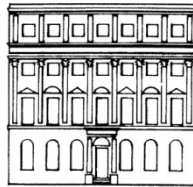


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Global Royal Families: Concepts, Cultures, and Networks of International Monarchy, 1800–2020

Conference Report

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Global Royal Families: Concepts, Cultures, and Networks of International Monarchy, 1800–2020. Conference held at the German Historical Institute London, 16–18 January 2020. Conveners: Falko Schnicke (GHIL), Cindy McCreery (University of Sydney), and Robert Aldrich (University of Sydney).

Co-financed by the GHIL and the University of Sydney, this event brought together scholars from four continents and eight countries to discuss the timely issue of global monarchies. Over the two and a half days there were almost forty attendees, and nineteen speakers presented ideas spanning royal families across two centuries and the continents of Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. Despite the wide variation in time periods and geographical locations covered, there were many overlapping and complementary themes, including the importance of the visibility of monarchs, the need to secure status on a global stage, the role of royals as official and unofficial diplomats, and the media's influence over the public image of a royal person or dynasty. The conference's main findings were that the global, national, and regional aspects of royal families were constantly intertwined, and that the political significance of monarchies recurred in different nineteenth- and twentieth-century contexts.

The conference opened with Robert Aldrich's (University of Sydney) introductory talk detailing the coverage of global royal families in history and historiography. Starting with comparative examples from the early nineteenth century and modern-day marriages between the Napoleon and Habsburg dynasties, Aldrich highlighted the intertwined genealogical, political, and cultural ties between royal families across the world. He maintained that in the nineteenth century European monarchies were affected by empire, which demonstrated their power to conquer and their interest in collections of 'exotica'. Yet at the same time, non-European monarchies were adopting Western styles of clothing, architecture, and court culture in order to be more accepted on the global stage.

The first session focused on royalty in international affairs and diplomacy and opened with a paper by Moritz A. Sorg (University of Freiburg), which examined the extent to which the First World War

The full conference programme can be found under 'Events and Conferences' on the GHIL's website <www.ghil.ac.uk>.

damaged the relationships of royal families across Europe. Sorg provided parallel case studies of Ferdinand I of Bulgaria and Ferdinand I of Romania to demonstrate how the First World War placed related monarchies on opposite sides, and the consequential impact this had on how these royal individuals were viewed in their respective countries and under the conditions of increasing nationalism. Next, Michael Kandiah's (King's College London) paper looked at how the British royal family has utilized its 'soft power' since 1952 to improve diplomatic relations between countries. Using oral testimonies of British diplomats, Kandiah explored how Queen Elizabeth II has been able to use her royal status, which places her above politics, in order to maintain good relationships through official engagements, both internationally and in Britain.

The second session centred on the House of Windsor and their relationship with foreign royal houses. Continuing the focus on Queen Elizabeth II and the current British royal family, Falko Schnicke (GHIL) delivered a paper which analysed the content of speeches given at state visits and highlighted the input that the government and the Palace had into these. He proved that it was the Foreign Office which inserted personal family remarks into speeches in order to demonstrate the network of monarchies and the intensity of international royal relationships. Thus the royal family functioned as a collective unit rather than as a collection of individuals. Following this Hilary Sapire (Birkbeck College, University of London) examined the relationship between the British and Zulu royal families (in South Africa) in the colonial period and through the early twentieth century. She argued that royal events and the links to the British monarchy were used by both Zulu monarchists and nationalists to advance their cause of independence.

The first day closed with a keynote lecture by Frank Mort (University of Manchester), which analysed how the media was used to transform the monarchy under George V and Queen Mary, and Edward VIII, into a consumable entity for the public. The increased visibility of the royal family through informal royal visits both in Britain and the colonies helped to make them more accessible to the ordinary public. Mort took a bottom-up approach to judging how the public emotionally responded to different members of the royal family by drawing upon first-hand accounts of seeing royalty. He argued that the rise of human-interest journalism meant that there was a

more extensive and global coverage of the royal family, and an attempt to make them more approachable by encouraging them to conduct unceremonious visits. He stressed the differences between George V and Queen Mary, helping to solidify the notion of the royal family as a domestic unit, while the Prince of Wales (the future Edward VIII) fostered a celebrity culture around his younger lifestyle.

The second day of the conference began with session three, which looked at the global reach of the British monarchy, with John R. Davis (Queen Mary London/Historic Royal Palaces) beginning with British attitudes towards India in the nineteenth century. Using Queen Victoria's diaries and royal library catalogues, Davis argued that Queen Victoria was first introduced to German philology by Prince Albert. This early introduction to philology, and repeated meetings with renowned scholars such as Max Müller, helped to fuel her interest in Indian culture during the latter part of her life. Moving into the twentieth century, Christian Oberländer (University of Halle-Wittenberg) presented a contrast to this with a paper analysing how the British royal family was a model for Japan's Imperial house, looking particularly at the role of the Japanese sovereign as a 'symbolic' emperor after the Second World War. He argued that by embracing state visits, the Japanese Imperial family placed themselves as the figureheads of the nation, and allowed Japan to open itself up to the public at home and in the West.

Session four continued the theme of royal travel by focusing on the Spanish and Austrian royal families. First, Javier Moreno-Luzón (Complutense University of Madrid) explained how Alfonso XIII of Spain (r.1886-1931) fostered closer relations with Latin America through royal visits, celebrations, and a shared culture to create a transnational image of the royal family. He argued that from the late nineteenth century to the end of the 1920s, the royal family successfully promoted Spanish national identity centring on the monarchy through the careful selection of different royal individuals to send to Hispanophone Latin American countries. They were thus able simultaneously to promote historic ties with Spain and highlight a progressive future. Aglaja Weindl (University of Munich) provided a case study of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and how he became an 'unexpected global royal' because of his world tour in 1892-3. This extensive travelling not only educated the Archduke but provided an opportunity to build better relations with Protestant and Orthodox

countries. Using Franz Ferdinand's own accounts, Weindl provided a personal insight into the repetitive nature of royal ceremonies across Europe, and how the guests felt about attending them.

Session five focused on global encounters, with Judith Rowbotham (University of Plymouth) using a range of local, national, and colonial newspapers to analyse the reception of the British royal family within different colonies. Taking examples of tours through India, Canada, Australia, and beyond from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, Rowbotham emphasized the impact that these visits had on global networking and diplomacy. Specifically tailoring the tone of the visit and activities not only aided relationships with the authorities, but allowed a sense of community to develop in the colonial public. Cindy McCreery (University of Sydney) followed this with a case study of the 1881 visit to Japan by King Kalakaua of Hawai'i and princes Albert Victor and George of Great Britain, and explored how this occasion was used to foster better relations between the countries. Pointing up similarities that mirrored Oberländer's paper, McCreery argued that the opening of Japan to royal visits was an attempt by the country to reinvent its global image, appear more welcoming, and encourage trade deals. Such a tour also allowed the King of Hawai'i to develop an international presence. Photographs of the visit demonstrated that there was a clear acknowledgement of the status of foreign royalty, while showing differences in hierarchy due to age and position in relation to the throne.

The next session focused on the importance of letter-writing between royals, with emphasis on female family relations. Susanne Bauer (University of Trier) presented her research project of cataloguing and analysing the 20,000 letters of Augusta Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, Queen of Prussia and Empress of Germany. Bauer argued that Augusta expressed many political opinions in these letters, tried to advise her husband (whether he asked for advice or not), and was a key factor in building relationships with royalty and politicians across Europe and beyond, with approximately 230 royal and non-royal correspondents. Mary T. Duarte (Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, USA) analysed letters written over the course of the nineteenth century by four generations of female royals from the line of descendants of Maria Theresa of the House of Habsburg. She scrutinized the type of advice passed from mother to daughter, and between grandmother and granddaughter, especially pertaining to mar-

riage and sexual life. She contended that as the generations went on, the tone of this advice softened, although duty and obedience were still often stressed.

The second keynote lecture of the conference was delivered by Irene Stengs (Meertens Instituut/Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam), who provided an in-depth anthropological analysis of the mourning culture in Thailand following the death of King Rama IX in 2016, and the meaning of the symbolism and rituals in the coronation ceremony of King Rama X in 2019. Taking a step-by-step approach through the elements and stages of the coronation ceremony, Stengs highlighted how this event was used to unite the country through shared experience and emotions. While there were historical and religious precedents for several aspects of the event, the incorporation of modern technology, such as mass television broadcasting and drones, gave the new monarch increased accessibility and a personal quality. She also presented a close analysis of the use of colour by the organizers of the event to mark a new reign, and explained the significance this holds within Thai culture.

The final day of the conference started with a session exploring regional dynasties and transnational royal families. Aidan Jones (King's College London) gave a case study of Alexander II of Russia's visit to Britain in 1874 on the occasion of his daughter Marie's marriage to Prince Alfred. He analysed the dynastic politics of the marriage arrangement and the wider implications this had for international diplomacy. Priya Naik (University of Delhi) followed this with a paper exploring the consumption of Britishness by Indian princes in the first half of the twentieth century. She argued that by consuming goods, language, culture, and customs, Indian princes were hoping to be accepted by British society and to join an international aristocratic network.

The final session analysed the different international models of monarchy. Nicholas Miller (University of Lisbon), like McCreery, focused on King Kalakaua of Hawai'i (r.1874–91) but compared him to Sultan Abu Bakar of Johore (r.1886–95) in the Malay States. He focused on the two kings' different approaches to ruling small monarchies and gaining international recognition for their states, and addressed the issue of labour migration. Charles Reed (Elizabeth City State University, Elizabeth City, USA) closed the conference by returning to India via the Gaekwad of Baroda. Like Naik, he high-

lighted the Gaekwad's desire to foster good relations with the British. Reed's approach was to explore how this was achieved through the lens of royal visits to Britain from the later nineteenth century and the public image they were trying to promote of a princely state in India during the colonial period and after independence.

The conference closed with reflections from the co-organizers, who drew out some of the key themes from across the papers. The breadth of the time period and geographical locations covered highlighted that monarchies had achieved local, national, and global reaches. Several papers pointed out that royalty was used, often unofficially, for diplomatic reasons to improve relationships between dynasties and nations, which provoked discussions about how individual royal persons perceived their role. It was agreed that monarchy is an evolving concept, and in recent times, by embracing modern technology and utilizing media coverage, royal families have been able to appear relatable and relevant to contemporary society. The importance of the family unit at the heart of the monarchy was understood to be a central factor in emphasizing the longevity and stability of the institution. Finally, the visibility of royalty, either through first-hand accounts of travel, or increased coverage in the press and accompanying images, was a central theme across many of the papers. This increased visibility frequently allowed royal individuals to appear more personable, and enhanced their popularity nationally and globally. The conference illustrated some of the paradoxes of private life and public role for royal families on a global stage. It also confirmed the need for further studies, even in the twenty-first century, on the evolving central position in political, social, and cultural life occupied by monarchs and their royal families in many countries.

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