if such questions can be satisfactorily answered, one would still be faced with the wild cards of fate and luck: the global, regional, and local disruptions of political and economic correlations; the attempts at coups and assassinations--the latter successful in his great-grandfather's case; the threats of health--even the schizophrenia of his grandfather King Talal that rendered the latter unfit to rule; the strange and unpredictable forces that an assumed role may engender within the personality--in this case, including the swift role changes from major general to Crown Prince to King; the roles of women--the wife, the stepmother, and others still to be named--that are often less alluded to but more significant than assumed.

So the speculation will continue. Even after predictions come to pass or don't, there will be additional speculation about why predictions did or did not come to pass....and then additional speculation. So, Abdullah the son now is tasked with becoming Abdullah the father--even as some Western feminist analysts might abhor the subjugating discourse of such a statement and vehemently champion parody or the outright denial of what is for what is. History tells us that--in Jordan--the becoming from son to father must occur, but it does not tell us how, when, and why. (See Al-Faleh, M. (1987). Cultural influences on Arab management development: A case study of Jordan. *Journal of Management Development*, 6, 19-33; Kawaguchi, M.C., Welsh, D.P., Powers, S.I., & Rostosky, S.S. (1998). Mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters: Temperament, gender, and adolescent-parent relationships. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 44, 77-96; Layne, L.L. (1989). The dialogics of tribal self-representation in Jordan. *American Ethnologist*, 16, 24-39; Miller, J. (February 8, 1999). Cautious King took risks in straddling two worlds. *The New York Times*, pp. A1; A10-A11; Orme, W.A., Jr. (February 8, 1999). A military man and now Jordan's new ruler. *The New York Times*, p. A13; Tang, N.M., & Smith, B.L. (1996). The eternal triangle across cultures: Oedipus, Hsueh, and Ganesa. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 51, 562-579.) (Keywords: Jordan, Monarchy, Succession.)