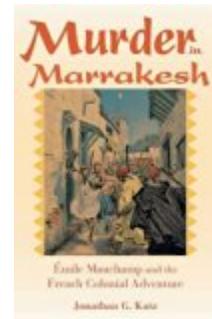


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Jonathan G. Katz. *Murder in Marrakesh: Emile Mauchamp and the French Colonial Adventure*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006. xviii + 358 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-253-34815-9.

Reviewed by Matthew G. Stanard (Department of History, Berry College)
Published on H-French-Colonial (May, 2008)



Overkill?

Jonathan Katz has written a monograph about the 1907 murder of Frenchman Émile Mauchamp in Morocco and its consequences. In short, the book has two goals: first, to recover what Katz believes is a neglected yet important episode in the history of France and Morocco; second, to use a book-length examination of the murder to explore various themes in the history of imperialism and colonialism in Morocco. Katz argues that Mauchamp's life and death, usually discussed in works on French colonialism in Morocco in a footnote if at all, deserve greater consideration. By recovering this episode, he hopes "to shed light on what the colonial adventure meant to its participants and the effect it had on the lives of all those who came under its thrall" (p. 16). As such, this monograph is an elaboration of an earlier essay published as a journal article and later reprinted as a chapter in an edited volume.[1] In this extended work, Katz seeks to add to our knowledge of pre-Protectorate Morocco and Marshal Louis-Hubert Lyautey's establishment of the Protectorate, notably advanced by Edmund Burke's study of Morocco to 1912 and William A. Hoisington's work on Lyautey.[2]

Using English-, French-, and Arabic-language archival sources in France, Morocco, and the United Kingdom, a number of periodicals published in those countries, and French- and English-language secondary sources, Katz explores a number of facets related to Mauchamp's career and death. Mauchamp was born in 1870 in Chalon-sur-Saône, studied medicine and became a doctor, and in 1900 was appointed by the foreign min-

istry to a post in Jerusalem. The government appointed him to a position in Marrakesh in 1905, part of its policy of "peaceful penetration" into Morocco by means of medicine. Mauchamp set up a clinic in Marrakesh later that year and joined the city's tiny European community. While there, Mauchamp gathered materials for a study of Moroccan society and mores (published posthumously in 1910 as *La Sorcellerie au Maroc*). Competition among the European powers played out on a smaller scale when Mauchamp competed with a German-trained rival, Judah Holzmann, for clients and legitimacy. On March 19, 1907, less than eighteen months after arriving in Marrakesh, Mauchamp was murdered by a group of Moroccans just outside his clinic in the Arsa Moulay Musa neighborhood of Marrakesh. Although Mauchamp was buried the following month in his hometown of Chalon-sur-Saône, the consequences of his death were longer-lived.

The immediate instigation for Mauchamp's murder was apparently his planting of some sort of pole on the roof of his clinic that some locals interpreted as a foreign flag or part of a wireless telegraphy network. In the months and weeks leading up to his death, rumors had circulated that Mauchamp was a spy, and Moroccans had grown increasingly resentful at further European encroachments on Moroccan sovereignty. Moreover, the sultan had issued an order to report or confiscate imported telegraph equipment. As a result, the raising of a pole on the roof of Mauchamp's clinic sparked a violent reaction that led to his murder.

Katz argues that Mauchamp's death was a political act of resistance against French influence in Morocco and against the sultan's administration, the Makhzen. Moroccans resented European—particularly French—influence over an increasingly weak Makhzen and held this against the sultan of the time, 'Abd al-'Aziz (Abdelaziz). Therefore, the murder of Mauchamp also was an indirect attack on 'Abd al-'Aziz. Within days of the murder, French troops led by Lyautey had occupied the border town of Oujda, and during the following months the French used Mauchamp's murder to pressure the Makhzen. This pressure contributed to internal turmoil as the sultan's half-brother Moulay Hafid took advantage of 'Abd al-'Aziz's increasingly precarious position to lead a rebellion and declare himself sultan in 1908. "Mauchamp's death provided the catalyst not only for Lyautey's military incursion into Morocco but for Moulay Hafid's successful rebellion against his brother, the reigning Abdelaziz" (p. 99). Increasingly unable to control Morocco in the years after 1908, Moulay Hafid turned to the French for help, paving the way for the Treaty of Fez and the creation of the French Protectorate in 1912. In short, Mauchamp's death and its consequences played an important role in the advent of French rule in Morocco.

Generally, Katz achieves his twofold goal of recovering an important yet neglected historical event and exploring different themes in the history of imperialism and colonialism in Morocco. He demonstrates that although previously passed over or forgotten, Mauchamp's death in fact had important consequences, both for domestic Moroccan affairs and Franco-Moroccan relations. Using the murder as an opening point, Katz also considers a variety of related issues. For instance, by discussing Mauchamp's and other Europeans' medical practices in Morocco, Katz explores the practice of European medicine in colonies during the New Imperialism and the nexus of medicine and power. The French, British, Spanish, and others sent doctors overseas in order to extend their influence without resorting to overt or military means. The murder of Mauchamp and the subsequent French military occupation also demonstrate that violence and a sense of honor were important factors on both sides of this imperial encounter. In raising the fact that many have forgotten Mauchamp's death and its role in the creation of the French Protectorate, Katz delves into issues related to the function of forgetting and memory in history. Katz discusses relations among Jews, Muslims, and Christian Europeans in Morocco, European education in Morocco (including the role of the

Alliance Israélite Universelle), and the role of interests groups in French imperialism. Katz also provides details of the struggle between 'Abd al-'Aziz and his successor 'Abd al-Hafid (Moulay Hafid).

Along the way, Katz reveals some surprising features of Mauchamp's story. For example, this doctor who was murdered in Marrakesh and who became Chalon-sur-Saône's immortalized hometown hero was not a likeable character. Katz himself calls Mauchamp a "cocky French doctor" (p. 103). Mauchamp often had a negative attitude, meddled unnecessarily in political affairs, and sent irritating requests to the French legation. His study, *La Sorcellerie au Maroc*, demonstrated a paradoxical, overt racism toward Moroccans—that is, those people who were actually or potentially his clients and objects of the civilizing mission. The contrast between the ideal of peaceful penetration by means of enlightened French medicine and the reality of the arrogant and racist Dr. Émile Mauchamp is revealing.

Unfortunately, certain annoyances detract from the readability of *Murder in Marrakesh* and diminish its persuasiveness. The book contains numerous typographical and other errors, questionable translations, inconsistent word usage, and even errors in the bibliography (e.g., Ellen Amster's article on Mauchamp is cited as having appeared in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*).^[3] More substantively, Katz's account frequently lacks clear notes for its quotations and references, making it difficult for the reader to evaluate the sources he employs to construct his narrative and support his arguments. Some quotations from Mauchamp, for instance, are simply unaccounted for in the notes (pp. 67-73, 294-295). Finally, Katz's story at times goes beyond picaresque to become an overly long account littered with extraneous details, unnecessary quotations, and minutiae that end up cluttering the narrative rather than propelling it.

The resulting work has its strengths, especially for scholars who would like to delve more deeply into the specifics of Moroccan affairs on the eve of the Protectorate. Yet in the end, what is gained from this long foray into the facts surrounding Mauchamp's murder? Perhaps not as much as one might have hoped, and the degree to which the monograph furthers our understanding of this episode and the history of pre-Protectorate Morocco is questionable. In his 2001 article, Katz also surveyed Mauchamp's life and career, recounted the details surrounding his death, explained the murder's political ramifications, and demonstrated the role of honor

and vengeance in the colonial encounter in Morocco. Ellen Amster's fine 2004 article, "The Many Deaths of Dr. Emile Mauchamp: Medicine, Technology, and Popular Politics in Pre-Protectorate Morocco, 1877-1912," showed how Mauchamp was killed not because Moroccans rejected Western science and medicine, but rather for political reasons. "Mauchamp's murder was a political event, an act of popular Moroccan defiance against Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz and anger at his impotence before the European powers." [4] According to Amster, Mauchamp's death led to growing French pressure on the sultan and increased French involvement in Morocco. Although in his book Katz persuasively demonstrates that Mauchamp's death deserves greater attention, and while Morocco specialists might benefit from all the ins and outs of Mauchamp's brief Maghrebi career and death, others would do well to turn to Katz's original article in *The Journal of North African Studies* and Amster's article in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* for succinct accounts of the doctor's career and the importance and meanings of his murder.

Notes

[1]. Jonathan G. Katz, "The 1907 Mauchamp Affair

and the French Civilising Mission in Morocco," *The Journal of North African Studies* 6 (2001): 143-166; idem, "The 1907 Mauchamp Affair and the French Civilising Mission in Morocco," in *North Africa, Islam and the Mediterranean World: From the Almoravids to the Algerian War*, ed. Julia Clancy-Smith (London: Frank Cass, 2001). The collection was reviewed on H-Net: David J. Wasserstein, "Review of Julia Clancy-Smith, ed., *North Africa, Islam and the Mediterranean World: From the Almoravids to the Algerian War*, H-Mideast-Medieval, H-Net Reviews, February 2003.

[2]. William A. Hoisington, Jr., *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); Edmund Burke III, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco: Precolonial Protest and Resistance, 1860-1912* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976).

[3]. Ellen Amster, "The Many Deaths of Dr. Emile Mauchamp: Medicine, Technology, and Popular Politics in Pre-Protectorate Morocco, 1877-1912," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004): 409-428.

[4]. Amster, "The Many Deaths of Dr. Emile Mauchamp," 409.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-french-colonial>

Citation: Matthew G. Stanard. Review of Katz, Jonathan G., *Murder in Marrakesh: Emile Mauchamp and the French Colonial Adventure*. H-French-Colonial, H-Net Reviews. May, 2008.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=14475>

Copyright © 2008 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.