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“Brutal by temperament and taste”:
Violence between comrades in France’s Armée d’Afrique, 1914-1918

Abstract: Central to the historiography of the First World War, scholarship on violence has focused on abstract, impersonal forms of violence between opposing forces or on more personal manifestations between civilians and enemy combatants. In contrast, this article uses military justice archives to explore instances of serious interpersonal violence and sustained brutality between soldiers within the same combat unit. It provides a new vantage point to explore the complex entanglement of violence and camaraderie and how that played out within the specific context France’s multi-ethnic Armée d’Afrique. Unpacking the accusations, explanations, and justifications that emerge from multi-vocal military justice sources illustrates what it meant to commit and be criminalized for certain acts of violence within a context that was utterly saturated with violence; how and where the line was drawn between acceptable and unacceptable conduct; and, most importantly, what violence reveals about individual combat experiences and relationships between comrades. Granting access to the perspectives and internal worlds of this diverse group of soldiers, many from racially and otherwise marginalized communities, military justice evidences a complicated and rich set of situational responses and social relationships that enhances our ability to reflect on the conflict’s impact upon the men caught up in it.

Keywords: First World War, Armée d’Afrique, violence, military justice, empire

« Brutal par tempérament et par goût » :
Violence entre camarades dans l'Armée d'Afrique, 1914-1918

Résumé : Au cœur de l'historiographie de la Première Guerre mondiale, les études sur la violence se sont concentrées sur les formes abstraites et impersonnelles de violence entre forces opposées ou sur les formes plus personnelles de violence entre civils et combattants ennemis. En revanche, cet article utilise les archives de la justice militaire pour explorer les cas de violences interpersonnelles graves et de brutalité continue entre soldats d'une même unité de combat. Il offre un nouveau point de vue pour explorer l'enchevêtrement complexe de la violence et de la camaraderie et la manière dont ces événements se sont déroulés dans le contexte spécifique de l'Armée d'Afrique multiethnique de la France. L'analyse des accusations, des explications et des justifications qui émergent des sources polyphoniques de la justice militaire illustre ce que signifiait commettre et être criminalisé pour certains actes de violence dans un contexte totalement saturé de violence; comment et où la ligne était tracée entre une conduite acceptable et inacceptable; et, plus important encore, ce que la violence révèle sur les expériences de combat individuelles et les relations entre camarades. En donnant accès aux perspectives et aux mondes intérieurs de ce groupe diversifié de soldats, dont beaucoup venaient de communautés racialement ou autrement marginalisées, la justice militaire met en évidence un ensemble complexe et riche de réponses situationnelles et de relations sociales qui renforcent notre capacité à réfléchir à l'impact du conflit sur les hommes qui y sont pris.

Mots-clés : Première Guerre mondiale ; Armée d’Afrique ; violence ; Justice militaire ; empire

On the night of March 3, 1915, men from the 54th Company of the 2nd Régiment de Marche des Zouaves were trying to get some rest in their *cantonnement* or quarters. They were prevented from sleeping, however, by their intoxicated comrade, Lenhard, who was "causing a commotion." When their pleas to Lenhard to be quiet had no effect, the soldiers started throwing shoes and other objects at him. Things escalated rapidly and officers were forced to intervene as Lenhard threatened those around him, stating his intention to take one particular *zouave* outside and slit his throat. In the *conseil de guerre*, or military tribunal, held in the wake of this incident, two *zouaves* testified that the initial "commotion" stemmed from them resisting Lenhard's attempt to force them to "commit acts against nature." Although he admitted being drunk and that he might have "said a few stupid things," Lenhard, a European settler from the Algerian town of Oran, vehemently denied the accusations of sexual assault. Instead, he framed his behavior as part of normal banter between soldiers. The report submitted by his commanding officer painted a very different picture: "Brutal by temperament and taste," Lenhard was deemed "the terror of his comrades," threatening them over the smallest matters to the point that "they tremble before him." Not content with bullying his fellow soldiers, Lenhard also regularly menaced sergeants, captains and other *gradés*. Indeed, since joining the military in 1906, Lenhard had accrued 260 days of punishments for minor offenses, mostly related to drunkenness and altercations with others, and had spent time in a disciplinary battalion; a rap sheet that would have done him no favors in the eyes of the tribunal judges. Found guilty of verbally assaulting and threatening his superiors, and of committing violence against a fellow *zouave*, Lenhard was sentenced to two years in a military prison.[1]

Using military justice archives, like the ones summarized here, this article asks how we should situate and thus seek to comprehend the kinds of "brutal" behaviors of which Lenhard was accused, especially given the incredible levels of violence that formed the backdrop to his and other soldiers's daily lives between 1914 and 1918.[2] The multi-vocality of these sources, especially the inclusion of the voices and perspective of "ordinary" soldiers, enables the complexities of camaraderie to be explored in new ways, not least by thinking about how such relationships operated in the multi-ethnic divisions of France's Armée d'Afrique where settlers like Lenhard served alongside metropolitan Frenchmen, naturalized Algerian Jews, and tens of thousands of colonized North Africans. Indeed, while the military understood and sought to deal with violence between their combatants in specific ways, the resultant judicial proceedings and associated documentation offer insights into a much broader spectrum of

[1] Service Historique de la Défense (henceforth SHD), GR 11 J 1548, Conseil de Guerre (henceforth CG), Lenhard, François Jean (2e bis RMZ, 45e DI).

[2] Out of an estimated 200,000 cases overall, some 140,000 tribunal records survive. Organized by division, these sources comprise registers of "minutes" summarising key information about the soldier, the crime and the sentence passed. Each minute links to a *dossier de procédure* containing a more expansive set of paperwork generated in the course of the *conseil de guerre* investigation and trial. Bach, *Justice militaire 1915-1916*, 155

issues and behaviors. By granting access, in often unexpected ways, to the experiences and internal lives of this diverse group of combatants, many of whom came from racially and otherwise marginalized communities, military justice archives enable us to replace reductive characterization of men like Lenhard as simply "brutal by temperament and taste" with evidence of a complicated and rich set of situational responses and social relationships.

Conflict, Camaraderie, and Colonialism

The ferocious violence of the First World War is starkly visible in the conflict's statistics: of the 8.4 million men mobilized by France, some 1.3 million died, representing 3.4 percent of the entire French population. There were more than 3.5 million documented wounded, many of them injured more than once, while a million men faced the postwar world with some form of permanent disability.[3] The early stages of the fighting were the most brutal. By the end of the first forty-five days, some 600,000 men had been either killed, wounded, imprisoned, or were missing.[4] This figures included 27,000 soldiers killed on Saturday August 22, 1914, the bloodiest day in French military history up to that point.[5] The fact that there was a "clear spatial, temporal and social structure to the exercise of lethal violence,"[6] meaning these elements were not the same for all soldiers at all moments, does not alter the over-riding point that this was, to use Anne Duménil's words, "a war of infinite violence."[7] Although initially notable by its absence from histories of the conflict, especially among scholars who were also veterans, violence is now firmly established within the historiography of the First World War. This scholarship has primarily focused on abstract, impersonal forms of violence between opposing forces or on more personal manifestations between civilians and enemy soldiers.[8] Almost no attention has been paid to violence between individuals within the same combat unit.[9] Indeed, the

[3] Prost, *In the Wake of War,* 44-5; Delaporte, "Mutilation and Disfiguration (France)."
[4] Attal and Rolland, "La Justice militaire en 1914-1915," 134.
[5] Saint-Fuscien, "The end of the great military leader?," 64.
[6] Ziemann, *Violence and the German Soldier in the Great War*, 21.
[7] Duménil, "Soldiers' Suffering and Military Justice in The German Army of the Great War," 44.
[8] Among this vast literature, some particularly useful entry points for the French case are Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, "Violence et consentement: la 'culture de guerre du premier conflit mondial," 251–71; Cochet, *Survivre au front 1914-1918;* Geyer, "Violence et expérience de la violence au XX^{e} siècle". 37–71. For a broader overview see Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*. For literature on violence towards civilians see, amongst others, Ruth Harris, "'Child of the Barbarian': Rape, Race and Nationalism in France during the First World War," 170–206; Connolly, *The Experience of Occupation in the Nord, 1914-18*, 37–66; Audoin-Rouzeau, *L'enfant de l'ennemi*. The legacies of this violence have been explored most notably through critical engagement with George L. Mosse's theory that European societies were "brutalized" by the First World War as argued in *Fallen Soliders*. The most pertinent critiques of Mosse's work, for the purposes of this article, are Prost, "Les limites de la brutalisation," 5–20; Hassett and Moyd, "Introduction: writing the history of colonial veterans of the Great war," 1–11; Edele and Gerwarth, "The Limits of Demobilization," 3–14.
[9] There has, however, been some work on violence, specifically inter-racial violence, between civilians on the same side, notably Tyler Stovall's investigation of violence between metropolitan French and colonial workers on the homefront. See "The Color Line behind the Lines,", 737–69

opposite of violence towards the enemy is often considered to be violence against the self, rather than against one's comrades.[10] Of course no one has claimed the French Army was free from conflict. Tensions were inevitable given the conditions in which men from disparate social, cultural, and geographical backgrounds were forced to live and fight. Examples of the quotidian expressions of such frustrations litter the letters, diaries and memoirs of metropolitan French soldiers which form the backbone of scholarship on camaraderie in the trenches.[11] Yet for all it is common to acknowledge that French Army was "not a peaceful and harmonious institution," but rather one that "experienced outbursts, violence and threats, some of which were tacitly tolerated and others severely punished," the nature and implications of those "outbursts, violence and threats" and the military's reaction to them has yet to be explored in depth.[12]

Also frequently missing from the literature is a consideration of how interactions might have functioned when the language, religion, ethnicity, and relationship to "Frenchness" of the comrades in question was different to that of the majority of combatants.[13] This is why it is particularly instructive to look at the three infantry divisions that made up France's Armée d'Afrique (the 37th, 38th and 45th). Normally garrisoned in North Africa, these divisions contained European settlers, naturalized Algerian Jews and colonized North African subjects alongside metropolitan Frenchmen. Recruits with French citizenship, including settlers and Algerian Jews, mostly served in *zouave* regiments, while colonized subjects were placed into *tirailleur* units, albeit with a centrally mandated quota of white French officers to oversee them. In the military, as in the empire, the subject/citizen distinction was used by the French Republic as a proxy for racial differentiation. The legal designation "colonial subject" should therefore be understood as referring Arab or Berber combatants from North Africa, unless otherwise specified.

Contact between different Armée d'Afrique formations, on and off the battlefield, was not uncommon, especially following the creation of 'mixed' *zouave* and *tirailleur* regiments from mid-1915. Much valuable work exists exploring the everyday impact of this imbrication of metropole and empire on colonial combatants. While the source base underpinning these studies is varied, incorporating postal censorship records, the press, and oral histories (albeit mainly focused on West

[10] See, for example, claims made in Becker and Rousso, "D'un guerre l'autre," 71.
[11] Such work was pioneered by Jacques Meyer in *La vie quotidienne des soldats pendant la Grande Guerre*. More recent examples include Maurin, *Armée, guerre, société*; Lafon, *La Camaraderie au front 1914-1918*; Mariot, "Social Encounters in the French Trenches,", 1–27; Mariot, *Tous unis dans la tranchée?*.
[12] Cazals and Loez, *Dans les tranchées de 1914-1918*, 226.
[13] Often colonial troops are simply not discussed within the literature on camaraderie where the default assumption remains that "the soldier" was a white, metropolitan Frenchmen. On the rare occasions when combatants from the empire are mentioned it is usually very briefly and as a category apart. For an example of the latter see Alexandre Lafon's telling entitled chapter "The 'Others' as Comrades? Colonials, Allies and Enemies". Lafon, *La Camaraderie au front,* 181–7.

African troops), understandably given the imbalances in the records available, the written words of French officers, colonial officials and colonial politicians tend to feature prominently.[14] It is important to take these official and institutional perspectives into account, and much can be gleaned from attentive and critical readings of such top-down sources, as the extant scholarship demonstrates. But there are also limits, particularly in terms of what we can learn from rather than simply about colonial soldiers.

Military justice archives equally contain these kinds of top-down institutional documents which reflect what those in charge deemed it a priority to prosecute and punish more than behavior on the ground. However, the inclusion of, often extensive, transcripts of interviews with and/or statements from the accused, victims, and witnesses gathered at different stages of the judicial process — during initial questioning at the moment of arrest and/or within the accused man's unit to establish what happened, as part of the enquiry to determine whether the soldier should be prosecuted, and as part of the tribunal itself – draws in an alternative set of perspectives. This makes military justice a valuable and, as yet, under-utilized source which brings to the fore a particularly unheard subset of voices: colonized combatants serving in the Armée d'Afrique. My approach to these documents owes much to the "*monde du contact*" paradigm advanced by Emmanuel Blanchard and Sylvie Thénault, and to recent work on "contact zones" by Santanu Das, Anna , and Daniel Steinbach. In contrast to the latter's focus on literary sources, however, the use of military justice sources expand the field of possible voices specifically to illiterate and non-French speaking soldiers .[15] As I have argued elsewhere, although always mediated to some degree, especially in the case of soldiers who were illiterate and/or forced to communicate through an interpreter, we can still use these sources to gain valuable insights into lives of colonized and otherwise marginalized soldiers who left almost no other first-hand documentation.[16]

Tracing the complex entanglement of violence and camaraderie articulated via military justice sources using units whose roots lie in the empire thus brings into conversation these three previously quite separate strands of historiography. Centering instances of serious interpersonal violence, such as assault and murder or sustained brutality, like that displayed by Lenhard, within the ranks of men

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14 Fogarty, *Race and War in France,* 13. Fogarty's work is a crucial reference point within an expanding body of literature exploring the French empire in the First World War. Other notable works include Andrews and Kanya-Forstner, "France, Africa and the First World War," 11–23; Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée*; Michel, *L'Appel à l'Afrique*, reprinted as *Les Africains et la Grande guerre*; Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*; Lunn, *Memoirs of the Malestrom*; Frémeaux, *Les colonies dans la Grande guerre*; Mann, "Not Quite Citizen"; Recham, *Les Musulmans Algériens dans l'armée française (1919-1945)*; Mann, *Native Sons*; Hassett, *Mobilising Memory*.

[15] Blanchard and Thénault, "Quel 'monde du contact'?", 3–7; Das, Maguire and Steinbach, *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict*, especially 1–34; Maguire, *Contact Zones of the First World War*.

[16] Eldridge, "Conflict and Community in the Trenches," 23-46. The best data on the socioeconomic profile of men brought before a *conseil de guerre* can be found in Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien's detailed statistical breakdown of the 3rd Infantry Division. See *À vos ordres?,* 134–8.

supposedly on the same side allows us to think through three inter-related questions: what it meant to commit and be criminalized for certain acts of violence within a context that was utterly saturated with violence; how and where the line was drawn between acceptable, tolerable and unacceptable conduct; and, most importantly, what violence reveals about both individual combat experiences and relationships between comrades. Unpacking the accusations, explanations and justifications that emerge, essentially reading these official archives "against the grain", reveals the conditions, emotions, and experiences of serving soldiers, including information about metal health and same-sex sexual relationships that are difficult to find for soldiers in general but particularly scare for colonized combatants. Surfacing material relating to the internal emotional worlds of colonized subjects broadens and deepens our historical portrait of "the soldier", contributing to the process of writing back in a group of combatants who are still largely considered as a category apart, when they are considered at all.[17]

The article begins by mapping how unsanctioned violence within the French Army was defined, assessed, and prosecuted (or not) by military authorities during the Great War, and the role that race and racialized thinking played in those processes. It demonstrates both how intersecting privileges associated with race, rank, and class worked to justify certain acts of violence and exonerate their perpetrators, and how passive colonial knowledge was put into active practice to condemn other behaviors and other kinds of soldiers. Constructions generated "from above" by commanding officers and officials involved with military justice are then juxtaposed with the picture presented "from below" through the testimonies of men involved in altercations to show what happened when the complicating and messy categories of race, religion, and sexuality collided with apparently clear-cut military hierarchies and judicial categories and processes in highly pressured situations. What emerges from the case studies in the second half of the article, which focus on alcohol consumption, mental health, and same-sex sexual relationships among colonized soldiers, is that behaviors the military authorities were quick to attribute to innate character flaws might be better understood as situational responses to an incredibly stressful and violent daily environment that enhance our understanding of soldierly endurance and its limits. As well as offering a direct challenge to racialized understandings of colonized combatants, these records also demonstrate that violent episodes which the military dismissed as having "no motive" were in fact rooted in complex sets of emotions and experiences that become visible as the soldiers in question were called upon to explain themselves and their actions.

[17] In addition to the texts cited above with respect to the French empire and the First World War, see the innovative work being done by Michelle Moyd on the German East African context particularly her book *Violent Intermediaries* and the article "Color Lines, Front Lines," 13-35.

Defining the Boundary between Acceptable and Unacceptable Violence

The fundamental purpose of military justice was to maintain order, discipline and thus cohesion under fire by prosecuting and punishing behavior that violated military norms and rules. What constituted a "crime" in the eyes of the French armed forces was outlined in the Code of Military Justice.[18] Minor infractions and petty offenses were dealt with internally by the soldier's unit, while more serious crimes and *délits* were brought before a *conseil de guerre* or tribunal. Conduct warranting a tribunal appearance covered acts that were crimes in civilian life like theft, assault, rape, and murder, as well as offenses specific to military life such as refusing to obey an order, abandoning a post, and desertion.[19] Cases could be dismissed during the investigative stage before reaching a tribunal via a *non-lieu* decision. When it was deemed necessary to proceed to a full *conseil de guerre* hearing, a guilty verdict required a majority vote by at least three of the five judges, all of whom were serving officers of varying seniority. As in the civilian justice system, punishments ran the full gamut up to the death penalty, although most of those found guilty were given custodial sentences ranging from a few months to many years. France's acute manpower needs, however, meant that increasing numbers of these sentences were suspended to allow convicted men to return to the frontlines, often presented as an opportunity for them to "redeem" themselves [*racheter la faute*].[20] Nonetheless, the stakes were high for soldiers and prosecutions instilled considerable fear, as the military intended. These proceedings also represented a very public othering of the combatant, placing him outside of the dominant norms of duty, honor, and self-sacrifice that were integral to military life and regimental reputations.[21]

When defining "violence" the military authorities made a clear distinction between the controlled and disciplined collective violence of the battlefield directed toward a common aim (the defeat of Germany) and the uncontrolled, unsanctioned violence of individual soldiers which threatened order, hierarchy, morale and thus the effective functioning of a unit. However, this latter

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[18] First compiled in 1857, the code was not substantially altered until April 1916 when the system became more flexible via the introduction of 'extenuating circumstances' and suspended sentences. For a copy of the 1916 version of the code see https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6108631j.r=code%20de%20la%20justice%20militaire%201916?rk=42918;4.

[19] Saint-Fuscien, "La justice militaire française au cours de la Première Guerre mondiale," 116; Suard, "La justice militaire française et la peine de mort," 149.

[20] As a result of the prevalence of suspended sentences [*sursis*], in combination with other changes introduced in 1916 which made military justice more flexible and lenient, it is estimated that only 10 percent of condemned men completed all or part of their sentence. Saint-Fuscien, *À vos ordres*, 189, 227.

[21] In addition to André Bach's key reference text, *Justice militaire,* scholarship on this topic has been led by Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien among whose many works the following have particularly informed my thinking here: "Juger et être jugé," 251–73; and "Pourquoi obéit-on?," 4–23. Cases of *fusillés* [men executed by firing squad] and the campaigns to rehabilitate them are dealt with by Bach, *Fusillés pour l'exemple 1914-1915*; Offenstadt, *Les fusillés de la Grande Guerre*; Le Naour, *Fusillés*. For questions of authority and obedience see Saint-Fuscien, *À vos ordres?*; Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience*. On the 1917 mutinies see in particular Pedroncini, *Les Mutineries de 1917*; Loez, *14-18, les refus de la guerre*; Rolland, *La grève des tranchées*. For a highly critical view of military justice, see Roux, *La Grande Guerre inconnue,* 216.

category encompassed a broad spectrum of behaviors from the spontaneous physical articulation of daily frustrations, usually in the form of a punch, kick, or slap, all the way up to the taking of a human life in a pre-meditated fashion. Violence could be accidental, incurred while subduing an unruly or drunk comrade, when carrying out routine duties like cleaning a rifle, or committed in self-defense. The focus here will be on serious forms of interpersonal violence covering the following military justice charges: assault [*voies de fait*], aggravated assault/battery [*coups et blessures*], manslaughter [*homicide involontaire*], homicide [*homicide/homicide volontaire*], murder [*meurtre*] and pre-meditated murder [*assassination*].[22] Excluded from the data set are threats [*outrages*], unless they also entailed the enactment of physical violence. Because this is a study of violence between comrades, cases of sexual assault or indecency [*viol* or *attentat à la pudeur*] against civilians are not considered, but accusations between soldiers are analyzed. Far less prevalent than prosecutions for the two dominant crimes of desertion or abandoning a post, the aforementioned charges accounted for just over 4 percent (n= 245) of *conseil de guerre* cases within the Armée d'Afrique between 1914 and 1919; in 40 percent of these cases the accused soldier(s) were colonized combatants. In terms of the severity of the violence, 8.7 percent of the altercations that were prosecuted involved the deliberate taking of another life.[23] The majority of incidents took place behind the lines, reflecting the overall distribution of crimes in both the Armée d'Afrique and the army more broadly.[24] Unsurprisingly, despite all these clearly defined categories, rules and procedures, the actual application of military justice was context-dependent and subjective, not least because many of the relevant decision were taken by officers who were also serving at the front.[25] Exploring the gap that often existed between the letter of the law, as set down by the Code of Military Justice, and how things operated on the ground reveals what behaviors were and were not considered acceptable, and under what circumstances. Central to such determinations

[22] For the punishments associated with these different crimes, see the post-1916 Code de Justice Militaire pour l'armée de terre: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6108631j?rk=300430;4

[23] There is some variation across the three divisions of the Armée d'Afrique with charges associated with violence accounting for 5.94 percent of cases in the 37th Division, 3.88 percent in the 38th Division and 3.67 percent in the 45th Division. The overall figure for the Armée d'Afrique is 4.16 percent. There is also racial variation with colonized soldiers accounting for 58 percent, 49 percent and 26 percent respectively in the 37th, 38th and 45th divisions. Excluded from these statistics are *non-lieu* cases that were investigated but dismissed before they reached the tribunal stage. These figures are based on as complete a survey of the archives as possible. However, due to both the pandemic and problems at the SHD itself, there may be a small number of additional cases that I have not yet identified.

[24] In his work on the 3rd Infantry Division, Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien estimates that in 1914, at least 80 percent of men were judged for crimes that occurred in the combat zone, such as "abandoning a post in the presence of the enemy". In 1918, the exact opposite was true with at least 75 percent of tribunal decisions concerning actions committed in non-combat zones. The *cantonnement* and its environs were the prime locations for rule breaking. "Pourquoi obéit-on?,"9; *À vos ordres,* 102–7.

[25] There is some excellent work on these issues with respect to the British and German armies such as Duménil, "En marge du combat?," 89–111; Jahr, "War, Discipline, and Politics," 73–107; Jahr, "Désertion et déserteurs dans la Grand Guerre," 111–24.

were perceptions of the accused as articulated by those with higher ranks; assessments which, in turn, highlight the priorities and concerns of military authorities at particular moments in the conflict.

At the most basic level, what was tolerable remains invisible—the incidents and infractions that were never written up. Accused of striking an inferior he deemed to have been insubordinate, Corporal Gibergy was asked if there were a lot of "troublemakers" [*mauvais têtes*] in his company of *zouaves*. Gesturing to this invisible hinterland of behavior that was challenging but not sufficiently serious to warrant further measures Gibergy replied: "There are a great number and the exercise of command is therefore made very difficult."[26] Gibergy's case equally points to one of the most obvious lines between acceptable and unacceptable behavior: violence that violated the military hierarchy. The 1857 Code of Military Justice, which remained in force until 1916, was founded on the "full submission" of the soldier to an order, any order, emanating from a superior without hesitation or murmur as their first duty and the *sine qua non* on which the strength of the army rested. From the moment they enlisted, and long before they reached a battlefield, all recruits were thus subjected to extremely severe discipline designed to ensure they accepted the constraints and rigors of military life.[27] Given the sanctity of command structures and the imperative to maintain respect for this fundamental martial principle, violence committed by rank-and-file soldiers against their superiors was thus regularly and harshly punished. Such transgressions of were compounded, in the case of the Armée d'Afrique, by the intersection of racial and military hierarchies which frequently created scenarios in which colonized subjects were accused of attacking white European officers. Returning to quarters for evening roll call on June 21, 1915, the *tirailleur* Bouhaka, who had been drinking—although not, he claimed, to the point of being inebriated—got into a fight with another *tirailleur*. Stepping in to separate the two men, Corporal Mariano received several blows. The corporal presented this as an attack on him by Bouhaka, whereas the *tirailleur* stated that in the melee Mariano struck him on the nose and he returned the blow "instinctively" without knowing exactly who he was hitting. Found guilty of battery, assault against a superior, and "obvious and public drunkenness", Bouhaka was sentenced to eight years hard labor; a strikingly harsh sentence, even considering the long list of minor punishments he had incurred since enrolling with the army in 1904.[28]

More complex were cases of violence committed by superiors against men under their command. While officers were within their rights to chastise their men, and even to "strike" [*frapper*]

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[26] SHD, GR 11 J 1322, CG, Gibergy, Léon Alexis (3e RMZ, 37e DI), "Procès verbal d'interrogatoire: Gibergy, Léon Alexis," Jan. 28, 1916. For reasons that will be discussed subsequently, Gibergy was found not guilty.

[27] Roynette, *Bons pour le service* , p. 343. However, as the author notes, although the most severe, the military was not the only institution in the Third Republic to pursue such a philosophy – schools also had vey coercive and harsh disciplinary regimes, as did many workplaces.

[28] SHD, GR 11 J 1550, CG, Bouhaka, Bouzira ould Mohammed (1er RMTA, 45e DI).

an inferior in defense of the self or others, to "rally" deserters, or prevent acts of pillage, clear limits were placed on such behavior, at least in theory.[29] Prosecutions for breaking these rules were certainly rare, and, even when brought to a *conseil de guerre*, the superiors in question were almost never convicted. The *adjudant* Sarrazin, for example, was found not guilty of assault despite admitting to caning a soldier who refused to undertake a work detail behind the lines so hard he was incapacitated for more than thirty days.[30] However, references by soldiers to the use of physical force by their superiors were commonplace. Multiple dossiers mention blows distributed when issuing orders and ensuring these were carried out, or as an accompaniment to verbal warnings about behavior. Soldiers also reported being manhandled to hurry them along during marches and work tasks, or as they were transported to disciplinary spaces. Rank-and-file soldiers accused of insulting or assaulting a superior often stated in their defense that the officer in question had struck them either first or as well. Writing to the commander of the 45th Division on March 27, 1915 about an assault charge brought against the *tirailleur* Mohamed for attacking his superior, the quartermaster Déguero, the tribunal's *commissaire rapporteur* noted that the accused *tirailleur* claimed he had been kicked and punched by Déguero after he stopped to adjust his uniform while on route his work duties. The *commissaire* then asked the general if "it might be a good idea" to also charge the corporal in accordance with the military code. Clearly the general agreed as Déguero, a settler from Algiers, was subsequently found guilty and sentenced to two months in prison. But without the intervention of the *commissaire*, this act would likely have gone unpunished.[31] Indeed, this is the only example I have found within the Armée d'Afrique where accusations of violence by a superior raised by an already-accused inferior were followed up. Normally, any such claims arising from soldiers's testimonies were discredited, discounted, or simply ignored in reports by commanding officers and in the *commissaire rapporteur*'s summative "report of the affair".[32]

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[29] SHD, GR 19 N 298, note 3190, "Du général commandant en chef à M. le général de l'armée," Sept. 1, 1914. Cited in Saint-Fuscien, *À vos ordres?,* 210.

[30] SHD, GR 11 J 1568, CG, Sarrazin, Louis (3e BMILA, 45e DI).

[31] SHD, GR 11 J 1548, CG, Déguero, François (1er RMTA, 45e DI), "Le Capitaine Cusa, commissaire rapporteur près du Conseil de guerre de la 45e Division à M. le Général Commandant la 45e Division," Mar. 27, 1915. Déguero appears variously in the file as Déguiro and Séguiro. Ahmed was ultimately acquitted of 'violence against superiors'. SHD, GR 11 J 1548, CG, Ahmed ben Mohamed (6e RMT, 45e DI),

32 Based on his study of the 3rd Infantry Division, Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien argues that before spring 1916 there were "no mentions of 'punches' or 'shoves' by superiors in court martial records", that defendants never complained about such acts, and that they were never cited in their defence. He attributes the shift in 1916 to changing norms surrounding the role of the officer in the face of lengthy, arduous and very costly offensives and mounting concerns regarding the morale of the troops. While traditional martial masculine traits such as courage and *sang froid* remained in place, these were now supplemented by the requirement that officers show care and concern for their men if they wished to retain their respect and obedience. This timeline does not hold true for the Armée d'Afrique, as demonstrated by the cases of Gibergy (January 1916) and Déguero (March 1915), among others. While this does not necessarily undermine Saint-Fuscien's wider claim that brutality by

A key consideration for the military authorities when deciding where to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable behavior was the perceived character of the accused. Being deemed a "good" soldier was a clear asset within the military justice process. In several cases, soldiers accused of violent acts were found not guilty or had their cases dismissed before they reached the tribunal stage based on previous or subsequent bravery in battle. Such acts were taken as evidence of the accused soldier's willingness to "redeem their fault" and their ability to be re-integrated back into the unit.[33] One of the most explicit statements of the logic underpinning such decisions can be found in the not guilty verdict handed to the aforementioned Corporal Gibergy who was charged with striking an inferior, a *zouave* named Latil. On January 21, 1916, a soldier from another section came to distribute packets of tobacco. As leader of his unit, Gibergy was asked how many packets of tobacco were required. When he answered eleven, Latil interrupted to say that the section only had ten men. Furious at the intervention, Gibergy slapped Latil with the back of his left hand. Latil went straight to the captain to report the incident, which Gibery immediately admitted to. Expressing regret, Gibergy described the slap as "an almost unconscious gesture" prompted by Latil's "habit of meddling in an irritating manner" and compounded by the fact that Latil's words "made me out to be a thief". At the time of the incident, Gibergy continued, Latil happened to have his head bent towards him which favored a "brusque movement" that he was "not able to repress".[34]

In his report of the incident, Captain Richardot accepted that the violence displayed by Gibergy was "obviously condemnable," even more so because Latil was "a good soldier… a peaceful and calm man". Nonetheless, Richardot asserted, "mitigating circumstances are clearly present". These included testimonies expressing surprise that Gibergy was being held in detention over this incident since he did not have a reputation for mistreating his men; Gibergy's almost entirely clean rap sheet save for one minor punishment from November 20, 1914, prior to his promotion to corporal; and Latil's own statement that he wished he had not filed a complaint "especially as the corporal is a brave and energetic man who has proven himself". This final point was clearly pivotal since, having outlined the extenuating factors, Captain Richardot added that even if Gibergy had shown himself to be "brutal" in this instance, "his violent nature may have been (let us not forget) a factor in the ferocious bravery with which he has already fought and which has earned him a *médaille*

officers became less acceptable as the war progressed, it is a useful reminder that each division possessed their own unique culture, including around discipline. See "The end of the great military leader?," 68–70.

[33] See, for example, SHD, GR 11 J 1320, CG, Pipi, Marcel François Auguste (2e RMZ, 37e DI). This was also a feature of German military justice as outlined in Duménil, "En marge du combat?," 105–8.

[34] SHD, GR 11 J 1322, Gibergy, "Procès-verbal d'interrogatoire: Gibergy, Léon," Jan. 28, 1916.

militaire."[35] This decoration and the accompanying citation, in Richardot's eyes, shed a "singular light" on Gibergy's temperament, leading him to conclude:

> In this hand-to-hand [*coups-à-coups*] war of the trenches when the often indomitable tenacity that must be deployed to take or keep a piece [of territory] requires a true savagery, temperaments infused in the manner of Corporal Gibergy's deserve their share of consideration.[36]

Obliged by procedural rules to refer the incident to a *conseil de guerre*, Richardot nonetheless made an explicit case for leniency to be shown towards Gibergy. This suggests a tacit admission by the military of the brutalizing nature of fighting in the trenches; an admission that since the army needed men willing to use violence, they also had to accept that sometimes those behaviours would spill out beyond the battlefield, including among those with the challenging task of maintaining order in the ranks in the midst of these very difficult conditions. Although we do not have access to the deliberations of the tribunal judges, their unanimous not guilty verdict indicates they found Richardot's entreaties persuasive. Gibergy's case thus demonstrates that a soldier's perceived value to the military effort could redefine the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable violence and take precedence over rendering justice to a victim. Consideration was attached to bravery and good conduct prior to and immediately following a violent offense because this suggested the potential for the accused to soldier to (re)conform to the dominant masculine martial tropes of courage, self-discipline—or at least a militarily valuable loss of self-discipline in the case of Gibergy's "ferocious bravery" in battle—and a willingness to risk one's life for the *patrie*.[37]

Although not explicitly named, race, alongside other structural privileges, almost certainly shaped how Gibergy's violence was perceived. The "savagery" for which he was praised would likely have been read very differently had he not been a white, metropolitan Frenchman from Allevard, near Grenoble. As the existing scholarship has demonstrated, acknowledgement of praiseworthy masculine battlefield virtues sat alongside racist fears that the supposed "barbarity" of "uncivilized" African combatants—which made them such effective fighters, according to dominant ideologies—

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[35] Gibergy not only received a *médaille militaire* but also a *croix de guerre* with distinction [*palmes*] for bravery, including lack of concern for his own safety, during combat on February 17–18, 1915.

[36] SHD, GR 11 J 1322, Gibergy, "Rapport du Capitaine Richardot, Commandant la 4e Compagnie de 3e Régiment de Zouaves," n. d. The mitigating evidence Richardot mentioned is drawn from the following documents : "Procès-verbal d'information: Sotton, Pierre," Jan. 28, 1916; "Relevé des punitions: Gibergy, Léon,"; "Procès-verbal d'information: Latil, Emile," Jan. 28, 1916.

[37] A similar set of logics and outcome can be found in the case of Lieutenant Jean Beaudemoulin whose "abuse of authority" accusation was dropped before it reached the tribunal stage. See SHD, GR 11 J 1350, Non-lieu (henceforth NL), Beaudemoulin, Jean (2e RMZ, 37e DI)

could be turned against the French at any moment unless carefully controlled and appropriately directed at all times.[38] As a result, judgments regarding violence involving colonized soldiers could be particularly charged.

Although the precise impact of race can be difficult to parse, especially in terms of causality, because it was one of multiple intersecting factors in any given scenario, a set of case studies that usefully point to the ways in which race informed military thinking as well as judicial processes and outcomes is violence that was perceived to be connected to same-sex sexual relations. We can see this in the case of the *tirailleur* Moktar, for example, who was tried for one count of premeditated murder and two charges of attempted murder. Although the tribunal were unable to determine unequivocally the precise relationship between the men involved, Moktar's reputation as a "impure [*immonde*] individual" and an "inveterate pederast" (a term used frequently by the military at this time as a synonym for "homosexual") played a significant role in awarding the harshest possible punishment: military degradation and the death penalty. The strength of the tribunal's feeling was underlined by the *commissaire rapporteur's* summary report which, unusually, included the personal comment that he was "entirely in agreement" with the view expressed by the judges. The *commissaire* went on to specify that "Human life is too valuable, above all in times of war, to defer to filthy passions," before concluding that "an act of this nature risks being badly interpreted by our indigenous troops."[39]

Sex between men was not a crime, either in civil society or the military, sodomy having been decriminalized in 1791 by the Revolutionary Constituent Assembly. Military justice therefore only became involved in instances of sexual assault or indecency, or when (accusations of) same-sex sexual relationships led to some form of violent altercation. In the latter case, which was much more common, it was the rule-breaking associated with the violence that was prosecuted; the purported relationships serving as explanatory or background context, as the example of Moktar illustrates.[40] This encapsulates the ambiguity in the military's stance towards same-sex sexual relationships. As in wider society, homosexuality remained highly stigmatized in the French armed forces in the early twentieth century, particularly because of its association with "feminine" characteristics that stood in direct opposition to martial masculine ideals, rendering the soldier in question a "suspect comrade"

[38] The most famous text to articulate this view is Charles Mangin's *La force noire*. For a more extensive discussion of these ambiguities see Fogarty, *Race and War,* 55–96.
[39] SHD, GR 11 J 1323, CG, Moktar, Salem ben Tidjani (2e RMTA, 37e DI), "Rapport sur l'affaire," Jul. 3, 1916.
[40] Data from the Armée d'Afrique bears out Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien's observation that crimes concerning morals were rare at the level of the *conseil de guerre*. *À vos ordres?,* 140–1. Across the three divisions, there is only one case of a prosecution for indecent assault [*attentat à la pudeur*] where the victim was a fellow soldier and that was dismissed via a non-lieu decision. See SHD, GR 11 J 1348, NL, Brahim, Ben Ali (2e RMT – Brigade du Maroc, 37e DI).

on multiple levels.[41] What military authorities feared most was the supposed contagious potential of homosexuality to "infect" "normal" soldiers and thus undermine the morale, cohesion and effectiveness of their troops; as alluded to in the *commissaire's* comment about the risk of Moktar's actions being "badly interpreted by our indigenous troops." At the same time, the military was unable to stop such relationships from forming. Indeed, the social promiscuity of these intense, all-male environments may have actively facilitated them, producing a fluid and porous spectrum of behaviors that stood in contrast to the binary categories that structured dominant societal norms. Jason Crouthamel's argument that comradeship in the German army functioned as an "umbrella concept under which men with different perceptions of emotional and sexual norms found inclusion" is thus equally applicable to the French context.[42] Nor did the French Army show much zeal in punishing such practices, generally preferring to turn a blind eye, certainly during wartime when more urgent matters took priority.[43] Until, that is, these sexual encounters disrupted the normal functioning of the unit, at which point soldier's like Moktar and their behavior crossed the line from tolerable into unacceptable.[44]

What the *commissaire* also made explicit in his report was the racialized framing of Moktar's behavior through his assertion that "the nationality of the accused [who was Tunisian] cannot be an attenuating factor since Arab law punishes masturbation with the death penalty."[45] This statement gestures to the contradictory colonial beliefs that homosexuality was endemic among North African Muslims, yet also forbidden by a religion whose concept of "justice" was brutal, irrational and excessive, in implicit contrast to the French system. The link between sexual licentiousness and the empire, in which hot climates were deemed to provoke sexual "excesses," was firmly embedded in the French cultural imaginary by 1914. Practices such as sodomy, often referred to as "the Oriental vice," were especially strongly associated with France's North African territories and with the Armée d'Afrique who were garrisoned there. Robert Aldrich opens his book on colonialism and homosexuality by noting that "in French slang, '*faire passer son brevet colonial*'… meant to initiate [a soldier] into sodomy."[46] Much ink was spilled by military officials and medics over the potential for French soldiers to be corrupted by the supposed sexual deviancy of Arab men, especially given the

[41] For examples of this stigmatisation in practice see Revenin, *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines à Paris*, 136. For an alternative perspective see Florence Tamagne's argument that homosexuality acquired a new and more positive visibility during the First World War as part of the "fraternity of the trenches" in *Histoire de l'homosexualité en Europe*.
[42] Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front,* 3, 46–61.
[43] For further discussion of this see Tamagne, "Guerre et homosexualité," 124, 127.
[44] Jackson, *One of the Boys* makes a similar argument is made with respect to homosexuality in the Canadian military in the Second World War.
[45] SHD, GR 11 J 1323, Moktar, "Rapport sur l'affaire," Jul. 3, 1916.
[46] Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 1.

lack of European women in these colonial spaces, and the risk of such contagion spreading to the metropole. The Armée d'Afrique's infamous disciplinary battalions and colonial prisons or *bagnes,* known colloquially as *Biribi*, serving as a prominent focal point for such anxieties.[47]

As men of their time and milieu, officers like the *commissaire rapporteur* cited above were impregnated with these ideas and associated racial stereotypes which, in turn, shaped how they understood and judged the behavior of soldiers within the Armée d'Afrique. While same-sex sexual relations occurred between soldiers of all races and ethnicities, and indeed ranks, within the army, it is telling that all but two of the *conseil de guerre* cases in the Armée d'Afrique where this is a factor pertain to soldiers who were colonized subjects.[48] Moreover, the two exceptions involving French citizens relate to the Algerian-born settler Lenhard, who opened this article, and a naturalized Algerian Jew.[49] This implies a certain instability between citizenship status and identity, particularly regarding perceptions of "Frenchness" that applied to combatants who were colonial citizens (as opposed to colonized subjects) from North Africa.[50] Given that bodies are prime sites through which "imperial and colonial power was imagined and exercised," cases like Moktar's also demonstrate the complex intersections between race, masculinity, and empire.[51] By attesting to the perceived inability of soldiers from North Africa to master their "baser" instincts and control their behavior more generally, *conseil de guerre* prosecutions both reflected and reinforced existing notions that "French" masculinity existed on a higher plane "shaped by civilization as well as racial superiority."[52] Military justice records thus offer a valuable perspective on how passive colonial knowledge was put into active practice as decisions were made about where to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable violence.[53]

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[47] For further discussion of these ideas and their prevalence see Joly, "Sexe, guerres et désir colonial," 62–9; Aldrich, "Colonial Man,"123–40; Kalifa, *Biribi,* esp. 265–86.

[48] Perceptions and judgments regarding homosocial relations between soldiers were inflected by class as well as race with different standards applied to officers compared to the rank-and-file. Perhaps the most obvious and commented upon example of this is Marshall Hubert Lyautey who served as Resident-General of Morocco (1912–16; 1917–25) and Minister of War (1916–17). His sexual proclivities were endlessly speculated upon yet without apparent detriment to his military career. Unfortunately, a fuller discussion of the intersections of class, race and sexuality in this context is beyond the scope of this article.

[49] Neither man was brought up on a sexual assault charge. Instead, both were accused of violence against a fellow *zouave*. The purported sexual advances that apparently underpinned this violence only emerged through reports and testimony. SHD, GR 11 J 1548, Lenhard; SHD, GR 11 J 1555, CG, Chouraqui, Abraham (3^{e} bis RMZ, 45^{e} DI).

[50] Among the literature on this subject see in particular Zack, "French and Algerian Identities in Formation," 115–43; Sivan, "Colonialism and Popular Culture in Algeria," 21–53; Yedes, "Social Dynamics in Colonial Algeria," 235–49; Eldridge, "'The Forgotten of this Tribute'", 3-44.

[51] Burton and Ballantyne, "Introduction: Bodies, Empires and World Histories," 6. Although Foucault omitted the colonial from his analysis, the other obvious reference point here is his concept of biopower.

[52] Aldrich, "Colonial Man," 125, 135.

[53] Steinbach, "Between Intimacy and violence,"100–1.

Moktar's actions were presented as deriving from innate "flaws" linked to his racial identity demonstrating that when deciding which violations of the rules and norms could be tolerated and which had to be punished, the man mattered as much as, and sometimes more than, the crime. Gibergy's slap could be dismissed by the military authorities as an isolated incident, an aberration amidst an otherwise correctly directed (as in towards the enemy) and therefore militarily valuable enactment of violence; an interpretation shored up by Gibergy's race and rank. In contrast, unsanctioned violence among ordinary soldiers stemming from "pathologies", like those attributed to Moktar, was deemed much more threatening because it was thought to be rooted in a "degeneracy" that suggested the soldier in question was irrecuperable. Habitually violent soldiers like the "brutal by temperament and taste" *zouave* Lenhard who bullied and terrorized both his comrades and his superiors equally fell into this category, as did men who persistently abused alcohol, as we shall see.[54] But how did the soldiers themselves understand and seek to explain the violent acts they were accused of committing, and what do their explanations tell us about their experiences more broadly?

Situational Responses and the Toll of War

Generally absent from the military's assessments in cases like those outlined above was any acknowledgement that the conditions under which combatants were living might play a role in their violent acts, any suggestion that the triggers for their behaviors might be, at least in part, situational rather than simply inherent and immutable. Yet if we switch from a top-down to a bottom-up perspective on violence and center the voices and perspectives of the soldiers themselves, a different picture emerges. By paying attention to the testimonies of those most directly implicated we rather get a sense, albeit mediated and imperfect, of their experiences of and responses to war. Using testimonies gathered from the accused, victims, and witnesses at the different moments within the investigative process we can see how soldiers framed and justified their actions, often challenging externally imposed characterizations in the process. Whereas military authorities rarely linked violent behavior to the stresses and strains of sustained and extremely violent warfare, the impact of the wider conflict on their wellbeing and their everyday relationships features prominently in accounts from accused men. Their testimonies thus provide valuable insights into the complex social and emotional worlds of combatants, particularly colonized North Africans for whom, as already noted, we lack the kind of textual first-person narratives available for many other groups of combatants.

[54] Terms such as "pathology" and "degeneracy" occur frequently in medical and judicial discussions from this era, particularly in connection to soldiers deemed to be in some way failing to fulfil their duties. See, for example, Porot and Hesnard, *L'Expertise mentale militaire* ; Roux, "Les mutilations volontaires par coup de feu," ; Brousseau, "Essai sur la peur aux armées 1914-1918."

The atrocious conditions of trench warfare, the stress associated with the near-constant risk of death or injury, and the constraints exercised by the endless rules and tasks imposed by the military hierarchy created an ideal breeding ground for friction between soldiers. It was therefore not uncommon for tempers to flare, such as when the *zouave* Quevauvilliers struck his corporal in the face after the latter refused to return a nail file Quevauvilliers claimed belonged to him.[55] Incidents of momentary aggression could equally occur between friends. During a "brawl" among a group of drunken *zouaves*, the nineteen-year-old soldier Bertin was hit twice in the side by his otherwise close friend Navas, a settler from Algiers. Dismissing the incident as just a couple of punches, Bertin took himself off to bed. Only the next morning did he realize that Navas had used a knife and stabbed him. Bertin downplayed the incident, possibly to protect his friend, stressing that "my wound wasn't serious" as demonstrated by the fact that despite being sent to the medic, he was able to reprise his duties immediately. He concluded his testimony by asserting "Now, Navas and I, who have always been good comrades, we've reconciled."[56] Tensions could be especially pronounced in colonial units because military authorities assumed a homogeneity among colonized soldiers from North Africa that ignored the many social, political, ethnic and linguistic differences between these combatants. Furthermore, such units were often led by officers with little to no knowledge of the religious customs, languages and cultures of the men under their command who they viewed simply as "Arabs" or "Muslims."[57] "Tempers might have been improved" David Englander suggests, "had the *poilu* been better able to get away from it all." But leave allocations rarely functioned smoothly or regularly and were, in any case, applied differently to troops from North Africa.[58]

Even if some soldiers came from worlds in which physical violence was an accepted way of settling disagreements,[59] what raised the stakes, very considerably, between 1914 and 1918 was their easy access to deadly weaponry. Minor altercations over mundane things could thus escalate rapidly, sometimes with tragic consequences. The indigenous sergeant Smizzi, for example, almost lost his life when the *tirailleur* Maoui fired his rifle at him in retaliation for breaking up a card game earlier in the day.[60] The *tirailleur* Belhacène had a similarly lucky escape after being shot at by his comrade Kaddour

[55] SHD, GR 11 J 1370, CG, Quevauvilliers, Georges (4e RMZT, 38e DI).
[56] SHD, GR 11 J 1319, CG, Navas, Georges (9e RMZ, 37e DI), "Procès-verbal d'information: Bertin, Eugène," Apr. 5, 1915. Bertin's testimony probably contributed to the not guilty verdict given by the tribunal, especially as it countered assertions by Navas' commanding officer that he was a quarrelsome drunk who was unable to 'let a meal pass without getting himself into a drunken state'. But other contextual information would also have played a part, including the fact that Navas was also deemed to be someone who 'has always given satisfaction and completed his duties as a liaison agent with zeal' and that no one actually saw him use a knife on Bertin.
[57] Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée,* 448; Dean, "The French Colonial Army and the Great War," 491–3.
[58] Englander, "The French Soldier, 1914-1918," 57. The most detailed account of leave policies and their application can be found in Cronier, *Permissionnaires dans la Grande Guerre*. For a discussion of the specificities of leave for colonial combatants see Eldridge, "Absence, Agency and Empire," 277-99.
[59] Cochet, *Survivre au front,* 35–7.
[60] SHD GR 11 J 1547, CG, Maoui, ben Ali Zirda (3e RMZT, 45e DI)

when a prior dispute, once again over a card game, was reignited by Belhacène helping himself without permission to food Kaddour had prepared for his own consumption.[61] In the course of a discussion over whose turn it was to undertake guard duty, the *tirailleur* Aoujène suddenly took a knife from his pocket and struck the *tirailleur* Chériti below the left breast, near his heart.[62] Chériti survived, but his fellow *tirailleur* Boualeg bled out instantly after he was stabbed in the chest by the soldier Guendouze who took exception to a casual comment Boualeg made about the difference between their respective time in the frontline.[63] In these, and many more instances, the aggressiveness of the response from the soldier in question appears considerably out of proportion to the initial trigger suggesting men struggling to cope. Indeed, one way of interpreting the willful infliction of violence on fellow soldiers is to see it as evidence of the tendency of soldiers to become emotionally numb and indifferent, even fatalistic, as a psychological response to their daily conditions, especially as the war lengthened.[64]

Excessive alcohol consumption was ubiquitous in these kinds of cases of violence between soldiers. Drinking was a staple feature of French life prior to the First World War, particularly among rural and urban working-class communities.[65] Although forbidden by the Qu'ran and socially frowned upon, alcohol was equally present in North Africa, again especially among young men in urban settings.[66] Accustomed to alcohol in their civilian lives, it is unsurprising that many soldiers, including colonized Muslim combatants, continued to drink after their incorporation into the army. Indeed, the military actively supplied their troops with alcohol in various guises and in progressively greater quantities. Wine, especially the lower strength *pinard*, was considered a hygienic beverage and constituted a particular dietary staple.[67] Military authorities believed alcohol served a range of beneficial, even necessary, functions such as combatting cold, fear or boredom, lowering inhibitions and thus encouraging aggressivity during assaults, and bolstering morale. Soldiers fully agreed that

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[61] SHD, GR 11 J 1325, CG, Kaddour, Sayah (3e RMTA, 37e DI).
[62] SHD, GR 11 J 1319, CG, Aoujène, Mohamed ben Belkacem (2e RMTA, 37e DI).
[63] SHD, GR 11 J 1321, CG, Guendouze, Mezeghiche (3e RMTA, 37e DI) Counter-intuitively, Guendouze was the more experienced soldier and Boualeg seems to have been simply speculating on how much longer it would take for him to acquire the same degree of frontline knowledge.
[64] Crouthamel, *An Intimate History,* 58.
[65] Between 1910 and 1913, average annual consumption of wine in metropolitan France was estimated to be 128 liters per person, rising to 200 liters for urban and working class *departéments* like the Seine. This was alongside an average annual consumption of 32.9 liters of beer, 34 liters of cider and 4.22 liters of spirits. Lucand, *Le pinard des poilus,* 19; Nourisson, *Le buveur du XIXe siècle*, 24–7..
[66] For discussion of drinking culture in North Africa see Znaien, "Les territoires de l'alcool à Tunis et à Casablanca," 197–210; White, *Blood of the Colony*; Pinaud, *L'alcoolisme chez les Arabes en Algérie*; Sheikh and Islam, "Islam, Alcohol, and Identity," 185–211.
[67] Starting off at 0.25 liters a day for men in the front lines, the ration was extended six months later to soldiers behind the lines. In 1916, the ration was increased to 0.5 liters, rising again in January 1918 to 1.0 liters, half of which was provided free and half sold to the soldier at a price below the going commercial rate. Fillaut, "Lutte contre l'alcoolisme dans l'armée pendant la Grande Guerre,"144.

alcohol was a vital to their service and much has been written about the symbolic and material significance of *pinard* to the *poilu* identity.[68] Comforting, ritualistic and easily shared, drinking facilitated sociability, helping to build comradeship and thus undergirding soldierly endurance.[69] Yet, it equally caused tensions and even broke relationships between men. Asked why, "out of the blue," he had hit a fellow *tirailleur* several times in the head with the foot of a bedstead, the *tirailleur* Bouhamla replied: "I was taken with drink… He owed me 10 francs for some time. I very much regret my act."[70] Bouhamla's victim required hospital treatment, but he was luckier than the *tirailleur* Bettioni who was killed when a bayonet, wielded by his comrade Boussebie, struck him in the region of his heart. Despite proroguing the original *conseil de guerre* so more information could be collected, the tribunal was unable to get to the bottom of the quarrel between the two men that led to the fatal stabbing. All parties concerned, however, agreed that Boussebie was drunk and that, although generally a good soldier and "not mean", "he frequently got drunk and in those moments he was violent and quarrelsome."[71]

Drinking undoubtedly fueled altercations. Yet alcohol, and particularly the abuse of alcohol, was also a response to the environment in which soldiers found themselves, a sign of men seeking to anaesthetize themselves against conditions they found difficult to endure. As the author of a postal control report from November 1916 wrote: "The habit of getting drunk in the *cantonment* is general… it seems that the men console themselves for everything with *pinard*."[72] Christophe Lucand goes further, arguing that alcoholism was one of the major factors in the triggering of mental disorders among soldiers, even if neither medical nor military personnel were willing to acknowledge this at the time.[73] Indeed, any suggestion that the imbrication of inebriation and violence might be driven by contextual factors is striking by its absence from reports penned by officers within military justice files. The *tirailleur* Lakdar, for example, was given five years of hard labor for threatening to kill his indigenous sergeant following a reprimand for the state of his uniform; the fact that he was preparing to load his rifle as he issued this threat undoubtedly contributing to the long sentence. Lakdar's claim

[68] In addition to the already-cited works see Ridel, *L'ivresse du soldat*; Cochet, "1914-1918: l'alcool aux armées," 19–32*;* Zientek, "Wine and Blood".
[69] Lucand, *Le pinard des poilus,* 18, 77.
[70] SHD, GR 11 J 1322, CG, Bouhamla, Abdallah ben (2e RMTA, 37e DI). Found guilty of "aggravated assault", Bouhamla was sentenced to one year in prison.
[71] SHD, GR 11 J 1328, CG, Boussebie, Ali ould Benziane (2e RMTA, 37e DI), "Procès-verbal d'information: Boudjemane, Mohamed ben Mohamed", Feb. 6, 1916. Found guilty but with extenuating circumstances, Boussebie was given a two-year suspended sentence.
[72] SHD, 16 N 1484, "Rapport sur le correspondence des troupes du 10 au 25 novembre 1916" cited in Saint-Fuscien, *À vos ordres?,* 106. Although the report was written in relation to the 3rd Division. its findings are generalizable across the army.
[73] Lucand, *Le pinard des poilus,* 91.

that he was drunk and did not recall what had taken place evidently did not win him any sympathy.[74] Writing up the incident, the captain of his company offered the following damning comment:

> Lakdar is a bad soldier. An inveterate drinker—he is completely irascible in character and becomes intractable as soon as he has drunk, all are afraid—he is a raging [*furieux*] alcoholic.
>
> All means were used to soften him up, gentleness, severe punishments, nothing has any effect on him. I consider him to be a dangerous individual, his physical strength and his violent character making him feared by his comrades and even by his officers.[75]

Similar comments were made about the *tirailleur* Asnaoui who "in a state of drunkenness" threatened to hit several comrades with whom he had been playing cards earlier in the day. In the scuffle to subdue Asnaoui, the indigenous sergeant Amor was punched. Once again, the character assessment provided by the commanding officer was highly condemnatory:

> Incorrigible drunkard, argumentative player, [Asnaoui] is a deplorable example to the company. Very strong, he is feared by his comrades who he does not hesitate to brutalize. This black sheep must be gotten rid of immediately.[76]

Admitting that he had drunk "more than necessary" (two liters of wine according to witnesses), Asnaoui defended his actions arguing that if he drank and was a little difficult "it is because I was not well-treated and I was often brutalized. In addition, I haven't had leave since March 1916 [Asnaoui's crime took place in July 1917] and I could never get to go."[77] Challenging his superior's reductive reading him as "incorrigible", Asnaoui's account provides a more multi-faceted set of explanations for his actions, one that contextualizes his drunkenness and associated aggression as a response both to violence he experienced at the hands of others and to the impact on his emotional well-being of prolonged exposure to the war without respite.

Behavior that military authorities were quick to dismiss as stemming from innate character flaws might therefore be better understood as situational responses to the war, indicative of

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[74] SHD, GR 11 J 1364, CG, Lakdar, Belgacem ben (4e RMZT, 38e DI), "Procès-verbal des déclarations reçues par l'officier de police judiciaire: Lakdar, Belgacem ben," Dec. 9, 1915.
[75] SHD, GR 11 J 1364, Lakdar, "Rapport du Capitaine Ciambelli, Commandant la 24e Cie", Nov. 25, 1915. Despite these apparently very serious character flaws, Lakdar's sentence was suspended and he was put back into service.
[76] SHD, GR 11 J 1377, CG, Asnaoui, Larbi ben Amar ben, (8e RMTA, 38e DI), "Rapport du Capitaine Filio, Commandant la 19e Cie du 8e Tir.", Jul. 24, 1917.
[77] SHD, GR 11 J 1377, Asnaoui, "Procès-verbal de première comparution," Aug. 31, 1917.

individual suffering and distress.[78] This can clearly be seen in the case of the Algerian *tirailleur* Bonnebal who was brought before a *conseil de guerre* accused of murder. On October 6, 1916, at around 8 p.m. in the *cantonnement* where his company was billeted, Bonnebal took his rifle, placed a cartridge in it and fired at the *tirailleur* Saïbi who was sitting a few feet away from him chatting to another soldier; Saïbi died instantly. Having joined the company only hours earlier, Saïbi had never spoken to Bonnebal. Despite interviewing multiple witnesses, Captain Belhomme was at a loss to explain this act committed "without any apparent provocation." Bonnebal's own testimony, provided through an interpreter, was "incoherent," leading the captain to speculate that he was suffering from a "persecution complex" [*la folie de la persecution*] and might not have been "in possession of all his faculties"; either "mad or faking madness."[79] Bonnebal's comrades concurred, stating that he seemed "ill" [*un malade*]. Indeed, on several occasions between October 1 and 5, Bonnebal had sought refuge near his officers asserting that another comrade had threatened to kill him, even though the officers in question saw no evidence of mistreatment towards Bonnebal. He also claimed a letter had been sent to his superiors from a sergeant in another company ordering him to be killed.[80] However, a medical examination on October 12, 1916 concluded: "No mental trouble. To rejoin his corps under escort." A more detailed assessment by the head of the neuro-psychiatric wing of the Bar-le-Duc military hospital similarly asserted that it was "impossible" to "detect in him a real delusion of persecution or other mental disorders characterizing a clearly determined psychosis," although the difficulties of communicating with Bonnebal through an interpreter were noted.[81]

In view of these difficulties and seemingly unconvinced by the two medical opinions, the tribunal judges refused to deliver a verdict, requesting further evidence. This led to Bonnebal being placed under observation in a different psychiatric hospital on November 27. Over the next three weeks Bonnebal remained "somber, suspicious, mute," staying in bed all day and not engaging in communal life. The medical team even brought in "another Arab who speaks French to sleep next to him to serve as an interpreter for us," but Bonnebal "energetically refused" to converse with this man even to exchange the most banal pleasantries. Things changed dramatically, however, on December 22 when an external interpreter, holding the rank of captain, visited the hospital and spoke with Bonnebal. At this point, the *tirailleur* "revealed his delirium," explaining: "I have been hurt for a long time. I took revenge because I suffered a lot. They insulted me, they threatened me, you know very

[78] Anne Duménil offers a thought-provoking discussion of suffering as a motive for military crimes, specifically in relation to soldiers who fled the battlefield in "Soldiers' Suffering and Military Justice," 45–50.
[79] SHD, GR 11 J 1327, CG, Bonnebal, Mohammed (2e RMTA, 37e DI), "Rapport du Capitaine Belhomme, Commandant la 14e Compagnie," Oct. 6, 1916.
[80] SHD, GR 11 J 1327, Bonnebal, "Procès-verbal des déclarations reçues par l'officier de police judiciaire: Bonnebal, Mohamed," Oct. 10, 1916.
[81] SHD, GR 11 J 1327, Bonnebal, "Certificat de visite," Oct. 12, 1916; "Examen mental du Tirailleur BONNEBAL, Hôpital Centrale, 2e Armée, Place de Bar-le-Duc,"Oct. 17, 1916.

well that I am within my rights. Besides, they'll kill me if we're alone..."[82] Accepting the diagnosis that Bonnebal was an "alienated person" [*un aliéné*] suffering from delusions of persecution with "dangerous reactions," a second tribunal in July 1917 declared the *tirailleur* not guilty. Following the hospital's recommendation, they agreed Bonnebal was unable to continue to serve in the military and should be discharged and confined to an asylum.

Although it is not possible to determine whether Bonnebal's mental health issues pre-dated the war, they were evidently exacerbated by his daily environment and underpinned his act of sudden violence. Bonnebal's case was unusual in the lengths to which the military went to clarify his mental state, but the result is a rich trove of documents that humanize "the accused" and place his act of apparently unprovoked violence in its wider and more complex context. This offers a different lens through which to explore the impact of the conflict on specific individuals. Such insights have relevance for ongoing debates about soldierly endurance, adding nuance to our understanding of what it meant to cope (or not) during the First World War. Evidence from this and the previously cited examples thus complement more established bodies of scholarship on phenomena such as shell shock, desertion, and mutiny by pointing to the other ways that the limits to coping among combatants might manifest and be traceable. Centering cases involving colonized subjects allows us to integrate the experiences of this group of soldiers into these literatures, while highlighting the potential to build on work examining mental health among colonized populations within the empire by considering the treatment of such men when transplanted to the metropole.[83]

The Social and Emotional Worlds of Soldiers

Conseil de guerre files equally provide compelling glimpses into the complex social and emotional worlds of the rank-and-file, particularly in terms of their relationships to each other. Acts of violence that superior officers described as having "no motive" or whose origin they deemed trivial or incomprehensible (especially common in cases involving colonized combatants), turn out, on closer inspection to pertain to issues that mattered deeply to the soldiers concerned. Military justice thus offers a good example of how prosecuting certain acts, in this case violence, can open a vista onto other, often hidden, subjects, behaviors and experiences. This can be illustrated by returning to prosecutions for violence that feature accusations or suspicions of same-sex sexual relationships, this time considering them from the soldiers's rather than the authorities's perspective.

[82] SHD, GR 11 J 1327, Bonnebal, "Compte rendue médicale concernant le tirailleur Bonnebal Mohamed, inculpé de meurtre, Service neuro-psychiatrique, Hôpital du Collège, St Dizier," Dec. 23, 1916.
[83] See, for example, Keller, *Colonial Madness*; Edington, *Beyond the Asylum*; Bullard, "Truth in Madness," 114–32.

Evidence of sexual practices are notoriously hard to locate and complicated to assess, especially in terms of disentangling perception from experience and identity.[84] Analysis is further complicated in this context by the contemporary stigmas surrounding homosexuality, the pressures imposed by dominant notions of (martial) masculinity, the unequal power relationships at play in the *conseil de guerre* process, and the stakes (judicial but also reputational) for all implicated parties, not just the accused. Cases involving same-sex sexual relationships were typically characterized by confusing and often contradictory sets of testimony that military officials tried to disentangle and then reassemble into what they deemed the most coherent and plausible narrative. Yet what was a problem for military justice, which was focused on determining the "facts", is an asset for the historian. Offering multiple perspectives on the same set of events, careful reading of these sources can tell us much about soldier's perceptions and their constructions of situations and of themselves. The frequency and forcefulness with which denials about same-sex relationships were issued, for example, tells us much about the strength of the culture of opprobrium surrounding homosexuality within the military and the cultures from which these men came. Even those who were called simply as witnesses were often reluctant to admit to knowing that such things happened in their unit, let alone on the specific circumstances being invoked, lest they be tainted by association. As part of denying that sexual relations had played any part in his decision to kill his close friend Cheniki, the *tirailleur* Benchelighem told the tribunal: "No, I never had relations against nature with him; but since they claimed that, I told him [Cheniki] to distance himself from me."[85]

A more extreme example of the urge to distance oneself from any association with such behavior was provided by the *tirailleur* Boughazi who freely admitted to killing Corporal M'Bareck with a shot to the heart from his rifle at 4 a.m. on April 9, 1915, stating that he did so because the corporal had attempted, several times, to commit "acts against nature" with him. Boughazi not only admitted to the murder, in the immediate aftermath he fetched the duty sergeant to show him what he had done. In his testimony, Boughazi stated that the first time the corporal made such advances, he told him to leave him alone; the second time, he warned M'Bareck that if he did it again, he would kill him; the third time, he loaded his rifle and fired. "Boughazi finds the crime he committed totally natural," reported the *tirailleur*'s commanding officer, "the corporal wanted to abuse him; he [Boughazi] showed that he was a man of honor by killing him." This assessment was undoubtedly informed by Boughazi's own statements when questioned within his unit. Asked why he did not simply report

[84] For a more in-depth discussion of these challenges see Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front,* 10–11; Ross, "Sex in the Archives," 267–90; Herzog, "War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century," 1–15; Clark, *Desire: A History of European Sexuality*, 1–15. Although dealing with a different chronological period, I also found it very useful to think with Hamilton, "Sodomy and Criminal Justice in the Parlement of Paris," 303-34.
[85] SHD, GR 11 J 1326, CG, Benchelighem, Messaoud ben Belkacem (3^{e} RMTA, 37^{e} DI), "Interview with Benchelighem," n.d.

M'Bareck's behavior to his officers, he replied "a complaint would have made me look like a woman in the eyes of the whole company; I preferred to kill M'Bareck."[86] This was also what he told an older comrade, Kaddour, who he had confided in. When Kaddour encouraged Boughazi to report the harassment, the latter refused on the grounds that, in Kaddour's words, "he would be suspected of having unnatural morals."[87] What seems to have been at stake for Boughazi was both his sense of honor and masculinity. Indeed, it is perhaps telling that on the third occasion when M'Bareck attempted to assault him, Kaddour, awoken by the noise, lit a candle to see what was going on in the process making public the fact that M'Bareck was attempting to open Boghazi's trousers. Quickly extinguishing the light, Kaddour testified that Boughazi's shot rang out moments later. What is also interesting about this case, in terms of the military's attitude towards same-sex relationships, is the response from the tribunal judges, all five of whom declared Boughazi not guilty of murder.

Not every case of this nature was, however, structured around denial. Honor, albeit understood somewhat differently, was also integral to the defense offered by Moktar, who we encountered earlier, during his trial for the murder of one comrade and the attempted murder of another. During the morning of June 18, 1916, Moktar was seen talking to two fellow *tirailleurs*, Ould Ali and Lakdar. In the afternoon, Moktar appeared, having shaved off his moustache, brandishing a loaded rifle. Upon seeing him, Ould Ali immediately sought to hide behind a nearby shack as a bullet, fired by Moktar, "whistled past his ear." Two soldiers tried to disarm Moktar, but he escaped and took off after a *tirailleur* he believed to be Lakdar. Firing again, Moktar mortally wounded the *tirailleur* who, it turned out, was not Lakdar but a different soldier named Babaï.

Asked during his trial why he tried to kill Ould Ali and Lakdar, Moktar said he had received a bonus which Ould Ali persuaded him to give to him for safe keeping until his next rest period, telling Moktar that he always spent his money too quickly. Subsequently, Moktar saw Ould Ali being kissed by Lakdar. "Jealous," in his own words, and unable to bear the idea that his friend would let himself be kissed "in front of everyone," Moktar asked for his money back. This was the morning of June 18. Ould Ai replied "go shave your moustache" [*va te faire raser la moustache*] which, as the president of the tribunal had clarified, signified that Moktar should "go get dressed up as a 'whore'." Ould Ali added that he would then give Moktar ten *sous* for every "favor" until all the money had been returned. At this point, Lakdar interjected to say that Ould Ali had given him Moktar's money and that he would pay two *sous* each time. Insulted and humiliated by this exchange, Moktar confessed that

[86] SHD, GR 11 J 1319, CG, Boughazi, Bouazza ould Mohammed (2e RMTA, 37e DI), "Rapport du Capitaine Ducastel, Commandant la 16ème Compagnie du 2e Régiment de Marche de Tirailleurs Indigènes," Apr. 9, 1915; "Procès-verbal d'interrogatoire: Boughazi, Bouazza ould Mohammed," Apr. 15, 1915.
[87] SHD, GR 11 J 1319, Boughazi, "Procès-verbal d'information: Kaddour, Eddin," Apr. 15, 1915.

he lost his head, saying to himself, "I can only kill him."[88] However, Moktar did not act immediately on his emotions, waiting until mid-afternoon, shaving off his moustache in anger in the meantime. This delay led the tribunal to class his actions as premeditated, qualifying Moktar for the harshest possible sentence, the death penalty.[89] In place of the one-dimensional assessment provided by his commanding officer who, as we saw earlier, dismissed Moktar as an "impure individual", testimonies collected via the *conseil de guerre* point to a more complex situation involving a broad spectrum of emotions ranging from humiliation and hurt, to jealousy and anger, and finally regret at having killed a comrade, Babaï, who Moktar thought of "like a brother."

Other cases where jealousy seems to have played a role equally gesture to a complicated and constantly evolving set of relationships between men that defy easy characterization. Returning drunk one evening to quarters, Lahoussine saw two other *tirailleurs*, Idir and Sider, chatting. Calling out to Sider that he'd already told him he did not want to see him talking to Idir, Lahoussine proceeded to attack Sider with a razor, prompting the latter to defend himself with a mess tin. In seeking to get to the bottom of the dispute, the evidence collected by the *conseil de guerre* suggested that Lahoussine and Idir had been close until Idir suddenly stopped speaking to and associating with his comrade. Lahoussine believed this was because Idir was now the "friend" of a sergeant and that Sider had been the "matchmaker" in this scenario (both words used by Lahoussine in his deposition), hence his rancor towards Sider.[90] Across the paperwork the term "friend" seems to be used in different ways. Indeed, the relationships in question remain ambiguous. For example, in the immediate aftermath of Lahoussine stating that Idir no longer spoke to him because "he is the friend of the sergeant now", he was asked "And you've never been the friend of Idir?" To which Lahoussine replied "No". Irrespective of what "friend" actually meant in this context, the altercation between Laoussine and Sider demonstrates the importance of connections forged between men, and the hurt caused when those relationships ended.

This is also apparent in the case of the *tirailleur* Benchelighem who shot his friend Cheniki and one Corporal Chalal as they lay in their beds. The sergeant who first questioned Benchelighem about his motives swore that Benchelighem stated "Cheniki was my wife [*ma femme*] for a long time, the

[88] Seeking to establish how in control he actually was, the *conseil de guerre* spent a lot of time asking witnesses if Moktar was drunk at the time of the incident, receiving a variety of responses. Moktar himself stated that he was not drunk but rather "mad with anger". SHD, GR 11 J 1323, Moktar, "Notes d'audience. Interroge de Moktar," Jul. 3, 1916. Motkar had given a virtually identical account during prior questioning, see "Procès-verbal: Moktar, Salem ben Tidjani ben," Jun. 27, 1916.

[89] In his version of events, Ould Ali denied that any money had changed hands and claimed that the two men had been "perfect friends" until Moktar started to pursue him sexually prompting Ould Ali to ask to move companies. When Moktar was transferred instead, he made it clear to Ould Ali that "he wanted me dead". SHD, GR 11 J 1323, Moktar, "Notes d'audience. Témoins: Ould Ali," Jul. 3, 1916.

[90] SHD, GH 11 J 1324, CG, Lahoussine, Sadik ben Ali (3e RMTA, 37e DI), "Procès-verbal des déclarations reçues par l'officier judiiare: Lahoussine, Sadik ben Ali," Aug. 22, 1916.

corporal wanted to separate me from him. I killed them both."[91] The idea of soldiers taking a "wife" had strong colonial connotations, being particularly associated with behavior in the Armée d'Afrique's disciplinary battalions and *bagnes*.[92] Although Benchelighem subsequently denied saying this and having had any kind of sexual relationship with Cheniki, he was open about the fact that the two men had been very close and that he resented Corporal Chalal for coming between them. "Cheniki and me we loved each other like brothers," he stated during an interview on October 27, 1916. "We arrived together [at the front] coming as reinforcements [from Algeria]. Corporal Chalal was opposed to us continuing our companionship [*notre commerce d'amitié*]."[93] Two days later, during his tribunal hearing, Benchelighem explained that he was "angry" [*fâché*] to learn that Cheniki and Chalal were in a relationship. Not because of the relations themselves, which he claimed to be indifferent to, but because the corporal had broken up his friendship with Cheniki in order to commit "unnatural acts" against his friend. It was this, in combination with alcohol, which he normally did not drink, that led him to seek vengeance in the most dramatic terms.[94]

That soldiers experienced deep friendship, jealousy, hurt and betrayal, and that these were all amplified by the wartime context is, on the one hand, a banal observation. Except for the fact that this is some of the only evidence we possess that speaks to their inner emotional worlds, certainly when it comes to colonized combatants. Nor are such things always readily attested to in the more voluminous diaries, letters and memoirs penned by white French soldiers. Even if the sentiments that emerge do not starkly distinguish colonized combatants from their metropolitan French comrades-in-arms, being able to evidence that is significant in and of itself since the starting point within the French empire and the military was usually to assume difference and thus to think of and treat such men as a category apart.[95] In seeking to justify the continued subjugation of colonized peoples, imperial ideologies repeatedly insisted that these populations did not feel, or felt differently to their European counterparts. There is therefore much to be gained from reading existing sources in new ways to explore and take seriously traces of the internal lives of colonized combatants and the emotional and social context to which they speak. The complicated emotional landscapes that are revealed stand in contrast to the one-dimensional assessments of violence between soldiers that were often applied by military officials and the judicial process which reduced individuals to their perceived innate flaws—

[91] SHD, GR 11 J 1326, Benchelighem, "Procès-verbal d'information: Djouadi, Mohamed ben Tahar," Oct. 24, 1916; "Rapport sur l'affaire," Oct. 29, 1916.
[92] See, for example, the medical reports cited in Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality,* 60–1; or Dominique Kalifa's claims about incarcerated men taking a "woman" in order not to become one themselves in *Biribi,* 280.
[93] SHD, GR 11 J 1326, Benchelighem, "Interview: Benchelighem," Oct. 27, 1916.
[94] SHD, GR 11 J 1326, Benchelighem, "Rapport sur l'affaire," Oct. 29, 1916.
[95] My thinking on this point was usefully informed by Michael Roper's caution to historians that "in emphasising only difference, we risk de-humanising those who left less elaborate psychological records" and thus inadvertently reproducing the dominant discourses and stereotypes of others. Roper, *The Secret Battle,* 32.

"incorrigible drunk", "inveterate pederast", "brutal by temperament and taste"—and divorced their actions from the context of the war. Even if still partial, the resultant information challenges, and shows the men themselves challenging, the reductive explanations and label attached to them and their behavior by military justice, replacing these with more complex and multifaceted portraits.

Conclusion

During the First World War, the trenches served as spaces of support, mutual aid, and comradeship, all of which were invaluable to soldiers on a daily basis. However, they could equally be experienced as "a world of insults, threats and intimidation."[96] Focusing on this latter dimension through the prism of altercations between soldiers on the same side demonstrates the complex interplay between violence and camaraderie. At the same time, using military justice records pertaining to the multi-ethnic Armée d'Afrique brings an under-utilized set of sources and a new range of voices to the discussion. Although Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien regards *conseil de guerre* files as providing "less information about what men endured or refused than on what justice itself accepted or refused from men at war," this article has argued that it does not need to be an either/or situation.[97] Tribunal records do indeed provide valuable evidence of what behaviors were considered acceptable, tolerable, and unacceptable to those in command, and under what circumstances. Exploring the subjective nature and variable application of military justice with respect to prosecutions for violent acts reveals the ways in which colonial mentalities and contemporary notions of race, among other factors, inflected judicial processes and outcomes. It is particularly striking, for example, that all but two cases within this sample of prosecutions for violent acts where same-sex sexual relations were a cited factor pertain to colonized subjects, even though we know that such relationships were not confined to this group of combatants. Military justice thus provides insight into the assumptions certain groups of soldiers faced which were embedded in the minds of those assessing them, reminding us of what they were up against in their daily environment.

In juxtaposing the military authorities's understanding and assessment of violence with the perspectives of the soldiers themselves, the second half of the article has sought to demonstrate that, to return to Saint-Fuscien's formulation, we can also access "what men endured or refused." By criminalizing, or more specifically choosing to prosecute, certain acts, military justice casts light onto other, often hidden, subjects and practices. An examination of violence between comrades via military justice sources thus opens a window onto a far broader range of interlinked topics from alcohol and its potential abuse to mental health to interpersonal and sexual relations. Testimonies provided by those

[96] Cazals and Loez, *Dans les tranchées,* 228.
[97] Saint-Fuscien, "Juger et être jugé," 273.

involved illustrate the different ways individuals reacted to the pressures they were placed under between 1914 and 1918, how they related to the men around them within this highly fraught context, and how they chose to frame and justify their choices when called upon to explain themselves and their behaviors. Read as situational responses to an unimaginably challenging and violent daily environment, this material offers new insights into questions of soldierly endurance and its limits, as well as where we might usefully look for different kinds of evidence that speaks to these issues.

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