



Murder in Marrakesh: Émile Mauchamp and the French Colonial Adventure

Jonathan G. Katz

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"In Morocco, nobody dies without a reason." —Susan Gilson Miller, Harvard University

In the years leading up to World War I, the Great Powers of Europe jostled one another for control over Morocco, the last sovereign nation in North Africa. France beat out its rivals and added Morocco to its vast colonial holdings through the use of diplomatic intrigue and undisguised force. But greed and ambition alone do not explain the complex story of imperialism in its entirety. Amid fears that Morocco was descending into anarchy, Third Republic France justified its bloody conquest through an appeal to a higher ideal. France's self-proclaimed "civilizing mission" eased some consciences but led to inevitable conflict and tragedy. Murder in Marrakesh relates the story of the early days of the French conquest of Morocco from a new perspective, that of Émile Mauchamp, a young French doctor, his compatriots, and some justifiably angry Moroccans. In 1905, the French foreign ministry sent Mauchamp to Marrakesh to open a charitable clinic. He died there less than two years later at the hands of a mob. Reviled by the Moroccans as a spy, Mauchamp became a martyr for the French. His death, a tragedy for some, created opportunity for others, and set into motion a chain of events that changed Morocco forever. As it reconstructs Mauchamp's life, this book touches on many themes—medicine, magic, vengeance, violence, mourning, and memory. It also considers the wedge French colonialism drove between Morocco's Muslims and Jews. This singular episode and compelling human story provides a timely reflection on French-Moroccan relations, colonial pride, and the clash of civilizations.



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