Spanish Pacification Campaigns in Morocco (1909-1927): Developing Indigenous Forces in Counterinsurgency.

A Monograph

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2017

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)*
25-05-2017	Master's Thesis	JUN 2016 – MAY 2017

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
Spanish Pacification Campaigns in Morocco (1909-1927): Developing Indigenous Forces in Counterinsurgency.

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER

5b. GRANT NUMBER

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)
MAJ. Juan Martínez Pontijas

5d. PROJECT NUMBER

5e. TASK NUMBER

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301

8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
Advanced Operational Arts Studies Fellowship, Advanced Military Studies Program.

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

When Spain assumed the establishment of a protectorate in 1912, its army faced a large and persistent insurgency. Extensive documentation exists concerning the Spanish operations in Northern Morocco. However, not much has been written about the impact that the creation and employment of indigenous troops had in relation to the counterinsurgency effort. The Spanish authority soon established different models or regular and irregular indigenous-based units in order to secure and stabilize the country. The Indigenous Police, the Indigenous Regular Forces (*Regulares*), and the Xeriffian *Mehal-la* were of special importance.

Developing such organizations was not without difficulties and setbacks. The performance of the indigenous units varied because they responded to three different conceptualizations of how to employ indigene-based forces. The Spanish officers involved in the process not only developed different systems of recruitment for each unit, they also organized them in unique manners to meet the requirements of the fight they were facing. This study explores those processes over time and provides insights for current operations based on them since, eventually, they were very successful. By October 1927, the Spanish protectorate's pacification ended because a very efficient indigenous-based system had slowly but relentlessly penetrated the tribes within Northern Morocco.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Army of Spain, Morocco, Indigenous Troops, Indigenous Police, Regulares, Mehal-la, COIN, Host-nation, Pacification, Integration, Advising.

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			MAJ Juan Martínez Pontijas
(U)	(U)	(U)	(U)	53	19b. PHONE NUMBER *(include area code)*

Monograph Approval Page

Name of Candidate:	Major Juan Martínez Pontijas
Monograph Title:	Spanish Pacification Campaigns in Morocco (1909-1927): Developing Indigenous Forces in Counterinsurgency.

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Abstract

Spanish Pacification Campaigns in Morocco (1909-1927): Developing Indigenous Forces in Counterinsurgency, by MAJ Juan Martínez Pontijas, Army of Spain, 53 pages.

In September 2016, military forces of several western nations were conducting operations aimed at developing host nation forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Mali. For years, in those scenarios, part of the effort to eliminate endemic insurgencies has been to raise and employ indigenous troops, which is probably one of the hardest military tasks in building local capabilities.

From that perspective, the Spanish experience in Northern Morocco from 1909 to 1927 is one of those cases worthy of examination. When Spain assumed the establishment of a protectorate in 1912, its army faced a large and persistent insurgency. Extensive documentation exists concerning the Spanish operations in Northern Morocco. However, not much has been written about the impact that the creation and employment of indigenous troops had in relation to it. To fight such an enemy, the Spanish authorities soon established different models of regular and irregular indigenous-based units to secure and stabilize the country. The Indigenous Police, the Indigenous Regular Forces (*Regulares*), and the Xeriffian *Mehal-la* were of special importance.

Developing such organizations was not without difficulties and setbacks. The performance of the indigenous units varied because they responded to three different conceptualizations of how to employ indigene-based organizations. Not only all of them developed different systems of recruitment, they also organized their units in unique manners to meet the requirements of the fight they were facing.

Concerning their organization, the Spanish experience in Morocco serves to illustrate the impact of competition for manpower among organizations. It also exemplifies the dichotomy existing between quality and quantity and how, in order to maintain the adequate numbers ensuring combat capability, all forces had to reduce their standards of recruitment. Relevant for today's operations, the performance of the Spanish personnel participating in the development of the three models heavily influenced the process.

The vicissitudes of the Indigenous Police offer a good case study concerning the employment of law-enforcement organizations in counterinsurgency. Increasingly used for military purposes, it eventually suffered from organizational degeneration because it abandoned its original mission. The *Regulares* and the *Mehal-la* were part of a flexible operational system mixing cavalry and light infantry units. Both were well-trained and cohesive organizations. However, the latter enjoyed a more patient and progressive development, which ultimately increased its performance and avoided major setbacks throughout the years.

Because the three organizations coexisted, their interaction affected the pacification effort when considered as a whole. As a result, their performance over time differed depending on the operational environment's conditions and the ability of the Spanish authorities to integrate the capabilities each of them provided to the overall counterinsurgency effort. Finally, only the adjustment of operational tempo to the environment's conditions permitted true tribal adhesion to the protectorate's authorities.

By October 1927, the Spanish protectorate's pacification ended because a very efficient indigenous-based system had slowly but relentlessly penetrated the tribes within the Northern Morocco. Developing such a system is not an easy endeavor. Over time, it requires a holistic view of the all the factors shaping the organization of the different models of forces.

Contents

Acknowledgement

This monograph would not be the same without the support of Major General Carlos de la Fuente Chacón, Head of the Army of Spain's Military Culture and History Institute, who enthusiastically embraced my project and supported my research by making a large amount of archives and research materials available to me. Among the scholars working in that organization, I am indebted to Lieutenant Coronel Manuel Rodríguez Arias, from the Historical Studies Directorate, who sent me many of the primary sources used in this research. I also want to express my gratitude to retired Colonel Carlos Azcárraga Gómez, member of the Melilla Studies Association, and to Mr. José Luis de Mesa Gutiérrez, each of whom provided me invaluable comments and criticism based on their expertise on the matter treated in this paper. Finally, I am deeply grateful to retired Major General Valentín Martínez Valero, my father, for his patient reading of my drafts and precious counsel concerning this work.

Illustrations

Introduction

In September 2016, military forces of several Western nations were conducting operations aimed at developing host nation forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Mali. For years, in those scenarios, part of the effort to eliminate endemic insurgencies has been to raise and employ indigenous troops. Not surprisingly, current counterinsurgency doctrine acknowledges that governmental authority's credibility is vital in order to "address the threat and conditions of instability."[1] But, as a study on former US military's advising involvements acknowledges, "working effectively with indigenous forces in a foreign country is probably the hardest military task."[2] Because history compliments doctrine and helps shape its application, it is certainly useful to identify those experiences that might offer relevant insights for today's approaches to similar problems.

The Spanish experience in Northern Morocco from 1909 to 1927 is one of those cases worthy of examination. By the time Spain assumed the establishment of a protectorate in 1912, its army had already been facing a large and persistent insurgency, particularly in the mountainous region of the Rif. To fight such an enemy, the Spanish authorities soon developed different models of indigenous-based units to secure and stabilize the country. The full array of indigenous forces operating throughout the protectorate included various types of regular and irregular organizations. The former, supported by the latter, responded to a comprehensive organizational process oriented to materializing permanent indigenous security structures.

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[1] Headquarters Department of the Army, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (Washington, DC: May 2014), 11-1.

[2] Robert D. Ramsey III, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 114.

Context matters. The strategic and operational environments in which the Spanish protectorate's authorities developed the different types of regular indigenous forces certainly framed their approach. Even though the Spanish presence in Northern Morocco had been permanent for centuries, it mostly remained limited to some locations on the coast. In 1904, in order to preserve its interests in the Strait of Gibraltar, Spain reluctantly agreed to participate in the French-led intervention process in Morocco that eventually resulted in a shared protectorate.[3] The pacification effort in Morocco became a central piece of Spain's politics in a moment when its society was under the shock of having lost the former empire's last overseas territories in 1898. In such a context, the Spanish governments developed diverse approaches to the "Moroccan issue" in order to impose order and security within the region.[4] Throughout that process, the role of the indigenous forces increased dramatically. From 1919 until the end of the pacification process, every significant operation against the insurgency executed within the protectorate included large numbers of indigenous soldiers.[5]

As today's doctrine acknowledges, the most visible elements of authority in a counterinsurgency context are the host nation military and police forces. Building the capacity of indigenous forces to face the insurgency works toward increasing their competence, capability,

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[3] Victor Valero García, "The Campaigns for the Pacification of the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco: A Forgotten Example of Successful Counterinsurgency" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2011), 1. The social feeling among the Spanish society about the intervention in Morocco was far from homogeneous. Many civilians and army officers, known as *Africanistas*, would enthusiastically embrace what they saw as a new imperial expansion opportunity based on commercial, political, and historical considerations. Geoffrey Jensen, "Muslim Soldiers in a Spanish Crusade. Tomás García Figueras, Mulai Ahmed er Raisuni and the Ideological Context of Spain's Moroccan Soldiers," in *Colonial Soldiers in Europe, 1914-1945: "Aliens in Uniform"* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 183.

[4] Ibid., 2.

[5] Fernando Caballero Echevarría, "Intervencionismo español en Marruecos (1898-1928): análisis de factores que confluyen en un desastre militar, Annual" (PhD thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2012), 299.

commitment, and confidence.[6] That is not an easy mission. The Protectorate's authorities created different organizations to meet the requirements of the pacification effort. Because of their participation in it, the Indigenous Police, the Indigenous Regular Forces (*Regulares*), and the Xeriffian *Mehal-la* were of special importance. Over time, factors such as their recruitment, or the fact that many units had to simultaneously fulfill war fighting and law enforcement missions, severely undermined their development. Additionally, because the three organizations coexisted, their interaction affected the pacification effort when considered as a whole.

Extensive documentation exists concerning the Spanish operations in Northern Morocco. However, not much has been written about the impact that the creation and employment of indigenous troops had in relation to it. It is ironic that those organizations have received so little attention given that their participation dramatically contributed to the stabilization of a territory that remained peaceful for decades afterwards. Indeed, the creation, deployment, and utilization of a heterogeneous pool of indigenous units decisively contributed to the Spanish protectorate's pacification. Such a process was not without difficulties and setbacks. Many of them can be directly linked to the fact that the performance of the indigenous units varied depending on their organization, training, and employment.

[6] FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, 11-1.

The Moroccan Campaigns and the Indigenous Forces

The action of the Indigenous Forces is the soul of our action in Morocco.

—Javier Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas.*[7]

The pacification of the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco was a complex process that occurred in several phases, most of them achieved through extensive military campaigns in the Rif area.[8] The Spanish Army and the sultan's troops fought and died for more than seventeen years in order to stabilize an extremely inhospitable land inhabited by fierce tribesmen who refused to accept the rule of the Moroccan monarch. For large periods of time, by means of a perennial insurgency, different rebel tribes and bellicose warlords impeded the protectorate's authorities to exert control upon the population in many areas. However, as soon as those authorities entirely occupied the Riffian territory, it was almost immediately pacified and its stability lasted unchallenged until the independence of the Kingdom of Morocco, thirty years later.[9]

The foundations of the protectorate were the treaties agreed by Spain and France in 1902 and 1904, in which the Great Powers negotiated the zones of influence within Morocco. The agreements established that those areas had to be occupied if the sultan became unable to exert his influence over such territories. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially since 1905, the turbulent situation in Morocco showed that such circumstance was about to

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[7] Captain Javier Ramos Winthuyssen was a Spanish cavalry officer serving in Morocco. He wrote a remarkable study focused on the development of the Protectorate's indigenous troops. Rejecting the conscription model that he had witnessed in the initial African campaigns, he advocated for a colonial army based on indigenous professional soldiers as the only tool able to pacify Morocco.

[8] The phases were the following: the 1909 Campaign, the Kert Campaign (1911-1912), the Rif Campaign (1919-1921), the Reconquest and Strategic Defense (1921-1925) and the Alhucemas Bay Campaign (1925-1927). Salvador Fontenla Ballesta, "Las Campañas del Rif," in "Centenario del Protectorado de Marruecos," special issue, *Revista de Historia Militar*, no.2 (2012): 136.

[9] Jesús Martínez de Merlo, "La Pacificación del Protectorado de Marruecos," in *Al servicio del Protectorado, España en Marruecos 1912-1925* (Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, 2012), 25.

happen as violence spread throughout the country. The area of influence assigned for a potential Spanish administration included the Rif, a mountainous land which was especially difficult to control. The region's situation was increasingly chaotic due to the inherently aggressive nature of the Riffian population, which resulted in an expanding tribal resistance against the sultan's authority.[10]

Figure 1. Map of Northern Morocco. Adapted from Comisión de E.M. del Ejército, *Mapa de la Parte Norte de Marruecos* (Madrid: Talleres del Depósito de la Guerra, 1912).

On 9 July 1909, a party of tribesmen attacked and killed a group of workers constructing a railroad in the vicinity of one of the historical Spanish enclaves in Northern Africa, Melilla. Due to the general situation, the Spanish military authorities had foreseen an aggression of that kind and had prepared accordingly. Melilla's military garrison responded by occupying several key locations in the vicinity of the city. Within the following weeks, heavy combats took place between large groups of insurgents and the Spanish forces. The violence of these clashes caused so many casualties among the Spaniards, that the government decided to mobilize increasing

[10] Caballero Echevarría, "Intervencionismo," 45-49.

numbers of reservists in order to send them to the African theater. Such mobilization led to widespread social unrest. In Barcelona, security forces brutally suppressed antiwar protests in what is known as the Tragic Week.[11] Nevertheless, the reinforcements enabled the Spanish army to launch multiple operations upon the tribes in rebellion and, by January 1910, it controlled the area surrounding Melilla up to the Kert River.[12]

The 1909 campaign brought to light how divided the Spanish society was concerning the intervention in Morocco, especially when considering the possibility of suffering a large number of fatalities while trying to impose stability within the Rif region.[13] Militarily, the army concluded that the expeditionary forces employed, which were organized and trained following the Prussian model, were not suited to the fight needed in such a difficult operational environment.[14] The establishment of indigenous units could solve both problems. From a domestic policy perspective, their deployment in combat would surely spare Spanish lives. From a military standpoint, the army in Morocco would integrate soldiers well-acclimated to both the enemy and the terrain of the country.[15] As a result, in January 1910, the protectorate authorities created the Indigenous Police to act as a security enforcer within the tribes. Additionally, to lead

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[11] Wayne H. Bowen and José E. Álvarez. *A Military History of Modern Spain, From the Napoleonic Era to the International War on Terror* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007), 38.

[12] Francisco Ramos Oliver, "Las Guerras de Marruecos," in *ENTEMU. Aportaciones a cinco siglos de la Historia Militar de España*, ed. Evaristo Martínez-Radío Garrido (Gijón: UNED Centro Asociado de Asturias, 2013), 171.

[13] Bowen and Álvarez, *A Military History*, 38.

[14] Ramos Oliver, "Las Guerras de Marruecos," 175. The Spanish Army in Northern Morocco suffered from serious deficiencies in training, logistics, and doctrine. Troops deployed in Africa were "often ill-prepared and under-equipped for the conditions there." Jensen, "Muslim Soldiers," 190. Widespread corruption, inadequate organization, division in the officer corps, and lack of funding severely conditioned the Spanish Army performance in many occasions during the pacification process. Julio Albi de la Cuesta, *En torno a Annual* (Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, 2014), 77-79.

[15] Bowen and Álvarez, *A Military History*, 40.

the projected operational effort from July 1911, the Spanish government organized the Indigenous Regular Forces, known as the *Regulares*.

Since the end of the 1909 campaign, the Spanish forces in the vicinity of Melilla had devoted themselves to consolidating the positions previously occupied while facing little armed opposition. However, on 24 August 1911, a party of insurgents attacked a cartographic military team working in the vicinity of the Kert River. That event opened the campaign named after that geographical feature. Overall, the operations were defensive in nature as the Spanish army did not intent to penetrate into the Rif but to defend the natural border of Melilla. Despite that cautious approach, small units composed mainly of indigenous troops conducted numerous offensive actions aimed at destroying insurgent groups. The campaign concluded when the warlord sponsoring the revolt among some tribes died in a firefight against a *Regulares'* platoon.[16]

Given the chaotic situation, on 30 March 1912, the government of France and the sultan signed the Treaty of Fez, which eventually approved the effective establishment of a protectorate. On 27 November 1912, France and Spain signed an agreement by virtue of which both assumed their duties on the zones of influence accepted in 1904. The Spanish area of responsibility would be ruled by a *khalif*, acting on behalf of the Moroccan monarch through a government called *majzén*. The most relevant Spanish authority was the High Commissioner, whose principal mission was to supervise the Moroccan administration. To facilitate the task, the Spanish authorities divided the territory into three general commands: Ceuta, Larache, and Melilla. Aimed at enforcing the rule of the *khalif*, one of the first measures adopted was the creation of the

[16] José María Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares Indígenas. De Melilla a Tetuán. 1911-1914. Tiempos de Ilusión y de Gloria* (Madrid: Almena, 2006), 101.

Mehal-la, a military organization based on indigenous troops trained and assessed by Spanish officers.[17]

The protectorate's authorities quickly assumed that imposing an effective administration throughout the territory would be a challenging endeavor because the bellicose tribes within the Rif fiercely ignored the Sultan's authority and stubbornly opposed the presence of Europeans.[18] In 1913, as soon as the *khalif* effectively set the *majzén* in Tetuán, the capital of the protectorate, Spanish and Moroccan forces launched several offensive operations against the rebellious tribes in the vicinity of the main cities. The intent was to quickly expand and consolidate the m*ajzén*'s rule.[19] However, the instability and uncertainty caused by World War I paused the operations within the region.[20]

The Spanish administration took advantage of the temporary lapse to undertake the reorganization of the indigenous forces within the Protectorate. An important regulation issued in 1914 identified four types of units: the *majzén*'s forces, the Indigenous Police forces, the Indigenous Regular forces, and the Indigenous Irregulars or *harkas.*[21] Such norm acknowledged the importance given by the Spanish military to operating with indigenous troops. It showed a clear preference for regulars but, recognizing the utility of irregulars, it also created a procedure to organize ad hoc indigenous organizations in support of particular operations. The intent was to

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[17] Ramos Oliver, "Las Guerras de Marruecos," 177.

[18] Bowen and Álvarez, *A Military History*, 40.

[19] Carlos Hernández de Herrera and Tomás García Figueras, *Acción de España en Marruecos* (Madrid, Imprenta Municipal del Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1929), 208.

[20] Ramos Oliver, "Las Guerras de Marruecos," 177-178.

[21] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 299-300.

create a structure able to both enforce security within the region and effectively fight the firmly rooted insurgency.[22]

In November 1918, General Dámaso Berenguer Fusté was named High Commissioner. In order to enhance the pacification process throughout the Protectorate, he implemented a "diplomatic penetration" across the territory instead of the former approach, which was mainly military.[23] In his own words, the conflict in the Rif was about progressively establishing an effective political administration. The process envisioned naming the proper authorities and supporting them with Indigenous Police forces able to enforce their action. Then, regular forces would be deployed in order to provide security along the newly-defined front. The system was based on infiltrating the noncompliant tribes by adept Moroccans linked to the Indigenous Police while conducting frequent shows of force executed by the *Regulares.*[24]

The system worked remarkably well in the regions of Ceuta and Larache during 1919 and 1920. Many tribes in the western area of the Rif started to comply with the *khalif*'s rule and a network of outposts and blockhouses secured the main lines of communications.[25] The *Regulares*, the Indigenous Police, and occasionally the *Mehal-la*, were the spearhead in most offensive operations whereas the Spanish regular units usually remained in the rear area. Overreliance on indigenous troops as part of the first-line combat units implied risks. Many Spanish officers were well aware of them. One of the greatest exposures was that such circumstance created a "feeling

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[22] Manuel Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política y táctica de las fuerzas indígenas en nuestra zona de penetración en el Norte de Marruecos. Cooperación y articulación táctica de las tropas europeas con las antedichas, en un Ejército colonial probable* (Ceuta: Imprenta del Regimiento Serrallo, 1921), 49.

[23] Martínez de Merlo, "La Pacificación del Protectorado," 27. General Berenguer had previously served in Cuba and, like many other officers serving in Africa, was an officer with extensive experience in guerrilla warfare. By 1909, many of them had fought in the Third Carlist War, in the 1893 African campaign, in Cuba, or in the Philippines. Fontenla Ballesta, "Las Campañas del Rif," 137.

[24] Caballero Echevarría, "Intervencionismo," 294-295.

[25] Ramos Oliver, "Las Guerras de Marruecos," 178.

of inferiority among the European soldiers."[26] Later on, that would prove to be a fatal issue in the eastern theater.

In February 1920, General Manuel Fernández Silvestre was appointed General Commandant in Melilla. Having the experience of the model set by General Berenguer, he enforced a more aggressive version of it in the area under his responsibility. His intent was to speed up the penetration process within the eastern region with the ultimate objective of pacifying all the tribes from Melilla to Tetuán.[27] However, the Rif is a territory rougher than the areas around Ceuta or Tetuán. The mountain population was more violent and independent than the people living in the western protectorate's plain and urban areas. Historically, the region's tribes had resisted the sultan's authority by forming ad hoc alliances under the leadership of prestigious local warlords.[28] One of them, Mohammed ben Abd-el-Krim, leading the Beni Urriagel tribe, organized a general uprising in order to face the aggressive Spanish penetration throughout the Rif.[29] By June 1921, the Spanish Army had established an overextended network of outposts and garrisons from Melilla to the natural limits of the Beni Urriagel tribe. Unfortunately, such system had been laid attending to political criteria instead of military considerations. Trying to influence as many inhabitants as possible, General Fernández Silvestre set a system of undermanned and isolated defensive positions spreading across the territory.[30]

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[26] Albi de la Cuesta, *En torno a Annual*, 105.

[27] Bowen and Álvarez, *A Military History*, 43.

[28] Caballero Echevarría, "Intervencionismo," 296.

[29] Bowen and Álvarez, *A Military History*, 43.

[30] Albi de la Cuesta, *En torno a Annual*, 205.

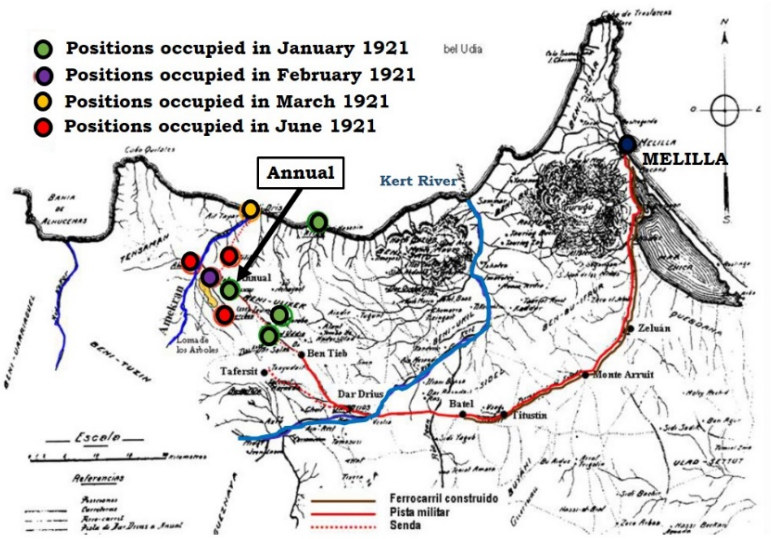

Figure 2. Operations in 1921 leading to Annual. Adapted from Fernando Caballero Echevarría, "Intervencionismo español en Marruecos (1898-1928): análisis de factores que confluyen en un desastre militar, Annual" (PhD thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2012), 414.

The Spanish military set its own trap. On 21 July 1921, a large insurgent force stormed the Spanish outpost of Igueriben. Spanish forces had been trying to relieve the besieged troops for several days and the slaughter that took place in front of them severely undermined their morale. Meanwhile, Abd-el-Krim's success attracted other tribes to join the rebellion and fostered defection among the most newly-recruited indigenous troops collaborating with the Spanish Army. General Fernández Silvestre, understood that the magnitude of the rebellion and the isolation of many outposts threatened the whole system of defensive positions. Consequently, he ordered a general withdrawal.[31] From that moment on, different events of panic, treason, and deficient command led to a rout that eventually resulted in 8,000 Spanish casualties, including General Fernández Silvestre.[32] Such defeat, known as the Disaster of Annual, had a profound impact on Spain's society. The subsequent investigation of the events strongly condemned the

[31] Bowen and Álvarez, *A Military History*, 44.

[32] Albi de la Cuesta, *En torno a Annual*, 450-451.

behavior of the indigenous troops. Witnesses and survivors declared that many Moroccans defected and joined the insurgency in the slaughter, especially among the Indigenous Police.[33]

The crumbling of Melilla's command was not total because the High Commissioner heavily reinforced the city since 24 July. Focusing on recovering the initiative as soon as possible, General Berenguer developed a new plan for the pacification of the protectorate.[34] The efforts to recover the lost territory began in late August and, by November, Spanish-led troops controlled the eastern bank of the Kert River again.[35] This time, however, the protectorate's administration had learned the lesson. During 1922 and most of 1923, efforts to penetrate the tribes in rebellion were very limited as the authorities progressively tried to strengthen control over the areas recently dominated.[36] In Spain, controversies within the government concerning the policy to be followed in Morocco and criticism of the protectorate's military leadership were some of the causes that led General Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja to successfully bring about a military coup on 13 September 1923.[37]

During the first months of his dictatorship, General Primo de Rivera did not seem to have a clear policy concerning Spain's involvement in Morocco. His first measures were certainly conservative, for he organized two divisions in the peninsula as strategic reserve for the protectorate and he also ordered a general redeployment within the Rif.[38] His intent probably

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[33] Albi de la Cuesta, *En torno a Annual*, 338.

[34] It consisted of three phases. The first, to recover the ground lost after Annual in the east; and in the western zone to expel or contain the insurgency. The second, the landing at Alhucemas. Finally, to establish by political action or by force coastal positions in the Rif in order to penetrate the territory of the tribes in rebellion. Bowen and Álvarez, *A Military History*, 45.

[35] Albi de la Cuesta, *En torno a Annual*, 527.

[36] Ramos Oliver, "Las Guerras de Marruecos," 180.

[37] Bowen and Álvarez, *A Military History*, 46-47.

[38] Ibid., 48.

being to avoid a new defeat, all forces had to withdraw to a set of strong defensive positions known as the "Estella Line."[39] The occupation of the line, executed under constant harassment from insurgents, gave Abd-el-Krim control over a large territory and several tribes throughout the Rif.[40] Emboldened by his successes, on 13 April 1925, the Riffian chieftain made a fatal strategic miscalculation when he ordered his forces to attack the French defensive positions along the Wergha River, on the border between both Moroccan protectorates, and eventually threatened the city of Fez.[41]

Until that moment, French authorities had been, at best, indifferent to Spain's struggles with the bellicose northern tribes. Having to face a common aggressive enemy, however, forced the two powers to cooperate with both the military and political perspectives.[42] By the end of July 1925, a plan had been designed to launch a joint amphibious operation in the Alhucemas Bay aiming to hit the insurgency at his core, in the territory of Abd-el-Krim's tribe.[43] On 8 September, more than 13,000 soldiers disembarked in the rebel-controlled coast despite heavy resistance. Among the units leading the assault were several battalions of the *Regulares* and the *Mehal-la*.[44] One month later, on October 13, Spanish-led troops stormed the main village of Abd-el Krim's safe haven. From that moment on, the rebellious chieftain had to withdraw further deep into the mountains of the Rif. Subsequent raids and offensive operations conducted by Spanish forces

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[39] Martínez de Merlo, "La Pacificación del Protectorado," 30.

[40] Ramos Oliver, "Las Guerras de Marruecos," 180.

[41] José María Campos Martínez, *Abd el Krim y el Protectorado* (Málaga: Algazara, 2009), 180.

[42] Ramos Oliver, "Las Guerras de Marruecos," 181.

[43] Bowen and Álvarez, *A Military History*, 49.

[44] Francisco Gómez-Jordana Souza, *La Tramoya de Nuestra Actuación en Marruecos* (Málaga: Algazara, 2005), 121.

progressively isolated and demoralized the insurgents. Abd-el-Krim would eventually surrender to French authorities in May 1926, which avoided him to witness how members of his own tribe collaborated with the Spanish Protectorate's authorities in putting down the last remnants of his rebellion.[45]

On 10 October 1927, the High Commissioner announced total and complete pacification of Northern Morocco.[46] From that moment, peace and stability within the Spanish Protectorate's area would be assured for decades.

The Indigenous Police

> The Indigenous Police companies are not designed to conquer or fight, even when they might be forced to do so. Their task is to normalize the activity within the tribes, to secure the villages, and to ensure that justice prevails.
>
> —Manuel del Nido y Torres, *Misión Política.*[47]

On 31 December 1909, barely one month after the conclusion of that year's campaign, the Spanish Government's Ministry of War ordered the organization of the Indigenous Police Troops in the area of Melilla.[48] The creation of such organization responded to the spirit of the agreements that Spain had previously signed. Heavily inspired by the successful French experience in Algeria, the intent was double: to relieve the Spanish Army's units from combat pressure against the tribes and to attract the indigenous population in order to stabilize the region around the Spanish enclaves in Northern Africa.[49]

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[45] Martínez de Merlo, "La Pacificación del Protectorado," 31.

[46] Bowen and Álvarez, *A Military History*, 50.

[47] Manuel Del Nido y Torres was a Spanish officer who served in Morocco for years and wrote extensively about his experiences. His works on the organization and employment of indigenous troops in Morocco and the initial history of the Xeriffian *Mehal-la* are extensively referenced in this paper.

[48] José Luis Villanova Valero, "La Pugna entre militares y civiles por el control de la actividad interventora en el Protectorado español en Marruecos," *Hispania*, LXV/2, no. 220 (2005): 688.

According to its order of creation, the Indigenous Police's missions were to "ensure order, those of the military police, and whatever ordered to them" in the occupied territories.[50] As one officer serving in Africa said, its first objective was "reestablishment of order."[51] However, such ambiguous mission statement enabled the units to fulfill a large variety of tasks. Further regulations increased them by ordering the Indigenous Police to enforce "justice administration in the first instance" or to execute direct administration over those tribes not willing to recognize the *majzén*'s authority. By 1916, an Indigenous Police company could be tasked with activities as diverse as to conduct surveillance on key features of terrain, to establish an information network within the tribe, to execute census and land registration, to ensure arms control within the tribesmen, or to collaborate with teaching Spanish at the main village's school.[52]

To fulfill the increasing number of tasks assigned, the Indigenous Police's structure changed almost every year since its creation. Nevertheless, the basic regulation concerning its internal organization and recruitment remained remarkably unchanged until 1921. The basic police unit was the company, called a *mia*, which would be composed of three or four infantry squads and a cavalry squad. Their manpower would largely depend on both the financial situation and the extent of the area in which they were to develop their activity.[53] In theory, every *mia* could only have three officers, two had to be Spaniards whereas the third would be an indigene chosen among his peers because of his exceptional loyalty and skills.

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[49] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 49.

[50] Villanova Valero, "La pugna," 688.

[51] Javier Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas y Ejército Colonial* (Sevilla: Gómez Hnos., 1921), 64.

[52] Tropas de Policía Indígena de Melilla – 3ª Mía. *Memoria geográfica, histórica y estadística de la Kabila de Beni-Sicar* (Madrid: Talleres del Depósito de la Guerra, 1916), 9-17.

[53] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 48.

Concerning recruitment, the above-mentioned regulation outlined that all enlisted personnel had to be between twenty and forty years old and meet certain physical standards. Because the daily work of the units would be carried out among the population, indigenous police units could only enroll volunteers from the areas in which they were deployed. They had to be "fully aware of both the terrain and the political circumstances of the population." Moreover, the indigenous policeman had to be someone with prestige within the tribes "either because of his behavior or his family ties."[54] The latter aspect is particularly relevant because it intended to promote the Indigenous Police as a legitimate institution, to facilitate its duties due to the status of its members, and to serve as a primary asset to penetrate the insurgency.[55] However, the increasing political demands for creation of new *mias* and the burdens imposed by the prolonged counterinsurgency effort provoked that the number of recruits fitting those requirements decreased over time. Thus, the administration had to accept individuals of lesser reputation. As a result, misbehavior of some elements increased throughout the years and so did the enmity towards the Indigenous Police in some villages.[56]

A well-established promotion system permitting soldiers to become sergeants if they had served for more than two years, were able to write Arabic, and, if possible, could also speak Spanish also contributed to the recruitment effort. Promotion to officer ranks was stricter, as the candidate had to meet "in an extraordinary degree" the conditions of having served for more than two years without a single fault and being able to fluently write both Spanish and Arabic.

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[54] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 60.

[55] Del Nido y Torres, believed that only the employment of indigenous troops could attain effective control over the rebel factions. Consequently, he stressed that "the recruitment of those individuals is critical because they are the means to establish contact with the rebels in order to convince them to give up with their attitude and have the territory pacified. It is through these individuals that we shall know the intent of the insurgents, their desires, commitments and fears." Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 59.

[56] Villanova Valero, "La pugna," 694.

Allowed to serve until their sixties, those officers also benefited from a higher salary.[57] Yet, throughout the years, the number of Indigenous Police officers was never sufficient because, as an official document acknowledged, the system was not applicable to the police or the *Regulares*. Due to the permanent activity of those units, most of those individuals suited for promotion just did not have the time to receive the education needed.[58]

Figure 3. Indigenous Police officers in 1919. Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 400.

Because the Indigenous Police *mia* was an organization entirely composed of indigenes, with the only exception of some of its commanders, the role of the Spanish officers leading it was critical. As an expert in the region stated, an officer had to have "perfect knowledge of the country, habits, culture, and language of the indigene, experience in counterinsurgency warfare, proactiveness, and discretion."[59] Apart from leading the unit, since the establishment of a system

[57] Command of Melilla, *Provisional Ordinance for the Organization, Regime and Service of the Indigenous Forces of Melilla and her Territory*, ch.1(Melilla: Negociado de Tropas y Asuntos Indígenas, 1910).

[58] The Officer's position cannot be covered due to the lack of sergeants with enough theoretical knowledge, despite their loyalty and effective virtues for command." Spain's Ministry of War, Official Diary, no. 20 (January 27, 1920), 245.

[59] Fernando O. Capaz Montes, *Modalidades de la Guerra de Montaña en Marruecos. Asuntos Indígenas. Conferencias del Coronel Capaz, Alta Comisaría de la República Española en Marruecos, Intervención y Fuerzas Jalifianas* (Ceuta: Revista África, 1931), 31.

of delegate offices in 1912, the captains of the Indigenous Police *mias* had to collaborate in the governance of the tribes, particularly in the administration of justice.[60] Their main concern ought to be the pacification of the territory in which they were deployed "not so much through armed action but through propaganda" in order to attract those reluctant to accept the *majzén*'s rule.[61] Notwithstanding their capital role, serving in the indigenous forces frequently implied isolation and personal risk. High salary and the promise of quick promotion due to combat actions compensated those conditions. However, in 1918, a regulation upon rewards and decorations made those units less attractive by drastically removing such important incentives. From that time, the officers assigned to the Indigenous Police became increasingly demotivated to the extent that pervasive disheartenment emerged as one of the explanations to justify the defeat in Annual and, eventually, the organization's disbanding.[62]

What appears certain is that the Spanish military had confidence in the Indigenous Police mission. From its creation, the number of *mias* created and deployed augmented permanently. In 1909, only three *mias* served in Melilla's area. By 1921, there were fifteen. The same trend applied to the areas of Larache and Ceuta.[63] The growing number of police units responded to the necessity of control over the territory. As the protectorate expanded, so did the Indigenous

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[60] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 28. Those offices, deployed throughout the controlled areas of the Protectorate, served as delegations of the *Majzén*'s authority. Manned by Spanish personnel, their purpose was to maintain permanent contact with the population and to assess the tribal authorities concerning governance and security matters. Another officer with extensive experience in Morocco, Ramos Winthuyssen, explained their function in his work on the Indigenous Forces: "The detached offices control one or several tribes, depending of their extension, the character of the inhabitants, the population's density, the time they have been pacified and the proximity to ungoverned areas. In each one of those, the judge authorizes all documents concerning sales, merchandises, heritages, etc. The captain of the company, assessed by the judge and elders of the tribe, listens to the tribesmen's claims and requests and provides justice according to the Muslim code of law." Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 66.

[61] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 34; Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 65.

[62] Albi de la Cuesta, *En torno a Annual*, 98.

[63] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 42-50.

Police's organization. Such enlargement seemed logical taking into account the apparently successful action of the *mias*. As one officer recognized "the Indigenous Police has exceeded our imagination concerning its utility and goodness."[64] Another one confirmed the same idea by stating that "as they have been deployed, police units have been successful in ending up with chaos and anarchy." While praising the performance of those units in policing their areas of responsibility, he also stressed that they excelled in "controlling roads in order to impede smuggling and conduct ambushes on rebels in their area."[65]

The last sentence of the officer's statement is really significant as it points out that Spanish military authorities also trusted the Indigenous Police units in conducting counterinsurgency operations. In fact, that happened since the very first moment.[66] During the Kert Campaign, since 27 October 1911, several companies of the Indigenous Police participated in military operations. They mainly conducted reconnaissance operations but, in many occasions, they also fought as the leading elements in offensive actions against the insurgency.[67] The trend significantly increased throughout the years. In 1914, the Royal Order reorganizing the indigenous forces within the protectorate specifically stated that Indigenous Police forces "could act in military operations as an armed force," even in scenarios away from their regular bases, if such was the decision of the competent military authorities.[68]

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[64] Antonio Vera Salas, *Porvenir de España en Marruecos. Impresiones de Campaña* (Toledo: Colegio de María Cristina, 1916), 279.

[65] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 65-66.

[66] Ramos Oliver, "Las Guerras de Marruecos," 174.

[67] Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia de las Campañas de Marruecos*, vol. 2, (Madrid: Servicio Histórico Militar, 1951), 511-513.

[68] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 302.

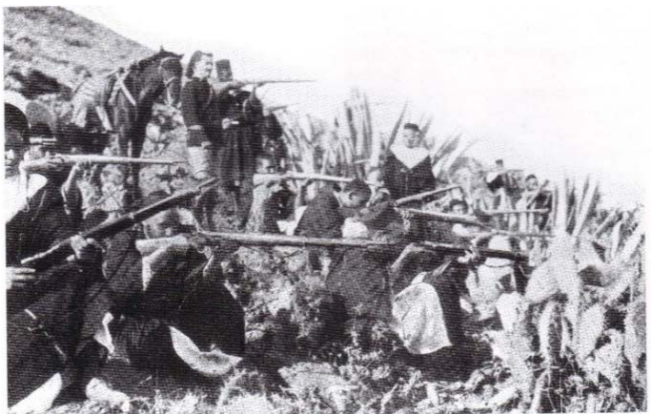

Figure 4. Indigenous Policemen prepare an ambush in 1912. Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 399.

However, the feeling was not unanimous. Some Spanish officers had already started to identify certain flaws in the organization and recruitment of the Indigenous Police forces.[69] Additionally, the economic situation imposed a heavy burden on further developments of these forces since 1918 as the salary perceived by a policeman was lower than the one earned by a laborer or the indigenous soldiers in the French Protectorate. Such circumstance not only severely hindered the recruitment effort but also provoked that disaffection spread among the ranks.[70]

In 1919, General Berenguer, the Spanish Protectorate's High Commissioner, introduced a new reorganization of the Indigenous Police units in Melilla and Larache classifying the companies into *mias* of contact, *mias* of rearguard, and *mias* of support. Such changes created a more military structure that fostered even further the Indigenous Police's involvement in military operations while diminishing its political activities. The *mias* of contact, when available, were

[69] One serving in the *Regulares* stated: "They live in their own house, where they have their own weapons and horses, and their organization is somehow irregular. I find this system unsound because, as they serve within their own community, their behavior will be inevitably influenced by their own quarrels and personal interests… I think it would be a good idea that the policemen were recruited among the soldiers serving in the *Regulares* once they have served for three years, rewarding them for their service with a more comfortable assignment, not requiring so much work if compared with the tasks carried out by the *Regulares*." L. Wiew, *En Sidi Saide la Blanca* (Madrid: Imprenta de A. Marzo, 1916), 84-85.

[70] Caballero Echevarría, "Intervencionismo," 471.

always the leading elements in the operations against the insurgency and the first line of defense in the territories recently pacified.[71] This situation became controversial. Some Spanish officers agreed that police forces needed to demonstrate to the population that they were able to effectively fight the insurgency.[72] Others, on the contrary, insisted that their role should only be to support military operations, not to lead them, and to provide rear area security.[73]

The *mia* of contact's main function was to establish a living frontier in the vicinity of the unpacified territories in order to facilitate the "political penetration" among the rebel populations. The Indigenous Police had to negotiate with the uncontrolled tribes in touch the establishment of positions within their territory. Those had to be occupied by newly-constituted Indigenous Police units which would, in turn, become the next *mias* of contact.[74] This system imposed a heavy burden on these units because they were the ones suffering most of the fatalities due to their permanent contact with the insurgency. Several problems derived from the situation. First, the number of casualties demanded large number of replacements, which occurred at the expense of the *Regulares*, the true indigenous military force.[75] Second, morale among policemen severely weakened because most of them did not want to endure the harshness of the first line of combat. As one Spanish officer plainly put it: "soldiers resigning from the *Regulares* enlist in the Indigenous Police companies trying to find a more peaceful way of life. Why would we then employ these units regularly in combat?"[76] Third, as Spanish units were less frequently exposed,

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[71] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 12.

[72] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 59.

[73] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 63.

[74] Caballero Echevarría, "Intervencionismo," 294-297.

[75] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 135.

[76] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 66.

policemen reinforced their belief that they were being used as "cannon fodder," which increased their contempt for European soldiers.[77]

Being those problems important, the worst aspect of the reorganization introduced by General Berenguer is that it perverted the role of the Indigenous Police. Since the beginning of 1921, combats took place almost every day in the area. The *Regulares* and the Indigenous Police bore the brunt of the fight and the latter started to progressively lose focus on its main mission. In the aftermath of the Disaster of Annual, Colonel José Riquelme y López-Bago, Chief of the Police Troops in the Melilla area, admitted that "the permanent employment of Indigenous Police's forces in the first line of defense did not allow them to fulfill their true mission."[78] Thus, progressively, as the Indigenous Police's main effort shifted from security tasks to military operations, the Spanish administration started to lose control over the tribes because information and political attraction activities became deficient.[79]

When Abd-el-Krim's rebellion started to spread among the tribes in the Melilla area, the Spanish administration was unable to understand the situation since the Indigenous Police had lost influence over the region. Even worse, as the tribes started to consider joining the rebellion, the policemen, not willing to fight against their own clan, became a cause of concern for the military. One officer who survived Annual declared that "the state of dissatisfaction among the Tesaman, Tafersit, Beni Ulixech, and Beni Sadi tribes was clear since many days. That was

[77] Caballero Echevarría, "Intervencionismo," 483.

[78] Eduardo Rubio Fernández, *Melilla, Al Margen del Desastre (Mayo-Junio 1921)* (Barcelona: Cervantes, 1921), 62.

[79] Caballero Echevarría, "Intervencionismo," 522.

transmitted to the police troops, from which we feared desertion as indiscipline was starting to be obvious."[80]

Indigenous Police forces' defections played a significant role in the collapse of Melilla's command and the slaughter of hundreds of soldiers, both Spaniards and Moroccans. The investigation carried out to identify the reasons leading to such disaster strongly blamed the Indigenous Police in several aspects already mentioned such as the low morale and preparation of its officers, or the inadequate employment of its units for military purposes.[81] However, as a Spanish officer acknowledged just after the referred events, the reasons for the rebellion within the police ought to be found in the failure of the Protectorate's implantation both as a policy and as a system, not in the Indigenous Police as an organization.[82]

But the Indigenous Police was mortally wounded. The Spanish population, the public opinion, and the Army needed to find scapegoats for the terrible events at Annual.[83] Accordingly, in 1923, a reorganization within the Spanish protectorate disbanded the Indigenous Police forces. From that moment, the newly-created Military Intervention Service integrated the former Indigenous Police detached offices into a new separate organization under direct control of the High Commissioner. For their part, all members of the Indigenous Police either disenrolled or joined the *Mehal-la*.[84]

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[80] Sigifredo Sainz Gutiérrez, *Con el General Navarro. En operaciones. En el cautiverio. Diario del Capitán de Estado Mayor* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1924), 16.

[81] Albi de la Cuesta, *En torno a Annual*, 531.

[82] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 6.

[83] Albi de la Cuesta, *En torno a Annual*, 98.

[84] Ibid., 591.

The Indigenous Regular Forces: the *Regulares*

> Our Groups of Indigenous *Regulares* Forces, combining three or four infantry battalions with a cavalry squadron in a single unit, is the most perfect organization that can be imagined for the fight in Morocco.
>
> —*General Goded, Las Etapas de la Pacificación*[85]

The Indigenous Police was not the only organization emerging out of the 1909 campaign. Acknowledging that regular Spanish Army units, trained in a European conventional style and based on conscripts, were neither adapted to the terrain nor to the enemy, the Spanish Army encouraged the creation of indigenous-manned combat units. Additionally, the extension of the territory and its further expansion required a permanent garrison able to carry out further military operations. As the initiative matched the political concern about Spanish casualties in Africa, on 30 June 1911, the Spanish government ordered the creation of the Indigenous *Regulares* Forces.[86] From the very first moment, the administration hoped that the newly-formed organization would be able to "cooperate in tactical operations with the Army's troops and, some day, to constitute the main part of the Army in the possessions and territories occupied by our troops in Africa."[87] Thus, it started as a limited experiment, which, depending on its performance, would set the basis for a permanent African garrison in the future.

As a lieutenant colonel, Berenguer, who would later become the High Commissioner, was the officer responsible for organizing the unit. Inspired by the French experience in Algeria with indigenous infantry battalions, he envisioned a combined arms organization integrating

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[85] General Manuel Goded Llopis served in Morocco many years. He commanded several indigenous units and was in charge of the initial landing in Alhucemas. His latest assignment in Africa was as Inspector General of the Military Intervention Service and the Xeriffian Forces. He wrote a comprehensive book on the final operations of the pacification process.

[86] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares,* 48.

[87] Ibid., 297-298.

infantry companies and cavalry troops under the same command. The *Regulares* had to be a cohesive and disciplined volunteer force able to conduct both conventional and irregular warfare operations. Because the indigenes enrolled already shared the culture and military customs of the insurgency, the efficiency of the *Regulares* would be greatly increased through hard training and discipline.[88] Training essentially focused on intense combined arms combat and live fire exercises.[89] Strict enforcement of discipline included hard measures such as physical punishments or the summary execution of defectors. However, the Spanish officers also ensured respect for cultural and religious practices to the maximum extent, allowing activities considered as infractions in regular Spanish Army units.[90]

Figure 5. Troops from a *Regulares* battalion. Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 343.

Because the *Regulares* units were within the Spanish Army structure, all officers serving in them were Spaniards. The possibility existed, as happened in the Indigenous Police, for natives

[88] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 113.

[89] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 106.

[90] Plundering after raiding an insurgent village or camp was one of those activities. Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 121.

to be promoted to the Indigenous Officer rank if they showed loyalty, combat skills, and received the proper military education. Lieutenant Colonel Berenguer specifically chose the first Spanish officers among those already assigned to combat units in Melilla.[91] Soon, many junior officers were willing to serve in the *Regulares* because of the impressive behavior of the unit during the Kert Campaign.[92] Lieutenant Colonel Berenguer stressed the role of the officer as a model for the troops and encouraged closeness by forcing them to have permanent contact with the indigenes. In 1916, a captain serving in the *Regulares* stated that "officers had to have profound knowledge of their soldiers and be aware of their names and qualities."[93] The Spaniards led from the front, which implied heavy casualties in combat, but also fostered esprit de corps and loyalty. In 1914, the average number of casualties in combat among officers was exceptionally high.[94] However, none had been murdered by indigenes serving in their units, which always was one of the greatest fears among the Spanish military authorities.[95]

Concerning the enlisted personnel, the initial intent was to avoid the presence of Spanish noncommissioned officers, corporals and soldiers within the *Regulares*. However, because of the need to fulfill administrative duties related to the Army's structure, the first Spanish sergeants and soldiers arrived to the unit by December 1911.[96] Further reorganizations limited the number of

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[91] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 106.

[92] José E. Álvarez, "Between Gallipoli and D-Day: Alhucemas, 1925," *The Journal of Military History* 63 (January 1999), 78.

[93] Luis Pareja, *De la Guerra en Marruecos: Recuerdos y Observaciones de un Capitán de Compañía* (Madrid: Imp. A. Marzo, 1916) in Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 274.

[94] Antonio León Villaverde," El Proceso de Creación de las Fuerzas Regulares," *Revista Ejército*, no. 843 (June 2011): 109.

[95] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 106. In 1931, an experienced senior officer would still advise his subordinates: "Do not forget that any indigenous soldier can betray us." Capaz Montes, *Modalidades de la Guerra*, 21.

[96] Juan Ignacio Salafranca Álvarez, "Las Fuerzas Indígenas," in *Al servicio del Protectorado,*

Spanish sergeants and corporals, who could never outnumber their indigenous counterparts in those ranks. Additionally, willing to preserve the indigenous character of the organization, legal restrictions concerning the number of Spanish soldiers serving in the *Regulares* limited their presence to a fifth of the total number of troops.[97] Despite these constrains, in 1919, the *Regulares* battalions organized machine gun companies which could only integrate Spanish personnel, a circumstance that slightly increased the European presence in the indigenous organization.[98] As their officers did, the Spanish enlisted personnel lived with the Moroccans serving in the unit with the intent of ensuring its cohesion and effectiveness.[99]

Figure 6. Enlisted personnel from the *Regulares*. Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 343.

The recruitment of indigenes to serve in the *Regulares* was not without difficulties. The Spanish military authorities urged Lieutenant Colonel Berenguer to have the unit manned by late

España en Marruecos 1912-1925 (Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, 2012), 34.

[97] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 300.

[98] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 52.

[99] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 55.

1911 in order to participate in the foreseen operations in the vicinity of Melilla.[100] Apart from that exigency, the hiring effort faced two more important difficulties: the lack of a large population in the controlled areas and the competition for manpower with the Indigenous Police.[101] The latter had been created almost two years before and had already enrolled a large number of well-qualified fighters. Thus, the recruitment area for the *Regulares* had to be expanded to French influence areas and Algeria, which caused minor diplomatic concerns since the French military also actively recruited Moroccans for its units. Consequently, pressure to fill the ranks in a hasty manner strongly lowered the initial selection process. The *Regulares* accepted all indigenes between thirteen and forty-nine years old that met the established physical examinations, which were hardly rigorous. Defectors from the sultan's or French forces, individuals expelled from their tribes, and fugitives found their place within the unit.[102] It is not surprising that, in some instances, troops belonging to the *Regulares* misbehaved towards the population during this initial period.[103]

However, recruiting in distant areas had an unexpected positive effect while conducting operations. Spanish officers recognized very early that the *Regulares* soldier showed no affection for the insurgents he was fighting as the latter had no family or tribal links with him.[104] The *Regulares* had no constraints concerning specific areas of operations or particular population groups. Although they started operating in the Melilla area in the context of the Kert Campaign, in 1913, due to severe degradation of the western area's security conditions, the *Regulares*

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[100] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares,* 50.

[101] León Villaverde, "El Proceso de Creación," 106.

[102] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares,* 55.

[103] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas,* 72.

[104] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política,* 114.

battalion shipped from Melilla to Tetuán in order to participate in the operations against rebel groups acting against the *majzén*'s authority.[105] During the combats that followed, the Spanish military authorities considered that the *Regulares* "excelled in their duties."[106]

The first years of combat consolidated the capabilities of the organization which increasingly incorporated artillery from the regular Spanish Army in its operations against the insurgency.[107] Always being the spearhead of the operations, the *Regulares* consistently sustained heavy losses and became the Spanish "shield of Moors against the Moors."[108] In July 1914, due to their excellent performance, the Spanish government ordered an enlargement of the *Regulares* Forces. From the initial battalion established in June1909, in October 1914, four regiments started to operate throughout the Protectorate from their garrisons in the main cities: Melilla, Ceuta, Larache, and Tetuán.[109]

From 1912 to 1923, the *Regulares* forces were under the authority of the Subinspectorate of Troops and Indigenous Affairs. That entity centralized all indigenous forces in a single chain of command with the intent of enabling cooperation between the Indigenous Police and the *Regulares* in the execution of offensive operations.[110] Furthermore, it allowed the latter to

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[105] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 154.

[106] Ibid., 157.

[107] Manuel Goded Llopis, *Marruecos: Las Etapas de la Pacificación* (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1932), 70.

[108] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 59. Interestingly, almost a century later, an American manual on counterinsurgency used the same term to explain the strategic relevance of host nation military and police forces in the fight against an insurgency. According to it, those units "serve as the shield to carry out reform." Headquarters Department of the Army, *FMI 3-07.22, Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, DC: October 2004), 1-10.

[109] Each regiment was composed of two infantry battalions and a cavalry squadron. Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 241-245.

[110] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 68.

complement the former in case of need.[111] Nevertheless, Lieutenant Colonel Berenguer always stressed the military character of *Regulares* and their independence from the Indigenous Police structure.[112] Interestingly, as a secondary effect contributing to the political penetration within the Protectorate, the *Regulares* barracks were located in areas permitting interaction with the population.[113] As a result, these forces were more prestigious among the inhabitants than the Indigenous Police.[114]

Throughout the years, the employment of *Regulares* forces against the different insurgent groups within the Rif augmented to the point that General Berenguer, once he was named High Commissioner and praising his creation, stated that "without them, we need to think about abandoning our project" of pacifying the region.[115] By that time, the experiment was obviously working. The Spanish Army's actions in Morocco became increasingly dependent on the indigenous component and newly-created volunteer forces such as the *Tercio de Extranjeros*, the Spanish version of the French Foreign Legion. Spanish officers warned that such circumstance endangered the overall Spanish military situation within the protectorate.[116] One of their main concerns related to the array of indigenous forces throughout the different regions, which they correctly thought to be unbalanced. In the western area, between Ceuta and Larache, three regiments of *Regulares* operated against the insurgency. In Melilla, there was just one. General

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[111] Ibid., 67.

[112] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 69-71.

[113] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 122.

[114] Albi de la Cuesta, *En torno a Annual*, 100.

[115] Ibid., 190.

[116] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 82.

Berenguer believed that the large number of Indigenous Police companies in the Eastern region largely compensated that flaw.[117] The events in Annual would demonstrate how mistaken he was.

During the July 1921 ill-fated combats, not only the Indigenous Police forces defected. The behavior of the *Regulares* involved was certainly very fickle. When the operations began, they were among those trying to relieve the besieged position of Igueriben or protecting the flanks of the initial withdrawal. When it turned into a chaotic rout, the *Regulares* units had been severely attrited and casualties among the officers were extremely high. As a result, as it happened with the policemen, many indigenes among the *Regulares* units also defected.[118] Nevertheless, the reinforcements sent from Ceuta to avoid the fall of Melilla included a *Regulares* battalion, which indicates that General Berenguer still trusted them for the subsequent counteroffensive.[119]

The *Regulares* forces did not receive the harsh criticism that the Indigenous Police suffered after the defeat in Annual, although the battalion participating in those events almost disintegrated as a result of high combat casualties and defections. Initial evaluations recognized that the unit had been severely mauled by previous combats and highlighted the role of the Spanish soldiers and officers. According to these reports, they ensured the unit's cohesion longer than it happened in the Indigenous Police companies, whose officers were murdered by their own policemen.[120] However, one of the reasons for General Silvestre's order of withdrawal was that he received information related to Abd-el-Krim's forces being reinforced by defectors proficient

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[117] Albi de la Cuesta, *En torno a Annual*, 261.

[118] Ibid., 339.

[119] Ibid., 503.

[120] "Our *Regulares* had a proportion of non-commissioned officers and soldiers not as large as it would have been desirable but enough to make a big difference when compared with the Indigenous Police." Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 126.

in military tactics, which indicates that a significant number of *Regulares* traitors joined the insurgency.[121]

In any case, at the time when many were blaming the Indigenous Police for the defeat, others advocated for increasing the relevance of the *Regulares* and the *Tercio* in future military operations. Overwhelmed by the number of casualties among Spanish conscripts in Annual, political and military authorities decided to enhance even further the role of professional shock troops in subsequent operations. From that moment, *Regulares* forces were present in all major actions against the insurgency throughout the Protectorate.[122] A new regiment would be created in 1922.[123] The relevance that both the *Tercio* and the *Regulares* acquired over time is well illustrated by the fact that their officers were even capable of influencing General Primo de Rivera to adopt an aggressive policy towards the Rif's rebellion just as he was considering a general withdrawal.[124]

Having decided to remain and fight Abd-el-Krim, General Primo de Rivera's cooperation with the French authorities led to what was the most important military operation throughout the pacification process, the Alhucemas Bay landing. Among the units launched against the rebellion's heart were nine battalions of *Regulares*, which were half of all the infantry forces tasked to penetrate into the insurgency's safe haven.[125] From 1925 to 1927, the active

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[121] Gómez-Jordana Souza, *La Tramoya*, 177; Guillermo Serrano Sáenz de Tejada, *De la Guerra de Marruecos y el Combate que no debió ser* (Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, 2013), 82.

[122] Antonio Atienza Peñarroya, "Africanistas y Junteros: El Ejército Español en África y el Oficial José Enrique Varela Iglesias" (PhD thesis, Universidad Cardenal Herrera-CEU de Valencia, 2012), 395.

[123] Serrano Sáenz de Tejada, *De la Guerra*, 174.

[124] It is known as the incident of Ben Tieb. During an inspection of the troops in Africa, General Primo de Rivera went to a *Tercio*'s garrison. Officers from that unit and others serving in the *Regulares* openly condemned his approach to the situation in the country which they thought was extremely timorous. Some of those officers even refused to salute him. The event had deep impact on the dictator and certainly shaped his views concerning future policies. Atienza Peñarroya, "Africanistas y Junteros," 502-505.

[125] Gómez-Jordana Souza, *La Tramoya*, 121.

contribution of *Regulares* forces significantly contributed to eliminate the last remnants of rebellious factions in the Rif. The pacification's proclamation specifically mentioned the indigenous troops involved in the last operations, who "never flinched".[126]

Once the territory was pacified, the Spanish Army maintained the *Regulares* Forces within its structure. They participated in the Spanish Civil War in increasing numbers to the point that, by the end of the conflict, fifty-one battalions were active in the Spanish Army. When Morocco gained its independence, the Spanish Army maintained four *Regulares* regiments in its structure. Two still remain.[127]

The Xeriffian *Mehal-la*.

> Troops organized in a European style but maintaining their indigenous spirit. They have a mixed mission, including tasks from both the *Regulares* and the Indigenous Police…. The Xeriffian *Mehal-la* has served and still serves very well to the Spanish cause.
>
> —Manuel del Nido y Torres, *Misión Política*

On 27 April 1913, the Moroccan sultan's newly-appointed *khalif* arrived to Tetuán and established his government under supervision of the Spanish administration.[128] The latter understood that the *majzén* needed to have a military force available to enforce its authority.[129] Accordingly, by October 1913, the Xeriffian *Mehal-la* started to be organized in the

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[126] Goded Llopis, *Marruecos: Las Etapas*, 434.

[127] Juan Jesús Martín Cabrero, "La fuerza de Regulares. 100 años de historia. Presente y Futuro." Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, March 30, 2012, accessed October 10, 2016, http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2012/DIEEEO29-2012_GrupoRegularess_MCabrera.pdf.

[128] Ramos Oliver, "Las Guerras de Marruecos," 177.

[129] Manuel del Nido y Torres, *Historial de la Mehal-la Xeriffiana* (Melilla-Tetuán:Tip. La Papelera Africana, 1916), 9.

protectorate's capital.[130] Initially, such force would certainly have a limited role in the pacification process. Its original duties were to provide immediate security to the *khalif*, to participate in all military ceremonies related to the *majzén*'s official activities, to police the city, and to execute "military services" in the vicinity of Tetuán.[131] Additionally, as the units had to be fully manned by indigenous troops, for that was meant to significantly enhance the government's image among the population.[132]

Figure 7. *Mehal-la* troops escort the *khalif* in the streets of Tetuán. Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 403.

The narrow scope of the new military initiative was justified by previous experiences with indigenous forces acting under the sultan's administration. For instance, in 1908, its forces were untrained, poorly-armed, and dramatically underpaid, which led to soldiers frequently abusing the population.[133] Consequently, even when the High Commissioner allowed the *majzén*

[130] Del Nido y Torres, *Historial de la Mehal-la*, 10.

[131] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 51.

[132] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 401.

[133] Atienza Peñarroya, "Africanistas y Junteros," 174.

to build the *Mehal-la*, Spanish officers had to supervise the process and employment of it.[134] The man in charge of monitoring the initial organization was Lieutenant Colonel Miguel Cabanellas Ferrer, an officer with wide experience in Morocco due to his previous service in *Regulares* units.[135]

Lieutenant Colonel Cabanellas had to accept the first 120 men that the *majzén* recruited for manning the first *Mehal-la* company. All of them were from the Tetuán area, and many clearly showed physical disabilities that made them unsuited for service in a military unit. The medical service would later reject twenty-five individuals after a superficial examination but some still remained. Lieutenant Colonel Cabanellas thought that a larger dismissal would hinder future enrollments if the indigenes had the feeling that it was too hard to join the *Mehal-la*. Further recruitments would not be tied to the vicinity of Tetuán but still limited to the protectorate's controlled areas. The intent was to inform the population about the new Moroccan unit's organization and to hinder defection.[136] Interestingly, the Spanish officers charged with supervising the hiring process envisioned an additional measure to ensure loyalty among new recruits: they needed to forward a deposit at the time of enrolling that would be returned after a certain time in service.[137] Apart from such an unorthodox measure, enrollment incentives also included access to decorations and pensions granted by both the *majzén* and the Spanish government.[138]

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[134] The Spanish officer's work was "essential to ensure order within the forces, to train them, to fulfill the *Mehal-la*'s administration…, and to command those whose vigilance was the most convenient, as it usually happens with these types of troops." Del Nido y Torres, *Historial de la Mehal-la*, 45.

[135] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 402.

[136] Del Nido y Torres, *Historial de la Mehal-la*, 10.

[137] Ibid., 22.

[138] Ibid., 28.

Recruitment for the *Mehal-la* went extraordinarily well during the first months. New soldiers frequently joined units to serve with relatives and friends, which was highly encouraged by the instructors.[139]After a year, the *majzén* could count on four infantry companies and a cavalry troop to fulfill several missions throughout Tetuán's region. As the organization expanded, more Spanish officers joined Lieutenant Colonel Cabanellas as supervisors, most of them with previous experience in Indigenous Police or *Regulares* units. Their main mission was to assess the indigenous officers concerning training and administration of the units. Through that process, they helped to identify those individuals appropriate for promotion to sergeant or corporal.[140] Lieutenant Colonel Cabanellas also directed his instructors to stress discipline and cohesion in order to increase the *Mehal-la*'s prestige among the indigenous population and the Spanish administration. Concerning the indigenes, the focus was to make them "see the *Mehal-la* as something belonging to them."[141] To avoid desertion in critical situations or to ensure success in certain complex operations, Spanish officers frequently took command of the companies they were supervising, even when they weren't theoretically allowed to do so.[142]

The organization of the *Mehal-la* initially found great reluctance among Spanish officers serving in the Protectorate. Aware of previous woeful performances of the sultan's forces in Morocco, some believed that units fully-manned by indigenes were easy targets for insurgency infiltration. The quality of the indigenous officers was also thrown into question because many had political connections with tribal authorities. A third reason, and probably the main one behind such criticism, was that its recruitment directly affected the hiring efforts of both the Indigenous

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[139] Del Nido y Torres, *Historial de la Mehal-la*, 13.

[140] Ibid., 12.

[141] Ibid., 11.

[142] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 151.

Police and the *Regulares* Forces.[143] The endeavors of the instructors, the increasing focus on quality-based recruitment, and the fact that its activity was constrained to the Tetuán area contributed to progressively increase the *Mehal-la*'s reputation.[144] By 1916, a Spanish officer serving in Africa recognized that the unit had great prestige even among his peers.[145]

The latter also stressed that the most relevant characteristic of the *Mehal-la* was its flexibility. According to him, the *khalif*'s army was "embracing all types of possible missions" in the capital's area.[146] Between October and December 1913, the *Mehal-la* mostly policed inside the city of Tetuán. By 1914, it was fighting small insurgent groups in the countryside close to that city and, later that year, as soon as the first cavalry troop became operational, it even started conducting raids against rebellious villages across the region.[147] By 1916, the *Mehal-la* frequently patrolled most of the villages in the vicinity of the protectorate's capital and had established an effective intelligence network throughout that territory.[148]

However, as happened with the Indigenous Police, success in the countryside led the authorities to foster the *Mehal-la*'s military contribution. In November 1915, both a second cavalry troop and an artillery platoon started to participate in extensive operations against the rebels.[149] When those took place in Tetuán's area, the *Mehal-la* always led the offensive columns and executed all reconnaissance missions.[150] As a Spanish officer mentioned, when General

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[143] Wiew, *En Sidi Saide la Blanca*, 86.

[144] Del Nido y Torres, *Historial de la Mehal-la*, 35.

[145] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 73.

[146] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 48.

[147] Del Nido y Torres, *Historial de la Mehal-la*, 87.

[148] Ibid., 45.

[149] Ibid., 67-68.

Berenguer was named High Commissioner in 1919, the unit had assumed a mixed set of missions from "both the *Regulares* and the Police."[151] Such comment is especially significant because, by that time, the Indigenous Police was already fulfilling several purely military tasks, which implies that the *Mehal-la*'s employment had an even greater military focus.

It is interesting to note that General Berenguer had an inaccurate conception of the *Majzén*'s troops when he took command over the protectorate's administration. Thinking that the *Mehal-la* was mainly a ceremonial unit and a lame imitation of the Indigenous Police, he envisioned a significant reduction of its manpower in order to reinforce other indigenous-based organizations. After witnessing the unit's performance against the insurgency in military engagements across the western area of the protectorate, he changed his mind.[152] Convinced about its military capabilities, he also understood that the *Mehal-la* was especially suited to lead those operations in which the deployment of Spanish troops could provoke undesired political or religious uproar.[153] For instance, in 1921, the authorities of the city of Xauen decided to accept the rule of the *khalif*. Considered a sacred place by the indigenes, the *Mehal-la* was the first unit to enter the urban area so as to reassure the population and avoid delivering the message that Spanish troops were seizing a Muslim holy place.[154]

As the *Mehal-la* only conducted operations in the vicinity of the protectorate's capital, none of its units took part in the operations leading to the defeat in Annual. Thus, it was the only indigenous-based organization that could not be accused of misbehavior. Such unstained

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[150] Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas*, 49.

[151] Del Nido y Torres, *Misión política*, 151.

[152] Víctor Ruiz Albéniz, *Ecce homo: las responsabilidades del desastre: prueba documental y aportes inéditos sobre las causas del derrumbamiento y consecuencias de él* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1922), 132.

[153] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 402

[154] "El Coronel-General Castro Girona," *ABC*, 29 October 1921, 7.

reputation immediately became an asset for the Spanish administration. In 1922, General Berenguer sent *Mehal-la*'s units to Melilla in order to participate in the operations aiming at the recovery of the territory lost the previous summer. Those would be the first units operating outside Tetuán, which constituted a clear effort to expand the model throughout the protectorate.

Figure 8. *Mehal-la'*s cavalry. Serrano Saenz de Tejada, *De la Guerra,* 187.

The *Mehal-la*'s ascent was also the beginning of the Indigenous Police's downfall. Apart from fostering the organization's involvement in military operations, the Spanish administration also decided to stress the use of the *Mehal-la* in the political penetration aspects of the pacification effort. In June 1923, when all the Indigenous Police units were disbanded and most of their officers and policemen reassigned to either the Military Intervention Service or the newly-created *Mehal-la* units, the latter dramatically increased its importance within the pacification effort.[155] Four regiments adopted an organization similar to those of the *Regulares* and deployed throughout the Protectorate within a year. Avoiding confusion about its role, such

[155] José Luis Villanova Valero, "Jesús Jiménez Ortoneda, Interventor Militar en el Rif (1911-1936)" *Hispania,* LXIX, No 232 (May-August 2009): 433.

structure clearly indicated that the *Mehal-la* was fundamentally a military organization focused on the immediate threat of the Riffian insurgency. [156]

The initial intent was to have the units operating within those areas close to their basing, as happened with the original *Mehal-la* in Tetuán. Despite that approach, *Mehal-la* units participated in operations elsewhere when required. Notably, up to five battalions from different locations landed in Alhucemas during 8 September 1925.[157] Simultaneously, as the post-Annual offensives progressed, the protectorate's administration acknowledged that the military effort had to be followed by the establishment of the political structure able to ensure peace and security within the tribes. While the Intervention system was set in place, it became necessary to fill the vacuum left by the dismantling of the Indigenous Police. As an interim measure, in 1923, officers serving in the *Mehal-la* had to ensure the socio-political administration within those tribes not fully pacified.[158]

As the Rif's rebellion came under the control of the protectorate's authorities, the number of indigenous troops involved in operations progressively increased. By 1927, the *Mehal-la* and the *Regulares* were leading, along with the *Tercio de Extranjeros*, the effort in the final offensives. In that latter stage, the *Mehal-la* proved to be a very useful tool to ensure loyalty among the pacified tribes. Being a force with prestige among the Spanish military, but apparently not under the direct command of their administration, the *majzén* frequently appointed subdued tribal leaders as *Mehal-la*'s indigenous officers. By doing so, they demonstrated their loyalty to

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[156] Jiménez Domínguez et al., *Fuerzas Regulares*, 403.

[157] Gómez-Jordana Souza, *La Tramoya*, 140-141.

[158] Villanova Valero, "La pugna," 703.

the sultan's government, militarily collaborated with the pacification effort, and were able to keep their weapons.[159]

The last idea may seem irrelevant but it was not. The indigenes felt extremely attached to their rifles due to the historically violent nature of the relationships among the tribes. In the Rif, a man without a rifle was not a man. Until the defeat in Annual, the Spanish administration did not try to disarm the population because the population perceived the confiscation of a tribe's weapons as a severe punitive measure. Moreover, it forced the military to protect that tribe against any possible enemy. When the Intervention Service started disarming the tribes in 1926, the *Mehal-la*, by accepting the most relevant individuals within its ranks, was an organization able to mitigate the humiliation of being dispossessed of their weapons.[160]

Once the pacification campaigns finished, the *Mehal-la* remained as the *khalif*'s military force until the independence of Morocco. Since that moment, its units were either disbanded or integrated into the armed forces of the Alawite Kingdom.[161]

Conclusion

The importance that the development and employment of indigenous troops had in the pacification effort in Northern Morocco is undeniable. The Indigenous Police, the *Regulares* Forces, and the Xeriffian *Mehal-la* contributed with their blood to ultimately destroy the different insurgent movements that created a permanent state of chaos within the Spanish protectorate.

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[159] General Goded illustrated that idea through the following case: "When the campaign ended in June 1927, after nine months of dangerous and permanent action, Chieftain Al-Lux was asked what compensation would please him the most, and he asked to be named officer of our indigenous troops. Being the Inspector, when I forwarded him his nomination and gave him the uniform of the *Mehal-la*, I could identify how joyful and proud he was because that uniform represented for him the highest reward and decoration." Goded Llopis, *Marruecos: Las Etapas*, 355.

[160] Caballero Echevarría, "Intervencionismo," 496. General Goded also recalled that when witnessing those forwarding their weapons "it caused emotion to see the faces of true sadness of those strong and rough men who earlier fought against us as lions." Goded Llopis, *Marruecos: Las Etapas*, 446.

[161] Juan Ignacio Salafranca Álvarez, "Los Oficiales Moros," in "Centenario del Protectorado de Marruecos," special issue, *Revista de Historia Militar*, no.2 (2012): 262.

Nevertheless, their trajectory over time was certainly divergent because they responded to three different conceptualizations of how to employ indigene-based organizations. Not only all of them developed different systems of recruitment, they also organized their units in unique manners to meet the requirements of the fight they were facing. As a result, their performance over time differed depending on the operational environment's conditions and the ability of the protectorate's authorities to integrate the capabilities each of them provided to the overall counterinsurgency effort.

Acknowledging the previous, it is necessary to conclude by considering in parallel the three approaches presented and highlight the most relevant aspects related to their systems of recruitment, organization, and employment. Additionally, an evaluation of the whole system and how they all worked together throughout the pacification campaigns needs to be examined because it certainly affected their particular performances.

Recruitment.

Today's counterinsurgency manuals state that, if possible, the counterinsurgency force "should include personnel indigenous to the operational area" and that local leaders should be integrated even when their "military ability may be limited" as that increases control and motivation within the force.[162] As popular support can only be gained through an active minority, it makes sense to enroll known individuals within the community in which they are likely to act.[163] Both the Indigenous Police and the *Mehal-la* recruited their personnel in the areas in which they were to operate. As developed, such circumstance dramatically helped the counterinsurgency effort by permitting the protectorate's authorities to engage with relevant individuals within the

[162] FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, 7-16.

[163] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Saint Petersburg, FL: Glenwood Press, 1964), 75-76.

indigenous population. Additionally, effective intelligence networks and improved reconnaissance capabilities set by those organizations enabled significant results.

However, recruitment among inhabitants living in the area of operations is certainly risky. Time is crucial in minimizing it. Discipline and cohesion can only be developed progressively over a certain period of training. It is mandatory to invest the necessary time in consolidating the structure of the indigenous organizations before committing them in combat or law enforcement. A very important cause of defection among the Indigenous Police during the events leading to the Annual's slaughter was that many newly-organized units were operating in their homelands against insurgents from their own tribes or with whom they had close ethnic or cultural ties. The *Mehal-la* also experienced occasional desertions but it can be argued that because its area of operations was limited to Tetuán for an extended period of time, the impact of them on the overall counterinsurgency effort was less significant.

Once studied the development of the different campaigns in the Rif, it can be argued that the advisability of recruiting in the area of operations should only be limited to police forces. The organization of the *Regulares* units did not follow that model in order to avoid, specifically, that their soldiers had family or tribal connections with the enemy. For these troops, emotional detachment from the insurgents they were fighting occurred not only because of their different origins, it also happened because the Spanish authorities dared to enroll and integrate indigenes from a great diversity of backgrounds. Additionally, the fact that family and tribal bonds were minimal among the *Regulares* soldiers probably also contributed to developing strong unit cohesion. Today, scholars still recognize the value of recruiting "unusual personnel and allowing them to fight in unorthodox political frameworks" in order to facilitate success in counterinsurgency environments.[164]

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[164] Peter Paret and John W. Shy, *Guerrillas in the 1960's* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 73-74.

The Spanish experience in Morocco concerning recruitment also serves to illustrate the impact of competition for manpower among organizations. It does not seem that the *Mehal-la* had difficulties in recruiting personnel in the Tetuán area, but that is probably because it was the only force recruited in that location. In Melilla, when Lieutenant Colonel Berenguer started to organize the first *Regulares* unit, several Indigenous Police companies already operated in the surrounding region and more were envisioned. Thus, he had to sacrifice quality for quantity. Throughout the years, the three organizations competed for hiring enough personnel to fulfill their duties. Such competition, as seen, even created friction among the Spanish officers serving in them. Recruitment-related problems became more stringent when the number of casualties due to prolonged operations had the double effect of increasing the needs of the forces and reduced the willingness of qualified indigenes to enroll. Again, only the *Mehal-la* in its initial period seemed to escape from that trend because it operated in a reduced area with limited combat activity. In 1923, that circumstance changed when it received large numbers of former policemen from the extinct Indigenous Police. As a result, at a certain point, in order to maintain the adequate numbers ensuring combat capability, all forces had to reduce their standards of recruitment. Today's doctrine recognizes that "quantity has quality all its own," but it also indicates that the former cannot substitute the latter.[165] That is significantly true concerning police forces. In a struggle in which legitimacy and reliability play a central role, having qualified personnel able to properly behave among the population becomes crucial as its demeanor will have a dramatic impact on popular attitudes.[166]

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[165] FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 11-2.

[166] Richard L. Millet, *Searching for Stability: The US Development of Constabulary Forces in Latin America and the Philippines* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), 128. That was acknowledged at the time by certain Spanish officers. One of them stated that "more than large cadres, what police units need is a very careful quality-based recruitment." Ramos Winthuyssen, *Tropas Indígenas,* 135.

Organization: Integrated units and advising.

Current manuals identify five types of relationships integrating foreign and indigenous forces in counterinsurgency. The Spanish authorities developed two of those models to conduct operations within the protectorate.[167] From today's perspective, both the Indigenous Police and the *Regulares* were integrated organizations because they were formed by Spanish and Indigenous forces melded into a single integral unit. On the other hand, the *Mehal-la* was a Moroccan force that included Spanish officers assigned to it as advisors.

Despite the fact that both the Indigenous Police and the *Regulares* responded to the same model of organization, their level of integration differed significantly. Because the Indigenous Police barely only integrated Spanish officers, it was certainly an attractive organization for the Spanish Army from a manpower management perspective. However, the model was a double-edged sword because it was extremely dependent on the quality of those few Spanish officers in charge. Considering the political mission of the Indigenous Police, a perpetual foreign leadership probably did not help to build the *majzén*'s influence and authority among the population, especially when Spanish officers had to deliver justice within the tribes.[168] Additionally, policemen and population had a very limited number of Spaniards to observe as leaders or models of behavior. When the quality and performance of the Spanish officers decreased, cohesion and reliability of the Indigenous Police units severely suffered from such circumstance. Anew, personnel quality was behind the flaws of the ultimately vilified organization.

Integration within the *Regulares* was more extensive than in the Indigenous Police not only because the number of Spaniards was higher within their units. Foreigners and indigenes,

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[167] The types are: Parallel, Lead Nation, Partnered, Integrated, and Advising. FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, 11-6.

[168] Del Nido y Torres advised to avoid providing justice because it could "only give us a great number of displeased indigenes that will increase proportionally to our mistakes." Del Nido y Torres, *Mision política*, 28.

serving side by side as officers, sergeants, corporals, and soldiers, shared the burdens of almost all ranks. Additionally, competent Spanish officers consistently commanded these units throughout the pacification process. As a result, the *Regulares* turned to be a very cohesive organization displaying the best military practices of both worlds. However, as it happened with the previous case, the *Regulares* could not be seen by the population as a military force fighting on behalf of the sultan's state because their leadership was always Spanish. Not surprisingly, when Morocco achieved her independence, the *Regulares* forces remained in the Spanish Army's structure and are still part of it.

The *Mehal-la* was the true purely Moroccan regular force. Spaniards only served within its units as advisors at battalion and company levels. Compared with the Indigenous Police, the closest in structure and missions of the previous, the model worked better over time due to several reasons. Firstly, until 1923, the *Mehal-la*'s organization did not suffer neither the expansion nor the increasing changes in tasks that the Indigenous Police endured. Secondly, Lieutenant Colonel Cabanellas and subsequent chiefs of the advising team permanently focused on the quality of the Spanish officers working with the *Mehal-la*'s units, enrolling individuals with an extensive understanding of the Moroccan scenario. Finally, the Spanish advisors also understood that the *Mehal-la* was an extremely valuable assets to attract the population and organized the unit accordingly. Affinity-based distribution of indigenes within the units, enlistment of soldiers from controlled areas of the protectorate, or enrollment of tribal leaders as officers had the double-effect of increasing cohesion and enhancing the image of the unit as an authentic security provider belonging to the *majzén*. Thus, this advisor-based model benefited from a more methodical approach to its development, minimized the Spanish footprint through quality and permanently focused on developing the organization's prestige.

Employment.

The vicissitudes of the Indigenous Police offer a good case study concerning the employment of law-enforcement organizations in counterinsurgency. When units operated within the tribal communities, contemporary testimonies show that they proved to be extremely useful intelligence providers. Embedded in their own communities, most of policemen contributed to enhance security and control within the territory as long as they remained close to their homelands and developed police tasks. However, the protectorate's administration increasingly used the Indigenous Police for military purposes because of the policemen's knowledge of both the terrain and the enemy, which ultimately led to organizational degeneration. Other counterinsurgency campaigns show that using "the military in the role of the police is always a bad idea."[169] The contrary is also true.

Concerning the *Regulares*, their performance was quite consistent over time. The Spanish administration managed to create units fully-integrated into a European army's structure that lived and fought according to the indigenous style. Lieutenant Colonel Berenguer believed that fighting the Moroccan insurgency required a Moroccan counterinsurgency force able to conduct both combined arms maneuver and irregular fighting in the Rif's fragmented terrain. To achieve that, he created a new flexible operational system mixing cavalry and light infantry units. Being always the spearhead in combat operations, the *Regulares* units sustained considerable attrition during the pacification process but proved to be a resilient warfighting organization trusted by the Spanish military.

For many years, the *Mehal-la* only operated in the Tetuán area and conducted limited counterinsurgency operations in the fields surrounding the city. It can be argued that its initial limited territorial scope eventually helped to increase its reliability because, not being involved in

[169] Millet, *Searching for Stability*, 127.

large operations and being concentrated in a single location, the Spanish advisors and the Protectorate's administration could effectively build a well-trained and cohesive organization. The fact that Moroccan forces fought under the *majzén*'s banner enhanced credibility to the narrative that the fight against rebellious factions was on behalf of the Sultan, not because of Spain's colonial appetites. In its initial stage of development, such an idea only reached the populations in the vicinity of the capital but the expansion of *Mehal-la*'s organization in 1923 spread the message across Northern Morocco and decisively contributed to the pacification process.

The System.

The political structure of the Spanish protectorate and the burdens that an intensive protracted counterinsurgency campaigns imposed in Spain severely affected how the different authorities approached the development and employment of the indigenous forces. The Spanish authorities' aversion to sustain fatalities among European soldiers put a permanent strain on their strategies concerning the pacification campaigns. Mainly for that reason, from the very moment that the number of casualties suffered in the 1909 campaign convulsed the Spanish society, they resorted to "Moroccannize" the scenario and created indigenous-based units to sustain the burdens of future fights. Once the protectorate was officially established in 1912, legitimization of the *majzén*'s authority became also part of their interests. These two aspects constitute the core ideas leading to the Indigenous force's development and reflect permanent clarity concerning their purpose within the pacification effort.

However, that was far from enough. When considering the actions of the High Commissioners and the *majzén* throughout the different campaigns, the overall Spanish experience in the development and use of indigenous troops is one of setting realistic goals and being aware of the limits of influence. From that perspective, the pacification process can be divided in three stages. After the 1909 campaign, when developing the three types of units, the

protectorate's authorities demonstrated a remarkable lack of unity of effort. Only from that perspective can be understood that the units literally competed for manpower. The development of all three occurred so independently that, having being responsible of the *Regulares*' creation, General Berenguer was still not fully aware of the *Mehal-la*'s combat capabilities as late as 1919. Additionally, the development of indigenous troops was unbalanced within the protectorate concerning both the number and types of them. For years, most combat troops remained positioned in the western part of the protectorate, with the *Regulares* units stationed in the vicinity of the main cities and the *Mehal-la* in Tetuán. In the eastern area, only a *Regulares* regiment operated in Melilla and most indigenes served within the Indigenous Police ranks. Nevertheless, the creation of units and their employment responded to limited objectives imposed by the Spanish government's reluctance to engage in large operations.

The second stage, leading to the events in Annual, corresponds with General Berenguer's appointment as High Commissioner. The system of penetration that he defined, based on political action supported by military operations was certainly sound and worked in the western area because it was adapted to that operational environment but mostly because it was applied with patience. In the east, General Fernández Silvestre replicated the procedure recklessly and unprepared Indigenous Police units joined the fight against the insurgency in precarious circumstances for the sake of seizing territory. Progress in counterinsurgency is slow because having an impact on the population requires consistent action and permanent contact with it. The Indigenous Police was the element enabling access to the Riffian communities. By removing the Indigenous policemen from their tribes, the Spanish administration set the basis for disaster as such measure reduced its ability to exercise an influence upon them. This phase within the campaigns demonstrates that holding gains is critical. Physical progression is condition-based on having population's support or, at least, neutrality in the rearguard. Indigenous security forces are critical enablers of such requirement and, consequently, should not be devoted to other tasks.

Lastly, the disaster that took place in the Riffian mountains in July 1921 was the crisis forcing the protectorate's authorities to review their approach. The Indigenous Police, blamed by the slaughter, disappeared but its mission did not fade. The Military Intervention Service, assisted by new indigenous-based security organizations, became the operational element tasked to penetrate the tribes and gradually consolidate control over those reconquered. This time, the operational tempo adjusted to the effort and a more conservative progression throughout the years permitted true tribal adhesion to the protectorate's authorities. On the other hand, the *Regulares* and the *Mehal-la,* organized and trained to fight the insurgency, were main agents within the military line of effort. By October 1927, the Spanish protectorate's pacification ended because a very efficient indigenous-based system had slowly but relentlessly penetrated the tribes within the Rif.

"The advantages that indigenous forces," a recent observer noted, "afford to a coalition in a counterinsurgency, whether as auxiliaries, or integrated troops, are manifold."[170] However, as the Spanish experience in Northern Morocco demonstrates, developing indigenous forces in counterinsurgency is not an easy endeavor. It requires a holistic view of the operational environment permitting to build different models of organizations according to their mission. Patience and adaptation must guide all aspects of their development.

[170] Robert Cassidy, "Regular and Irregular Indigenous Forces for a Long Irregular War," *RUSI Journal* 152 (February 2007): 46.

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