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«Mahomet Implanted a Real Neuropathic State in the Brains of Believers»: North African Masculinities and Colonial Psychiatry in the Writings of Maurice Boigey

Nina Studer

In 1908, Maurice Boigey, who worked at the time as a military doctor in the so-called *Campagne du Maroc*, i.e. the French military conquest of Morocco between 1907 and 1912, wrote an article with the title *Psychological Study on Islam*, plagiarised from an 1897 book by a known antisemite and Islamophobe. In it, Boigey framed Islam as a cause of mental disorders: «The first disciples of the prophet were degenerates and their doctrines, put into practice, caused real mental lesions in those who followed them. In other words, Mahomet implanted a real *neuropathic state* in the brains of believers». ¹ Boigey's deeply pejorative article was published in the *Annales Médico-Psychologiques*, the main franco-phone journal for studies of psychiatry, which lent respectability to his claims. While Boigey's study should be understood as the most extreme point of view amongst French authors writing about the psychology of Islam, most of his contemporaries agreed that there were causal links between the religion of the colonised in the Maghreb and the development of mental disorders amongst them. This article specifically analyses the North African masculinities constructed by Boigey, how his theories fit into wider medical and psychiatric frameworks prevalent at the time, and how they influenced later texts and knowledge production about North African men.

The title of this article comes from the 1908 text *Psychological Study on Islam* by the Frenchman Maurice Boigey (1877–1952), who was at the time employed in the so-called *Campagne du Maroc*, i.e. the French military conquest of Morocco. Despite the psychological framing of his article, he was a military doctor in an infantry regiment with no special training in psychiatry. After being published in the prestigious *Annales Médico-Psychologiques*, the same article was also fully reprinted in *La France Médicale* that same year. ² In this article, Boigey explained that human beings were constantly changing and evolving, which, he argued, was most obvious in «Westerners», who «have constantly evolved in the orbit of civilisation. They are the ones who worked the most, produced the most, fought the most, built the most, decorated the most, perfected the most, lived the most». ³ From this, he concluded that their «psychological type» was «active». This was, he argued, in stark contrast with Muslims, who had:

1 Maurice Boigey, *Étude psychologique sur l'Islam*, in: *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* 8 (1908), p. 5–14, here 7f. Emphasis in the original.

2 Maurice Boigey, *Étude psychologique sur l'Islam. Étude extraite des Annales Médico-Psychologiques*, in: *La France Médicale* (1908), p. 263–265.

3 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 5. Cf. D. Kimon, *La pathologie de l'Islam et les moyens de le détruire, étude psychologique. Définition des sociétés aryennes et des sociétés-sémitiques, islamisme,*

never produced any extraordinary work, built any capital, constructed any fleet, studied any science in depth, embellished any place of the earth in a lasting manner. While the social state of Westerners is the outcome of an immense philosophical labour, Islam results from a set of instincts stopped in their natural expansion by the work of a brilliant imposter who is Mahomet.⁴

This led Boigey to define the «psychological type of Islam» as «inactive».⁵ Psychologically speaking, «active» Frenchmen faced «inactive» Moroccans during the *Campagne du Maroc*, according to Boigey.

On top of this supposed psychological inactivity, Boigey likened Islam to a mental disorder. «The dogma of Islam had to develop with the rapidity of a contagious epidemic. Its progress can be explained less by theology than by mental pathology», Boigey explained to his French readers. He also explicitly connected the spread of Islam to violence, adding that «[i]t is a sort of veritable epidemic madness that the Koranic hordes have spread, weapons in hand».⁶ Once these armed «hordes» had forced conquered populations to convert, their brains were altered by Islam: «The first disciples of the prophet were degenerates and their doctrines, put into practice, caused real mental lesions in those who followed them. In other words, Mahomet implanted a real *neuropathic state* in the brains of believers».⁷ This theory of Islam as a diagnosable mental issue represents, perhaps, the height of psychiatric prejudice against North Africans. In addition, Boigey's article is also one of the most erroneous publications by a colonial doctor, full of demonstrably false historical statements about Islam and Muslims. In his 1996 article *French Psychiatry in Algeria*, the psychiatrist Jean-Michel Bégué described Boigey as «biased and virulent about native populations»,⁸ while Fabien Gouriou, in his 2008 thesis *Psychopathology and Migration*, stated that the content of Boigey's article represents «an edifying caricature» of a colonial discourse legitimised by scientific frameworks and vocabulary.⁹

There is, however, a further layer to Boigey's text, which escaped his contemporaries as well as those postcolonial historians of medicine and psychiatry who, up to now, have criticised Boigey's unhinged views on Islam: Boigey's article was almost entirely plagiarised from an 1897 book by an anonymous French

Mahomet, le Koran, le fatalisme, l'osmanisme, solution de la question arménienne, Paris 1897, p. 25. All translations into English are by the author.

4 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 6. Cf. Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 26 f.

5 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 6.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 7. Cf. Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 51.

7 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 8. Emphasis in the original. Cf. Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 53 f.

8 Jean-Michel Bégué, *French Psychiatry in Algeria (1830–1962)*. From Colonial to Transcultural, in: *History of Psychiatry 7* (1996), p. 533–548, here p. 539.

9 Fabien Gouriou, *Psychopathologie et migration*. Repérage historique et épistémologique dans le contexte français, Psych. Thesis, Université de Rennes 2008, p. 47.

author, who used the *nom de plume* D. – either Daniel or David – Kimon.¹⁰ Connecting Boigey to Kimon allows me to draw additional conclusions about Boigey's intentions, as Kimon was both proudly antisemitic and anti-Muslim, asserting, for example, that Catholic France «allows itself to be blindly dominated by what is crudest and lowest, most abject, most false and most treacherous; Israelism and Islamism».¹¹ A direct comparison between the two texts shows that almost every one of Boigey's statements about Muslims was based on Kimon's book, either copying formulations from it directly or paraphrasing Kimon's theories. As Boigey's article did not include a bibliography or references, he did not, however, attribute any of these quotes or theories to Kimon. Indeed, Boigey made no mention of him at all. He seems to have also committed plagiarism in other publications.¹² In the following footnotes to Boigey's quotes, I therefore also give references to the corresponding passages of Kimon's book.

The main argument of my article is that this plagiarism further discredits Boigey both for his personal beliefs – because he relied on the theories of a virulent Islamophobe – and for his scientific and professional conduct, and that this should be taken into account in all academic discussions of his role in French medicine, psychiatry, and sports theory. While Boigey's article is discussed in practically all historical analyses of French colonial psychiatry in the Maghreb,¹³ his enormously problematic appropriation of Kimon's ideas adds an additional layer to the criticism already rightly aimed at him. Similarly, those discussing Kimon's monographs have, up to now, not made the connection to Boigey.¹⁴

When examining his arguments, I will specifically analyse the North African masculinities constructed in them. The postcolonial historiography on the relationship between France and the Maghreb has clearly identified French colo-

¹⁰ Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, «Ennemis mortels». Représentations de l'islam et politiques musulmanes en France à l'époque coloniale, Paris 2019, p. 91 f.; Vicki Caron, Catholic Political Mobilization and Antisemitic Violence in Fin de Siècle France. The Case of the Union Nationale, in: Journal of Modern History 81/2 (2009), p. 294–346, here p. 319.

¹¹ Kimon, Pathologie de l'islam, p. 26.

¹² Thierry Terret, Jean Saint-Martin, Journey in the Historiography of the *French Method of Physical Education*. A Matter of Nationalism, Imperialism and Gender, in: Mark Freeman (ed.), Sport, Health and the Body in the History of Education, London 2015, p. 5–24, here p. 14.

¹³ Cf. for example Robert Berthelot, L'homme maghrébin dans la littérature psychiatrique, Paris 1994, p. 43; Richard C. Keller, Colonial Madness. Psychiatry in French North Africa, Chicago 2007, p. 166 f.; Nigel C. Gibson, Roberto Beneduce, Frantz Fanon. Psychiatry and Politics, London 2017, p. 99; Ouafa Bensaada, L'exil en héritage. Mémoire des traumatismes, Ph.D. thesis, Centre de recherches psychanalyse, médecine et société, Université de Paris 2021, p. 62; Carlos Javier Cordero Pedrosa, Fanon Matters. Relevance of Frantz Fanon's Intellectual and Political Work for Peace Studies, Ph.D. thesis, Universitat Jaume I 2021, p. 267 f.

¹⁴ See, for example: Aomar Boum, Partners against Anti-Semitism. Muslims and Jews Respond to Nazism in French North African Colonies, 1936–1940, in: The Journal of North African Studies 19/4 (2014), p. 554–570, here: p. 556; Fernando Bravo López, The Genocidal Islamophobia of a Late Nineteenth-Century French Anti-Semite. D. Kimon and The Pathology of Islam, in: Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations 25/1 (2014), p. 101–116.

nial psychiatry as having had an enormous influence on how North African men are viewed and depicted in France today.¹⁵ While Boigey is commonly understood as a precursor to France's leading psychiatric school, the so-called *École d'Alger*, by historians working on French colonial medicine and psychiatry in the Maghreb,¹⁶ his unsettling reliance on Kimon's book makes him and his influence even more questionable than previously understood.

This article looks at how Boigey's inflammatory *Psychological Study on Islam* fits into wider medical and psychiatric theories prevalent at the time, and how it influenced later texts and knowledge production about North African men. In the first part of this article, Boigey and his 1908 article are placed into their wider historical context in order to understand where Boigey's aggressive stance towards Moroccans in particular and Muslims in general came from. The second part presents the main arguments of his article through the lens of the Muslim masculinities that Boigey portrayed. In the third part, I analyse the theories and authors he was influenced by, as well as the wider reception of his article by France's colonial doctors and psychiatrists. This last part focuses on the question of how Kimon's offensive theories were – through this process of unperceived plagiarism – sanitised for a broader French medical and psychiatric audience.

The Campagne du Maroc

While Maurice Boigey is a well-known figure in the history of sports, his role in shaping medical views about North African men is less acknowledged. He studied medicine at the university of Nancy and at the *École du Service de Santé Militaire* in Lyon, concluding with a medical dissertation entitled *Heart Damage in Smallpox* in 1900.¹⁷ At some point after his marriage to Marguerite Marie Hélène Magnin in 1901, he started to work in a hospital in Biskra in Algeria.¹⁸ He then moved to Morocco, where he remained, according to his friend and

15 Mahfoud Boucebcı, Aspects du développement psychologique de l'enfant au Maghreb, in: Santé Mentale au Québec 18/1 (1993), p. 163–178, here p. 163; Jalil Bennani, La psychanalyse au pays des saints. Les débuts de la psychiatrie et de la psychanalyse au Maroc, Casablanca 1996, p. 91; Robert Berthelıer, Fanon, psychiatre encore et toujours, in: VST – Vie Sociale et Traitements 89 (2006), p. 76–84, here p. 77; Keller, Colonial Madness, p. 208.

16 See, for example: Saıd Chebili, La théorie évolutionniste de l'École d'Alger. Une idéologie scientifique exemplaire, in: L'Information Psychiatrique 91 (2015), p. 163–168, here: p. 167; Jean Rabardel, Une dérive de la psychiatrie: le discours colonial en Algérie, VST – Vie sociale et traitements 130 (2016), p. 142–146, here: p. 144; Simona Taliani, 1956 et alentours. Frantz Fanon et le corps-à-corps avec les cultures, in: Politique Africaine 143 (2016), p. 93–111, here: p. 104fn35; Boumghar, Étude psychologique, p. 5.

17 Maurice Boigey, Les lésions du cœur dans la variole, Lyon 1900.

18 Saıd Boumghar, L'étude psychologique sur l'Islam de Boigey (1908). Logomachie et psychiatrisation, in: Le Quotidien d'Oran, 24.07.2022, p. 5.

colleague Henri-Louis Rocher, for four years. The exact length of his service as a military doctor in Morocco is not clear, but, according to Rocher, he moved back to France in 1909.¹⁹ Throughout his life, Boigey was a prolific author, writing on many medical and non-medical questions, and he became a respected expert on a variety of issues, chief amongst them sports.²⁰ In some of his publications – such as his 1917 monograph *Human Breeding* – he supported eugenic ideas.²¹

His article *Psychological Study on Islam* was one of several texts he produced about North Africans between 1907 and 1912, but the tone of these other articles was, while patronising and pro-colonial,²² not as starkly negative towards Muslims as his 1908 *œuvre*. It was during the *Campagne du Maroc* that Boigey's tone became more belligerent. The 1906 Algeciras Conference had allocated Morocco to France's sphere of influence, which resulted in a series of attacks on Europeans in Morocco.²³ Amongst those attacked was the French doctor Émile Mauchamp, who had started to work in Marrakech in October 1905.²⁴ Mauchamp was beaten to death by a mob in Marrakech on 19 March 1907, which caused a wave of outrage in France. Indeed, the French military conquest of Morocco was triggered and justified by this murder.²⁵

As a doctor, Mauchamp was presented as a carrier of civilisation in the French press and the attack on him as a humiliation of France.²⁶ The Moroccan government was held directly responsible by many in France for this tragic event. The newspaper *Le Rappel*, for example, informed its readership in March 1907 that, according to the newspaper *Le Courrier du Maroc*, the Moroccan government could have prevented the crime, adding that «its responsibility, that of its people and its agents is too obvious for punishment to hesitate and go astray: by hitting anyone we will have hit a culprit».²⁷ The French government echoed these wishes for retribution. An article in *Le XIX Siècle* quoted Stephen Pichon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, as having proclaimed at Mauchamp's funeral: «The government is determined not to let this murder go unpunished».

19 Henri-Louis Rocher, Maurice Boigey (1877–1952), in: *Presse Médicale* 61/26 (1953), p. 558.

20 Joan Tumblety, *Remaking the Male Body. Masculinity and the Uses of Physical Culture in Interwar and Vichy France*, Oxford 2012, p. 66.

21 Maurice Boigey, *L'élevage humain. Aux Pères de Famille*, Paris 1917. See also: Tumblety, *Remaking the Male Body*, p. 67.

22 See, for example: Maurice Boigey, *L'assistance hospitalière en pays musulman*, in: *Presse Médicale* 76 (1907), p. 609–611, here: p. 609.

23 Ellen Amster, *The Many Deaths of Dr. Emile Mauchamp. Medicine, Technology, and Popular Politics in Pre-Protectorate Morocco, 1877–1912*, in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004), p. 409–428, here: p. 418.

24 Jim Paul, *Medicine and Imperialism in Morocco*, in: *MERIP Reports* 60 (1977), p. 3–12, here: p. 5.

25 Amster, *Many Deaths*, p. 409.

26 See, for example: *A la Chambre. L'interpellation sur les incidents du Maroc*, in: *Le Messin*, 28.3.1907, p. 6.

27 *Au Maroc. L'assassinat du docteur Mauchamp*, in: *Le Rappel*, 26.3.1907, p. 2.

The French government asked for the punishment of the murderers, the «dismissal and imprisonment» of the governor of Marrakech, financial compensation for Mauchamp's family, and «the settlement of all our subsequent claims». Until these requests were met, France planned to occupy the city of Oujda in Eastern Morocco.²⁸

On 29 March 1907, «supposedly in retribution» for the murder of Mauchamp, as Susan Gilson Miller put it, the French army began the occupation of Oujda.²⁹ This was followed by the invasion of Casablanca and the Beni Snassen mountains. As a military doctor in Morocco during the conquest of the Beni Snassen mountains, Boigey's view of Moroccans was a reaction to Mauchamp's murder and this belligerent atmosphere amongst the French, as well as to his personal experiences with Moroccans in a war-time context.³⁰ While he pretended to depict universal truths about Islam, his article was influenced by the anti-Moroccan sentiment prevalent at that specific point in time and should be read as a legitimization of French colonialism in pre-protectorate Morocco.

Boigey's *Psychological Study on Islam* depicted Muslims, France's enemies in the *Campagne du Maroc*, in an extremely pejorative way. At first glance, looking at depictions of masculinities in this article might not be an obvious choice, as Boigey claimed to write, gender-neutrally, about Islam as a whole. Yet his way of looking at the world was clearly gendered, as he suggested in later publications that French women should refrain from physical activity and avoid most sports, which he depicted as dangerous for the uterus.³¹ This focus on procreation can also be found in his reports about North African women, whom he described as prematurely nubile,³² as «object[s] of traffic and profit» who were married off very young,³³ and as lacking education and knowledge when it came to female physiology.³⁴ Muslim men, on the other hand, were fatalistic and lazy, but brave, in Boigey's publications.³⁵ Boigey's gendered perspective can also be observed in *Psychological Study on Islam*, for example when he described Mus-

28 L'incident marocain, in: *Le XIX^e Siècle*, 28.3.1907, p. 2.

29 Susan Gilson Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, Cambridge 2013, p. 75.

30 See, for example: Boumghar, *Étude psychologique*, p. 5.

31 Thierry Terret, *Sports and Erotica. Erotic Postcards of Sportswomen during France's «Années Folles»*, in: *Journal of Sport History* 29/2 (2002), p. 271–287, here: p. 279. See also Florence Carpentier, Alice Milliat, *A Feminist Pioneer for Women's Sport*, in: Emmanuel Bayle, Patrick Clastres (eds.), *Global Sport Leaders. A Biographical Analysis of International Sport Management*, Cham 2018, p. 61–81, here: p. 71 f.; Roy J. Shephard, *A History of Health & Fitness. Implications for Policy Today*, Cham 2018, p. 194.

32 Boigey, *Élevage humain*, p. 234.

33 J.-M. Boigey, *Le mariage dans les tribus musulmanes de l'Afrique*, in: *Presse Médicale* 102 (1911), p. 1185–1188, here: p. 1185.

34 Maurice Boigey, *Comment accouchent les Sahariennes*, in: *Presse Médicale* 47 (1907), p. 377–379, here: p. 377.

35 Maurice Boigey, *Organisation sanitaire d'une expédition coloniale*, in: *Revue d'Hygiène et de Police Sanitaire* 34 (1912), p. 874–889, here: p. 877.

lims as suffering from a «perversion of the sexual instinct». Describing Muslims in this passage as «pederastic» makes it clear that he only considered Muslim men in his text.³⁶ Consequently, when Boigey wrote about *the Muslim*, he meant Muslim men – i.e. the enemy soldier – and did not include Muslim women or children.

Boigey's excessively negative depiction of Muslim masculinities – based on his perception of Muslim men as enemies of France, who had, additionally, just murdered Mauchamp, a fellow doctor – should be viewed in the wider context of French representations of colonised North African men. As Zahia Smail Salhi described in a 2008 article, the French colonisers in North Africa humiliated Muslim men, injured their sense of self, and «diminish[ed] their masculinity on the personal level»³⁷ – all of which can be found in Boigey's text. In addition, Boigey's perception of his own masculinity clearly influenced his views. Raewyn W. Connell argued in a 2005 chapter that, as colonial conquests were carried out by «segregated groups of men – soldiers, sailors, traders, [and] administrators», this could produce what she called «frontier masculinities», which «combined the occupational culture of these groups with an unusual level of violence and egocentric individualism».³⁸ Being a military doctor, Boigey belonged to two of these segregated groups of colonising men – as a doctor and a member of the French army – and his depiction of Muslim men was clearly influenced by this violent frontier thinking.

Diagnosing Religion

The murder of Mauchamp, the anti-Moroccan feelings in France, and the military *Campagne du Maroc* were the historical contexts in which Boigey turned to Kimon's book, with the deeply pejorative title *The Pathology of Islam and the Means to Destroy it*. He decided to use the latter's vilification of Islam to try to strengthen France's position in North Africa. Boigey suggested that all Muslim men shared characteristics, habits, and outlooks. A Muslim was a «mediocre silhouette of the Prophet», i.e. a bad copy of Muḥammad. Thus, all the characteristics of Muslim men – down to their passions, manias, vices, and impulses – were based on the preferences of the prophet and, because of that, fully anchored

³⁶ Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 8f. Kimon's version is less clearly gendered, as he described Muslims in general as led by «sexual perversions», adding: «The sexual instinct of Muslims in general is completely deviated from the normal line; their perversion is purely psychopathic.» Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 60.

³⁷ Zahia Smail Salhi, *Gender and Diversity in the Middle East and North Africa*, in: *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 35/3 (2008), p. 295–304, here: p. 297.

³⁸ Raewyn W. Connell, *Globalization, Imperialism and Masculinities*, in: Michael Kimmel, Jeff Hearn (eds.), *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, Thousand Oaks 2005, p. 71–89, here: p. 74.

in the seventh century. This Orientalist belief in an asynchronous development between Europe and the «Orient», with Muslims being stuck in the equivalent of the European Middle Ages, was widespread in Europe in the late nineteenth century.³⁹ Boigey explained to his readers that Muslim men did not know about «mechanics, the arts, astronomy, [or] mathematics, because Mahomet did not know about them». Boigey further claimed that Muslims could not navigate, based on an alleged sura: ««He who embarks twice on the sea is unfaithful», says the cameleer of Mecca in the Koran».⁴⁰ Despite Boigey's confident declaration, this quote cannot be found in the Qur'an, and in a 1909 refutation of Boigey's article, the respected Tunisian doctor Ahmed Chérif «challenge[d] Mr. Boigey and all Arabists combined to find in the *Koran* a similar sentence, or something close to it».⁴¹ Exactly the same formulation – down to the offensive reference to the «cameleer of Mecca» – can be found in the French translation of a book by the English Arabist William Gifford Palgrave about his journey through «Central Arabia», published in 1866.⁴² It can also be found, word for word, in Kimon's 1897 book.⁴³

Yet the influence of Islam went further than merely dictating the preferences and characteristics of Muslims, Boigey warned his readers. As mentioned in the introduction, he believed that Islam altered the brain structure of Muslims, making them mad in a psychiatrically diagnosable way. This took several forms: The first of these was the existence of certain «blind spots» in their consciousness, which made Muslims unsuitable «for the sciences, for the arts, [and] for administration». The second, Boigey explained, was a «madness of words»:

These words are: Allah, illah! and still others contained in prayers and invocations to the Divinity. You have to have seen, in the mosque, Muslims pronouncing as if caught in hallucinations for hours and a hundred times a minute these two words: Allah, illah! bobbing their heads like floating buoys undulating on an invisible sea, to get an idea of this kind of madness.⁴⁴

³⁹ See, for example: Kathleen Davis, *Time Behind the Veil. The Media, the Middle Ages, and Orientalism Now*, in: Jeffrey J. Cohen (ed.), *The Postcolonial Middle Ages. The New Middle Ages*, New York 2000, p. 105–122, here: p. 106.

⁴⁰ Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 6f.

⁴¹ Ahmed Chérif, *Étude psychologique sur l'islam*, in: *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* 9 (1909), p. 353–363, here: p. 354. Emphasis in the original.

⁴² William Gifford Palgrave, *Une année de voyage dans l'Arabie centrale (1862–1863)*. Ouvrage traduit de l'anglais avec l'autorisation de l'auteur par Émile Jonveaux, Paris 1866 (Vol. 2), p. 36.

⁴³ Kimon, *Pathologie de l'islam*, p. 34f.

⁴⁴ Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 8. Cf. Kimon, *Pathologie de l'islam*, p. 55f. While Boigey – and Kimon, whom he copied – presented this offensive passage as a general description of everyday Muslim prayers, it sounds more like a Sufi *dhikr* recitation, in which believers repeat one of the names of God or one of several set formulations, amongst them «lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh», as an act of remembrance of God. See, for example: Arthur Saniotis, *Understanding Mind/Body Medicine from Muslim Religious Practices of Salat and Dhikr*, in: *Journal of Religion and Health* 57 (2018), p. 849–857, here: p. 852f.

This passage shows both Boigey's gendered perspective and his deep lack of understanding of Islam or the Arabic language. As a man, he could not have observed Muslim women in prayer, which demonstrates that, even if never explicitly marked as such, his article was only concerned with the psychological makeup of Muslim men. His lack of knowledge, on the other hand, is obvious, as he referred to the *shahada* in this quote, the Muslim statement of faith, which starts with «lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh», i. e. «there is no god but God».

The third of the forms of insanity amongst Muslims was a «delirium of sadness» and a lack of laughter, as, according to Boigey, the Qur'an «eradicated from the heart of man all feeling of joy and cheerfulness».45 Boigey copied this idea of a deep-set sadness amongst Muslims from Kimon, who had, however, added that «the Mohammedan is the opposite of the Catholic Parisian, cheerful, happy, joyful, jovial».46 While Boigey left this part out, it remains clear that such a comparison with French men was precisely what he intended. The fourth form of madness concerned sexuality, which he believed to be dominated by a «perversion of the sexual instinct», adding that «[t]he Muslim likes young children and is frantically pederastic and masturbating».47 The fifth form of insanity Boigey described as «visual or auditory hallucinations», which led Muslims to commit random crimes and attacks: «They are the ones who are often at the origin of an uprising or a massacre».48

In summary, Muslim men were described by Boigey as incurious, driven to madness by their language, melancholic, sexually perverted, and – important knowledge for a conquering army – unpredictably dangerous. «One of these [forms of] madness may predominate», Boigey concluded. «In this case, the subject is a madman and his co-religionists surround him in an atmosphere of holiness». Yet, amongst the majority of Muslims, Boigey claimed, these forms of madness were mixed, which led him to the conclusion that «the mental state of the majority of Believers is a mixture of madness in varying doses, of tangled delusions, masked by an appearance of reason».49

While Boigey thus depicted all Muslim men as being somewhat mad when compared to an idealised, clearly male-coded Frenchness, *Psychological Study on Islam* had a concrete goal stemming from the specific context of the *Campagne du Maroc* – military victory over the Muslims. Boigey's article should therefore also be read as a sort of manual on how to best organise a military attack on Muslims, as Nigel C. Gibson and Roberto Beneduce already discussed in their

45 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 8. Cf. Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 58 f.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

47 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 8 f. Cf. Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 60.

48 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 9. In Kimon's version this idea was more clearly put into the context of a war of religions, as he described these hallucinations as leading to «massacre[s] of Christians», see: Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 61.

49 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 9. See also: Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 62.

2017 book on Frantz Fanon⁵⁰ and Carlos Javier Cordero Pedrosa argued in his 2021 Ph.D. thesis.⁵¹ The basis of Boigey's suggestions was his belief that all actions of Muslims were solely motivated – commanded, even – by Islam and that Islam linked all Muslims «by an invisible thread». Medically speaking, he suggested that «Islam, considered as a whole, must be compared to a sort of brain centre or nerve centre».⁵² More broadly, he compared Islam to «an immense electrical apparatus of which all the parts are united».⁵³ Muslims' complete reliance on other Muslims, Boigey believed, thus provided a plan of attack: «Let the hand of a skilled operator, foreign to Islam, cut the wires emanating from the central organ». This action, Boigey argued, would paralyse the isolated Muslims, making them incapable of action.⁵⁴ Up to this point, Boigey followed Kimon's script. He then additionally contended that he had personally been able to witness this paralysis caused by isolation during his service as a military doctor during the seizure of the Beni Snassen mountains. This, Boigey suggested, could be used by France: «Practical applications emerge from these considerations. To reduce Muslims, they must be isolated from the rest of Islam».⁵⁵ Boigey's assessment concurred with some French theories from the turn of the century that defined Islam, especially in Africa, as a growing power that had to be divided in order to be defeated.⁵⁶

This strategy of isolating Muslims from other Muslims in order to physically overcome them also led Boigey to suggest that Muslims should always be attacked from several sides, as they «will certainly be defeated» that way. Boigey suggested that this caused a «brain disturbance» amongst them «that must be sought at all costs». Linking this proposal back to the idea of all Muslims being united by a web of wires that not only connected them, but also commanded their actions, Boigey added: «Due to the state of dependence in which Muslims are in relation to each other, all experiencing at the same moment the same commotion, the same impulse, they also experience the cerebral disorder at the same moment, which paralyses them all when they feel 'surrounded' and threatened with isolation».⁵⁷ Cutting the electrical wire that allegedly united all Muslim men, Boigey suggested, could be to France's advantage in the context of the *Campagne du Maroc*.

Kimon and Boigey's framing of Muslim men as led by a communal – external – «apparatus», i.e. their religion, in all their behaviour and decisions, also

50 Nigel, Beneduce, Frantz Fanon, p. 99.

51 Cordero Pedrosa, Fanon Matters, p. 267 f.

52 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 10. See also: Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 89.

53 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 12. Cf. Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 89 f.

54 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 10. See also: Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 90 f.

55 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 10 f.

56 On this, see, for example: Marwan R. Buheiry, *Colonial Scholarship and Muslim Revivalism in 1900*, in: *Arab Studies Quarterly* 4 (1982), p. 1–16, here: p. 5.

57 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 11 f.

represented Muslims as inferior to the allegedly rational and individualistic French. In this, Kimon and Boigey followed contemporary beliefs about a clear hierarchy of races.⁵⁸ While this notion was widespread at the turn of the century, it was novel for an author depicting himself as a medical authority on the psychology of Muslims to advise the French government to actively use this alleged mental flaw of Muslims in order to defeat and subjugate them. It shows that, during the *Campagne du Maroc*, at least some of France's colonial doctors and psychiatrists defined themselves as playing an active part in colonial policies, based on their supposed in-depth knowledge of the mental 'deficiencies' – Boigey's «real *neuropathic state[s]*» – allegedly caused by Islam.

Influenced and Influencing

Boigey's claims about the forms of madness shared by all Muslim men might seem outlandish to twenty-first century readers, yet the question of his historical relevance remains. Was he a lone outlier, a pioneering voice, or part of wider medical narratives on North African masculinities? The history of French colonial psychiatry in the Maghreb can be roughly divided into two periods. The first phase was defined by patient transports to France, by metropolitan psychiatrists writing about North Africans, and by the belief in a relative rarity of insanity amongst North Africans. The second phase – starting sometime between the immediate aftermath of World War One and the 1930s – was shaped by the construction of large, modern psychiatric facilities in North Africa, by the establishment of the so-called *École d'Alger*, and by the theory of a shared «primitive mentality» of North Africans. The idea that Muslims were somehow immune to mental diseases disappeared once psychiatric hospitals were constructed in the Maghreb and the number of Muslim patients started to increase.

While Boigey's *Psychological Study on Islam* firmly belongs, chronologically, to the first phase, his article can be interpreted as one of the turning points between the first and second phases. Indeed, Boigey's article is often portrayed as one of the events that ushered in the second phase. This was suggested by Robert Berthelie, who referred to Boigey's article as:

appear[ing] at first glance to be in complete contrast to earlier texts. It indeed introduces for the first time, at least it seems to me, a properly and entirely racist problem in the psychiatric literature devoted to Muslim psychopathology and/or psychology. By its violence, by its partisan character, by its pivotal situation between two eras, by the fact that it is [published by] as respectable [a society] as the Société Médico-Psychologique, it seems important to me as marking a caesura.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Buheiry, *Colonial Scholarship*, p. 2.

⁵⁹ Berthelie, *Homme maghrébin*, p. 43. See also: Bensaada, *Exil en héritage*, p. 62.

As seen in this passage, the earlier phase of French colonial psychiatry in the Maghreb is sometimes perceived as more benevolent and less biased against the colonised populations than the invasive treatments and large-scale pathologisation of the second phase. In 2007, Berthelier further expanded on this idea, explaining that the French psychiatrists before Boigey wrote with a «certain sympathy» about North Africans and that Boigey's article was the start of an era of «militant colonialism».⁶⁰ Despite the relative novelty of Boigey's theories, Berthelier also highlighted that his ideas were not original, but had crystallised out of the medical and anthropological theories of the time, ranging from phrenology to theories of degeneration. Due to this, «Boigey therefore appears as a simple, particularly committed witness» of his time.⁶¹

I argue that while Boigey's opinions were indeed indicative of wider developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the largest influence on him was Kimon. The identity of the French journalist and author who used this *nom de plume* remains unknown. However, in a 2009 article, Vicky Caron suggested that he was, based on an 1898 report by the French police, a French Catholic of Greek origins who had served in the Foreign Legion.⁶² Kimon was, according to Aomar Boum, «one of the leading anti-Semitic French voices».⁶³ He was a member of the *Union Nationale* and of the *Ligue Nationale Anti-sémitique*, and was a contributor to the newspaper *La Libre Parole*.⁶⁴ In a 2014 article on Kimon, the Spanish historian Fernando Bravo López pointed out that Kimon was criticised by some of his contemporaries and that his extreme opinions on Islam were marginal.⁶⁵ Yet Bravo López also showed that Kimon was, at the end of the nineteenth century, «well known in the sphere of anti-Semitic and ultra-nationalist groups in France». While Bravo López added that his publications were read both within and outside of his antisemitic circles,⁶⁶ this anchoring of Kimon's main readership amongst antisemitic and ultra-nationalist French circles tells us more about Boigey's worldview in 1908.

In 1897, Kimon wrote his book *The Pathology of Islam and the Means to Destroy it*, in which he ranked the different groups of Muslim men as «ferocious beasts», comparing Kurds to panthers and hyaenas, Afghans to tigers, Persians to reptiles, mixed-race Muslims to «tame felines, rendering no service to humanity», and more.⁶⁷ While Kimon's book included passages about Muslims from all over the world, Boigey's *Psychological Study on Islam* – while also pretending to

60 Robert Berthelier, À la recherche de l'homme musulman, in: *Sud/Nord* 1/22 (2007), p. 127–146, here: p. 131.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

62 Caron, *Catholic Political Mobilization*, p. 319, fn 95.

63 Boum, *Partners against Anti-Semitism*, p. 556.

64 Bravo López, *Genocidal Islamophobia*, p. 102 f.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

67 Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 28–30.

be universally applicable – was narrowly focused on France’s possessions in North Africa in general and on Morocco in particular. A pseudo-medical outlook was shared by both publications. While it appears that Kimon was not a doctor, he employed medical vocabulary throughout his book.⁶⁸ Like Boigey after him, Kimon suggested that Islam was a contagious, shared form of insanity and that all Muslims suffered from mental disorders in a clinically recognisable way.⁶⁹

While all the ideas about North African masculinities discussed by Boigey in his 1908 article can be traced back to Kimon’s 1897 book, he nevertheless omitted some of the latter’s most extreme notions. Kimon’s poisonous anti-semitism, for example, did not find its way into Boigey’s *Psychological Study on Islam*. Kimon positioned Judaism and Islam as two equal «parasites» plaguing France and Europe.⁷⁰ In this, he contradicted France’s most notorious anti-semitic, the journalist Edouard Drumont, who had presented Muslims as the «positive twins» of Jews in Algeria in his 1886 book *La France juive*, as shown by the historian Ethan B. Katz in a recent article, *Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and Colonialism*.⁷¹ In Kimon’s book, however, there are no comparisons between Jews and Muslims that could be interpreted as even remotely positive for either group. The military doctor Boigey’s ire was focused, at least in his 1908 article, entirely on the colonial enemy in North Africa: Muslims.

Similarly, Kimon’s opinions as to how Christian France should best deal with Muslims were even more disturbing than Boigey’s «cutting of wires» strategy discussed above. Kimon suggested that, «[i]f the civilised world decided to eliminate [...] with one stroke, Islam» – which, he reported, amounted to 130 million people – 5% of all Muslims, the «[i]mmutable, untransformable» ones, «must be destroyed».⁷² He nonchalantly suggested the killing of 6.5 million Muslims in his book. Further on in his book, Kimon explained this in more detail. Comparing the largely abstinent Muslims to alcoholics, and Muḥammad and the Qur’an to alcohol, Kimon suggested that the addictive substance had to be removed from the addicts: «This violent suppression of Mahomet and the Koran will produce, in some, exactly as in alcoholics, convulsive attacks, explosions of rage, and we will be obliged to kill them. But what does it matter to kill a small number of inveterate, uncontrollable, immutable Koranists, to save millions of individuals».⁷³ Kimon also suggested that, in France’s North African col-

68 Bravo López, *Genocidal Islamophobia*, p. 107.

69 Kimon, *Pathologie de l’Islam*, p. 51.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

71 Édouard Drumont, *La France juive. Essai d’histoire contemporaine*, Paris 1886 (2 volumes); Ethan B. Katz, *An Imperial Entanglement. Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and Colonialism*, in: *American Historical Review* 123/4 (2018), p. 1190–1209, here p. 1201.

72 Kimon, *Pathologie de l’Islam*, p. 31.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 182.

onies, the French state should make it mandatory for all Muslims to work, that corruption and theft should be punishable by death, that usury as well as male and female prostitution should be punished by forced labour, and that all «secret, political and religious societies» of Muslims should be suppressed.⁷⁴ While Boigey never went so far as to mirror Kimon's willingness to massacring millions of people, it is difficult to imagine that he did not at least partly agree with Kimon's suggestions, given how heavily he relied on his theories.

While Kimon seems to have remained marginal outside of openly anti-semitic circles, Boigey was not. The famous criminologist Alexandre Lacassagne, for example, wrote an introduction to Boigey's book on military prisoners that was published only two years after *Psychological Study on Islam*. In this introduction, Lacassagne described Boigey as an «elite spirit» and as part of a group of «intelligent and documented» military doctors that had «taken a liking to forensic medicine» in recent years.⁷⁵ This alone shows that Boigey was perceived to be a well-established and respected medical expert. His position of authority can also be deduced from the fact that his 1908 article was published in both the *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* and *La France Médicale*. The Moroccan psychoanalyst Jalil Bennani, for example, argued that its publication in the *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* «says a lot about the conscious, or unconscious, participation of medical authorities in the colonial interests of the time».⁷⁶ With the *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* being the main francophone journal for studies of mental disorders at the time, this lent respectability to Boigey's claims about the psychological make-up of Muslim men.

Possibly to counteract the backlash to Boigey's article, the *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* published a second article the following year, also with the title *Psychological Study on Islam*, contesting Boigey's claims. The aforementioned Ahmed Chérif – one of the first Tunisians to receive a medical degree from a French university – took it upon himself to refute Boigey's text. He set out to point out and disprove the «flagrant errors of the author, to prevent them from spreading and corrupting the judgment of honest and innocent readers, who only made the mistake of believing Mr. Boigey's word».⁷⁷ In his text, Chérif not only criticised Boigey, but also voiced his disapproval of the *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* and *La France Médicale* for printing Boigey's article in the first place. Writing about Boigey's conviction that famous Muslims like Ibn Rushd and Ibn Sina – Averroës and Avicenna – had been nothing but «violently mus-

74 *Ibid.*, p. 36–38.

75 Maurice Boigey, *Ateliers de travaux publics, détenus militaires*. Préface du professeur Lacassagne, Paris 1910, p. v–vi.

76 Bennani, *Psychoanalyse au pays des saints*, p. 67 f.

77 Chérif, *Étude psychologique*, p. 353 f.

limited Spaniards»,⁷⁸ i. e. Muslim in name only, Chérif exclaimed: «Listen, men of good faith, what a European scientist dared to write, in 1909 [sic], in major scientific journals with a circulation of several thousand copies».⁷⁹

While Boigey is commonly understood as a «caesura» with previous traditions in French colonial psychiatry, to take up Berthelien's formulation,⁸⁰ he was, from Chérif's perspective, no better than an «ignorant and fanatical monk from the time of the Crusades» writing about Muslims.⁸¹ Chérif thus viewed Boigey as just one particularly unpleasant proponent of the tradition of anti-Muslim sentiment in Europe. Independent of whether Boigey should best be understood as a break with former psychiatric theories or as a continuation of broader Orientalist traditions, the question remains of how much influence his 1908 article had on the psychiatrists of the second phase. In 1912, the psychiatrist Antoine Porot described Tunisian Muslims as having «brains completely steeped in the Koran», which, he warned, «easily develop delusions of a religious structure».⁸² This seems very close to Boigey's 1908 formulations. Indeed, writing about Porot's important 1918 article *Notes on Muslim Psychiatry*,⁸³ Berthelien portrayed Porot, the founder of the *École d'Alger*, as clearly influenced by Boigey, stating that Porot's article was «distinguished by a choice of qualifiers which essentially refer, whether we like it or not, to Boigey's article». Berthelien argued that Porot took up Boigey's arguments – and those of earlier colonial psychiatrists – in his article, «thus being part of their continuity».⁸⁴ As Porot's theories in turn influenced a whole generation of French psychiatrists both in North Africa and France, some of Boigey's – and through him Kimon's – outlandish claims about the psychological make-up of Muslim men found a much broader audience. Indeed, in a 1985 article on colonial psychiatry Tahar Boucherdakh and Abdelhadi Elfakir explained that many of Boigey's 1908 theories were «taken up, either verbatim, or disguised and supplemented» by later authors.⁸⁵

Despite its strong impact on later medico-psychiatric authors, the family tree of Boigey's 1908 article does not lead back to the classics of nineteenth-century French colonial psychiatry, i. e. to Jacques-Joseph Moreau de Tours' fa-

78 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 13. Kimon similarly wrote about «Spaniards who violently became Muslims»: Kimon, *Pathologie de l'Islam*, p. 126.

79 Chérif, *Étude psychologique*, p. 362.

80 Berthelien, *Homme maghrébin*, p. 43.

81 Chérif, *Étude psychologique*, p. 363.

82 Antoine Porot, *Tunisie*, in: *Congrès des médecins aliénistes et neurologistes de France et des pays de langue française*, Paris 1912, p. 55–75, here: p. 71.

83 Antoine Porot, *Notes de psychiatrie musulmane*, in: *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* 9 (1918), p. 377–384.

84 Berthelien, *À la recherche*, p. 134.

85 Tahar Boucherdakh, Abdelhadi Elfakir, *De l'assertion passionnée à l'hypnose intellectuelle. Le Maghrébin devant le psychiatre colonial*, in: *Horizons Maghrébains* 2 (1985), p. 46–60, here: p. 52.

mous 1843 article *Research on the Insane in the Orient*⁸⁶ or to Abel-Joseph Meilhon's influential study *Mental Alienation amongst the Arabs* from 1896,⁸⁷ but instead to Kimon's 1897 call for a massacre, i. e. *The Pathology of Islam and the Means to Destroy it*. Consequently, Boigey's article – and his influence on later authors – has to be read as a legacy of the most extreme anti-Muslim discourse of the time.

Conclusions

In summary, it can be said that Boigey's 1908 article – based on Kimon's book – contains inaccuracies, conspiracy theories, and deep underlying Islamophobia. Both Boigey and Kimon knew very little about Islam and perpetuated long-established Orientalist suspicions. Boigey even seems to have distanced himself somewhat from *Psychological Study on Islam* in later years, though this in no way absolves him. In 1919, for example, Boigey described Muḥammad, whom he had derisively called a «brilliant imposter» in 1908,⁸⁸ as a «great reformer» in the line of Confucius and Jesus.⁸⁹

The motivation behind the composition of his article can be found both in the Islamophobia he inherited from his study of Kimon and in his commitment to finding a solution to France's military issues during the *Campagne du Maroc*. Both Kimon and Boigey believed that Islam posed an essential threat to Europe, but, for Boigey, this threat felt more immediate. In one of the rare instances where Boigey digressed from Kimon's script, he described Muslims as «sleeping races». He warned that they would one day be «seized by the turmoil of ideas», and, «as they will have an enormous reserve of energy» – because they had remained inactive for so long – «they will end up dominating the world».⁹⁰ While Kimon's offensive book should be read as a more general condemnation of Muslims, Boigey's 1908 article was thus a clear call to arms to an expanding colonial power.

His deeply negative depiction of both Islam and the psychology of Muslim men should be interpreted as a justification of France's colonial aspirations and as a manual on how to best achieve the conquest of Muslim lands. Boigey's reliance on Kimon also contradicts the notion that, compared with later developments, the earlier years of French psychiatry's presence in North Africa, i. e. before the establishment of psychiatric institutions and the foundation of the *École*

86 Jacques-Joseph Moreau de Tours, *Recherches sur les aliénés, en Orient*, in: *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* 1 (1843), p. 103–132.

87 Abel-Joseph Meilhon, *L'aliénation mentale chez les Arabes. Études de nosologie comparée*, in: *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* 3 (1896), p. 17–32.

88 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 6.

89 Maurice Boigey, *Physiologie générale de l'éducation physique*, Paris 1919, p. 237.

90 Boigey, *Étude psychologique*, p. 7.

d'Alger in the 1920s and 1930s, were somehow more benevolent and less prejudiced. Theories of a compassionate psychiatric paternalism of this earlier period evaporate when contextualised against Boigey, his personal beliefs, and his unquestioning dependence on a wildly Islamophobic author.

While Boigey's study should be understood as an exceptionally negative voice in the descriptions of the psychopathology of North Africans,⁹¹ his article was nonetheless published in the most respected French psychiatric journal of the time and was read by many French doctors and psychiatrists. Being published in the *Annales Médico-Psychologiques* is also what makes his unrecognised plagiarism of Kimon – a marginal voice according to Bravo López – so problematic. Bravo López rightly explained that «if anyone in European intellectual history deserves to be labelled Islamophobic, D. Kimon fits the bill».⁹² Boigey amplified Kimon's theories about an «inactive» and essentially mad form of Muslim masculinity by pretending that they were his own, based on his experiences as a military doctor during the *Campagne du Maroc*. Porot and the psychiatrists of the *École d'Alger*, who might have recoiled at the bleak antisemitism and bloodthirstiness of Kimon's book, accepted Boigey's expertise. Through this process of sanitisation, they took up some of Boigey's theories and claims, thus indirectly spreading Kimon's racist beliefs to an even larger audience of medical and psychiatric experts in North Africa and France.

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⁹¹ See, for example: Bégué, *French Psychiatry*, p. 541.

⁹² Bravo López, *Genocidal Islamophobia*, p. 113.