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Jonathan G. Katz, *Murder in Marrakesh: Emile Mauchamp and the French Colonial Adventure*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2006, xvi + 376 pp. Notes, photographs, bibliography, and index. \$29.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN: 978-0-253-34815-9.

Review by Edward Berenson, New York University.

On 19 March 1907, a Moroccan crowd stabbed and beat to death a French doctor named Emile Mauchamp. The physician had been working in Marrakesh for two years as a self-styled medical missionary sent by the French ministry of foreign affairs. Mauchamp was known for his difficult, abrasive personality, alienating French diplomats in Tangier and Paris almost as much as the Arabs he had been assigned to help. Walking the narrow street toward his clinic, Mauchamp found his way blocked by a group of people angry over a pole the doctor had erected on his roof. Moroccans, in general, were upset by French efforts to dominate their country, and Marrakesh residents believed Mauchamp's pole was either an antenna used to spy on them or a flag conveying some unknown French code. In his extensive research, Jonathan G. Katz found that Mauchamp had intended his pole as a "joke" apparently designed to mock the Arabs' fears. Such insensitivity was not uncharacteristic of the young doctor; in this case, it cost him his life.

A dozen men attacked Mauchamp with sticks, rocks, and knives, crushing his skull and slashing his body. The assailants stripped the corpse naked, tied a noose around its neck and dragged it to an empty lot. As crowd members debated whether to ignite Mauchamp's body with kerosene, soldiers loyal to the Sultan's half brother and pretender to the throne, Moulay Hafid, confiscated the corpse and carted it to Mauchamp's dispensary. French officials later found the body elaborately dressed in a Moroccan Muslim's white *qamis* and *jallaba*, a turban covering the smashed head. By re-clothing the corpse, soldiers made a political point about Moroccan culture and values and the need for Christians to show them respect.[1]

Mauchamp's death unleashed an avalanche of correspondence between French residents of Marrakesh and consular officials in Tangier, as well as between the latter and their superiors in Paris. There is a smaller correspondence among Moroccan notables and between them and Hafid, the viceroy for Marrakesh. Perhaps most important, the French press focused on this murder, splashing lurid accounts of Muslim "savagery" across the front pages and publishing illustrations and photographs depicting the hero's untimely death. For most French journalists, especially those writing for the mass press, Mauchamp was yet another martyred agent of the *mission civilisatrice*, one whose ultimate sacrifice would remain unappreciated by the very people he had wanted to serve.

Katz uses all these sources--diplomatic, bureaucratic, and journalistic--to excellent effect, making his work a *tour de force* of historical excavation. Thanks to his impressive research, we now possess a rich and detailed account of the Mauchamp murder, a pivotal, if mostly forgotten, event in both the history of French imperial expansion and pre-protectorate Morocco. Everyone who knows these paired histories sees this attack as a key turning point along the road to Morocco's colonization, one that provided France with a pretext for sustained military intervention into the Sharifian Empire. But that, as Katz writes, exhausts what most historians say. The Mauchamp killing has long been relegated to a footnote and thus the status of a political *fait divers* in the large narrative of conquest, pacification, domination, and, eventually, nationalism and political independence. Katz makes the footnote the story (or at least the prism through which he views several important things): the civilizing mission and

reactions to it; French and Moroccan attitudes toward one another; and the trajectory of French imperial conquest and control. In the process, he provides capsule overviews of nineteenth-century Moroccan history, medical practice in Morocco, the country's Jewish population with its westernizing Alliance Israélite Universelle, and French colonial policy and its main protagonists.

These summaries, useful as they are, sometimes digress a little too much, making the book longer than it needs to be and diverting the reader from the main line of story and analysis. In general, the volume would have benefited from a sharper editorial pen, and especially from an abbreviation of the epistolary ping-pong between Mauchamp and the bureaucrats whom he bugged regularly, and sometimes tediously. Still, we get a good sense of the doctor's prickly personality and of why the French foreign ministry would have done well to choose someone else for the task of medical diplomacy. Katz divides the book in two, the first half devoted to life of Mauchamp, the second to his death. Any murder, especially one as terrifying and painful as Mauchamp's, is a tragedy that cuts short a precious life. But, callous though it sounds, as a historical subject the young doctor is more interesting dead than alive. We know his type: as a classic product of the Third Republic's schools, Mauchamp believed in rationality and science, disdained religion and "superstition," and took for granted the superiority of French culture.

Born in Chalon-sur-Saône just before the Franco-Prussian War, Mauchamp did well in local public schools before going off to Paris to study medicine. There, he specialized in pediatrics, writing a 661-page thesis on the "artificial feeding" of infants with sterilized milk. Most medical dissertations were much shorter, and one examiner blamed its excessive length on moralistic digressions about the evils of paid wet nurses, "prostitutes of a particular kind" (p. 35). Mauchamp wrote his tract amid mounting fears over depopulation and the women's emancipation said to cause it; he condemned the "unfeeling, egotistical" women who had others nurse their babies. As a patriotic republican physician, Mauchamp sought to play a role in repopulating the country, first by moralizing French women and then by helping create a "greater France."

After a four-year stint in Palestine, Mauchamp moved to Morocco, where he would serve in Marrakesh as a member of Foreign Minister Delcassé's Moroccan Medical Aid Service. As such, the young doctor conducted "medical diplomacy" in keeping with Delcassé's policy of insinuating French control over Morocco through "peaceful penetration." The two years Mauchamp spent there were stormy at best. He sparred regularly with French officials and made enemies among Marrakesh's Arab elite. Though he worked extremely hard and treated scores of patients every day, his racist and misogynous attitudes toward the locals could not help but show. He likened Muslim women to passive beasts and echoed other European observers in finding pervasive homosexuality among the men.^[2] His posthumously published book, *Sorcery in Morocco*, catalogues what he considered the filth and moral degradation of this supposedly base society. To remain unpolluted by it, he vowed never to shed his European dress and "civilized" habits. For this reason, Marrakeshis accused Mauchamp of flaunting his Europeaness, especially since he established his practice not behind the walls of the Jewish *mellah*, but right in the heart of the Muslim *medina*.

Mauchamp's tenure in Morocco came at a time of increasing tension between that country and his native France. The Algecirias Conference of 1906 had deepened France's hold over Moroccan finances and foreign trade, making residents of the Sharifian Empire wary of French intentions. Rumors of French spying via a wireless telegraph network began to circulate, and Mauchamp's relationship with a geologist named Louis Gentil, who arrived in Marrakesh with scientific equipment in tow, made the doctor an object of particular suspicion. In this context, Mauchamp's telegraph antenna joke failed to amuse.

Katz does an excellent job of narrating the murder scene itself, using a variety of Moroccan and European sources to reveal the political and ideological stakes of the conflicting accounts of what

actually happened. First and most important was the question of Mauchamp's own responsibility. Did he provoke the crowd's wrath by provocatively flying a foreign flag on his roof and appearing to communicate illicitly with French confederates? Such was the view of local Moroccan authorities and of British and German journalists, who found the French physician, like most of his compatriots, arrogant, condescending and tone deaf to Moroccan ways. These voices did not exactly say that Mauchamp got what he deserved, but their lack of sympathy for him was palpable.

Those who saw the murder from the opposite perspective considered Mauchamp guilty of nothing more than trying to help his friend and fellow scientist Gentil by setting up some geological equipment, including the infamous pole, on his premises. Such was the view of the doctor's friends and the French journalists who knew him. According to them, the Moroccan government and its local representatives, including Moulay Hafid, did nothing to prevent the attack on Mauchamp and may even have encouraged it. French observers also taxed the Germans with complicity by claiming that Mauchamp's rival physician, Judah Holzmann, had organized the assault. German consular officials denied the charge, pointing out that despite his name Holzmann was a Syrian-born Turkish citizen. In general, French observers rejected all efforts to assign Mauchamp a measure of blame for his plight. They portrayed him as a pure victim, as martyr to the civilizing mission and a selfless servant of humanity and progress who died for other people's sins. Back in France, journalists denounced Mauchamp's assailants as "fanatics" and "xenophobes," and they elaborately covered his funeral, an event that drew the foreign minister from Paris and photographers from *L'Illustration* and the other pictorial revues. Members of the Chamber of Deputies called for retribution, maintaining that French honor required a muscular response.

Even before the killing of Mauchamp, colonialists led by Eugene Etienne had been pushing for a more overt effort to colonize Morocco and to do so by military means. General Hubert Lyautey was the designated agent of the alternative to "peaceful penetration," though his method, it was claimed, would be largely peaceful as well. In April 1907, Lyautey led French forces across the Algerian border into the easternmost Moroccan city Oudja, where he vowed to stay until certain strict conditions were fulfilled, conditions, as the French government knew, that would remain unmet.

As the occupation expanded, so did the Moroccan resistance, which in turn moved the French government to send more troops. Faced with near-constant warfare, France made Morocco a protectorate, and Lyautey became proconsul in April 1912. Later, he dedicated a Marrakesh hospital to Mauchamp. Meanwhile in France, interest in the deceased doctor subsided quickly as his murder was forgotten amid a series of new atrocities and alarm over declarations of holy war against the French. A former teacher of Mauchamp's wrote a book-length biography of him, but it saw print only in a local learned journal. The town of Chalon-sur-Saône built a monument to the martyred doctor, which when dedicated in 1910 attracted a new, though brief, flurry of journalist interest. But that was essentially the last the French public heard of Emile Mauchamp; his name, like the names of most other Frenchmen involved with Morocco, would now be overshadowed and overwhelmed by the figure of Lyautey.

NOTES

[1] On this point see Ellen Amster, "The Many Deaths of Dr. Emile Mauchamp: Medicine, Technology, and Popular Politics in Pre-Protectorate Morocco, 1877-1912," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36 (2004): 409-28.

[2] See Robert Aldrich, "Homosexuality in the French Colonies," *Journal of Homosexuality* 41/3-4

(2001): 201-18.

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