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FORTUNY AND THE SPANISH-MOROCCAN WAR (1859–1860)

Battle paintings and orientalist pictorial production

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From Rome to Tetouan

In the nineteenth century, when European powers focused their interest on North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean, orientalist painting, which was dedicated to portrayals of the Islamic world, became a significant thematic genre in the visual arts. Political circumstances, especially colonial expansion, enabled certain artists to become instantly familiar with this geographical area and to illustrate it in their works. Some artists accompanied diplomatic missions, while others acted as pictorial chroniclers of military expeditions. One such chronicler was the nineteenth-century Catalan artist with the greatest international renown, Marià Fortuny Marsal (1838–1874), who visited Tetouan to paint episodes of the Spanish-Moroccan War (1859–1860). In 1860, aged 22 and studying in Rome, the young artist began his professional career by accepting a commission from the Provincial Council of Barcelona to produce a series of paintings on the Spanish Army's military expedition in North Africa, which had begun in late October of the previous year when hostilities broke out with Morocco (*Actas de la Diputación Provincial de Barcelona, de 14 de noviembre de 1856 hasta el 26 de marzo de 1860*, 29, fol. 512r., 30–XII-1859). Fortuny was commissioned to paint the heroics of General Joan Prim (1814–1870) and the battalion of volunteers who had supported the Provincial Council and fought under the General's command. The paintings were intended to decorate the walls of the Assembly Hall in the Palace of the Provincial Council of Barcelona.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Spain had become a second-rate power after losing a large part of its American empire. The Spanish government hoped to recover its impoverished prestige by protecting its remaining colonies, collaborating with France on expeditions such as those to Indochina (1858) and Mexico (1862), and looking toward Morocco. Two decades earlier neighbouring France had conquered Algeria and now Spain was attempting to strengthen and expand its North African seats in Ceuta and Melilla. It was in this context that the Spanish-Moroccan War (1859–1860) broke out.

This conflict, which is one of the most notable episodes of nineteenth-century Spanish history, had a huge impact on contemporary society. In the aftermath of the events of the 1850s, a series of inconsequential attacks on new fortifications in Ceuta by the Kabyles were exploited by the Liberal Union Spanish government under General Leopoldo O'Donnell

(1809–1867) as a pretext to begin hostilities with the Moroccan empire. The material outcome of the conflict, which was no more than an image-saving operation in Europe and a smoke-screen concealing serious internal problems, was limited. The propaganda aspect of the conflict, which was intended to enhance pride in the Spanish military, led chroniclers, writers, and artists such as Fortuny to become apologists for military paraphernalia. The decision by the Provincial Council of Barcelona to send an artist to the theatre of war was therefore motivated by the patriotic fever that had led to the armed conflict in the first place. Unlike the graphic chroniclers who created images for newspapers, Fortuny had an exclusively artistic purpose: to produce narrative paintings that depicted this wartime adventure. He had already cultivated this genre by painting scenes from medieval Catalan history while a student at Llotja School of Fine Arts in Barcelona. His task now was to interpret a live, current theme based on experience rather than on literary sources. The artist undertook to paint contemporary wartime episodes that would produce a nationalist exaltation of the triumphs of the Spanish military and portray an apologetic image of State power. Fortuny's commission was similar to that which the French government had entrusted to Horace Vernet (1789–1863) several years earlier in relation to the conquest of Algeria. For this reason, Vernet's paintings were recommended to Fortuny by his commissioners as models for his creations. Ultimately, however, the commission proved unsuccessful and the themes that led to Vernet's triumph provided little motivation for the artist from Reus. Only the final version of one of the paintings that were initially commissioned, *La batalla de Tétuán*, which is currently displayed in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya in Barcelona and several sketches of the Battle of Wad-Ras, the most elaborate of which are displayed in the Prado Museum in Madrid, were completed.

To honour his commitment, in February 1860 Fortuny travelled to Tetouan, where he remained until the end of April. His friend, medal engraver Jaume Escriu, who later married Fortuny's sister Isabel, accompanied him to Morocco as his assistant. During the first few days they stayed at Martil beach camp. After meeting General Prim, they settled into a large house in the medina of Tetouan, which they shared with Pedro Antonio de Alarcón (1833–1891), author of *Diario de un testigo de la guerra de África* (1859), and Charles Yriarte (1832–1898), correspondent of *Le Monde Illustré*, whom they had met a few days earlier when sailing to Morocco on board the *Vasco Núñez de Balboa* (Yriarte 1888, 7, 8). Throughout his stay, Fortuny devoted himself intensely to taking notes and recording his surroundings. Not a single detail from the war that was likely to be of interest for his future paintings escaped his attention. His notes referred to wartime episodes and covered every aspect of military life. They also portrayed the war's main protagonists and several officers he had made friends with. As well as focusing on the commission's objectives, he also discovered the Moroccan world, which helped him to cultivate the orientalist genre painting that became one of the most interesting and successful aspects of his art (Carbonell 1999, 36). Fortuny's notes reveal his interest in African landscape and architecture. Especially apparent is his interest in daily lives and customs, which are observably exotic to his European eyes (Yxart 1882, 54). However, like other artists, he had difficulty depicting the Muslim population, so he mainly drew members of the Jewish community, who coexisted more easily with Spaniards at this time of occupation. Not only did he meet with Muslim rejection due to the conflict but also with their animosity to being drawn by Westerners. Memoirs and letters of artists who worked in the Maghreb are full of unpleasant anecdotes generated by the hostility provoked by their work. Despite these difficulties, the artist succeeded in taking the notes he needed to record the lives of Tetouan residents. These notes later served to execute the Moroccan-inspired paintings he created in his Roman studio.

Fortuny belonged to a generation of artists that was characterized by a more realistic vision of Islamic society. Previous romantic artists had produced images steeped in a poetic subjectivity

that could rarely escape from their literary nature even if sometimes based on direct experience. Visual form was given to a set of ideals related to the life, history, culture, and landscapes of these places, knowledge of which was obtained through travellers' eyewitness accounts and colonial expansion. The romantic spirit led artists to go in search of these unspoiled territories. For them, the Orient represented an escape in time and space, a place where the simple values of primitive societies prevailed, where people lived in harmony with their environment and enjoyed a fuller, freer existence (Marí 1988, 10). This escapism grew from a desire to flee a world that was increasingly committed to material progress to the detriment of poetic sensibility. The Orient was the land of dreamy landscapes and palaces of splendid luxury where great passions ruled and eroticism and sex were adorned with mystery and sophistication. It was also where tyrannical power committed unimaginable cruelties. The harems, the Turkish baths of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), and the epic visions of Eugène Delacroix (1789–1863) and Eugène Fromentin (1820–1876) were the best examples of this orientalist vision.

Toward the middle of the century, the artistic ideal evolved toward a more realist approach, a development that brought with it a desire to depict the environment in a more lifelike manner. Without fully discarding the presence of imaginary elements in their paintings, artists such as Fortuny moved closer to reality to illustrate the more colourful aspects of the traditional Muslim world.

Fortuny found inspiration for his paintings in the notes he took in Morocco. These notes, which embodied an objective view of the aspects of reality that most interested him, were the first phase of his creative oil painting process. Fortuny also used his imagination as well as visual sources such as photographs, engravings, disguised models, and objects from his valuable collection. This collection, which converted his studio into a veritable museum, was dispersed after his death (Navarro 2007 [2008], 319–349). Using multiple elements to build his poetic image of Morocco, Fortuny presented what were the most interesting and exotic aspects for the European public. His highly successful paintings exerted a notable influence on many contemporary artists' representations of the Moroccan world. They also helped to create the thematic clichés that were constantly repeated in paintings of this genre in the last third of the century, when a large number of orientalist paintings were executed. Depicting scenes of a folkloric and atavistic Morocco, these works extracted literal quotations from Fortuny's paintings.

As occurred with many artists who travelled to these southern parts, the intense light affected Fortuny's style, which until then had been that somewhat restrained and academic. His style then became gradually freer and more vigorous, used more expressive language, and incorporated more luminous colours and an accentuated chiaroscuro. His daily work documenting the paintings he was commissioned to execute undoubtedly encouraged his style to evolve. Charles Yriarte remembers the painter in the fields of Tetouan, indefatigably sketching in his notepad, indifferent to all events, apparently living in a state of profound contemplation while focused exclusively on his work (Yriarte 1888, 8). Despite their strictly artistic purpose, Fortuny's almost two hundred pencil drawings and numerous watercolours he created in Morocco in the first few months of 1860 are by themselves a genuine chronicle of events as well as testimony to an experience that conditioned his sensitivity and imagination for life (Carbonell 1999).

In early 1862, several compositions the artist had despatched while studying in Rome were exhibited in the palace of the Provincial Council. These included his first orientalist oil painting, entitled *La Odalisca (Escena doméstica en un interior marroquí)* (1861) (Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona) and a photograph of a sketch of the battle of Wad-Ras (Coll 1862, 1300).

Surprisingly, his first orientalist painting, *La Odalisca* (Figure 7.1), which was painted in Rome in 1861 and presented to the Provincial Council of Barcelona, had nothing to do with his recent North African experience. Despite its title, it also had very little Moroccan input,



Figure 7.1 *La Odalisca*, 1861. Oil on cardboard, 56.9 × 81 cm
Source: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (MNAC/MAM 10691). Photograph by Calveras/Mérida/Sagristà. © Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

except perhaps for the furniture that appears behind the main figure. *La Odalisca* is an artwork in the same thematic context as *Odalisque avec esclave* (Harvard Art Museums, Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts) by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) that belongs to the long tradition of sensual female representations dating back to Giorgione and Titian's *Venus*. It represents one of the most hackneyed of stereotypes: oriental sensuality and eroticism. Despite the stir caused by the nakedness of the figure, the painting enjoyed great success in Barcelona's artistic circles. It was the first painting in Catalonia to represent such a theme and even earned the admiration of the prestigious realist painter Ramón Martí Alsina, who made a copy of it (Chillón 2010, vol. 2, 66).

His first etchings of this genre were executed in the same year as *La Odalisca*. These include *Familia marroquí* (1861) (Figure 7.2), which depicts a Kabyle family in front of what looks like a Tetouan fountain but which is actually the Fountain at Gate of the Chain in Jerusalem, which the painter knew through illustrations; *La guardia de la Qasba de Tétuán* (c.1861), which shows a group of armed men lying idly by the shaded entrance of the city's fortifications (Figure 7.3); and an etching titled *Tanger*, which depicts several static figures shrouded in their hooded djellabas sitting in the street next to an arch.

The arch is based on one he drew in Tetouan, as he did not visit Tangier until the following year (Doñate et al. 2003, 334). He probably called the etching *Tanger* because that city had become an orientalist reference after it had been illustrated in the works of Delacroix and David Roberts (1796–1864) almost three decades earlier.

Despite certain differences, these first etchings relating to Fortuny's recent stay in Morocco were in the same vein as the French orientalist paintings that were being marketed by art dealer

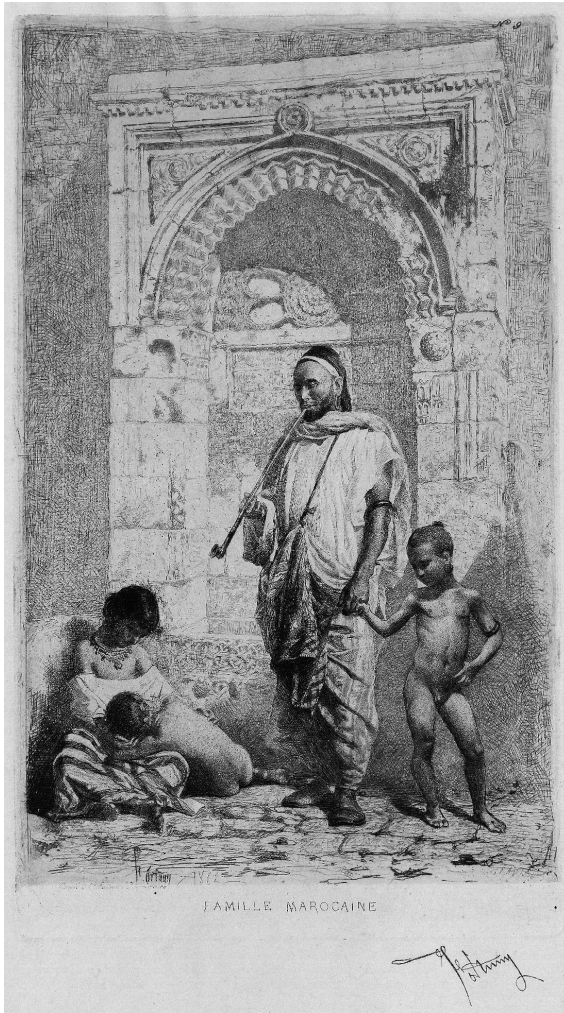


Figure 7.2 *Familia marroquí*, c.1861. Etching on paper. 35.5 × 24 cm
Source: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (MNAC/GDG 7364G). Photograph by Calveras/Mérida/Sagristà. © Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

Adolphe Goupil (1806–1893), the biggest representative of which was his son-in-law, Jean-Leon Gérôme (1824–1904). These etchings therefore approached what critic Emile Galichon (1868), in an article in the *Gazette de Beaux Arts*, later defined as ethnographic painting, in reference to the work of the above French painter. However, to qualify the works of Gérôme or, by extension, those of Fortuny as ethnographic, when in truth they manifested such a superficial pan-Arabism is, at the very least, inappropriate. Such qualifications have been aroused by an alleged faithfulness to reality. It showed itself in the authenticity of the arguments, the precision of the physiognomies, and the adjusted description of the attire. All the above must have had its origin in the artist's field study, when he observed the human types and most distinctive aspects of their reality to produce credible pictorial results. In fact, while the critics evaluated the supposed authenticity of the oriental resources in pretentious and exaggerated

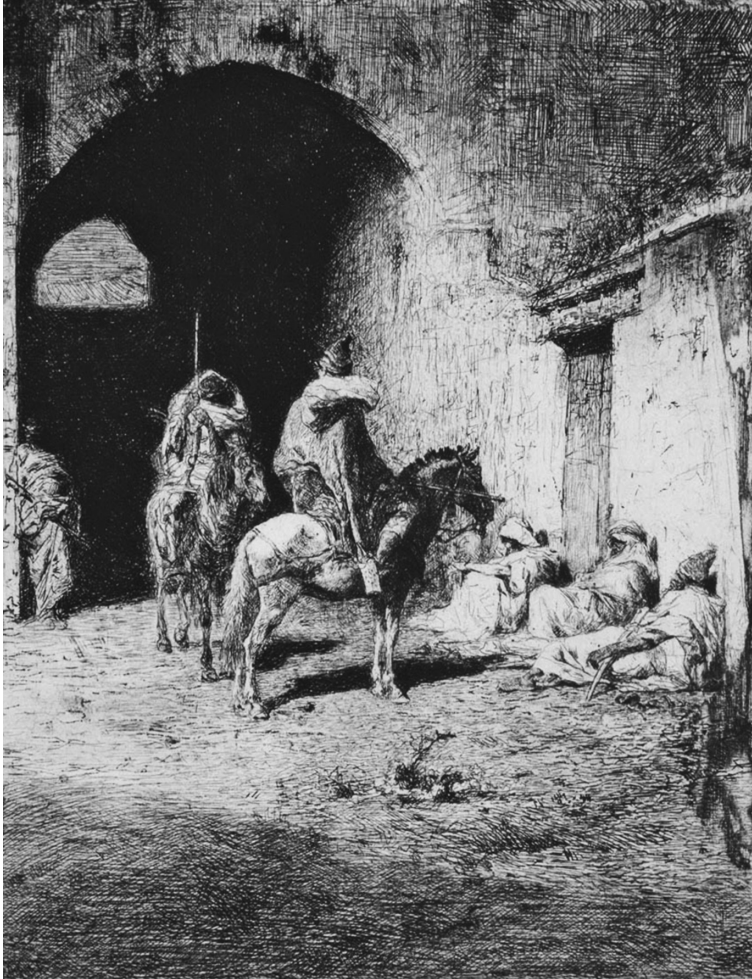


Figure 7.3 *La guardia de la Qasba de Tétuán*, c.1861. Etching on paper. 21 × 16.5 cm
Source: Private collection.

terms, most of the public who were not so demanding had little regard for this aspect. When contemplating this type of painting, they were generally content to be transported by their imagination to an exotic and distant world without the need for too much precision. Ignorance allowed for all kinds of license since most of these works became no more than decorative *objets d'art* in Victorian or Second Empire mansions. They were part of what was known as 'high class painting', creations intended for an exclusive audience characterized by their impeccable *fini*, anecdotal and inconsequential content, and high decorative value (Gracia 1989, 132). Also, as several authors have pointed out, these visions of the oriental world showed the European public characteristics once associated with the old regime, which, thanks to social progress, had been overcome. This awakened a feeling of self-satisfaction and spread the European model of progress to other cultures living on the margin of modernity. In short, it was an invitation to colonial expansion (Moussa 2012, 135).

Fortuny's second trip to Morocco

In Fortuny's letter dated 14 February 1862 in which he offered *La Odalisca* to the Provincial Council of Barcelona, he also requested funds to enable him to make a second trip to Morocco to take notes and recordings for the paintings he had been commissioned to execute (Diputación de Barcelona, Archivo General, Expediente relativo al artista D. Mariano Fortuny, leg 1386, fol 71) (Davillier 1875, 25). The Council accepted his request and in late September 1862 he travelled to Tetouan and from there to Tangiers. This time in Tetouan he was able to tranquilly draw the settings in which the wartime events of a couple of years earlier had taken place without the tension of armed conflict or the presence of Spanish troops. He painted watercolours and drew detailed landscapes of the Wad-Ras area and the river Martil valley that would later serve to construct the scenes of his battle paintings. He then spent a long time in Tangier, intensely documenting every aspect of the city in dozens of drawings and watercolours. He stayed in Morocco for almost three months. Late that year, just as he was about to return to Spain, he met painter Francisco Lameyer (1825–1877), who was to stay in Tangier well into the spring of the next year, portraying everyday scenes and members of the Sephardic community.

Fortuny's second stay in Morocco was extraordinarily fruitful. Unlike on his previous visit, he was able to draw and paint numerous watercolours about Moroccan daily life. Since the war was over, he was able to approach Moroccans more easily and could contemplate the environment more freely. His biographer, Baron Charles Davillier, explains that in Rome he had learned the rudiments of Arabic and in Tangier he lived with local people and even adopted some of their customs, such as wearing a djellaba so as to go unnoticed and be able to work without too many problems (1875, 27). Choosing to settle in Tangier also made his work easier because in 1777 sultan Sidi Muhammad Ben Abdallah had made Tangier his kingdom's diplomatic city and the locals were used to dealing with Europeans. Fortuny created numerous images of the city's most picturesque places: the dominant eighteenth-century citadel; the Great Souk, where caravans arrived from the south of the country laden with all sorts of goods and where, according to visitors, he experienced a genuine African lifestyle; the busy main street, which was called *Shiaquin* or silverware; the Customs office, with its picturesque porch of horseshoe arches near the beach walls; the public baths; the small shops full of exotic products; the cafés full of leisurely Muslims smoking kif, the intricate labyrinthine lanes with their dark parapet walks; and the wide beach and other picturesque places that surrounded the city. His papers reproduced the same places as most other artists who visited the city in search of its most oriental aspects and that would later comprise the most typical tourist route (Carbonell 2005, 105).

The notes from his stay in Tangier record the most colourful local customs and traditions, such as the *Maulud* procession to commemorate the birth of the Prophet, which later inspired his *Fantasia Árabe*. For these celebrations, the Islamic brotherhoods took offerings and the Kabyles performed a pyrotechnic display in which they danced to the sound of their own gunfire. He also witnessed the *tabaurida* or 'gunpowder race', an epic spectacle of enormous visual appeal traditionally performed outside the city walls and already depicted by several artists. This spectacle interested the romantics, who interpreted it as reflecting the animals' speed and energy and the riders' enthusiasm. Fortuny painted it twice, once in 1862 when he portrayed the event's strength and colour with great precision, and again in 1872, after his third and final trip to Morocco, when he reduced the action to a mere anecdote integrated into a luminous landscape.

Tangier was a great discovery for the artist. He was strongly attracted to the appearance of the city, which was quite different from that of Tetouan. *La infiel*, as the Moroccans called it, on account of the large presence of Europeans and the privileges enjoyed by the numerous Jews who lived there, was a small city of under 10,000 inhabitants. Its conditions for welcoming



Figure 7.4 *Playa Africana*, 1867. Watercolour on paper, 31.5 × 61 cm
Source: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (MNAC/GDG 10696D). Photograph by Calveras/Mérida/Sagristà. © Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

visitors were not very good but such limitations did not pose an obstacle to artists who, since Delacroix in 1832, had appreciated its picturesque appearance, magnificent extensive landscape, and clear light. Its climate was also better than Tetouan's, it was well connected to Europe, and it had a small Western colony comprising staff of the diplomatic missions and numerous merchants. Therefore, despite the difficulties, conditions in Tangier were better than in Tetouan for any European who wished to spend a season there.

Fortuny knew how to appreciate these advantages and understood why the artists who preceded him appreciated its appeal. From here on, he referred to it in most of his later orientalist paintings, disseminating the stereotypical image of the small and accessible nearby Orient embodied by this city in the mid-nineteenth century. The drawings and watercolours he created there are true to life but the style is more agile and more mature than those of his previous stay in Tetouan in 1860. On the other hand, the paintings he later derived from them in his Roman studio present the somewhat distorted view of an archaic, mysterious, decadent, and extremely exotic city. In general, the view of the Moroccans he expressed in so many paintings, watercolours, and etchings is deeply ethnocentric and always illustrative of his archaic exoticism. He depicts the locals as almost medieval individuals, often threatening and ragged in appearance, bearing old-fashioned weapons, sitting or lying in shaded alleys, hiding their faces under their hoods with an air of mystery, and forming part of the scenery (Figure 7.4).

Orientalist works and Fortuny's final trip to Morocco

After he entered into a commercial relationship with Parisian art dealer Adolphe Goupil in the second half of the 1860s, Fortuny produced his most significant orientalist-inspired Moroccan compositions (Davillier 1875, 40, 41). Most of these compositions depicted Tangier and were initially based on the notes he had taken during his stay in 1862. However, imagination and his work in his studio often transformed reality into a fictional world. He often chose a peculiar subject matter, such as religious traditions that portrayed the most atavistic aspects of society.



Figure 7.5 *Fantasia árabe*. Photoengraving on paper
Source: Private collection.

Examples are the three versions of *Fantasia Árabe*. These represent the procession held in Tangier during the feast of Maulud to commemorate the birth of the Prophet in which the Kabyles danced to the sound of their own gunfire. As he painted the three versions in succession, the story moved further and further away from reality. In the final version, executed in 1867 and displayed at the Walters Arts Gallery in Baltimore, the participants of the procession are even carrying a pet lion (Figure 7.5).

In this thematic context he also painted *Oración en la mezquita* (private collection), which depicts a Muslim praying inside a mosque, which is actually the church of Santa María la Blanca in Toledo.

Other works incorporate objects from his collection. One example of this is the watercolour *El mercader de tapices* (1870) (Museu de Montserrat) in which, in a shop supposedly located in Tangier, we observe antique Persian carpets, swords, and shields from his collection. Despite the assertions of critic and *littérateur* Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), who observed carpets from İzmir, Kabylie, and Tetouan (Laplana 2013, 31), these are not Moroccan at all. Other works, which were based entirely on imagination and therefore even more distant from reality, present an orientalized and sophisticated Morocco reminiscent of scenes from *Arabian Nights*. Examples of this are the two versions of *El encantador de serpientes* (1869/70) (one of which is displayed at

Walters Art Museum in Baltimore and the other at Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts), *Músicos árabes* (c.1872) (held at the Museo Fortuny in Venice), and even *Marroquíes jugando con un buitre* (c.1867) (private collection).

Some of the artist's most important orientalist compositions, as well as works from other genres, were displayed to the public at the Goupil Exhibition held in Paris in the spring of 1870. Their great critical and commercial success consecrated Fortuny definitively among the international artistic field. Then began his most personal creative phase, in which his pictorial language acquired its ultimate maturity. At the beginning of this new period, he returned for a third and final visit to Morocco. In October 1871 he took advantage of his stay in Granada to travel to Tangier accompanied by Bernardo Ferrándiz (1835–1885), a Valencian painter established in Malaga, and José Tapiró (1836–1913), a watercolourist and childhood friend and compatriot. Tapiró enjoyed this trip so much that in 1877 he settled permanently in Tangier, where he devoted himself to portraying the inhabitants of that North African city until he died in 1913. It was a light-hearted trip that lasted two weeks. The artist Georges Clairin (1843–1919), who had been living in the city for a year, played host, welcoming them to his studio on the Street of the Synagogues with a large oriental party and accompanying them on their trip to Tetouan (Peña 1968, 32, 33). Though the stay was short, Fortuny was able to take notes that would inspire later artworks such as the oil painting *El afilador de sables* (1872) (private collection). This depicts an everyday scene in which ragged warriors watch a knife sharpener at work while smoking a *sebst* or pipe of kif in front of the gate of Fez in the Medina district of Tangier. Since it was a commonly held belief that the humanity of ancient Al-Ándalus persisted on the opposite side of the Straits of Gibraltar, he used the notes he made on human types on this visit to populate his later paintings of Granada's medieval past. One example of this is *Tribunal en la Alhambra* (1871), which is displayed at the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí in Figueres. This notion also served to justify trips made by nineteenth-century intellectuals and artists to Tangier after visiting Granada's architectural sites.

It was at this stage that Fortuny's work evolved into a more modern, pictorial language that focused not so much on materialization of the traditionalist story but on visual aspects such as the representation of light and colour. He also gave prominence to pictorial values like the energetic brush stroke and the texture full of inlays observed in his magnificent oil painting *Árabe delante de un tapiz* (1873) (private collection). He also created a series of Maghrebian scenes using watercolour techniques. With a spontaneous execution and great expressiveness, these paintings capture the general atmosphere through intense colour, while the story loses importance. Though it has not been ruled out that some of these paintings may have been executed in Tangier, most were painted later in Rome. The most illustrative examples are displayed at the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid: *Patrulla mora*, *Marroquíes a caballo*, *Árabes subiendo una cuesta*, *El almúedano*, *Moro ahogado en una playa* (Barón 2017, 297–300). All convey the magic of that world with an unravelled, synthetic style that uncovers the freest and most innovative Fortuny.

In summary, from the beginning of Fortuny's career, Morocco became the source of inspiration for the painter that led him to create one of the most innovative and significant historical paintings of nineteenth-century Spanish art. It also inspired his orientalist works, which are among the best examples of this pictorial genre produced in the second half of the nineteenth century. No other artist of his time was as masterful in capturing the human environment on the southern shores of the Straits of Gibraltar or in creating out of that reality such an extraordinary and thought-provoking orientalist vision. Unfortunately, his untimely death cut short an extraordinarily promising career that was just beginning to bear fruit.

The great painting

During his first stay in Morocco, Fortuny contemplated the warlike events of the Spanish-Moroccan War to gain inspiration for the paintings commissioned by the Provincial Council. On his return in April 1860, he travelled to Paris to study the works of Horace Vernet relating to the conquest of Algeria, which the commissioners had recommended to him as models for his own. These paintings were on display in the Constantine Hall of the Museum of Historical Paintings in France, which was built by King Louis Philippe (1773–1850). The one that most interested him was *Prise de la smalah d'Abd-el-Kader* (Château de Versailles, Versailles), the size of which was spectacular: 21.39 metres long and 4.89 metres high. The painting had caused a stir at the 1845 Paris Exhibition, winning every award and being viewed by a multitude of Parisians. The critic Jules Champfleury (1821–1889) considered it an enormous 'panorama' that magnified the painter's virtues but, especially, his flaws (Lacambre 1992, 108). Fortuny was undoubtedly impressed both by the enormity of the canvas and the way in which the subject was presented as a broad view of the battle with a multitude of figures. To a certain extent this resulted from the artist's direct knowledge of the events since he had witnessed the Algerian crusade. The dimensions of the painting made Fortuny aware of the enormous task that confronted him and that ultimately demotivated him. His artistic sensibility was also different from Vernet's. Despite the commission, he could not be considered an enthusiast of military chronicles. Instead, he preferred the smaller, commercial paintings set in the eighteenth century that were fashionable in the main Parisian galleries at that time.

The first painting Fortuny planned to execute on the Spanish–Moroccan conflict depicted the battle of Wad-Ras, the final battle of the war. He painted several oil sketches, the most important of which is currently displayed at the Prado Museum in Madrid. However, he never got to paint the final version. This battle, which took place on 23 March 1860, was the bloodiest of all those waged in the Spanish–Moroccan conflict and put an end to the hostilities. The artist, witnessing the battle from a prudent distance, was in awe of its violence (Davillier 1875, 20). His sketches referred to the heroic performance of the Catalan volunteers, who fought hand-to-hand to prevent the advance of the Moroccan cavalry. The battle was an utterly violent event in which the battalion of the Provincial Council lost almost half its forces.

In the centre of the composition, Fortuny narrates the most intense moment of the battle. We see a motley crew of figures in different positions and with different attitudes expressing all the ferocity of the fight. In the middle of the fray he depicts one of the anecdotes reported by the press in its chronicles of the day. The protagonist is Colonel Francesc Fort, who had been commander of the volunteers since the death of Brigadier Victorià Sugrañes at the battle of Tetouan. The Colonel's horse has been killed but he is fortunate enough to land on his feet and, with his revolver in his left hand, he dismounts a Muslim horseman, while the sabre in his right hand pricks the snout of another enemy soldier's saddle. Falling from his horse, the enemy soldier is skewered by a volunteer's bayonet (Orellana 1871 [1872], 123). The painting distinguishes between the different types of fighters intervening in the battle: Catalan volunteers; *vivandières* performing care work; Rif Kabyles with their shaven heads and braids; regular Moroccan cavalry dressed in white and wearing red caps; and the Bukharis or Black Guard. The background landscape, which is merely suggested, delineates the westernmost hills of Beni Idder, which enclose the plain in which the battle took place.

In 1863, shortly after he returned to Europe from his second trip to Morocco, the commission from the Provincial Council of Barcelona was reduced to one large oil painting (Diputación de Barcelona, Archivo General, Expediente relativo al artista D. Mariano Fortuny, leg 1386, fol

73–77) (Davillier 1875, 30, 31). From 1863 to 1865, Fortuny therefore worked on the large oil painting of the Battle of Tetouan, which was 3 metres high by 9.72 metres wide. Increasingly at this time his preferences were less related to cultivating the historical genre, and this commission hindered his pictorial and commercial interests. In 1865 he stopped charging the Provincial Council and discontinued the execution of the painting while hoping he would be able to finish it later with the help of his future brother-in-law, Ricardo de Madrazo (1852–1917). In the end, in 1870 Fortuny decided to annul the contract. In 1873, he paid 4,200 escudos to the Provincial Council, definitively extricating himself from the problem (Carbonell 2013, 84). The artwork was left hanging in the artist's studio until his death. In 1875 those who had commissioned it acquired it from his widow and for years it was displayed in the Assembly Hall of the Palace of the Provincial Council in Barcelona (González and Martí 1989, vol. 1, 129) until it was transferred to Barcelona's Museum of Fine Arts.

The Great Painting, as the artist called it, was the result of a long creative process whereby direct experience, documented in dozens of drawings and watercolours, combined with the artist's studio formulations. Fortuny desired to achieve an innovative interpretation of the subject. He therefore painted a broad, panoramic view of the battle in an extensive setting, depicting the plain and the Tetouan coastline and with a high line of horizon, which enabled him to narrate the story better. The work is unfinished and some parts have simply been sketched, which gives the painting a certain chaotic appearance. Despite the shortcomings, the work possesses masterful fragments that remind one of the luminist paintings of the artist's final creative stage. Light tonalities flood the environment in strong contrast with the few shaded areas, thus faithfully reproducing North Africa's diaphanous and dazzling atmosphere. The execution, based on colour smudge, renders certain parts strikingly modern, a non-existent characteristic in contemporary works of the same genre.

La batalla de Tétuán or, more specifically, according to its original title, the *Expugnación del campamento marroquí por las tropas españolas el 4 de febrero de 1860*, portrays the climax to the battle when the Spaniards break enemy lines, storm the enemy's camp and cause the rout (Figure 7.6).

The theme is very similar to the Vernet painting he was recommended, in which the French troops storm the Algerian camp *Mahdi* Abdel Kader. Fortuny relates the action from the defeated enemy's camp—specifically, from the defensive rear-guard of the camp of Mulay Ahmed, whose elder brother, prince Mulay Abbas, was head of the Moroccan Army. He arranged the Spanish generals in the centre of the composition, where they played the role assigned to them by the commission's apologetic history. He placed the general staff in the front line of fire, forming a wedge that advances into the enemy camp. Standing in the centre is General Leopoldo O'Donnell, who leads the attack surrounded by his escort of hussars and general staff officers. Defying the dangers, he calmly issues his commands from the most visible location. He is the true leader of the army and, by extension, the true leader of the homeland. It should be remembered that at that time he was the president of the Council of Ministers. To his left, the Catalan volunteers, led by Brigadier Victorià Sugrañes, form the vanguard and make a tumultuous entry into the Moroccan camp. These are the men of action, the protagonists of the victory. Their commander who, with sabre in hand, leads the way to encourage the volunteers, dies in the attack. He represents the martyr who sacrifices his own life while offering his courage as an example to the troops.

General Prim is depicted alone on the right of O'Donnell's group, storming the enemy trench through an embrasure and brandishing his sabre against a Muslim fighter. This is the most glorious moment of the General's performance. This image, depicting the general launching himself alone into Moroccan lines while carrying the flag in the first important confrontation of the war, has become commonplace. This event occurred on 1 January 1860 in what became



Figure 7.6 *La batalla de Tetuán*, 1865. Oil on canvas, 300 × 972 cm
Source: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona (MNAC/MAM 10695). Photograph by Calveras/Mérida/Sagristà. © Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

known as the Battle of Castillejos. Other artists who portrayed the Battle of Tetouan, such as Francisco Sans Cabot (1828–1881) and Eusebi Planas (1833–1897), painted Prim starring in this same audacious role. Since then General Prim has embodied the figure of romantic hero in paintings, etchings, and prints. The best pictorial expression of this is *Juan Prim, 8 octubre 1868* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), a painting by Henri Regnault (1843–71) executed in 1868 when Prim was already a statesman. The war in Africa helped the General to project himself, thus considerably increasing his public prestige and promoting his political career. Charles Yriarte asserted that during the campaign he lived like a prince, with a large number of journalists, artists, and writers following his feats from his home base (Yriarte 1888, 6). On the far right of the painting, General Felix Alcalá Galiano, a commander in the cavalry division, is entering Mulay Ahmed's camp on the flank with a dignity typical of the figures in Diego Velázquez's equestrian portraits. He is explaining the enemy's panic, defeat, and desperate flight, which occupies the entire breadth of the first third. In the centre, on horseback and facing the spectator, is Prince Mulay Abbas. Here he is leading the group of Moroccans who are escaping on horseback. Fortuny painted this figure leading the enemy's hasty abandonment of the battlefield to highlight their humiliating cowardice. We should also note that the Moroccans' flight in the centre of the painting was treated as if it were a *tabaurida*, or typical race.

This desire to discredit the enemy is also perceived in an anecdotal image that shows a Moroccan fighter taking the camp's belongings and abandoning his companions. At his side another fighter is seen robbing a dying man, thus illustrating the lack of morality of an uncivilized populace which ultimately deserves to be militarily punished. Interestingly, among a group of Moroccans fleeing recklessly in the lower right-hand side of the painting is an elderly Jew who, in the right corner of the first third, is escaping with his riches on a donkey led by a black slave, thus representing the stereotype of the avaricious Jew who never abandons his riches.

The convincing appearance of *La batalla de Tétuán* does not prevent it from being the studio composition of a great artist. Imaginary elements, stereotypes, and conventions such as the arrangement of the main characters conveys a glorious idea of victory. Despite the fidelity of the relief, Fortuny distorted the landscape's colour scheme, transforming the fertile green plains surrounding Tetouan into an arid steppe. This fitted better the European idea of the North African landscape, the most defining element of which is aridity. If we add this to the artist's insistence on depicting the exotic appearance of the Maghrebian fighters, *La batalla de Tétuán* can be seen as an orientalist piece, like the paintings of Napoleon's campaign in Egypt and, especially, those of the later French campaign in Algeria. This Great Painting offered a perception of war that was different from the heroic individualism of romanticism, in which the protagonist stands out and imposes himself forcefully on the other mortals. In Fortuny's artwork, the individuality of many figures is blurred, they form an anonymous human mass, and the heroes stand out only discreetly from the group. *La batalla de Tétuán* is a great pictorial artist's studio composition but the notes taken *in situ* and the artist's own experience give it an expressiveness and plausible aspect that does not exist in most similar works of the era. Contemporary artists such as Francisc Sans Cabot and Eduardo Rosales (1836–1873), who did not witness the war, were far less convincing than Fortuny in their representations of the Tetouan encounter. Sans Cabot's work, for example, is dominated by the rhetorical device by which the hero is exalted in detriment to the action, which is reduced to a mere scenario. Fortuny attached great importance to his war experiences. This is proven by the fact that he refused to participate in the Duke of Ferrán Núñez's art exhibition on the war in Africa, arguing that many participants had not witnessed the conflict and could not paint it in a credible way (González 1989, vol. 1, 64). On another occasion when the play *Presa di Tétuán* was performed at the Albert Theatre in Rome,

the painter left indignantly at the interval because he believed that it distorted the events (Sedó 1974, 87).

In summary, *La batalla de Tétuán* is a pictorial interpretation that aspired to realism within a genre characterized by literary idealism and academicism. However, if it were not for his brilliant execution, you might think that poet and critic Charles Baudelaire's sentence (1821–1867) summarizing Vernet's painting *Prise de la smalah d'Abd-el-Kader* as a set of interesting anecdotes without excessive pictorial qualities may also apply to Fortuny's (Calvo 1982, 340). In short, though the painting is unfinished and has several formal flaws, it should be considered one of the most interesting contemporary historical compositions of nineteenth-century art.

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