



# Fantasies of Empire and Local Realities: Unpacking Airmindedness in the Middle East, 1924–1944

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**Abstract** This article analyzes the co-production of “airmindedness” in the British and French mandates in the interwar Middle East. We argue that while imperial carriers used visual and textual advertising to promote flying as an extension of empire, this process was not unidirectional. By focusing on local initiatives in Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, we demonstrate how local elites and entrepreneurs also shaped the meaning of civil aviation. In French-mandated territories, a direct rule approach stifled local ventures, whereas in British Palestine, Zionist groups successfully developed a local aviation culture. This study advocates for a multi-scalar, transimperial, and Middle East-centric approach to aviation history, recognizing the critical role of local actors in connecting imperial networks.

**Keywords** Airmindedness, Imperialism, Middle East, Civil Aviation, Interwar period

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## Colonial Skies

The conquest of the skies was supposed to rejuvenate Europe's dying empires. French and British imperial airlines – *Lignes d'Orient* (1927–1930)/*Air Orient* (1930–1933)/*Air France* (1933–) and *Imperial Airways* (1924–1939)/British Overseas Airways Corporation or BOAC (1939–1973) – promoted air travel through diverse visual ephemera in the interwar years.<sup>1</sup> Like other national airline companies, they organized aerial derbies and shows to propagate the fascination of flying, while also commissioning photographers and film-makers to sell speed and, more importantly, publicize in gazettes, pamphlets, and cinemas a unique “bird-eye” experience. To imperial carriers, however, air travel conveyed not only a sense of time-space compression or a certain view of modernity; it embodied the very idea of empire (Pirie 2009a: 2–5; Pirie 2012: 5; On the role of advertising in promoting British and French imperialism, see August 1985). Posters and maps displaying the long lists of destinations in which they operated conjured the vast territorial expanse of the empire. Due to its location on the crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa, the Middle East often played the important role of air junction for the new airborne mobility connecting Europe's imperial centres with their numerous colonies and dominions.

And yet, were imperial civil aviation to be narrated from the perspective of the French and British mandates of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq, a new perspective emerges. Aviation between, within, and to these territories reveals their role in rejuvenating empire through the creation of imageries. The promise of air travel to Damascus, Tripoli, and Jerusalem concocted a touristic amalgamation of antiquarianism, orientalism and piety which framed mobility within the empire as the consumption of image and fantasy.

Explaining the forging of such imaginary in tandem with the emergence of “airmindedness” in the metropole, as elsewhere, requires looking at “the specific historical factors that revealed, expressed, and produced that (flight) enthusiasm” (Palmer 2006: 3). For one, the popularization of flight – virtual or real – propelled collaborations between pro-aviation pundits, governments, and commercial actors to develop and expand a new aviation sector. Early aviation advertising commonly took the form of local and international air shows staged for large crowds at ever more sophisticated aerodromes near Europe's main urban centres (Palmer 2006: 3). Imperial government officials educated their peers on the merits and potentials of aviation, engaging in a pedagogical effort that extended to the public as well, particularly to youth groups and schoolchildren. While bold adventurers mounted highly publicized long-distance aviation stunts, journalists and writers took it upon themselves to foster a public understanding of, rather than only a fascination for, air travel (Pirie 2009a: 10–63). Newspapers reprinted articles, talks, and lectures to royal and learned societies on aviation, attempting to educate the wider public about aerodynamics and recent developments in aviation. Contemporaries commonly described flight as the ultimate embodiment of humanity's mechanical mastery over nature, and, as Robert Wohl (2005: 7) wrote, the experience of flying was believed to be so exhilarating, pairing unprecedented bird-eye perspectives of the world with unmatched speed, that many contemporaries relied on mystical and divine language to describe it:

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This generation that flies has seen things that no human eyes have seen since the dawn of time. It has discovered a new aspect of the familiar earth, a new scale of distances and proportion, a new pattern in nature and in the affairs of men. It has created for itself a new sensation of lofty solitude, of mastery over space, of infinite horizons (Rose 1930: 196).

Construction of small and large aerodromes and financially backing the establishment of aero-clubs were key new policies (Millward 2007: 29). Flying was to be democratized, reframed not as a mystical feat by Icarian daredevils but as a potential hobby and sportive activity, accessible to amateurs through derbies, joyriding flights, and gliding and light aeroplane clubs, whose activities were commonly bolstered by new state subsidies (Wohl 2005: 9–46; Roseau 2012: 32–54; for state subsidies to flying clubs in Britain see Hoare 1957: 200–203; Edgerton 1991; Chadeau 1985). An important component to the campaign to de-sensationalize flying was dressing it as transportation. Newspapers and magazines published photographs of politicians, aristocrats, and businessmen flying with early airline companies, reassuring readers that air travel was a safe and convenient mode of transportation.

Likewise, “New imperialists” in the interwar years believed that the development of tourism in the colonies could facilitate the exercise of imperial power and normalize British and French rule in their dominions. Steamships, trains, car roads and, presently, air routes, made possible a new culture of tourism, in which the colonies played the leading role (Zuelow 2024: 348; Baranowski et al., 2015). In a reversal of imperial centrifugal flows, the development of tourism fostered the expectations, experiences, and practices of touristic consumption in both imperial metropolises and the colonies (Furlough 2002: 444).

Producing and sustaining public enthusiasm for imperial aviation meant more than simply presenting the engineering or logistical feats it involved, however. As Christoph Asendorf (1997) and others have pointed out, the experience of flying severed the observer from the ground and transformed the territory below into a spectacle to be viewed (Kurgan 2013). Unmitigated by first-hand on-the-ground experience, European publics’ perception of their imperial territories in the East – long mediated through Orientalist imageries popularized by shipping line advertisements – was transformed by the view from above, which replaced the sometimes bewilderingly complex geographies of empire with seductively coherent territorial narratives (Roseau 2012; Kurgan 2013). An adequate understanding of imperial aviation therefore demands that we analyze it within broader contemporary visual cultures, since images were the primary tools through which this new “air minded” perception of empire was constructed, distributed, and consumed.

Valuable as they are, present studies commonly focus either on the development of singular imperial projects or explore the advancement of airmindedness in the metropole alone. Little is known about how imperial aviation was appropriated in the colonies, and even less about how this visual language was co-produced and collectively consumed across imperial projects. Drawing on visual and textual sources on the Middle East and often by Middle Easterners, in this paper we explore how aviation culture and imperial imaginaries were co-produced by imperial and local actors, public and private alike.

By adopting a multi-scalar approach to imperial history that foregrounds visual sources and the micro-analytical level, we aim to demonstrate the value of a Middle Eastern centric perspective to the study of aviation. We will show that Lebanese, Syrian, Zionist, French and British



entrepreneurs, political elites, and publicists were key actors driving the promotion of aviation, and how they refashioned the visual culture of aviation and empire in the process. Working within and across national, imperial and class boundaries, these actors developed political and territorial visions that varied with, and sometimes undermined, imperial imaginaries emanating from the metropole. Their actions require close attention if we are to better apprehend how aerial culture conjugated as it spread across the Eastern Mediterranean throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

In order to do so, this article is divided into four parts. Part I, “A Whole New World”, briefly illustrates how aviation visual advertising was a deeply imperial endeavour, drawing extensively on pre-existing tropes about the Orient and its relationship to Euro-modernity. Part II, “What Are You Waiting For!?”, continues the investigation into the nascent visual culture of aviation by interrogating how aviation was shorn of the Oriental imagery when it was promoted in French controlled Lebanon and Syria. Part III, “Taking off: the Aero-clubs of the Middle East”, briefly explores the history of local aero-clubs in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. Whereas French policy had mounted complex obstacles before the promoters of aviation in Lebanon and Syria, Part IV, ““Discovering” Palestine from above” shows that the development of aviation in Palestine took a different track thanks to permissive British policies, and the autonomous organizational structures, social capital, and financial means at the disposal of the promoters of aviation in the Zionist Yishuv. The concluding part circles back to our main arguments, that aviation served as an important platform for the propagation of images of empire in the Middle East and that the new span, scope, and speed of mobility represented by aviation heralded a visual culture that Middle Easterners have used to reimagine empire and their place within it.

### Part I: “A Whole New World”

Air France’s 1939 spring timetable for its Paris-Saigon service bore an explicit Orientalist illustration: a painted scene that captured in the background a modern airplane flying towards the East side by side with a magic carpet ridden by a character inspired by the fictional Aladdin (Fig. 1). Both carpet and airplane fly over an Oriental town whose skyline is dominated by muezzin towers and palaces capped with onion domes, while, below it, a cartographic outline of the Eastern Mediterranean with a purple and yellow flowchart depicts the expansive reach of Air France’s new lines crisscrossing the Middle East and North Africa. Travellers departing from London and Paris were able to board Air France flights departing for a variety of destinations, including Marseille, Athens, Benghazi, Beirut, Damascus and Baghdad. An arrow gestures Eastwards from Baghdad, towards the “Extrême-Orient” and Indochina, where the line ends.

The image is a striking exemplar of the composite visual language imparted by Imperial aviation to potential European travellers during the interwar period. Its defining feature was the contrast between French (and Western) modernity – represented by the airplane and a macro geographic view of empire – and the kitsch images of Oriental “exoticism” – the turbaned figure of Aladdin smoking a shisha seated on his flying carpet and the onion domes and Muezzins of the town below. While the modern aircraft represented the promise of comfort and speed of French (and Western) “modernity”, Aladdin and the *One Thousand and One Nights* directly appealed to tourists’ desire for escapism and exoticism.

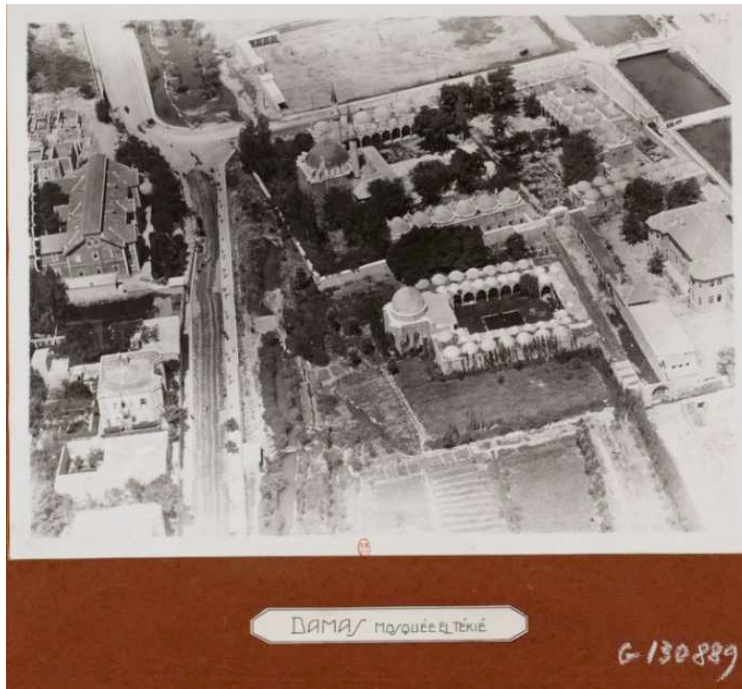
Air France was but one of numerous airline companies to promote its imperial lines through visual cues representing modernity, empire, and the timeless Orient. Flattened representati-



Fig. 1: Air France spring timetable for the Paris-Saigon service, featuring an Orientalist illustration of an airplane flying alongside a magic carpet, 1939. Musée Air France.

ons of the colonial dominions, and particularly the Arabic Eastern Mediterranean, were key elements in it. Contemporary newspapers, magazines, posters, exhibitions, toys and postage stamps contributed to make imperial aviation live “in imagination and memory, in print and pictures, and in private and public desires” (Pirie 2012: 6). The promise of technological mastery and unmatched speed of aviation might have rendered the contrast that much starker, but the basic premise of euro-modernity upsetting the traditions of a timeless and exotic Orient directed appeals to Western travellers for decades. Much like in the nineteenth century, aviation companies drew on engrained imperial tropes popularized by maritime transport companies and tourist agencies, reinforcing the sense of synchronic and civilizational difference between the imperial heartlands and the colonial periphery; ranging from primitiveness and desolation of certain populations and territories – i.e. Bedouins, desert – to antiquarianism and piety – in particular, the “Holy Land” in Palestine and Transjordan (Shakir 2024: 331).

Aviation provided new materials to fit into this basic outline. The “view from above,” most commonly expressed through aerial photography, reinforced the sense of European ascendancy and domination over a vast imperial preservation. Aerial photography had come into its own in Britain during the First World War, when it was used for military reconnaissance purposes in Egypt, Palestine and Gallipoli, and it was later employed by the British RAF, notably in Iraq, where archaeological air photography went hand in hand with policing from the air (Dowson 1921; Satia 2008). Amid French pro-colonial lobbies, the centrality of aerial photography to explore, control, and prepare the terrain for the arrival of colonial settlers was also widely ack-



**Fig. 2:** Aerial view of the Takiyya al-Sulaymaniyya (Tekiye Mosque) complex, Damascus (1926–1927). Photo: G. David, Loquinnaire, and L. Piat (39th Aviation Regiment). Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Département Estampes et photographie, VH-33I-PET FOL. Image 36. - IFN-8443060.

nowledged (de Martone 1932: 77). In French mandate Syria, Jesuit missionary Antoine Poidebard had been developing new methods of aerial photography with the help of the French military aerial forces since 1924 to prove the connection between ancient Roman and modern French civilisation (Fig. 2) (Denise and Nordiguian 2004; Reubi 2018). The results of his endeavours reached both scholarly and broader audiences throughout his lifetime in France and the Levant. By the early 1930s, the “view from above” had established itself as a preferred perspective through which to portray historical time and geographical space to increasing circles (Helbig 2016: 286).

Images evoking an inherent connection between aviation and empire were not limited to military and exploratory reconnaissance campaigns. Unlike the standards of civil aviation from the 1950s onwards, which imposed flying at high altitudes (Schwartz 2020), in the interwar period aircraft flew closer to the surface, capitalizing on what essentially was a technological limitation to foster diverse practices of aerial visibility that served not only military and governmental purposes, but leisure “sightseeing,” as well. As part of the company’s campaign to popularize aviation in the colonies attuned with a sense of superiority through aerial visibility, Air France’s pilots were encouraged to fly at a lower altitude than usual to allow sightseeing from the air (“The New Way to Baghdad” 1927), offering European passengers aerial views over Middle Eastern cities to make them live an unforgettable experience: “The pilot takes us around the city (Damascus) in two large circles to let us enjoy this fairy-tale, worthy of the *Arabian Nights*” (“Lettre d’Indochine” 1938).

Pedagogical and museological activities were equally important. In 1931, the International Colonial Exhibition held in Paris (Vincennes) allowed thousands of French citizens to discover with amazement the reproductions of ruins and “typical” buildings from the French colonies in Africa and Asia. Visitors were invited to wander through vast “quarters” and explore the



“Greater France” (to which the colonies were essential) represented by numerous photographs taken in the colonial dominions. In 1934, Imperial Airways and *The Times* lined together to convene an exhibition entitled “Flying over the Empire” in London. Maps, models of Imperial aircraft and photographs depicting imperial scenes constituted the core of the show. The exhibition toured in provincial towns, before being remounted in London for a 1935 Christmas showing. Exhibits followed in the British dominions as well as territories under mandate oversight such as Palestine (Pirie 2012: 184–185). According to some estimates, between 1936 and 1938 more than 135,000 Britons were exposed to maps, charts and aircraft models arranged to bolster both air-mindedness and imperial pride (Pirie 2012: 186).

While Gordon Pirie aptly argues that few air travellers along Empire air routes in the 1930s were “intentional holidaymakers” due to companies’ high fares and thus most passengers at that time flew for work assignment (Pirie 2009b: 49–66), new technological advancements and the need to make airborne infrastructures economically sustainable led commercial airlines to bill aviation – albeit with limited success – as affordable and as the most comfortable and efficient way to tour the empire and experience it first-hand.<sup>2</sup> For decades, the tourism industry’s promotions and services to the Middle East were couched in religious terms. In practice, the boundary between pilgrims and tourists was very often blurred; European travellers to the Middle East visited in priority places endowed with strong Christian religious resonance. Still, it appeared that by the mid-1930s Western air-minded tourists were by and large more interested in a sort of blended experience, mixing secular and religious elements, touring sites imbued with antiquity and exoticism with all the comforts and amenities of modern travel:

Many are those who would like to spend Christmas Eve at Bethlehem, the birthplace of Christ [...]. Whether you are a believer or an atheist, the prospect of this picturesque visit, representing a delectable spiritualism combined with imperishable recollections, is bound to appeal [...]. If Syria, Lebanon and Palestine tempt you, there is no need to resist their call, as the voyage is a simple and agreeable one [...] (Tourisme en Syrie, au Liban et en Palestine. 1935: 1).

To attract new customers, the French airline advertised other leisure activities that could be practised in the region. Lebanon – the “Switzerland of the East” (Tabet 1924) – with its snowy mountains in winter and village resorts in summer was advertised in gazettes as a fine destination for French and European aficionados of skiing as well as tourists looking for a unique experience, combining Western standards of comfort with a taste of the Orient (“Sports d’hiver au Liban” 1939; Zytnecki 2016). Posters printed in France, however, were not always Orientalist in nature. The transnational character of the poster designers of what has been known as the “Avant-Garde” – Cassandre (Russia), Henryk Berlewi (Poland) or Lajos Kassak (Hungary) – gave a slightly different tone to some of the Air Orient and Air France visual materials, privileging artistic rather than commercial imperatives (Peignot 1988: 10–12). Moreover, tourist guides printed in the metropolises increasingly revealed the unavoidable truth about a Middle East in rapid transformation, which hardly fitted with the image of a “timeless” world (Monmarché 1932: LXXXIV–LXXXV, 437; Cook 1934: 9). Beirut, in particular, was presented to European

2 By 1939, for instance, Air France advertised tickets from Marseille to Lydda (Palestine) for 5,600 Francs (one way) and 10,100 Francs (round trip). Comparatively, the cost of a Paris-London round trip was 650 Francs (AN, 20180302/127, 1939).



**Fig. 3: Air France office in downtown Beirut, 1935. Musée Air France. AF, n°1388, AF Beirut, 1935.**

travellers as way too modern and thus without any real tourist appeal (Sbaiti 2024: 6); the Lebanese capital was “just” a city of transit between more “authentic” touristic sites (Daam 2023: 285–286).

Allured by the exotic appeal of ‘authentic’ touristic sites and bent on excluding places deemed “too modern”, the selective European touristic gaze involved elaborate techniques of seeing and unseeing. The image of a magic carpet ride could hardly be appealing to middle class Lebanese and Syrian customers, who inhabited those “too modern” cities and whose purchasing power by the mid-1930s had become indispensable to making imperial air routes financially viable.<sup>3</sup> As the next section shows, this state of affairs led to the emergence of a parallel presentation of aviation and empire, one more closely attuned to the sensibilities and aspirations of a Middle Eastern elite eager to assert its own modernity and claim its place within, rather than against, the imperial order.

## Part II: “What Are You Waiting For!?”

The content and imagery conveyed by aviation publicity in the mandate territories was comparable to, and different from, visual and textual ephemera printed in the metropole. Local newspapers and gazettes advertised airline’s timetables alongside the expanding wares of travel agents. Air France and Imperial Airways printed marketing materials in different languages, including English, French, Arabic, and Hebrew, while airline branch offices mushroomed in principal cities – Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem.

On the one hand posters, ads, and aircraft models displayed in offices and newspapers in the Eastern Mediterranean intrigued more people than the exclusive group of individuals who needed to fly, or who could afford to fly.<sup>4</sup> In Beirut (Fig. 3), for instance, people passing by Air

<sup>3</sup> This was not the first time that the reference to the Magic carpet was used to promote flying to and over the Middle East. However, it was one of the first images that conflated a modern aircraft and a fantasist magic carpet for publicity purposes. “The Magic carpet up to date” 1929; Beale 1930.

<sup>4</sup> By 1939, a one-way ticket from Damascus or Beirut to Baghdad was 2,500 Francs, whilst a round trip amounted to 4,500 Francs (AN, 20180302/127, 1939).



Fig. 4: Air France office in downtown Damascus, featuring a map that places Syria at the center of the imperial air route, c. 1935. Musée Air France.

France's office in downtown could read assertive slogans encouraging them to embrace flight culture as the new normal: "What are you waiting for to use the airplane!?" The fact that the catchphrase ended with both an exclamation and a question mark indicated that the targeted audience – i.e. "modern men and women" – could not afford to remain indifferent to the flying experience any longer.

Rather than selling antiquarianism or exoticism, as in Europe's imperial metropolises, airline advertising in the mandate territories tended to focus on reassuring passengers about safety, identifying travelling with speed and comfort with the attainment of modernity (Citino 2017: 15–55). In some instances, advertisements shifted the imperial perspective; that is, they drew maps in which the Middle East was at the centre of the imperial stage. Thus, in one of the rare pictures of Air France's office in Damascus (Fig. 4), one can see on its façade a map that places Syria in the middle of an otherwise longer trip. Tellingly, Syria is said to be at a seven-day flight distance from both extremes; that is, Paris and Saigon. Next to it, a poster advertises the France-Syria-Indochina line with a globe and an aircraft, while a very suggestive slogan recalls the advantages of flying: "Travel by plane and save time". In other words, Damascus was not just a stopover within a long list of imperial halts as it was seen from Paris; it was the center of the French Empire, at least geographically.

French and British airlines adapted their publicity to cater to the needs, sensibilities and self-images of its potential Middle Eastern customers in other ways as well. In a photograph (Fig. 5) taken at Damascus airport, we see that Air France advertised flights between Damascus and Baghdad twice a week both in French and Arabic, promising a 4-hour voyage. It is also noted that since the start of its services, Air France has flown over the Syrian desert covering more than 650,000 km. Below the text, a model of a runway with a departure point in Damascus and a landing strip in Baghdad is displayed. Finally, an advertisement in English presents the timetable and fares together with a short slogan – "The Quickest Route over the Desert" – inciting the public to prioritize speed over other considerations as they made travel plans between



**Fig. 5:** Party at the Maurice Noguès aero-club in Damascus, October 1938. Musée Air France. 2020.6.3448.

the two cities. In sum, by the mid-1930s airline's publicity in the Levant was not only addressed to Western officials serving in the mandate territories but was adapted for consumption by members of the indigenous Arab bourgeoisie (on the services addressed to Western officials, see Shamir 2024).

Although it is difficult to evaluate the impact of airlines' publicity among local residents, an occasional list of passengers using the Damascus-Baghdad service between 1 July and 30 September 1938 reveals that out of 128 passengers, 75 – well more than 50% – had an Arabic family name. Interestingly, none of these passengers returned either to Damascus or Baghdad within this period by plane, meaning that either it was an outbound journey or they returned to their point of departure using other transport means – notably the trans-desert road – that were less expensive or they continued their trip to other destinations (AN, 20180302/163, 1938; On the trans-desert road, see Jaquier 2022). Likewise, according to British newspapers, by the late 1920s, joint action between mandate authorities, RAF and Imperial Airways had made Iraqis “as eager as school-boys to take flights”. The number of local passengers flying the Imperial Airways route from Cairo to Basra via Gaza was “rapidly increasing”, for Arabs had deserted “camels for planes” (Shakir 2024: 322). Although such assessments were exaggerated, not to mention mired in orientalist stereotypes, records show that the company did, in fact, seek to stimulate the still nascent passion for flying by considerably reducing fare flights. As a result of this pricing policy, the demand for transit between Palestine and Iraq grew significantly, leading Imperial Airways to open an experimental weekly service between the two countries from September until November 1932 (Shakir 2024: 326).

Such developments were possible thanks to a long overdue shift of French and British economic policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. Overturning a decade of reluctance to invest in the mandated territories, in the mid-1930s both France and Britain initiated a race to develop the infrastructures around their respective main economic centres in the region, which were at once interdependent and competitive poles (Schayegh 2017). The first significant move was made in Baghdad in April 1933, few months after the official termination of the British mandate in Iraq, with the inauguration of the international airport in the Iraqi capital. The event was hailed by the Iraqi government as a unique opportunity to compete with other nations in the race for



modernity and civilisation, for there was no doubt that “supremacy” was reserved for those nations who would “triumph in this domain” (CADN, 1SL/1/V/890, 1933). Three years later, when the British officially inaugurated the airport terminal at Lydda, situated halfway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, the French began building a modern aerodrome in Beirut’s Bir Hassan suburb in a late attempt to challenge British manoeuvres in Palestine.

Notwithstanding this positive evolution for civil aviation, French and British airlines companies were increasingly challenged by external players. When British Iraq opened its skies to foreign companies in 1929, air travel competition became tougher in the Eastern Mediterranean. Italy and the Netherlands – two colonial powers seeking to establish themselves in the Middle East’s aerial space in the making – dispatched trial flights to Africa, Asia, the Antilles and Latin America, in preparation to establishing new, far-flung routes of regular service (Dierikx 1991). In 1930, the Royal Dutch Air Line KLM started operating an Amsterdam-Batavia line, which, beside major stops at Baghdad and Basra, also called at the Gaza aerodrome. In 1934, Misr Air, an Anglo-Egyptian company, inaugurated a regular service from Cairo to Lydda and Haifa, the two major civil airports in British Palestine. In the autumn of 1935, Misr ran several experimental flights from Cairo to Nicosia in Cyprus, calling at Lydda (R4072-6A-668-21209, 1935: 272).

Within this rapid proliferation of new commercial airlines in their territories, the mandatory powers sought to privilege their respective national companies and promote “airmindedness” among Arab elites and, presumably, the general public, through additional means. On the one hand, they organized aerial shows in the mandate territories in which military and civil air power was displayed. On the other hand, they gave local names to the aircraft hoping to gain support to their presence in the region. Imperial Airways, for instance, named several DH 66 Hercules engines after different Middle Eastern cities: “City of Baghdad”, “City of Cairo”, “City of Jerusalem”, “City of Tehran”, while the S.8 Calcutta flying boat was baptized the “City of Alexandria”.<sup>5</sup> Again, although it is difficult to assess the real impact of this marketing stunt, imperial airlines kept giving local names to their models as well as tracking reactions from the public opinion by collecting published newspaper articles. Thus, for instance, the first half of the new Dewoitine 338 operated by Air France and named “Ville de Bagdad” was the opportunity to convene an official reception on 13 September 1938 at Baghdad’s airport in which local dignitaries – amongst whom were the Minister of Communications and the mayor of Baghdad – and journalists were invited. In the follow-up report about the event, the French Advisor to the Ambassador in Baghdad noted that:

The new Dewoitine [...] has caused a very positive impression. The speed of the new engines which allow to connect Damascus and Baghdad in less than three hours, their comfort, their elegance, all have secured a new gloss to our company in the Middle East. I would add that I perceived a great satisfaction and even a sense of pride among our invitees in seeing the name of their capital on a plane deemed to fly over numerous countries. (CADN, 1SL/1/V/891, 1938).

Among the positive reviews, *The Iraq Times* celebrated that the Damascus-Baghdad service was going to be operated by the Dewoitine 338, which had been in use to travel to Indo-

5 This was not exceptional. Imperial Airways and Air France named several aircraft after cities from all over the world: City of Chicago, City of Melbourne, City of Pretoria, Cape Town, etc.



China.<sup>6</sup> *Al Akhbar* saluted that Air France named a “rapid” and “modern” airplane after the city of Baghdad. Further, it stated that the fact that such a modern aircraft now operated the Damascus-Baghdad service was an additional proof of Iraq’s burgeoning position as a nodal point between Europe and the East.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, British and French authorities promoted air-mindedness in the Mandated territories by consenting – within limits – to the establishment of aero-clubs, training schools, and in some instances even local airlines. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the following sections, the room for manoeuvre, the relationship with the respective mandate authorities and the goals of these activities varied significantly.

### Part III: Taking Off: The Aero-Clubs of the Middle East

Fostering civil aviation and air-mindedness through the development of aero-clubs in the Eastern Mediterranean first appeared politically innocent. The project was quickly conjugated by politics, however, when it ran into the testy environment marked by British and French imperial geopolitics and their efforts to deflect and suppress mounting nationalist sentiment across the mandate territories. The politics of aviation were not only nationalist and imperial in nature, though. As Yoav Di-Capua demonstrated with regard to the Egyptian case, the promotion of aviation in the Middle East incubated nationalist sentiment in a way that re-etched, rather than obscured, class. Aviation enthusiasts tended to be petit bourgeois, while the aviators themselves and the presidents of aviation clubs were by and large men from the socioeconomic elite (2008, 924–930). The way that access to aviation was class-dependent was not unique to the region. As Gordon Pirie wrote, class entrenchment within the context of aviation was visible in Europe, as well: “if air travellers did not personally feel superior to others, flying could easily accentuate the sense of being a race apart” (Pirie 2012: 4).

Yet, in the Levant, the French saw in aero-clubs a means to both monitor Arab nationalist elites and reinforce their sentiment of class superiority, thereby preventing any potential political coalition between local elites and the non-elite majority. As a matter of fact, scions of Lebanese and Syrian notable families were eager to get involved in early aviation. They considered aerial activities, private and commercial alike, as a natural development stemming from the integration of the region into the periphery of the capitalist world system since the late nineteenth century. Believing themselves to be the indispensable drivers of “modernity” and “progress” in the Levant, they could not help but see themselves as the ones to deliver the ultra-modern promise of flight to the whole region.

The aero-club of Beirut was founded in 1923 at Rayak’s aerodrome by Alfred Sursock – a member of a prominent merchant family – with the approval of General Gouraud and the cooperation of Colonel Denain, who was at the direction of the Armée du Levant. Syria followed suit, establishing its own aero-club in Damascus two years later, in 1925. Participants were at first French military pilots who were assigned to the Club by civil and military authorities (“Un grand meeting a eu lieu en Syrie” 1924).

In both aero-clubs, French military and civil authorities held honorary positions along with the most select members of the Beirut and Damascene societies with whom they shared

6 The Iraq Times, 31 August 1938.

7 Al Akhbar, 12 September 1938.



similar socio-political profiles. The French authorities identified the aero-club's members as Francophile and "moderate" nationalists, or even "alien to politics", such as the members of the merchant Sursock and Pharaon families, and the banker Habib Trad (CADN, 1SL/1/V/890, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1934; AN, 20180302/163, 1938; CADN, 1SL/1/V/892, 1938).

While French and Levantine elites shared views about "modernity", the fascination with flying, and a common sense of "class", they nevertheless developed a pattern of ambiguity and mutual distrust when it came to aviation (Méouchy 2002). Local promoters of aviation often felt frustration towards the heavy-handed oversight exercised by the French, depicting it as a straitjacket that limited their capacity to develop business (CADN, 1SL/1/V/890, French High-Commissioner, 1935). The apprehensive French authorities had indeed blocked numerous private initiatives as well as some of the aero-club's initiatives (MAE, 50CPCOM/589, 1932).

Notwithstanding, aero-clubs in the Levant promoted airmindedness beyond their exclusive founding milieux by providing training and by convening aerial derbies and shows to which journalists, (Francophile) intellectuals, and political and economic elites were invited. In 1936, for instance, a party was held at the Mezze aerodrome in Damascus. The programme included military air shows, a landing competition on behalf of the members of the club, and a night flight performed by Air France. Besides the aerial activities, the programme also included car races, tennis exhibitions, lottery and fireworks ending with an official Ball at Air France's hangars (CADN, 1SL/1/V/890, 1936). In sum, a program that could hardly fit with the every-day reality of working- and even middle-classes in the region. On 22 October 1938, the aero-club organised a similar event in which Air France and French military air forces also participated (Fig. 5). The event, which was attended by the French High Commissioner, had two main objectives: "spreading propaganda in favour of tourism" in the Levant and a "manifestation of air power" (CADN, 1SL/1/V/891, 1938).

For most of the interwar period Palestine followed a similar trajectory to its northerly neighbours. During the 1920s, a handful of Jewish lecturers and aviation enthusiasts strove to educate the public of the Yishuv about the basics of aviation, but their few and intermittent initiatives were met with indifference or suspicion within the British mandatory government.<sup>8</sup> In the early 1930s, however, as Palestine had received an influx of Jewish capital and immigrants primarily from Germany and Austria, aviation in Palestine began developing rapidly. A series of highly publicized international events between 1933 and 1935 piqued public interest in aviation in Palestine. In March 1933, as part of the preparations for the 1934 iteration of the acclaimed Levant Fair held in Tel-Aviv, for instance, an all-Jewish gliding club, "The Flying Camel," was established (Tamari 1947: 15–16). The visual artist Arie El-Hanani used a version of the Flying Camel club's logo for the fair, the winged camel symbolizing Zionism's idea of itself as the har-binger of euro-modernity to the pre-modern Middle East and the place aviation was to fulfil in this promethean project (Fig. 6).<sup>9</sup>

8 In Tel-Aviv on 13 November 1927, for example, the municipality sponsored a public lecture "on the physics of lifting bodies in the air, in order to educate the public on the basics of the aeroplane," ("In Jaffa and Tel-Aviv: A lecture Soiree" 1927). During the 1920s, the early Zionist Aviation activist Yisrael Schochet sought to establish a flying club but was refused. See: (Singer 2019; Goldman 2020).

9 On the importance of the Levant Fair's Flying Camel logo and its place both within architectural history of the Yishuv and contemporary international fairs, see: Davidi and Oxman 2004.



**Fig. 6: The “Flying Camel” club logo, designed for the Levant Fair in Tel-Aviv by Aryeh Elhanani, c. 1934. Israel Airline Museum.**

In April 1935, the Second Maccabiah games were held in Tel-Aviv, and a small gliding competition was included. In the afterglow of this event, the Flying Camel was rebaptized the “Aero-club of Palestine” following a major overhaul by the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut (Malki 2009: 49–50). The new club had a national strategy and the requisite funds to allow it to move quickly and offer to hire the competing athletes as instructors and engineers on a professional basis. The athletes they hired became the core group of the Aero-club, the principal civil aviation organization in the country which established numerous landing grounds and gliding schools, and, in collaboration with the Histadrut, founded an Aviation company called Aviron, in July 1936 (CZA, S25/10528, 1940).

An important part of the Club’s activities was promoting airmindedness. It published a monthly magazine, *Aviation: issues of the Aero-club of Palestine*, which translated articles on aeronautics and aviation technology from foreign publications (principally the British *Flight* and the French *Les Ailes*), reported on major aviation events abroad, and publicized local and nationwide events in Palestine. A central theme of its original Hebrew materials was harmonizing enthusiasm for aviation with dominant contemporary discourses of Zionist nationalism and its project of colonizing Palestine. “Let us become an ‘airminded’ people!”, cried the op-ed of opening issue. “We must understand: without controlling the sky, we can never hope to control the land” (Rozenthal 1938).

The Aero-Club of Palestine relied on visual materials to promote airmindedness. One example, as Israeli Aviation historian Yossi Malki recounts, was an extensive marketing campaign which the Club launched together with the “Dubek” cigarette company in 1940 (Fig. 7) (Malki 2009: 79). Every cigarette pack contained one of 228 photographs printed on stickers, which were meant to be collected and pasted into a free album. 24 of these photographs fell under the theme of “conquest of the air,” and featured photographs depicting the Aero-club’s members and activities.

The short captions at the bottom of each page represented the field of “Hebrew aviation” as an integral part of the national project. “The pioneer has been associated only with occupation of the land and its cultivation. But the extension of our colonizing efforts have created new spaces to master. [...] the occupation of the air is now the rallying cry of the nation’s pioneers” (Defense and Sport, 1940: 67). The album narrated the development of aviation in Palestine as an assertion of Zionist independence from the British imperial order on the one hand, and

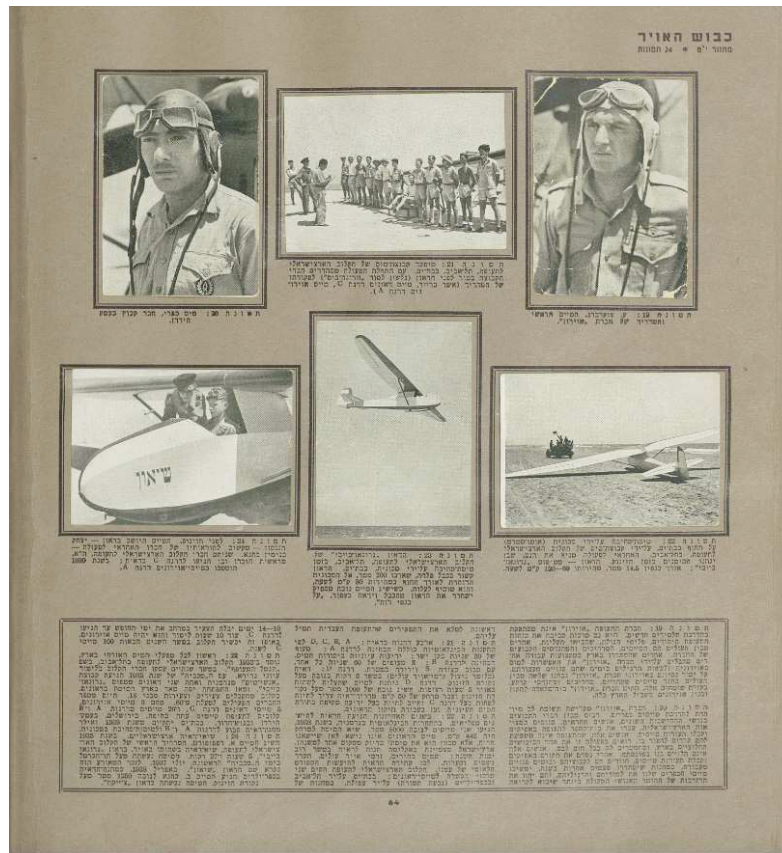


Fig. 7: Collectible stickers from the “Occupation of the Air” advertisement campaign, 1940. Dubek Company and the Aero-club of Palestine. National Library of Israel, item 990020154310205171.

a sign of its superiority over its neighboring Arabs, on the other. Whereas ostensibly aviation in Syria and Lebanon was incubated, at considerable expense, by the French, the “Dubek” album told a triumphalist story of how “Hebrew aviation was born [...] through its independent means; without outside help”. The photographs’ brief captures told anecdotes about how the Yishuv “Conquered the skies”: it had trained Hebrew pilots, their portraits proudly adorning the packs; it constructed the Tel-Aviv airfield, careful not to mention the ‘British’-led Lydda or Haifa airports, the country’s main aviation hubs; it raised Jewish capital and acquired airplanes, whose English provenance and manufacturing were left unstated; and it founded Hebrew gliding clubs, obscuring the congenial role the British Mandatory government played in licensing their activities and facilitating the importation of their gliders (Defense and Sport, 1940: 67).

#### Part IV: “Discovering” Palestine from Above

Assertions of national self-assuredness and independence notwithstanding, a recurrent theme permeating contemporary Zionist testimonies of flying over Palestine is a feeling of geographical insecurity. Observing the country from above accentuated sensations of unfamiliarity, foregrounding Zionists’ lack of knowledge of the lay of the land. Alongside spurring numerous initiatives to encourage Jewish youth to “know the land through their feet,” this newfound feeling of geographical insecurity situated aviation as a key remedial instrument that might redress a major challenge facing the Zionist project in Palestine (on Zionist boy-scout movements,



Fig. 8: Cover page from kindergarten teacher Sarah Tunis's notebook outlining an activity on aviation. The Hebrew title, appearing above the drawing, reads: "Conspectus. Subject: Defending the Motherland". Sarah Tunis. Central Zionist Archives, J17/7224.

see Benvenisti 2012). Pilots soon came to symbolize the forefront of Zionism's efforts to gain mastery over the land. "Who among us knows the Land of Israel?" a Jewish reporter rhetorically asked readers in the opening of his report on a graduation ceremony for the Histadrut-owned aviation company, Aviron, in August 1938:

Do we know its winding roads, valleys and hills? Do we know the gorges of the Judean desert? And [those of] the Negev?

The Jewish aviator has come to know the Land, its stones and rock formations, its mountains and deserts, [...] Jewish aviation reached a peak of 1500 meters altitude, from which one can see everything, discern any point [...] With the knowledge of the land, we want to reach a point where the pilot knows how to fly even blind and suddenly, once the land is revealed, to recognize every stone and every settlement. (Ben-Bracha, 1939).

Ideas associating the Jewish pilot with this core ideal of Zionism – not only a pinnacle of the prowess and innate modernity of the 'new Jew' but also a pioneer in the highly vaunted knowledge of the land – represent a particular vernacular strain in the propagation and idealization of aviation. The identification of birds'-eye views afforded by the airplane with detailed topographical knowledge of the Land of Israel demonstrates the uses of aviation as a military tool of reconnaissance, surveillance and, ultimately, control.<sup>10</sup> It represents a local iteration of a transnational cultural fascination with aviation, hinting at the place that aviation began to occupy in Zionist imaginaries, demonstrating how pilots became the embodiments of that particular

<sup>10</sup> These practices have been amply analyzed elsewhere. See, for instance, the double issue by *The Jerusalem Quarterly* (81 and 82) on "Palestine from Above: Surveillance, Cartography and Control", and particularly Yazin Anani's introduction (Anani 2020).



society's most prized values. A striking example of this vernacular strand of airmindedness is "Protecting the Homeland," a conspectus prepared by Sarah Tunis, a Tel-Aviv kindergarten teacher, for an activity about aviation (Fig. 8). Tunis, who had participated in the Aero-Club's pedagogical training programs, proposed to "educate the children on the protector airplane" that "guards our Land of Israel Day and Night".

The view from above was not understood solely as a source of military-useful topographical knowledge, however. Jewish-Zionist civil aviation companies, and in particular Palestine Airways, a privately-owned subsidiary of Imperial Airways established in December 1934, undertook numerous initiatives that commercialized civil aviation in a distinctly local way. In the summer of 1937, the company began offering Tel-Aviv residents 15-minute-long pleasure rides above the city for 550 mils – a little over the average daily salary for non-skilled Jewish employees. Its commercial effort took the form of short, teasing advertisements in Hebrew daily newspapers:

Son of Tel Aviv, have you ever seen your house from above?

Have you tasted the exhilaration of flight? [...]

The company's cars will take you to Lydda Airport

The flight:

Up from the airport to the Reading Power station by the sea, over the Levant Fairgrounds, Tel-Aviv Harbor, the beaches, a turn above the city and then back again to Lydda, from where the company cars drive you back into town. (CZA, A430/315, 1937).<sup>11</sup>

Though brief, this advertisement conjures the three conventional themes of aviation advertising: the exhilarating experience of flying, the uniqueness of the "view from above", and the promise of easy mobility, unencumbered by obstacles or frustrations. This initiative kicked off Palestine Airways' multipronged promotional airmindedness campaign, which had several partially overlapping goals: cultivating connections with British officials, currying favour with current and potential business allies, promoting high-end tourism, and expanding its local customer base. While the first of its airplanes was ready to take tourists on short flights over Tel-Aviv, the other was primarily used to offer exclusive flights to British administrators as well as to a cast of Tel-Aviv's elite.

While it nurtured an image of social exclusivity with local elites, the company popularized aviation through a series of aviation days in the fall of 1937. The first such event was held on 22 September 1937 in a cleared field near the coastal town of Netanya and was then followed in three successive days on 4, 5 and 6 October in a field outside Petach Tikva (Fig. 9) (CZA, A430/327, 1936; CZA, A430/327, Elyachar to Lloyd Palestine and Egypt Ltd, 1937). These days included stalls erected by local travel agents and aero-clubs, gliding demonstrations, model-making workshops and offered the public 7-minute-long flights on one of the company's two aircraft.

11 CZA, *Palestine Airways Ltd.* רשילא ודילא, A430/315. Original in Hebrew: translated by the authors.



**Fig. 9: Palestine Aviation Day in Petach Tikva, October 1937. Zoltan Kluger. Photo: D2-050, National Photo Collection of Israel (GPO).**

The services Palestine Airways offered varied in terms of ticket prices and time commitment, representing an evolving market strategy which began with the general public before moving on to more exclusive customers, consisting mostly of international tourists and the local Jewish urban bourgeoisie who could afford to spend substantial amounts for recreational activities (Fig. 10). “Tens of thousands of tourists annually visited Palestine,” the company director explained in an interview,

Many of them unable to spend more than a few days in the country. Aerial tourism was therefore to be encouraged and Palestine Airways would offer a service which would enable the visitor to see the whole of Palestine in a few hours flight and obtain an impression of the country as a whole or to complete a longer stay in the country by an aerial survey. Palestine’s variegated landscape could not only be far better appreciated from the air, but seen from above, it took on an added splendour.” (Commercial Aviation and Palestine, Interview with Mr Adelson, Director, “Palestine Airways Limited, CZA A430/324).



**Fig. 10: Management of Palestine Airways in front of a “Scion” plane at the Tel-Aviv Airport. Left to Right: Mr. Idelson, Mrs Yofe, Mr. Meir Weissgal & Mr. Simon, 10 October 1938. Zoltan Kluger. Photo: D40-037, National Photo Collection of Israel (GPO).**



Palestine Airways similarly capitalized on vacations during Jewish holidays to popularize aviation as a family recreational activity for the Yishuv's secular bourgeoisie. On 26 November 1937 the company announced its "Cruise the Country by Air" program on the occasion of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. Instead of offering scores of cheap, seven-minute flights in open fields, the new program consisted of day long joyrides, beginning with taxi shuttles to either of the two-government approved civil airports of Haifa and Lydda, from where paying customers would tour large swathes of Palestine from above, departing and returning to the same airport. (CZA, A430/327, Palestine Airways Head Office, 1937).

Palestine Airways made the skies of Palestine accessible to Jewish-Zionists in other ways, as well. Those unable to fly themselves could witness the "splendour" of Palestine seen from above through the mediation of aerial photography. Although aerial photography in Palestine had been first pioneered as military reconnaissance during World War I, projects of laymen aerial photographers – the dramatized photography of settlements, infrastructure and historical landmarks via oblique shots with little military or planning value – have only become commonplace during the mid-and-latter half of the 1930s (Abusaada 2020; Issa 2020; Yip and Crott 2020; Rozental 2023; Sonder 2021; Yap 2025). Collaborating with local photographers, periodicals, private entrepreneurs, and Zionist organizations, Palestine Airways facilitated the creation of an aerial photographic collection narrating the "throb of creative effort" which characterized the "heroic reconstruction effort" of Palestine by Zionism (quoted in: Yap 2025: 28). One prominent example of such commercial aerial photographic narration was the company's involvement in the Schocken album, a collection of 40 high-quality oblique photographs of Palestine's famous historical and biblical landmarks, Zionist colonies, its new and modern infrastructure, and the state-of-the-art, centrally planned garden-suburbs where the latest fashion in modernist architecture was put on display (Sonder 2021; Head Office to Elyachar 24 March 1938, CZA A430/317). Relatively light on biblical, roman, or crusader history – common Oriental-civilizational themes about the Levant which took center stage in Poidebard's project in Lebanon – the Schocken album offered a distinctly Zionist visual narrative. It touched on common orientalist and biblical imagery but placed its emphasis showcasing the quintessential modernity of the Zionist project, and how it was environmentally and demographically transforming a neglected, under-populated land of bare hills, sand dunes, and quaint, pre-modern Arab villages.

Whether through commercializing holidays, promoting international tourism, fostering notions of national self-reliance, or promising remedial geography lessons to newly arrived settlers, aviation in the Yishuv inserted itself into the exigencies and opportunities specific to the evolving local context in 1930s Palestine. The Zionist Yishuv mustered more organizational and financial resources than either of its northern neighbours and enjoyed a mandatory government more sympathetic to its goals, although not limitlessly so. As they reached critical mass in the latter half of the 1930s, Jewish aviation clubs and companies increasingly made their activities subservient to Zionist national goals, helped centralize administrative power, and reframed religious holidays as occasions for aerial recreation. For Zionists, observing Palestine from above was more than just a touristic *divertissement* sprinkled with historical facts about the Crusades or the Bible: it was an invitation to imagine the Jewish homeland in Palestine and an instrument to bring about its realization.



## Conclusion

After a protracted development of civil aviation in the post-Ottoman Middle East, by 1937 the delegate to the French High Commissioner could dispatch a note highlighting that “[...] the public in the Middle East is very well informed about aviation matters and can see the most modern aircraft used by many international companies flying over the airfields of Egypt and Palestine” (CADN, ISL/1/V/89I, Delegate to the High Commissioner, 1937). Likewise, the *Palestine Post* proudly reported that “to the inhabitants of Tel-Aviv, the blue and silver planes of the newly formed Palestine Airways are now familiar sights” (“Progress Made in Palestine Aviation” 1937). Taken together, these two quotations underscore the main arguments advanced in this article.

By the end of WWI, the French and, particularly, British empires had attained unprecedented geographical size, a reality that imposed new solutions following the destruction of Britain’s maritime fleet during the war; namely, linking their territories by air. Thanks to its central geographical location between Europe, Africa and Asia, the Middle East was directly connected to the newly established imperial air routes. Through cooperation but also by encouraging competition between imperial airlines and airborne infrastructures all over their respective zones of influence, France and Great Britain decisively contributed to the emergence of civil aviation in the region as well as to the spread of “airmindedness” among different sets of local residents in the territories under mandatory oversight.

Yet, contrary to Eurocentric narratives, which foreground the exclusive role of British and French pioneers and officials in these developments, we have demonstrated that “airmindedness” was simultaneously propagated by imperial and local actors who imbibed the values, visions, and aims of civil aviation. In other words, by the mid-1930s Easterners were not just becoming a sophisticated “airminded public” or passive flight consumers as a result of French and English endeavours – most notably, the establishment of aerodromes, new air routes, publicity and air-shows – in the mandated territories. Rather, local actors in Syria-Lebanon and Palestine played a no-less important role in cultivating airmindedness by getting resolutely involved in airborne activities.

These activities drew on strands of politics that were indigenous to the region and often advanced imperial imaginaries that did not always coincide with the discourses of imperial aviation emanating from Europe. While Lebanese, Syrian and Zionist entrepreneurs, bankers, journalists and political activists shared key ideas about “modernity” and “progress” with European pundits of imperial air travel, the sampling of visual devices that we brought here illustrates that the aerial cultures and geo-cultural imaginaries that they fostered were autochthonous to the Eastern Mediterranean in the interwar years. Autochthonous, however, does mean necessarily anti-colonial. Rather it reflects complex sets of political and cultural priorities that espoused spatial visions and mobilities for aviation that cannot be cast as simple manifestations of European aerial cultures and imperial priorities, nor as a consciously posited alternative to them. In other words, we argue that airmindedness in the Middle East took many visual and political forms – imperial, regional, national, classed – while Middle Eastern aviation entrepreneurs saw in aviation a medium in which to articulate their own regimes of mobility and spatial visions for the region. Their projects flowed together along common channels, but invariably separated into divergent streams.



We should not fold these developments into one single experience, nor erase the significant differences that existed between the territories under French and British oversight, or even within individual mandated states, as demonstrated by the case of the British mandate in Palestine. Despite the apparently new legal framework enshrined in the League's Covenant in 1920, France's determination to rule Syria and Lebanon directly precluded local initiatives in the field of civil aviation and forced Levantine elites to constantly seek political compromise, like in many other matters. British traditional preference for indirect rule, along with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, translated into a different political landscape in Palestine. While Arabs were prevented from developing aviation businesses and aero-clubs, flows of Jewish capital and of Jews with previous experience in flying activities in Europe facilitated the emergence of aero-clubs, training schools and even local airlines which played a key role in the exploration of the "Land of Israel" and forging new Zionist imaginaries about Palestine.

Finally, by focusing on visual and textual tools used by both imperial and local actors in order to promote air-mindedness during the interwar years we have made the case for a multi-scalar, non-Eurocentric approach to studying aviation history. Because of the political and geographic entwinement characteristic of Europe's empires during the first half of the twentieth century, the early history of civil aviation and of aerial travel should be at once transimperial and Middle East centric. In such a history, local factors, groups and individuals might help to connect the dots.

Ultimately, the visual culture of aviation in the interwar Middle East provides a potent case study of mobility's grip over the human imagination. The promotional materials, from imperial posters depicting magical orientalist fantasies to local photographs asserting a new national modernity, operated in the space between fantasy and reality. Together, they demonstrate how visual imaginations reflected not merely the new possibilities unlocked by new technology but were actively constructing and contesting the future of the region itself. In this, the airplane became a vehicle for competing visions of empire, nation, and progress, vividly illustrating how the modern Middle East was shaped as much by what was pictured as by what was built.



## Archive Abbreviations

LON – League of Nations Archives  
 CADN – Centre d'Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes  
 AN – Archives Nationales, France  
 MAE – Ministère des Affaires Étrangères  
 CZA – Central Zionist Archives

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