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Guns, culture and moors : racial stereotypes and the cultural impact of the Moroccan participation in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)

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Part II

Women and Religion.

The Moroccans and Spanish Society

Chapter 4

Victims, wives and concubines.

Relations between Moroccan troops and Spanish women ¹

It has generally been argued that during and after the Spanish Civil War the issue of Moroccan troops interacting with Spanish women was both a difficult and highly charged matter for the Spanish Nationalists. One scene in a Spanish film, *Libertarias* (1996), sums up the standard perception of this interaction. Towards the end of the film, a contingent of Moroccan soldiers takes a group of *milicianas* (militia women) by surprise and slaughters them with knives. At the same time, a nun, who had accompanied the militia-women, is forcefully undressed by two Moroccans while others are seen expressing sadistic enjoyment at the sight. Fortunately for the nun, a Spanish officer intervenes in time to save her from rape and possible death.² This film represents the typical view of relations between Moroccan soldiers and Spanish women during the Civil War - a relationship of sexual aggressors and victims. Given this common viewpoint, it would be difficult to imagine that there were in fact voluntary carnal encounters, love stories and marriages between the two groups. However, these existed – even to an extent that suggests that they were more than incidental.

The intent of this chapter is to furnish an overview of the interracial and intercultural relations between Moroccan soldiers who fought in Spain during the Civil War and the Spanish women of that time, and how the Spanish Nationalist authorities viewed and regulated these relations. The focus will be on the voluntary relations between these two groups. These relationships were an important indicator of how officials, particularly military authorities, in a European country regarded the interaction of what were effectively temporary Muslim immigrants with a European civilian society. In this regard, the reader will notice that the prevalent attitude in contemporary Spain that romantic relationships between Muslim men and Spanish women are doomed to failure,³ was also reflected in the outlook of the Spanish military authorities who brought Moroccan soldiers to Spain during the Civil War, despite their generally sympathetic attitude towards these soldiers and their culture.

The Victims

As growing numbers of Moroccan soldiers were either airlifted or shipped to southern Spain, in July 1936 and afterwards, they came increasingly in contact with Spanish civilians in the areas they occupied. Soon stories of Moroccan atrocities and the mass rape of Spanish women started to spread among the pro-Republican population. These were generally reinforced by the traditional Spanish image of the ‘Moor’ as a lustful irrational being. There are a small number of testimonies of people

¹ A large part of this chapter has appeared as ‘Victims, wives and concubines. The Spanish Civil War and Relations between Moroccan Troops and Spanish Women’ in: Götz Nordbruch & Umar Ryad eds., *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe. Muslim Activists and Thinkers* (New York 2014) 211-232.

² Directed by Vicente Aranda, Spain, 1996.

³ Daniela Flesler, *The Return of the Moor. Spanish Responses to Contemporary Moroccan Immigration* (West Lafayette 2008) 148-155.

who claimed to have actual first-hand information of these charges. These will be the starting point in the discussion of this first and most controversial aspect of the interaction of Moroccan men and Spanish women during the Civil War.

At some point in October 1936, at the crossroads outside Navalcarnero (to the west of Madrid), the American journalist John Whitaker wrote, in a classic and frequently cited account, how he met a Moroccan officer, Mohamed El Mizzian, who would eventually rise to the rank of general in Franco's army. El Mizzian, according to Whitaker, had brought two young girls (presumably Republican militia-women) for interrogation and then taken them to a schoolhouse where forty 'Moorish' soldiers were resting. When Whitaker asked what would happen to them, El Mizzian responded, 'Oh, they'll not live more than four hours'.⁴ Of course the reason that this anecdote is frequently quoted is that it probably is the only one that reported a rape in progress. Moreover, it cogently highlighted the reputation of Moroccan soldiers as the Civil War's prime rapists. For propaganda purposes this reputation was also strongly promoted by General Queipo de Llano, the man who almost single-handedly took control of Seville in July 1936. During one of his infamous and terrifying evening radio speeches of that year Queipo luridly noted: 'our brave Legionnaires and *Regulares* have shown to the reds what it means to be a man. Also to the red women, who now have finally come to know real men [*Italics added*]'.⁵ In one equally shocking comment (already referred to in chapter 1) and in the aftermath of the capture of the city of Talavera de la Reina, Queipo announced the fall, in the Nationalist hands, of 'numerous male and female prisoners. How satisfied will be the *Regulares* and how envious La Pasionaria would be [*Italics added*]'.⁶ While Queipo frequently mixed truth and lies in his speeches, and sometimes took to the microphone while drunk, his propaganda chief, Antonio Bahamonde, who later defected to the Republicans, is along with Whitaker one of the authorities cited concerning accusations of Moroccan troops raping Spanish women. For instance, he mentioned in his memoirs, published 1938 in Barcelona, that in a number of Andalusian villages 'the Moors raped the women they found on their way and killed them later'.⁷ Though there is certainly

⁴ John T. Whitaker, *We Cannot Escape History* (New York 1945) 114. 'I suppose Franco felt that women had to be given to the Moors', concludes Whitaker, since the Moors 'were unpaid'. The military historian Jesús María Ruiz Vidondo denies in his article. Whitaker's version of the events, arguing that the *Regulares* group Nr.5 (Alhucemas), of which El Mizzian was a Tabor commander, did not advance through Navalcarnero but through Boadilla. He does not provide evidence for his argument. See: Jesús María Ruiz Vidondo, 'Ben Mizzian, el General Moro de Franco', *Arbil*, nr. 119 (2009), accessed 4 September 2013, url: <http://revista-arbil.es/119ruiz.htm>. However, the records of Mizzian's military career, kept in the military archives of Segovia, credit him and his Tabor for playing a part, on 29 October 1936, in the occupation of Navalcarnero. Whitaker was therefore correct about at least the month and the location in which Mizzian was present. Archivo General Militar de Segovia, Caja 746, Exp.6/pag. 59.

⁵ Ian Gibson, *Queipo de Llano. Sevilla, verano de 1936*, 84. See Gibson's comment on the different versions of this quote.

⁶ *Ibidem*, 431.

⁷ Antonio Bahamonde y Sánchez de Castro, *Un año con Queipo. Memorias de un nacionalista* (Barcelona 1938) 96.

some truth in his claims, he might have exaggerated the scale of the rapes.⁸ The question then revolves around the scale of cases of Moroccan soldiers raping Spanish women during the Civil War.

Firstly, there is evidence that during the first weeks of the Civil War there were sexual assaults committed against suspected Republican women by Nationalist men (and one would assume that Republican males committed similar acts against Nationalist women). These would seem to have been the work mostly of Spaniards. Carlota O'Neill, the Mexican wife of a Republican pilot executed early in the war, for instance, tells of women with Republican sympathies being raped in Melilla during 1936. The perpetrators were always Spanish Falangists.⁹ Consequently, perpetrators of such acts, if they occurred on a wide scale, were not solely Moroccans. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that Moroccans constituted the majority of the offenders. Secondly, unlike those quantitative studies of rapes committed by Allied troops, both Western and Soviet, in post-World War II Germany and Eastern Europe,¹⁰ there are no comparable studies concerning the similar behaviour of Nationalist troops, including Moroccan troops, during the Spanish Civil War. While there can be little doubt that such acts did take place, it is not known whether the numbers were in the thousands, or hundreds or even less. Historians have never managed to translate these probabilities into bottom-line figures. Francisco Sánchez Ruano is unique in attempting to quantify rape cases that Moroccan troops committed, or might have committed, though in the end he does not produce solid numbers. Based on his research of mainly municipal archives, he concludes that large scale cases of rape committed by Moroccan troops were confined to the initial stage of the war in a few villages of Andalusia, Extremadura, and in the zone of Toledo (in Castilla la Mancha) as well as during the last phase of the war in Catalonia.¹¹ Thirdly, oral testimonies from Spanish citizens who witnessed the war produce contradictory images of the conduct of Moroccan troops. To take an example from Asturias, two female witnesses comment, around six decades later, on the presence of Moroccan troops. One stated

⁸ An example of such exaggeration is the estimation of Bahamonde of 150,000 executed in the area of command of General Queipo, which could not have happened during the period that Bahamonde worked for Queipo and in the geographical area under Queipo's command. Bahamonde claimed that Moroccan troops were brought by planes to Jerez, and were tied to the wings so as to transport the greatest possible number. He claimed to have witnessed two 'Moors' in Seville who showed the marks of ropes that were used to tie them on the wings. See: Bahamonde, *Un año con Queipo*, 26.

⁹ Carlota O'Neill, *Trapped in Spain* (Toronto 1978) 42-43.

¹⁰ For example, J. Robert Lilly estimated that American soldiers committed 17,800 rapes in England, France and Germany. Antony Beevor estimates the number of rape victims of Soviet troops in Germany to be around two million. Soviet troops even raped 'liberated' female prisoners from Polish, Ukrainian or Russian nationalities. See: Robert J. Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during WWII* (New York 2007) and Antony Beevor, *Berlin: The Downfall 1945* (London 2002).

¹¹ Francisco Sánchez Ruano, *Islam y Guerra Civil española*. He studied and documented 34 cases of rape and murder in Catalonia committed by Moorish troops and believes that those practices were widespread in Catalonia, see his conclusions: Ruano, *Islam y Guerra Civil*, 381. He leaves the question undecided whether the geographical concentration of the crimes in mainly Catalonia and Andalusia has something to do with a lack of research on other regions or with different behavior by Moorish troops in different places. He takes precautions in his conclusions though. Sometimes troops of different origin operated together in the same region making identifying particular units difficult, besides the fact that after the effective ending of military operations the Moorish units were moved out, being followed by a period of post-combat repression in which the actors were Spanish. (Ibidem, 371, 374, 375, 378).

that ‘we had to be at home early, because of the Moors, who were stationed in one corner and had carte blanche for doing what they liked’. Although she does not explicitly mention what it was that they liked, and whether anyone was a victim of that carte blanche in her village, the fear from what the Moroccans could do specifically to girls if they were not home early is implicit. But then there is another witness who spoke of the Moors who were walking through the mountains with their sheep and goats and stated that ‘the truth is that with us, when we met them, they behaved well’.¹² Fourthly, there is evidence that except in cases where it was the deliberate policy of the regional commander (Queipo de Llano, for instance) to use sexual violence or the threat of it as a weapon, it seems that Moroccan troops generally, as the testimonies of individual Moroccan veterans assert, did not overstep discipline. When individual soldiers did, punishment would often follow quickly and harshly.

A number of historians who discussed this issue either confirm the existence of widespread sanctioned rapes or deny them by giving a number of interesting arguments. As it has already been mentioned (see chapter 2) El Merroun rejects what he considers to be fabrications about rape charges towards the Moroccans. One argument he uses is that Islamic law severely opposes as well as punishes such crimes.¹³ That is not a strong argument as history is full of examples of soldiers violating religious commandments against rape, murder and theft. Therefore, this argument, while it might apply for some, is not a reasonable basis for the denial of the accusations. Furthermore the Moroccan soldiers themselves hardly proved to be uniformly religiously observant.¹⁴ The argument that Moroccan soldiers would refrain from rape because of their religious upbringing was already used, in 1940, by the Spanish priest and Arabist Miguel Asín Palacios when he argued that the respect for Islam towards the virtue of chastity was evidenced by ‘our very own Moroccan soldiers’, who turned their eyes, with clear embarrassment, away from immodest images to the point that in some hospitals they were seen tearing the pages of the Spanish magazines that were put in their hands for entertainment. Based on that, the author wonders whether any value or fundament can be attached to the calumnious campaign that the Marxist press undertook since the start of the campaign attributing to the Moroccan soldiers the savage rape of women, which is far from the spirit and the letter of their religious law, ‘a law that is an irreconcilable enemy of adultery which Islamic law punishes with cruel penalties’.¹⁵ El Merroun has other arguments however, as he also points out that the Moroccan troops had access to brothels in several corners of the peninsula. More importantly, he argues that the

¹² Testimonies by, respectively, Faustina Lobo Díaz, (from the Aller region) and Elena Fernández González (from the region of Lena), in: Caunedo, Díaz and Alonso, *Asturias, 70 años, 70 voces. Testimonios y memorias de una guerra*, 216, 238.

¹³ El Merroun, *Las tropas marroquíes en la Guerra Civil española*, 203.

¹⁴ See the following chapter ‘Moros y Cristianos’.

¹⁵ Miguel Asín Palacios, ‘Porqué lucharon a nuestro lado los musulmanes marroquíes’, in: Miguel Asín Palacios, ed., *Obras escogidas II y III de historia y filología árabe* (Madrid 1948) 125-151, here 145. He published this text first in 1940 in the *Boletín de la Universidad Central* in Madrid.

Nationalist authorities would severely punish those crimes, including using the death penalty.¹⁶ As it will be illustrated below, his arguments have some valid basis in the historical record.

The other side of the debate is represented by scholars like de Madariaga and Balfour. As mentioned in chapter 2, Madariaga argues that atrocities, including rape, constituted standard practice of the colonial forces both in Morocco and in Spain that were encouraged by their commanders. Similarly, Balfour argues that Moroccans and Legionnaires knew no other form of war than colonial war and that was characterised by massacres and looting as well as rape. Understandably none of his Moroccan interviewees, however, confirms that.¹⁷

The arguments of both Balfour and Madariaga are reasonable and the reference to the colonial wars in Morocco is compelling. However, there are a few comments that could be made about them. First, there was a decade separating the end of the rebellion in the Rif and the start of the Civil War, making the suggestion that raping in Spain would be merely an automatic continuation of raping in Morocco not very convincing. As of 17 July 1936 (the start of the military coup), such practices had not been routine behaviour for the Moroccan troops, for at a decade. Second, as earlier mentioned, the number of veterans of the colonial war in the Moroccan units were no more than a couple of thousands. While previous veterans of the Moroccan colonial war might have re-enlisted, the great majority of the enlistees were probably youngsters who had no military experience and were generally no older than between 6-10 years when the war against Al Khattabi ended, even if they would have known the stories of the war. For them, there would have been no continuation of rape as a colonial practice, nor would it apply to the thousands of volunteers from French Morocco who had no experience in the Spanish colonial army or its brutal practices during its fight against the Riffian rebels. This does not invalidate the arguments of Madariaga or Balfour, but that they would apply to a far smaller proportion of the Moroccan army in Spain than their arguments would suggest.

Charges of rape committed by Moroccan soldiers cannot be dismissed, but the assessment of this phenomenon at times lacks a clear basis in documents and testimonies. For example, Gustau Nerín claims, in his otherwise valuable work, that ‘many of the Moroccans who were convicted during the war, were accused of sexual abuses, but the sentences were very light (months, including days of imprisonment)’. However, the archival sources, which he uses to support this claim, contradict his conclusion.¹⁸ Among hundreds of offences, ranging from drunkenness to murder, seven cases are related to rape (*violación*). In three of these, the offenders received life sentences, while the military courts handed out two other Moroccans thirty years of imprisonment each. There is also one case of sexual assault (*abusos deshonestos*) for which a sentence of fourteen years, four months and one day

¹⁶ El Merroun, *Las tropas marroquíes*, 203.

¹⁷ He refers to one Spanish Nationalist officer who confirmed to Balfour the regularity of rape by Moorish troops. Balfour also refers to Nationalist military instructions to keep soldiers ‘in hand’, which he interprets as an affirmation of his point. *Ibidem*, 293.

¹⁸ Gustau Nerín, *La guerra que vino de África*, 287. The source which he gives in his *La guerra* is Archivo General de la Administración (hence AGA), M-1686.

was given. The lightest sentence, mentioned in this source, for an offender convicted of rape was six years, one month and sixteen days. These judgments hardly validate Nerín's claim of 'light' sentences.¹⁹

Western historians have usually neglected the Moroccan side of the rape issue which has been elicited in the recent past through interviews of aging veterans. Despite the necessary caution that one should take in considering these interviews, they cannot in fact be ignored given the pejorative historical legacy and reputation that have been associated with the actions of Moroccan troops during the Spanish Civil War. This legacy and reputation continues to this day to be linked in Spanish public discourse to the 'Moor'.

In these interviews the majority of Moroccan veterans indicated that they had not witnessed, participated in or had any knowledge of cases of Moroccan troops raping Spanish women. All agreed that their superiors forbade them, on the pain of death, from attacking civilians or hurting women.²⁰ At the same time, some admitted that looting was permissible upon first entering an enemy village or town. One of the veterans noted that 'there never was aggression against civilians. It was the finest army. It was forbidden to touch women or any house. The major, San Martín, told the *Tabor*: "no touching of women, no touching of anything"²¹

Still there were a few Moroccan veterans who did confirm that some soldiers were involved in cases of rape; one veteran even confirmed more than one instance. He noted that when the army entered a city the soldiers were free to loot as they liked, but that civilians were, according to him, off-limits. Failing to respect that order entailed a *consejo de guerra* (court martial). He witnessed the trials of two cases of rape that Moroccan soldiers had committed, one case occurred in Seville, where the perpetrator received the death sentence. The other took place in Catalonia, when three soldiers raped two girls of one family. Two soldiers were subsequently executed after interrogation while the third fled to the '*rojos*'.²² This last incident is suspiciously similar to one recounted by another veteran, in whose version three Moroccans raped girls from one family and killed the parents. Two of the perpetrators were caught and executed, while the third managed to flee and eventually to find his way back to Morocco.²³ Both accounts could be of the same incident. But in the second version, General Muñoz Grandes plays a part as he spoke to one Moroccan *kaíd* (native officer) asking him: 'We were at war in Morocco. Did we do such things?' The *kaíd* answered in the negative where upon the general

¹⁹ Whether the convicts served their full sentences is another matter, which the source does not clarify.

²⁰ Among testimonies that claimed the strict prohibition on rape, usually to be punished by death, are those of: Mohamed Imhaouesh, Mohamed ben Amar ben Al Hashmi, Ahmad ben Abdullah Al Omari, Al Massari, Al Bouyekra, as well as other testimonies in the personal archive of El Merroun, and those of most of the veterans interviewed for this study.

²¹ Interview with Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed, Alqazarquivir, 21 February 2011.

²² Testimony of Mohammed al Ayyashi Al Bakouri who served in the headquarters of his unit working on legal and native affairs. 7 April 1994, El Merroun archive.

²³ Testimony of Al Buyekra, 21 April, Fnideq, El Merroun archive.

asked ‘then why did these [soldiers] kill [those] people?’²⁴ The native officers of the unit then put their signatures on the execution order.

Another veteran relayed how on one occasion a girl was raped. After dismissing the first two groups of soldiers that were brought to her, she identified the supposed perpetrator in the third group, and thereupon he was executed by his own unit ‘so that others would not be able to do it. Therefore, when we entered an inhabited place we could not do anything’. The chief of his unit had told its members that Spain was not like Morocco. In Morocco ‘the women do as you want from them’, but in Spain if a woman ‘wants to, then it does not matter to anyone. But if she does not want to, then there is nothing [that can happen] by force’.²⁵ In fact the Moroccan veterans who expressed their views on this issue always approved of the shooting of a rapist, whether they witnessed an actual rape or not. But punishment was not always taken for granted, as rape charges were sometimes disputed by fellow soldiers. One death sentence for two Moroccans accused of rape and killing, for instance, prompted a *Tabor* of the *Mehal-la* – that thought the soldiers were innocent - to refuse to follow orders and to start marching towards Salamanca with the intention of protesting to Franco that they were ‘dying in times of war and in times of peace’.²⁶

The testimonies of the Moroccan veterans concerning the issue of rape leave one with the impression that Moroccan troops were strongly discouraged by their Spanish officers from committing rape, at least after late 1936. Further, if they did in fact commit the act and were caught they generally suffered harsh penalties ranging from extended incarceration to execution. Moreover, there are two contemporary accounts by Moroccan soldiers from the Spanish army who deserted to French Morocco that confirm the views given, more than half a century after the war, in the previous testimonies. Among the 147 Moroccans from French Morocco who had served in the Spanish army and returned to the French zone, only two spoke of rape cases. Although they did not specifically state that they witnessed the rapes themselves, they stated that in both cases the perpetrators (one perpetrator in one case and four in the other) were shot.²⁷ Not one of the 147 spoke of any license to commit rape, or of any rapes that went unpunished. Although most of these 147 soldiers did not participate in the first brutal weeks and months of the war, and although only two deserters spoke of cases of rape, these two still could be considered as strengthening the version of the events given by the veterans’ testimonies mentioned earlier.

²⁴ Ibidem. However, the reference with regard to the Rif war, though it might be the experience of Muñoz Grandes himself, does not apply to the Rif war in general. During that war, Spanish and Spanish-led forces used sexual aggression against women in rebel territories. According to some accounts, Franco and Varela (the only officer to receive the most distinguished San Fernando laureate twice) were brought women as war prizes by their troops but that both men magnanimously refused the gift. Nerín, *La guerra que vino de África*, 285-286.

²⁵ Interview with Masoud Ballah, Brussels, 5 November 2011.

²⁶ Testimony of Abdelkader Al Shaoui, 3 December 1992, El Merroun archive. This witness did not experience the incident himself, but heard it from soldiers of the *Mehal-la* involved, while he was receiving treatment in the hospital.

²⁷ Interrogation of Mohamed B. Omar ben Amar Taliouani, and of Mohamed B. Omar ben Amar Taliouani, SHD, 3 H 266.

Rather than dismissing on the one hand the Moroccan deserters' and veterans' version of the rape subject as self serving or apologetic, or on the other hand the accounts of rape by Moroccan troops of Spanish women as trivial, both versions can be reconciled by considerations of the timeframe of the enlistment of the Moroccan interviewees. Most of the Moroccan veterans interviewed by historians, decades after the war, as well as the deserters interviewed by French authorities in French Morocco, were deployed in Spain after the first weeks and months of the Civil War when most of the sexual aggression by the Army of Africa (as well as others) took place in an environment of sweeping and often uncontrolled violence and terror, before the relative stabilisation of frontlines. Therefore the accounts of the Moroccan veterans and their own version of the rape subject for the periods in which the majority of them served, can be considered reliable.

To conclude this issue we must consider an important point and that is the scarce documentary evidence on the part of the Nationalists about sexual aggression committed by their Moroccan troops, which is remarkable given that these troops were accused of committing these crimes on a grand scale. It is even more remarkable when one compares it to the acts of rape committed by the Moroccan (and other North African and 'coloured') of the French Expeditionary Corps that fought in Italy in 1943 and 1944, acts which were committed on a larger scale in May 1944 and immortalised in the 1960 movie *Two Women* (with Sophia Loren). Those acts of sexual aggression are somehow better documented than the rapes attributed to the Moroccans of the Spanish Civil War. The French military archives contain reports on more rape incidents and attributed to the Moroccans of the French army during the first half of 1944 in Italy than the Spanish archives have on rapes attributed to Moroccan soldiers during the whole 1936-1939 period,²⁸ although these French documents do not give a specific number for Italian victims or rape and at first sight do not seem to speak of hundreds let alone thousands of rapes that were reported in Italy.²⁹ Then remains the question of whether French commanders encouraged Moroccan troops and other colonial soldiers to commit atrocities in the Italian countryside. According to Italian sources, General Alphonse Juin promised, in a declaration written in Arabic, the colonial troops of the French Expeditionary Corps that they would have 'women, houses, wine' and everything they would desire. They could take, burn and destroy everything they wanted during fifty hours, should they penetrate the enemy line without leaving an enemy soul alive.³⁰ Of course, the French commanders of that campaign have not admitted this allegation. However, the rapes in Italy

²⁸ See for example, SHD, Cartons 10 P 11 and 10 P 68.

²⁹ Tomasso Baris, 'Le Corps Expéditionnaire Français en Italie. Violences de "Libérateurs" durant l'été 1944', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'Histoire*, nr. 93 (2007) 47-61. According to the feminist communist organisation L'Unione Donne Italiane 12,000 women were victims of sexual violence in the towns and villages that witnessed the passage of the French Expeditionary Corps. Ibidem ,54. The Italian senate determined in 1996 that 2000 women were raped by the Moroccan soldiers in the spring of 1944. See Norme in favore delle vittime di violenze carnali in tiempo di guerra, the website of the Italian senate: <http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=Ddlpres&leg=13&id=1012> (accessed on 11 July 2013).

³⁰ Baris, 'Le Corps Expéditionnaire Français en Italie', 51.

led, on the part of the French, to hesitation on whether to use the Moroccan troops and specifically the irregular *Goums* for the liberation of France.³¹

On the point of scarce documentary evidence on rapes by Moroccan soldiers in Spain compared to the French case in Italy, we can discern important differences. Firstly, in Italy there were other international military forces in operation, especially the American forces that reported to the French command many of the offences committed by Moroccan troops against Italian civilians including rape. Secondly, by the time the Moroccans were fighting in Italy the Italian authorities had become partners with the Allies against the Germans, and so Italian police and military were able to be present in territories where French forces were also present and thus able to record and report excesses committed by the French colonial soldiers in general and the Moroccans in particular. Thirdly, since the Italians were not enemy and certainly not the civilians, and given the previous two considerations, the French would not or could not go to great lengths in hiding the crimes, although if thousands of Italian women were indeed raped then the French military must have committed great neglect in recording this. In Nationalist Spain, on the other hand, there were no significant international parties present, during the first weeks of the war, to witness and report any large scale rape incidents that might hurt the reputation of the Nationalist army nor any independent and neutral police force that might seek to defend the interest of Republican female victims of rape. But an alternative explanation for the scarcity of documentary evidence on rapes committed by the Moroccans of the Spanish Nationalist army (an explanation which is certainly unpalatable to those asserting that rape by Moroccan troops took place on a grand scale) is that these sexual crimes were far less frequently committed than usually is thought and, as the veterans maintain, that the harsh punishments were enough deterrence to keep those deeds in the category of the exception rather than the rule. One might also argue that that the fear of the Moroccans, strategically utilised by the Spanish Nationalists, caused an overreaction and led to the aggravation of the reputation of the Moroccan soldiers, and reinforced the image of the lustful and violent Moor that had been around for hundreds of years.

The Allied campaign Italy was not the first episode to generate a negative attitude towards French colonial troops or blemish their record by accusations of sexual aggression. That fate befell the colonial troops of the French Army during the occupation of the Rhineland in 1920s. Between 25,000 and 40,000 soldiers originated from Senegal, Algeria, Morocco and other French colonies in Africa. Discriminated against and targeted as a racially primitive and alien threat in the ‘heart of Europe’, they were represented in the German media as being governed by dangerous, uncontrollable sexual instincts and desires, and depicted as an evil presence. Campaigners mobilising against the colonial soldiers denounced them as a ‘Black Shame’, and were concerned that the use of ‘primitive’ black troops to watch a ‘white nation’ would seriously undermine and threaten the ideology of white domination. That ‘savages’ could act like masters in Europe and that ‘coloured tribes’ were ‘allowed

³¹ Edward L. Bimberg, *Mountain Warriors: Moroccan Goums in World War II* (Mechanicsburg 2008) 85.

to tyrannise a white people' seemed outrageous to many Europeans in the early 1920s. The allegations united several liberal and left-wing organisations, trades unionists, German and international women's organisations, members of parliament from different European countries and the United States, with Christian groups and the extreme right-wing in Germany.³² In Great Britain, the press either falsely represented or greatly exaggerated the behaviour of French African troops in the Rhineland, which in turn further stimulated racial animosity towards black people and mixed relationships in Britain.³³

The Wives

For all the horror of individual and gang rape, relations between Moroccan soldiers and Spanish women during and after the Spanish Civil War were in fact much more nuanced and complex. Despite their propaganda-inspired reputation as lustful aggressors, a number of Moroccan soldiers had romantic relationships with Spanish women. In fact, there were a sufficient number of these relationships to alarm the Nationalist military and to motivate it to take measures to impede them.

The following anecdote, by a veteran of *Regulares* Ceuta, El Hussein ben Abdesselam, is illustrative of the general attitude of Spanish society and the military towards mixed Moroccan-Spanish relationships. One day, during the later stages of the war, El Hussein's *Tabor* arrived at the Extremaduran village of Puebla de la Calzada, where some of the soldiers were quartered on the opposite side of a workshop where several girls worked sewing clothes. The owner, a wealthy Spanish woman, used to invite a number of Moroccan soldiers to come and sit with them. As the gatherings became more frequent the Spanish owner fell in love with a corporal, a fellow Regular of El Hussein, who was from Larache and was called Abdesselam, and who apparently was well versed in Spanish. The romance ended in agreement between the two to marry. Upon hearing of the marital intentions of this Spanish woman, the people of the village were filled with dissatisfaction and a number complained to the commanding officer of the *Tabor*, demanding an end to the relationship. The commander promised to stop the intended marriage. He summoned the Moroccan corporal and assigned him fixed office duty, effectively preventing him from leaving his quarters until the unit left the village. El Hussein was one of the soldiers who informed the Spanish lady about these actions.

After realising what happened she took her car and drove south, crossing into Morocco and heading towards Tetuan where she had an audience with the Khalifa, Mulay El Hassan ben El Mehdi, to seek his intercession. Commenting that he had no problem with a Spanish woman marrying a Moroccan subject, the Khalifa reassured her that he would intercede with Franco in the matter. Whatever the Khalifa might have written or said, it seems that it had the intended effect. Sometime later the *Tabor* commander summoned the people who complained to him about the Spanish-Moroccan marriage, and told them that he had received instructions from Franco not to hinder the

³² Iris Wigger, "Black Shame" – The Campaign against "Racial Degeneration" and Female Degradation in Interwar Europe', *Race & Class* 51 (2010) 33-46, here 35.

³³ David Killingray, 'British Racial Attitudes towards Black People during the Two World Wars, 1914-1945', in: Eric Storm and Ali Al Tuma, eds., *Colonial Soldiers in Europe, 1914-1945. "Aliens in Uniform" in Wartime Societies*, 97-118, here 107.

marriage of the corporal and the Spanish lady. This did not mean the end of the story as the unit was moved out to be stationed, in the following months in a number of different places, with the Spanish fiancée of Abdesselam following the unit and renting a place in each locality that the unit came to settle in. But after several months the marriage documents were ready and the corporal was discharged from the army and remained in Spain with his Spanish wife.³⁴

This happy ending to the story of the Moroccan corporal and his wealthy Spanish wife was not representative of the majority of the cases of romantic relationships between Moroccan soldiers and Spanish women. The difficulties that these couples faced were significant. As one veteran pointed out: 'It was not easy to marry a Spanish woman. Not like today. They [the military superiors] would forbid it'.³⁵ Indeed, this was the policy that the Spanish military, and the Protectorate authorities through their *interventores*, sought to implement. Franco's positive attitude in the aforementioned anecdote was the exception to the rule.

It is important to note that in the majority of documented cases of mixed marriages, intended marriages or other romantic relationships, the soldiers in question can be divided into two groups. The first consisted of wounded men who obviously had enough free time to stroll outside the hospitals and make contact with women of the cities where the military hospitals were located. 'The nurses loved the Moroccans', asserts one veteran, 'the correspondence between the soldier and the nurse continued even after he returned to the front'.³⁶ A letter, intercepted by the military censorship, in April 1938, speaks of a romance that developed during a period of recovery from injuries. In the letter sent by a Spanish woman, a resident of La Coruña, to her lover and 'only protection in this world', a certain Dris, in Morocco, she reminds him how she took care of him during fourteen months in La Coruña as he was injured. The letter speaks of her as an orphan and apparently no other relatives. She also asks him that when he reaches Morocco he should do whatever the military government of Spain entrusted him to do and that is to ask the High Commissioner in Morocco a permit so that she could pass to Morocco. She also informs him that she received in her town a travel permit that would allow her to travel.³⁷ Whether the letter arrived at its destination and whether Dris managed, or even desired, to arrange for the permit is not known.³⁸

³⁴ Interview with El Hussein ben Abdesselam, Ceuta, 24 January 2011. Years after the events he met in Ceuta the mixed couple which had produced two children. The part of the story where the Spanish woman travels to Morocco to meet the Khalifa was of course not witnessed by Al Hussein himself but learned after she returned from her trip.

³⁵ Interview with Abdelkader Ahmed, Alcazarquivir, 21 February 2011.

³⁶ Testimony of Ahmed ben Abdullah Al Omari, 12 April, Tetuan, El Merroun archive.

³⁷ Copy of a letter from María del Carmen Guerra. AGA, Af, 81.1752. The document ends with 'Algeciras, 30 April 1938.- II triumphal year', which suggests either that she had left La Coruña and was waiting the imminent arrival of the permission to go to Morocco, even though it is clear that Dris had just left for Morocco, or that the letter was intercepted and copied in Algeciras on the mentioned date, which explains the 'triumphal year' expression, more familiar to Nationalist official documents of that era.

³⁸ See also the copy of a civil matrimony contract sealed at Lavadores (written Labadores in the document), in the Galician Vigo municipality, on 7 June 1938, between a corporal of the Mehal-la, who was an inmate of the Bella Vista (Vella Vista in the document) Hospital in Vigo. AGA, Af, 81.1752.

The other group of soldiers involved in romantic relationships with Spanish women, a smaller group, consisted of those who were assigned duties that left them behind the front-lines, like the Moroccan military police, the *Mejasnia*, or those performing guard duties for high Spanish figures, such as General Franco. These circumstances facilitated the relationships that started to worry the Spanish military authorities.

In May 1937 the Delegation of Native Affairs of the High Commissariat reported the case of a young Spanish girl from Saragossa, where a Muslim hospital existed, who tried to accompany an injured Moroccan back to Morocco with the intention of contracting a civil marriage. The report expressed relief that the lack of necessary documentation kept the girl from crossing the border at Castillejos into the Protectorate.³⁹ However, it also expressed concerns that such instances might take place in the future and that such unions not only produced insurmountable problems but impeded the protecting mission, though it does not state how. The report asked for adequate measures to impede such journeys, preferably cutting them short in the places of origin, usually cities where Muslim hospitals existed.⁴⁰ But such relationships continued to take place, and apparently not all military commanders were aware of their duty to stop intended marriages between Moroccan soldiers and Spanish women. In October 1937, a letter to the Delegation of Native Affairs asked its opinion on authorisation for matrimony between a soldier of *Regulares* Alhucemas and a Spanish woman, pointing out that the commander of the *Regulares* Alhucemas Group did not object to the matrimony but did not find himself in a position to authorise it as, in his opinion, the native authorities were the ones who should do so.⁴¹ In response the Delegation of Native Affairs advised, unsurprisingly, against such marriages, as the Spanish women were ignorant of the Muslim customs and lifestyles. It also objected on the grounds that such marriages demanded the matrimony to be Islamic, and that the meagre salary of a soldier would not economically be proper for a Spanish woman, which would be even worse if the couple were to live in a village rather than a city.⁴²

Another case of an intended Moroccan-Spanish marriage that illustrates one of the justifications the Nationalist authorities used to oppose this type of relationships was that of the military policeman, or *mejasni*, also a member of Franco's Moroccan Guard, Ben Brahim Susi. In March 1938 the Delegation of Native Affairs was informed that Susi had divorced his Moroccan wife and intended to marry a Spanish woman from Salamanca. The *interventor* in North Spain (the Spanish military controller of native affairs), who was charged with investigating the matter, noted that the Spanish woman had a limp and judging from 'her physical look', concluded that the Moroccan *mejasni* intended to benefit materially from marrying this much older woman. The *interventor* visited

³⁹ Castillejos is modern day Fnideq, the Moroccan locality closest to the border of Ceuta.

⁴⁰ AGA, Af, 81.1122 Leg. 3763/3. 'Orden sobre prohibición de casamientos ilegales de soldados musulmanes con españolas'.

⁴¹ From the Chief of Staff of the Morocco Military Forces, Ceuta, to the Commissioner for Native Affairs, Tetuan. 11 October 1937. AGA, Af, 81.1752.

⁴² Commissioner for Native Affairs, Tetuan, to the Chief of Staff of the Morocco Army Forces, Ceuta. 21 October 1937.

the Spanish lady and ascertaining that she was not pregnant, tried to convince her of her wrong choice. His argument was interesting. The Spanish officer told her that ‘the Moors in a European environment are only useful for military service’. He also argued that Moors are ‘such friends of fantasy’ that he must have created grand stories about his personal attributes and great possessions.⁴³

The ‘problem’ of inter-religious marriages emerged with such frequency that it eventually became a matter for ministerial consideration. In July 1938 the Nationalist minister of National Defence issued an order prohibiting ‘illegal marriages’ between ‘Muslim soldiers’ and Spanish women. The order came as a result of a lengthy complaint concerning these marriages, which the Legal Department of the Ministry of Defence had previously formulated. The specific incident that prompted this complaint and the subsequent order was a marriage in Melilla between a Moroccan corporal of the *Regulares* and a Spanish woman who had come from the Peninsula. What was even more egregious and reflected a ‘lack in morality’ was that her father even gave ‘authorisation’ to the marriage. The Legal Department outlined in its report the possible consequences of such marriages. One negative effect mentioned, citing the opinions of military authorities in the Protectorate’s eastern region, was that these unions would enrage native women. As the report noted, the differences in tradition would ‘degenerate into quarrels that would cause continuous bitterness between women of both religions’.⁴⁴ In addition, the report expressed a concern for the well-being of ‘our [female] compatriots’ who would gain neither spiritual nor material advantage from these marriages. The Ministry’s Legal Department urged civilian authorities in the Peninsula to do their utmost to legally hinder inter-religious relationships, and noted that the Church’s cooperation should not be a problem, as it can within its functions work to encumber such marriages. The report also lamented the fact that the Civil Code on marriage contained no prohibition regarding differences of faith. On the other hand, it noted that the Defence Minister could use the current law to insist on prior authorisation for any soldier wishing to contract marriage, and thus could legally require civilian authorities in Spain and Spanish Morocco to refuse to register such marriages without this authorisation. Finally, the report recommended that all sectors and commanders of Moroccan units be informed of this policy; but that it be done as discreetly as possible, given the ‘delicate’ nature of the matter. Further, the units should be ordered to keep authorisations to a minimum.

The Defence Minister’s instructions did ultimately achieve the desired result. It prohibited the Muslim religious personnel attached to military units from actually sealing the marital contract, which was easy to do since many of them held the rank of officer. An example of such personnel attempting to seal undesired marital contract comes from March 1938 when the director of the Muslim hospital in Saragossa informed the *interventor* of Moroccan affairs in northern Spain that he learned about an intended marriage between a Spanish woman and one of the Moroccan patients who had asked the

⁴³ AGA, Af, 81.1113, Leg. 3746/3, report nr. 1650, on 1 April 1938. The report concluded that it was futile to convince the Spanish woman to desist from her intention.

⁴⁴ AGA, Af, 81.1122, Leg. 3763/5. ‘Informe de la sección de Justicia del Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, sobre matrimonios de soldados musulmanes con españolas’.

hospital's imam and the *catib* (scribe) to arrange the marital union. The director managed in time, though this took place before the ministerial July instructions, to instruct his two subordinates to stop the arrangements. Additionally, the *interventor* ordered the hospital's religious staff to refrain from effectuating any further marriages without the authorisation of his office and without first providing the *interventor* with information on the 'Moor' and the 'Christian' woman and the circumstances of their relationship.⁴⁵

In light of the efforts of the Spanish military authorities to forestall marriages between Spanish women and Moroccan soldiers based on religious and cultural differences as much as possible, one might imagine that conversion to Christianity would have raised fewer objections to such unions. In 1938, there was just such an instance. The military Muslim hospital of Medina del Campo reported that a member of the *Mejasnia* intended to marry a Spanish woman and would convert to Christianity to do so. This, however, presented the Spanish military with a more explosive issue since the intended conversion might give the appearance that the hospital administrators were condoning proselytising activities that were strictly forbidden in Muslim hospitals. The hospital's director was eager to communicate that no such forbidden conversions were taking place.⁴⁶ This sensitive issue was very important to Franco and his followers who presented themselves as 'men of God', whether Christians or Muslims, fighting the 'godless reds'. As Carmen Franco, the daughter of the Generalissimo, stated, her father 'had much respect for Islam'. For instance, he never advocated that the members of his Moorish Guard, who had married Spanish women, convert to Christianity. He thought that the Moroccans should not change religions because they were 'very impervious and it was a complication to mix both religions'.⁴⁷ While it probably can be concluded that Franco was not a supporter of these types of marriages, at least in the case of the Moorish Guard, he did not actively oppose them.

In the 1940s when a sizable number of Moroccan soldiers were still stationed in Spain, the issue of Moroccan-Spanish marriages continued to concern the Franco government. As in the past, the same uncomfortable questions of religious and cultural differences dominated these alliances. As one veteran remembered during this period:

The captain would be informed about the marriage. They would call the woman and ask her if she agrees to marry with him. She says yes, he says yes. Then they [the military superiors] would say: "he is a Moro and you are Spanish, how will you marry? If you agree to marry him according to his religion, then fine. If no, then you stay with your religion and he the same, but without marriage". But when the children are born, that is a problem. When the child is born, they come and say: "what name will you give it". Many times, they went to the priest, and the priest talks with the soldier: "the children must have the same religion, they cannot be parted,

⁴⁵ See AGA, Af, 81.1113, Leg. 3746/3, cables nr. 471 and 1673.

⁴⁶ See AGA, Af, 81.1113, Leg. 3746/3, cable nr 2556.

⁴⁷ Jesus Palacios & Stanley G. Payne, *Franco, mi padre. Testimonio de Carmen Franco, la hija del Caudillo* (Madrid 2008) 8.

you have the Moorish religion, the Muslim one, and she has the Spanish religion. It must be given a careful thought". One of them must fall in the trap, the man or the woman. If the man loves her and wants to marry her then he must become a Spanish subject. They go to the priest and he baptises him. And if not, they remain like this [in non-marital relationship].⁴⁸

As such, the end of the Civil War in April 1939 did not put an end to the troubling issue of Moroccan-Spanish marriages. Though large numbers of Moroccan troops returned to Morocco, others remained for garrison duty and to mop up the remnants of Republican resistance. This meant that the continued presence of some Moroccan troops in populated location in the Spanish Peninsula, led to continued romantic attachments leading to marriages, despite the restrictions imposed by the Spanish state,⁴⁹ which grew stronger in 1941 when it forbade municipal judges from authorising civil marriages, except for those who were not Catholic and those who could prove that they were not baptised.

A July 1939 report highlighted yet another aspect of this issue: the question of the nationality of the Spanish female who contracted marriage with a Moroccan. The report noted an increase in the frequency with which Spanish women were entering into civil marriages with Moroccans either in front of Spanish municipal judges or justices of peace in Spanish Morocco.⁵⁰ A problem arising from these unions was the question of the woman's nationality. According to Article 22 of the Spanish Civil Code at the time, a Spanish woman who married a foreigner lost her Spanish nationality and automatically assumed the nationality of her husband.⁵¹ At the same time, Moroccan law did not grant Moroccan nationality to a foreigner marrying a Moroccan subject. The report also indicated that the local Moroccan authorities were too inflexible in providing these Spanish women, who decided to move with their husbands to Morocco, with the necessary Moroccan documentation. On the other hand, some Spanish women found it difficult to obtain the necessary Spanish documentation to travel with their Moroccan husbands in the first place, since they were now considered non-citizens by the Spanish authorities. As noted in both the documents of the Protectorate authorities and the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there were also concerns for the political and legal well-being of these Spanish women. They were losing the protection of Spanish laws, and while these were not the most liberal during this era the Spanish most certainly considered them more 'progressive' than those that existed in Morocco. This was yet another reason for the Spanish Nationalist authorities to feel uncomfortable with Moroccan soldiers having lasting relationships with Spanish women. In legal

⁴⁸ Interview with Dandi Mohammed, Tetuan, 15 February 2011. Notice that becoming a Spanish subject, in the eye of this veteran, amounts to or equals converting to Christianity.

⁴⁹ See letter from the Commissioner for Native Affairs to the Chief of the *Regulares* Group in Tetuan. 15 November 1940. The Commissioner reiterates, in answering an earlier inquiry by the *Regulares*, the usual objections on matrimonies between Moroccan soldiers and Spanish women: the difficulties for Spanish women being assimilated into Moroccan customs, economic hardship, the reintegration of Moroccan soldiers into their old ways of life, except a few cases and the damage to Spain's prestige as protecting nation.

⁵⁰ See AGA, Af, 81.11023, Exp.108.

⁵¹ A foreign woman who married a Spanish man automatically obtained, according to the Spanish Civil Code, the Spanish nationality.

terms, this concern was solved in March 1941 by prohibiting Catholics from contracting civil matrimonies.

There was one way of shielding Spanish women from the perceived disadvantages of moving with their Moroccan husbands to Morocco. The Delegation of Native Affairs in Tetuan noted in 1942 that Moroccans who contracted legal marriages with Spanish women and had children with them should be exempt from the efforts by the General Directory for Morocco and Colonies to deport Moroccans who were deemed undesirable or illegal to avoid 'the arrival to Morocco of these women and children where they would lead a life incompatible with the one led in the protecting nation'.⁵² The problem of course was that most of the mixed couples moved to Morocco and the concern of the Delegation of Native Affairs in this regard was, in terms of the scale of the problem, of secondary importance.

During the Civil War the Nationalist policy with regard to romantic relationships was still taking its nascent steps. Such policy was not yet well defined. It was not until the mid 1940s that the Spanish Protectorate authorities, especially the Delegation of Native Affairs, developed a 'doctrine' with regard to impeding relations between Moroccan men (who now included, in addition to soldiers and ex-soldiers, also many students) and Spanish women.⁵³ The Delegation deemed such relationships damaging for the prestige of the protecting power, and resolved to cooperate with the Spanish 'national board for the protection of women' to avoid their continuation. The Delegation found that Spanish women who consorted with Moroccan men did so out of 'pretentiousness, ignorance, vice or greediness' and considered the cultivated and suave 'Moor' the most dangerous type. But by this time the Delegation had a well-established practice in place, starting with intercepting letters between Spanish women and Moroccan men, gathering information to establish the nature of the relationship (is it mere friendly or romantic?) and taking steps to prevent the Spanish woman in question from moving to Morocco and the Moroccan man from coming to Spain,⁵⁴ as well as informing Spanish family members so that they would take action.⁵⁵ The mere interception of letters that never reached their destination was probably enough in some cases to end the relationships as it gave the impression to lovers that their partners neglected or had abandoned them.

One wonders whether Moroccans were also encouraged to display their disapproval of such marriages. In 1941, in Tetuan, on the occasion of the Day of the Hispano-Arabic Book, a literary contest was celebrated in which two short stories won the first prizes, one in the Spanish language category and the other in the Arabic language category. The Arabic story, called *Taha*, tells of two brothers, Taha and Ali, from a poor family who end up in Spain after the outbreak of the war. Ali

⁵² 'Nota para despacho', 16 May 1942. AGA, Af, 81.1174. Others who could be exempt were well-established and 'serious' tradesmen of good conduct.

⁵³ Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, 'Delegación de Asuntos Indígenas, S2N2. Gestión racial en el Protectorado español en Marruecos', *Awrāq: Estudios Sobre el Mundo Árabe e Islámico Contemporáneo*, nr. 20 (1999) 173-205, here 181.

⁵⁴ Rodríguez Mediano, 'Delegación de Asuntos Indígenas', 188.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 173, 174.

volunteers for the army, and his father praises him for choosing to fight for the Nationalists, whose victory will make Morocco great. Ali ends the war winning ‘the trust of his chiefs and their admiration with the courage that he demonstrated in the battlefields’. But the more studious Taha wins a scholarship to study medicine in Spain. Taha’s father has only one warning for his son. ‘I only warn you of one thing, and that is: the woman. You will find there beautiful girls, and the new life will seduce you in many forms so do not be seduced’. But apparently it is not enough to warn his son once, so the father charges again. ‘Know, o Taha, that between you and the future that you are awaiting there is only one ghost, if you overcome it you will overcome the rest. It is love! It is love!! It is love!!!’. It is a love that, the father continues, ‘would draw you backwards’. By heeding the warning Taha would be ‘worth of the aid that the Spanish government has given to you’. After graduation the son ‘could do what you like’, but we must presume that after graduation Taha did go back to Morocco. What is certain is that Taha heeded his father’s advice, otherwise he would not have ‘made medical discoveries that turned the known medical rules upside down’.⁵⁶ One wonders whether the story won the first prize because of the family’s pro-Spanish attitude, Ali’s demonstration of courage as a warrior, or the father’s repetitive warning to Taha not to mix with Spanish women.

The Spanish military and the Protectorate’s Spanish authorities generally tried to prevent Moroccan soldiers from marrying Spanish women. In their ‘protective mission’, the Spanish proclaimed their desire to prevent their Moroccan subjects from suffering a religious lapse, to preserve the harmony of family and village life in the Protectorate and to placate the sensitivities of the native women.⁵⁷ But the Nationalist policy towards interreligious marriages also stemmed from the decided viewpoint that romantic and marital relationships between peoples of two different cultures and faiths were incompatible and thus ultimately doomed to failure. The Spanish military officers and officials who considered themselves to have the closest cultural and personal ties to Morocco and its people, given their years of military service in the Protectorate, and who had no issue with the Moroccan military presence in Spain, were the ones who probably had the greatest concerns about their Moroccan brothers-in-arms establishing personal liaisons with Spanish women.

Despite the policy of obstructing interreligious marriages between Moroccan soldiers and Spanish women, the Spanish Army never actually resorted to penalise, during the Civil War in any case, those soldiers who had relationships with Spanish women, nor did it resort to physically preventing Spanish women (by imprisonment for example) from consorting with Moroccan soldiers. And the law did not, until the end of the Civil War, prohibit such marriages. In practice, interreligious marriages and romantic relationships continued to take place during and immediately after the war.

⁵⁶ Ahmed el Hassan Escuri, ‘Taha’, in: Ahmed el Hassan Escuri and Enrique de Roda Guarrido, *Cuentos marroquíes* (Larache 1941).

⁵⁷ In the case of Moroccan soldiers who divorced their wives in Morocco to marry Spanish women, the *Regulares* groups paid the divorced women their due *sadak* (dowry, in this case the portion to be paid after separation) and deducted the amount from the soldier’s pay. See for example AGA, Af, 81.1113, Leg. 3746/3 ‘El cabo de Regulares de Larache Mohammed Ben Yilud número 3004 intenta casarse con una española’.

From the group of French Moroccan deserters who commented on the issue, four maintained that marriages or romantic liaisons took place between Moroccan soldiers and Spanish women, two among these four placing these relations in the context of good contacts with the civilian population, while the two others affirmed that relations with civilians were forbidden.⁵⁸ One of them, even though acknowledging this prohibition, still managed to have a mistress in Granada named Juana who - the deserter found it interesting to mention - had a liquor license.⁵⁹ The existence of such romantic relations or marriages, occasionally taking place with the permission of the unit commander, gave some Moroccans the obviously mistaken impression that the Spanish Army not only tolerated but looked positively upon mixed marriages.⁶⁰ Yet, the majority of Moroccan veterans conceded that such unions were either difficult or totally forbidden.

There are no definite estimates as to how many Moroccan soldiers serving in Spain married Spanish women or had a romantic relationship with the possible intention of marriage. But fragmentary reports and a number of examples of oral anecdotal evidence give insight into the contexts of these marriages. Towards the end of 1939 reports by a number of regional military controllers' offices in Spanish Morocco were sent listing the names of Moroccan men (both military and civilian) and Spanish women who were married to each other. According to these reports there were: sixteen cases in Tetuan, one case in each of the places Rincón de Medik, Beni Ider, Anyera and Xauen, five cases in the region of Villa Sanjurjo, and seven cases in Nador.⁶¹ In addition, there is another report listing the names of 68 different 'Muslims who live maritally or have relations with Spanish women', as well as the names of Spanish women who either were residing in Morocco or were living in Spain and corresponding with their Moroccan lovers. Most of the listed men were Moroccan Muslims, save one case concerning an Indian resident of Tetuan, who was corresponding with a Spanish woman from Seville, and a Moroccan Jewish resident of Tetuan who received letters from two Spanish women, bringing the total to 99 cases of 'Muslims' who were married to or had a romantic relationship with a Spanish woman, of which 97 are related to Muslim Moroccans.⁶²

In one case, it is mentioned that the affair is *liquidado* (terminated), and therefore one must presume that the rest of the affairs or marriages were ongoing. Although many of the men in question were soldiers or non-commissioned officers (and even one captain), there were merchants who obviously met their Spanish women while selling their wares to Moroccan troops. In one case the

⁵⁸ Interrogations of Mohamed ben Abdesslem ben si Ahmed; Mansour ben Ghazi; Seddik ben Amar ben Ahmed; and Mohammed ben Mohammed ben Belkassen. SHD, 3 H 266.

⁵⁹ Interrogation of Mohammed ben Mohammed ben Belkassen. See previous note.

⁶⁰ Interviews with Abdessalam Mohammed Al Amrani and Mohammed ben Ayyashi El Zerki, Ceuta, 30 June 2011.

⁶¹ AGA, Af, 81.1752, reports, all in 1939, on: 27 September (on Tetuan, Rincón de Medik, Beni Ider and Anyera), 4 November (on Xauen), 24 November (on Villa Sanjurjo) and 16 December (on Nador).

⁶² 'Relacion nominal de los musulmanes que vivem [sic] maritalmente o tienen relaciones con mujeres españolas'. AGA, Af, 81.1752. One of the 68 names in this report is already mentioned in a report on 4 November about cases of mixed marriages in Xauen (see previous note), which means that this report listed 67 new cases to be added to those listed in the reports referred to in the previous note.

commitment to the woman went as far as conversion, as demonstrated by the case of Mohamed Sahafa Mohand Bejneni, a sergeant of the *Mehal-la* of the Rif, who was baptised in Spain, taking the name of Juan.⁶³ It is not clear how many of the Spanish women who were residing with their Moroccan men in Morocco were already living in Morocco before the Civil War, but there are four instances listed of mixed marriages that took place before the war going back to 1924, and February 1936 (both cases related to Tetuan), 1935 (Rincón de Medik) and 1932 (Anyera), and we have to presume that the rest of the cases, or the overwhelming majority of them, took place after the outbreak of the Civil War. This must not be seen as an exhaustive list, as we must assume that there were relationships with Moroccan soldiers or merchants who died during the war and therefore would not figure in these reports, and that a number of Moroccans stayed in Spain with their Spanish women. About this last group we can at least learn from a report by an *interventor* in February 1941, that the matrimonies existing in Spain at the time were numbered at only five, one of which had produced offspring.⁶⁴ Furthermore, we have to take into account the relationships that were terminated long before the authorities had any knowledge of them.

The passage of time since the end of the Spanish Civil War did not diminish the reservations in the policy towards marriages between Spanish women and Moroccan men. By 1952, there were almost no Moroccan units operating in Spain as the anti-Franco guerrilla movement was completely destroyed, but there still existed the Moorish Guard of the Generalissimo. Some of its members, even though a small number, married or at least planned to marry, Spanish women. One case, occurring in 1952, concerns an officer, Sidi Mohamed ben Yilali who applied for authorisation to marry a Spanish woman. As he was to marry a Catholic woman, and even though he had received the necessary dispensation from the Church, his superiors sought the advice of the chaplain of Franco's headquarters and the chaplain advised that the opinion of the church was that such mixed marriages are rarely authorised, and if so only after the assurance that the husband would not try to convert his wife, would permit her to practice her faith and would educate his children according to the Catholic religion. In the specific case of this officer who has to constantly live with Moroccan units, the chaplain found that in the few similar cases which he came to know, the results were not satisfactory, as these units were composed of soldiers of the Islamic faith who were extraordinarily intransigent and fanatic, which would make coexistence difficult for a Moroccan whom they think has abandoned his religion and accepted the catholic one. Following this advice, the chief of the *Casa Militar* (General Franco's headquarters) ordered the captain commanding the Moroccan officer's company to try 'with the utmost possible tact' to convince him of abandoning his plans, and should he persist, to apply for a transfer outside the Moroccan unit. In the end the Moroccan officer received the military authorisation

⁶³ AGA, Af, 81.1752, report on mixed marriages in Villa Sanjurjo on 24 November 1939.

⁶⁴ Report on 25 February 1941 by E. Moreno Gordillo. AGA, Af, 81.1125.

necessary.⁶⁵ This case is interesting, as the main obstacle presented, is not the guarantees that the Church demanded from a non-Catholic would-be husband, but the hostile position of other Muslims vis-à-vis a Muslim who would marry a Christian woman, a position that could be so troubling that it would necessitate the transfer of an officer outside his unit, which shows that reservations about mixed marriages continued long after the civil war and came from both sides, Spanish and Moroccan.

As far as evidence from the Moroccan perspective about Moroccan-Spanish marriages is concerned, all of the Moroccan veterans who personally knew other Moroccan soldiers who had married Spanish women and brought them back home, confirmed that these women had left Morocco in the wake of Moroccan independence, either with their husbands or alone (often after the demise of the husband) and moved to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla or returned to their original towns. For those Moroccans who married Spanish women and lived in Ceuta and Melilla or in the Spanish Peninsula they remained in place, acquiring the Spanish nationality.⁶⁶ In hindsight this would seem to have vindicated official Spanish scepticism that Spanish women could make a life in a country so alien to their culture and religion.

Before closing the discussion on marriages, one should wonder whether the general Spanish attitude towards mixed marriages and relations was mainly due to the Islamic faith of the Moroccans, separate in itself, or due to the mixture of Moroccan/Muslim of the inhabitants of the Spanish Protectorate. In other words, would a non-Moroccan Muslim have received a better reception to his intentions? There is one such example (and probably not many others exist) in the case of Amet Handi Hassen Bey. Hassen Bey was a Turkish soldier who was captured by the French in the Balkans during the First World War and was transported to a prisoner camp in French Morocco from which, after a few failed attempts, he escaped to Spanish Morocco and then to Malaga where he enlisted in the Spanish Foreign Legion in 1923 and participated in the war against the Moroccan rebels of Mohammed Ben Abdel Krim. In 1932 he was a sergeant when a companion of his returned from a family visit in Madrid carrying a picture of a niece of him. Hassen Bey took the picture in his hand and told his companion 'tell your niece she already has a fiancé, a sergeant of the Legion'. Later his companion received a family visit in Morocco that included the said niece and Hassen Bey was set to marry her, and after a visit by him to her grandmother in Madrid the two were officially engaged, with the acceptance of all family members. It was however a very long engagement of five years, due to the political events of the Asturias rebellion in 1934, as well as due to the delay in his application for

⁶⁵ Correspondence on 15 October 'Sobre autorización para contraer matrimonio con una española, el Oficial Moro, de 2ª de la Cuarta Unidad del Regimiento', and 14 November 1952 'Regimiento de la Guardia de S.E. El Jefe del Estado y Genrealísimo. 4a Unidad de Fusileros Marroquíes', Archivo General Militar de Guadalajara (AGMG), Caja 3, Cp. 24. Other correspondence about the officer in question shows that there were rumours in 1945 that he was already married in Spain. That and his supposed inattention to his Moroccan wife in Ifni led this one to demand a divorce.

⁶⁶ Interviews with: Mohammed Abdullah Susi and Al Hussein ben Abdessalam in Ceuta, respectively 19 and 24 January 2011; Dandi Mohammed in Tetuan, 15 February 2011; Abdelkader Ahmed and Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed, Alcazarquivir, 21 February 2011; Kendoussi ben Boumidien, Nador, 4 July 2011. The AGMG contains files on the Moorish Guard soldiers who married Spanish women and remained in Spain,

naturalisation, and the start of the Civil War in 1936 where he served in the general quarters of the famous Colonel Yagüe. One difficulty to surmount was the religious one, and the couple applied to the Pope for a dispensation for mixed marriage which they received. That indicates that the family of the girl would not have been content with only a civil matrimony, and that Hassen Bey did not convert to Catholicism to marry. Not only does Hassen Bey not mention any objections on the part of the family, but he does not mention any objections from the army either. The couple married in Trujillo (Cáceres province) in 1937, the groom's best man being the administrator of a Spanish nobleman. His position close to Yagüe and the rank of the best man were apparently prestigious enough for the local paper to publish a piece on the wedding.⁶⁷

The story of Hassan Bey has a number of interesting elements. The romance was not the fruit of the vicissitudes of the Civil War, although the marriage took place during its course. The woman in question did not marry under circumstance of objection by the military or social circles surrounding the couple, and in no way could the Delegation of Native Affairs interfere, since Hassan Bey was no 'native', or better said, a Moroccan. The issue of difference in faith proved to be no problem even though both spouses kept their religion, but Hassen Bey apparently did not contest that the offspring would be raised as Catholics, as he mentions that his first born was baptised,⁶⁸ indicating that he might not have been a conservative Muslim, and that this factor might have helped him to be accepted by his Spanish in-laws. For all intents and purposes Hassen Bey was embraced as a member of the family and society, as a Spaniard. His association with a Spanish woman was no problem. His story however, stands alone, and with no similar ones with which to compare, it would be difficult to see a pattern in attitudes and policies that one could recognise and apply generally to the Moroccans.⁶⁹

This chapter has so far focused on the mixed relationships between Muslim men and Spanish women in Spain. Relationships between Muslim women and Spanish men during the Civil War in Spain must have existed, but if they did then they would have been very scarce, to the point that they do not figure in the military archives of the Civil War period. Mateo Dieste notices something similar in Spanish Morocco. He states that Spanish colonial literature reflected the fascination of Spanish men with the mystery and inaccessibility of Muslim and Jewish women in Spanish Morocco. Nevertheless, in reality the dominant type of mixed relationship was that of Spanish women and Muslim men, even though this kind of relationships is absent from colonial literature, because it contradicted the masculine and colonial model of domination.⁷⁰

The Concubines

⁶⁷ Amet Handi Hassen Bey, *Memorias de Amet Handi Hassen Bey* (Valencia 1993) 121, 123-124.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, 125. Hassen Bey does not himself appear to be the religiously conservative type as he celebrated his first born by buying half a dozen bottles of champagne.

⁶⁹ The couple lived happily ever after, living out their old days together (as of 1993 the year of the publication of the memoirs) in Valencia after 56 years of marriage. Ibidem, 125-126.

⁷⁰ Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste, "Rarezas": Conversiones religiosas en el Marruecos colonial (1930-1956)', *Hispania* 73 (2013) 223-252, here 232.

Now that it is clear how the Spanish Nationalists viewed mixed marriages, the final issue is how they approached and dealt with another kind of relation between Moroccan soldiers and Spanish women. The Spanish Civil War witnessed a significant growth in the number of women turning to prostitution. Many of these were the wives and daughters of Republicans who had either died, were imprisoned or fled Nationalist repression, and many of which had probably few means to sustain themselves. As a consequence, the Nationalist camp experienced a relaxation of sexual morality that saw an increase in regulated or tolerated prostitution.⁷¹ Even the Spanish religious hierarchy, which supported the Nationalists, does not seem to have protested – in the name of Catholic morals - against the tolerance of prostitution.⁷²

The tendency, by the Spanish military authorities, to limit relationships between Moroccan soldiers and Spanish women also echoed in its policy toward prostitution. The term ‘policy’ however, in this case, must be used with extreme caution. For in contrast to the instructions with regard to Moroccan-Spanish marriages, no documentary material has come to light so far that explicitly prohibited Moroccan soldiers from using the services of Spanish prostitutes. Still there are some indications that seem to confirm the aforementioned tendency. Moreover, as a rule, Moroccan troops were generally serviced by Moroccan prostitutes.

In the early days of the war, the presence of Moroccan troops in southern Spain contributed to an increase in prostitution. In Seville, for instance, prostitutes frequented the gardens of the María Luisa Park where the *Regulares* camped.⁷³ This did not apparently please the Spanish authorities. One Moroccan, interviewed by Mateo Dieste, remembered with a laugh, that when he arrived in Seville ‘the Spaniards say to the women, the Moors has a dick like a donkey. The Spaniards [say] to the women. [The Moor] Probably has the prick like a donkey’. Only when the ‘gypsy women’ arrived ‘then the [Spanish] women came to where we were’.⁷⁴ To control these sexual relations the Spanish Nationalist military expended some effort to facilitate prostitution for their Moroccan troops by establishing special brothels for them.⁷⁵ These brothels were generally staffed with women from Morocco; military authorities took care to facilitate the movement of Moroccan prostitutes to the Spanish peninsula. There was, for example, a request sent by the commander of the Army of the North to Franco in April 1938, asking for permission to establish a ‘Concubines Centre’ in the

⁷¹ Jean-Louis Guereña, *La prostitución en la España contemporánea* (Madrid 2003) 412. This culminated, in 1941, in the official repealing of the 1935 prohibition on prostitution. In 1956 prostitution was made once again illegal. *Ibidem*, 415, 436.

⁷² *Ibidem*, 410.

⁷³ Bahamonde, *Un año con Queipo*, 28.

⁷⁴ Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste, ‘De los “Remendados” al Hâjj Franco. Los españoles en el imaginario colonial marroquí’, *Illes i Imperis*, nr. 7 (2004) 63-92, here 83. Notice the distinction the veteran makes between ‘gypsy’ and ‘Spanish’ women.

⁷⁵ For references to various women from Morocco working or running brothels in Spain, see for example AGA, Af, 81.1150.

neighbourhood of the city of Fraga to service the needs of eleven Moroccan units belonging to the Moroccan Army Corps. Franco agreed to the proposal.⁷⁶

There were earlier efforts to accommodate this need. In December 1936, General Orgaz, the Spanish High Commissioner in Morocco at the time, planned to organise an effort to move dozens of ‘Chejas’ and musicians whom he intended to use to build a Moorish quarter in Spain that would serve to entertain the troops.⁷⁷ One such entertainment expedition, from Xauen, comprised three musicians, 36 women and two café sellers.⁷⁸ In a December 1937 report, a Republican spy also noted the transport of ‘Arab’ women to Spain. He stated that after trouble arose among the Moroccan soldiers who had been isolated in ‘special camps’, the military administration felt compelled to bring these women and settle them in farmhouses near these camps. The reason for this ‘isolation’ of the soldiers, this Republican report claimed, was that the *Regulares* continued raping even after conquered territory was organised.⁷⁹ Some of these prostitutes arrived either in pairs or individually, in some cases transporting with them significant amounts of narcotics (kif) and tobacco.⁸⁰

Although prostitutes were deemed to provide a valuable service for the Moroccan troops, some of them had a negative effect on military discipline or morale. In February 1939, the commander of the 17th Division asked a colonel from the Delegation of Native Affairs to solve the issue of a soldier of *Regulares* Tetuan, who had complained that during a 48-hour leave, he had paid a Moroccan prostitute 140 pesetas in advance for a planned two-day liaison. The prostitute, however, left without coming back and the duped soldier complained to the disciplinary service of the Moroccan military police, the *Mejasnia*. The men of that service told him that they could not do anything for him because the prostitute was the lover of the head of said service. The Native Affairs colonel reprimanded the involved *Mejasnia* personnel to order the delivery of the swindled sum and, should that not happen, to arrest the prostitute so that she would receive the ‘proper punishment’. A stern warning was issued to the members of the *Mejasnia* for neglecting their duty and severe punishment was promised should such a case repeat itself.⁸¹ In a different case, an apparent addiction to prostitutes pushed one soldier to desert. This soldier, who had come from French Morocco, told his interrogators that he ‘saw that he did not gain as much money as he hoped’, and the money that he did gain he spent on ‘women of bad ways’, though not specifying whether these women were Spanish or Moroccan, detailing that in

⁷⁶ Archivo General Militar de Ávila, A.1, L.50, Cp. 45.

⁷⁷ AGA, Af, 81.1150, Exp.5429. ‘Cheja’, the feminine form for the Arabic word ‘sheikh’ (which means elder) refers in this context to women professionalising in singing and dancing and who, says Madariaga in her study, doubled as prostitutes. See: Madariaga, *Los moros que trajo Franco*, 286.

⁷⁸ Regional controller in Gomara to the Commissioner of Native Affairs in Tetuan. AGA, Af, 81.1150.

⁷⁹ Report by the Servicio de Información Exterior, December 1937, in: International Institute for Social History, Archivo FAI, CP, 33A/5.

⁸⁰ For example a Moroccan woman, returning to Spain with her ‘maid’, was applying to carry with her to Spain 10 kilograms of kif and 300 packets of cigars; see: Regional Controller of Jebala to Commissioner for Native Affairs, 1 June 1937, nr. 30, AGA, Af, 81.1150, Carpeta 6. Another woman, travelling with a maid and a third woman, described explicitly as prostitute, applied for permission to carry 50 kilograms of kif and 1000 packets of cigars, along with 10 kilograms of tea. Regional Controller Regional Controller of Jebala to Commissioner for Native Affairs, 1 June 1937, nr. 29, AGA, Af, 81.1150, Carpeta 6.

⁸¹ AGA, Af, 81.1117, L. 2948/2.

Saragossa such a woman cost him 10 *duros* in addition to 1 *duro* for tea, and 1 *duro* (one *duro* is five pesetas) for the phonograph.⁸² Therefore he preferred to return to his village.⁸³

In Morocco itself, sending Moroccan prostitutes to Spain had provoked early in the war the outrage of the wives of the Moroccan soldiers fighting in Spain. According to the memoirs (published in 1997) of Rosalinda Powell Fox, the British mistress of Colonel Juan Beigbeder (High Commissioner of Morocco from 1937-1939), a group of Moroccan wives stormed the Larache train station where a train of female 'camp followers' stood ready to follow the troops. The wives attacked the prostitutes in a battle where 'hair was pulled out by the roots', 'earrings wrenched from a delicate ear' and 'dresses were torn and bosoms exposed', managing to prevent the departure of the prostitutes that day. Only under the cover of the early hours of the next morning did the train with 'its fallen human cargo' leave the city.⁸⁴

There is no hard evidence to indicate the total number of Moroccan women who travelled to Spain to provide sexual services to the members of the Moroccan units or how long they remained. Only shreds of information are available. For example, in September 1938, 21 women were on route to a brothel in the village of Valmanya (in Lérida, and not far from the already mentioned Fraga), where a little less than 50 women were already stationed. However, in a report from the Commander of the Aragon Army Corps, these women were no longer needed since there were no more Moroccan units in the sector.⁸⁵ This again demonstrated that Moroccan women had the task of servicing exclusively Moroccan troops.

Why did the Spanish military take the trouble of importing prostitutes from Morocco for its Moroccan soldiers? Certainly there should have been, in a time of war and devastation, no shortage of available prostitutes in Spain itself, or even women who could not be deemed professional prostitutes but who temporarily traded sexual favours for food or other goods that were in shortage. For example, upon the entry of Nationalist troops in Barcelona, recalls one veteran, women in the city called on the Moroccan soldiers to sleep with them 'for there was hunger'.⁸⁶ One answer to the question may be that Moroccan prostitutes doubled as dancers and singers and thus created an overall entertainment environment that was more familiar to and in accordance with 'Moroccan culture'. It is not clear from the source material, documentary or oral, whether the Moroccan soldiers preferred Moroccan 'concubines' over local Spanish women. However, the obvious objective was also to discourage Moroccan soldiers from having sex with Spanish women. In some cases, the Moroccan troops were forbidden from going into the cities during their leisure time. In 1993, one veteran specifically noted

⁸² I presume that the tea and phonograph were, in this case, necessary elements of the encounter with the women of 'bad ways'.

⁸³ Interrogation of Ahmed ben Mohammed Er Riffi, deserted: August 1938. SHD, 3 H 266.

⁸⁴ Rosalinda Powell Fox, *The Grass and the Asphalt*, 81-82.

⁸⁵ Letter to Lieutenant Colonel Antonio García García, 12 September 1938, AGA, Af, 81.1125, Leg. 3370, Cp 2 'Varios'.

⁸⁶ Testimony of Hamido Al Ma'dani, 30 September 1996, El Merroun archive.

this prohibition but then indicated that he and his comrades would ‘go secretly to the places of vice’ during the night only to return to their positions in the morning.⁸⁷

The Nationalist military policy concerning the use of prostitutes was to separate, as best as possible, Spanish and Moroccan troops. This separation was based on a practical rationale: some Spanish prostitutes simply did not want the Moroccans. One such veteran prostitute recalled in the 1970s that ‘nobody wanted the Moors, because they came accustomed to the *carte blanche* that they gave them and they wanted to do whatever they desired. In one village in Asturias they left the majority of the women there pregnant’.⁸⁸ But the separation in the prostitution sphere must have also been due to the instances of friction and incidents that might have arisen in the brothels between Moroccan and Spanish soldiers,⁸⁹ especially if some Spanish soldiers would have objected to a Moroccan having sexual contact with a Spanish woman even if it was consensual. It would also reduce tensions with other European soldiers such as the substantial number of Italians in Nationalist Spain. In Seville, for instance, during the early phases of war the ‘Moors’ were forbidden from visiting night clubs so as to avoid contact with the Italians who called them ‘Abyssinians’ and had frequent and violent clashes with them.⁹⁰ Since efforts by the Spanish military authorities existed to prevent marital relations between Moroccans soldiers and Spanish women, it is safe to assume that the Spanish military sought to apply this policy to prostitution as well, the difference being that the Moroccan troops were offered an alternative in the form of imported Moroccan prostitutes.⁹¹

A European issue

Spain was not the only colonial power to have struggled with the issue of mixed sexual relationships between its colonial soldiers and European women, whether those sexual relationships developed into marriages or took place within the realm of prostitution. Pre- and post Spanish Civil War conflicts in Europe brought to notice these issues. Concerns about imperial prestige always played a role in the mind of the military authorities that controlled the colonial troops. This is clear, for example, with regard to the British Indian Army during the First World War. As David Omissi puts it, frequent

⁸⁷ Testimony of Mohammed ben Amar ben Al Hashmi, Tetuan, 18 November 1993, El Merroun archive.

⁸⁸ J.R. Saiz Viadero, *Conversaciones con la Mary Loly: 40 años de prostitución en España* (Barcelona 1976). 18. By ‘they gave them’ she obviously meant that Nationalist authorities gave the Moroccans the ‘*carte blanche*’.

⁸⁹ For examples of quarrels at prostitution houses between Moroccan and Spanish soldiers see: AGA, Af, 81.1125, Leg. 3770, ‘escándalos–reyertas’. In one such incident, a Moroccan military policeman was beaten up by a Requeté and a Legionnaire. The madam of the house claimed that he had mistreated one of the prostitutes while he accused the two Spanish men of attacking him without any reason. While being interrogated he threatened to take revenge on the madam for testifying against him. See SHD, 3 H 266, for the interrogation of the deserter Mohammed ben Tahar ben Hacni, a sergeant in the Spanish Foreign Legion, who fled from a prison in Ceuta, where he was incarcerated for killing, in July 1938 in Saragossa, a Spanish sergeant of the Legion who courted Mohammed’s ‘mistress’. No details on the ‘mistress’ are provided, whether she was Spanish or Moroccan, but she was probably a prostitute.

⁹⁰ Bahamonde, *Un año con Queipo*, 43. The Italians, who acted like they were in a ‘conquered country’ used to have ‘many incidents with the Moors, some grave’ and even deadly ones. *Ibidem*, 147.

⁹¹ A number of veterans refer to comrades who used the services of Spanish prostitutes or had otherwise extra-marital sexual relationships with Spanish women, though denying that they themselves ever indulged in such contacts. It is worth mentioning that, with one exception, these interviews were not conducted in the presence of family members, so that at least was not a factor in the interviewees’ denials.

dislocations of military life might easily disrupt the sexual mores of the Indian soldiers, while encounters between white women and Indian troops could be charged with the heightened curiosity of racial and cultural difference. Soon after arriving in Europe Indian soldiers began obtaining access in Marseille to women of the neighbourhood and illicit sex took place. Wounded men recovering in the hospitals of Brighton or Bournemouth walked out with white women. Authorities regarded these encounters as prejudicial to good discipline and did their best to keep Indian troops under strict surveillance. Sex with English women was considered detrimental to the prestige and spirit of European rule.⁹² But it is also remarkable that some Indian troops also thought these liaisons to be distasteful, especially if there was a concern that an Indian soldier willing to marry a European woman might convert to Christianity.⁹³

The discomfort towards mixed sexual relationships also included the French authorities during the First World War, especially the censors who were preoccupied with the effect upon the prestige of France, French females, white women in the colonies, and the European prestige that justified and supported European rule in the colonies.⁹⁴ Colonial soldiers discovered that they could in the metropole approach white women and have relationships of some equality with them.⁹⁵ Despite efforts to discourage relations between French women and colonial soldiers, French officials nevertheless felt that these efforts could not stop these liaisons. There were some officials who took a liberal view towards these relations especially if they were ‘consecrated by a birth’ of a child, to whom the state should feel an obligation, and who thought that the French goal of assimilation and civilisation of colonial subjects could be reached by permitting a large number of colonial soldiers to have a more prolonged stay in France. Yet, the overall official attitude was negative,⁹⁶ for it violated the necessary racial distance between the colonial subjects and the French nation to which they in theory belonged, but a distance that was necessary to maintain colonialism, empire and French power.⁹⁷ Ironically, the French officials found that their control of the colonial order in the metropole was more equivocal because of social and administrative disorder that the war brought about, and because they called colonial soldiers to defend a motherland with which these colonial subjects supposedly had strong bonds, certainly a situation that is not so dissimilar to that of Spain during the Civil War.

When the Second World War broke out, similar concerns came back to life in Europe. To take for example the use by the British Empire of black soldiers of the South African High Commission Territories in Europe. British colonial authorities viewed with concern the move of these troops into Sicily and Italy. Contact with Europeans might show these in a bad light and corrode the racial ‘balance’ of Southern Africa. Sexual opportunities and the sight of impoverished Europeans

⁹² Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj. The Indian Army 1860-1940*, 65.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, 66.

⁹⁴ Fogarty, *Race and War in France. Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914-1918*, 222.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 225.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 223-224.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, 229.

threatened white prestige, and had implications for the return of Africans to their colonies. A British colonial adviser wrote: 'The temptations to which these men are subjected in Sicily and Italy are serious. ... The people are large producers of potent wine ... [and] women of Sicily and Italy display a deplorable lack of any sense of moral decency'. This touched deep-seated fears for white prestige, particularly on the subject of sex.⁹⁸ Another adviser deplored the more relaxed racial attitudes, which he considered common among southern Europeans, and because of the 'extreme poverty and want of the local population', in which circumstances the colonial soldier is 'necessarily in a far superior position ... and is able to offer many things which they are in dire need of'.⁹⁹

The French, during the Second World War, were not less concerned than the British, nor less than they themselves were during the First World War, even when it came to the women of their bitter enemy Germany. Some French officials felt, with regard to their own Moroccan troops, that having defeated the Germans and been welcomed by the German women, these Moroccans had lost their deference towards the Europeans.¹⁰⁰ In June 1945, a few weeks after German surrender, the French commander of the 4th Group of Moroccan *Tabors* sent a letter to the commander of Moroccan *Goums*, requesting that certain measures should be taken to maintain the morale of *Goumiers* that would make them capable of completing their current mission of occupation, and that would eliminate causes of disorder and indiscipline that could take place. Among those measures he requested increasing the staff of groups of prostitutes to the Moroccan units, to the amount of fifteen women per *Tabor*, as the numbers had been currently insufficient. The rationale was that 'one cannot ask from the *Goumiers*, in their majority originating from the Berber tribes of easy morality to live in complete self-control for long months'. The officer concluded that to fill the ranks of the prostitutes groups was the best means to mitigate rape or attempts of rape that could take place in Germany. But for reasons of European prestige, and in consequence French prestige, he judged that it would be inappropriate to recruit European women for this task, and that 'native' women should be sent over.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

The Spanish Nationalist military felt uncomfortable with the issue of Moroccan soldiers interacting with Spanish women. The Nationalists faced a fundamental dilemma. They had brought Muslim Moroccans to Christian Spain and expended considerable effort to justify their presence as true allies in the crusade against the godless 'reds'. At the same time, the Nationalists portrayed themselves as fighting for traditional Catholic Spain: the same Spain that had put to an end to the Moorish political presence at the end of the fifteenth century and its demographic presence in the early seventeenth

⁹⁸ Ashley Jackson, 'African Soldiers and Imperial Authorities: Tensions and Unrest during the Service of High Commission Territories Soldiers in the British Army, 1941-46', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25 (1999) 645-665, here 654.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, 655.

¹⁰⁰ Robin Bidwell, *Morocco under colonial rule. French administration of tribal areas 1912-1956* (London 1973) 300.

¹⁰¹ Lt. Colonel Parlange, commander of the 4th GTM (*Groupe de Tabors Marocains*) to the commander of Moroccan *Goums*, 1 June 1945. SHD, 3H 2425 -D6.

century. These were also the same individuals who did everything they could to impede interactions and marriages between Moroccan soldiers and Spanish women.

In her work on the cultural Spanish responses to modern Moroccan immigration in Spain, Daniela Flesler discusses today's public opinion about romantic relationships between Muslim men in general and Moroccan men in particular and Spanish women. She notes that contemporary Spanish literary works as well as feature movies that have dealt frankly with this issue, and have generally criticised racist attitudes towards such relationships, have nevertheless tended in the end to judge these intercultural and interreligious romantic bonds as almost always doomed to failure.¹⁰² In this regard, and if one can cautiously speak of continuities in attitudes, it probably should be noted that Spanish society, civilian and military alike, whether Francoist or democratic, sympathetic or not to the 'Moor', whether in the 1930s, 1940s or in the twenty-first century, has displayed a relative consistency in its attitude towards romance between the Muslim Moroccan male and the Spanish woman.

Given that the sexual relation between a Moroccan soldier and a Spanish woman was to be avoided whether it was the fruit of a romantic relationship or a business transaction, and that the greatest possible distance between the Moroccan man and the Spanish woman was sought, one wonders then (to come full circle) how it is possible for Spanish commanders to allow their Moroccan troops, even for a brief period at the beginning of the war, to engage in acts of raping Spanish women (a more damaging act to the Spanish prestige than a consensual sexual relationship) when the Spanish military command did not want the Moroccans to romance, marry or solicit one? The answer, as suggested by some historians and already mentioned above, might be found in the degree that Republicans in general, and Spanish women in this case, were stripped from their Spanish-ness, as they belonged to a political side that was against the 'true' Spain. Therefore, while romantic relationships and marriages were considered meetings between the Moroccan and the Spanish that ought to be controlled, condoned sexual assaults (not necessarily condoned on a large scale) were encounters between a Moroccan and a non-Spanish alien element that could be allowed to take place (as a punishment for the enemy) without much interference from the powers that be.

There is an anecdote that illustrates how deeply entrenched the willingness was to keep the Moroccan and the Spanish separated sexually, except that this one involves a Spanish man and a Moroccan woman. One of General Mohammed ben Mizzian's daughters married a Spanish officer without the consent of her father. After their marriage the couple travelled to Morocco, invited by Mizzian, who had become chief of independent Morocco's army, on the pretext of reconciliation. At the airport, the police detained the daughter and deported her husband.¹⁰³ Despite later attempts by the

¹⁰² See footnote 3.

¹⁰³ Carlos Fernandez, *Tensiones militares durante el Franquismo* (Barcelona 1985) 157-159, cited in Nerín, *La guerra que vino de África*, 177. According to this source the daughter converted to Catholicism to marry her Spanish fiancé. See also 'Fotocopia de una carta de d. Guilleromo de Olózaga, yerno del General Mizzian, al Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores', *Fundación Francisco Franco*, 22380. In the letter, dated 14 November 1959, the husband of Mizzian's daughter, explains that he requested that Spanish embassy in Rabat to grant his wife

Spanish husband to reunite with his wife and complaints to Franco, the new state of affairs prevailed. Attempts at freezing the pension of Mizzian from the Spanish army were rejected by Franco himself who probably understood Mizzian's decision and, given the policy of his regime, approved of it. The principle of rejecting Spanish-Moroccan mixed marriages (though this time it was between a Spanish man and a Moroccan woman) scored yet another victory.

The interracial and interreligious relations between Moroccan soldiers and Spanish women are a good example of the ambivalence with which the Spanish Nationalists looked upon their Protectorate in Morocco and its inhabitants. As much as the Nationalists deemed the Moroccan soldiers an essential part of the Spanish Nationalist Army and their 'crusade', their policy was to ensure that these 'Moors' retained their Muslim identity and space and were kept, as much as possible, separate from the Spanish population, particularly its female inhabitants, but more importantly not to allow disruption of the Spanish imperial hierarchy and prestige by letting the Moroccans step outside their defined boundaries as people under Spanish protection. Interracial marriages were deemed destructive to these aims. However, the importance of the Moroccan soldiers for the war effort necessitated that this aim – separating Spanish women from Moroccan soldiers - was to be achieved with 'tact', and the reality of their omnipresence in Spain made a totally successful effort to achieve this impossible.

political asylum, but that the department of Moroccan Affairs at the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded by requesting the husband to inform his wife not to take refuge at the embassy in Rabat because of the grave consequences that such act might entail.