

Moroccan War in graphical Spanish magazine “La Union Ilustrada”. Between photojournalism and literary journalism (1909-1927)

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In this presentation we are going to present the most relevant results about of our investigation in process.

Historic context

2 The Moroccan War also called Rif War or the Second Moroccan War, took place from 1912 to 1927, between the Spanish colonial power and the Moroccan Berbers of the Rif mountainous region.

The relation between Spain and Morocco has always been tense and difficult. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, a constant conflict was kept and the beginning of this war occurs for several reasons:

On the one hand, the 1898 Disaster, when Spain lost its last colonies (Cuba, The Philippines and Puerto Rico) caused a political, social and economic crisis. It is not until the loss of these colonies when Spain began to look towards Morocco. The Protectorate of Morocco is seen as a new colonial opportunity to Spain.

On the other hand, the Africanist ideology favoured the creation of the Protectorate. The Africanist ideology saw Africa as a continent, which had to be cared for, and guided and it needed a constant protection. This ideology encouraged certain Spanish elites to legitimize the colonization of Morocco by Spain.

The Protectorate of Morocco was born because Spain was commissioned to implement a series of protective measures assigned by international commitments when Spain signed the Act of Algeciras in 1906. This happened because the Majzen, the Moroccan authority, was very weak between 1906 and 1912 and it helped the European penetration in Morocco. In 1912, Spain and France signed the Treaty of Fez, which transferred to the Moroccan sovereignty to these countries.

Spain was awarded with the whole region of northern strip of territory on the Mediterranean and a southern strip bordering the Spanish Sahara, especially relevant are the Rif Mountains which was in a state of rebellion.

3 Although the conflict began in 1912, the Melilla War took place in 1909, where the Rif people attacked the Spaniards in Rif mines. These mines were being exploited by Spanish companies. “La Unión Ilustrada” was born in 1909 and it took advantages of these events, the magazine was born at the same time of this conflict to get more readers. For this reason, we decided to extend our period of analysis including this conflict to cover the entire vision offered by this magazine about the Moroccan War.

“La Unión Ilustrada”

The name of this magazine can be translated as “The Enlightened Union”. It started 1909 in Malaga by La Union Mercantil. La Union Mercantil was an important editorial company. This magazine became one of the most important graphic magazines in Spain. The magazine was very similar to other relevant magazines at that moment, (Blanco y Negro) “White and black” and (Nuevo Mundo) “New world”. This magazine success was based on the strength and security of this company.

It was the most sold graphic magazine in the first decades of the twentieth century. In 1912, just three years after, it was sold throughout Spain and Andalusia.

The first number was launched on the second of September 1909. It was a weekly magazine. The final number was released on the 12 of April 1931. The number of pages also varies; from 20 in the early years, to 50 pages in the last numbers, and the average was 16 graphic pages.

The sections in the magazine were very varied because "La Unión Ilustrada" used to changed its orientation and structure many times for editorials reasons. In spite of this, it was a weekly graphic general information magazine, divided into two major sections, the first with texts and the second part of the magazine was eminently graphic where the photos constituted an indispensable part of the publication.

Methodology

The methodology we followed to analyze the coverage of La Unión Ilustrada of the War Morocco is: content analysis and image analysis.

In the content analysis we have detected: text and photos authors, journalistic genres, the location of these texts in the magazine, headlines and the type of language used.

In the analysis of images, we have focused on the main signs of a photo: the frame, view angle, the objective, the composition, the shape, the size, the colour, the lighting and texture.

The study will analyze two phases of the conflict. The first phase, is from 1909 with the beginning of the magazine and the Melilla War to the Annual Disaster in 1921. And the second phase is from the Annual Disaster to the end of the war in 1927. In this presentation we will only show the results corresponding to the first period. We are walking in the result of the second phases where the volume of coverage about the conflict is higher.

We have detected 592 copies of the magazine from the first period in which 239 copies were about the conflict of the Morocco War.

We believe it is important to talk about the magazine context before giving all the details. These magazine readers were middle-class and aristocracy and the language used was sweetened to soften the conflict. There was censorship too, and there was a high patriotism.

The texts and language do not allow to see the truth of conflict, but the photos show us more details and a better real vision.

Analysis

The magazine is divided in two different parts. The first one has more text and drawings spanning several sections such as literature, gossip etc. And the second part was the graphical section of the magazine, the most informative, which opened with a full page photo.

Apart from 20 magazines where we found some text about the Moroccan War in the first part of the magazine, virtually all of the information about this conflict is in the graphics part. The pictures of the conflict were the best strategy to get more readers.

In the next graphic we can see the media coverage of the conflict by “La Unión Ilustrada”. It is the same as the most relevant facts of the war. The periods where the magazine dedicates more space: is in the War of Melilla in 1909, the Kert campaign (1911-1912) and the beginning of the Spanish Protectorate, some conflicts in 1913 and finally the Annual Disaster in 1921 with more than 12 pages of the magazine about the war.

Photographers

In our analysis we have identified 98 different photographers in this conflict in the magazine. Certainly, the magazine has a huge volume of people and photographers hired to illustrate it. The magazine paid each photo 5 pesetas (as announced in its pages).

We must emphasize the work of magazine special press correspondent in the conflict. Most of photos about the Moroccan War are signed by them.

The first of them is Lázaro – they sign their last name or a pseudonym. Lázaro (Lazarus) is the photographer with more photos in the magazine. And he was the photographer who covered the longest period of time, since 1912 until 1921. There are photos with his name in 99 copies of the magazines analyzed. Furthermore, almost all photos of the campaign are signed by Lazaro.

The second of them is Rectoret. He was the special press correspondent since 1909 until 1912. His photos appear in 30 copies and he did a very similar job to Lázaro's.

The other important photographers in the magazine were – by order of importance - Rubio, Silva, Beringola, Calatayud, Luque, Las Artes Gráficas, Welkins and Ortiz.

Graphic section front page

At the beginning of the magazine, in the first 10 copies, the front pages were about the Moroccan War. The most popular was the first number with a front page where showing a little Moroccan girl. The magazine had 15 front pages about the conflict in the years

that we have analyzed. But only in the first two years these front pages appeared (1909 and 1910). The conflict never appeared again on the front page after 1910. The magazine would prefer a more colorful and friendly front page about various characters of the Spanish scene (bullfighters, singers, etc.)

About the front page in the graphic section has a greater space about the conflict. Of the 239 copies in this period a total of 48 magazines has a front page concerning the conflict.

In the graphical part of the magazine you could find some photo which were accompanied by short texts (no more than 100 words) describing the photos. These texts do not have author and we cannot know who were theirs authors, but it's possible to think that they could be the same authors of the photos. In contrast to the texts in this section, all of the photos were signed.

These texts appear in only 128 copies of the 239 analyzed, so the 46% of the information about the campaign of Morocco in the magazine is not accompanied by any text, just the photos and their captions.

Battles

Battle is the topic that more photos have in the magazine. Although, the cameras in this age were heavy and with a difficult use. The photographers did a very good job. Almost all the pictures were taken after the battles or from far behind in the area of combat. Nevertheless some photographers like Lázaro or Rectorect are literary photojournalism they show us a real image about the conflict and they tell us other faces about the conflict.

Loading Soldiers

There are a huge volume of photos of loading soldiers, it reflects a fundamental aspect of the conflict, the importance of the Malaga port as the center of the war. Malaga was the starting center of all soldiers, supplies and personalities in the Moroccan War.

Photos are very patriotic and generally they show large panoramic and scenic with many people.

Photos of wounded and dead people

There are many photos that show soldier wounded and dead by the conflict. This is an important social aspect in the magazine because many people bought the magazine for knew it. Of course most of the photos are of soldiers in the hospital without blood. But in 1921 we will find photos of Spanish soldiers wounded and pictures of dead in the battlefield, more hard that before and much more realistic.

Native police and regular forces

Although the texts do not provide much information, on this occasion, are the photos that give us more information about this event as the highlight of the campaign. General Berenguer at the beginning of the campaign created a body of Moroccan mercenaries who fought for the Spanish side in exchange for money. This group of mercenaries were called regular forces or native police. These troops were intended to positions riskier and the first line of battle because the Spanish army feared that these soldiers could desert in the middle of the battle.

There is a huge volume of photos of these forces along the whole magazine, we cannot venture the reason for this, but we believe that this group of soldiers was carrying the weight of the conflict. After The Annual Disaster they deserted all, and it can be seen a significant change in the volume of photos of these troops.

Official Visits

The magazine did a huge coverage of all military, political and aristocratic personalities who visited Melilla and troops settled there during the conflict. All texts are written in an optimistic and patriotic language, there is never any sign of criticism of any aspect.

Life in the camps

This photos reflect the more kind side to the conflict. We find numerous photographs of daily life in the camps. Since soldiers washing their clothes, getting a haircut, having fun etc.

In the year 1920 and 1921 this photos left to appear in the magazine by the Annual Disaster which changes the editorial line.

The importance of the religion

Religion has played a crucial role in Spain, and this is reflected in the magazine where we see numerous ceremony for the fallen in the battle officiated by the Church or massive mass for the soldier. The Church have an important role in each conflict aspect how: blessing new boats, planes or constructions.

One of the most important photo about it, it's a panoramic photo of a massive mass in a soldier camp.

New buildings

The Spanish state invested a lot of resources on building new infrastructure in Morocco. Especially relevant were the bridge in the river Kert (fundamental to the domination of this area), and the railway in the Rif mines. People of Rif knew the importance of these infrastructures and they took position in high mountainous areas in order to shoot the convoys, soldiers and builders who were working in these areas.

During the Annual Disaster, Rif people took advantages and they disassembled part of the railways that the Spanish army had built.

We can see many photos about the constructions, panoramic mainly and the detection of snipers by Spanish soldiers.

Annual

The July of 1921 the Spanish army suffered a serious military defeat to the Rif people led by Abd el -Krim in the town of Annuul. Abd-el-Krim was a virtually unknown leader who led a general uprising in the Rif, that in just 15 days, killed about 9,000 Spanish soldiers and humiliated the Spanish nation. What happened there, was called "The Annual Disaster". These days changed drastically the Spanish presence in Morocco and had a decisive influence on the policy, the army, and the Spanish society, in the following years.

This defeat caused a series political crisis and it will have effects on the coup d'etat and the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in 1923.

These facts are evident in the magazine. The conflict comes to occupy 12 pages of 40 in the magazine in 1921. The language change after the Annual Disaster, with a vision more alarmist, serious and objective. The photos are much harder; shows bodies of soldiers dead, and a look bloodiest of the conflict.

And from August 1921 to December 1921 when our first part of the analysis is finished, all the magazines of that period reflect the conflict with an average of 9-12 pages each one.

Conclusions

The conclusions we draw from the first part of this analysis are these:

- The magazine offers a sweetened vision of the conflict because the magazine want soften the war until the Annual Disaster in 1921 that becomes it, with a more serious languages and more alarmist vision of the conflict.
- The photos provide much more data than text. So we can find the importance of native police and religion. Or for example, we have discovered that the conflict was higher in the summer months, outside the harvest season.
- "La Unión Ilustrada" was one of the most important graphic magazines of his time, and the quality of their photos make it one of the best sources to know internally the conflict of the Morocco War.
- The Annual Disaster cause a huge crisis in the Spanish society and the magazine reflects this change with more pages and a change of editorial line in the way to talk about the conflict.

- Photos of the conflict are excellent examples of photojournalism, and some of them are excellent examples of literary photojournalism because we can discover a new and unknown aspect of the conflict.