

King Zog of Albania: Europes Self-Made Muslim Monarch



Shortly before 5 p.m. on Saturday, September 1, 1928, Europe gained a new kingdom and its only Muslim king: 32-year-old Zog I of the Albanians. Few foreign journalists were present in the Parliament House in Tirana to hear him swear his oath on the Koran and the Bible, yet the birth of the Kingdom of Albaniaa native monarchy, not an alien impositiondid not go unnoticed abroad. King Zog (18951961) was a curiosity, and so he has remained: the most atypical European monarch of the twentieth century, a man entirely without royal connections who created his own kingdom. By contemporaries, he was variously labeled the last ruler of romance, an appalling gangster, the modern Napoleon, the finest patriot, and frankly a cad. Even today his reputation is disputed, but Zog is undeniably one of the foremost figures in Albanian history. Though notorious for cut-throat political intrigue, he promised to bring order and progress to a land that had long known little of either. It was I who made Albania, he claimed. Zogs reign ended in 1939; Italian Fascists forced him into exile and post-war Stalinists kept him there despite his best efforts to return. In this first full biography, Jason Tomes explores the reality behind the man described in The Times as the bizarre King Zog and shows him to have been the product of a unique time and place. Tomes invites readers to set aside their assumptions about modern European monarchy and meet a king who fired back at assassins and paid his bills with gold bullion.

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