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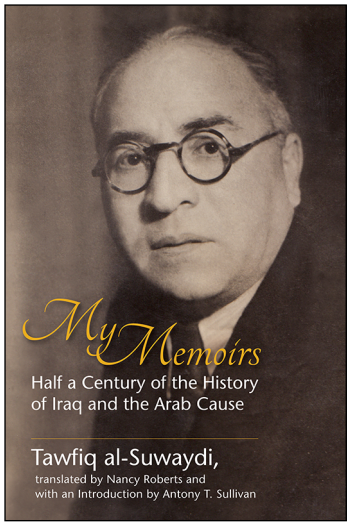
My Memoirs: Half a Century of the History of Iraq and the Arab Cause

Tawfiq al-Suwaydi



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Introduction

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My Memoirs by Tawfiq al-Suwaydi (1892–1968), eminent Iraqi Sunni statesman, diplomat, and lifelong Arab nationalist and liberal reformer, have never previously been published in English. This translation by Nancy Roberts fully captures the elegance of al-Suwaydi's prose and the great drama that was his life. In places, the memoirs compete well with any good adventure novel. Tawfiq al-Suwaydi's account of his desert voyages, wartime stratagems, and flights from state security services make the book a wonderful read. It is difficult to put down. His portraits of kings, statesmen, soldiers, adventurers, and rogues constitute a gallery of leading personalities of the twentieth century, one worth a careful perusal especially given current world events. Perhaps most notably, al-Suwaydi reminds readers of the important Arab liberal tradition of the last century, which recent decades of military dictatorship have largely expunged from popular memory. This book will go far toward helping English-speaking readers understand the deeper background of unfolding events in the Middle East and the epochal developments that have shaped Iraq and the Arab world over the past century and more.[1]

Readers of these memoirs may be especially grateful for the effort made by the author to avoid reporting rumor or hearsay and to confine himself, as he notes, to those things that he did himself or with which he was personally familiar given the positions he held and the responsibilities he bore. Tawfiq al-Suwaydi states that his objective throughout was to record only the facts and to avoid making any unfounded claims. Although, thankfully, he fails to confine himself merely to the facts and does indeed tell us what he believes many of those facts to mean, these memoirs are remarkably free of special

pleading. All of this makes this book a significant contribution to historical understanding and one that deserves the widest possible attention.

Born almost three decades before the fall of the Ottoman Empire and a key player in the new Arab Awakening of the early twentieth century, Tawfiq al-Suwaydi was the scion of an elite Iraqi family that traces its origins back to ʻAbbas ibn ʻAbd al-Mutallib, a member of the prominent Meccan ʻAbbasi clan, paternal uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, and the individual whose descendants founded the Abbasid Caliphate (751–1258), centered in Baghdad. This ancestry is important because for centuries the family connection to the Prophet Muhammad was key to the eminence of the al-Suwaydis, as well as that of a handful of other Iraqi families resident mainly in Baghdad. Hanna Batatu, author of the authoritative history of Iraq in modern times, notes that "Arabs are . . . a genealogy-conscious people. To the townsmen among them, in particular, a holy pedigree counted for much." Batatu endorses the al-Suwaydis' claim to descent from the family of the Prophet, while noting that they were unaccountably left off an Ottoman list of the elite landowning families of ulema and *ashraf* resident in Baghdad in 1894.[2]

Strictly speaking, the religiously honorific titles of *sayyid* or *sharif* have applied only to descendants of Hassan and Hussein, grandsons of the Prophet, but the House of Muhammad has historically been more widely interpreted to include the descendants of ʻAbbas.[3] Of the many Iraqis who claim or have claimed to be *ashraf* (plural of *sharif*) and *sadah* (plural of *sayyid*), or descendants of the family of the Prophet, the claim of the al-Suwaydi family, buttressed by copious genealogical evidence, is certainly one of the strongest. Unlike many Iraqi families that claim *ashraf* status, the al-Suwaydis have an actual family tree that makes for interesting reading. In addition to ʻAbbas, the Prophet's uncle, and various other medieval luminaries, the genealogy shows that Harun al-Rashid (c. 764–809), the famous Abbasid caliph and patron of scholarship and the arts, was a direct ancestor. Islamic judges, quranic commentators, and distinguished scholars appear frequently in the al-Suwaydi ancestral line. One particularly good example of a prominent historian was ʻAbdul Rahman al-Suwaydi (died 1785), author of a variety of historical studies including *History of Events in Baghdad and Basra* and *The Special Garden in the Biography of the Ministers*.[4] Like a number of such other wealthy *sadah* families who have served from time immemorial as administrators of particular shrines or holy places in Iraq, the al-Suwaydis have continued to act as the administrators of the shrine of Shaikh Ma'ruf in Baghdad. Batatu coyly remarks that it is impossible to determine whether wealth originally led the al-Suwaydi family to hold that office or whether the office first led to its wealth.[5] However, as these memoirs so amply demonstrate, sacred descent is hardly the only quality that has earned the al-Suwaydis the eminence they possess. More notable, especially in the modern period, is their service to Iraq in particular

and the Arab world in general and their success in numerous business ventures over many decades. At the same time, the memoirs may suggest that the al-Suwaydis and other elite Sunni families had even more influence on events under the British mandate than they actually did. Readers would do well to keep in mind that throughout the four decades between 1918 and 1958, the most decisive leverage over all that occurred in Iraq was retained by the British.

Sacred descent in Iraq, true or claimed, has never by itself guaranteed preeminence and respect. More has always been required, the status of *sharif* being only one important supporting element. As Batatu notes, if the *sadah* mattered in society, they mattered on some other ground—either on account of their "wealth, or their holding of office, or their knowledge of religion or of the holy law, or their leadership of tribes or of mystic orders, or a combination of two or more of these factors."[6] In fact, the al-Suwaydis qualified on all of these grounds. Like other *sadah,* or *ashraf,* they had long been individuals of social prominence and abundant means. Few in Iraq could adduce a more convincing claim, based on the widest possible grounds, to a leadership role in traditional Iraqi society than the al-Suwaydis.

The term *ashraf* is also commonly used to designate those 300 men who either fought on the side of Sharif Hussein of the Hejaz against the Ottoman Empire as allies of the British from 1916–1918, or the much smaller group that served in the administrations of Syria and Jordan between the end of Ottoman rule and the establishment of the mandate system.[7]

Using this second designation, the al-Suwaydi family also qualifies as *ashraf.* The *ashraf* so defined who ended up joining King Faisal I in Iraq after 1921 numbered only fifty-one individuals and included three al-Suwaydis. Although neither Tawfiq nor Naji al-Suwaydi (1882–1942) fought with the Hejazi troops during World War I and indeed Tawfiq served as an Ottoman army officer throughout that conflict, both brothers qualify as *ashraf* because of their administrative and judicial services in Aleppo and Damascus immediately after the end of the war. A third al-Suwaydi brother, ʻArif al-Suwaydi (1886–1978), who later became a cabinet minister and a parliamentary deputy in Iraq, is also part of this very short list. The only other sharifian family so defined to have three members on this list is the al-ʻAskari family. All of this background should convey some idea of the weight that the al-Suwaydis carried in Iraq before 1958 as both politicians and landowners, and why these memoirs are historically important. A fourth al-Suwaydi brother, Shakir al-Suwaydi (1896–1998), became a medical doctor and was never involved in politics or in management of the al-Suwaydi estate.

And then there was a fifth al-Suwaydi brother, Thabit al-Suwaydi (c. 1884–1914), who died far before his time after demonstrating almost unbelievable courage by his public and uncompromising opposition to the

gathering storm of the twentieth century's first holocaust. In fact, Thabit al-Suwaydi was assassinated by agents of the Young Turks[8] in mid-August 1914, almost three months before the Ottoman Empire entered World War I, after making clear that he was unalterably opposed to the recently announced policy of the then-governor of Diyarbakir Province in Anatolia to commit genocide against the Armenian and Christian Arab populations of that area.[9] Thabit's death thrust Yusuf al-Suwaydi (1851–1929), father of the five al-Suwaydi sons, into the deepest of mourning. After Thabit's assassination, Istanbul never had the slightest chance to resolve its differences with Yusuf al-Suwaydi. Yusuf's anti-Turkification efforts in Iraq in 1913 and those of his son Tawfiq in Paris in the same year were transformed after 1918 into the secular Arab nationalism that dominated Arab discourse and politics for the next half century.

The Young Turks knew the al-Suwaydi family well, and not only because of its distinguished lineage. Thabit, like his younger brother Tawfiq, had studied in Istanbul and was personally familiar to the authorities there. Like Tawfiq, Thabit was a gifted student. A graduate of both the Ottoman School of Public Administration (the Mulkiyyahana) and the Istanbul College of Law, Thabit was appointed attaché to the governor (*wali*) of Baghdad in 1911 and by 1914 was hoping to become the governor of Diyarbakir Province. But any such governorship, like so much else, was simply not to be. Thabit's outspoken opposition to the gathering massacre of the Armenians persuaded the Turks, after lengthy negotiations, to deny him the Diyarbakir appointment and to dispatch him to serve as district commissioner of Roum Khalah, a remote and unimportant locality in the Province of Aleppo. Even that demotion, however, proved insufficient to satisfy the bloodthirsty Ottoman governor of the Province of Diyarbakir, Rashid Beg al-Jarkasi, as subsequent events were to demonstrate.[10] In al-Jarkasi's opinion, Thabit simply knew too much about what was actually happening to the Armenians and other Christians in Diyarbakir Province and was more than likely to cast a spotlight on the Diyarbakir horrors once he reached Aleppo. Therefore, al-Jarkasi sent his thugs to make sure that Thabit never arrived at his destination. The sad and sudden end of Thabit's life, and the reaction to Thabit's death by his father Yusuf, are related in poignant detail by Sulayman Faidhi, a contemporary and personal friend of Thabit in Faidhi's own memoirs, introduced and edited by his son, Basil Faidhi. By all indications, the following account of these events constitutes the first time this incident has ever been related in English. For his part, Sulayman Faidhi describes in unforgettable fashion his meeting with Thabit al-Suwaydi in mid-August 1914, not far outside Aleppo, possibly only an hour or less before Thabit was killed:

> On August 25, 1914, we [Sulayman Faidhi and the two other representatives of Basra Province who were serving in the Ottoman parliament] left

> Istanbul after attending the [last] session of parliament [before the beginning of World War I]. On our way back to Baghdad and on to Basra we stopped in Aleppo where we visited with the Governor to request that he provide us the needed protection for our unsafe journey to Baghdad. We left Aleppo in three carriages, one carriage for ourselves, one carriage for our luggage, and a third carriage for our guards. Ja'far al-'Askari, Commander of the Gendarmerie of the Province of Aleppo, who had arranged the protection for us, and many other young men from Aleppo came to say goodbye. Several hours [after we left Aleppo] we saw some people coming in our direction and when we stopped to greet them we saw that it was Thabit al-Suwaydi and three of his guards. We descended from our carriages and hugged one another. Then Thabit began to tell us this story: "I was District Commissioner (Qaimacam or Kaim-Makam) based in the town of al-Bashairia in the Province of Diyarbakir. An order came from the government [in Istanbul] to the Governor (Wali) of Diyarbakir, Rashid Beg al-Jarkasi, to kill all the Armenians who were living in the Province of Diyarbakir. The governor ordered some of his Jarkas guards to slaughter the Armenians and the Christians. The killing was so brutal that it is too savage to describe. No one was to be spared . . . children, women, and old men were all to be killed. I objected to the killing of the Armenians and also to the killing of Arab Christians. . . . I wrote a letter to the governor [al-Jarkasi] describing the brutal manner in which the Jarkas gangs he sent were killing Arab Christians and the Armenians. The governor has become very angry with me and has accused me of protecting the Armenians and has complained to the government in Istanbul. This is the reason why the Government of Turkey has transferred me to a small place called Roum Khalah in Aleppo Province and you have met me as I proceed to this place." We rested and we ate together and then we set out on our respective journeys, Thabit to Roum Khalah and we to Baghdad.
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> When we arrived in Baghdad on August 31, 1914 we were received by an enormous crowd of important people, including poets, writers, and those from the newspaper. . . . But missing from the crowd was my great friend, Yusuf al-Suwaydi. Because I knew how much Yusuf cared for me, I went directly to visit him at his mansion. I found him very distressed and sad. When he saw me, he was overcome with emotion. I felt there was something desperately wrong. I began to tell him of my trip and meeting with Thabit. Yusuf began to cry and he said, "They have killed Thabit. They killed him before he reached his destination." I was overcome with emotion because I had loved Thabit from the first day I met him as he was noble, brave, and sincere. We cried together with heavy hearts. I knew Thabit was extraordinarily courageous. He was extremely loyal to his beliefs and principles. After a while of being with Yusuf, I departed with sadness and the sound of the weeping of the old man still in my ears.[11]

Although Tawfiq al-Suwaydi does not mention this incident in his memoirs, it does provide context for Tawfiq's own commitment to ecumenism and his lifelong struggle to combat prejudice and intolerance. He and Thabit were clearly chips from the same block. Yusuf al-Suwaydi raised his sons well, and indeed in a fashion quite extraordinary for Iraq and the Middle East as a whole in his time. Liberalism, pluralism, and especially compassion for those under siege were as much tenets of Tawfiq's

personal philosophy as they were of his brother Thabit's. This posture of the al-Suwaydi family was to have a major influence on the course of events in Iraq as the years and decades passed.

Many readers of *My Memoirs* will delight in encountering Tawfiq al-Suwaydi, an architect of the enlightened Arab nationalism presaged in Arab student circles in Istanbul and Paris during the few short years before 1914. Successors to two generations of the nineteenth-century Arab activists first described by George Antonius in his classic volume, *The Arab Awakening,* originally published in 1939, Tawfiq and his student colleagues in Istanbul and Paris honed their teeth on opposition to the Turkification policies and centralizing reforms undertaken by the Young Turks after 1908. They demanded Arab political and cultural autonomy within a reformed, decentralized, and liberalized Ottoman Empire. During those early years, Tawfiq never argued for Arab independence or revolt, and used all of his already considerable influence to make sure that his colleagues did likewise.

He hardly needed to have done so. As he makes clear in his memoirs, during the 1908–1914 period, what later became Arab nationalism was notable only by its absence. Tensions had increased between Turks and Arabs in Iraq and elsewhere because of the Turkification policies of Istanbul, but in those prewar years, Arab sentiment did not assume any form that could be recognized as clearly nationalistic. Tawfiq al-Suwaydi specifically mentions the paucity of Arab national sentiment in Iraq at the time and notes that in the Hejaz it was totally absent, with at least urbanite Hejazis insisting that they were in fact not Arabs. He remarks that he personally, despite the good fortune of being born into one of the most educated families in Iraq, thought of himself as an Ottoman Muslim with "only the most illusory sense of myself as an Arab." And he rightly asks: If this was his particular situation as an early adolescent, what must have been the situation of the general Iraqi population?

But all that was to change, and soon. It was in Istanbul, in the very belly of the Ottoman Empire, that Arabs of different ages and degrees of sophistication first came together to create the beginnings of a new, "imagined community," which shortly after World War I coalesced into what has long been known as Arab nationalism. In truth, one would be only slightly exaggerating to say that when Tawfiq al-Suwaydi first arrived in Istanbul in 1909 at the age of seventeen to continue his studies in law after one year of preparatory work at the Baghdad Law Faculty, he was by his own admission something of a country bumpkin in comparison with the much more cosmopolitan Syrians whose circle he joined. However, intensive discussions with them in and outside of the Istanbul Literary Forum (al-Muntada al-Adabi), provided him a priceless political education, one that he put immediately to good use after his arrival in Paris in 1912 (then speaking no French) to continue his legal studies at the Sorbonne. Subsequent to his graduation in 1914 (by then

Tawfiq al-Suwaydi as a law student in Istanbul, standing, back row, extreme right, ca. 1910.

speaking fluent French), he worked briefly as secretary to a committee charged with revision of Shamsuddin Sami's French-Turkish dictionary. In 1919, immediately upon his return to Iraq after the war, a very different Tawfiq al-Suwaydi attempted to "awaken" Iraqis to the nascent Arab national movement in order to rally them against the "odious" British administration being established there. In that, as he relates in these memoirs, he was totally unsuccessful, as poverty, ignorance, and low popular morale frustrated his efforts and those of other members of the returning al-Suwaydi family. The British noted all of these initiatives and were certainly less than pleased. In 1919, the fact that both England and France blocked trips to Europe that Tawfiq had been invited to make speaks volumes about how he was already regarded by the principal European powers.

But all that is getting ahead of the story. In 1913, while still almost a child, Tawfiq al-Suwaydi built on the grounding he had acquired in Istanbul to emerge as an architect and major intellectual catalyst of the seminal First Arab Congress held in Paris in June of that year. Indeed, Tawfiq was already respected enough to succeed in persuading his colleagues to change the name of the proposed gathering from the Syrian Arab Congress to the more comprehensively Arabist designation of the First Arab Congress. As he observes in his memoirs, some of the deference he was accorded was a direct result of his distinguished family line. Deference aside, and as implied by the new name of the congress, what later became Arab nationalism first manifested itself in Paris. Tawfiq al-Suwaydi played a major role in cultivating this new plant, which was to grow so quickly and proliferate so widely.

In Paris, one crucial venue for the transmission of Arabism was a café at the corner of the boulevards Saint Germain and Saint Michel where Tawfiq al-Suwaydi and other young Arabs met regularly in 1912 and 1913 to share plans and dreams for the future. As in the cases of many of his associates,, Tawfiq's activities in Paris were not restricted to conversations over coffee but, as his memoirs attest, also included undercover and far more dangerous ventures. In fact, at different times before, during, and after World War I, Tawfiq al-Suwaydi was a member of both al-Fatat (the Young Arab Society) and al-'Ahd (the Arab Covenant), underground societies of Arab activists strongly opposed to perceived Ottoman repression in Arab lands. Al-Fatat was founded in Damascus in 1911 by Izzat Darwaza, and al-'Ahd in 1913 by 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri. Al-'Ahd grouped together Arab officers from Mesopotamia serving in the Ottoman army. In 1918, upon the conclusion of World War I, al-'Ahd created a section for civilians, which Tawfiq promptly joined. Before 1918, for Tawfiq as well as for other Paris al-Fatat cell members such as Ahmad Rustum Haydar, 'Abd al-Ghani al-Uraysi, Jamil Mardam, 'Awni 'Abd al-Hadi, and Rafiq al-Tamimi, detection and arrest by the Ottoman authorities would almost certainly have entailed the gravest of

consequences. By all indications, Tawfiq al-Suwaydi echoed the values of his elder brother Thabit as a man of high principle and one who from an early age risked his life to advance the positions in which he believed.

When Tawfiq al-Suwaydi helped to convoke the First Arab Congress in 1913, he and his colleagues had substantial material in the Levant and Egypt on which to draw. Beirut, of course, had known protonationalist stirrings since the middle of the previous century, and these developments were hardly unknown to intellectuals in Cairo. In 1913, as he notes in his memoirs, the desire for decentralization and Arab cultural autonomy within the Ottoman Empire had come to be represented by the new Reform Society in Beirut and the Decentralization Party in Cairo. Tawfiq al-Suwaydi was well aware that the Beirut Reform Society, founded in January 1913 and directed by the modernist Beiruti notable Salim ʻAli Salam, had almost immediately issued a statement concerning the "Project of Reforms to be applied to the Province of Beirut," and that this statement had been endorsed by the Decentralization Party in Egypt. The Lebanese delegates to the First Arab Congress met with some members of this party en route to Paris. Financial support for the Levantine participants was provided by a "public subscription," indicating significant popular approval for their mission. In the event, whatever agreement was thought by the Arabs to have been reached with the Turks and supposedly sanctioned by a great banquet between the two sides crumbled almost before the ink was dry. Recriminations from Beirut and elsewhere swiftly followed, accusing the *congressistes* in Paris of having allowed themselves to be duped. This episode was hardly the last of the many disappointments that Tawfiq al-Suwaydi was to experience during his long and distinguished career.

These memoirs contain the text of the important welcoming address that Tawfiq delivered to the delegates assembled in Paris. In that allocution, Tawfiq spoke of "[rescuing] the homeland" and "[fomenting] a spirit of renewal in defense of the Arabs' legitimate rights." He adduced what he optimistically called the "single purpose, the single nation and the single message that unites us." In particular, he asserted that Iraqis were fully as committed to this campaign as were the Syrians, a claim that was manifestly untrue as he himself makes clear elsewhere in his memoirs. No matter: the moment called for exhortation, not sober analysis of realities, and at exhortation, as at so much else, the youthful Tawfiq al-Suwaydi was already a master.[12]

Tawfiq, along with his father, Yusuf, and his brothers Naji and ʻArif, may well have shared some of the general detestation of the Young Turks characteristic of the Iraqi *ashraf* because of a well-grounded fear that, as provided for in Article 20 of the Young Turk Constitution of 1908, their financial immunities were about to be repealed, and they would be taxed in the future according to their means. For the *sadah* elite in general, such was

the stuff of nightmares. Worse, according to Article 14 of the Program of the Committee of Union and Progress, their agricultural holdings were to be partitioned and redistributed among the peasantry. On paper, all this portended nothing less than a comprehensive financial and agrarian revolution in Iraq and the end of traditional Iraqi society. As Hanna Batatu observes, "it [was] not only concern for their Arab cultural identity . . . that drove the sadah and other Arab landed magnates to seek autonomy. They sought it also . . . to prolong the life of the old social institutions from which they benefited."[13] Whatever such concerns may have been for young Tawfiq al-Suwaydi and his family, all evidence suggests that Tawfiq's personal role in convening the First Arab Congress in 1913 stemmed primarily from a heartfelt commitment to precisely those Arabist convictions that these memoirs reveal.

The Arab delegates in Paris believed that they had achieved a great victory by reaching an agreement with the Young Turks that satisfied all of their major demands. The Turks agreed, or so they thought, that Arabic was henceforth to be an official language throughout the Arab provinces, that Arab troops in the Ottoman army were to be deployed only within the Arab world in time of war, and that local government in Arab regions would in the future be dominated by the Arabs themselves. The Young Turks smiled but in fact had not the slightest intention of implementing any such reforms. Turkification and centralization were what Istanbul desired and indeed had wanted since shortly after the Young Turk revolution in 1908, which, during its early months, had stirred great enthusiasm in the Arab world. In 1913 as earlier, Arab disillusionment was rapid and bitter. The hopes of the elite of a generation seemed gone with the wind.

On their return from Paris, delegates to the First Arab Congress were greeted by widespread anger from important people. For example, Tawfiq al-Suwaydi recounts in his memoirs that Sharif Hussein of Mecca, who would lead the Arab Revolt only three years later, promptly denounced the work of the *congressistes* in Paris as a betrayal of the Ottoman homeland. More opposition erupted especially in Iraq, where a dissident campaign led by the ever conspiratorial Sayyid Talib al-Naqib of Basra facilitated abortion by the Young Turks of all that they had supposedly agreed to in Paris. Nevertheless, the die had been cast. In only a few short years, what participants in the First Arab Congress briefly thought they had accomplished in 1913 became the foundation for a new and much more demanding postwar Arab political nationalism focused on achieving independence for the Arab mandates placed under the rule of the French and British heirs to the late Ottoman Empire.

Giants stride across the pages of these memoirs. Tawfiq al-Suwaydi interacted personally with many of the most important figures of the twentieth century. The verbal snapshots he provides of many of them are riveting: A. T. Wilson, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Adnan Menderes, Gamal Abdel Nasser,

King Ibn al-Sa'ud, Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, St. John (Jack) Philby, King Faisal I of Syria and Iraq, Moshe Sharett, the Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husseini, Rabbi Stephen Wise, Anthony Eden, Eamon de Valera, Lord George Curzon, Louis Massignon, Benito Mussolini, George Antonius, Christian Herter, Reza Shah Pahlavi, John Foster Dulles, Habib Bourguiba, and Kings Abdullah and Hussein of Jordan are all here. Tawfiq al-Suwaydi, with his international education and command of French, German, Turkish, Farsi, English, and Italian, was for decades the obvious candidate in Iraq for the post of foreign minister, a position that he held on several occasions and one that facilitated his meetings with so many of the major personalities of his time.

What were the familial influences that shaped this remarkable individual? What was it like in the 1930s and 1940s to be a child growing up in Baghdad in the household of such an eminent figure as Tawfiq al-Suwaydi? What was the material basis for the eminence of the al-Suwaydi family? Fortunately, personal testimony on these matters by Tawfiq's son, Luay al-Suwaydi, is available, and his recollections and those of others shed light not only on the al-Suwaydi family but also on Iraq itself during the turbulent decades that marked his father's career. Some attention to these matters will hopefully enable readers to better appreciate the world about which these memoirs were written.

When Luay al-Suwaydi was born, Tawfiq's father Yusuf reportedly threw gold coins on Baghdad's streets to express his joy at the safe arrival of his new grandson.[14] By all accounts the al-Suwaydi household was a harmonious one, and Luay al-Suwaydi recalls a happy childhood. Tawfiq made a point of having breakfast with his children regularly because he often could not take dinner at home as a result of meetings connected with pressing affairs of state. When Tawfiq could eat dinner with the family, conversations not surprisingly revolved around economics and politics. Once the children had reached the age of eight, the al-Suwaydi family would frequently retire to one of the private boxes reserved for government officials or VIPs at one of Baghdad's major movie theaters to see whatever English-language film happened to be showing. There the elder al-Suwaydi would translate or summarize the story line in Arabic for the children. Clearly, going to the movies *en famille* was the way that the al-Suwaydis structured quality family time for themselves and their offspring.

Luay recalls being taken as a child by his father to Tawfiq's Baghdad tailor where a blue blazer and a pair of gray trousers were made for him. The elder al-Suwaydi was himself an elegant dresser, fittingly so for a scion of the *ashraf* class. Luay recalls that his father's favorite tailor was not in Baghdad but on Savile Row in London. Tawfiq al-Suwaydi was in fact at home almost everywhere in the world and was uniquely qualified not only for his frequent terms of service as Iraqi minister of foreign affairs, but also