



Kingship in Great Britain and Saudi Arabia: A Workshop on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606) by Fourth-Year Saudi Students

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Abstract - It all started with a course on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606) I taught at the Faculty of Sciences and Arts of Sharurah, Najran University, Najran Province, south of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This paper is a study based on a workshop on kingship in the tragedy *Macbeth*, and more generally in Great Britain and Saudi Arabia. The workshop was conducted for fourth-year Saudi students from the Faculty of Sciences and Arts of Sharurah. Interesting findings emerged from the workshop, showing similarities, overlappings and, albeit here and there, a few differences about the political systems, accession to the throne, the management of political and social issues, and the semantics of kingship, to name but a few.

Keywords: crown - Great Britain - history - kingship - politics - Saudi Arabia - sociology.

Résumé - Tout est parti d'un cours sur la pièce *Macbeth* (1606) de Shakespeare que j'ai dispensé à la Faculté des Sciences et des Lettres de Sharurah, dans la Province de Najran, située dans le sud du Royaume d'Arabie Saoudite. Le présent article est une étude basée sur un atelier sur la tragédie *Macbeth*, et plus généralement sur la Grande-Bretagne et l'Arabie Saoudite. L'atelier a été mené pour des étudiants saoudiens de quatrième année de la Faculté des Sciences et des Lettres de Sharurah. De cet atelier sont ressortis des résultats intéressants qui montrent des similitudes, des recoupements et, parfois, quelques différences, sur les plans des systèmes politiques, de l'accession au trône, la gestion des questions politiques et sociales, et la sémantique de la royauté, pour ne citer que ceux-là.

Mots-clés : Arabie Saoudite - couronne - Grande-Bretagne - histoire - politique - royauté - sociologie.

INTRODUCTION

Surprising though it may seem, the present study conducted in the Middle East would never have been achieved, had its author not been nurtured on the philosophy and methodological approach of the Dakar School of British Studies. The idea of carrying out this study has truly been ignited by the paradigm of the School of Dakar.

The School of Dakar is a School of comparative and cross-cultural studies. It advocates the study of British literature and civilization from the perspectives of African history, culture and traditions; it is fundamentally concerned with the reception of British Studies in Africa². The School of Dakar is not by any means incompatible with openness, prospective and genuine innovation. Herein lies the



purpose of the following study as it transcends the African milieu to explore such a foreign setting as the Middle East. Indeed, the paper seeks to transpose the postulate, and thus the scope, of the School of Dakar by applying its heuristic principles to the Saudi Arabian context.

Through the lenses of sociology, history and politics, this paper reports on the findings of a workshop on kingship in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606)³, and more generally in Great Britain and Saudi Arabia. The workshop brought together fourth-year Saudi students from the Faculty of Sciences and Arts of Sharurah, Najran University, Najran Province, south of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia⁴. The study thus attempts to build an Arabo-Saxon bridge. The idea of conducting the workshop sprang up when I realized the strong interest of the Saudi students in the play *Macbeth*.

Two basic principles have guided the choice of the theme of kingship: the *principle of interest* and the *principle of topicality*. Interest in otherness – other cultures and traditions – is one of the driving forces behind this study. As for the topicality of the study, it lies in the evolution of the Saudi monarchy, with the Western political ideas of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman and the very modern transformation of the conservative Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The recent accession of King Charles III to the British Crown gives the paper further impetus.

The paper is articulated around two parts. The first part sets out the methodology of the study. The second part deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the workshop results.

1. Methodology

The workshop was conducted on 11 April 2022, by the end of the drama course. It was attended by Level 8 students – corresponding to fourth-year students⁵ – of the English Department of the Faculty of Sciences and Arts of Sharurah, Najran University. Fourteen students had enrolled for the English drama course. On the day of the workshop, two students were missing. Therefore, twelve students participated in the workshop.

The twelve students were divided into three teams of four students. Each team was given an interactive assignment *in situ* about a specific theme of the play *Macbeth*. The members of each team worked on handouts that were given to them at the beginning of the workshop.

To ensure fairness and equity, each team worked on a theme chosen by random drawing among the three themes proposed:

- ◇ Team 1: The students worked on the theme of *kingship*.



- ◇ Team 2: The students selected the theme of *culture and traditions*.
- ◇ Team 3: The students chose the theme of *people and society*.

To avoid language barriers in the expression and analysis of views and thoughts, the students were allowed to use documents and the Internet if need be. The present paper is exclusively concerned with the results of Team 1. In other words, it specifically deals with the theme of kingship.

Team 1 worked on the following issues in the play *Macbeth*, in Great Britain and Saudi Arabia.

- a. The political systems.
- b. Succession to the Crown.
- c. The semantics of kingship.
- d. Political issues.

The data collected were analyzed qualitatively.

2. Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of the Workshop Results

2.1. The Political Systems

The students in Team 1 have shown a particular interest in both the similarities and dissimilarities in the political systems of Saudi Arabia and Medieval Scotland. The play *Macbeth* is set in Scotland and England in the 11th-century. Despite the discrepancy in time and space, Saudi Arabia and the Scotland represented in *Macbeth* have some common features. Both countries are monarchies, each ruled by a king, surrounded by their sons and by other noblemen, who are part of the royal court. Guards and servants attend to both monarchs.

The students then made a comparison between the political system of Great Britain, which is an entity of the United Kingdom, and that of Saudi Arabia. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Political Systems of the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia

	UNITED KINGDOM	SAUDI ARABIA
Official Name	The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)	المملكة العربية السعودية <i>Al Mamlakah al-'A rabiyyah as-Sa 'ūdiyyah</i> The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)
Political System	Parliamentary Monarchy	Absolute Monarchy
The Crown	Monarch: King or Queen <i>The monarch reigns but does not rule.</i>	Monarch: King only, no Queen <i>The monarch reigns and rules.</i>
Parliament	Name: The Parliament of the UK	مجلس الشورى السعودي <i>Majlis ash-Shūra as-Sa 'ūdiyy</i> Saudi Consultative Assembly



	<p><i>Bicameral Parliament</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ House of Commons: Members of Parliament (MPs) - Elected ◇ House of Lords: Life Peers, Hereditary Peers and Lords Spiritual. ◇ Legislative body ◇ Building: Westminster Palace 	<p><i>Unicameral Parliament</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Members appointed by the King ◇ Legislative and Consultative body ◇ Building: Al Yamamah Palace
System of Government	Prime Minister: Member of Parliament (MP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Prime Minister: the King himself ◇ Deputy Prime Minister: the Crown Prince.
Constitution	Unwritten constitution since <i>Magna Carta</i> in 1215	The Holy Qur'an and The Prophet's Sunnah (traditions)

It is important to point out that kingship is open to females in the United Kingdom, whereas it is closed to females in Saudi Arabia. Worth mentioning also is that, at the time when the workshop was being held, the King of Saudi Arabia himself exercised the function of Prime Minister, whereas the Crown Prince served as Deputy Prime Minister. The students clearly expressed that fact in their answers. However, in a Cabinet reshuffle carried out on 27 September 2022, the current King of Saudi Arabia, Salman Bin Abdul Aziz, appointed Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Prime Minister of the Kingdom by Royal Decree. Among the reasons for this major change, one cannot discard old age. Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman is therefore the current Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia.

As specified by the students, The Holy Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad's traditions stand for Saudi Arabia's constitution. Indeed, on 1 March 1992, the then King of Saudi Arabia, Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, issued a Royal Decree embodying the Basic Law of Governance, an official document containing many features of what might be considered a constitution in other countries. The Basic Law states in Article 1 of Chapter 1 that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic State, its religion is Islam and the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's *Sunnah* (traditions) are the constitution⁶.

In conclusion, the results show that, despite the fact that the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia are monarchies, there are differences in the political institutions and in their functioning.

2.2. Succession to the Crown

The students compared the way the Heir Apparent, or Crown Prince, is chosen in *Macbeth* and in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In *Macbeth*, King Duncan suddenly announces his decision to give his elder son, Malcom, the title of "Prince



of Cumberland", which means that Malcom is now the Heir Apparent to the Scottish throne. In Scotland, the holder of the title of Prince of Cumberland was *de facto* the Crown Prince, the second highest position in the kingdom, a position that was not automatically acquired just because one was the son of the king of Scotland. Indeed, as clarified by Raffel, the Prince of Cumberland was "[a] title which, in Scotland, created someone as heir to the throne (kingship not being automatically inherited)"⁷. Before King Duncan's announcement, no one knew who would officially be the Crown Prince, though people might naturally have guessed his decision.

Surrounded by the two Generals of his army Macbeth and Banquo, his two sons Malcom and Donalbain, a few noblemen and servants, King Duncan suddenly announces his decision amidst the weeping expression of his "*plenteous joys*" (I. 4. 33), in reaction to the bravery Macbeth and Banquo have displayed in the war against the army of the King of Norway and their loyalty to their king and country:

Our eldest, Malcom, whom we name hereafter
The Prince of Cumberland, which honor must
 Not unaccompanied invest him only,
 But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine
 On all deservers. (I. 4. 38-42)

The students underscore a difference in the choosing of the Heir Apparent to the Saudi throne. The table below presents the results of their comparison.

Table 2. Succession to the Crown in *Macbeth*, in the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia

	<i>Macbeth</i>	UNITED KINGDOM	SAUDI ARABIA
Succession to the Crown	<p>Kingship is not automatically inherited in Scotland.</p> <p>The title of <i>Prince of Cumberland</i> confers the status of Heir Apparent.</p> <p>By word of mouth, King Duncan appoints his elder son, Malcom, <i>Prince of Cumberland</i>, which means Heir Apparent to the Scottish throne.</p>	<p>Succession is based on absolute <i>primogeniture</i>.</p> <p>Gender: not important Heir/Heiress Apparent</p> <p>- Succession to the British throne is based on order of birth: The current monarch's eldest surviving child becomes the Heir or Heiress Apparent to the British Crown <i>Example:</i> Charles, Prince of Wales</p>	<p>Succession is no longer based on <i>agnatic seniority</i>.</p> <p>Gender: important Crown Prince No Crown Princess ¶</p> <p>- Succession to the Saudi throne: The Allegiance Council elects the King. - The King chooses the Crown Prince and the Deputy Crown Prince, then refers to The Allegiance Council</p>



			for approval by vote.
Coronation Ceremony		Rituals of crowning at Westminster Abbey. Service performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Highly ritualized and very ceremonial: the monarch swears an oath. He is anointed with holy oil, invested with regalia and crowned. A closing procession	بَيْعَة <i>Bay'ah</i> Pledge of Allegiance Ceremony held at Al-Yamamah Palace, the Royal Palace, in Riyadh. Princes, officials, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia and Saudi citizens pledge allegiance.

The phrase "absolute primogeniture" refers to the fact that the monarch's firstborn legitimate child inherits the Crown. As for "agnatic seniority", it refers to the fact that the monarch's younger brother inherits the Crown over the monarch's own sons. The sons inherit the throne only after all the monarch's brothers have passed away.

The students do not go as far back as the time of the "first Saudi State (1745-1818)", as Wyndbrandt (2010) calls it. Instead, they focus on the third State, or the third era, which is the era of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, founded in 1932. The students paraphrase Article 5 of Chapter 2 of the Basic Law of Governance of 2013:

The rule remains with the sons of the founding king, Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Al Faisal Al Saud, and with the sons of the sons. The best of them will be pledged allegiance to rule according to the book of God The Almighty and the Sunnah of His messenger (*sic*).

The students refer, here, to the founder of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the first king Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Al Faisal Al Saud (1880-1953), also nicknamed Ibn Saud.

Let us recall that, in general, the rule of "agnatic seniority" had always been applied in Saudi Arabia after the death of Ibn Saud in 1953. Indeed, age took precedence when it came to designating successors in Saudi Arabia. The eldest surviving son of Ibn Saud, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, has always been designated as King. Six kings have been designated on the basis of this clear line of succession: Saud, Faisal, Khalid, Fahd, Abdullah and Salman, the current



sovereign. This line of succession was reformed by King Salman. In April 2015, King Salman appointed his nephew, Mohammed Bin Nayef, Crown Prince and his own son, Mohammed Bin Salman, Deputy Crown Prince. Then, on Wednesday, 21 June 2017, King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia issued a Royal Decree relieving Prince Mohammed Bin Nayef from his position of Crown Prince and appointing his 31-year-old son Prince Mohammed Bin Salman the kingdom's new Crown Prince. The Royal Decree included the following order stipulating that Article 5 of Chapter 2 of the Basic Law of Governance shall be amended to read as follows:

Rule passes to the sons of the founding King Abd al-Aziz Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Faysal Al Saud, and to their children's children. The most upright among them is to receive allegiance in accordance with the principles of the Holy Quran and the Tradition of the Venerable Prophet⁸.

The Saudi Allegiance Council approved of Mohammed Bin Salman's appointment by a vote of 31 out of 34 members. The Allegiance Council is a body that was established in 2006 by Royal Decree by King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz. It is in charge of choosing the King or the Crown Prince.

It is worth pointing out that King Salman still has surviving brothers. The students do not hint at any of these facts. They do not mention the reform introduced in the line of succession to the throne under King Salman, nor do they allude to the amendment of the Basic Law regarding succession. It can be said that the students were wary because Saudi Arabia is a conservative country, where there is a culture of suspicion and reporting.

In *Macbeth*, Act I, Scene 4, the students expected the noblemen and servants present in the Palace to pledge allegiance to Malcom when King Duncan announces that he has named the latter "Prince of Cumberland", that is to say heir to the throne, or Crown Prince. The students state that, in Saudi Arabia, people pledge allegiance to new rulers. An overview of the history of Saudi Arabia allows to confirm the students' assertion. As a matter of fact, the death of King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, who reigned from 1 August 2005 to 23 January 2015, can serve as an illustration, among other examples. Upon the death of King Abdullah at age 90, prominent Saudi scholars, officials and citizens pledged allegiance to the new King of Saudi Arabia, Salman Bin Abdul Aziz, and to the Crown Prince Muqrin and Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Nayef at the Governance Palace in the Saudi capital city, Riyadh, in the evening of Friday, 23 January 2015.

2.3. The Semantics of Kingship: Discourse Analysis

The king's title and terms of address were also a crucial point in the students' linguistic analysis. In *Macbeth*, King Duncan's subjects call him "My liege" (I. 4. 3), which is a sign of respect, loyalty and devotion to their monarch. It comes from the phrase "my liege lord", which means "my feudal lord" or "my superior"⁹. The students draw a parallel between the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia, where Saudi people use various terms of address and titles to refer to their king with all due deference.

The students' findings regarding the comparison of the terms of address and titles in the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia have been classified into four categories: equivalent terms, identical terms, overlappings and specificities.

Table 3. Terms of Address and Titles in the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia

	UNITED KINGDOM	SAUDI ARABIA
Equivalent Terms	King	ملك Malik
	Crown Prince or Heir Apparent	ولي عهد Walī a'hd

	UNITED KINGDOM	SAUDI ARABIA
Identical Terms	His Royal Highness	صاحب السمو الملكي Sāhibu samū al-Malikī
	His Majesty the King	جلالة الملك Jalālat al-Malik
	Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces	القائد الأعلى لكافة القوات العسكرية Al-Qā-id al-a'lā likāfat al-quwāt al-a'skariah

	UNITED KINGDOM	SAUDI ARABIA
Overlappings	Head of the Commonwealth	أمين سر العائلة ورئيس مجلسها Amīn siril-a'-ilat wara-īs majlisihā (Royal) Family's Secretary and Head of its Council / Head of the House of Saud
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Supreme Governor of the Church of England ◇ Defender of the Faith 	خادم الحرمين الشريفين Khādīm Al-Haramain Al-Sharīfain Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques



The Two Holy Mosques in question here refer to the Great Mosque of Mecca, known as "Masjid Al-Haram", and the Great Mosque of Medina, known as "Masjid An-Nabawi".

	UNITED KINGDOM	SAUDI ARABIA
Specificities / Differences	The Fountain of Honours	ملك الحزم والعزم <i>Malik al-hazm wal-a'zm</i> King of Firmness and Determination

None of King Salman's predecessors ever bore the title "Malik al-hazm wal-a'zm" - "King of Firmness and Determination". Saudi people exclusively created the title "King of Firmness and Determination" for King Salman in the early days of the civil war in Yemen, which broke out in 2014. Through the creation of this title, Saudi people sought to pay tribute to their monarch for his firmness and determination not only against the Shiite rebels known as the Houthis, fighting to wrench the power out of the hands of the Yemeni government, but also against the intervention of Iran in the Yemeni civil war, and in the Middle East in general. The Saudi-led war in Yemen is waved as an evidence of King Salman's firmness and determination to protect the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and make it one of the lead countries in the Middle East and in the world.

2.4. Political Issues

The students react to the errors of judgment made by King Duncan in the play *Macbeth*. First, King Duncan misjudges the Thane of Cawdor, who appears to be a traitor. The Thane of Cawdor has joined the army of Sweno, the King of Norway, and fought against the army of Scotland. Second, King Duncan misjudges Macbeth, a nobleman and General of his army, whom he takes to be a loyal subject. Having no idea whatsoever that Macbeth is plotting to murder him, King Duncan showers acknowledgements, gratitude and affection upon the General of his army. The students find it normal for a king to make such errors of judgment about his close subjects. According to them, a king should trust his subjects, in particular the soldiers and the Generals of his army. A king should not be too suspicious, "*he should not let his guard down*" (*sic*) either. The students deem that, just as King Duncan in *Macbeth*, a Saudi king could make the same errors of judgment about the noblemen of his court. Be they monarchs or subjects, everyone can make errors of judgment, in the students' view.

Surprisingly enough, the students have a positive appreciation of the two decisions King Duncan has made in the play. He has ordered the execution of the treacherous Thane of Cawdor and the nomination of Macbeth as the new Thane



of Cawdor. For the students, King Duncan's decision to have the Thane of Cawdor executed is a fair decision insofar as the latter is a traitor. As "Thane of Cawdor", this nobleman should have been grateful to the King of Scotland, Duncan, to whom he owes this important appointment. It falls within the prerogative of the King of Scotland to grant the title of "Thane" to the subject of his choice. As a subject of King Duncan, the Thane of Cawdor should have been loyal not only to his monarch, but also to his country, which he should have loved and defended. The students recall a famous saying in their religion, Islam; they write it in Arabic and give its equivalent in English:

" حب الوطن من الإيمان "

"Love for one's homeland is an act of faith"¹⁰.

Transliterated as "Hubbul watani minal imān", the saying teaches that patriotism is an act of faith. The students find the punishment inflicted on the Thane of Cawdor fair enough because he has betrayed his nation.

Before the revelation of Macbeth's hideous nature in the play, the students approved of his appointment. They consider that Macbeth truly deserves the title of Thane of Cawdor because, as a General of the Army of Scotland, he has emerged victorious in the war that has opposed his soldiers to those of the army of the King of Norway. Macbeth has proved to be brave and courageous!

The students consider that a Saudi king would exactly make the same decision as the one made by King Duncan regarding the execution of a traitor like the Thane of Cawdor. However, they outline fundamental differences. The students think that King Duncan's decision to appoint Macbeth as Thane of Cawdor cannot happen in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since only members of the Saudi Royal family are entitled to such high positions. Albeit a nobleman, Macbeth is neither a prince nor a member of the Royal Family in the play¹¹. In Medieval Scotland, the title of Thane referred to a man, often the chief of a clan, who held land from the king and ranked with an earl's son. The students declare that, in the Saudi context, only a prince, or a member of the Royal family, could be elevated to such a high rank by the king.

In the play, King Duncan pays a visit to Macbeth, General of the Army, at his castle in Inverness to honour him after his brave victory over the army of the King of Norway. For the students, the visit was not necessary because a General is expected to achieve acts of bravery; it is part of his duty to prove to be courageous in front of the enemy camp. However, they think that, likewise, a king of Saudi Arabia could pay a visit to a General of his army who has stood out in the defense of the kingdom and the preservation of the integrity of the Saudi nation. The students consider that, unlike General Macbeth who lives in a castle



in Inverness, Generals of the Saudi army do not have castles. It is rather at a military base or in another private place that a king of Saudi Arabia would pay them a visit to honour them.

The high-ranking position of General of the Army is important enough to deserve a monarch's visit as tribute to the efforts, courage and bravery displayed. However, the students do not envisage at all a royal visit to a simple brave soldier who has fought to defend the Saudi nation. According to the students, "*competent authorities compensate and promote him, it is not the king's condition to do so*" (sic). This is what is likely to happen in a military context in Saudi Arabia. In a civilian context, a king of Saudi Arabia would as well honour a Saudi citizen who has achieved great things for the nation. For instance, the Saudi citizen could receive "*the king's Award*" (sic). The students mean that a king of Saudi Arabia could grant an award to a Saudi citizen who has achieved great things for the nation.

Another important discrepancy has been raised. The students have a mitigated opinion about King Duncan. On the one hand, they look upon Duncan as a wise king because he has appointed his son Crown Prince. The students have not written a single word about the Saudi context. However, it can be inferred from their opinion of King Duncan that the current king of Saudi Arabia, Salman Bin Abdul Aziz, is a wise monarch too. Indeed, on 21 June 2017, King Salman issued a decree whereby he elevated his son Mohammed Bin Salman to the position of Crown Prince in replacement of the then Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Nayef, his nephew. At age 31, Mohammed Bin Salman became, thus, the heir to the Saudi throne. The announcement by Royal Decree of the ousting of Mohammed Bin Nayef as Crown Prince and the appointment of the King's son Mohammed Bin Salman stunned the Saudi establishment (Chulov and Borger 2017). It is worth mentioning that, unlike King Duncan in the play *Macbeth*, King Salman of Saudi Arabia did not appoint his elder son Crown Prince. Notwithstanding that Mohammed Bin Salman is the eldest of the six children to King Salman and his third wife, the Crown Prince has elder brothers from the monarch's other wives.

On the other hand, the students do not think that King Duncan is a wise enough monarch because he has blindly trusted the General of his army, Macbeth. This opinion is in line with the one the students have expressed above, when they said that a king "*should not let his guard down*" (sic). This view brings to mind the realities of kingship and courts as portrayed by the 16th-century political moralist Machiavelli in his treatise *The Prince* (1532).

The issues of plotting, murder attempt and regicide have also been a point of focus. The students draw a parallel between the play *Macbeth*, the history of England and that of Saudi Arabia. The results are presented in the table below.



Table 4. Plotting, Murder Attempt and Regicide

<i>Macbeth</i>	ENGLAND	SAUDI ARABIA
The three witches known as the " <i>weyward sisters</i> " make the prophecy that Macbeth shall become King. To make the prophecy come true, Macbeth and his wife Lady Macbeth plot to murder King Duncan. Macbeth murders King Duncan by stabbing him to death with a dagger.	- The Gunpowder Plot. 5 November 1605: A group of conspirators, among whom Guy Fawkes, attempted to blow up Parliament and King James I of England with gunpowder. The conspirators were tried for high treason on 27 January 1606 and executed.	Students: <i>"Any King of Saudi Arabia could face the same situation because it already happened to a Saudi king. One attempt managed to kill a king, and the second attempt failed"</i> (sic).

The students had studied in class the context in which *Macbeth* (1606) was written. They learned in Burton Raffel's "Introduction" that Shakespeare was heavily influenced by the Gunpowder Plot (1605) and that the play contains allusions to this historical event¹².

As far as the specific case of Saudi Arabia is concerned, the students do not mention the protagonists involved in the successful murder attempt and in the failed one. They specify neither the names of the Saudi kings, nor those of the Saudi subjects concerned. However, a leap back in the history of Saudi Arabia allows to confirm the students' revelation. Indeed, on 25 March 1975, the King of Saudi Arabia, Faisal Bin Abdul Aziz, was assassinated by his 27-year-old nephew Prince Faisal Bin Musaed Bin Abdul Aziz. Prince Faisal is the son of Musaed, himself son of the founder of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz, and half-brother of King Faisal.

During a royal audience, King Faisal was fatally wounded by his nephew Prince Faisal Bin Musaed, who allegedly fired three bullets at him with a pistol at point blank range. In the anteroom, Prince Faisal Bin Musaed was talking to a Kuwaiti delegation waiting to meet the King. When King Faisal bent forward to kiss his nephew, the latter reportedly pulled out a pistol and shot the King under the chin and through the ear. Prince Faisal Bin Musaed would have been killed by one the King's bodyguards, had Oil Minister Sheikh Yamani not shouted to the bodyguards not to kill the Prince. Immediately placed under arrest, Prince Faisal was questioned by the police about the motives. A settlement issued by the Royal Cabinet declared Prince Faisal Bin Musaed officially insane. Thereafter, Prince Faisal Bin Musaed was found guilty of regicide¹³. However, he was later deemed sane to face trial. On 18 June 1975, a Sharia Court – a Koranic Law Court – met in



closed session and declared Prince Faisal Bin Musaed guilty of the murder of King Faisal Bin Abdul Aziz. A few hours later, Prince Faisal Bin Musaed was publicly beheaded in Riyadh, before a crowd of 10,000 people, for the assassination of his uncle, King Faisal. In a broadcast announcement of the execution, the Saudi Government stated that a Koranic Law Court convicted 27-year-old Prince Faisal Bin Musaed Bin Abdul Aziz of having shot his uncle to death and added that King Khalid, brother and successor of the late King, approved of the verdict¹⁴.

It is this episode of the history of Saudi Arabia that they students refer to when they write: "*One attempt managed to kill a king*" (*sic*). In the light of the above considerations, one can see here the way the play *Macbeth* recalls the Gunpowder Plot in England and has an equivalent in the history of Saudi Arabia.

To conclude, the students list two major lessons they have learned from the play *Macbeth*:

- ◇ "*Take responsibilities for your actions*" (*sic*).
- ◇ "*Beware of people you trust*" (*sic*).

Although they have not provided any further details, one can link each of these two lessons to a segment of the plot of the play *Macbeth*. The first lesson hints at responsibility and accountability for actions. As the saying goes: "One reaps what one sows". The fate of the Thane of Cawdor and that of Macdonwald, both of whom have betrayed their king and their country, are perfect illustrations. Due to their treason, neither of these two characters have survived. The Thane of Cawdor has been executed upon King Duncan's order. As for Macdonwald, he has been killed by Macbeth in the war.

The second lesson mentioned by the students unmistakably refers to King Duncan's rule. Here is a King who has made errors of judgment about his subjects. Ironically, he has lost his life because of his misjudgment of Macbeth, whom he blindly trusted.

CONCLUSION

Conducted in the Middle East, this study exports the philosophy of the School of Dakar by applying the heuristic approach thereof to the Saudi Arabian context. The paper is a comparative study of the theme of kingship in Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth*, and in Great Britain and Saudi Arabia, through a workshop gathering fourth-year students from the Faculty of Sciences and Arts of Sharurah, Najran University, Najran Province, south of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Partly set in Medieval Scotland, the play *Macbeth* served as a starting point for the study of kingship in Shakespeare's play, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and



Great Britain, which is an entity of the United Kingdom. The workshop targeted such focal points as the political systems, the rules of succession to the throne, the semantics of kingship, and political issues.

The findings of the study reveal the existence of similarities, overlappings and specificities. In the light of the results obtained from the workshop, it turns out that kingship is static in the United Kingdom, whereas it is in constant evolution in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, significant political changes have been underscored over the past decades in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Among these changes stand out the election of the King and the Crown Prince, openness to the world and an increasing modernization initiated by Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman.

The policy of modernization of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has had an undeniable impact on the Saudi society, as it has led to the granting of more rights to women: female drivers since 2018, massive recruitment of female security guards in Mecca and female workers in airports and other sectors, appointment of female ambassadors, to mention but a few examples. Will the political changes lead to the election of a Queen or a Crown Princess in the kingdom some day in the future? Time will tell.

Notes

1 – I served for five years (2017-2022) at the English Department of the Faculty of Sciences and Arts of Sharurah, Najran University, Najran Province, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

2 – This paper was presented at the *International Colloquium "English Studies in Francophone Africa: The Pioneering Work of the School of Dakar"*, held on 20-21 December 2022 at Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar, Senegal.

Established in the 1980s by the "founding fathers" of British Studies in Senegal, all educated in Senegal, Great Britain and France, the Dakar School of British Studies is a School of thought and research gathering scholars and researchers from the Department of Anglophone Studies of the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences of Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar. All specialized in British Studies, its members are united by a view advocating a comparative study of British cultures and traditions with African ones.

3 – Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* in 1606. However, the play was first published in the *First Folio* of 1623, seven years after his death.

4 – The Faculty of Sciences and Arts of Sharurah is also known as Sharurah College of Sciences and Arts.



5 – The Faculty of Sciences and Arts of Sharurah is a four-year college where students earn a bachelor's degree after successfully completing four years of study divided into eight levels: Level 1, Level 2, ... and Level 8. Each level corresponds to a semester of study.

6 – See *Saudi Arabia – Constitution*, by Royal Decree of King Fahd, Adopted in March 1992, ICL Document Status Oct. 1993, p. 1.

See also *Saudi Arabia's Constitution of 1992 with Amendments through 2013*, p. 4.

Despite the presence of the word "Constitution" in their names, these two documents are not the constitution of Saudi Arabia; rather, they stand for the Basic Law of Governance.

7 – See W. Shakespeare. 2005. *Macbeth*. Fully annotated, with an Introduction by Burton Raffel (ed.). New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Note 50, p. 26.

8 – See "Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Bin Salman appointed Crown Prince", in *Al Arabiya News*, p. 2.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/gulf/2017/06/21/Saudi-Arabia-declares-Mohammed-bin-Salman-as-crown-prince>. Accessed 28 September 2022.

9 – See W. Shakespeare. 2005. *Macbeth*. Fully annotated, with an Introduction by Burton Raffel (ed.). New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Note 4, p. 23.

10 – This saying is often attributed to Prophet Muhammad. However, according to some Muslim clerics, it has not been established as an authentic *Hadith*.

11 – In the play, Macbeth is neither a prince nor a member of the Royal Family. However, he will murder King Duncan and become king.

12 – See Burton Raffel, "Introduction", in W. Shakespeare. 2005. *Macbeth*. Fully annotated, with an Introduction by Burton Raffel (ed.). New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. xx-xv.

13 – See the account made by BBC about the case: "1975: Saudi's King Faisal Assassinated", in *On This Day*, BBC: 1950-2005. 1-2.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/25/newsid_423300/4233595.stm. Accessed 11 October 2022.

14 – Read the account made by Juan De Onis in *The New York Times*, "Faisal's Killer Is Put to Death", Issue 19 June 1975. 1-3.

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